

DEMONS 341

Chapter 341: What's Wrath's Deal?

A short time later, Uncle stopped in front of a moderately sized tent that was around the size of Vivian's yard. It was two very similar shades of pink that made Kat wonder if a normal human would be able to tell the difference. This was prompted by a second thought that Vivian probably could, and then a third once again, wondering if a normal human would be able to tell the difference.

"Just in here lasses" said Uncle pulling on one of the seams between the colours, easily opening up to reveal the inside which was a simple arena with what looked to be a kind of white concrete. It wasn't quite marble like, and it had a very rough texture with small bumps across its surface. The more Kat looked, the more Kat felt it was concrete despite its colour, still she walked inside and examined the area.

How did Uncle open that 'door' anyway? Can you just peel open any seam? Is it perhaps some hidden key system? If you have it you can open the door anywhere? Or is it that one specific section that opens and you need to know which? Adding to that... is the door flexible now? Or is that one section only flexible when someone opens it.

These were the thoughts running through Kat's head as she walked slightly off to the side. She could see something on the ground over towards the far right, and while it didn't seem like much, it was at least more interesting than the rest of the area.

"Woah!" said Kamiko "It's so much space all held up by just one little pole in the centre. I can see why Wrath likes these kinds of things. They must be easy to put up, they certainly provide a lot of space, and I bet they aren't so hard to move around either. I do wonder if they cost much but I suppose you probably shouldn't tell me"

Uncle shrugged "It's not actually that secret lass. They are maybe a bit more expensive than a house of the same size I think. Honestly, it's buying the land that really gets you"

Kamiko nodded vigorously for the umpteenth time today and it made Kat wonder if there was bobble head ancestry in Kamiko's line or if perhaps she would be doomed to have neck problems. "Yeah, I know I've heard that's a really big problem. I mean, we have a nice house, but I know mum and dad were actually really old when they decided to have kids. More like... I dunno if they actually count as retired and mum won't tell me how old she actually is, but I know dad is like... oh what was it... it's a few hundred years I know... aw well not important.

Huh. I wonder if that's normal. Do demon parents wait a long time before kids? Does the fact that both her parents have succubus ancestry play a role in it? So many questions I know would be really rude to ask but... I've basically been thrown into a whole new world that I do have to interact with. Honestly, turning into a demon wasn't half as confusing as trying to find out demon social norms. At least I could get all my freaking out over things done with Lily and move on. Now I have to wonder endlessly what's normal and what is not.

Uncle clapped his hands together, and Kat whipped her head around to face him properly. Only to realise... she wasn't sure he had hands. Which begged the question of where said sound came from...

but Kamiko was also looking at him now, which prompted Uncle to speak. "So, I'll now be explaining to you lasses what we are doing fer your punishment here at Wrath.

"You'll both be going up against some of the newer recruits at Rank 1. Now, before you complain that either, fighting a Rank 1 is beneath you, or you say that you don't know anything about fighting because you never trained, let me say that both of those things are fine, and kind of the point.

"What I you will be assisting in demonstrating, will be what happens when younger and weaker opponents go up against a stronger foe. If either of yer prove competent enough we'll have you fighting two or more at once and seeing how that goes.

"Once a fight is over, we'll have you pair switch out and I'll heal yer if it's necessary. That should give you time to rest so that the fights aren't really a battle of attrition. Do you have any questions?"

"Yes" asked Kat "What are we fighting to. First blood? Injury? Surrender?"

Uncle gave a chuffing laugh. "Someone's eager. Really though I suppose it depends. What do you want it to be?"

Kat glanced over at Kamiko, and was someone unsure how to move forward when for once, Kamiko was keeping quiet. *Well... how do I want to go?* "Honestly I'm not really sure. First blood is nothing to me, and even injuries are hardly anything worth mentioning. I'd like to say surrender but I'm not sure if that's fair to whoever I'm fighting if they have no regeneration, or if we'd actually be in a position to surrender properly if the fight is in full swing. Say I want to surrender but my jaw's been broken. I might have more important areas to regenerate"

Uncle's beard made a fist and ran through itself as if it was a normal hand. It was a little strange to see the bottom half of the beard stroking the upper, and weirder still that no matter what angle Kat looked she couldn't actually see more of Uncle's legs. "What about you Kamiko?"

"Well, really that depends on if you will be watching us, and if you will be, how good the healing we are being provided with will be. I'm not keen on taking on a bunch of scars even if my succubus nature will prevent the worst of it, so first blood seems like the best for me... but surrender is good to in case I can surrender once I've been clearly outmatched. I certainly don't want to go with injury. Even if you have great healing, injury is a bit too much for something like this. I'm not sure I could handle the pain."

It was at this point, Kat realised something. *Have... huh well damn when did that happen?* Kat had just realised that at some point she'd stopped caring about pain. *It's not like I ever stopped feeling it but... it also isn't important anymore? Or something...? Is this a bad thing? Should I try to correct this?*

Uncle's next words broke Kat out of her thoughts. A slight glance from Uncle in her direction seemed to imply he knew her mind was wondering. "We can have separate rules for each of you if you'd like? For Kat we can have till major injury, surrender, or submission, and for you Kamiko we can go with first blood, surrender, or submission?"

"Wait how did you know our names? I never even got to introduce myself?" asked Kamiko. *Huh... I didn't even notice. I kinda feel bad for not introducing myself now.*

"No harm done lass" said Uncle "and I know what yer names are because the system told me who'd be comin around. Gave me a brief description of yer both and yer names."

