

## DEMONS 251

### Chapter 251: a Major ending

Kat was flying towards the Nightmare with Minor in her arms. Even after a short internal debate extended by her demonic energy charged brain, she just couldn't risk leaving Minor behind. At least in Kat's arms she could take a few hits for Minor and protect her from the unknown.

Still, it left an uneasy feeling in Kat's heart that she couldn't and didn't really want to shake. Keeping it under wraps though, Kat moved forward, flapping her wings in a steady rhythm. \*I still don't like this.\*

Kat adjusted her course slightly to make sure that she was in line with where that strange section of chest was. The sakura tree was still keeping the Nightmare busy so this was a great chance to do... something.

\*I still don't know if this is the right idea but... it's the only part on the thing that stands out. I can't think of any other section to attack anyway.\* Kat's eyes narrowed as she arrived at her chosen target.

Kat paused in mid-air and waited for a sign that the Nightmare had noticed her but other than the recurring thuds from branch on golem, nothing stood out at all. Taking a deep breath Kat charged up her fire in her tail.

With her arms occupied, Kat decided to coil her tail in and strike it against the surface and hope for the best. Once her tail was coiled and coated in fire Kat brought herself within striking distance and released.

Her tail slammed into the target just as assumed. That's when things started to get strange. Her tail bounced harmlessly off, making almost no sound and certainly no damage. Kat was about to strike again, when the edges of the area was set alight. In a perfect square outlining the different material she'd noticed, the fires blazed on.

Kat slowed her thoughts and checked her reserves she found them just as full as before when she struck. \*What?\* Kat could clearly see flames burning her signature purple and there was a lot of them... way more than the practical unnoticeable diminishment of her energy would suggest.

\*Ok... do I strike again then? Nothing is happening to the square but I can already see the flames freezing the inky stuff on the edges even in this slowed state. Let's try to apply a bit more.\*

Kat set her tail alight and didn't even bother with getting ready for a strike. Lightly tapping her burning tail against the cube, she felt a slight amount drain from her tail, as the fire around the edges, flared up, doubling in size.

\*Ok something is going on here.\* Pushing one sixth of her remaining energy into the cube. It drank the energy eagerly. In response to her gift the cube gained a faint purple hue and exploded around the edges with fire.

A large strike was heard from the front, and a light pop sound, could be heard as they cube Kat had been providing energy to pushed into her and out of the golem. Once it was clear of the residual wax like drippings Kat's eyes widened as she looked at what was inside.

The cube was now clearly identifiable as one made of ice. In the centre of it was Major, frozen in place as the opposing half to that which Ki possessed. It was then Kat realised that she still held Minor in her arms and the cube was pushing them both outwards.

Quickly wrenching herself around she let the ice continue pushing into her back... but the force just wasn't there. Even when it lightly popped out of the golem it should have done more serious damage but it felt like the gentlest push as she was forcibly moved out of the way.

As the cube of ice fell, the Nightmare groaned. Great pieces of it sloughed off in large chunks as they were cut away by the still furiously working branches of the sakura tree. The once mighty club it used to lean on had cracked and shattered at some point, and the sturdy midsection was now a bent mess falling to the ground.

Kat dropped to the ground quickly and put her back to the ice cube. She was just in time for the loud boom that rang out signalling the fall of the giant. A wave of air slammed into the cube, moving Kat from her slight lean to fully standing but no more than that.

Moments passed, and Kat did nothing but calm herself. Her aura was still out in force, but it did nothing for her. She breathed deeply as she turned to face Major's frozen half. As she did she started to hear footsteps. Turning around, she watched Ki walk into view.

"Funny seeing you here" said Kat "Thought you'd come from the other side"

Ki smiled "I share a few tricks with the friend in your arms. Plus, it is time, so I had to appear" said Ki calmly.

As Ki approached Kat stepped to the side giving her a more complete view of the Major frozen in ice. "Is the tree alright?" asked Kat

Ki nodded "Yes, it will not be destroyed from combat such as that. We had good allies and it was not yet time for it to fall"

Kat nodded and didn't say anything else. Ki walked up to the ice cube and placed her hand on it. She closed her eye in concentration and the ice started to melt quickly. The water sloshed off to the sides disappearing into the snow but the ice quickly shrunk to a pale imitation of what it once was.

Now it was a cube, hardly larger than Major herself was, just barely covering the figure within. Ki took a step forward, but as she did, the wooden half of her caught fire. Bright red fire burned her side, keeping only to the wood as she screamed.

Kat was about to rush to help her but paused when black started to bubble out of the cracks. Kat froze in place, as Ki stumbled. "Heheheheehehe" cackled the burning figure "I suppose you figured it out then"

Kat stared in confusion. \*What the hell is going on. I figured out exactly nothing...\* "Yes" said Minor from Kat's arms.

Kat felt Minor shift in her hands and let her stand up. Minor wobbled slightly as she stood and looked at the burning figure. "What gave it away" laughed Ki

"You said the fake bled Nightmares. The Major we found was not bleeding, but consumed" said Minor.

"Ahahaha, of course, undone by such a detail... he" said Ki with a resigned voice "I take it you know what to do though"

Minor nodded "Yeah, I figured that out as well" said Minor. \*Good because I have no idea what the hell is going on.\* "What I don't get is why you made it so easy for me"

Ki let out a wheezing cough as her wooden arm crumbled and she slumped to the side. "Ah well, I was the idiot who believed you were gone" said Ki over the flames "When I saw you, I knew I'd lost but... well, I was forced to try to win but" a cough rocked Ki's frame "I can't say I actually wanted to win"

Minor nodded "For what it's worth. I'm still sorry" said Minor

"Ahaha" laughed Ki between coughs "There's the sister I know and love. Th-thank you, for doing the right thi-" Ki???s said until the breath left her, and the wooden section collapsed, burning away to a husk.

Kat took a moment to get herself ordered and then said "Ok... what?"

Minor shuffled over to the fallen half of Major and picked it up, before starting to drag it over to the ice cube "See, we need to put Major's halves back together. One was wood and the other was ice. Not sure why wood. Maybe I have wood affinity as well as fire? I dunno" said Minor

Still not understanding, Kat moved forward anyway and grabbed onto the half of Major Minor was trying to carry. Easily lifting the prone form up Kat followed Minor's lead and lead it over to what remained of the block.

Minor dipped her hand in, somehow passing through the ice, and pulled. The other half of Major's body flowed out without resistance as it was pulled free of the ice cube. "Now" said Minor "I think you know what's next"

Kat nodded, moving slowly. She gently put the half in her hands down beside the remainder of Major. As soon as Kat's arms left Major's body there was a flash of light. It ran down the perfect split there had once been. And all that was behind was unblemished skin... well, Major still had her scars, but those were normal.

Kat waited with bated breath. \*Something else should happen right? Anything? Guys?\* Kat looked around as if waiting for something but... nothing seemed to be happening. \*Well... that's just great.\*

## **Chapter 252: a Major beginning**

"Um Minor... should we be... I dunno doing something?" asked Kat

"That... is a great question" said Minor getting up from her kneeling position. "I think we should wait? Maybe. Maybe having you leave her mind would be better but I think we want her to wake up here first"

As if those words were some sort of magical calling, the form of Major started to stir. Kat and Minor froze, and let their gazes turn in sync towards Major as she finally started to move. When Major let out a light groan as her head turned to the side, Kat and Minor's muscles tensed and their breath caught in their throats.

"Urgh, my head" mumbled Major as she started sitting up. When Major opened her eyes, Kat noticed that they were now a bright blue, literally shining out of her eye sockets. \*Will that apply to the real world? Or is this more dream shenanigans.\*

And then the screaming started. "DEMON!" shouted Major leaping to her feet and readying a spell sigil. Only for a sharp sound to ring out. Even with Kat's eyes she didn't see the source but Major now had a large red hand print on her face and Minor had swapped positions and was now standing straight on with her hand positioned as if she had just slapped someone.

\*Ok what? Why couldn't she use that sort of speed before!\* "Shizuka, I am disappointed in you. Kat saved your life, multiple times, my life, multiple times, and responded to Grandmother's call despite how horrible she was treated by Enuco when they first met. And the first thing you do is scream in her face and look at her like she's come to kill you" said Minor, her voice chillier than the snow around them.

Kat shivered. \*What the hell happened to Minor... is this... no seriously what the hell.\* Major looked up at her sister with big eyes. "But... but..."

Minor glared at Major and didn't let up in the slightest. Major flinched under her gaze. "Ok fine, I shouldn't have said that???" said Major moving her gaze back towards Kat. "Hey... wait... Don't I know you..."

