

DEMONS 1081

Chapter 1081 Fengs For Me

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"Let me try again to explain this then," said Bing slowly, keeping an eye on Feng to ensure he was listening, and it at least seemed like it was. "What I am attempting to explain, is that I genuinely believe Meng would have pretended to have some other more respectable profession if we had actually been her children, or if she was able to adopt us in a more legal and ethical way. The fact we only found out due to outside factors, likely would've been the same. Perhaps that is naive of me, but I doubt it.

"So, with that added on top of what I already know of Meng, in addition to what I know of other adopted children, I think we've got nothing to worry about. Other adopted children treat their adopted parents as their real ones all the time, and I just don't see how that's any different,"

"By that logic then Bang should also count as a valid adoptive parent," said Feng as nicely as he could. He wasn't trying to be deliberately antagonistic right now, but he DID want to make a point.

"And he tried to kill us, so we're disowning him," said Bing with a slightly shaky voice. "That's, once again, no different to if he was actually our father. Having him try to kill us is a step over the line, and at this point we can no longer accept him as our dad. Granted, Kat has probably taken him out, but if he'd lived I still would have wanted nothing to do with him ever again,"

Feng nodded, it was a reasonable argument and he could see where Bing was coming from. In fact, Bing seemed like she was having more trouble accepting her own argument than he was, but Feng didn't want to mention that right now. He was trying not to be antagonistic. "Right, I can agree with that,"

"But you can't agree with my feelings about Meng?" asked Bing.

Feng kept walking beside his sister, letting the sound of his leather shoes slapping the stone, and the few drips of water occupy his mind. It wasn't an easy thing to answer. *How do I even explain? The betrayal of expectations, the fact that she is directly responsible for our real parents experiencing tragedy... the fact they were never given a choice.

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This isn't a 'normal' adoption sis. We were essentially stolen from our real Mum and Dad, and Meng was complicit in that. She's not even trying to pretend she had good reasons, or that she cared about us specifically at the time. Sure we're her kids NOW but we weren't at the start. Meng wanted an excuse to get some kids of her owns, and she took it.

That is not good, or even respectable behaviour. In fact, it's downright villainous. Our sect has stood against such people for centuries... and now... now it's suddenly all ok because the person committing those atrocities is our mother? Am I just supposed to set aside all of the values I've been taught my entire life?

I'll at least grant that Meng didn't push us towards her own thoughts and feelings. She taught us the philosophies of the sect, contrasted them to other schools of thought and tried to present them in a mostly equal light, while pushing us slightly towards the ones accepted by our sect. I wonder how much

restraint that took from Meng... or if she thinks we're better off with the Holy Icy Wind school of thought.

How do I explain all this to Bing though. She was always more about individuals, about people. It didn't matter what the law said, what mattered was what the people INTENDED with their actions. Well, not completely, but more often than not certainly. To her, Meng is her mother, the person that raised her and that MEANS a lot to my sis.

To me though... Meng is someone that has broken quite possibly every law the sect has. She is everything we were taught to guard against and unlike Bing, I do not think I should be making exceptions or excuses for my mother. Especially not when she isn't actually my mother.

Though... is that really the difference? That I now feel like I have this... this rift inside of me where 'My Mother' and 'Meng' sit, and I can no longer see them both as the same person. Heck, we still don't know what Meng really looks like, so how am I supposed to deal with the monster who wears my mother's face... when it is my mother's face I know the monster by, and my mother, is in many ways... faceless.*

Feng let out a loud, audible sigh. "No I suppose I can't agree with you when it comes to the Meng we know. Sis... she's probably broken every law we set down to protect our people, and I doubt she has any remorse about that fact,"

"Pretty sure she hasn't broken ALL of them Feng..." said Bing as a bit of a joke.

"Ah, but I disagree. I know she has at least hit all of the big ones, such as high treason, grand fraud, murder, and rape," said Feng with a sigh.

"Wait what? When has she ever raped anybody? Or committed high treason? I can at least understand the grand fraud... and the murder... but the others?" asked Bing with some concern.

"Well, she's technically kidnapping the sect heirs right this moment, even if we're agreeing to go with her. That's if it doesn't count as kidnapping when we were babies... as for the rape, pretending to be a man's wife and sleeping with him definitely counts, as Meng probably did with dear old dad before he was replaced. Plus she's probably used that tactic for other targets as well," said Feng with a grimace.

Bing winced. "I... I suppose I hadn't thought of it like that... but has she really done anything that bad recently?"

"Bing, we are currently being kidnapped," said Feng bluntly.

"That doesn't count, we want to go along," said Bing with a dismissive wave.

"No Bing," said Feng slightly more harshly than intended. When he saw his sister wince, Feng backed off a bit, letting himself breathe before continuing. "No Bing... you want to go along, and I feel like I have to," Bing started to say something but Feng raised a hand to stop her, "I'm not saying that Meng is trying to force me into anything, I'm sure she's doing what she thinks is best..."

"But I'm not safe here at the sect anymore. Because of what she's done, I'm liable to face a lifetime of imprisonment maybe slavery with mind tonnes of shock talismans or something to enforce it. I HAVE to leave now, and I don't really want to. Thus, it is kidnapping, probably through coercion, even if unintentional. On top of that, can you honestly say that Meng hasn't been killing people in years?"

"But... but Feng even WE kill people, sometimes as part of judgements, sometimes when they've attacked us out in the wild. Not often but it's happened... so surely that pat doesn't count..." said Bing wishfully. *novelnext.Com*

"Yes but we made sure they were guilty, and those that were directly attacking us... we mostly had no choice. Meng is much stronger then she led most people to believe, and illusions are a great way to nonlethally take someone out. Instead, she's been disguising what were probably melee attacks for years... and who knows how guilty the people she's executed really were," said Feng.

"But... she's never done anything bad to us," said Bing, with sadness lacing her tone. Bing had already started to figure out where this conversation was going, and she didn't like it. Even still... she set things up so perfectly.

"And that was never my point," said Feng with some force. "Just because her crimes were not committed against people we care for does not mean they weren't crimes. This was something we were taught as young children, something we used in practice in judicial cases, even before we were in charge of judgement... we can't go around making exceptions like this as sect heirs, not if we want to be impartial,"

Bing frowned, "Well... well what if I don't want to be impartial? She's my MOTHER Feng, I LOVE her. Even if you don't appreciate that, or even if you can't I'll still stand up to the world and claim her as MINE. Plus... PLUS we're not going to be sect heirs much longer. Just a family on the run... and... and then I don't HAVE to do what is right all of the time. I can be a bit selfish if I want... and dammit Feng I want my mother to live, to be with me. To hold me at night when I'm scared,"

Feng looked at the cold, stone ceiling with tears in his eyes, "I know Bing. I know,"

The silence stretched on for minutes before Bing could answer, "I... I think I know as well," whispered Bing, "And I wish I didn't,"

[Chapter 1082 1082 Twins Found.](#)

Bing's perspective.

Bing found herself being crushed against Feng and Meng. Kat had found them five minutes ago, tops, and then handed over a tracking slip. Meng had then dashed towards them so quickly that a section of the caves had collapsed on the way. Something Meng was completely unconcerned about. "Ooh, my babies it's so nice knowing you're safe," said Meng as she tightened the hold. Bing felt the life slowly leaving her body... or maybe that was just the air being squashed out of her lungs.

"Please get off me," said Feng, uncomfortable with the display of affection, especially after solidifying his opinion on Meng.

"Bah, now that I don't have to pretend I believe all the shit about 'the sect coming first' and 'nobody is above the law' I can be more affectionate! I'm not letting this chance go," said Meng.

Bing winced internally. Even if she was completely fine with the hugs... that wasn't what she wanted to hear. *It sort of hurts now that Feng has explained everything properly. I wish he was just being an angry piece of shit... but he has a good point. Not one that I can bring myself to care about all that much... but one I can't argue against. And then Meng had to just go and CONFIRM IT. Poor Feng... I don't know what he's going to do... but I can't imagine him putting up with Meng hovering over him for the next decade as we try to start a new life.

Dammit... and if he leaves what the fuck am I supposed to do? Meng might be my mother, but I can't just hide behind her robes for the rest of my life like a child too scared to interact with the other kids. Feng will probably need all the help he can get... and Meng... doesn't. Fuck, I'm going to have to talk to her about this before it becomes an issue and plan things out.

Of course, the problem with that plan is that Meng will definitely follow us both if we leave her alone. And if Feng figures that out, he'll insist I stay behind. Urgh, things have gotten rather complicated all of a sudden. I wish I could just blame Feng for it... but I can't. Kat seems fine as well, so I can't even remain angry at him for that slipup earlier, even if Meng will likely punish him for it...