"Oh. Well, that makes perfect sense then" said Kamiko. *And it does make some. Maybe not perfect though. I mean, why call us lass so often if he knew our names? Is it just a thing? Wait, stop getting hung up on this, there is something else to go over. The conditions.*

"What constitutes a major injury? Like, if someone broke my arm, that... honestly if it was a clean break that would hardly slow me down. My bones are very tough at this point, but they don't take that long to heal. Or what about skin? I'm pretty sure I could keep fighting with most of it scraped off and it would only take a few seconds to grow back. Mostly the same with muscle." Said Kat

Kamiko stared open mouthed at Kat's casual acceptance of what she would consider grievous bodily harm. Uncle however, found these to be extremely reasonable questions. "Well, I guess we can just mention it before the match. Or, we could go to first bone break. That's an option. You said they were decently tough so you won't just be relying on regeneration. Not many can say that a broken bone is easily healed though, so be a little careful with the youngins"

"Actually, that's another thing" said Kat, realising this might be a bit tough. "How strong are they. I'm... not horrible with controlling my strength exactly, but I've mostly only fought people either... really squishy that I can't use any strength on, or people I can hit as hard as I want without fear, either because they'd not actually be that hurt, or because a guy called Thyme will heal them afterwards."

Chapter 342: K VS K

"Thyme ey? I've never heard that name Lass, just how strong might he be?" asked Uncle.

"That... that is a good question. Honestly I have no idea. It depends what you consider the most impressive? He seemed to think it was hiding my demonic features" said Kat

Uncle's eyes bugged out of his head, nearly doubling in size. Kat was watching, they actually did increase in diameter. "He managed that without an artifact for you to hold? Lass that is impressive. If something like that be protecting the others it really wouldn't matter how hard you punched."

Kat nodded "Yeah, and other than that it was just really weak bandits and some cultivators that I had to apply a bit of a demonic energy shield around them before flicking them. It was still pretty bad..." said Kat trailing off.

"Shield? Can ya explain that lass?" asked Uncle

"Ah... yeah? I mean don't you guys have it? When I lift something a thin film of energy covers the object so I can lift it with the force evenly distributed. I just do the same thing for punching... or well, not punching but hurting people, to avoid just killing them by hitting them in the chest or something" said Kat

"Ah" said Uncle nodding. "I'm surprised you can do that Lass. I do actually know what you are talking about. It's normally not something people bother learning. Not enough control, and showing mercy to your enemies is normally not worth the effort. Normally you get it at third rank though... hmm, you might be a bit stronger than I thought Kat"

Kat shrugged "I really have no idea"

Uncle glanced between the two succubi before bobbing his beard and making a decision. "Right, would you two mind a bit of tug of war. Or rather, can you both stand still in place and try to move the other. No flying of course, if that's something you can do. I'll draw the line"

Taking out a piece of black... chalk? From somewhere inside of his beard, Uncle used his beard hand to draw a long line about as thick as Kat's wrist on the concrete then gestured for Kamiko and Kat to stand either side. "Are you ok with this Kami?" asked Kat

Kamiko nodded. "I'll be fine. It's just a bit of a strength test Kat. I'm not so weak that you'll break my arms or something. Besides, I trust you to be careful enough not to hurt me."

Kat smiled, a pleasant warmth in her chest at seeing how much trust Kamiko already had in her. Taking up position Kat said "Want to do this without channelling energy into our limbs first?"

Kamiko nodded "That actually might be best. We can establish a baseline for each other and then ramp up from there if we are evenly matched. Personally, I think that you will have a slight edge even without using energy but I will try my best!" said Kamiko happily.

Kat and Kamiko lined themselves up, and when they put their hands together, Kat was already feeling bad. *Dammit, my arms are so much longer than hers. She's not even that much shorter? Do I just have really long arms or something? Are hers tiny?* The bigger issue, that Kat hadn't noticed, was the angle of their meeting arms.

Kat and Kamiko's hands met and their fingers twined together. They shared a glance with each other and the slightest incline of their heads before they both started to push. Kat felt her muscles tense, as they strained against Kamiko. Her arms were mostly fine, with her elbows locking up and keeping her arms straight. It was her legs that were getting a workout.

She felt the pressure in them build as she pushed forward, they strained, attempting to move forward. A slight glance at Kamiko revealed... nothing really. Unlike Kat whose toned legs rippled with power clearly visible through the slits in her kimono... Kamiko's legs were completely covered.

If her face was anything to go by though, she wasn't fairing quite as well as Kat. The slightest shake in Kamiko's arms started to signal the end, and Kat pushed herself even further forward, forcing Kamiko's arms to shake further and one of her legs to slide back slightly. Just as Kat was about to step forward and try to take the wind, she heard Uncle yell out. "STOP!"

The pair froze in place. They shared a glance, but didn't retract their hands. They were both leaning heavily into each other and the floor wasn't the best grip around, so they kept a slight lean. "I didn't think you'd both be such an even match" said Uncle "Seems it's mostly just Kat's height that is doing for her. Let me just fix that"

Uncle tapped his beard against the floor twice and Kamiko found herself raised up. The platform moved slowly, and the pair of succubi were able to push away from each other slightly and use the raising platform and their own strength to pull themselves to their feet as she rose.

Once the platform stopped, they looked at each other once again. "Ready to go Kami?" asked Kat.