"Yes Shizuka you do. It's the demon that you got Mother to summon" said Minor.

Major's eyes went wide as her face fell. "Oh no... am I dead? Is that what happened? I'm in the frozen wastes... I always thought I was a better person than that... but I guess I did let my sister die for me..." Major was going to continue ranting when Minor somehow managed to slap her without moving again.

"Don't be an idiot" growled Minor "Did you not hear me explaining how many times your life has been saved?"

Major now sported two separate red marks on either cheek and they had started to swell. It made her sound a little silly when she talked but Kat made sure to keep her expression neutral. \*This is Minor and Major's show. Like with Ki, but more important. I'll try and stay out of this.\*

"But... but where else could we be? I thought maybe if a demon saves your life too much you go to the wastes or something... how should I know? There are tonnes of bad rumours about demons but Kat was so nice... maybe she was ju-" Major stopped herself from finishing that thought when Minor very slowly and purposefully raised her hand ready to slap Major again.

"Ok ok fine" said Major "I'm not dead, somehow you're not dead, Kat's probably not dead. So nobody is dead right? Then where in the name of Everfrost are we? Why are we surrounded by snow? Where are these planes?"

Minor groaned "You know Kat. I had more faith in my sister's intelligence when she couldn't speak back to me" said Minor looked to Kat.

\*What sort of a response do you want from me? This is the most forceful I've ever seen you. Major just went through several traumatic experiences. She doesn't seem to remember you setting her on fire, or putting her back together but... I feel like your expected her to be up and working without rest??\*

\*Actually, that might be exactly it. Minor was shockingly ok after shattering into literal pieces. I don't think you are supposed to recover from something like that so fast. I thought it was because we had a goal and that she'd fall apart later but... maybe it actually didn't bother her?\*

"Um Minor, perhaps you shouldn't be too harsh on her. She did just have her mind shattered, and put back together after all. I think that would be a rather extreme situation for anyone, however she also has to contend with the fact that her long lost sister isn't dead and that she isn't anywhere she recognises

"So maybe just... give her a second? Or if you really need to have this conversation now I could use my aura but I'd have to be careful" said Kat

Minor opened her mouth and closed it multiple times as if she was a fishing gulping for air. "Huh" was eventually all she managed to say before letting herself fall backwards onto her bottom. Once on the ground she started to hug her tails and look up at Major like a sad puppy.

\*Um... Minor why do you look so sad now?\* "Sorry Shizuka... I just... I really wanted this to be a great moment and then you insulted Kat, and I mean... I couldn't let you do that... and now I'm sure your mad at me" said Minor. \*Ok well that answers that question but... why is your mood bouncing around so much...?\*

\*Could this be backlash from calming her so much with my aura during that fight? Is this everything spilling out maybe? Or something?\* "Hey hey" said Major as she ran over and gave Minor a hug, sliding along the ground to get there faster. As Major hugged Minor, she looked over at Kat and gestured towards them.

Kat tilted her head in confusion. Major flicked her eyes down to her arms and then back up to Kat and then back down to her arms. Ah, I understand. Kat took a step towards the two of them and got a big grin. Wrapping them both up in her tail Kat used it to pull them both onto her lap as she sat down with them.

Minor let out a giggle and snuggled in closer to Major before collapsing in their arms and letting out soft breaths. \*She's asleep now! Well, maybe that's for the best.\* "Yes, I believe so. She needs her rest" said Major.

"How did you know what I was thinking" asked Kat

"Because I was thinking the same thing" said Major quietly. A moment passed before Major spoke up again, when she did it was in the same hushed tone but with a slight edge to it, signalling she wanted to know the answer dearly. "One question though, why did she keep referring to me as Shizuka instead of Shizuru, she of all people should know the truth"

"Ah" said Kat drawing the sound out. \*I'm not sure how to address that elephant in the room... but I can see she wants an answer from me now.\* Through Kat's 'stalling' tactic Major had kept her eyes locked with Kat's. She hadn't even blinked once during the twenty-five seconds Kat had drawn out the sound.

"Ok fine. So... right there is a bit of an order to things, but that is one of the ones she addressed back after you passed out back in the tunnels to Enuko's. Minor thinks that-"

"Why do you call her Minor? She is your friend is she not?" growled Major "Do you not have the decency to refer to her by her name?"

"Well MAJOR" said Kat stressing Major's 'name' "That is part of the explanation as well if you'd so desire"

Major's brows drew together upon hearing her designation "Why would you refer to me as that? Is that not a disgrace to her?"

Kat shrugged "I don't know. Minor means a lot to me, regardless of what I call her. She's the one who requested it, and until I hear otherwise from her I'll keep referring to her as Minor. I might even refer to you as Major just because that's how she wanted me to refer to you"

Major growled but Kat continued "Now, let me recount the tail of what exactly has happened... actually should I do it now? Will you remember this when you wake up?"

"Wake up? But I'm not dreaming" said Major

Kat chuckled at that "I'm afraid you are. Well, it's a bit more complicated than that, and part of the larger story. Want me to skip around or tell you everything from the start" said Kat with a smug grin.

"Do you take joy in this?" asked Major

Kat's grin dropped into a flat line. "No. I do not. You annoyed me a bit implying that I didn't care enough to use the name Haruka for Minor. Now, will you let me recount everything? WITHOUT interruption?" asked Kat

"Fine" grumbled Major no happier with the fact that Kat clearly did know of Minor's 'real' name.

### **Chapter 253: a Major smackdown**

"Right but... there are some parts I'm just not processing fully" said Major... halfway through Kat's recount. She had been stopped after she had picked out the rug for Gramps and headed back to her own dimension.

"Well, what exactly seems to be the issue?" asked Kat

"Mostly how Minor can even call herself that. Why does she think she is less than I am? I mean I hate that I'm saying this, but I feel like she's right... but what does that mean exactly? We were so young... I just can't be sure how much of each personality we still have... but... she seemed fine talking to me right?" said Major

\*Oh boy. Just... think of her like one of the younger kids at the orphanage that doesn't understand why her friend just got adopted.\* "Well, to address your questions somewhat out of order. Minor has changed since she said those things. Some are more or less true, but I suspect the heart of the matter is that spell that was used to heal you.

"If I had to guess, her assumption is something along the lines of... I'll break it down with some simply math actually. So, say you have 200% of a soul between the two of you. When this happened, you got say 80 Shizuru, and Minor got 20, then you got 60 Haruka, and Minor got the other 40.

"This leaves you as mostly Shizuru, but with a lot of Haruka, and Minor who is twice as Haruka as she is Shizuru, but doesn't even have half the soul that you do. Personally I'd guess that in actuality some of what made each of you, you was burned up and used in the spell to keep you guys alive, so it might be more like... you got say, 80% Shizuru, Minor got 10, you got 30% Haruka, she got another 30% and the rest was burnt" said Kat

Major bit her lip struggling with the emotions flittering across her face. "I just... I don't like all this talk about her like she's less of a person. I mean she's right here in my arms" said Major

Kat felt a spark of anger burning in heart at this. \*Major! You go too far. You're the one in the wrong here. She IS less than she once was. Ignoring the fact that she's a voice in your head and treating her like an equal is going to do no one favours. How can you boil what I'm trying to tell you down to something so silly as,\*

\*'less of a person' Her soul was chopped up to keep you alive. Then she had to struggle as an unheard voice in your head for years because you couldn't accept the fact she was dead. Which sure, she wasn't, but then you come and tell me that you're 'uncomfortable' talking about what was done to her. \*

Kat kept her face a mask of calm, but it had a major crack. Her anger was starting to boil, and her eyes burnt with fire behind them. Her horns had started to have purple cracks running through them that bled the faintest traces of purple fire. Kat's aura that she normally kept a tight rein on was struggling against her control like a caged beast.

And Major had a front row seat. She could see it as Kat's face started to lose it's more standard smile into a mask that would make any courtier jealous... but Major had seen it transform before her eyes, not to mention the whole leaking flames issue.

Major didn't know if she should speak up or what. She recognised that something she had said had annoyed Kat greatly, but she just didn't understand what. In the end she bit the bullet. "I just... I don't understand why you are mad" whispered Major, partially to avoid Kat hearing, but even unempowered, Kat caught it. Major wasn't that quiet.

