

DEMONS 181

Chapter 181:

Kat bit her lip "That is a good question I suppose. I know that demons seem to have been around a while, but perhaps they get to cheat a little with longer lifespans. I'm not sure how old I can get exactly, but I know I'll outlive any normal human"

Callisto nodded but it was Lily who spoke up "It is worth considering depending on how the whole multiple universes thing actually works the answer might be both. If the multiverse is infinite everything can happen"

Callisto frowned "We have not yet learned anything to suggest the multiverse is infinite and I cannot truly believe that to be the case. You do make an interesting argument for the sake of things Lily but I think it far more likely that it is inconceivably vast but not infinite"

Lily shrugged "True, it was just an errant thought. Though it does bring me to the question of if humans in other universes have a similar lifespan to demons"

Callisto nodded "Yes, that is a much more intriguing question. It brings into question if the extended lives of demons might instead be a by-product for human ancestry with greatly expanded lifetimes and it is later humans that have degraded instead.

"Of course it is just as likely it goes the other way..." Callisto continued to debate with Lily over which was more likely, if either, that humans were descendants of demons or vice versa. Kat was going to take Sylvie and have a chat with her but seeing her bright eyes and rapt attention on the two arguing figures decided to simply pick up a chair and relax.

Kat set her chair against the car and leaned backward so that her head could rest against the cool steel, but her wings were still mostly free of obstructions. She then wrapped her tail over her eyes and prepared to take a short nap.

Of course, this didn't actually give Kat any additional sleep. As a demon she found herself sleeping less and less, and she wasn't even tired but it did give a great chance for her to recover some demonic energy and allow the other two to get the arguing out of their systems

Eventually Sylvie joined Kat. She was still very interested in the argument but that didn't mean snuggling with Kat was suddenly off the table. Kat of course simply wrapped the girl in a light hug and kept relaxing.

Finally, after half an hour of debate wherein Callisto and Lily managed to come to the conclusion that there was no conclusion they finally brought Kat back into the conversation. "Sorry about that. I may have let myself get a little out of hand" said Lily

Kat shook her head. "Nah, it's been too long since I've seen the truly overexcited Lily. You've been a little reserved since school ended and I think this is good for you"

Lily sighed "I suppose you are right. Perhaps I did need that. Thank you Callisto for enabling the conversation"

Callisto shrugged "I had just as much to do with it as you did. Having a conversation with an intellectual equal is a rather scarce commodity even when I try to keep in mind those that I am aware of"

Lily blushed at this. *Hmm, I wonder how true that is. Lily is really quite smart but Callisto seems to be on a slightly different level. I mean, I'm sure that's rude of me to say, but Callisto just has a sort of PRESENCE that Lily lacks, almost like my calming aura when I bring it to bear in full*

Lily just... lacks that extra step. Though perhaps it isn't her knowledge that is lacking but her confidence. Kat considered it further. *There is also the point that Callisto is older than us by a few years...*

Oh god is this Lily in a few years? Sylvie is already looking up to Callisto and Vivian and I'm worried what sort of monster that could create. If you add Lily into the mix I'm scared for the future of the planet... Vivian's quick switch to seriousness, Callisto's seemingly endless knowledge, and Lily's penchant for over researching.

Kat shivered slightly, for the world was not ready. *Maybe it is a better idea to teach them magic. Let them destroy some other universe testing a crazy idea.*

"Anyway" said Callisto "Back to the reason we have gathered in this clearing. I was going to request Kat try to see how good her stamina was, but it sounds like you already have an idea because of your energy metre?" *noveLnext.com*

"Well, I wouldn't say energy metre, more like a vague sense, but anyway, I know for a fact I can run pretty much forever. I lose a little bit of energy when I fly... well normally anyway, and pretty much none running but I can fly faster" said Kat

"How is it that you can run forever Kat? Surely you need to stop for at least something" said Callisto

Kat shook her head "Not really? I mean, perhaps for food or water eventually, but I gain just slightly more energy than I use up when I run"

Callisto furrowed her brows "That doesn't really make much sense to me"

Kat shrugged "I never said it did. I seem to just gain a bunch more energy if I sit still, but using it is a bit weird. I can sort of like... feed it to my muscles, but it's more like um... hmmm give me a moment"

Callisto and Lily nodded

"Ok, so, when I create fire" said Kat trying and failing to create said fire. "Ok, when I'm summoned and I create fire" Kat said with an emphasis on summoned "It is literally burning energy. A large chunk of it is just gone

"When I use that same energy on my muscles, it's more like it flows through? Like, say... um I use ten litres of demonic energy, I get back nine, but I still need the full ten for it to work at all?" said Kat

Callisto hummed in response. "I see, so it can be used the same way one must assume food is. Consumed to produce energy. Or like water that we drink, which is absorbed slightly but mostly utilised for cleaning and then disposed of"

Kat and Lily cringed at the crass example, though Callisto and Sylvie seemed to find no issue with it. "Um... well, I mean." Kat wasn't exactly sure how to follow up such a statement.

Finally recovering "I'd say not quite. The demonic energy I get back after placing it in my eyes or legs is just as pure as fresh energy that springs forth somehow" said Kat

Callisto nodded "I see, so a slight variant on the system then. It is good to know, but for now I'm more interested in your seeming inability to generate fire"

Kat tried again. Forcing the fire to the edge of her palm where she found it easiest to start her fires but couldn't get even a sliver. It was like she was having the weight of the world pressed on her palm as she tried to force against it... which might have been right.

"I think it's something that was mentioned to us by the system. This universe suppresses all kinds of higher energy including demonic. I guess I'm mostly fine? The stuff in my body has no issues because it's in my body. But now, trying to start a fire, seems impossible because the universe doesn't like it" said Kat

"Didn't you summon your fire when you ranked up before?" asked Lily

Kat shrugged "I think that was different. Maybe it's a rank up thing or maybe just because I kinda messed up mine the first time"

Callisto started writing further but still spoke "I see. Well I guess that means the few tests I had lined up involving your additional abilities will have to be discarded"

"Well, my aura still works I think?" said Kat

Callisto paused in her writing "I see. Yes, I do believe you mentioned that before. Might you refresh my memory a bit?"

Kat started to send her aura towards Callisto carefully trying to avoid Lily or Sylvie when the little girl on her lap spoke up "Do me as well. Send it towards me"

Kat looked towards Lily who shrugged and nodded. Kat let her aura flow more freely allowing it to affect everyone in the area. This turned out to be a little bit of a mistake because Sylvie instantly curled up asleep grabbing tightly onto the edge of Kat's kimono.

Lily did something similar, yawning and stumbling over to the chair before curling up slightly and closing her eyes. Callisto though got a sharp glint to her eyes and her renewed writing was twice the speed it had been before

"Yes, what a wonderful feeling. I can understand why the other two find this to be relaxing, and why they requested it be shared with them" said Callisto

Chapter 182:

Kat put her tail over her mouth and took a deep breath "Callisto... what just happened" asked Kat

"Well, Kat, assuming that you are referencing the sleeping status of our mutual companions I suspect it might be a number of answers, the whole thing is truly fascinating, but I suppose the main one is this. Has it been some time since they were exposed?" asked Callisto

"Yeah? Though why does that matter? It isn't like people build up a tolerance or whatever, even the first time I didn't knock Lily out" said Kat

"Yes, that is indeed what I suspect as well, but please remember that you have grown in strength considerably even just since I was first made aware of your existence. I suspect your aura is a more potent force than it ever has been" said Callisto

Kat's tail started to snake around her hands as she held them together "I mean, sure I guess, but then why are you fine? Not to be rude of course" said Kat

"I take no offence at your question, it is a valid thing to be asking of the only one remaining standing. Though first I ask you this Kat, was this your full force of your aura?" asked Callisto

Kat shook her head

"In that case I can think of quite a few different and varied reasons for myself to have remained standing despite the intensity of the aura. Though at the very least we can rule out the range variable for if you notice I am slightly closer to you than Lily.

"So, first and foremost, you may recall that I have mentioned, I only rarely sleep. As I managed to get some just this night past, I am at perhaps the most rested I could ever truly be. Your aura has much less to work with when it comes to me, as I simply do not have the same need for sleep others do" explained Callisto

Kat nodded, *I guess I do recall that now, but I'm still not sure it's really that important... I wonder what else she has.*

"Continuing on from that point, I know little about Lily's recent sleeping habits, but at the very least I know Sylvie did not manage to sleep as early as I would have liked for a young girl her age. She is good at hiding it, but she was excited for today and had trouble sleeping.