Kamiko nodded "Yup, ready and willing Kat. I'm so happy that you aren't miles ahead of me. I didn't want to be seen as weak by someone as cool as you"

Their hands locked together once again. "I'm nothing special, but thanks" said Kat as they started to push once again. The once again quickly reached an equilibrium. Straining against each other with physical strength alone... but it was getting harder on Kat's end.

This was not due to her lacking in strength, but instead because her energy screamed in her chest to be used. She had the feeling she was just the slightest amount from being able to push Kamiko back, and her energy seemed to be ready to comply. The problem was, they had agreed not to use it and Kat was having to concentrate on forcing that same energy to stay put instead.

The pressure continued to build though, as the seconds past, her energy tried more and more to slip her tight rein on it, and Kat decided it was time to speak up. "Um, Kamiko, my energy is NOT happy with the fact that I'm not using it for this. It really wants to jump in and help me win"

Kamiko smiled back. "Yes, I know the feeling as I'm currently experiencing it as well. It makes me a little sad to hold it back. My energy just wants to help. Shall we release a little bit then?"

Kat nodded and Kamiko shared a look with her. They both released a small slither of energy into their arms and legs. Kat instantly felt the power coursing through her, and she felt Kamiko's grip on her hands tighten. They stayed locked eye to eye, and by an unspoken agreement continued to ramp up the energy they were using.

Kat's demonic energy whirled. Cycling happily through her system and provided her more power. Kat made sure to keep it away from her head, and wings. She didn't want to waste a drop, letting it flow freely everywhere else.? Kat's eyes started to glow, despite the lack of energy to her head, and a very faint purple mist that was just barely visible started to leak from her arms.

For Kamiko, the process was similar. Her eyes, instead of glowing started to spin, with the cross in the centre staying in place and the corner stars roaming the edges in ever increasing speed. Additionally, instead of a faint leaking mist like Kat, Kamiko started to generate a soft pink glow that seemed to cling to her body.

Just as they started to really push against each other, to start the real battle, the floor beneath them started to crack. Kamiko stumbled, as it was her left foot that gave way first, shortly followed by Kat's right, but it was enough, Kat's full pressure was about to bear down on Kamiko.

Faster than either of them could see, strands of beard hair had wrapped around them both, holding them in place. It was soft and comforting and strong as steel. Kat flexed her demonically enhanced muscles on reflex, and found them completely subdued. The hair didn't so much as twitch. "Hahaha. The youngins these days are more impressive than I thought" said Uncle.

"Ummm" Kat looked from Kamiko to Uncle and back to Kamiko wondering what he was talking about. Kamiko shared a similar look of confusion. *What is he talking about? Even Kami is confused? Does she not know? I mean I certainly don't but... how weird are we?*

Kamiko though, was more than happy to just ask out loud. She twisted in place, using the fact that while the hair had no give in it, it didn't bind them tightly, allowing her to turn her body in the beard to face Uncle. "What do you mean Uncle?"

Chapter 343: K V K Round 2

Well, that's rather simple" said Uncle "For succubi that have no formal training you are both really strong. Likely in the upper bounds of Rank 2. Normally you'd have to be a Wrath battle maniac with a lot of practice under your belt to get close to that level of strength. Or perhaps one of the races that get a big boost to that strength like a Pit Fiend...

"But you both have noodle arms. I mean really, there looks like there is hardly any strength in either of you but you managed to crack the floor! That's no easy feat. Sure, it was only really rated for Rank 1, but we have great safety tolerances. What did they feed you both?"

Kat looked at Kamiko, as they were slowly being lowered down by Uncle, placed just to the side of the broken floor. Kamiko of course, spoke first at the silent question. "Well, I don't really know? I mean... I'm the only family member that's Rank 2 so it's not like I could really compare. I don't think either of my parents are that strong either? I mean, they aren't weak of course but... none of them have noticeably increased strength. Oh, and I ate the same as everyone else growing up."

Kat took that as her chance to jump in. "Honestly, I have no idea either. Kamiko is the first demon I've really pitted my strength against properly. I've fought people weaker than me, and of somewhat comparable strength if you count abusing restorative pills as strength. I... don't think I ate anything weird? Especially because I just don't eat when I'm not hungry and my energy can sustain me for an age"

Uncle looked between them both at their answered and sighed. "Spouse I didn't really expect anything different as an answer. Just a little strange is all. Maybe I should rethink some of the battles with the little firsties... nah they'll be fine. Just don't hurt them too badly. This will be a proper combat test, so no overpowering anyone with higher Rank demonic fire

"Oh and Kat, can you fly with those wings? Kamiko what about you?" when Uncle finished his question Kamiko shook her head. Kat decided to go for the nonverbal response as well and started to hover slightly, flapping her wings slowly and keeping herself low.

"Well none of that then Kat. Technically it isn't an ability, not really, but none of the others can fly and the ceiling is more than high enough for you to just avoid fighting or dive bombing them if you want to. Just to make it... well I won't say fair considering the entire point is for it to in fact, not be fair, but less boring shall we say. I'll be banning the use of flight"

Kat nodded and dropped to the ground, but a thought occurred to her. "Can I use them for other things? And what about my tail? Am I allowed to smack people with my wings and stab them with my tail? Or are those both off limits"

Uncle used his beard fist to scratch a -presumed- non-existent chin. "I'm going to say it's fine. I mostly just don't want you flying out of reach. Anything else is fair game really. Well, no demonic fire, but we covered that as a separate matter" said Uncle

Kat nodded in understanding, but now it was Kamiko's turn for a question. "Will we be using our demonic energy?"