"You almost said it yourself. You don't understand" said Kat, her voice as calm as she could make it, but Major almost felt it cutting her like a knife. "Minor has been through a lot for you. I am trying, very very hard to give you some perspective into how she thinks, and the risk she has taken

"I haven't even gotten to the later realisations she's had, and yet you have gotten so fixated on the fact that I'm apparently talking bad about her. Major" the kitsune flinched at hearing her 'name' but Kat wasn't feeling any guilt over it as she continued "I am doing you a favour, and Minor a favour, trying to get you to UNDERSTAND, but you are so caught up in the idea that I'm thinking less of your sister that you can't even comprehend what's going on

"We are IN YOUR HEAD we had to get Enuco to cast a spell on me to come here, and then we literally had to fight our way through YOUR Nightmares, defences, and then a massive golem of what must have been regret

"Only for Minor to figure out that we also had to set a copy of you on fire and RIP HER IN HALF. Minor has gone WELL ABOVE AND BEYOND anything either of you should have had to experience in your young age" Kat felt a slit twinge at implying she was much older, but she was past that point. After

spending over an hour trying to go over the events in the tunnel, being interrupted multiple times, by Major despite having asked for her to avoid such a thing Kat charged right on.

"And now, now I find you sitting here and arguing semantics with me over HER CHOSEN NAME. I see it, I see every time you flinch when I call you Major. Imagine how it would feel to here that her sister is trying to call her something other than what she's asked for

"She has CLAIMED Minor as her name. She could never be Haruka again, and she was never Shizuru. Even Shizuka, was a name you wrapped yourself in to try and bind the wounds you were feeling

"Now when she finally has a name of her OWN one that has never been shared, you tell me that I'm the one lacking in RESPECT by calling her by it, or by explaining the likely reasons behind the name and how I can only guess the spell worked.

"Mostly propped up by things MINOR has told me of course. I don't cast spells of course, I don't even use mana." At this point Kat now had pulsing purple veins running across her wings, and her tail had a sharp purple outline.

Her kimono was starting to burn on the edges, around the sleeves and around any other edge of the material. The ring around her neck looked almost like a burning necklace of fire. Major would appreciate it more if it didn't flare up every time Kat raised her voice.

"Now. Even taking all of that into consideration. Minor's situation has CHANGED. I said that, multiple times. I wanted you to hear the whole story before I started answering questions that Minor really should answer herself

"I only did this because I thought you'd appreciate it you know. I doubted you wanted to wait till she woke up to find information about your long lost sister. I mean, I know that if anything happened to one of my two friends I'd been dying to hear what happened, as soon as I possibly could

"But no, instead, my word isn't good enough. I'm not taking the proper care. I'm being insensitive. Well you know what Major. I may be in your head right now, but if I have to I'll punish you when I get out of here. Enuke be damned. You need to stop and actually THINK a minute please"

When Kat finished speaking, she let out a long breath. As she did, a wave of fire exited her mouth, and the colour drained from her extremities. Her aura happily sat back down like a trained puppy that had done no wrong, and her clothes smoothed out.

"Now" said Kat, with an actually calm voice "I may have gone off more than was polite there, but you have to understand, I now know more about Minor than you do, and she isn't in a bad spot. She's fine just tired, and while I know you've been thrown into a hell of a thing as well, you need to understand that things are very different with Minor than they ever will be with anyone else"

Major gulped, with a look like a deer caught in the headlights. Her tails were all ramrod straight and bristled to their full size. Her ears were flat against her head and her face was pulled into a deep frown.

"I... you might be right. Perhaps it's time I wake up, or rest for real" said Major shakily.



Kat nodded. \*I almost wish I felt bad about going off like that, but Major needs to understand that things are very complicated, and she just isn't thinking about Minor, she's thinking about the sister that was lost all those years ago.\*

#### **Chapter 254: a Major... uncertainty**

Kat watched as Major stood around awkwardly for around thirty seconds "So... how is that waking up thing going?" asked Kat

"Um..." said Major looking more unsure then she had at any point up till now. "I have no idea. I- I mean I'm not tired, and... this is my dream right? So I should be waking up instead of trying for sleep, but... I don't feel weird or any sense that I could wake up if I wanted

"Is there perhaps anything you can do? Could you leave first and then let Enuko know to... what? Exactly, I don't know if it we quite got to that part... sorry" Major had the good grace to look mildly uncomfortable at the fact that Kat hadn't been able to get to that part of the recount.

Kat shrugged and thought about leaving, not expecting anything to come of it, but as soon as she started to concentrate on it, she could feel something reminiscent of a switch that sat in the back of her mind. It was strange, and almost felt like it sat in the gap where her spine and skull connected but that wasn't quite right.

\*Very strange...\* Kat examined it, and 'touched' it experimentally and felt it catch. \*Hmm clearly it requires some force behind it... why do I have this anyway? Did Enuko's spell put it there so I can leave whenever I want? Seems like something she would have mentioned.\*

Shaking her head, Kat looked towards Major and said "I think I can leave if you would like" said Kat

"Er, um, sorry, you make it sound like I'm kicking you out... I just... don't really know what else to do? I have a lot to think about and I think there is a good chance that to end this waking dream will require your presence in the real world, or perhaps for Enuko to end it herself. I mean no disrespect." said Major

Kat sighed, \*Yeah I believe you Major. It's clear that you are just a scared kid, which I suppose I can't blame you for. I just... looking through your memories gave me the impression you were a bit more put together... but I guess I can ignore that.\*

"Hmm, I wonder if I should wake Minor before I go... I don't wish to disturb her, but I'm unsure if I can see her again if I leave" said Kat

Major frowned upon hearing this "I suppose I know what you mean. I wasn't exactly thinking of that either. Based on what you are saying, it isn't entirely impossible that I won't be able to hear her once we leave either... I think we need to wake her for this"

Kat sighed but nodded "Ok, how do you want to do this?"

Major smirked at Kat's question "Well, I wonder if Minor still has one of Haruka's little quirks" said Major

Major reached out towards Minor's tails and carefully brushed aside the fur around the edge before pinching slightly at the very tip. The reaction was instant Minor yelped in surprise and jumped out of Major's lap, whipping around to see what had 'attacked' her.

Major grinned and said "Seems you haven't changed all that much"

Minor frowned and replied "Only because that trick works on you as well"

Now it was Major's turn to frown. "It does no such thing"

Minor then returned her own smug grin and drifted over to Kat to whisper in her ear, making sure to be as quiet as possible and said "Amelie found that one out in less than a day. She's the only one other than me who knows it works on Major. Major is a bit better at hiding the reaction than me"

Kat grinned and nodded. "You sound better"

Minor shrugged "A bit yeah, but I'm still quite tired. Why am I up exactly?"

"Well, I seem to have a switch in my mind I can activate to leave, and I thought it might be best to do so. I wanted to say goodbye to you, in person, so to speak before I did so, and perhaps ask if you think Major will be able to hear you once we wake up" said Kat

Minor bounced forward and hugged Kat "I think it will be fine. I can... sort of feel that something has changed now that Major is all up and about. We'll see when you get out but I think at the very least she should be able to hear me. It's like... there isn't quite a bridge between our two worlds but a connection that wasn't there before so I think it will be fine" said Minor.

"Ok, I'll go then, but stay safe Minor, and keep well" said Kat hugging the kitsune in turn, wrapping her tail around Minor a few times and gripping her tightly with her arms.

"Mhm" mumbled Minor.

\*Wait? Can I...\* Kat focused on her energy again. I really hope I don't need the system for this. Kat reached into her centre of power and felt what she was looking for. The template for her beacons.

\*Here we go.\*

Pushing her energy into the figure Kat felt a shudder run through her. "Step back a moment Minor" said Kat

Minor let go... slowly and unsure of what was happening. As she did so Kat's chest started to glow brightly, and project out a familiar icon. The mixed symbol she used for her beacon. The light slowly started to move away from her chest, expanding and solidifying into the glass like substance it was before.

The beacon hovered there in between Kat and Minor with Major watching from the side. "Here, this is yours" said Kat

Minor reached forward with a shaking hand and carefully grabbed the beacon in question. As soon as Minor touched it, the light dimmed and it dropped carefully into her palm. "Th-thank you" said Minor fighting off tears.

"No problem" said Kat. "I'll leave you with your sister now"

Minor ran up to Kat, hugging her once more "You can stay if you want" said Minor not really asking, but wanting the words to be said anyway.

"Hey" said Kat "I'm not going anywhere. I might even find a way to make you an accomplice. I'll just have to get some advice about that"

"Ok" said Minor hugging Kat tightly.

Smiling softly Kat prodded the switch, trying to flick it on. It resisted her casual attempts, so Kat brought more of her mental weight down upon it. The device seemed to creak, but was not quite willing to budge, as if it was being forcibly held in place by something else. Then a hand seemed to reach into Kat's mind. Blazing with fire, it grasped the switch and pulled down hard.

Kat felt her breath being ripped away from her. Everything faded to black for a second and it felt like she couldn't suck in air no matter how hard she tried. The moment stretched on as Kat's mind sped up in panic...