Which god, that's a bunch of mixed messages isn't it? Meng see that as unacceptable behaviour, but Feng sees Meng as someone who considers everything acceptable. To him, she'll look like a massive hypocrite. God dammit. How am I supposed to mediate that? They'll both just talk past each other, unless Feng just sulks, but that will do nobody any favours.

I might have to ask Kat and Sue for help... but I don't even know how long they'll stick around. Are they going to be on the ship with us to the Mountain Shaker sect? I can't remember if they ever said when their contract ends... I would assume when Bodeir gets back home, but perhaps they were just responsible for him while he's HERE but needed to be summoned earlier.

Fuck. This is all so complicated now.* Meng, being a properly attentive mother and expert in reading body language from years as a spy could tell her children were both rather uncomfortable at the moment. Bing's comfort had been jumping around though, so it might not be the hug itself. Feng however, looked like he wanted to be anywhere else...

Meng couldn't find it in herself to care though. Her children were safe. They were in her arms. Meng was certain that escaping the sect there would be no further fighting. The fact that she could just hug them both like this was wonderful. Now they just had to find Lian, and everything would be perfect. "Kat, I'm going to break my way out of here going straight upwards,"

"As long as you keep the two in the bubbles safe that's fine, I did here you collapse that section of cave a that's a bit back," answered Kat.

Meng blinked uncomprehendingly for a few seconds before Kat groaned and pointed to Bodeir and Voldar that happened to be floating nearby, still asleep of course. "Oh... um... woops?" said Meng with a smile.

Kat groaned, "Dammit Meng, I had to move them both out of the way before you charged straight through them, and I can't even see the balloons properly! We're lucky they were fine and my contract didn't start playing up. Please remember that my real job here is to get Bodeir home safely. I do feel for you, and I'm happy to help, but please consider my position."

Oof, that's another point to Feng's way of thinking. It wouldn't have been hard to be just a bit more careful about those two... which... admittedly I'd sort of forgotten as well. Man am I glad Meng tied those to me, I'm certain I would've forgotten about them if she hadn't. Which would be... bad yes.

"Sorry Kat," said Meng lacking in any real remorse. Kat just sighed and made a 'get on with it' gesture.

In the end, Meng just formed an illusionary drill and dug her way up throw the rocks. Kat followed closely behind, bashing away bits and pieces of stone that fell down, protecting the bubbles where Meng failed to. With this, it didn't take long for the group to get to the surface, where Meng turned to Kat and asked, "So... which way to grab Lian?"

Kat rolled her eyes and pointed off in the distance, then the group headed off once again. *Ok... I get it that you're out of crisis mode Mum... but can you show a bit of compassion for Kat's situation? Or are you just at your limit for caring about other people? Actually... how stressful has today been for her? The answer might be... very. Probably best not to push the stress-out assassin... oh god but I have an idiot for a brother.*

Bing turned to face Feng from her spot on Meng's lap. Meng had summoned an illusionary flying boat just large enough to hold three seats. Meng was at the back with Bing on her lap, Feng was sitting up the front trying to be as far away as possible and Kat was flying beside them because she couldn't see the damned thing properly.

Bing pursed her lips, trying not to frown as she tried to figure out how to warn Feng not to piss of the stressed assassin. *Which is a bit of a rude thing to think about your mother, but what else am I going to do? It's not like there's a magic answer for stress.* Except of course for the fact that Kat could relax people with a flex of her aura. Something Bing didn't know.

With Meng leading the charge, and the boat to protect them from the wind, it didn't take long to make it to the correct mountaintop with Bing no closer to finding a way to warn Feng then before. The issue was that Meng simply paid them both too much attention. Not that Bing was feeling uncomfortable about that fact... she just needed some way to secretly pass a note to Feng before he stopped his brooding and went back to being angry.

*And then what am I going to do? Seriously? It's not like Feng doesn't have some valid points, I understand that... but Meng cares about us, and having Feng constantly try to distance himself from her is not doing Meng's mental state any favours. Everything he says is really hurtful to her because she genuinely cares.

Just the fact that she won't let go of me proves that fact. Obviously she doesn't want to push things... but how much rejection can she really take? Even if Meng would regret it afterwards, a simple backhand at full strength would KILL Feng. Meng knows this... but she also doesn't have training for dealing with belligerent children, just the experience she's had with us...

And Feng is pushing things. I really hope that Lian is as accepting of this as I am, because if she isn't... Meng might do something that we'd all regret. Her emotions are clearly all over the place at the moment, so... what can I do? I suppose I can either force her back into the mask... or try and reassure Meng about her place in our lives...*noVefnext.com*

Which might not be possible because in Feng's ideal world she wouldn't HAVE a place in our lives. But like... what is he going to do about it? It's not like he can report her to the sect police. Plus... plus if it really did come to a fight like that I'd have to side with Mum. Sorry Feng, but Meng isn't going to kill you if you lose, and I'd rather not support any idiocy.*

[Chapter 1083 1083 Lian Up To The Sky](#)

Lian

It had taken much less time to find Lian and Lily. Kat had advocated for using the drill to get down to the pair, and knowing how much Kat cared for Lily, Kat could make a compelling argument. Lian and Lily worked together to form a strong shield that kept them safe until all the rock had been cleared away. Lily flew up to Kat under her own power, but Lian was still in the hole with Meng. "Do you mind if we have a small chat before you meet back up with Bing and Feng?" asked Meng.

Do I mind? Hmm... I... I don't mean to disagree with the sect matriarch but I kinda DO mind. "Um... can I just see Bing first? I mean... not that I don't trust Kat and Lily, and like... obviously you're right here, so things are all probably true but... I still can't help but be a bit worried about Bing. So... if I can just... I dunno give her a hug and see that she's safe?" Lian offered nervously.

Meng of course, was more than happy to accept, "Oh that's perfectly fine. Very understandable, um... yeah I'll just... we can just go up out of this hole and you can chat... or something. Then we can have that talk alright?"

Huh... Lian gave a nod and in a blink of an eye she was next to Bing. Lian immediately wrapped her arms around the girl. "It's nice to see you're ok," whispered Lian.

"Yeah well... things have been interesting for sure. I was never in any real danger though Feng did nearly get his torso shot with an arrow," said Bing with a slightly weak smile.

Clearly that isn't everything though... what's wrong with Bing? Her eyes and mouth are saying different things. Should I press? "You don't seem find Bing... do you want to talk about it?" asked Lian.

Bing winced at being called out, though wasn't surprised in the slightest that Lian had picked up on things. "I have... realised a few things and I'm sorta trying to deal with them. I... hmm... I don't know what to tell you Lian. I mean, I trust you with it all... but I don't know if I want Meng and Feng to overhear my thoughts... but we're going to be stuck together from now on and I might not EVER get the chance to discuss these things... so... bit awkward," explained Bing.

That does complicate things. I'm not even sure which way to push her... wait, no I'm being an idiot. "Can you write it all down while I'm having a chat with Meng?" asked Lian as an alternative.

Bing opened her mouth to protest before closing it, thinking for a few seconds and then letting out a pained groan. "Of course you'd think of that. You keep notes on everything... and you're right. I should have some spare paper in my ring. Just... yeah I'll have it all ready for you when you get back," said Bing.

"Cool, so... as long as you're ok?" said Lian, offer to stick close clearly hovering in the air.

"It's nothing pressing. It's... probably better we deal with it sooner rather than later, because it's going to eat at me until I do... but it's not going to hurt putting it off for a few hours. Hopefully we can deal with it when we're on the boat... maybe you can work out a curse that keeps us from being overheard?" said Bing.

"I already know of one," said Lian. "It's not going to stop anyone that actually wants to listen in... but that's part of the design I think. Making it too fragile to bypass without having the whole thing shatter,"

"Good... good..." said Bing with a nod, but Lian could see that her friend was still uncomfortable. Despite that... it was best not to keep Meng waiting, and Lian was interested to hear what the older woman was going to say.*nOvelnext.cOm*

Lily had explained things in a more general sense, relaying things that Kat had heard and figured out. So Lian wasn't clueless about Meng being a spy, but some details hadn't been mentioned, like Meng's understanding, or her desire to properly adopt Lian. Sure it was lightly touched on, but not the specifics or the intensity.

"I'm ready" said Lian as she walked over to Meng. A blink later and Lian was rapidly traveling at speed until they were out of earshot, hopefully. It was unclear just how far Kat and Lily could hear, but Lian was guessing that if they did overhear anything they wouldn't spread it around at least.

"So..." said Meng.