Uncle bobbed and said "Of course. Honestly, it's too hard to tell if someone is internally boosting. Sure, you can see the difference sometimes, but they might have just been holding back, or they could use it from the start. You both actually display signs of use when approaching, what I assume is your full

power... but that isn't normal. Most demons just use it when they need with nothing to show. So, banning it is a little too hard to be bothered with. Plus, if everyone is using it, there is no problem.

"Now, do you two want to continue? How close to your maximum strength were you both when you cracked the stone?" asked Uncle as he moved to tap the floor once again. This time, though, his beard spread out afterwards and started grabbing all the various pieces scattered around. Once they were together again, the floor shined for a second before becoming whole.

"I was pretty close to my limit really. If the floor didn't give out I would have" said Kami

Kat tilted her head at that and pondered. *Hmm, I was using a lot of energy but I don't think I was at my limit. Sure, I was starting to cycle around my maximum but I think it takes a couple rotations to get to max strength. So... how strong would that make me?* "I'm not quite sure but I don't think I was that close" said Kat

"Hmm, well, Kamiko it'll be up to you then. I'll cover the ground with my beard so that it won't break, and you can both go all out. It might be a little slippery as I never got the ability to change my hair to any other texture despite my power. Hopefully it doesn't become a deciding factor" said Uncle.

Kat nodded and looked to Kamiko for her answer, expecting the girl to just move on but instead she said "I'd love to! Even if I don't win it will be really cool to see where I stand. Maybe if Kat holds back a little bit at the start so we can see exactly how much stronger would be the best, but if that's a bit hard to measure we won't worry" said Kamiko

Huh, I didn't think she'd actually want to keep going. Without commenting, Kat moved to her position once again, as Kamiko took the raised platform. They locked hands and Kat once again started to send her energy circling through her arms and legs. The time, Kat kept it to about a third of her capacity and she was applying no pressure forward towards Kamiko.

The other girl was already glowing a faint pink, and looking towards Kat as if waiting for her to start, eyes in full motion. "I'm at about two thirds strength Kami. Push against me if you can, and we'll see how well I compare. I can up the energy if I need to" said Kat.

Taking Kat's prompt, Kamiko started to push into Kat slowly, applying more forward pressure at a gradual rate. Kat returned the pressure, keeping pace with Kamiko easily. Their muscles thrummed with energy, and strained to keep the succubi in place. Then, a slight chink in the armour. Kat felt herself losing ground ever so slightly. Increasing the energy in her arms by a tiny amount, Kat felt it equalise once again, and felt fine. Looking up at Kamiko, Kat realised the same couldn't be said.

Her pink aura was flickering and giving off sparks, and her face was screwed up in concentration. A stark contrast to Kat's determined, but relatively calm image. "Do you want to stop?" asked Kat

Kamiko started to shake her head, before flinching and nodding instead. Kat returned the nod and started to let up slightly letting herself fall back. Kamiko, realising what she was doing, started to reduce the energy running through her own body and pulling back as well. Once they separated, Kamiko let herself fall to the floor. She was puffing loudly and Kat was surprised to find a slight sheen of sweat on the girl.

Wait we can sweat? I thought that wasn't a thing we did? Why can she sweat? Looking closer though, Kat realised that wasn't the case. Tiny crystals of ice were leaking from Kamiko's skin and sliding down her arms. They melted slightly in the process giving the appearance of sweat... and Kat wasn't sure if it still counted or not.

Still why is she tired? "Um are you alright?" asked Kat

"Yeah. Just. Need. To. Catch. My breath" said Kamiko, taking big gulps of air.

Should I ask? I... I think I have to, right? This is important to my health. "Hey Uncle... is that normal? Kamiko being tired?" asked Kat

Uncle gave Kat a look as if to say 'what are you on about' and she responded with. "Well, I don't sweat and I certainly don't get physically tired."

"That... isn't really normal no" said Uncle. "So you can just keep going forever?"

"No of course not. When my energy levels drop really low I just collapse completely. My tail can still move to defend me when something tries to attack. Honestly it's a little weird" said Kat

Uncle produced a tiny fist made from beard to stroke it while he was still reinforcing the floor. *Guess he doesn't want to trip us or something.* "Well that sounds like what happens when you experience extreme demonic energy deficiency but... that doesn't seem to be quite right for you?"

Chapter 344: I Dunno, Why Don't You Guys Think of One?

Kat tilted her head "Well, yeah it only happens when I'm basically empty but it's really the only thing stopping me from running forever, my energy. I don't sweat anymore or really get hot or even tired outside of mental fatigue."