Until Kat felt a shock run through her entire frame, and then suddenly she was gasping for air, kneeling down on the floor of the infirmary with Enuco's haggard form over in the corner. "Is it done?" croaked the kitsune.

Kat recovered quickly from the lack of oxygen and looked over at Enuco. She was not in a great state. She was kneeling, hands affixed to the sigils as they were when she entered. Her tails dragging along the floor as if they had the life pulled out of them. She had bags under her eyes so dark that they almost looked fake to Kat's eyes.

Her ears drooped low, and the voice that she spoke with made it seem like she had drunk nothing in a week. It was a parched hollow sound. Looking around Kat found a glass of water, likely prepared earlier and grabbed it from the counter it rested on before handing it to Enuco.

As the kitsune reached out to grab it, she fell to her side. Kat kneeled down carefully and placed the glass in Enuco's shaking hand. Kat carefully guided the glass and hand towards the kitsune's mouth and let her drink slowly.

After barely a mouthful Enuco spoke again "Is it done?" still raspy with a tinge of desperation in there.

"It is done" said Kat "They should both be fine"

"Ah good" said Enuco curling her tails around herself "I... I just need to rest for a bit then. Don't mind me I???m not dying just yet-" Enuco was cut off with a yawn "But I cannot keep myself awake any longer. The spell was... eh it's not important. Please, watch over them while I rest... just... a bit... longer"

"Of course. I will do this" whispered Kat, but Enuco had already drifted off. Despite this, the kitsune gained a slight smile, so perhaps she did hear Kat's soft words in her ear.

## **Chapter 255: Reconnecting with the System**

Looking at the two unconscious bodies, Kat was rather at a lost as to what she was actually meant to do.

\*Sure, promise to watch over Major and Minor... er, Shizuru? But really, what actually am I doing?\*

\*I'm in a room with two unconscious bodies, in a house I don't know my way around, and man does that sound stranger in my head than I meant it to. Hey system are you actually there now?\*

Hello User Kat. D.E.M.O.N.S is functioning at accepted parameters. User Kat has ONE warning.

\*Um...? Ok? What is that warning?\*

User Kat was unavailable for 10 days. This has led to User Kat's debt theoretically expiring. However due to strange circumstances in acquiring your main Rank 2 skill and Emergency Beacon activation this has been held off.

User Kat will have 24 hours to finish duties here, then 24 hours in Home Dimension before being required to perform a job to pay of the remainder of User Kat's Debt

\*What! Ten days?! Quick, can you send a message to let the others know I am well?\*

User Kat's Accomplices have been notified. User Kat can send and receive messages at Rank 2.

User Kat has received the following message from Accomplice Sylvie and Accomplice Lily

"Hi Kat. Hopefully you see this soon. The system sent us a strange message saying that you were fine, had become rank 2, but that you couldn't talk to us. It's really strange, and when we ask why not it just keep insisting that you are fine... we aren't really sure what to think and we are getting a little worried but we'll be fine"

Additionally, an addendum was added to the message by Accomplice Sylvie

"Lily said she's fine. She isn't. She's freaking out in a major way. I've been keeping her company but don't let her know I told you.

Sylvie"

\*Well that's just great. Should I send a message back now or just wait till tomorrow? Eh, I'll send a quick one. System send the following back to them\*

"Hey guys, it's Kat. Finally, in contact again sort of. I have to do a few things first but I'll be home in 24 hours almost exactly we can talk more then."

Kat grimaced a little at her short message. It certainly didn't feel like she was away for ten day. \*This is the longest I've been away on a mission. Dammit, how did time get so distorted? No wonder Euko collapsed, the poor woman had been keeping that spell running for over a week...\*

\*I just don't understand where all the time went.\* Kat frowned but chose not to dwell on it any more.

\*Ok more importantly, what am I supposed to do with you guys.\* Kat first checked Shizuka's pulse, and held a hand near her nose to make sure she was still breathing. Once that was confirmed Kat moved on to do the same for Euko.

Once assured they were both at least breathing, Kat then had another decision to make. \*What do I actually do with you?\* Thought Kat as she stared down at Euko. \*Should I like... get her a bed or something? I mean, I don't want to leave her there on the floor, but I have no idea where everything is...\*

\*And if her house isn't super enchanted by this mysterious husband I keep hearing about then I'm actually a pixie. Though... if they are sufficiently over engineered maybe I'd be fine? I mean, Euko would be with me, I have her permission, and I'd just be taking her to her room...\*

\*That I don't know the location of, great. What about a blanket maybe? This room has nothing not even a single cupboard, probably so that she could get at everything to draw the sigils and runes everywhere.\*

Kat glanced from Enuco to Shizuka and back. \*Could maybe fit them both on that bed? It might be a bit tight but... no the tails would be an issue. Somebody will have tail in their face and the other will have tails hanging of the bed... and I'm not sure how ok that is?\*

Kat looked at her own tail flicking behind her. \*Hmm, my tail is always fine but I don't think I even get muscle cramps anymore, and sleeping on the ground that one time did nothing bad to me, so I probably shouldn't use myself as an example\*

\*Plus, even if I was to use the excuse that Enuco is much stronger than I am a fact I shouldn't forget is she was up ten days straight and needs a proper rest. Kat bit her lip. Ok, so she needs sleep, now am I ok leaving Shizuka here for a moment while I find a bed for her?\*

Kat looked over at Shizuka. The body was sleeping peacefully and looked much better than it had previously. Despite the fact that it had been ten days since she apparently went into their head to fix things the body in front of her was haggard yes, but not with one foot already in the grave.

"I'm not sure if you pair can hear me, but I need to get Enuco to bed. Don't worry if you don't see anyone when you wake up" said Kat before scooping Enuco up into her hands.

It was actually rather awkward. With Minor and Major they were small enough that her long arms and occasional assistance from her tail was more than enough to keep everyone bundled in her arms.

Enuco presented a problem. She just had so many tails and so much fluff that it was rather awkward to hold her in a proper hold. Carrying her princess style was Kat's first instinct, but with all the tails in the way Enuco was angled face towards Kat with tails splayed out in front.

It would be fine... ish, but Kat would be dealing with constantly bumping into them as she walked, and there was simply too many to take hold of like she would for Minor. \*Hmm, this is a challenge then I guess.\*

Kat considered carrying Enuco over her shoulder instead, but the tail thing became an issue. If Kat wanted to keep Enuco's head up high to prevent blood flow being an issue her tails would be blocking Kat's vision.

\*There's supposed to be one more way to safely carry someone I think... but what is it?\*

Kat scoured her memories for mentions of it but turned up nothing. She hadn't had to carry anyone any other way nor had she been carried by the third.

It did come up once, in conversation with Gramps when explaining ways to carefully move the other orphanage kids around but he never demonstrated it, only mentioning that there were three ways to safely carry someone.

\*Wait, is it just piggyback? Well, that's out the window because of my wings, but... I don't that was it... such a shame too... well... maybe that could work anyway? My wings will be a bit squashed and it certainly won't be comfortable for Enuco but... I think it's for the best.\*

Flattening her wings the best she could manage, Kat struggled to manoeuvre Enuco into position. After trying and failing to do so cleanly from the ground, Kat first lifted Enuco onto the bed then used her own tail and Enuco's in carefully placed positions to keep her sitting up.

Then she turned around and backed towards the kitsune before wrapping her arms around Enuco's legs and pulling her into a piggyback position. It was still rather awkward on her wings but it wasn't painful and at least she could get a proper hold on Enuco this way.

Stepping outside the door Kat looked left and saw hallway, and then right and saw... \*Arrows? What?\* Shrugging Kat followed the helpful signage. As she moved the arrow on the floor seemed to move with.

It twisted and turned as she neared cornered and after a few corridors, to rights and a left, Kat found herself outside of a sliding door decorated with lotus flowers. Well, that's what they looked like from afar, to Kat's eyes they were packed to the brim with runes.

\*Ah shit.\* Still despite her worries and softly glowing runes ambivalence, the arrow quite clearly pointed towards the door. There was just a slight catch. She couldn't see the handle anywhere.

\*What the hell do I grab?\* Kat took a step closer to take a better look and the door shook. Pausing in her motion, the door continued, sliding open to reveal a huge room that was surprisingly empty.

The only thing it really contained where a few obvious cupboards built into the wall and a truly massive bed. It could easily fit five people, and was a large circular shape taking up over two thirds of the massive room by itself.

The sheets was an almost identical shade to Enuco's hair, which, Kat felt a little odd but just shrugged it off. Carefully lowering the kitsune onto the bed, Kat pulled back the covers and tucked Enuco in before swiftly exiting the room and returning to the infirmary.