Lian looked up at Meng and waited for the rest of the statement to come. Thirty of silence later, it was clear that whatever it was Meng wanted to say... was going to need to be coaxed out of her. This is so weird. I don't think I've ever seen Meng so uncertain about anything. "I'm afraid I'm not a mind reading Meng," said Lian.

Meng winced at the reprimand but nodded, "Sorry... I guess I just don't really know where to start... um... there are things that need to be said, thing that should be said, and things that probably don't matter but I can't say I know which of them to start with really. Um... what do you know about everything that's happening?"

"Lily explained a lot of the general stuff. Well, she did give me a fair bit of detail, but like... she wasn't relaying whole conversations you had with Kat, just what Kat sent over occasionally... and even then Lily gave me a summary of that summary. So I know that I'm probably going with you three, that you're really a spy but your name happens to be Meng... and I guess I'd like to hear the rest from you," said Lian slowly.

"Ah... yes I see. I suppose that would be best... um... so I'm Meng, adoptive mother to Feng and Bing and... if you'd like I'd love to have you as a daughter as well... but... um... I wouldn't want to force anything... I mean..." Meng stumbled through the words, failing to string them all together into a proper sentence even with all the interruptions.

So Lian threw herself into Meng's arms, shutting the cultivator up. "Look Meng... I already thought of you as more of my Mum than my real Mum... so... this isn't anything weird for me. I just... it'll take a bit of time to get used to calling you... well 'Mum' instead of Meng. I don't mean anything by it... but you've been like... my only good female role model since I was fifteen... probably earlier.

"I'm surprised I haven't tripped up and called you Mum more often over the years. Still, I had to train myself to say Meng and now it will take some time to train myself out of it. That's... whatever, just please don't take too much offence if I get things wrong,"

"Of course not dear," said Meng, as she tightened the hug. "I can forgive my daughter such slip-ups, especially when they are just that... mistakes,"

Lian frowned at the venom in the last part of the statement. "Are you alright?" *Like mother like daughter apparently.*

Meng sighed, "I really shouldn't be burdening you with my problems. I'm supposed to be the adult in this situation,"

"Yeah but if we're family?" Lian paused, letting Meng look down in confusion, and then nod when she realised Lian was waiting for confirmation, "Then I should be allowed to help you as much as I want. You're not my teacher, or my babysitter. You're... well I guess you're officially my mother. I want to help you if I can so I will..."

"That means a lot at the moment... as to what happened... well I suppose Feng happened. I don't want to disparage the boy, I did a great job instilling the values of the sect into him. I got him to value, truth, and justice... things that I don't really believe in myself. Sure I might believe in Karma, but that's a force that we've proved to exist and completely different.

"I can't be certain... but I think Feng has decided, even after calming down from all the surprises, that he still doesn't like me. From what I can guess... it's probably because I'm not and never have been a good person. Perhaps he's focused more on my crimes in the legal sense, perhaps he's more concerned with my moral bankruptcy. I can't be sure without asking him..."

"But it does mean that he isn't pleased to be in my presence. And I can't be too mad at the poor boy for it. I mean I TAUGHT him that value system. I tried to raise him into the best sect heir I could... which has clearly come to bite me in the ass a bit because I don't believe in most of the things the sect scriptures seem to espouse. So... on the one hand, I'm proud, it means that Feng listened to me and I raised him well... but only by the standards of a mask I feel increasingly disconnected from," explained Meng.

[Chapter 1084 1084 Lian About Meng](#)

Lian

"I'm not sure if this makes me a bad parent or not either. Clearly, by the standards of normal society I did a good job, Feng will likely be looked at as an example of virtue... but I'm not terribly happy with how things are shaking out now that the truth has come to the forefront. Feng is likely to be a better person than I... but also much more likely to end up dead, or taken advantage off," explained Meng with a sigh.

"Well... I can see why that would be a problem... but doesn't the sect have like... spies and stuff? Also... can't Bing, myself and even you stick around to make sure that nobody takes advantage of him too much?" asked Lian.

Meng gave a sad shrug, "I'm not sure, about the second thing that is. I know we do have some spies, but they're all pretty basic. No assassinations even when we really should have people able to do that sort of thing on demand. It's all information gathering, and I kept it that way because they were never that good at it. As for keeping Feng safe... I don't know if he'd let us hover over his shoulder.

"Even if Feng does need that kind of watching, he might decide that he needs to strike out on his own, and from what I know of parenting, children need to be allowed to make their own mistakes, even into their early adulthood. Stopping them from living will just cause more resentment, and Feng already resents me a good deal, adding more on top of it is not something I'd like to do...

"I'm also not sure that he'd trust me to properly vet anything clandestine... or just anything that all. I'd listen to his orders... probably... but I just don't think Feng trusts my word enough for it to matter,"

"Maybe... I mean... look I don't really know Feng as well as Bing... but that seems... a bit of sad way to look at things. Still... I don't know what to tell you, I've just seen the twins again for the first time in a few days, and this is the first I'm hearing about Feng's issues being more than just a feeling of betrayal... so... I don't know how I can help you here Meng," said Lian.

"See, I shouldn't have bothered you with it," said Meng with a sigh, "Now you've just got extra baggage, and I'm not closer to an answer,"

"Hey," said Lian as she hugged Meng back a bit tighter, "I'm sure you feel a bit better just from sharing that, I don't mind hearing it... I just..." *Well, really, I don't know what to do but that's not going to convince her. Frankly... I don't think I can convince Feng of anything. He's stubborn like that, and now... well I don't really what he's like now but there might be something.* "... need some time to think about it, that's all. Perhaps watch Feng a bit, maybe talk to him myself, and probably get yelled at,"

Meng sighed and pulled Lian back in for a tight hug before letting her go. "It's nice to hear that. I guess... with that out of the way... I wanted to ask... well what do you think of everything? Of being forced to run away?"

"Well, I already said it didn't I? You've been my mother for a lot longer than just today, you've cared for me more than my real one and I can't find myself to care about some bad things that you may or may not have done in the past..." said Lian.

"I very much did them," interrupted Meng. "I am not a good person, and I don't want you to think that I AM a good person, or that I'm aiming to be a good person. I'm aiming to be a mother my children can love, and I'm perfectly willing to hide things from them if I think I can get away with it. My morals haven't changed, I just know that avoiding outright murder for now is for the best until things settle a bit,"

"Look Meng..." said Lian firmly, "I do mean 'may or may not' have done when I'm talking about the past. I just don't know. I can't be sure about Feng, or about Bing, but for me? It doesn't seem real. It seems like you're telling me a lie just because you want me to be mad at you. Even if intellectually I know that's stupid, and that you've probably done a lot worse things than my actual parents...

"But well I kinda hate them? I'm sure it's not a surprise, I've made not secret of the fact that I don't like them, never have, but... the bad stuff they did? The ostracization? The beatings? The starvation? I had to

LIVE that. Maybe that makes me a worse person than Bing, definitely makes me a worse person than Feng, if we're going by your standards. The way the sect treated me definitely didn't help but...

"But I just can't care about people I don't know, and heck, I can't really find it in myself to care about a lot of the ones I do. I need to SEE people doing good or bad things to form a proper opinion. Maybe, maybe if Bing told me they were bad I could trust that... but I mean, for a sect that's supposed to be about protecting the innocent, I sure was vilified for something I couldn't control."

"I know dear," said Meng softly as she gave Lian a light kiss on the forehead, "I'm sorry that such things happen to you. If I wasn't acting in my capacity as the sect matriarch I would've found those fools and skinned them alive,"

"I doubt you would've actually skinned them," said Lian with a grin.

"Perhaps, perhaps not. It would depend on the severity of their crimes against you and if I felt like making an example," said Meng matter-of-factly.

Lian rolled her eyes, "I doubt you'd have gone that far. Even if you were willing, I doubt you'd let Bing and Feng find out about you doing something like that,"

Meng sighed and conceded the point, "True, but don't let that make you feel less important than my other two children. Technically speaking, none of you are mine by birth and official adoption papers will be pretty meaningless on the road. I can just say I'm your mother, and if people complain I'll silence them. *novelnext.com*

"That being said... I do want you to know I understand what you're going through. I too was looked down upon for my affinity and bullied for it,"

"Wait... but... wouldn't illusions be super useful in assassin school?" asked Lian.

Meng chuckled, "If we want to call it a school, technically I went to spy school and eventually took an elective in assassination. And yes, it was useful and the instructors were very interested in me because of that... which generated a lot of the initial dislike, then the rumours went around. They changed depending on who you asked, but you might find some amusement in them. They don't bother me anymore, so I'll share them with you, just so you know I do understand.