"Hmm" murmured Uncle

"OOOh, I know!" said Kamiko, putting as much enthusiasm as she could into her words while still clearly trying to catch her breath. Taking a little longer to fully calm her breathing, she continued. "I think that it's actually Kat's special regeneration. My bet is that for some reason it thinks that being tired is something to be healed which burns a bit of energy to keep Kat in perfect condition. Most regen only heals skin and muscle, and some can also do bone, but Kat's seems to just do whatever it wants"

Kat nodded. "That actually makes a lot of sense. It's still a little weird but it makes sense"

Uncle nodded along as well and said. "Yes, I can see how that happened. My regeneration doesn't work anything like Kat's so I hadn't considered it from that angle. That does mean that if we see you freeze up from lack of energy, I'll be ending the match instantly though ok? Even if your tail happens to be enough to defend against a Rank 1 or 2 I'm counting it as a loss"

Kat nodded, willing to accept the words. "Excellent" said Uncle. "Now just wait here a moment while I go off and grab your opponents"

And with that, Uncle carefully slid his beard from underneath the pair of succubi and dashed across the tent before pulling open the tent flap and sprinting away. Kat was a little ashamed of herself when her first thought was. *That was pretty slow.* While Kat felt bad for the thought, it wasn't like she was

wrong. It was pretty clear that Uncle was higher rank than the pair, likely a few ranks, and Kat could have left the tent faster.

*Maybe they have a speed limit? It sounds funny to put one on how fast you can run but when it's commonplace to run faster than cars I wonder if that line of thought still applies. Or what about the sound barrier? I'm sure that the stronger demons can do that, or maybe just the ones specialised in speed. It would be really rude to be setting off sonic booms inside the compound.

Though, I already have a weird thing to let me pick up large objects without them folding around my fingers, and spreading the energy... maybe they have something that lets them stop that.*

Kat turned her thoughts away from same hypotheticals, and instead to Kamiko, who seemed to have mostly recovered. Of course, she was now lying flat against the ground with a big grin on her face, but she'd stopped breathing so heavily and no longer leaked ice. "How are you feeling Kamiko?"

"I'm fine. Still a little tired, but not that bad. It takes a lot out of me to use my energy at full charge like we did just before. It's... I think it's not great for my body, or that's what I've been told anyway. It was short enough that I should be fine but I never use all my energy like that. I stand by my old decision that your regeneration is by far your best trait"

Kat smiled. *Yeah... she might be right honestly. I... I guess I never really thought that regeneration would be rare though? Or well, it seems like regeneration isn't but mine is much better than what is normal. Kara thought so when it repaired my energy channels, and now Kamiko thinks it's my best ability. She's probably right. If flight doesn't count as an ability, it probably is my best. True Sight is good, and might be the undisputed best in a few situations, but my regen, if it is actually responsible for my lack of fatigue, is always great.*

Kat looked around the empty tent and saw no sign of Uncle. A quick check with her hearing revealed that the same trick from the hall was present and she couldn't hear anything outside of the tent. This time, not even if she used her energy. Accepting this, Kat plopped herself down next to Kamiko and relaxed while waiting for Uncle to get back.

Kamiko eventually sat up and leaned on Kat's shoulder. It... wasn't the most comfortable for either of them actually. Kat's larger wing was forced to encircle Kamiko, and Kamiko's smaller wings lacked the dexterity to do anything other than dig slightly into Kat's side. It wasn't too bad, and neither were complaining, but it was certainly less than ideal. One thing Kat did notice, is that Kamiko kept her tail away from Kat.

I still wonder about that. Do people not hug like me, tail included? Or is it for when you are really close. Like how some kids get embarrassed when their parents kiss them goodbye at school? It's sort of embarrassing to do in public and not something you do with friends? That makes a certain degree of sense I think... but it's so comfortable and Sylvie clearly loves it.

These were the thoughts that filled Kat's head. She continued to go over thoughts on demonic etiquette, and ignoring the demon who loves to talk that was taking up her left shoulder. Still, it wasn't even ten minutes before Uncle reappeared, now with six demons in tow. They filed in behind him without complaint.

Kat's eyes were first drawn to the last in line. Kat wasn't sure what she was, but Lily would recognise a Lamia when she saw one. She had a huge snake tail as her bottom half that was easily as long as Kat and Kamiko were tall when put together. She had blue scales that reminded Kat of the sky. They even had slights flecks of white in them occasionally which Kat was choosing to interpret as clouds.

On her human half, she had an elaborate dress. There was more lace on it than Kat had ever seen in her entire life. The collar was laced, the sleeves were laced, her bust was framed with... you guessed it lace. There were also patches of laced designs sewn into it where there was space, as well as lace lining the bottom of the dress. *I guess when you have unlimited copies of the outfit, it's fine to have a bunch of easily damaged lace. I certainly appreciate that my Kimono always stays in top condition.*

The dress itself was a soft pink, similar to Kamiko's aura, or cherry blossom leaves, while the lace was all sorts of colours. The lace around the collar was completely white, while the lace around the sleeves was completely black. The lace around the edge of the dress was a dark blue that contrasted well with the soft sky blue of the Lamia's scales, making it look like the start of a storm.

The lace that framed her... rather small breasts, was a soft pink that almost matched the colour of the dress. Kat had no idea what the point of it was. It just piled up a bunch of lace around the area in almost exactly the same colour as the dress beneath it. So, Kat quickly changed her focus to the designs. There were three separate snake designs. Each scale was meticulously outlined, in one of three colours.

The first, that sat just below the collar lace was the same blue as the Lamia's scales, with a small bit of green lacing around the eyes that matched the Lamia's own now that Kat took the chance to look. The other two were in the stomach area looking at each other as if glaring. The left one was green, and the right one was a dark blue similar but distinct from the bottom lacing.

Back to the Lamia's green eyes and face. Her eyes looked like they were rough cut jade. Slightly milky, but with a clear snake slit to them and slightly flat edges. Her hair was a simple bob cut that was black in colour, and her face was set in a hard line. She wasn't smiling, but it was close. She had a mostly neutral face that seemed to be just on the edge of happiness, but something was missing. She also had sharp pointed ears that stuck out well past her head, and were nearly as long as Kamiko's horns.