## **Chapter 256: Meditating or something IDK**

In the end, it took around twenty hours for the first signs of movement from Shizuka. During that time though, Kat had a few things of interest to keep her busy. The first thing she noticed was that her body was different.

Things were smoother than before in a major way. If before she was at the level of a professional gymnast, now she was well and truly in super human territory with no turning back. Rotating her arms and legs, she could almost feel the muscles gliding around the joints rendering the motion a strange ethereal quality when she walked now.

The same could be said of her wings. Instead of having all the muscles for them bunched up in one spot on her back, they instead seemed to have spread out across her back and the rest of her wings. Rather than flapping them as one large whole, Kat could now flex them almost as well as her tail.

The extra range of motion was limited to mostly around the top, but in addition to that, Kat noticed that she could also do more with her wings. Before, flapping up and down in time was all she could do, now however she could rotate them slightly and change the angle.

\*That's going to help with my flying a great deal.\* Kat also tried to check on her strength, but didn't really have a good way to test it. Eventually, after some testing, Kat realised that, while she wasn't

stronger demonic energy could leak into whatever she was carrying if she willed it producing some interesting affects.

The best example of this was something she did somewhat regret doing, but nobody saw her and nobody would know. She was testing her strength and found that lifting the bed with Shizuka on it was easy.

Lifting it with one hand was just as simple. Lifting it with a finger, the same... but also impossible. It took Kat a second to even realise what the problem was. She had been lifting the bed by the corner and instead of obeying the laws of physics and tilted at the midpoint it just happily stayed balanced on her finger.

It was difficult sure, and Kat felt the strain kick in almost instantly, but for a few seconds she was able to support the entire structure on the tip of her finger without it falling over. Kat was unsure what this meant exactly, but suspected it meant she would now slightly coat things she lifted with energy and then tie that back to her allowing for her to lift with her whole body even if the object was only attached to one part of it.

So obviously Kat did the same thing anyone else would do in this situation and tried to balance on her tail. To her surprise it worked perfectly. Kat flew slightly before lowering herself down onto her tail and coiling it a bit just to help ease the pressure along a greater length.

The plan worked like a charm, and Kat could build herself a sort of chair and pretend to meditate. \*Hey system, now that I've tested some things out, I'm still not sure what strange rank 2 ability you think I have. My upgrades... well they aren't as impressive as going from human to rank 1, but they are still pretty good. I just don't get what one would be considered strange.\*

User Kat's dream walking ability is well above Rank 2 standard ability. It's timely addition and considerable power is an anomaly.

Kat froze. \*Um? Pardon? Did you say MY dream walking ability? What are you talking about? \*

User Kat's Rank 2 ability is a variant Dream Walker ability. This ability normally appears in Rank 6 or higher demons, or with Rank 3 and higher sloth demons. To have received such an ability at Rank 2 from outside of your domain is an anomaly.

\*Wait hold on what? I don't have a dream walker ability though! That was part of Enuco's spell, I didn't do anything at all.\*

User Kat is mistaken. Summoner Enuco's spell ensured that the body belonging to ERROR did not awaken and further enhanced the mindscape allowing for more consequential actions to be taken within dreamscape.

\*Wait... so... I can enter dreams now or something?\*

User Kat is correct. True extent of variant Dream Walker is unclear at this time.

\*Huh... well... ok then.\* Kat looked down at Shizuka and bit her lip. \*I could test it? Nah I don't want to risk causing any trouble. Hmm, was that the switch I felt before?\*

Kat pushed her energy to that same place in the 'back' of her head.

The button was still there. She could feel it and gave it a slight poke. She felt the switch shudder slightly but nothing else happened. \*Well dam I guess I do have that kind of power.\*

After Kat finished identifying that, she tried to get some rest of her own. She moved over to the wall and altered her tail chair a bit so that she could lean against it and take some of the pressure of, spreading it more evenly around her body.

Kat shut her eyes and started to go to sleep when something strange happened. She could feel her body falling asleep, but her mind seemed... strange. Instead of blacking out completely it felt more like she was underwater, and she could almost feel her body.

Trying to move slightly made ripples in the 'pond' this amused Kat slightly, but when she tried to ponder it more thoroughly, she found that no thoughts would form. In a panic, Kat jolted awake.

The 'pond' disappeared as she through her eyes open. Looking around there was nothing out of place and Shizuka was still sleeping peacefully. What was that?

Due to User Kat's Dream Walker, User Kat appears to have achieved a low level of Demonic Meditation without training

\*Um... what?\*

Demonic Meditation – A substitute for sleep that most Demons are trained in. This ability requires only a minor amount of training and is sometimes trained before even reaching Rank 1. Demons that haven't tried it before Rank 4 will pick it up as a Rank 5 ability which is considered a large waste of potential. Thus, most Demons train it up before.

Counter to this however, some factions believe that you get a superior version of Demonic Meditation if you unlock it at Rank 5. Data on this is inconclusive, as most Demons that reach Rank 5 train their Demonic Meditation and thus it improves. Insufficient numbers are forced to unlock the ability at Rank 5 to properly compare.

\*Huh... and so... is it always like that? With a pond and the ripples?\*

No. User Kat seems to have Water Class meditation. This is likely a related to User Kat's Ice attributed Demonic Flame.

\*Right... so is this good?\*

No known Demonic Meditation technique is considered superior to any other. Arguments have been made but the most commonly held opinion between those researching the topic is that with time and training all Demonic Meditation types are equal but not necessarily suited to the individual. Thus finding a matching Meditation is best.

\*So... is mine considered matching? Is that something I should get around to at some point?\*

User Kat likely has a compatible Demonic Meditation as it manifested as a side effect from a Rank ability.

\*What other techniques are there?\*

That information requires a higher Rank to access.



\*Welp... ok then.\*

Thus Kat sunk back into her strange meditation. It didn't seem to be all that useful. When she sunk into the waters her thoughts slowed and things didn't come together easily. Her mind was forced to drift on with the slight whirl of the water around her.

Kat couldn't feel her body properly when in the water, it made her almost feel like she was one and the same with the pond. It was however, supremely calming once she had gotten used to it, and as time passed, she started to sink further and further into the state.

And it was in her meditative state that Kat spent the majority of her twenty waiting hours. Even for her it would seem she needed to recentre herself and get some proper rest just the same as Major, Minor, and Enuco did. Despite her body's ability to continue onward, her mind was worse for wear than it seemed.

As such Kat's psyche happily gave itself to the pond. Spreading out, and recombining and healing the stress she hadn't realised had been accumulating in her mind. The water seemed to help cleanse her tense muscles.

After those twenty hours of rest, ripples started to permeate Kat's pond. When they appeared Kat's drifting consciousness seemed to scramble to put itself together, which the main body of thought could only consider strange. That was until Kat's mind started to awaken itself and noticed where the ripples were coming from. Forward, and slightly to the right. Exactly where Shizuka had been sleeping.

Kat threw her eyes open.

### **Chapter 257: a Minor Accomplice**

Shizuka seemed to shiver as her fur and hair rapidly flicked between Major's light blue and Minor's deep red. It seemed to strobe, with rings of red and blue moving out towards the tips of her hair and tails pulsing with slowly increasing speed.

Kat watched fascinated as the colours started to blur together even to her advanced eyes, looking much closer to a strange light grey instead of either one. Then all of a sudden, the motion halted and the colour flashed to light blue as if it had never been anything else.

Kat held her breath and waited as presumably Major shifted in the bed. Kat stood up and moved to their side as silently as she could, intending to allow Major to sleep more if it was necessary.

When, a second later Major's eyes opened, Kat let herself breathe again. "What... what happened my head is killing me" said Major?

"How much do you remember?" asked Kat in a soft and gentle voice as she could manage, which, consider her work at the orphanage, and her new demonic position, nearly put Major right back to sleep.

"Ergh, Kat what are you doing here" asked Major?

\*Welp, with a response like that it has to be Major.\* "Do you remember the dream you were just in?" asked Kat still keeping her voice soft.

Those words shook away and sleepiness that might have still been present. Major practically through herself into a sitting position, and whipped her head around to look Kat in the eyes "That was all real?!" said Major

Kat nodded and Major seemed to take this in stride, opening her mouth to say something else but before anything more than a slight wisp of air could make its way out of Major's mouth she completely froze... and then broke down crying "I-I... I can h-he-ar her" sobbed Major grasping onto Kat's outfit and pulling her in close.

Kat let herself travel towards Major and hugged the crying girl, and starting stroking her hair the way she did with Minor. This seemed to only cause Major to hug Kat tighter as she continued to cry her eyes out.