"The first rumour to start going around was that I was using my illusions to cheat on the tests. That I wasn't actually doing what was asked of me, just making it look that way. Which was nonsense, because most of the time there were no rules, and even if I HAD just been making it look like I'd passed, that would mean I passed. Then, people were saying that I used my illusions to sleep with the teachers, but nobody could agree on if I was making them illusions of that were sexual, or if I was showing the class an illusion of myself participating normally while I performed oral on the teacher under the desk,"

Lian raised an eyebrow, "Yes... but were you?"

"No of course not," said Meng. "We were trained very strictly, and that sort of thing would've gotten the instructor killed if someone found out. Not for the sex, but because they were mostly students recently graduated, and if they were getting side action it meant they couldn't follow orders."

"We did have an instructor that covered the sexual arts, the men had another man, and the women had a woman. Not sure how it shook out for the boys, but the woman who taught the class for us was older than dirt, and probably spent most of her time running a brothel. Still, she did know her stuff,"

"Mum... that's kinda gross. I don't think I want to know anything about your sex life. In fact... maybe I should find a curse to remove that part of my memory," mumbled Lian.

Meng smiled, "Perhaps that was a bit too far... but do keep in mind, you've accepted me as your mother, that means telling important, but embarrassing stories is a necessity,"

"No," whispered Lian in mock horror. With some real horror mixed in of course.

[Chapter 1085 1085 Lian And Bing C-H-A-T-T-I-N-G](#)

Bing

When the group hopped out at Bodeir's temporary help, it was to minimal fanfare. Meng had ensured that nobody would see them pulling in, and she wasn't going to change that just yet. Kat got off first, and called out to Sue and Hromdir, who came running. Kat gave a very basic summary, but was quickly dragged away alongside Bodeir in his bubble, which, to Bing's surprise, remained active even after Meng offered to wake him up safely.

"Right, now that that's over, Kat can argue why we're allowed on the ship. I have a letter to deliver, so you guys can talk without me being here for a bit. You'll have at least half an hour, but you might not have any time after that," said Meng.

Bing stared at her mother until Lian took the initiative to hug Meng. Bing quickly joined in, and Feng huffed, walking off to the back garden, either to take some time for himself or to give the new sisters time to chat. "What's his problem?" asked Lian.

"Look... it's complicated, I wouldn't want to explain it poorly and make him look bad," said Bing.

"Oh trust me, he already looks pretty bad. Lily knows about Feng's part in Kat's injuries and apparently she's more hurt than she's letting on despite her regeneration. Lily was NOT happy with him for that, or Kat for that matter. So nothing you can say will make it worse," said Lian.

Ah... yeah I didn't think about that. Feng was just being an idiot just then I think... no real defence for him over those actions, it's one of the reasons Meng was so mad at him. "Feng... Feng has decided that Meng isn't worth loving because she's broken a bunch of laws and you shouldn't make exceptions for family," said Bing with a sigh.

"Well that's just stupid," said Lian bluntly, "I'm not surprised Meng was right about that though,"

"Wait... you mean she knows?" asked Bing with a slight tinge of fear. *Why does she already know!*

"Why wouldn't she know Bing? She's not some random spy that recently replaced your mother, that's been the whole damn point. She's raised you both for decades. You think she can't guess what you're

both thinking with a bit of time and effort? Not only is she trained in this, but she's got lots of experience dealing with you both," said Lian with a shrug.

"Why do you say that like you aren't on the list," said Bing with a glare.

Lian shrugged, "I'm not saying she doesn't know me just as well, she probably does, I'm just not surprised by that fact at all. I also think Feng's being stupid, but he's always been stupid, so I can't say I'm surprised either,"

"Lian," hissed Bing. "His reasons are good ones, and even if we don't agree with him, he IS our brother, or are you disowning him or something?"

Lian shook her head with a smile, "No I'm not disowning him for being stupid, I already knew he was when I accepted my place as the third sibling."

"I'm not saying he's doing the right thing here..." said Bing carefully. *He's probably doing the right thing. Maybe? He's doing the more morally just thing, at least according to how we were raised. I'm just not pleased with it... especially now I understand his reasoning, because he certainly FEELS right.* "I'm just saying he has a point,"

"I think he's being a hypocrite myself," said Lian with a shrug.

"What are you talking about?" asked Bing.

"Well, a few reasons. The first, is that he's regularly allowed his friends to pick on me in the past, and taken their word over mine, just because they're his friends, with the excuse 'I trust my friends not to lie to me' or 'it's your word against three others'. The worst example was when I was escaping to your room, covered in paint that one time, and he asked what happened. Didn't want to believe it when I said his friends had done it intentionally.

"Now, a lot of these issues were years ago now, he's grown up and so have his friends, but not THAT much. The idea that he isn't biased towards people he likes is ridiculous. Additionally, as much as he's whining, he's still coming along. If Meng was some untrustworthy monster that deserves to be punished, why would he listen to her and just quietly come along?

"Could it be because Meng is willing to protect while we cultivate? Perhaps because he knows she's got resources for us all? Oooh, how about the option that he's scared to be left here because if he sticks around they'll throw him in jail or execute him for being a traitor? If he was really so principled as to not make exceptions... why not allow himself to be judged?" offered Lian.

"You can't just expect our brother to walk to his death!" hiss Bing, irritated that Lian would even suggest such a thing.

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"But I'm not," insisted Lian, "I'm happy for him to come along. I'm not happy for him to delude himself into thinking he's some paragon of virtue and arbiter of the law. He's a kid that wants safety and protection same as us. We're just honest about the fact that we love Meng too much to think ill of her. Maybe he doesn't, but he's still USING that love she has for him to benefit..."

"And frankly? If he truly has no love for Meng anymore and he's just sticking around to get as much as he can from her before leaving? That's infinitely worse than what Meng has done. Meng never betrayed a single person who loved her. Sure she pretended to be that person, but she never was. It was all a job to her. This is personal, and I'm taking Feng's decisions pretty personally at the moment,"

*I... I don't know what to say. I want to shout at you for saying such things about Feng... but once again, my siblings prove to have somewhat valid ideas even if I don't like them. I hadn't really considered what it meant when Feng said he had no choice but to come along... because he DOES have a choice. Well, not a real one, not to me...

But if I recognise that Feng could turn himself over, could submit to the law and try to get away free, because he hasn't done anything... then I also have to recognise that he doesn't have to stick around. That and... well... it IS disgusting to abuse the love and trust of a woman that was raised to be a spy.

She doesn't know any other way to live, and she's trying, making a genuine effort to be a good mother. I can understand why Lian would be mad at Feng for abusing that... I don't think he is... probably. What... what would I prefer to believe? That Feng is delusional and still loves Meng despite his attitude, or that Feng is also a bad person?

Fuck my siblings. They're such pains.*

"Welp, you've given me another existential crisis, just like our brother did earlier. I don't know if I'd rather believe you're right, or believe you're wrong... but I'm not happy with either idea," said Bing.

"Does that mean we can be mad at Feng then? Because both options make him look bad, and I'm down for him to get spanked as punishment or something," said Lian.

"Please tell me you're not into that or something..." mumbled Bing.

"Hmm..." Lian seriously considered the idea, "I'm not sure... at least, I don't want to think about that sort of thing when it comes to Feng. I've got no romantic interest in him at all, and if I do get off on the idea, I'd really rather it wasn't Feng's face on the guy getting smacked. I just meant that he deserves a good punishment, and I will enjoy his suffering,"

"That does sound kinda sadistic Lian," offered Bing.

Lian shrugged, "Eh, perhaps it is. I just think that if he's going to act like an ass there should be a punishment for it. Even if he just whined a bit less I'd be happy. I mean, if he's sticking around it means he's made his choice. I don't want to hear him constantly badmouthing my mother, even if she's HIS mother too,"

"You really jumped on this whole adopted sister thing quickly," said Bing.

Lian gave a shrug, "Yeah well, I already thought of you as a sister for a long time. Making it official is nice, but it's not a big change for me. Though... you sound a bit annoyed about it. Was Sue right about that crush you're harbouring on me? I have to say, incest isn't MY fetish, so I have to turn you down,"

"I'm going to kill that Succubus," grumbled Bing, hands clenched at her side and teeth together while Lian just burst out laughing.

[Chapter 1086 1086 Backyard Backdrop](#)

Feng

Feng sat down on the bench near the pond, before letting out a sigh. Being angry all the time was getting old, even if he felt that anger was justified. *It doesn't help that I'm exhausted. I didn't get to sleep properly in the vault because my mind was too busy, then I was nearly killed, then dragged away by Bing... and now that I have time to rest I can't even allow myself to sleep because this is technically enemy territory. Kat might be putting in a good word for us...