"I cannot automatically assume that Lily is in a similar position, but simply based on how tired she looked when I acquired her this morning, I find it likely that she suffered from a similar issue or perhaps did not sleep on time for other reasons" said Callisto

Kat bit her lip. *I know Lily has never been the best with actually keeping up with her sleeping needs so that doesn't really surprise me. Sylvie does a bit perhaps, but I suppose she is still quite young.*

"Ok, I can accept that... maybe, but you said there were varied reasons, right? Those were both the same" said Kat

"Of course, I was simply going over the easier answers to conceptualise and confirm. From here it gets a little more complicated, and requires some faith in what I am doing as I speak, though first one more reason perhaps

"Is that I simply have a stronger mental fortitude. Not to deride them, but I simply have a much broader depth of experience to call upon to assist me in withstanding the desire to sleep"

Before Kat could say anything Callisto continued "Now, onto the more esoteric possibilities. These ideas will build off each other, but the first, is perhaps the additional trust that they have for you when compared to me. They may be so much more willing to accept your influence over them

"I trust you a great deal because of Vivian's influence, and I do not mean to say that I lack faith in you or your abilities, but it simply doesn't compare to the familial bond you share with Sylvie, or the deep gratitude that Lily feels towards you" said Callisto

Kat frowned and scratched her head with her tail "I can understand the familial bond thing, especially after how Vivian found out about everything, but I'm not sure I buy the deep gratitude from Lily. She's a great friend, and I'd do anything for her, but I don't think gratitude is the correct word to describe it really" said Kat

Callisto shrugged "I did not misspeak, and I am confident in my words, however I do realise we lack the ability to rigorously test such things and as such will not engage with you in any sort of extended debate. I am merely proffering reasons for these current circumstances.

"Now to continue on, the final thing, which I have noticed over the course of the conversation is that I am able to influence the effect the calming aura you project has on me" said Callisto

Kat jumped in "Wait what? How exactly can you effect it, if it's my aura?"

Callisto patiently continued to explain "Your aura appears to invoke a sensation of calm. How it achieves that though seems to differ from person to person, and even moment to moment. When we started, I found myself slightly warm, and a little like I was swaddled in blankets

"As we talked though, I let my thoughts centre upon Vivian, and I could feel the calming influence changing, to the feeling of Vivian hugging me and trying to cheer me up. A very specific moment in fact from-" Callisto stopped.

"It seems your aura is more powerful than I thought" Kat raised a questioning eyebrow but Callisto didn't stop "Still, if I continue with this logic, and focus on the idea of completing a project, getting work done, once again the calming sensation changes to one of relaxation, as if I have completed all my work for the day"

"Ok..." said Kat drawing the word out "What does that mean exactly?"

"It means, or at least, I highly suspect it means, that your aura can very specifically calm individuals. It does not simply force them to be calm; it makes them consider more calming moments, and feel that same mindset

"It also appears to make it much more likely for those affected to be willing to speak with you. I was very close to giving away information, that while not secret, not truly, was not something I had wished to speak on in my initial statement

"It was relatively easy for me to notice because of my rather considered speech. Thus it was more than obvious once I began to drift of script, but if I was a more sane, more normal individual, or perhaps a closer friend, I doubt I could notice that it was doing anything more than calming me"

Kat bit her lip and let her tail snake around her arm "I'm not really sure how much I like to hear that my calming aura works better on people who like me, or that I can use it to get information out of people"

Callisto shrugged "Based on literature I have read; I suspect that the alternative would be a much deadlier aura. I don't know exactly how rare what you have is, but at the very least I would consider it the kinder option of those I would assume to exist"

Kat hummed. "Yeah, the system mentioned that it was actually really rare, and I think most demons get like... an aura of killing intent? I think"

Callisto nodded "I suspect it is not in fact limited to demons, though your species likely acquire it early than most. Truly I think the fact you did not receive an aggressive aura of any kind speaks more about your character than most would believe"

"But it's not like I dislike fighting though. I've had plenty of fun in fights before, and scaring Kress in my most recent trip was hilarious" said Kat

Callisto shrugged "I know not what it truly means, other than that you said it was rare, and that I believe it speaks of your character"

So what? Your aura is one that spits calculations at people until they yield under the onslaught of math?"So what exactly should we do now then? We have more stuff to test I presume, but with Lily and Sylvie asleep, perhaps we should hold off?" asked Kat

Callisto tilted her head "I see no reason to delay really. It is clear, that both Sylvie and Lily required the additional time sleeping and I do not begrudge them that. At the same time any testing we do is unlikely to wake them, and unlikely to be particularly enjoyable to watch

"I do suppose Sylvie might prefer it simply to be spending time with you, and perhaps Lily as well, but really you can spend better time with them by simply spending it together once the testing is complete"

I suppose the crazy maid has a point.

Chapter 183:

"So what did you still want to test?" asked Kat

"Well, a few things. To speed, turning speed, manoeuvrability in flight, and, depending on your willingness it might also be worth testing how durable you are" said Callisto

"Well, I know that I can get my face scraped off by gravel and survive, as well as getting impaled by two swords and then ripping them back out with only a minor inconvenience" said Kat

Callisto let her mouth hang open. "I do not believe when Sylvie recounted your most recent adventures such a thing was included"

Kat shrugged "Well, the gravel was from that time when I met Minor, the kitsune with... I guess it isn't a split personality it's two souls, and the other reason you didn't hear is because I may or may not have politely glossed over some of the more grisly parts"

"Kat... Well, I suppose I cannot entirely fault that particular line of logic if I am entirely honest. I wouldn't have done it personally though many have told me I am unnecessarily blunt or overly detailed in my recounting

"In this instance though... would it not be better to inform them of just how much you are easily capable of shrugging off? Fearing your friend might get cut down by a sword is much harder if you know they can simply allow it to hit them and recover later" said Callisto

Kat curled her tail in on itself as she fidgeted "I suppose? Maybe? I was more concerned about things being overly graphic for them. It doesn't really paint a nice picture when I describe the amount of blood that leaks out when you remove a sword from your stomach"

"It is entirely your own business. Though, with that knowledge in mind... I'm not sure I'm entirely comfortable going through with any durability testing. Doing anything worse than what you have already recovered from would be difficult and I certainly don't want to test anything worse" said Callisto

Kat shrugged "I suppose that makes sense. It really isn't the biggest deal either because the system is supposed to pull me out before I take anything that would be fatal. And it seems I can recover from pretty much anything short of that. Though, what exactly did you have in mind for durability testing"

Callisto sighed "Well, I had intended to see how many of the boxes I could stack on say... your arm. I was planning to stop as soon as you said it was painful... give us a rough baseline of what you can handle. But if you can handle being flayed by gravel, I'm not sure minor bruising is even an issue"

Kat nodded "Well, pretty sure when I fly on Earth I'm constantly tearing the muscles in my back that work my wings. Something about this dimension makes it much harder to fly and it really burns"

Callisto pinched the bridge of her nose and looked down "Right... ok, that's fine. I can manage with data of that kind. Is there anything else that I really should know before we begin some more robust testing?"

"My healing can push foreign objects out?" said Kat somewhat embarrassed

"The gravel" said Callisto deadpan

"Yup, that one was very unintentional, and my word did it hurt. As I was standing up the blood poured off me, I had gravel and silk forced into my wounds, man it was awful" said Kat

"As much as I adore detailed data points, I can't say I enjoy your casual recount of what it is like for you to regenerate and force small pieces of gravel out of your body as you do so. The mental image just from saying a few words is truly grating... Actually, that's great material for my next horror novel. Never mind, thank you for the information" said Callisto

"You're welcome?" said Kat confused

"Quite" said Callisto who marched off to the one box at the end of the clearing. Opening it up, she revealed a number of what looked to be... circus hoops? *What are those even for? Aren't those like... the hoops you'd like set on fire in a circus and make animals or acrobats fly through.*

"I can see the question on your face Kat. These will be your test of flexibility, and flying capabilities." said Callisto as she set up the relevant obstacles "What I'd like you to attempt is to fly through each hoop in sequence"

Callisto tapped the side where a number was tapped to it. Kat for her part examined the hoops closely "Are you sure I can even fit between these. I'm very flexible don't get me wrong, but I'm not sure my wings fit when closed let alone when flying"

Callisto nodded "I measured your wings myself remember? I'm certain you can fit through these hoops. Of course, you are correct in that you will need to be careful when flying, but I see the potential. Plus, if I no longer need to concern myself with making sure you don't crash then I can place these even closer"

Kat let out a long breath "Fine, I suppose. I haven't really had a challenging flight from the manoeuvrability perspective, weight, plenty, acrobatics, none"

When Callisto was finished there was only five rings. That did nothing to diminish the difficulty of the course. The first two rings were rather simple, just in a straight line, one after the other. That's where the easy parts ended.