At this point, Kat could hear steps approaching from outside. \*Great, I bet Enuco is going to storm in here, and I swear if she attacks me I am not going to be happy.\* As if summoned, Enuco threw open the door and took in the scene. Kat was glad however that, she took the extra fraction of a second required to realise that Major was grasping tightly onto Kat and that she was repeating it was all real over and over again gave some better indication as to what was going on.

Enuko lowered the arm that had been raised in a strike and let her features droop proceeding to stand in the doorway like a lost fox. \*What are you doing.\* Kat glared at Enuco trying to communicate with her eyes so she didn't interrupt Major.

This seemed to get the wrong idea across as Enuco sighed and started walking away. Kat gave a sharp shake of her head and redoubled her glare. This time Enuco seemed to get it and slowly walked towards the pair as if moving too fast would shatter the illusion before her.

No such thing happened of course, and when she arrived in tail range Kat slowly snaked her tail behind Enuco and pulled her into the hug as well. As soon as Kat had both kitsune in her arms Enuco started crying as well. Kat just smiled and pulled them tighter, nothing needed to be said.

Eventually, it was Major who broke the hug, looking up between Enuco and Kat, stating once more "I can h-hear her" with somewhat less tears, though they hadn't entirely vanished.

Kat and Enuco smiled and shared a glance "I see you did as I asked" said Enuco

"Of course," said Kat "This was my most important summoning to date. I had to succeed"

Major made a squeak of affirmation. "Though, I don't want this to sound rude, but can Minor take over the body somehow now? Or is she just a voice in your head for the moment?" asked Kat

"Eh... um, we're not sure" said Major

"That's ok, I just wanted to ask because I have to leave soon" said Kat

That caused both foxes to freeze in place. "What?" asked Enuco, the first to bring herself back into the moment

"Well... so, hang on one second" said Kat \*System how much can I explain?\*

User Kat is allowed to explain everything except the systems existence, and is asked to refrain going into significant details of home world when speaking with the two Entity before you.

\*Ok thanks.\* "Right, so I wasn't sure what I could or couldn't say for a second, but I'm actually fine to talk about it. So, I currently owe a debt to the major powers of the demon world. It's nothing major, just paying back what was invested in me to get a start."

Enuko nodded along as Kat continued "But, the deadline was for one month, and with the extra time I spent here I've gone over that limit" Enuko instantly started to speak up but Kat charged forward ???BUT, because of the strange circumstances I've been given twenty four hours here, then another twenty four at home before I get summoned again"

Enuko chewed on her lip for a moment before she began speaking "Can I somehow pay that off? I mean, I was going to give you something"

\*System? Can she just give me money?\* Thought Kat as she sped up her thought process so as not to just stare off into space for too long

User Kat is able to be granted items from Summoner Enuko, however as it was not used in the summoning process it cannot be converted to Embers.

\*Ok um... what? Why not?\*

Converting into Currency is reserved for higher Rank demons to prevent market manipulation.

Kat felt her mouth threaten to drop open but she couldn't risk Enuko thinking something strange was going on so she held it close. \*That's actually a problem?\*

Of course. The Greed faction has routinely tried to engage in it and as such the other large Organisations voted multiple policies in to prevent it.

\*That... that makes a lot of sense actually but I kind of wish that it didn't.\* "Um, sort of?" said Kat "You can offer me things but I don't have the required status to convert whatever you might give me into what I need to pay off my debt"

"Huh, that's strange... but I suppose it makes some degree of sense. Alright, is there anything I can get you then?" asked Enuko

\*Hey system... can I ask her for lessons on how to use my fans? Would that stop her from eventually being punished for summoning me about a task?\*

Yes. Lessons can be considered payment for Beacon Contracts.

\*Is it an issue that I'd have to come back though?\*

No. D.E.M.O.N.S is willing to take on the cost of transporting User Kat to lessons if those lessons are a payment for a Contract.

\*Well damn. Ok then.\* "Um, if it's possible, could you teach me how to wield a set of fans? I don't have them on me, I left them at home, but when I'm free I'd love to come back" asked Kat

Enuko looked thoughtful for a moment "Well, I can't personally teach you anything really. I don't use them, but I do know someone who might be able to if that is acceptable. How will we arrange the time?" said Enuco

\*Um... system can I make Minor an accomplice?\*

That is acceptable. User Kat will have no remaining Accomplice slots if you do this.

\*Go for it then.\* Major froze. "Kat? My sister wants to ask if you are responsible for the burning letters she can see in front of her"

\*Can I answer that question? Even in front of Enuco?\*

Yes. Now that User Kat has an Accomplice in this Dimension the rules regarding what User Kat aren't as strict.

Kat felt like slamming a hand into her face but settled for answering Major "Yes, that's my doing. She'd be considered an accomplice of mine by the system"

"What are you getting her into?" asked Enuco. Her voice was calm but her eyes held a sharp gleam.

"Nothing dangerous I assure you" said Kat "It will allow Minor to contact me whenever she wants. It is only something that became available to me recently"

Enuko pursed her lips "Ok. I'll trust you" she said but each word looked like she was trying to cough up rusty nails, even as she tried to keep it as pleasant as she possibly could.

"Though... can you make me one as well?" asked Enuco

Kat shook her head "I am afraid that all of my slots are taken up. Perhaps in the future I can, but for now, I cannot"

Enuko nodded and mumbled "I'm not sure if I prefer it this way or not" \*I'm not sure if she realises I can still hear her... but surely she has fought people with really good hearing right? This seems like a bad habit.\*

## **Chapter 258: THE RETURN**

"Well" said Kat hoping to break the silence "Is there anything else you guys want to do before I leave? I don't want you to think I've just secured payment and run off, but I really will have to leave soon and get on my way"

"Wait!" said Major "We want to try something first... hang on"

A look of concentration passed over Major's face. It was scrunched together and her tails were twirling around each other as if in agitation. Kat didn't notice Major was holding her breath until finally after a minute of trying Major started panting and trying to regain the lost oxygen

"What was that?" asked Kat and Enuco together

"We're trying to see if I can swap places with... Minor" said Major, carefully stating Minor's name with only a slight shiver.

"Well I suspect you are going about it wrong" said Euko

"What do you mean?" asked Major

"Well, I don't want you to think I'm equating Minor to an evil spirit but... when dealing with evil spirits and possessions if you want to avoid them taking over you need to keep your mind alert or asleep. The most dangerous time for someone like that is when they are relaxing and trying to go to bed

"As such I suspect, if Minor focuses on trying to gain control while Shizu- how do you want to be addressed Shizuru? Wait we can get to that later. The one in control should relax while the one only in the mind should try to force the body to move" said Euko

"Ok let's try that" said Major as she went to lay back down on the bed. Once she was there, she tried to relax but she was still feeling excited. The joy of knowing her sister had returned still bubbling under the surface.

After a moment Major tilted her head to the side and said "Minor wants you to use your calming aura to see if that helps"

Kat nodded and carefully pushed some of her aura over to Major. Major's eyes went wide "Woah, ok... this might be really useful. I can... we both can... sort of see the barrier between us. It's so strange and I think... wait... ok, hang on... on three" said Major

Major didn't say anything else out loud, but five seconds later her fur shifted. It happened slowly. The body seemed to relax further sinking into the bed more as the fur swapped slowly, as if a fresh coat of paint was being rolled out.

Once the blue had changed completely to red, the body, now likely Minor sat up. Even the scar that Major had seemed less prevalent. Minor's eyes went wide as she moved, and then ran and attached herself to Kat.

"Aura please.... it's still too much" said Minor with a shaking voice.

Kat frowned. \*I do have my aura on you, that's how you managed to swap.\* Still Kat complied, pressing her aura further towards Minor, who visibly relaxed. "Thank you... this is all... quite a lot and... and the aura helps. I have to... I have to concentrate to stay in control" said Minor

"What do you mean?" asked Euko

"Eh... um... well, so when Major is in control it's natural, I can tell... like... um she just sort of is? But when I'm in control... it's um... sort of like I have to grip tightly onto the inside of the body. Like... like I'm about to be pulled out. And with everything being so... real? I guess... it's very hard. I'm not sure I could do this at all without Kat's help" said Minor

"That's ok" said Euko carefully walking forward to stroke Minor's hair. Minor kept a hold on Kat's kimono the whole time but seemed to happily nuzzle into Euko's hand as she patted her head. "We can practice"

"Well, would you guys like to practice a few more times before I go? It does have to be soon, but I can stay for a bit longer" said Kat

"I-it's fine" said Minor "You've already spent plenty of time with me, and you really need to go so you don't get in trouble, so it's fine"

Kat gave Minor a hug "Ok. Don't be afraid to message me using the system then. Goodbye to all of you" said Kat as she stood back further away.