But who am I kidding. She's putting in a good word for Bing and Lian, perhaps Meng and I'll just be the annoying brother they have to take as well. It certainly doesn't help that they all see me as the one in the wrong, or at least, I assume Lian does. Bing at least knows that I have a point... but she just isn't built like me. She can't see Meng as beyond redemption just because she's her mother.*

Feng let out an, surely manly, yelp of surprise when he felt a pair of strong but squishy arms wrap around him. "Naw, is my little boy brooding in the backyard," said a familiar voice. Meng.

"Let me go!" insisted Feng.

"Hmm... how about nope?" asked Meng.

"Weren't you delivering a letter? Why the heck are you here?" asked Feng as he pushed against the hold ineffectually.

"Bah, now that I don't need to be worried about getting found out I sent off a solid illusion to do that nonsense for me. It's not hard, and I can put a bubble of awareness inside the clone so I can react to things properly. It's basically the same as if I'm there in person, but I can do more important things with my real body, like giving you a hug," insisted Meng.

"Why are you doing this?" asked Feng with a growl.

"You're not very specific with that question are you Feng?" said Meng with a grin. "I'm using an illusion to do busywork because my son is brooding and I want to help him, I'm hugging you because I'm a touch-starved spy that gets great joy from forward affection and I'm currently milking it for all it's worth,"

"Why do I not believe you?" asked Feng to the air.

Meng answered instead of the wind though, "Because I'm also trained in body language reading and basic human psychology so I know that despite your annoyance with me, this is still comforting to you. Embarrassing and annoying maybe, but it makes it very hard for you to keep hating me as I rapidly humanize myself in your eyes,"

"And there it is," said Feng with a sigh. He tried to bring his recent anger back to the surface but it wasn't responding to his call. He refused to find this relaxing, just because he was tired, but his anger was denied to him for now. "So... what... you're just going to sit here hugging me and spying on my sister?"

"Technically sisterS plural, but no, I'm not spying on them at all. Unlike a certain naughty boy I can think of, I trusts them not to stab me in the back while I'm sleeping. Sure I could, they aren't far enough away

to be out of hearing range, but I trust them enough to just leave it. I'd probably have done the same for you if you were less antagonistic. I am here for the hugs though," said Meng.

"Great. So I'm trapped here till you get bored," mumbled Feng.

"No you're trapped here until it's time to leave. I'm centuries old Feng, I could hug you for at least a year before even the slightest hint of boredom crept in, and even at that point, I'm not entirely certain that I would be bored at all," said Meng.

Feng grumbled but said nothing in response. The silence stretched for a minute, a comfortable minute for Meng, and an annoying one for Feng. "You know, you can talk to me. About anything really, I'll even promise not to get mad if you decide to go on about how much you hate me," suggested Meng.

"And why would I do that?" asked Feng.

"To make yourself more comfortable?" offered Meng as an answer.

I hate that she's at least a little bit right. Dammit woman... you are making it really hard to hate you. Jumping on me as soon as I'm too tired to stay angry, and then trying to be supportive and comforting. The fact that Bing believes it's all real just makes it worse. The training probably helps a lot too.

"I hate you, you know?" said Feng.

"Of course," said Meng easily.

"What are you just accepting that?" asked Feng.

"Two main reasons, the first is that confronting you about any strong belief will only inspire negative feelings so I'm not going to argue against it right now. Punish you later for being stupid and getting Kat injured? Sure, but right now you do need a break, I'll admit that much. The second reason, is that if I'm able to easily accept your opinions you will see me as a person to confide in, and I can use that to restore our relationship. Oh, and I guess there's a third reason, which is that hate is much easier to turn to love when compared with apathy. Now that I've had my own chance to calm down, and now that all my children are safe I can... deal with your own attitude better," said Meng honestly.

"I wish you weren't so nice to me. It makes it hard to hold onto just how evil I know you to be," said Feng.

"Ah, but evil is such a subjective thing isn't it? Technically, if I was younger, I wouldn't be held accountable at all for the things I've done because it's just how I was raised. At what age do I suddenly become responsible instead of the organisation behind me Feng?" asked Meng with a grin that Feng couldn't see.

"See, this is the sort of thing I hate. It's manipulative, and annoying, and god I don't know. Fifty?" answered Feng.

Meng nodded, "Fifty for cultivators, but no more than twenty for mortals I'd say,"

"So... how long did you know what my issues with you were?" asked Feng.

"Eh, I made a decent guess. I DID raise you Feng, I don't need to do any extensive research or even pay that much specific attention to guess at your thoughts. I changed your diapers for fucks sake. Did you think there was ever a possibility that I wouldn't be able to work out your train of thought once it got going?" asked Meng.

Feng blushed a brilliant red and tried a bit harder to get away, to just as little effect. "I... I don't know what to say,"

"Well I'd like to know if it's my apparent moral bankruptcy, my lacking code of ethics, or my disregard for laws, and breaking of said laws, that makes you the most angry?" asked Meng.

I'm wising up to this trick. "Can I just not answer that?" asked Feng, knowing the answer.

"Of course dear, you can stay silent if you want," said Meng and then she let herself fall into silence. Then she used her illusions to silence everything else sneakily. There was no sound. No birds, no wind, no water, no trees, no servants running around the house nearby. Nothing. No sound was escaping except for their breath.

Feng cracked after five minutes, "I don't know," Meng gave him a light squeeze as encouragement to continue. "I... I don't know which part bothers me the most. I guess the moral code thing doesn't count, because just not having a moral code doesn't mean you're evil... but I don't know if it's the disregard for laws, or the ethics of the situation.

"I want to say it's just the laws breaking, that I'm being objective about that... but I guess you taught me a bit too well to stay willingly blind for long. I know that part of it is that I feel like my ethics, that were partially based on your own, which were all lies, no longer hold true. You are not a good person, and I thought you were and maybe I just hate the disconnect that leaves me with, but I don't like it at all," grumbled Feng.

"I wonder how proud I'm supposed to be that I was so good as a parent that you learned all the lessons I was trying to teach you?" mused Meng to the air. "Especially when the real me considers those lessons to be both incomplete, and actually rather damaging in the real world. Does that make me a bad parent or a good one?"

"A horrible one," shot Feng indignantly.

Meng just laughed at Feng's response... and the pout on his face. It was adorable. Best not point that out to him though.

[Chapter 1087 1087 Backyard Backdrop Part 2](#)

Still with Feng

When Meng finally stopped laughing her face got serious. Feng was still in her arms of course, but the air around her changed noticeably and Feng could tell even though he wasn't looking at Meng properly. "You know, if you really want, you don't have to come with us," Meng spat out like it caused her physical pain to say.

Well... considering how fucked up her head is she might be taking real damage saying something like that. "Oh yeah, I'll be super safe by myself with some creepy spy organisation you still haven't named chasing after me," said Feng sarcastically, surprised that he managed to find a bit of his anger again.

"Feng, please, I raised you to be smarter than that. I'm a master of illusions and I was able to replace two sect leaders with my techniques and a bit of help. If you truly have no desire to remain with me I'm capable of creating an artifact for you to hide your appearance for anyone below Rank 5...

"And if you're willing to visit every now and again so that I can recharge it, I could make something that even a Rank 5 would struggle to even recognise without concerted effort. I can make it possible for you to vanish, and I'm willing to provide you with your third of the resources I collected for your cultivation,"

"Oh," said Feng, no other words coming to mind. She's right... how did I overlook that? Am I just too used to thinking that I'm seeing her real face? Or did I never imagine that she would provide me with an artifact so powerful that many cultivators would murder me for, heck, they'd murder a lot more than just me for them. Hmm... will she give me time to think about it? Or will that be the trap? "Can you give me some time to think... that's... that's a big decision,"

"You can take all the time you want," *What?* "But" *Here it is.* "making an artifact like that takes sacrifices on my part, sacrifices that I AM willing to make for you, but not if you aren't committed to the idea. While it is something I can recover from given time, I also feel the need to make a concerted effort to get to Rank 5, or 4.5 if I fail to ascend properly to Rank 5. I need to make it so clearly not worth the effort to keeping chasing us, and getting to Rank 5 would solidify that," said Meng.

*Well there is the trap. Two traps really. To get the better artifact I'd need to visit, regularly. Not sure how regularly, but Meng can say whatever number of months or years she wants and I'll have no choice but to listen if I want something to protect me from the biggest threats... but even if I want the weaker one...

Meng would force me to stay away. I'd have to leave Bing and Lian behind with her. The way she's worded things... Meng likely has to sacrifice a significant part of her cultivation to make and empower whatever it is she'll make me... so if I took it I'll be increasing the risk to Bing and Lian, possibly drastically...