The next ring was behind the second, which would have been fine, were it not for the fact that the fourth ring was directly after the second, and made it so that Kat would need to nearly turn in place to prevent entering the wrong ring. The fifth and final one was directly above the fourth... not so bad right? Well, Callisto managed to keep it all on the edge, and box in the fourth ring with trees so Kat would need to go straight up more or less

"This looks like hell" said Kat

"How would you know? You haven't ventured there just yet" said Callisto. Kat paused. *Did... did Callisto just tell a joke?* Kat quickly looked around for signs of Armageddon, but saw nothing that would indicate the world was ending.

Callisto gave Kat a piercing look and she shivered. *Damn. First Sylvie with charm magic and apparently Callisto has mind reading. Are we all sure I'm the real demon? Because I'm starting to have doubts.*

Ignoring her thoughts Kat started running towards the first ring before just deciding to bail. Without her 'hover mode' that she normally made use of when summoned she just didn't have the space to start with a run.

Stepping back instead Kat boosted her legs and kicked off. Once she was stabilised and in flight she went straight into a dive. Flying through the first ring wasn't so bad, she just had to curl her wings in at the right moment. The second however was already proving difficult

Kat enhanced the speed of her thoughts and watched as the world started to slow. As she beat her wings and tried to regain a bit of height before the second ring, Kat realised that somehow Callisto had spaced it perfectly

The ring was just a bit too close to get a full wing beat in despite the seemingly large amount of space. Kat pushed her wings down even faster than she had been collapsing them around herself as she just scraped the bottom of the second ring

Well... She never said I couldn't touch the rings. Kat hooked her tail around the second ring and used it to swing herself around avoiding the fourth ring and heading straight into the third.

Exiting swiftly Kat decided to get a little fancy. Repeating the trick, she launched herself back around towards the direction of the final two rings. Kat managed to get one solid wingbeat in before she was through the fourth ring.

Once again abusing the control her tail gave her, she hooked around the top ring this time and allowed her momentum to carry her up around and through the final ring.

Once through, Kat dropped her enhanced state and let herself land. Kat let out a deep breath and checked her energy reserves, and found they were down to about half. *That's pretty bad for only what like... 30 seconds of flying*

"Interesting performance. If I'm honest, I had largely discounted just how functional your tail would be and how large of a role it could possibly play in your attempt to complete the rings. It is a little strange none of them fell over, even ignoring that your tail really made the difference rather than your flight skill" said Callisto

Kat grinned. "Tails are the best"

Chapter 184:

Callisto nodded "I cannot say that I disagree. It does seem to be a particularly important feature and I am aware you have used it to great effect in the past, and I guess even now in the present as well"

Kat let her tail wind its way around her body before coming to caress her face. "Yeah. For some reason my tail is a... well a bit more a part of me perhaps? I was worried at the beginning when I still had to hide it under my clothes but since I got my wings and stopped worrying, I've grown very attached to my tail

"Sure, I have wings, and I can fly, and that's really cool, I'd never say otherwise. But I think if I had to go back to being human, I'd miss my tail most of all. It's done very well by me and I wouldn't trade it for the world" said Kat with enthusiasm

Callisto nodded as she made a few additional notes in her book "Interesting. I'm not sure that I would have considered your tail as the leading candidate from your changes. I know quite a few individuals that would prefer your other abilities

"Certainly Vivian at least would probably go for the easier to care for hair or perhaps the fact that even after all the work you've done you haven't started sweating"

Kat examined herself and found that Callisto was correct "Huh, well I didn't really think about the whole no sweat thing. I'm not sure if that's because I'm not hot enough right now or if it is instead because I just don't sweat anymore"

Callisto pursed her lips and scratched some notes out before rewriting "That is something I had not properly considered. The question of if you even sweat at all is one that I would be interested in testing, but of course I lack the ability to bring you to the sufficient temperature"

Kat shrugged "Vivian might remember from that one time I had that fever before I ranked up... but then I seem to have improved in most ways after I did, so maybe it doesn't matter anymore"

Oh... oh shit. "Callisto I've just had a thought" said Kat "Shouldn't we have waited until I reached rank 2 before doing all this testing? Not that I don't enjoy it... but won't the numbers be useless in just a day or two"

Callisto shook her head "Why would you ever reach such a conclusion Kat? We are collecting data on your rank 1 strength. I'm more than happy to test you again upon reaching rank 2, but already your physique is more than sufficiently interesting

"It gives me some things to consider certainly. I imagine ranking up will make you even less human in anatomy, if not in appearance. Of course, based on what I know from Lily and my own research it is likely you will remain human in appearance

"But appearance is not my main concern. It is everything under your skin that fascinates me... well, that isn't strictly true, your skin is a fascinating material in and of itself and I do wonder if it would maintain its properties if you were skinned

"Of course, I would never ask" said Callisto before Kat could even fully consider what was said "Vivian would probably skin me if I so much as suggested it. But based on what you have revealed about your adventures perhaps losing a chunk of skin is not out of the question

"If you would be so kind as to provide an example of such a thing in the future I would thank you greatly" Callisto managed to run through her entire thought without breathing. Upon finishing though she seemed no worse for wear, while Kat was still trying to go over the implications.

"Um..." said Kat. *Can I even do that? Should I... do my skin even last once it leaves my body? I wasn't exactly paying attention... and I'm not even sure that my blood sticks around. I mean, do I even want to be running around with random bits of skin? That's weird right? Even if it's your own skin*

"I guess I can keep an eye out... though I'm not sure I'll be in the right state of mind to think about it" said Kat being a little careful with the wording. *Wouldn't want to say I wouldn't be able to remember, because that would be a lie. Not sure if it's vague enough to trip it or not.*

"Certainly understandable. I doubt I'd be in the right mind if someone was trying to flay me. Then again, I also doubt I'd survive so perhaps I cannot truly relate to the experience. None the less, let's move on to less grisly topics. Are there any tests we can perform relating to your tail? I find myself caught unawares. I had not devised any with it in mind" said Callisto

Kat pretended to rest her head on her tail laying it flat against her chin and leaning left slightly "Well... I can't say that anything comes to mind really. It's basically a third arm in a number of ways. It's just as strong, or perhaps stronger. I can use it to pick things up, drop them, turn keys under doors

"Honestly the only thing that distinguishes it is the colour and the fact it's only like half the width of an arm. Which of course, does beg the question of how it's so strong, but I don't find myself caring"

Callisto nodded "That does make at least some degree of sense. Aw well then. I can just run you through a few more basic routines I have devised"

Kat nodded and got to work. Callisto had a few other things to test. She got Kat to lift various things of increasing weight around the area... that was until she lifted the car and proved that nothing was really out of her strength range.

Off the back of that discovery, Callisto forgo any further lifting exercises and moved onto speed and endurance. This fell apart almost immediately as Kat was able to keep a very consistent speed as she performed lap after lap of the clearing, even informing Callisto that she was below max speed because of the size of her track.

Callisto of course took all this with amazing calm and grace, as if she had intended for this outcome all along... which perhaps she did. One of the few tests they completely ignored was the log breaking. Callisto had been planning to get Kat to chop through larger and large logs.

This was vetoed by Kat once she pointed out the sound of a few tens of logs would cause Lily and Sylvie to wake up and neither of them wanted that outcome. With that test dismissed, the only thing really to test was speed and Kat had already pointed out in the endurance and consistency test that she couldn't reach her max.

This however just gave Callisto a great idea. Carefully packing up the area with assistance from Kat they loaded the boxes into the back as well as Lily and Sylvie into the car. Kat herself was now running next to said car as it drove out of the forest.

You know. This isn't even that hard. It's not like the car can get up to full speed Kat wanted to mention as much to Callisto but the speed of the wind as well as the car door in between them stopped any attempts

Kat amused herself by instead jumping and pulling of various poses while hanging out next to the window. The real challenge was making sure that she jumped forward fast enough instead of straight up in place.

Finally, just as they exited the forest and Kat was thinking she was going to have to start trying Callisto pulled to an abrupt stop and Kat followed. Stopping completely faster than Callisto despite starting a few moments later.