Enuko nodded "I will arrange that teacher for you"

Minor swapped to hugging Enuko and slowly let her control slip, changing back into the blue haired form of Major. "And I'll see you later as well. I think when you're talking to me privately, you should go with Shizuru, but too many diplomats know me as Shizuka so in public you'll have to go with that"

Kat nodded and smiled. \*I'll remember.\* "Goodbye" \*system do the thing.\*

And flames enveloped Kat.

After the rush of brilliant fire Kat found herself back in her room. The bed looked freshly made and there was no dust to be seen. Well, ok, she had super vision and could see that a few spots were missed in the corners, but no human would be able to tell. Taking a deep breath, Kat carefully opened her door.

The house was quiet though. She could hear faint sounds of typing coming from Callisto's room but nothing else. \*Interesting. Does that mean that only Callisto is home?\* Heading downstairs, Kat found what she expected, an empty house. Checking the various rooms just reinforced this fact.

In the end the only rooms she hadn't entered were Sylvie's, Callisto's, and Vivian's, but that was plenty. She boosted her hearing outside each door and still only Callisto's room leaked any sound.

Knocking on the door in question Kat heard the sound of typing stop, followed by the shuffling of cloth as Callisto presumably stood up and made her way over to the door. When it opened to reveal Callisto, in her standard maid attire Kat smiled. "Hello Callisto I'm back" said Kat

"Of course, it would indeed seem that you have returned to us, however it falls to me to inform you that the other three are currently not on the premises. They decided to go shopping for ingredients to celebrate your return and I suspect they will be back in an hour or so." Said Callisto

"Huh, I'm surprised they wanted to go to the trouble" said Kat

Callisto nodded "Yes, they were rather happy to hear from you the other day. Despite the assurance they supposedly received from that system of yours they were not fully convinced until you sent that message.

"Personally, that message of yours isn't really confirmation of anything to my eyes. It could just as easily send it considering the lack of information, but I did not wish to share my doubts with them. Alas, it seems that you are present and the message was from you so it seems my worry this time would be labelled as unfounded" said Callisto

Kat tried not to rub her head in embarrassment. She half succeeded by keeping her hands still, but having her tail start the process of smoothing out her perfectly smooth hair. "Yeah... sorry about that it was a bit of a strange thing. I promise that during this next job I have to go on soon I'll remember to message you guys more often" Kat said.

Callisto shrugged slightly "You'll need to explain that to them not me, however I am interested in this new ability of yours" said Callisto

"Ah... well... apparently I can enter dreams sort of? I don't know how it works" said Kat

"Interesting interesting. That has some rather complicated implications. Do you physically enter the dream or do you connect your mind with the target to influence the brain into thinking you are also included within the dream?" asked Callisto

"Ah... I don't know? I mean... to me it's like I'm really there but... that might have just been the spell? Um... can we do this later though? I'll explain it to everyone I promise" said Kat, somewhat nervous to meet the others after bailing on them last time and dropping out of contact.

"Sure thing. Though, I will say, could you do me the favour of cleaning up the kitchen downstairs? Just to have it done before the others return" asked Callisto

\*What? But the kitchen was completely clean.\* "Are you sure it needs cleaning?" asked Kat

Callisto shrugged and said "Perhaps not, but if I'm going to be cooking a lot for the celebration, it would be nice to know everything is clean"

Kat shrugged. "Sure thing. It will give me some more time to relax"

"Thank you" said Callisto, right before closing the door in Kat's face and returning to whatever it was she was doing.

\*Right... Callisto is just like that I suppose. Maybe she's a little mad I disappeared in her own way?\* Those were Kat's thoughts as she headed downstairs to start on her assigned cleaning.

## **Chapter 259: A Tail is Always Handy**

Kat was just finishing the last of her cleaning when she heard Vivian's car pull up. \*I guess I should go and help. Go abuse my super strength to carry in the groceries.\* Kat put away the cleaning supplies quickly abusing her speed just a little before heading out to help the others.

As soon as she opened the door, she felt a hug against her side. Looking down Kat found that Sylvie was waiting by the door for her and had taken the chance to get the first hug in. Sylvie had on a nice but plain silvery dress that matched her hair. Picking Sylvie up Kat pulled the little girl in close.

"Welcome back Kat" said Sylvie before nuzzling into Kat's shoulder.

As Kat raised her gaze to the others, she found Lily practically launching herself at her. As Lily jumped, her dark red shirt fluttered in her self-generated breeze, and her baggy grey pants clung to her ankles. Kat let out a little chuckle as she opened her other arm bringing Lily into the hug as well. "I was so w- I mean welcome back, yes" said Lily nervously.

Kat used her tail to stroke Lily's hair slowly. "Hey it's fine. I'm back now, I wasn't in any danger" said Kat

"I- I know but... it was supposed to be an emergency and I was so worried" said Lily before catching herself when she noticed Sylvie grinning at her.

"I m-mean that it-'s about time y-you got back" shuddered Lily. Kat just smiled and hugged Lily tighter.

Vivian clicked her tongue and pretended to be annoyed with her hands on her hips, a slight frown on her face but with a spark of joy in her eyes. "What am I, chopped liver? You both run straight into Kat's waiting arms. Sometimes I wonder where I went wrong raising you lot" said Vivian

Sylvie poked her tongue out at Vivian, a rare sign of her true age, and said "But Lily's parents live over the fence. You didn't raise her at the very least, and we've only known you a month" said Sylvie.

\*Damn, it really hasn't been long that I've known them. Though be a bit fairer Sylvie it's closer to two months now.\* Vivian straightened her posture slightly then leaned forward. "Oh? Did I teach you to backchat me like that?"

"Nope, I learnt it from Callisto" replied Sylvie, but Kat doubted the truth of that statement. Callisto was nothing if not polite to Vivian, so it was more likely she'd been having fun with Callisto and had learnt a few new tricks.

"Ah, the devil herself has betrayed me and gone back on our bargain. How could she turn my own daughter against me like this" gasped Vivian, pretending to be shocked.

Kat decided she'd had enough of the verbal sparring and decided to take matters into her own hands. Pulling Lily and Sylvie in as tightly as was safe, Kat picked them both up carefully, and noticed her energy spread around them.

Once she was sure their weight would be supported Kat carried them over to Vivian and wrapped her tail around the woman in question pulling her into the group hug. The group stayed like that for a few minutes before Vivian insisted, she at least be allowed to get the ingredients that needed to be kept cold in the fridge.

Kat was tempted to just use her fire, but stopping some things from being affected, and controlling the temperature of her flames were two very separate issues that she didn't want to test the limits of just yet.

"Just slide everything onto my tail then. I'll take it all inside and then we can sit down together" said Kat

"Oh, you don't need to go to that much trouble" said Vivian "A couple of bags won't be hard on us"

Kat smirked and walked over to the car. She started to lift it slowly and watched as she felt the energy cover the car she was lifting. Holding every shopping bag and the car up at once seemed to surprise the other three sufficiently well.

"Wait... but how? You are holding the entire thing up by the bumper and I am well enough aware that it shouldn't be strong enough to hold the entire weight of the car" said Vivian

Kat smiled "Slight upgrade at rank 2. I might not be much stronger but now when I lift something, I can lift it with my entire body rather than just the part of it doing the lifting. It really helps spread out the weight"

"Sure..." said Vivian "Can you put the car down now though? You've made your point"

Kat nodded, returning the car to the ground and stretching her tail out before winding it through as many bags as she could. Kat managed around half of the shopping at once, and found that rather than weight, the length of her tail was the issue.



Mainly that the bags would push up against each other and she needed to prevent them from slipping by curling up the end of her tail enough that they stayed put even when walking. Kat quickly walked to the kitchen careful not to go quite so fast in case she damaged the supplies. Dropping them off on the kitchen table Kat went back and grabbed the rest.

Vivian managed to grab two bags of her own before Kat made it back. Sylvie had picked up a smaller bag with snacks in it and Lily grabbed one consisting mostly of lettuce and a few other vegetables with Kat grabbing the last three.

When they were all spread out on the table Callisto appeared at the bottom of the stairs and instantly got to work as if she'd known they were ready for her before they did. While Callisto got to work Lily and Sylvie worked together to pull Kat over to the couch.

Vivian attempted to help Callisto in the kitchen a bit but was picked up by Callisto surprisingly easily and deposited on the couch next to Sylvie. "Well Kat, tell us about why we couldn't contact you for over a week" requested Sylvie

"Well, I can, but before that I should be clear that I have to head out again in twenty-four hours" said Kat

"What!" shouted Lily indistinctively grabbing onto Kat. Even once she realised what she'd done she decided to hold Kat's arm tighter instead to emphasize the point.