Truthfully... there is also the matter of just going at it alone. I don't know that I could, or if I'm truly ready to separate myself from the group. That's not even accounting for the fact that it will take some time to make whatever this is. Meng isn't going to make something like that in a week. So I'd be forced to interact with everyone until Meng handed it over... and they'd all know I'm planning to leave them, potentially for years.

I'm not sure how I could deal with the disappointed looks from Bing. Lian would... not be pleased I don't think. I'm not sure if she wanted me to see those looks on her face when we were riding the illusionary boat, but she isn't happy with me at all. I suppose I'll need to spend some real time thinking about this.

Now... is there anyway I can get Meng to leave me alone with my thoughts? Because it seems I've miscalculated just how devious she can be. I assumed that she would not be overly manipulative with me, based on her very direct actions before now... and I suppose in a certain light Meng is still direct, or

at least upfront. Hmm...* "Hey... if you're here, shouldn't you be talking with the staff like Kat to convince them we can stow away on the ship?" asked Feng in an attempt to get rid of Meng.

"Nope," said Meng. Clearly, the attempt had failed.

"Well... why not? Shouldn't you be used to those sorts of negotiations?" asked Feng, just to make it seem like he wasn't trying to get rid of Meng.

Based on her smug grin, Feng didn't think he had succeeded. "I might be good at them, but I certainly don't enjoy it. Kat is doing a pretty good job right now vouching for us. Oh, and if she failed, I'd just sneak us onboard anyway. You've repeatedly mentioned how much I like to kill people, why wouldn't I just use a bit of illusion work to sneak us onboard a ship they don't want us on? That's barely a misdemeanour," explained Meng.

Feng felt like there were several things wrong with that statement but didn't know which to address first. "Didn't you say you weren't spying on anyone at the moment?" was Feng's first choice in the end.

"I said I wasn't spying on Bing and Lian. Kat, and Bodeir's staff are completely different matters. While I have some trust in Kat due to her inability to lie, and the fact she's risked her life at least once, possibly more than that, to save you after you were an idiot and when I technically couldn't have blamed her for it, I am willing to at least provisionally believe she means us no harm.

"Though she isn't the best at negotiation, she is honest, heartfelt, compassionate, and most importantly, powerful, so she can get away with being bad at it. The reputation of demons makes it seem like she's better at that part of the job when in truth she's just particularly honest. Likely wouldn't lie much even if she hadn't been a demon. Still, even if I did trust Kat with my whole heart and mind, which I don't, that means nothing for Bodeir's servants.

"Not only do I know that the organisation has spies in Bodeir's sect, I also don't know how willing these servants will be to bend to our whims. They might lie to Kat about what they're doing, and then try and screw us all over as a larger group. Unlikely perhaps, but scared people can do dumb things, and quite a few of the servants are definitely scared. Though the ones in charge seem to be handling things well at the moment so I'm not too worried about how this will all play out," answered Meng.*noVeℓnext.cOM*

Feng rolled his eyes, "I suppose it's good to know I'm not likely to be killed in my sleep while on the transport"

"Oh Feng," said Meng with a chilly laugh, "If they even dared to try something like that a crash and a bit of maiming on their sect heir would be the least of their worries. Though I would have to wait till Kat and Sue have left before making a move. Her Truesight is a bit of a pain..."

"Oh yeah!" said Feng suddenly remembering, "How good can that charm really be if Kat saw through it. Accidentally."

"Kat's a fucking cheating cheater who cheats," grumbled Meng. "Truesight is IMPOSSIBLY rare even amongst the demon population. This isn't a one in a billion talent, it's way rarer than that. It also normally pops up in older demons, and I get the feeling Kat isn't one of them. The chance of you running into someone with Truesight is much less than you getting taken out by a meteor, a passing spirit beast, or heck, one of the super volcanoes exploding and killing you. Truesight is such a non-issue that most

people think it's a myth. Just my luck I had to find out the truth of that particularly legend..." grumbled Meng.

"So there isn't anything you can do against it?" asked Feng, curiously.

"Not that I know of. Supposedly, stronger and more intelligent people than me have tried. Not sure I agree with the second, but I can at least accept the first. Then again, with Truesight barely being considered real there is a possibility that proper research funds were never dedicated to it... but from what I know every Illusion cultivator and mage that finds out about Truesight tries to find a way to get around it... and none have ever managed it to my knowledge."

Feng let out a low hum. That might be good information.

[Chapter 1088 1088 A Demon An Elf And A Ship's Captain Are Sitting At A Table...](#)

Kat is back

"I don't care if you trust them what you are asking is ridiculous," Hromdir slammed his hands on the table as he spoke. Kat had never seen the butler so emotional, and he wasn't looking pleased at all. Creshe was next to him, with a somewhat pained look on her face, but she didn't decide to add anything just yet.

"If this is about the fact Bodeir is still asleep, do remember, that I asked if you wanted to fix that before we had our chat," returned Kat.

"This has nothing to do with that. I don't trust the young master not to massively complicate things. You're asking us to walk headfirst into a diplomatic incident of such massive proportions that we'll be lucky to come out of it unscathed! Do you understand how dangerous what you're asking us is?" hissed Hromdir.

Kat let that question hang for a moment to think about it, "No... no I don't think I do understand how dangerous it is. I'm sure this will cause problems... but it seemed like the best I could do at the time. I essentially neutralised Meng as a potentially enemy with remarkably little effort on my part,"

"You were attacked as soon as you left the damned vault! You took a needless risk, you should have just fought her! You have Truesight! She has no chance against you!" grumbled Hromdir as he jabbed his finger repeatedly at Kat.

"Hromdir, that's being remarkably short-sighted," said Creshe

"You want to tell me that she couldn't defeat the assassin?" asked Hromdir, "Is that not what she was paid for? Sure we didn't think the sect mistress was the potential assassin, but that was Bodeir's worry, and Kat has walked right into this mess!"

"Kat's own abilities will be working against her here," explained Creshe "While she might not struggle to fight an illusionist, she WILL struggle to prevent collateral damage because of her struggles to see solid illusionary weapons that WE KNOW Meng is capable of. Kat was right to mitigate the risks in this case,"

"Well, what about the series of fights she participated in on Meng's behalf," said Hromdir.

"They were attempting to kidnap Bodeir and the others, Meng's involvement might have changed the nature of the fight somewhat, but Kat would've been forced to fight them anyway. I understand that you're feeling rather emotional at the moment, and the political ramifications go over my head a bit, but I don't see what other options Kat could've had," said Creshe calmly.

"It's a bloody good thing for you that you don't understand. This is shaping up into a sect war situation! I don't even know what side of the alliance the Holy Icy Wind sect will fall now or if we'll be obligated to lend assistance or not in the light of these revelations. That's not even taking into account the risk of attack while we're flying back to the sect! Kat is essentially asking us to take on dangerous cargo without any safety measures. Imagine she was asking us to transport a hundred thousand explosive talismans improperly secured and you might have an idea," growled Hromdir.

Creshe winced at the image, "I can see how that would be bad..."

"It's worse, Kat doesn't have to return with us. Her contract was just till the boat took off here. We'll be on our own," insisted Hromdir.

Creshe shuddered at that but Kat jumped in, "I know that, but I'm willing to use what extra time I have in this realm to help with the escort back. There is a risk I'll be forcefully removed, but I think if Bodeir gives me additional payment I'll be fine... perhaps even if he doesn't. Technically I could argue that I know Bodeir was in a clear and present danger as the boat took off and thus needed to remain on guard,"

Hromdir seemed genuinely surprised that Kat was willing to stick around. He let out a deepthroated hum as he thought over the implications, "Can you do that?"

"Probably?" said Kat with her own wince. "I know we demons can sort of... bend a contract a little bit towards our favour, especially if our summoner is weak... but if I'm bending it in Bodeir Sr's favour? Then I think it should be fine... the only issue might be one of payment but well..."

"If you get something additional from Bodeir Sr, even if it is merely a token of appreciation that should negate any further repercussions," mumbled Hromdir. "I suspect... if Meng is... minimally cooperative Bodeir will even be quite glad to pay the additional price. Not for the trouble you're dropping in his lap... but because you've kept his son safe from a much greater threat than he hired you for. I still don't like this... but I can see it working out... somehow. The issue now is... hmm... I'm not sure that we can authorise this,"

Creshe nodded at that statement and continued, "Indeed, technically speaking our vessel isn't suitable for major diplomatic figures such as the sect matriarch of the Holy Icy Wind sect. There is also the issue with the spies in Bodeir Jr's retinue. We've removed plenty, and we keep watch to ensure the ones that remain don't find out anything important as we encourage Bodeir Jr to learn to spot them... but..."