Callisto stepped out of the car "I suppose it is time for you to join us in this lowly vehicle of mine. Seems you can easily outpace it. I hope it does not inconvenience you to travel at such a slow speed"

Kat's mouth twitched. *More jokes from Callisto? I swear if the world doesn't end today it might just next week.* "You were going not a blip over 40 kilometres an hour the whole time I bet" said Kat checking her memory of the speedometer from the trip in. "How is that truly comparable"

NOVeLNext.COM

Callisto spoke calmly "Kat. You should not be competing with a car at all. Though truthfully, I am more interested in the fact that you can stop in place at your top speed now. The blatant flaunting of several laws of physics is of much greater importance than the flaunting of an upgraded biology"

"Really? It's only that, that truly breaks physics? What about the fact I can fly at all?" said Kat

Callisto just shrugged.

Chapter 185:

In the end, the packed lunches only sort of got eaten. Sylvie and Lily were unable to truly recover from the calming aura. Sylvie woke up when she was being removed from the car, only to see Kat holding her

and immediately snuggle in closer and return to sleep. Lily for her part, ate a small portion of the food Callisto had unpacked upon return before slinking back to her own house to sleep.

Kat was sure that come the next day Lily would be unbelievably tired. Kat of course praised her demonic constitution that let her get up early in the morning right on schedule with no fatigue at all. Sylvie managed to get a good sleep as far as Kat knew but she wouldn't put it past the little one.

As Kat was eating breakfast, she was considering what to do about ranking up. *So, the real question is where.* Kat looked across the table and found Sylvie happily making her way through same pancakes as Vivian watched from the side

Kat thought perhaps that Vivian had eaten earlier but the distinct lack of a plate even in the sink raised a few questions instead. Kat found herself playing around with her food rather than eating it. If by playing you mean stabbing it repeatedly without paying attention.

I mean, is it even going to be a problem? The system seemed to imply that my rather strange ascension was rather unique. Though is it more to do with the fact I was overloaded or the fact that I'm on Earth for this?

Vivian had noticed Kat's repeated motions and her failing to pick up her own pancakes. That might have something to do with the large hole she had torn into the one she had been eating, but really, it's anyone's guess.

Would it be safe to go back to that clearing? I don't want to go conspiracy theorist but if people found all that ice laying around I sure as hell wouldn't want to show up and do the same thing a second time. Once is a strange but potentially ignorable phenomenon. Twice and people start looking.

Vivian was swift. She deftly removed the fork from Kat's hand and waited to see what happened. Kat mechanically 'stabbed' the same place she had always been her hand stopping just shy of having 'the fork' hit the bottom of the plate before raising it up again.

But where else do I go? Probably don't want to use that training place Callisto picked out for us because by the sounds of things people actually go there. A bit of messing around for a day, sure, but freezing a large chunk of the landscape, or at least destroying a few trees? That would get noticed really fast

Vivian decided that if Kat wasn't going to pay attention to her she'd just have to see how far she could take this. Carefully removing the plate from beneath Kat she carefully moved the uneaten pancakes over to the bench before signalling Sylvie to be quiet and leaving to grab more supplies.

Could perhaps just do it here? I mean, surely Callisto has done a few strange things in the backyard right? We can just pass off anything strange that happens as one of her experiments going on right?

Vivian quietly snuck upstairs to Callisto to get her in on the action. The pair came down with a collection of things, mostly random bits of cloth they found around Callisto's room along with a strange looking device that was something of a cross between a pair of scissors and a pizza cutter.

No that's a horrible idea really. If I remember last time correctly, and I'm not sure I do... Kat checked over her memories again and found them to be spotty at best. She could find the memories in question

but it looked like they'd been in a heatwave and had a number of visual distortions. *Which I suppose isn't even entirely inaccurate considering I had the fever to end all fevers*

Callisto and Vivian go to setting up the various cloth scraps around. Firstly, they slipped one under Kat's hand and waited to see if she'd notice or move it in any way. Once it was proven she wasn't going to interfere Vivian set about leaving the cloth all around Kat. She was about to try and sneak some onto Kat's tail that was lazily flicking around near the bottom of the chair but was stopped by Callisto and Sylvie.

Right so I'm risking a giant pillar of fire next time I rank up. Ideally, I should do that somewhere remote and where no one can see me. At night perhaps? Kat instantly shot the idea down. No that's stupid, I would be seen for miles around at night. The middle of the day would be much better

Callisto and Sylvie managed to convince Vivian that it would never work and that Kat's tail was a bit special. Vivian in wild gestures articulated that Kat hadn't noticed anything else even the scrap of cloth on her head but the other two were adamant that messing with Kat's tail would ruin the whole plan.

What about a warehouse or something? Maybe Chekov has some space somewhere... then again I doubt he'd want even cold fire anywhere near his woodworking supplies. Perhaps Vivian knows some abandoned constructions sites? *NOVeLNext.COM*

After finally removing Vivian from the immediate vicinity of Kat's tail, they then got to work on the next stage of the plan. Callisto disappeared for a moment before returning with a number of old shirts she had lying around.

Then again, would Vivian even be privy to that information? That sounds more like something Callisto would know... but then again now that I think about it. Is the town even large enough to have warehouses? Most things get shipped in pretty frequently or so Gramps always said

Callisto went to slicing into the shirts she'd brought down. They were inside out because the outside had already been ruined by various stains from the few times, she'd tried her hand at some advanced chemistry. They were much too big for everyone especially Sylvie, but with a bit of extra slicing it looked... maybe, vaguely like a dress... if you were blind in one eye and had the good one covered in an eyepatch.

Perhaps that old shed in the orphanage then? I mean Gramps would probably say yes even if he shouldn't... nah actually he'd probably have twelve better ideas for me instead. Plus, there are a few too many blankets stored there.

Callisto stepped upstairs to change out of her maid outfit she always wore and into the ruined shirt as well as some bike pants and stocking to somewhat disguise the fact that she was not in her ordinary outfit. This combined with a white singlet that still let a large amount of skin show through the holes in the sleeves to complete the look.

Wait, System? What are the chances of something crazy happening when a demon ranks up?

Standard Rank Up procedure has almost no variation. The chance that something unaccounted for happening is less than a single percentage point, and occurs most frequently in battle induced Rank Ups of Wrath, Pride, Envy, War, and occasionally Monk Factions

Kat pursed her lips. *Chances of something crazy happening when I rank up?*

Sylvie and Vivian had just thrown the things over their own clothes. They didn't have the ridiculous changing speed of Callisto to make use of. Vivian had been tempted to just remove her own shirt before she remembered she was in a dress. For Sylvie it made little difference. Even with Callisto's modifications it looked strange.

The chance of something unaccounted for happening is extremely high. In fact, there is only an approximated single percentage point chance that nothing strange happens.

Of course. What was I thinking? That things could be easy for once?

"Kat" said Vivian quickly adding the strange scissors Callisto had procured to Kat's hand

So I guess I'm back at the drawing board with no real place to go. Worst comes to worst I guess it has to be some other nondescript place in the forest but I have time to plan this go around so I really don't want to mess up completely

"Kat" said Vivian and Callisto with smirks on their faces

Probably best I bring this up with the others or something.

"KAT!" shouted the three at once.

Kat startled and looked around, and saw the devastation. Cloth everywhere numerous tears in each of the girl's dresses and a strange looking pair of scissors in her hand. "Wha?"

Vivian pretended to look aghast "Wha? That's all we get? We've been trying to stop your awful rampage against all clothing kind for the past five minutes and not even a thank you"

Vivian let her voice crack and posture falter. Kat's face filled with worry. She was about to reach out to comfort her with Kat's eyes homed in on Vivian's dress. The one she was wearing underneath her tattered one.

Instead of comfort, Kat turned her kind concern into a glare standing to her full height with wings furled, letting her eyes shine. She took a deep breath and glared down at them all before saying "Wha!?"

They all burst out laughing.

Chapter 186:

Once they had sufficiently recovered from their fits of laughter Vivian put on her business face. It was a remarkable shift for Kat to watch happen in person. Vivian seemed taller, and her whole presence changed. Hell, Kat could almost swear her hair got a few shades darker.