The only other noteworthy feature was the Lamia's arms. Unlike Kat and Kamiko who had thin arms with slight toning, the Lamia was ripped. Her casual stance as she slithered in already had her arms bursting with muscles. Each arm was at least twice as thick as Kat's own, and around the width as the spade at the end of her tail at their largest.

Kat would find out later during introductions, that this Lamia was named Seralina, but preferred to be called Sera. Why that was... well, Kat never cared enough to ask.

Chapter 345: Three Brothers, a Beard and a Rock

The next thing Kat found her eyes drawn to was a set of identical triplets. Kat would later learn that their names were Krekron, Sekron and Pekron, but for some reason, Pekron really hated the name and asked everyone to call him Percy instead. His brothers thought it was weird, but when it was mentioned Kat would find herself going along.

For all of the three brothers, it was clear that they were pit fiends, which, Kat supposed made sense considering the number of them in the Wrath faction. Their wings however, were much smaller than

normal, with Kat only catching glimpses of them. They were even smaller than the set that Kamiko had, though they were positioned much higher up on the back, closer to where Kat's wings connected to her.

The wings in question also had a number of holes in them. The only thing stopping Kat from assuming it was some sort of scar or injury was that each brother had the exact same set of holes. Even using her demonic energy to drastically improve her eyesight, Kat found them completely indistinguishable from each other.

The other thing that was the same was that each of them had what looked like full plate armour on. They were the first, and so far, only demons, that were wearing anything that resembled protection on them in a real sense. Sure, she'd seen that one guy with leather that was probably his own skin, and some other leather harness and outfits, but they all felt more like a fashion choice for some reason.

These three though, clearly had bulky plate armour for a reason other than that. The lack of adornments seemed to support this theory as well. The only distinguishing feature on the armour, if could count it as 'part' of the armour was the multicoloured tabards they all wore that poked out around the chest area and then covered their upper thighs.

Each had the first letter of their name stamped into the centre in a way that made it seem burnt on, with the rest of the tabard being a unique set of colours and patterns. Krekron had a plain black tabard, with some gold trimming around his 'K' to make it stand out more.

Sekron had a series of 'V' shaped stripes that appeared to run the length of the tabard, the background with a dark blue, similar to the ocean on an overcast day, while the stripes were a bright gold, slightly lighter than the metal in question.

Finally, Percy had scattered crosses that ran across the tabard in lines, that started higher on the left and lower on the right, with a cross marking the top, middle and bottom, in a repeating fashion every so often. To contrast with the others, that used dark backgrounds with light highlights, Percy had a soft pink as his background with dark purple highlights as the crosses.

The only other difference that singled out any of the three was that Sekron had a scar under his chin, as if he'd been stabbed up from below and into his mouth. It was a relatively thin star shaped scar, and was mostly noteworthy only because it was a difference from the other brothers.

They all had rather forgettable faces, and the plate armour made it hard to see their physique underneath them. *And they don't even have to look that impressive under the armour because we are demons. It's not like super strength is a rare thing, so anyone can wear them if they really want to... but on the other hand, it looks like normal metal? Is there even a point? I don't exactly have hardened skin, but against a demon that bit of metal isn't going to help much.*

Moving on from the brothers, the next demon of note was one that looked almost exactly like Uncle, except a bit shorter. When Kat glanced between the two of them, Uncle shook his head. "That's just Meron. No relation, just the same demonic type" said Uncle with a bright tone, as if there was some great joke Kat wasn't actually allowed to know.

*Perhaps it's a matter of there not really being many of them? Or perhaps Uncle is old enough that they are separated by so many generations that it doesn't really matter? Adoption is also a possibility, and

while they are the same demon type, it lets the younger one style after Uncle in a way to feel closer to him?*

Kat's assessment of them looking 'exactly' the same wasn't entirely fair to either party of course. The new demon was much shorter than uncle, hardly coming up to Kat's chests and only just barely making it past her bellybutton in height, compared to Uncle's more normal seeming height.

Additionally, his beard was both more or less like Uncle's. Meron's beard reached all the way to the floor with a tiny bit of length to spare... but it was also missing the definition that Uncle's had, and was more wispy, with thinner and less vibrant hairs. Despite being the same colour grey, there was a clear vibrancy and feeling of life in Uncle's despite his clearly advanced age.

The final difference, was that his eyes were completely green. It was an odd detail, and Kat didn't know what to make of it. Meron didn't seem to have any pupils or really anything at all in his eye, just a solid green sphere. *Wonder how well he can see.*

Finishing up that examination Kat turned her attention to the final demon she was set to fight, Kat saw the person who would be introduced simply as 'Rock'. Now, Kat was of the opinion that was woefully blunt, and considering what little she knew of demonic lineage, at least one of the woman's parents should also look like a moving rock golem. Though, when the names were mentioned, Kat stole a glance at Kamiko who looked even more poleaxed.

Rock looked like a human, that hadn't quite been sanded down properly. She had curves and quite a lot of muscle definition all across her body, but none of it was smooth. They looked more like someone had glued a bunch of boulders together into a loose approximation of a person and halfway through the sculpting process had died or given up on ever finishing.