"Indeed, with Meng obviously present even the dullest of spies that have given us no cause to remove them can create issues. Even if they were just to send a message to a friend, who tells another friend. Things like this can't be kept quiet with spies around... and maybe not even without them. This is a major undertaking..." grumbled Hromdir. *novelnext.com*

I can already see this getting annoying... so let's nip all this 'protocol' and 'spy' worries in the bud. With a sledge hammer. "So... I get what you're both saying... counterpoint... do you have a choice?" said Kat innocently.

Creshe instantly seemed to pick up on Kat's implication but Hromdir was looking a little lost, "Of course we have a choice. Why would you even suggest otherwise?"

"Well Hromdir... the person you're thinking of is a master of illusions, and I'm friends with her daughter at this point... plus I could argue it would be safer to have her cooperation so... assuming you say no... I can just... not tell you about seeing her walk on under powerful illusions?"

"Ah... fuck," said Hromdir.

"You've really put us in an awkward position, haven't you Kat," said Creshe "You're right in that we have no choice but to accept... or suffer the consequences. This is the sort of thing we really need to report to Bodeir Sr but we have no way of contacting for something like this,"

"Really? None at all?" asked Kat.

Creshe nodded, "Indeed. The best we have is a powerful artifact capable of sending a response to Bodeir but it doesn't receive messages, just send them, and only once. It's more of an emergency warning system. Which we will still need to use... just likely for warning him we're already taking aboard such troublesome passengers instead of asking for permission, or opinions like we really should,"

Kat just shrugged, "I'm not sorry,"

"I can see that," said Creshe

"I'm still not entirely convinced it will be worth it. Oh, Bodeir Sr will pay the price, as this keeps his foolish son safe, and I love the lad like he was my own grandchild... but make no mistake this is definitely going to cause us problems in the future. We will weather the storm, as all good mountains do... but it is likely to be a mighty storm indeed, if it is not stopped early,"

Kat just shrugged again, "Is there anything else you need to know?"

Hromdir just sighed, "We didn't exactly get the full details of what happened, but realistically we can get those later. What needs to happen right now, is organising all of the servants and informing them of the change in plans, then deciding if it's safe to wake Bodeir Jr up,"

"Why wouldn't it be?" asked Kat.

"While I trust in your bindings by the contract... if Bodeir Jr is... his normal self instead of the polite fiction we present to others on his behalf... Meng may take offence and decide to punish him for a slight. Perhaps it would be best to just... keep him safely asleep until we reach the sect," said Hromdir with a sheepish grin.

"Meng's an assassin, I'm pretty sure she's seen a few idiot noble children," said Kat.

"Oh sure, but the first time he did something to one of her kids, Meng would retaliate. Even if it is a minor retaliation... Bodeir Sr will need to get involved because it's an attack on a sect heir," explained

Hromdir with a sigh and a shake of his head. It was potentially treasonous to consider, but there was no point adding more fuel to the fire.

"Ah... politics," said Kat.

"Yes, politics," agreed Hromdir.

[Chapter 1089 1089 Chattin Away With Sue](#)

"I'm glad you're ok," said Sue as she hugged Kat tightly, intentionally making sure to press her chest against Kat's arm. It probably wasn't going to do anything... to Kat. If Lily found the sight pleasing, then Sue would consider it worth it. Then again, Sue probably would've done it even if Lily wasn't watching.

"While I enjoy the hug, I'm not sure why you're so worried," said Kat as she hugged Sue back. Sure Sue might have been trying to make it indecent, but good hugs are not something to ignore.

"Well, I want to visit Bing first, and but she was talking about secret stuff with Lian, so I just made sure she was fine, and then went to leave, but she mentioned you were pale, and considering what I know of your regeneration, there's only one thing that could have caused it. Overuse of KatE," said Sue with a pout on her face.

"Ah... that. Yeah... I didn't expect it to be such a problem. I was... not fine perhaps but I managed to get through it and I'm feeling better now," said Kat with a smile that would hopefully reassure Sue.

"Kat... everyone knows that you're only supposed to use that ability when you absolutely NEED to. I'm not saying you didn't... but everyone has a different limit on it, and it's never safe to go over it. Using your fire like that twice in one week is pretty tough on your body... and possibly your soul as well. I wonder if your regeneration is what's keeping you together... or if you rested just enough to not cause yourself real damage," said Sue, still pouting.

"Eh... I'm not sure..." said Kat sheepishly.

"Ok... look... just, try not to rely on that skill? Everything else can be trained up without risk to yourself, especially with the medical care on off in the Hub. If you damage your demonic fire though... death is preferable to the alternatives. So... like... don't do that," insisted Sue.

Kat nodded, "Sure,"

"I can't help but feel like you aren't taking this seriously," said Sue with a grimace.

*Perhaps I'm not. I certainly didn't feel good after using KatE the second time to take down Bang, but I still think it was the right choice. I actually think it was more draining to use her to send a message to Sue because of the time I had to have her out, and the run down the mountain. Then again... it could've been using her twice in 'quick succession' if it can even be counted as such. I thought I'd given myself enough time, clearly I was wrong...

But by how much? This isn't the sort of thing I can test on Earth, and I probably want to give myself a week to properly recover, because I'm surely worse off after overusing the ability. I feel like there should be a way to train it... but perhaps Sue is right and there just isn't.*

"Maybe I'm not taking this as seriously as it deserves... and I'm sorry if I'm worrying you Sue, but I feel quite fine now and I guess I just don't have a proper concept of how dangerous overusing my abilities. Are... so let's talk about something less depressing. Hopefully. What have you been doing while I was off fighting?" asked Kat.

Sue narrowed her eyes, "This isn't a subtle attempt to shame me for not helping right?"

Kat looked at Sue with confusion across her face. "What the heck are you talking about? Why would I expect that of you? You're my friend, and I know that you're not all that interested in combat unlike Kamiko, or heck even Lily who really wants to feel useful. You're better at social situations, and sex. So I'll leave those to you..."

Sue sighed, letting her shoulders droop, "Sorry for asking that... I guess... no I didn't want to think that of you... but I sort of felt like I was a bit useless? I suppose Lily might know a bit of what I'm feeling... but if you really don't mind..."

"Of course not Sue. Besides, quite a few of my opponents were Rank 4. I'm not going to force you to fight people like that for... I dunno pride reasons?" said Kat.

Sue smiled, though it looked a little fragile, "Well in that case, I was trying to keep everyone from freaking out too much so I went around and had sex with people that were looking stressed,"

"And... was that fun?" asked Kat a little unsure.

"Well... I only managed to accidentally start one orgy when I was having a foursome and then three others walked in on us... but those guys were weak, passed out after just a few rounds. Then I ended up sleeping with way more girls than guys. I don't know why... but the men just weren't interested, or, they were, clearly and with quite a few nice looking visual indicators but they still turned me down and I didn't feel like pushing at the time. A bunch of girls were down though... which, wasn't as satisfying, but some of them really knew what they were doing," said Sue.

"Are you sure you're straight?" asked Kat. Again.

Sue nodded, "Yeah, pretty sure. I mean, looking at naked women does absolutely nothing for me. Not even the slightest tingle... but really, can you tell who's fingering you during an orgy?"

Kat gave Sue a deadpan stare, "I wouldn't know, and I don't think I want to imagine either."

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"True true, you are a like that aren't you. Look... it's... I guess it depends on who you ask. Some people would say that just because I'm willing to sleep with women I'm bisexual or at least bi-curious, and I wouldn't even say they're wrong... but I it takes a fair bit of work for me to feel anything with women. Kisses do nothing, light petting gets barely a reaction... it's only when they go all in..."

Kat decided to hold up her hand, signalling for Sue to stop. "Look... I do appreciate the fact that you were willing to answer, and I trust it... but I'd really rather not know more,"

Sue inclined her head in acceptance, "Yeah, I understand. I guess it's just... important to me. It's something I care about that isn't just sex, which is nice. Mostly sex, but not just sex."

"Perhaps you can become a sexuality councillor or something, if that's something demons need? Perhaps an adult one that gives... hands on advice?" suggested Kat.

Sue let out a few small giggles at Kat's suggestion, "That's an amusing thought Kat. I'm not sure if that's something we really need... but I could certainly train myself up for the job, and hopefully get contracts that revolve around helping people sort out their questions of sexuality... not sure that anyone would waste that much money summoning a demon for that kind of help... but I might do it..."

"See, that's something you can enjoy," said Kat.