"Now, what has gotten you so distracted?" asked Vivian

Why do I have the inexplicable urge to lie? Kat started to shiver under Vivian's gaze. *Like that's a weird thing to go to right? I've been honest with Gramps for years, and I haven't told a single lie to Vivian in large part because I CAN'T.*

So why is that desire so strong right now... "Well, a few things sort of" said Kat

Vivian continued to stare

"I mean, it isn't something to concern yourself with overmuch" said Kat *NOVeLN*ext.COM

Vivian stared harder "Kat you didn't notice us replacing your food with clothing scraps"

Kat swallowed. *Why is this so hard. It was a reasonable concern.* "Ranking up"

Vivian continued to glare. But at the same intensity

"I was wondering where. Because I mean, last time wasn't the greatest, but this time should be better and we can plan but like... nothing seems better than a random spot in the woods? But I mean we can't just go back to the same place, especially if people notice" said Kat. She realised she was rambling, but it just seemed to fit the situation for some strange reason

Then Vivian's aura completely changed, once again back to her bubbly self that practically had sun beams shooting from her cheeks. "You could have just said so. No need to assault the poor cloth" said Vivian

Kat quirked an eyebrow "Isn't that your fault though"

Vivian shrugged "This isn't the time to lay blame Kat. We are trying to work out the best solution for you" Vivian's grin got larger and larger as the sentence went on making it clear she knew what she was doing.

"Well sure then, what are your suggestions" said Kat

"Simple really" said Vivian dragging the words out "Pick a different forest"

Kat opened her mouth to argue... but stopped "What?"

Vivian shrugged "I had to pick the closest place that nobody would be the first time. It isn't like there are no other forested areas nearby and with some planning we can make a day trip out of it"

"You know that is a surprisingly reasonable response" said Kat

Vivian shrugged "What did you think I was going to suggest? Steal one of the old condemned warehouses"

Kat shrugged "Actually that was a consideration, but I realised that I don't actually know of any warehouses... like anywhere around here"

Vivian shook her head "There are a few, but if the damage from last time is any indication, I'm not sure a warehouse could stand up to it. Sure, the cold dispersed pretty quickly but remember you were outside, so it had places to go"

Kat nodded "So random forest it is then"

"Indeed" said Vivian

"Ooh, road trip" said Sylvie

Kat stopped. She hadn't really been focused on the fact that Callisto and Sylvie were present as well.

"Indeed, it will be a pleasurable adventure and I am sure I can make some interesting observations during the event assuming we can stand close enough but avoid harm" said Callisto

"Yay" said Sylvie beaming.

Oh no. Kat looked to Vivian for help but she was smiling right alongside the two traitors "Uh, am I the only one a bit concerned about the danger"

Vivian looked over at Kat "No, but I mean, we promise to be careful, and considering that last time was supposedly some crazy mistake I'm sure we'll all be fine"

System. Tell Vivian how likely things are to end up unusual

Accomplice Vivian, the chance of something strange happening during User Kat's Rank up is approximately 99.99% with a 0.1% rounding error

Kat smirked, and Vivian returned to her serious mode "Kat... did you force it to display that"

Before Kat could even answer Vivian let her facade fade as she broke into a grin. "Nah, I bet those are the real deal. What do you think Callisto?"

"We will simply need to prepare adequately. Perhaps finding a high vantage point along with some binoculars. I know I have at least two pairs lying around, and perhaps I could construct a third given enough time" said Callisto

Vivian nodded "Yeah that seems like the best way to stay safe. What about the light show?"

"Simple enough. I can just ensure that I bring along my old eclipse glasses. They are in need of repairs perhaps, but nothing that could not be accomplished on short notice" said Callisto

"Sounds good. If you don't mind, could you go and inform Lily and her parents it will be tomorrow? I heard you dealt with her parents expertly last time" said Vivian

"Of course, Vivian" said Callisto as she bowed and headed out the back door.

Vivian shook her head "I wonder if she keeps doing that because it used to annoy me or if it's become routine"

As Vivian said that and looked towards where Callisto had just exited, it occurred to Kat that she'd used the back door. "Why did Callisto leave that way?" asked Kat

"So that she can jump the fence of course" said Sylvie like it was obvious. Kat was about to ask what on earth Sylvie was talking about when Vivian nodded along like she agreed.

"Ok I'll bite. Why is she jumping the fence" asked Kat

"It's quicker of course" said Vivian

"But you can't just do that" said Kat

"I'm sure you could jump the fence if you wanted to" said Vivian.

I mean, yeah I guess technically? "I can fly though I wouldn't need to jump" said Kat

They both broke out in grins as a response. Kat let them have their moment and then asked seriously "So what is the plan then? Just drive out somewhere and you guys find a good mountainside?"

Vivian nodded "Yeah, and I have just the mountainside in mind. About three, fourish hours westish, we can find a mountain nobody really climbs anymore but has some old hiking paths knocked into it, sorta"

Kat placed her tail under her chin "There was a lot of questionable things in that statement" said Kat

Vivian shrugged and grinned "It really is no worry Kat. The exact location I can deal with, and the trails used to be boxed in with some wooden structure. Probably quite overgrown by now, but if you are willing to carry or even fly our gear to the end, I don't mind a bit of mountaineering"

"Is there anything you aren't good at?" asked Kat

"Mountaineering" said Vivian with her trademark grin

Kat furrowed her brows "Not sure I like that answer"

Vivian shrugged but kept smiling "Not sure you have much of a choice" punctuating her sentence with a tongue poking out.

This time it was Kat's turn to glare. Vivian relented, quickly "Look, Callisto is pretty good at it, and I'm fit enough not to worry. Plus, if we get attacked by ravenous bears or something you can fight them off"

Kat felt her smile twitch "What about Sylvie and Lily though, that hardly seems safe" said Kat

"I wanna see you fight a bear" said Sylvie with a grin matching Vivian's making it very clear she knew what she was doing.

Oh god Callisto and Vivian really are rubbing off on her. "Surely you have something safer in mind? If something happens while I'm ranking up and can't come over to help you guys, you'll be in trouble"

Vivian shrugged "Callisto can fight the bear then"

Kat felt her smile twitch again. *Why am I suddenly the worry wort? Normally I can shake these sorts of things off... What the hell changed in the past like day and a half?*

All of a sudden Vivian burst out laughing "Oh you should have seen your face"

Kat raised an eyebrow "Am I missing something here"

"Yup. You actually think I'd let you fight a bear? Even if I knew you could win" said Vivian shaking her head "Nah, I've picked a mountain with a road to the top. It's a bit out of the way so nobody really goes there except to stargaze and because we are out in the day it should be fine"

Kat looked over at Sylvie for support but found the girl sticking her tongue out and Kat felt a headache coming on despite her regeneration and inability to get headaches anymore. *Even Sylvie now... Guess I know where my worries come from. Away not even a week and already they've started corrupting my sweet angel Sylvie*

*Ah who am I kidding, as sweet as she is around me I'm almost certain she was the one who replaced all the salt shakers at the other tables with sugar that one time, and was responsible for Lawrence getting in huge trouble for picking on Steph. *

Chapter 187:

It was now the following day, and everyone was in the car. It was perhaps the first time Kat had actually seen Vivian, Sylvie, Callisto, and Lily all in the same place. Of course, the fact this place was a car and that Kat herself took up a large amount of space did cause some issues.

The way they managed to sort it out, was by having Kat sit on the right side of the car, pull her wings in close and make use of the fact that seatbelts have a bit of give, taking up more like the right and centre seat, with Sylvie on her lap, and Lily taking up the left

Initially Vivian had volunteered but Lily pointed out that she needed to direct them if Callisto was to be driving. It was only once they were all on the road and well on their way to the destination that Kat realised there was something wrong with that picture.

"Wait a moment... why didn't we just let Vivian drive?" asked Kat

Sylvie for her part was sleeping, wrapped up in Kat's arms but Lily pulled her head out of the book she was reading and looked at Kat startled having also not realised this detail. As Vivian felt the stares from the back land on her she shrugged and said "Callisto is much better at driving then I am"

Kat narrowed her eyes "I feel like there is a bit more to the story"

"Well, I may or may not have crashed a few cars in my time" said Vivian

"A few" shouted Lily

Vivian shrugged "Look, it's all in the past. I can at least avoid crashing my car now"

"Indeed, if you consider the fact that you drive the same route every day, 5km under the speed limit, choose to walk multiple blocks rather than travel unknown roadways and still can't get good prices on your insurance" said Callisto

"Wait hold on" said Lily "Um, didn't Vivian drive us safely out to the city?"

"Yeah. See Callisto, they said I did well" said Vivian

Kat saw Callisto raise an eyebrow through the review mirror "Are you going to ignore the fact you have to drive along that road perhaps once a week and have travelled along it so many times I've always had to wonder why you never got a house in the city"

Vivian pouted "You know how much I'd hate living there. A day visit is infinitely preferable"

"Even when such visits occur every day of the week for three months?" asked Callisto

"Eugh, don't remind me. You were even so mean as to avoid being my driver when I asked during that last week. It was driving me up the wall" said Vivian elbowing Callisto slightly when she said driving.