The most disconcerting part to Kat was that she didn't walk like she was made of stone though. Her movements weren't quite as fluid as Kat's own, but easily on par with normal humans and much better than someone that seemed to be made out of stone should ever be able to manage.

Rock wore short bike pants that were, in fact, so short, would have Kat wondering if they weren't just underwear instead. The pants clung to Rock's... well, rocky form, and showed off the details very well. Which made her look all the more uncanny as the sharp edges of her legs showed through. The seam for the pants, which themselves were black, were the seams a bright orange that Kat wasn't a huge fan of. It just didn't work with Rock's grey skin tone at all.

The shirt didn't help. It too was a tight fit, made out of what Kat assumed was the same material as the pants, but it at least had some colour to it. The shirt did however, point out that even Rock's feminine assets, which while roughly equal in size to Kat's own, certainly earned the 'roughly' moniker. It looked like she was hiding cardboard boxes under her shirt, and only the fact that Kat could see them rippling slightly as she walked made it clear they were the same strange rocky material the rest of Rock was.

The shirt was mostly an ocean blue with a completely black stripe to highlight her chest area. Why Rock thought that was a good idea, Kat was unsure. The shirt also had a collar with a pattern consisting of alternating open and closed fists that were orange in colour. They continued along the seams for the arms and also ringed the sleeves of the shirt, which hugged Rock's impressive biceps.

Overall, Rock gave off the 'chiselled' impression very well, but the lifelike manner in which all parts of her body managed to move really threw Kat off. It didn't look right to her eyes, though she spared a thought that it might just be because she wasn't used to it.

Once inside, Uncle first introduced the six demon fighters that they would be going against, finally stopping at Pekron... "and last but certainly not least, we have Pekron, the third of the triplets"

"Please, call me Percy" said Pekron, in a gravelly voice.

"Why do you have to reject your name brother?" said Krekron "It's a good strong name"

Percy raised an eyebrow "Must we do this in front of our sparring partners? What I choose to be called is none of your business"

Kat then watched the two brothers descend into arguing, and when nobody moved to stop them, the rest of the group instead shuffled slowly off to the side to continue the conversation.

Chapter 346: Trash Talking Before a Match?

Once everyone had moved to the side of the tent, Uncle tapped the ground and the sound from the brother's argument dimmed completely, Uncle continued speaking. "Now that our young hopefuls for Wrath membership have been introduced, let me reveal your instructors." Uncle said while gesturing with his beard towards Kat and Kamiko.

"These two will be your opponents. They are on punishment duty so don't feel too bad if you are a bit rough with them. Still, either party can surrender at any time. For Kamiko, the shorter one, we will be fighting till first blood, and for Kat you have essentially free reign, though surrender is still acceptable. If you have a problem with that, you can introduce your own conditions before the match if needed.

"Kat has impressive enough regeneration, that, essentially nothing will count as a major wound, so having that be the end of combat is a major handicap for you... hmm, do I still refer to you as a set of six with those two over there?" Uncle shrugged. "Any questions?"

"YEAH!" shouted Rock, her voice shocking Kat with how normal it sounded, just another weird thing about her body. She almost seemed to have a light British accent, and while she was shouting, her voice was very smooth and likely was soft spoken when she wasn't trying too hard. "Why do we have to fight flooz-" Rock's insult was cut off when Seralina slammed the end of her tail into Rock's head.

"Can you not insult them right before a fight?" said Seralina. Kat was surprised she sounded normal after the events with Kara, she even had the same forked tongue. *I guess she just prefers to sound normal? Or maybe she worked hard to actually sound normal? I'm not sure.*

Rock rubbed the back of her head a little before whipping around to glare at Seralina "Why should I care about fighting two Succslu-" Seralina's tail slammed into Rock again, this time from the front.

"First off. As a Lamia, I have some Succubi blood as well, so you're insulting me. Second, your grandmother was born a Succubus, and she is a great woman. Thirdly THEY ARE RANK 2 YOU IDIOT" hissed Seralina.

"I don't see why any of that matters. My dear old granny ran off to fu-" Rock's tirade was once again interrupted by Seralina, though this time, her tail was caught. Didn't stop the follow up slap though.

"Your grandfather was a horrible man, and she deserved better, but we are not here to air your dirty laundry. We are here to fight Rank 2 opponents. We were told this, very clearly, and they deserve the respect of a fellow combatant even if you think less of them for their heritage. Which is so outdated I'm surprised anyone even considered it when only around half of the race performs that kind of work, IF even that much" said Seralina calmly as if scolding a child.

Meron and Sekron, were at this point, sharing a look Kat didn't really understand, and were slowly backing away from the two girls to hide behind Uncle. Kat couldn't say it was a bad plan, but she did notice Seralina's eyes were tracking them, so it wasn't as subtle as they may have hoped.

"What's the point of fighting someone that's Rank 2 if they are so weak, they can barely spread their legs right!" shouted Rock.

Seralina sighed and gave Rock a look. Rock stared back. Seralina lined up for a punch, that was rather slow, which was easily blocked by Rock... until Seralina smashed her in the back of the head with her tail, sending Rock's head forward into her hand.

"Please Rock, have some decorum. I've known you for ten years, and I still don't get what your problem is with them. I've never pressured you to talk about it, and I'm not starting now, but can you please at least pretend not to hate everything about two girls I'm sure are perfectly nice" asked Seralina, with a sad tone knowing her advice wasn't going to be taken seriously.

"Well, I'll say it again? Why should I?" sneered Rock.