"Well... if you remember there was a debt I'm supposed to be paying off. Apparently I'm already overdue, but because of what happened which" Kat held up a hand when Vivian opened her mouth "I will explain, I really am not just dodging it, so anyway, my debt was overdue and so I was given 24 hours back in the other dimension, to finish things up, then the same here to... well I'm not sure really? Rest?"

Kat saw Sylvie looking upset and Lily annoyed. Vivian was a bit more passive, but Lily and Vivian were both about to start laying into her, she could almost feel it. So to pre-empt them Kat continued speaking "But! But, this time I'll be able to message you guys. I won't be out of contact again. That was very a very extreme situation and it was because I didn't have the system for a bit there, but I promise to message you all every night before I go to bed ok? We can chat if you want but I'll keep you updated I swear"

Kat saw that Lily was still unhappy with this, and Sylvie was doing her best to appear like she wasn't unhappy with this, while Vivian seemed content with the knowledge that Kat would be checking in. Callisto... was chopping carrots with extreme speed and precision.

When Lily was the first to speak up, Kat had hoped it would be a pleasant question. Instead it was something that really showed she was too smart for her own good. "So, if you didn't have the system, does that mean you were at risk of actually dying?"

"It wasn't like that I swear" said Kat, making sure to not outright deny it as she had, had similar doubts.

Lily however, certainly noticed "Really? Well, that just means that the system went away for a reason. So? How safe were you?" asked Lily

"Fairly safe" said Kat

"Specifics please" said Lily

Kat sighed. \*I guess now is a good a time as any to go over everything. How much should I leave out though? I was literally inside of Major's head and I'm not sure how ok I feel with just airing out her various memories. Hmm, guess I can gloss over those sections for the most part and focus on the tunnel and the stuff after that.\*

"Well, I guess I should start at the beginning then, do you remember Minor? The kitsune I met a while back? Well, it's like this...

### **Chapter 260: You Need to have a High IQ To Understand the Intricacies of Dream Walking, No Really it's...**

As Kat told everyone her story of the most recent adventures to everyone, Kat noticed something. Every time she glossed over some details either to respect Minor and Major's privacy or just to make things seem slightly less dangerous, Sylvie would tap twice on the tail that Kat had wrapped around her.

At first Kat didn't pick up on what Sylvie was doing, and her track record wasn't perfect, but it was much better than chance. Once Kat started to check when she was being tapped it became extremely clear what it was being used for.

Halfway through the story Callisto brought out the first of the food. It was an elaborate spread of various fruits all cut up in intricate ways. A watermelon had been carved into a carving of Kat herself,

With the smaller pieces that had been taken off in the carving, being made into copies of everyone else except Callisto. It took Kat a second to realise though, once Callisto had placed down all the dishes, that Callisto had hidden her outfit in a number of things.

The apple slices were mimicking the frills that lined her sleeves and collar, then the grapes made up the buttons covering her neck, and if you looked at the right angle, the little pieces of fruit that seemed to be randomly placed on the table?seemed to have Callisto giving a shushing gesture.

Kat was half convinced she was mistaken about that last one, but Callisto had very deliberately moved the table once Kat had noticed it in a half-minded way during her story, grinned at her reaction, and then ever so slightly adjusted the table destroying the sightline completely.

In the end though, everyone on Earth made for better audience members than Major did... or perhaps it was just that they were used to her stories now so they were willing to wait for the whole thing to be over.

When it was finished, it was Callisto that spoke up first "So do you know the specifics relating to your dream ability?"

Kat shook her head "Nope. It's really murky as to how much the spell Enuke cast actually did. She was still stuck in it at the end, and it didn't seem right to grill her on everything. Plus, she said she was just copying someone else's work, so I'm not sure if even she knows"

Callisto nodded and went back to checking on the food that was still being cooked. How anyone thought they needed more food after the table of fruit, Kat was unsure, but when she asked about it, she was simply assured that it was part of the spirit of things.

"I think it's a been strange that all took ten days" said Lily "Even if you have shortened the explanation from us, they don't seem to be overly shortened in my estimation. Even doubling the theoretical time that each even took would lead to nothing more than maybe five days

"And that is including sleep times which I take it you didn't need to do?" Kat nodded "Right, so I actually have a thought about why it might have taken so long, if you would be interested to hear it?"

Everyone nodded along curious as to what Lily had come up with. "Right so, I can think of two ways this spell might theoretically work. Relying mostly on the knowledge from that time Nixilei explained it to Kat,

"Magic is a little like writing out a strongly worded letter and expecting the world to follow through. Each ring is like a sentence, and when you add them together you get a paragraph. For intense things you need multiple paragraphs to make a story, is everyone following me so far?" Everyone nodded, even Callisto back in the kitchen.

"Right so with that in mind, I can make some assumptions about the 'story' that Enuko was trying to tell with all of her sigils. Either, she is making the dream world more real, thus allowing actions to have more of a pronounced effect.

"Or she is instead first picking someone up and placing them inside someone else's head, then using the spell to keep them 'trapped' in them for lack of a better word, until such a time as they wish to leave

"Now, I think that the most likely scenario is that she is making things more real, and that Kat was able to join in with her own power. Now, when things got made real, I bet a chunk of mana was used to finalise the scene

"And every time Kat moved scenes, what actually happened was that she destroyed part of the spell, which then suspended them in time, until the next scene could be built, before releasing them once again. This allowed for such a large amount of time to pass" said Lily

Kat and Vivian seemed to chew on this information. Going over it, but not really reaching any true conclusions with the information. They just didn't have enough to go off of. Sylvie on the other hand seemed to understand perfectly, but was hesitant to agree with the information.

Callisto was ready with an alternative suggestion "I believe we are operated with severely stunted data. It is just as likely that it is intended to lock the being's consciousness inside the one mind and that the additional time that was used was entirely generated during the entry and exit procedures"

Instead of folding in on herself the way she had when criticised at school by teachers and some mean-spirited students, Lily seemed to almost gain a few centimetres in height and start to glow. "You're right, that is entirely possible with the information available except for the fact that we know Kat has her own dream walker ability. If it took a significant amount of time to transfer the conscious it would be essentially pointless.

"Imagine if Kat took even just ten hours instead of a few days to enter a dream. That length of time would allow the target to awaken before Kat could enter their dreams, and the system very specifically said it was a dream walking ability not a mind invasion or mind walking one"

Seeing Lily so pleased with herself Kat brought her into a hug. She let out a slight squeak but smiled at Kat, before looking back over for Callisto's counterpoint. "I can concede that, but perhaps we can look at this another way.

"If we assume once again that it is the solidification of the dream area that the spell aims for, perhaps it takes a certain amount of time to properly reinforce that. Even with Kat's ability bypassing that, perhaps it is time limited anyway for safety" said Callisto

"But what about Minor's appearance when Kat first arrives in the dream. She didn't seem to believe an extended period of time had passed since Kat had arrived" said Lily

"Ah, but...

Kat allowed herself to start tuning out Lily and Callisto's argument as it devolved into speculation above her head. It wasn't as if she couldn't participate if she really wanted to, but this was a great chance to relax and hug the adorable Sylvie while hanging out with everyone and Kat just couldn't find it in herself to butt into the conversation once Callisto and Lily really started going.

Even still, it did warm her heart to see Lily actually arguing with someone. \*She might not have realised, but normally once she got into her 'this is what my research says' voice she just curls up when someone other than I contradicted her. I'm glad she's gotten so comfortable with the others.\*

\*She's been doing better since school finished... though I think it has more to do with somehow being inducted into our family here.\* Kat winced at the thought, feeling someone bad for thinking that Lily was more part of her own new family than she was a part of her own.

\*I still don't like her parents though. Even if I feel a bit bad for excluding them in that thought. But really, I haven't seen them actually SUPPORT her in anything. Gramps has supported me more than they've done for her and he has a whole orphanage to look after. Honestly it's-\* Kat cut her negative thoughts on Lily's parents off, focusing back on the room.

Sylvie noticed when Kat shook herself out of her own mind and snuggled in closer pressing in closer to Kat's chest with a big smile on her face enjoying the closeness of everyone. She was even using her other hand to keep Vivian from sitting further away and 'giving them space'.

\*Well at the very least. I'm glad with my story and then Callisto and Lily's investigation they've managed to forget that I have to leave in a day.\* As Kat finished that thought she felt a shiver down her spine. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Vivian give the slightest shake of her head.

\*Welp. I tried.\*