Callisto sighed "I had been working on the windmill project that week. Remember? The one you signed me up for because you were too busy while I was also trying to complete my research on those soil samples"

Vivian shivered "Oh... yeah... now I remember why I forbade you from doing chemistry in the house"

Lily and Kat shared a look. *Don't ask.*

##

It was some time later that they pulled into the mountain 'lookout'. Though that was being generous to the structure. It was simply a pad of compacted gravel for parking alongside a rather large flat rock someone had taken the time to carve stairs into.

This is actually kind of strange now that I look at it. Kat examined the area surrounding them. *It isn't like the road is in horrid shape. A little despaired, but still very functional. But why haven't they done more with the area?*

"Hey Vivian. Why did they even waste money building a road up here without taking the time to develop the area at all" asked Kat

"Ooh, I actually know this one" Lily chimed in "I was doing some research myself actually and it turns out that the area is technically a nature reserve. The road was being constructed with the plan to develop the area into something more like parkland

"With a special emphasis on stargazing and other night-time activities. The issue was however that the mountain was actually classified as a protected nature reserve by an old gold miner who bought the land and then later lobbied the government

"The thing was, the final few stamps never went through for whatever reason and so the development plan went ahead. That was until a descendant of the old miner found out and provided evidence saying it was actually a nature reserve

"It was really fascinating to see what happened after that. Initially the government claimed the documents must have been fake, but someone on the inside went looking through the archives that had yet to be added to the servers

"In the end, once they found the government copies that were handed over to the courts, the whole case was a wash and the development was halted"

Kat stared opened mouth at Lily "When did you have time to research all that?"

Lily shrugged "Didn't take that long. I just looked up a few details after Callisto mentioned where we were going yesterday. Wasn't hard exactly"

Kat bit the inside of her mouth. *I guess I'd sort of forgotten just how good Lily is at research. She hasn't really found that much out about demons, and before that I guess she was actually working on that present for me*

When she has a very specific topic, she can find a tonne of details really fast. I wish there was a better job to point her towards where those talents could be properly used.

While Lily was explaining the history of the place, Kat was moving the boxes Callisto had packed onto the rock. Sylvie was 'helping' by following behind Kat and trying to grab her tail.

Vivian and Callisto were sharing the load of another box. Once everything had been deposited Kat first put energy into her ears. Straining them for any sign of people or perhaps a car engine. Finding nothing she launched herself up into the air to make sure that nobody was in sight.

Enhancing her vision as much as she could, considering the energy she had to provide her wings to keep them functional. Still she managed well enough. Examining the various places the road poked out from the tree line.

Landing Kat spoke to Vivian "Ok so where am I setting up"

Vivian shrugged "Could always do it at the end of the gravelled area" pointing to the other end of the parking lot

Kat frowned "That's hardly 100m's away"

Vivian shrugged again with a bright smile as she handed Kat the box containing the crystal "Look, we can just hide behind the boulder if something goes wrong. It'll be fine"

Kat let out a deep breath. "Ok. I've been worrying myself a bunch since I've been back but I trust you know what you're doing"

"Oh, I have no clue what I'm doing dear, but here is hoping for the best" said Vivian.

Kat sighed and made her way over to the designated area. *Ok system is there anything else I need to know?*

User Kat should be aware that unlike the previous attempt, User Kat is unlikely to feel pain during the process even if something has gone horribly wrong. This is because when ranking up the nerves are dulled to some extent to facilitate restructuring of the body

What the hell was last time then

An improper way of ranking up

Kat pursed her lips but didn't direct anymore thoughts towards the system. Opening the books, she saw the ruby once again, the swirling blackness inside along with a faint calling to her.

Kat carefully set the box down, before swiping the gemstone into her hand. The moment she stopped the motion, the gem flashed, and she felt her hand burning. Looking down she saw cracks of all things running along her arms.

As she stood there the cracks continued, like breaking ice, up her arms, and from within leaked a strange mixture of black and purple mist. Once it reached her chest, her horns started to glow. A burning purple light covering Kat.

She swallowed, hoping this was going to be fine. The leaking mist started to change. Where it used to be trying to leak out, it began getting sucked back in. Kat felt her arms swell as they filled with whatever weird energy the black mist was.

She grit her teeth, as new cracks burst forth arcing across her chest and up her neck. Despite this though, she felt fine. As if she didn't have massive fissure's running through her body.

Ok... this isn't so bad. Thought Kat.

But as if waiting for a queue a summoning circle appeared below Kat.

System! What the hell is going on.

Entity Minor's beacon has been activated in emergency mode

Oh come on!

Chapter 188:

Beacons have an emergency mode?

Yes

Ok not important. Kat sped up her thoughts and the world slowed. The mist slowing its rapid charge, as Kat focused inward.

Is there anything that could go wrong if I accept due to ranking up?

It is likely User Kat will be perfectly fine. Interdimensional travel is exceptionally well tuned, but User Kat's Rank Up's have been strange before, and D.E.M.O.N.S makes no guarantee.

Kat clicked her tongue in annoyance. *Dammit. Ok fine. System, if I run over to the girls and run back can I still accept the summons.*

Of course.

And so Kat did just that she sprinted forward stopping at the edge of the rock and yelled "Something bad has happened to Minor. I don't know what's going on but I have to find out"

Lily looked on at Kat's cracking form with worry. Callisto and Sylvie nodded as if this was to be expected and Vivian had a beaming smile like always. "Don't wait up for us. Go make sure they're ok"

Kat nodded. Sylvie spoke up next "Come back as soon as you can though" lower lip trembling.

Lily didn't say anything, but it looked like she agreed with Sylvie. Kat turned to Callisto, but she had already started packing up the supplies. Kat dashed back to the summoning circle. *I accept.*

And was whisked away instantly. The fires of the teleportation swirled, but this time she could actually see the bubble around her. As she travelled, the purple mist started to leak from her again, but seemed to be stopped by a transparent barrier.

As the time passed, her vision became increasingly obscured by purple mist... until she arrived. The mist exploded outward taking up as much space as it could. Kat tried to reign it in instinctively and succeeded.

That's something at least. As the mist retracted and her vision cleared, Kat looked around frantically for Minor but instead... she saw Minor's grandmother. She had the same blue coat and seven tails she

had before, though they were now looking significantly more frazzled. It was only noticeable because Kat's eyes were being empowered by the mist of demonic energy.

In fact, the rest of her outfit has fallen a few steps down. The sash she appears to be wearing seemed to be part of the kimono, and it looked like it hadn't been washed in a few days, and was filled with wrinkles if you looked in the right places.

"Um, hey... where's Minor?" asked Kat confused

"That isn't important for the moment. I called you here because I need your help" said Grandma Maemari.

Kat's eyes went wide. "Who are you and what have you done with Minor's grandmother"

The fox scowled at Kat "I'm at my wits end here. I summoned because I had no other choice and I won't take your stupid jokes"

Woah, where is the calm but angry vixen she was last time. Now she's just angry. Kat held her hands up in a placating gesture and folded her wings up trying to make herself look as reasonable as possible "Look, I mean no disrespect. I just find it hard to believe after last time that you'd willingly call on me for anything"

Kat felt the temperature in the room drop. A significant feat considering how resistant she was to the cold. It still wasn't chilly, but it was a nice breeze. The room though had chunks of ice starting to form in the corners.

Grandma Maemari grit her teeth like the words were causing her physical pain to say "If I had any choice I would. But I need you specifically for this. Will you help me or not?"

Kat sucked in a breath of cool air. *I really don't want to... but if Minor is hurt then fine.* "I will help" Kat braced herself for the hoard of chains she was sure to see but instead, she watched as multiple sigils appeared and shattered.

Um... System? I was sort of expecting a contract there.

User Kat was not offered anything, and neither User Kat nor Entity Enuko wished for a contract

Wait you know people's names? *Novelnext.cOM*

Why would D.E.M.O.N.S be unable to discover this information?

Kat bit her lip. *Sort of just thought it you took them from my head.*

"Come" said Grandma Maemari, Enuko Kat reminded herself. Enuko spoke clearly but the literal frost in her words made it clear that it was an order.

Kat took one light step forward... and shot careening into the wall. *What the hell was that.*

User Kat's body is currently being reconstructed. Errors in movement faculties is to be expected.