"Indeed, I can already imagine the looks on all the repressed lesbian faces," said Sue with a smile.

"Wait... what?" said Kat. "Why would you specifically target lesbians? Did we not just have this conversation?"

"Straight I may be, but repressed lesbians just make the cutest faces when you tease them. Bing is a perfect example of this, and technically I don't have to sleep with ALL of them. Besides, you can't deny me this. I mean, you take great pleasure in teasing Lily and you're asexual, so surely you can understand," said Sue with a grin.

I feel like I should argue against this somehow... maybe about how you're setting them up for disappointment by potentially rocking their world as a straight women and then telling them to find a different girl... but maybe that's better? Less awkward? Like talking to strangers about your problems because you don't care about their opinion? Still not sure it's a good idea but... "I suppose I can admit that it IS amusing to watch," said Kat.

"Glad you agree. Not finding them sexually attractive makes it very easy to avoid return fire as well," said Sue.

"Hmm... not sure I can agree with that part. I feel like if Lily managed to find the right angle she could still tease me. Not sure what that angle is, because sex isn't going to do it. Maybe just embarrassment somehow? Though I don't find myself embarrassed often... hmm... well if I can survive you I can survive anything," said Kat with a shrug.

"Eh, I've let you off easy because you're my friend. I could make you really embarrassed if I want into the naughty details and you know it," grinned Sue.

Kat sighed, "Yeah, I suppose that part is true... maybe I should let up on Lily occasionally?"

"Nah," finished Kat and Sue with matching grins before they pulled each other into another hug.

"Oh yeah, by the way are you good to make the journey back even if we aren't paid for it?" asked Kat.

Sue smiled, "Oh... I'm sure I can... extract... my payment from the sailors,"

[Chapter 1090 1090 Bodeir Senior Needs The Deats](#)

Despite some potential worries of attacks, the journey back to the Mountain Shaker Sect was very calm. A few spirit beasts attacked along the way, but Meng simply dealt with them herself. She landed the first

few on the deck then butchered them for parts. This continued until the hold was full of meat and monster parts. After that, they were just sent flying off in another direction. Apparently monster minds were easy to trick until they ranked up.

Lian and Bing were finding that being officially designated sister didn't change much about their relationship. They were acting more or less the same around each other, with the only exception being that Lian was more willing to show Meng affection when she checked up on her daughters.

Meng spent a lot of time meditating when she wasn't dealing with their attackers. Part of this was to restore her qi levels every time they were used, but most of the time Meng spent in meditation was making plans for the future. Meng sat on deck so that she didn't need to move much when they were attacked, and everyone gave her a wide berth where possible.

Kat and Lily spent time snuggling and practicing their new abilities, with Kat focusing on letting her mind adjust to her water state while Lily was practicing her spells, and it was going quite well for Lily... less so for Kat. Kat found best results when simply relaxing and allowing her mind to process everything subconsciously... which worked until Kat tried to direct her focus somewhere or move parts of her 'body'.

Sue... did things that don't need to be mentioned in this recount.

When the ship pulled up to the Mountain Shaker sect, Meng released Bodeir Jr from her illusion and then slapped him in the face with a sack filled with a concentrated sleeping pill she'd made into a powder so that there was no chance of Bodeir Sr mistaking Bodeir Jr's rest as a threat on Meng's part.

Bodeir Sr was of course, there to meet with them, and looked over everything before settling on Kat. "I'm surprised to see you here Kat, I hear there has been some... additional developments regarding your mission,"

"Right well... do you want the full story now or later?" asked Kat. She hadn't yet heard any word of complaint from D.E.M.O.N.S so Kat was fairly sure that delaying her report would be acceptable, but if Bodeir wanted to know now she wasn't going to deny him that.

"Give me the highlights now and then wait at the house you were assigned on your first visit. I'll arrive soon enough to get a full report," said Bodeir, his tone making it clear that despite not technically having the ability to order Kat around anymore, this wasn't a request, it was still an order. noVeLnext.cOm

Kat nodded though, perfectly ok with that. "So, highlight time. Meng, who is called Meng is not the Meng who should be in charge of the Holy Icy Wind sect. Turns out she was a spy who has a soft spot for kids and wanted some of her own, so when the organisation she worked for wanted them for some reason she decided to defect, well that and I could see through her illusion.

"Bodeir, Voldar, and the twins, were attuning to artifacts or something, I don't really understand it, but Meng told me her story, I agreed to help out, then we killed the fake Patriarch of the sect, imprisoned an elder in his mind, and killed an assassin that thought he could poison Meng. Then we made our way to the ship and headed here... I think that covers everything?"

"Everything in your final days perhaps, you never mentioned anything that happened earlier in the trip... but for now I suppose that is fine. I'll need to have a discussion with Meng and decide how to settle

them temporarily. It will be the first of many conversations I'm sure... though I can't risk keeping them around long. You've made a lot of work for me you know?" said Bodeir.

"I won't deny that... but would you say that I made the wrong decision?" asked Kat.

Bodeir glared back, "That remains to be seen. I'll meet you in about an hour,"

With that Bodeir strode passed Kat to talk to Hromdir, giving him instructions for moving Bodeir Jr, and then started speaking with Meng. It was clear that Kat had been dismissed, so she turned to Sue and asked, "Are you going to come with us?"

"Probably best I do. I wouldn't want Bodeir Sr to be chasing after me for a report. Especially not if he's willing to walk in on me... and I feel like he is that kind of person. No respect for the arts," said Sue.

"Sure, arts," said Kat with a roll of her eyes before taking off and flying over to the house. Kat made everyone a bit of food to keep them occupied and then relaxed until an hour and a half later when Bodeir Sr showed up. Kat was quickly tasked with explaining what happened while they were out, and she gave a detailed account of everything she was involved in. Sue added in her own comments when it came to the party Bodeir Jr participated in, as well as what she did while Kat was off with Meng, but otherwise Sue was fairly quite.

"Sue, you may leave if you desire to," said Bodeir when the story was finished.

"Um... are you sure?" asked Sue.

Bodeir gave a slight incline of his head, "I am sure. The information you have provided me doesn't need to be investigated so thoroughly, at least not by myself. It has implications sure... but I will not force you to sit through an extended meeting lest you feel the need to... distract me,"

Sue grinned, "Are you sure you don't need a good... distraction?" Sue saw Bodeir's frown but continued, "I can come to... visit after your talk with Kat is done. I heard about what happened to your wife, and I mean no disrespect when I say that... well... she can't take care of you anymore and I can. You're not likely to see me again, and there's no chance of a child. Plus... getting to fuck someone as powerful as you? That's a rare chance for me,"

"No thank you," said Bodeir with a shake of his head.

Sue looked him over one more time before nodding and leaving the room. This left just Kat, as Lily had passed out after lunch and was currently napping. "What were you thinking when you made that deal with Meng? You've told me what happened, and given me A reason for why, but at that moment... what were you thinking?"

Kat sucked in a breath, "Mostly I was confused and unsure. I grew up in an orphanage, and I know that kids can be adopted by lovely parents, and those parents can love, just as much, if not more, than biological ones. It was quite clear to me that Meng would do almost anything for her children... and Bing became an acquaintance during our little chats so I didn't want to destroy that. Especially not her friendship with Sue... who... well... I won't get too much into it, but she's trying to branch out a bit from her favoured hobby.

Bodeir nodded and gestured for Kat to continue. "It was a hard choice. I just didn't know what would be best for well... anyone. Bodeir already wasn't safe, and fighting right next to him wouldn't be good for anyone, yet just leaving Meng to her own devices didn't seem like the best idea either. I knew she'd be perfectly willing to use Bodeir as a hostage if it came down to it... and while I could kill her without coming to too much harm myself... that's not what my contract was about was it?"

"No it was not," agreed Bodeir. "Did you put any consideration into the political aspect of this?"

"Not really," admitted Kat. "It's not that I didn't understand there would be major complications because of this... but more so that I can't understand what those complications even might be. I have no experience with such wide scale political change, or this world in general. I can barely guess at the issues that I've caused and most of those guesses will probably be wrong,"

"I do not blame you for that... truthfully Kat? Even I cannot estimate the fallout from this. Which presents for me a bit of a problem. I don't know how I can best use it, or if I can even turn things to my advantage at all. I do understand, that keeping Bodeir safe for those extra days means you require payment... but I can quite easily ask if you'd accept your payment in the form of granting Meng's family that sanctuary for a month. I likely will not do such a thing... but I could,"

"I understand, and I wouldn't hold it against you," said Kat honestly.

"It's not your acceptance I'm worried about," grumbled Bodeir as he started a new round of questions for Kat.