"I said I don't have time for your games" growled Enuko

Kat wobbled as she tried to stand up. "Forgive me, I was in the middle of ranking up. Kind of a big deal have my whole body upgraded and I was interrupted. Why the hell do you think I have this mist following me around"

Enuko growled but dashed over to Kat and grabbed her by the arm before throwing Kat over herself like a sack of potatoes. It was rather awkward because of Enuko's tails and Kat's wings but Enuko didn't even flinch.

The world blurred as Enuko moved. Even Kat's enhanced vision could hardly keep up with the passing scenery as Enuko sprinted through the house before stopping in place outside of a thick wooden door.

As Enuko stopped the howling winds she generated rushed past pushing her tails into Kat's face and pulled at her wings, though the disruption caused by the tails prevented most of the gale.

After this, while Kat was spitting out tail fluff, Enuko was ever so slowly opening the door. It was an unbelievably careful action, as if one minor misstep could doom the world. She grasped the handle, and smoothly opened the door before stepping in.

Finally, she carefully put Kat down in a corner and Kat could get a better look at the room. *I'm surprised she even took the time to be careful putting me down.* Though Kat's thoughts rapidly changed when she examined the room.

It was a completely barren place save for three things. The first was the large window at the other end that gazed out into the mountains. A nice view but the least important feature of the room. The next thing Kat noticed as the numerous sigils carved all around her. Kat enhanced her vision further to try to see them all through the purple mist that was just now trailing through the door.

What she saw though stunned her. What she thought were large sigils were in fact, sigils made of sigils, with runes so tiny Kat wondered how you could even manage to carve them at all. The originally high count completely dwarfed what Kat could see in even a small section of the carvings.

Gulping Kat turned towards the last feature of the room. Minor. *Oh no.* Minor was on a small bed that closely fit her frame. She looked even paler than last time Kat had met her, and she was now starting to thin considerably. Where before she looked like a frail girl, now she looked closer to a skeleton in clothes.

Kat gulped, as she looked up at Enuko for answers. When the fox didn't say anything and continued to move around the room and check the various sigils and runes Kat spoke up. "What is wrong with Minor"

Enuko froze. She glared at Kat and Kat felt as though her soul was being stared at. The temperature started dropping again, before Enuko grimaced and looked away. "I suppose I do need to explain if you are to fix the problem"

Don't be rude, she's just worried about Minor "I believe so. I don't see how I can help this situation at all" said Kat with a calm she no longer felt.

Enuko turned her gaze to Kat once more, but clearly looked over her shoulder, as if speaking to the wall instead would help her demeanour. "I'm... I'm not quite sure myself but I have a few guesses

"See, Minor had been saying she wasn't meant to control the body, and I didn't really listen. Until she collapsed. After that she was only conscious for bits and pieces but from what I could gather she couldn't control their body anymore

"Not that she was giving up, but that the control was being wrest away from her. There is no force that could harm her within my compound... except perhaps one"

Enuko took a deep breath like she was about to admit to acts of genocide, before continuing "I believe it has to be Shizuka, Major"

Um... what? Kat spoke more eloquently then her thoughts betrayed by abusing her mental acceleration to 'get more time' to speak "I don't quite follow"

Enuko looked like she was ready to punch something but reigned her anger in "I think that there is an issue in their combined mind. And I need to send you in to help"

Chapter 189:

Kat looked at Enuco like she was crazy. Perhaps because that's exactly what Kat was thinking "That's crazy" she said before she could stop herself

Enuko growled "You think I don't know that!" Enuco started pacing "You think I am unaware? If I didn't have my husband's and father's sigil construct notes I'd never be able to even think of this, let alone attempt it"

"Wait you're serious? This is a thing you can actually do?" asked Kat

"Yes" Enuco hissed "The problem though. Is that I can only send in people that the person trusts implicitly. That leaves her mother, me, and perhaps you"

"Well..." said Kat unsure if she should even ask the question "Why not send yourself"

Enuko physically bit down a reply, and Kat heard Enuco's teeth crash together releasing a small shockwave "You think I would if I could?!" growled Enuco "The one casting the spell can't be the target"

Kat tried to calm herself down. *I???m getting effected by Enuco's... Wait a second.* "Enuko can I use my calming aura on you while we sort this out, I have a few more questions"

Enuko looked ready to rip Kat's wings off for the question, but nodded anyway. Kat spread her aura out to Enuco and found a resistance. Now that she was trying to move her aura it seemed that Enuco had a literal wall of anger around her.

Kat tried to smother it like a blanket coating her aura around Enuco and hoping for the best. Enuco's face instantly eased, but her gaze remained sharp. "Thank you" she said curtly and went back to examining the sigils before cursing.

"Damn. I'm glad you used that. I was already missing several key runes in my cross checking" said Enuco with surprising grace.

"You're welcome. Now, what exactly am I mean to be doing here. I didn't even think it was possible to go into someone else's mind" said Kat

Enuko tilted her head "That's because it sort of isn't"

"I don't follow" said Kat

"Ok... so" Enuko started "Outside of a few very specific species, it is in fact, not possible to enter other sentient creatures' minds without simply possessing the body, and then you aren't exactly in their mind so much as you become it

"What this spell does is sort of... expand? The mind for lack of a better term and make it more real. And then it puts both the target, and the person entering, into this expanded space. It's sort of real sort of not and very hard to explain"

"So... what am I supposed to be doing then" said Kat

"I have no idea" said Enuko

"What!" said Kat

Enuko shrugged "I really truly have no idea. I have never cast this spell, it is far beyond my means. I don't understand it, I don't know even half of the theory that goes into making it work. All I have is my husband's notes, and enough time to copy them out painstakingly"

Kat gulped "So will this even work?"

Enuko grit her teeth and paused... before continuing "Yes...?it should. I've seen the spell work, once, when I was much much younger. But only as a test. The mana requirements and the fact that the caster had to remain physically close during the casting made it very hard to keep testing"

Great. Ancient powerful spells Enuko doesn't understand are about to be cast on me. Hey System if this is going to kill me will you send me back to Earth. **Novelnext.cOm**

User Kat is correct

Well at least I don't have to fear my ever-encroaching doom. "Ok, so then, in a more specific sense what am I supposed to do once I'm inside" asked Kat

"Once again" said Enuko "I don't know" Kat went to interrupt but Enuko continued anyway "I have some theories. You'll probably have to find Major and Minor and maybe fix a few things? Look, I don't truly know

"All I really know is that it's supposed to be a bit like a lucid dream. Except with more people and much less control over the environment" Enuko straightened herself and glanced over the carvings one more time. Making a few adjustments across the board.

Kat gulped as a horrible thought sneaked into her mind. "Um..." said Kat "Look, I... I don't really want to ask this but uh... so, um... if it is Major causing the problems... and I need to help either one or the other... who do I help"

Enuko paused her last-minute corrections and turned to stare at Kat. Despite the temperature not changing and no icicles forming, Kat shivered. Kat could feel the rage bubbling under the coating of her aura as it tried to press out before it settled down.

Enuko took another hard look at Kat up and down before she said a single word. "Both"

Kat nodded. *It was the only answer I suppose. I just really hope I don't have to make the choice myself for some reason.*

Kat gulped, "Is there anything else at all that I need to know"

Enuko shook her head "I do not believe so. I just..." Enuko grit her teeth and tsked "I wish I knew what I was doing. This seems to be the only chance. Minor doesn't have long and I can't pull her mother away from her duties especially not while the Beast King is visiting. The strife it could cause is too high..."

"If... if you weren't an option... I might have done it anyway though" Enuko whispered, perhaps thinking Kat wouldn't hear, perhaps not.

"Now" said Enuko "Are you ready"

Kat looked at her still cracked skin, with more miniscule ones slowly edging themselves over her body, as well as the purple mist that while no longer being created was starting to seep into and enlarge the cracks. *I wish there was another answer to this... but* "I'm ready"

Enuko nodded. "Your body should remain safe during the spell. I won't be able to give you any additional sustenance during it, and I don't have time to get you any now, and as much as it pains me... Minor probably doesn't have enough time for it to matter..."

"Um... how long do I have" asked Kat

Enuko shook her head "Time will be distorted during the spell. Even if I said you had twenty-four hours it wouldn't help. And truth be told, I don't know. The spell is supposed to sustain the individuals powering it a bit longer, but once again, I don't understand it"

"Ok. I'll do my best" said Kat

"You will bring them back" said Enuko but she started the spell.

The light was almost instantly blinding. The sigils all shone as Enuko pumped them full of mana. Kat felt the mist rise up to cover her eyes, and while that stopped the pain it didn't stop allow her to see.

Seconds past... minutes? Hours even? Time seemed to have no meaning in the endless white Kat experienced. *Probably not hours though. I can still think pretty clearly and I'm pretty sure it's been like 30 seconds.*

Then there was a large crack. Kat's hand flew to her chest and she felt the cracks expanding slowly. She gulped, but suddenly there was a surge of powering that filled her. Mist came rushing in, and then...

Darkness.

##

Meanwhile...

Enuko channelled the spell with everything she had. She grit her teeth as she pushed her mind to the maximum to keep each sigil evenly supplied with mana. She couldn't see with her eyes anymore but there was so much mana saturating the area it didn't matter.

Then she heard a crack. Scanning wildly for the source, she found nothing. Pushing her senses even further she found that it was the demon. *She better not be interfering with my spell or so help me...*

But from everything her mana could tell, the demon was calm up until this point. It was when the demon heard the crack that she started to move. Another moment past before she felt reality creak under the weight of the spell before the light dimmed.

Opening her eyes again she was shocked at what she saw. She should have seen an unconscious demon and a stream of sigils connecting it and her granddaughter. Instead she saw a rush of purple smoke go for Shizuka's prone form.

She wanted to scream and attack the cursed thing for letting her trust it, only to find the body gone. She went to stand up but felt her spell holding her in place. "Shit" said Euko

What the hell happened here?! Why is the spell still going if the bitch tricked me?

Enuko studied the spell to the best of her abilities trying to find what went wrong or what the succubus might have changed but based on the runes she had seared into her memory everything was correct.

Why! It should have worked!... And then it hit her.

"FUCK" said Euko "Demon's don't have mana"

Chapter 190: Does this count as Talking to yourself?

Darkness.

Kat could see nothing except a complete and total darkness she had never seen before. *What even is this? This is worse than a moonlit night and I have demon vision. Why the heck is it so dark.*

Kat's tail tried to flick in irritation, but she found it caught. Noticing this, Kat intentionally tried to move it again but found herself stuck in place. Trying her various other limbs yielded a similar result.

Kat tried to let out a breath to calm herself, but even that was beyond her. There was a brief moment as panic, but she felt herself bring demonic energy up to her lungs in reflex. *Ok... so some things are working.* As time passed, Kat kept an eye on her energy levels and found them to be completely topped out.

Ok now that is a bit weird. Based on my experiences, I should be losing energy if I needed it to regenerate the fact, I'm not breathing... but I don't feel anything at all. Is this a side effect of the spell that Minor's grandma cast? I thought this was supposed to be real enough. *Novelnext.com*

Hey system? Did something go wrong?

But Kat got no response. Her brows furrowed as she tried circulating her demonic energy again. It moved freely, throughout her limbs, even poking it above the skin and creating fire was perfectly acceptable. Whatever was going on... she wasn't dead. *I don't think anyway...*

At that moment though, the world churned. The blackness became a brown as it swirled around twisting into shapes that didn't quite fit within a reality before settling on a facsimile of a brown wall.

Kat found herself in a chair that actually managed to accommodate her wings. It wasn't as comfortable as the chairs in hell, but it was a long thin straight back supporting her that spread out around the neck area leaving her wings free to hang behind the chair.

Might be a little uncomfortable to get out of, but I'd take that trade. Kat's thoughts were interrupted when she heard a sigh from her left. Turning Kat found herself face to face with Minor.

She looked... more sure of herself, than all the previous times Kat had seen her. There was a confidence in her posture and the way she held her three puffy red tails, now straight and fanned out behind her like her mother and grandmother always kept theirs.

Her fur was a deep red, with a slight hint of orange, close but not quite what you would consider normal for a fox. She was also missing the red tips, instead her hair held traces of the blue that must have been inherited from her mother.

As Kat was about to greet her, Minor spoke up "Hi Kat, back again today to rant I suppose. I know you can't exactly talk back to me but I find it helps organise my mind, and I can feel Grandma panicking nearby.

"Really, it's such a shame. I'm sure if she calmed down for a minute or two, she could figure something out, maybe with the old enchanting journals I always hear about, but then again, I've never seen them.

Minor sighed. "Like, I'm trying my best from in here you know. It isn't easy to figure out this mess that Shizuka has created you know. Yes, yes, I know I should be calling her Major for my own sanity, but listen

"I'm not sure how much I want to fix things. It's much nicer in here. I missed it when I was forced into the world. Heck, if Grandma wasn't so worried I wouldn't be bothering at all...

"No that is also a lie" Minor shifted a bit to face Kat fully "I'd like to see you again. Once or twice, perhaps to apologise and perhaps to thank you... both probably. Hopefully Grandma won't complain when I try to summon you again..."

Minor sighed "Dammit, why did you have to screw things up so much Shizuka. I can't fix everything on my own. I don't even know where to start... Well, ok Kat that is also a lie, but I can't do it... I'm... I'm scared I guess."

"You don't seem scared" said Kat deciding she'd let Minor talk enough.

The girl stiffened. Her ears fluffing up and her tails straightening and bristling. "Why can you talk? I don't know you well enough to get you to talk. I tried and I tried.... Are you one of the nightmares now too?"

Tears were threatening to spill out of Minor's eyes. *Oh... welp I need to fix this.* Kat used her superior speed to appear behind her and wrap Minor in her tail. "Nope, I'm the real one"

Minor gulped "Prove it" the tears had stopped but there was still a little bit of fear there.

Kat shrugged as she held Minor closer and wondered back to her chair and sat down. "Well, I'm not quite sure how I can do that. I guess I can say that your grandmother wasn't doing nothing. She managed to figure out a spell to help.

"Apparently she made your mind into a dreamscape and put me inside as well. So I'm here sort of in person? Not quite sure how this whole thing works"

Minor physically deflated. She shrunk down to just two thirds of her original size as she curled up on Kat's lap and cried. "Hey, hey why are you crying, hey Minor" said Kat worried

"I'm" said Minor "Just" between "So happy" sniffles "To see you"

Kat pulled the poor girl even closer and let her wings surround them as well. "Of course, your grandmother asked me for help after all"

"Gg-grandma? Grandma actually asked you for help?" sniffled Minor

"Yup. She was pretty annoying about it but I said yes anyway" said Kat

Minor tried to bury herself further into Kat's embrace. "Thank you so much"

"Hey" said Kat stroking Minor's hair "You seemed to be doing fine before you knew it was me. What happened to that brave face?"

Minor spluttered a little before finally twisting her body to the side. Now Kat was supporting her by holding her tails out to the right and Kat's own tail around Minor's waist "I just... I'm sorry. I like to put on a brave face when talking to you... err, the visual representation I have of you... wait a minute"

Minor turned to face Kat head on "You have horns!"

Kat winced at the shout, not quite prepared "Yes Minor I have horns"

"I'm such a fool" said Minor trying to hide her face with her tails "I should have noticed something was wrong. I didn't know you had horns so I can't give them to you when I summon your image"

"Yeah what is that about anyway" asked Kat

"Well..." said Minor "Because this is my mind as well, I have some control over it. Especially in... uh... think of it like unclaimed territory, the black stuff. So I just sort of come out here summon up some props and pretend everything is fine"

"It is fine Minor, we can work this out" said Kat trying to project her calming aura over Minor... it wasn't working well. Kat could feel her aura, and she could press it outwards slightly, but it increased in difficulty the further she pushed it out. She could only just barely cover Minor, and she was sure it was weaker than normal.

Still it had the intended effect and Minor's breath equalised somewhat. "Thanks Kat. I guess I know it's really really you"

Kat shrugged and asked "Why the sudden confidence"

Minor smiled "Only the real Kat, could have the calming aura. Your fake did calm me sure, but it was more about knowing you were out there, than because you have your proper aura. This is much nicer"

Hmmm... should I be worried about that thought? "Anytime Minor. So tell me, what exactly do we need to do?" asked Kat

Minor covered her mouth with the end of her tail as she spoke, looking a little like a fake moustache "Well... um, so, I guess... um"

"Take your time" said Kat

Minor took on a big breath of air... and a little fur before continuing "Ok, so um... the problem is that Major is freaking out... and sort of... lashing out maybe isn't quite the right word but ah...

"Hmm, ok so um... this is just what I've learnt in my time being part of the mind but... ah, the mind really likes to fix itself right? So ah... when it breaks... for lack of a better time... it sort of just flails about and grabs the first few things that look good enough

"And like... I had been helping Major keep herself... sane ish, while I was just a passenger. Nudging a memory aware here, nipping a line of thought in the bud there... and well... now things have gotten out of hand"

"Great" said Kat, with false cheer in her voice