Kat gave Kamiko a look, 'You want her or me' with Kamiko inclining her head towards Kat suggesting she take care of it. *I'm surprised she figured that one out. I guess body language isn't too different here.* Kat gave a raised eyebrow to Uncle who turned a tiny part of his beard into a thumbs up.

Kat started to walk slowly forward. She saw that Seralina's eyes instantly noticed the movement, but Rock wasn't even trying to pay attention to her surroundings. Seralina, seeing Kat's approach tried once more to reason with Rock, "Look, we are about to spar, maybe you can just tone it down a bit..."

Before Seralina could finish her sentence Rock butted in. "No, Sera, I don't think I will. If you can't see what the problem with them is, then maybe we shouldn't be friends. Clearly, you'd rather be off doing other things then sparring with me. Perhaps your heritage is catching up to you"

You know. Thought Kat calmly, letting the racial insults wash over her. *I really do wonder if I'm weird for still never thinking of sex, or if the whole thing is overblown? Actually... maybe it's cultural? I mean, Kamiko seems much too adorable to be thinking about it. Gramps made sure all of us at the orphanage knew what it was and what it entailed... and he at least put some effort in unlike the sex-ed classes, but other than that it just doesn't really seem important?*

Unless... is Rock making a big deal because that's what she wants instead of a good fight? Nah that's silly. Kat continued her walk until she was right behind Rock. Seralina just gave a soft sigh. She didn't look overly hurt by Rock's words about their friendship, making Kat think this was perhaps a common occurrence. Clearing her throat, Kat smiled as Rock whipped around and into a combat stance.

"What do you want?" growled Rock. Her growling actually sounded like grinding rocks instead of her normally soft voice.

"Well, I thought I'd offer you a chance to take a shot. You seem to have such a problem with 'my kind' after all. If I'm really as bad as you say surely you can take me out with just a punch?" said Kat with a smile. *As if. I bet I can dodge anything she throws at me, and I'm pretty sure that I could tank some hits anyway. Well, I haven't seen her fight, but I mean really, my regen will take care of it if it's even that bad.*

"Ha, as if I trust you not to go running away with your tail between your legs" said Rock mockingly.

Kat felt something in her energy twinge, as it started to churn in her gut, spinning much faster than normal, and almost like it was getting ready to break out. *Really? That counts as insulting my tail does it? God dammit I can't believe that counts.* Seralina watched as Kat's eyes flashed at the insult, and paled a bit as she realised that somehow Rock must have hit on Kat's trigger somehow.

Don't punch her in the face. "I will not move my feet from this spot. Take a shot." said Kat. *Don't punch her in the face. It isn't worth the effort.*

Rock didn't need any more encouragement, she bounced on her feet a few times before swinging out towards Kat's face, going right for her nose. It was so slow, that when Kat reflexively activated her enhanced cognition, the fist practically stopped moving.

Kat rolled her eyes and bent backwards just enough for Rock's hand to sail easily over her head. When Rock pulled her fist back, and Kat returned to her full height Rock said. "Hey! You dodged!"

"Well, yeah," said Kat "I said I wouldn't move my feet from this spot, and I didn't. You missed, and it wasn't even close."

Rock growled and threw another punch at Kat as if the first one was a fluke or something. Seeing the fist coming again, Kat just moved her face slightly to the side and pushed her energy into her face. Rock's fist impacted right next to Kat's eye, and she felt the skin breaking under the heavy fist.

It wasn't much power though, and her head stayed perfectly still, bone not even creaking. Kat then slowly turned her face forward again, easily pushing away Rock's arm with her neck alone. The damage had already been healed at this point and Kat looked into Rock's eyes and said. "Do you still plan to insult me?"

Rock gulped, but Kat continued. "And I mean, honestly, I could probably take it if it was just me, but Kamiko is a sweet girl, and you're being really rude to her, and your friend who's just trying to help you. Was the punch worth it? You feel strong now?"

Chapter 347: Danger Noodle Combat!

Rock of course, not one to listen to reason, or a sound and politely worded argument, flung another fist at Kat. Kat first activated her enhanced cognition, and moved her gaze up to Seralina, an apology in her eyes. Then, in one blurred motion, Kat kicked Rock in the side and sent her flying.

Kat did take a moment, to consider if she should have waited and applied her shield to spread the damage evenly around Rock's body... and decided she'd been more than rude and it was fine to hurt her a bit at this point. Kat didn't use anything close to her full strength... just a bit of speed.

Rock was sent hurtling into the tent wall, slamming into it with a clang and falling to the ground face first with a groan. "Sorry I slammed your friend into a wall" said Kat still keeping eye contact with Seralina.

The Lamia just sighed. "I'm honestly not surprised. At all."

Kat nodded sagely. "Yeah, she seems like... a piece of work I guess is the right word."

Rock groaned in the corner, but was promptly ignored. "I really didn't think it was that bad. I mean, she's been friends with me for years, and it was a few of those before I found out about her dislike of Succubi. I told her, rather bluntly, and probably in poor taste, that Lamia's have Succubi ancestry way back in the past and... well she didn't take it great but we got over it..."

"I didn't think she'd just managed to ignore it in me for the most part. I wouldn't worry too much, she's a bit hard headed, and I'm sure that your recent brand of encouragement is probably the best way to handle her." Said Seralina.

Kat shrugged, and turned to Uncle. "So... what's the plan now?" asked Kat

"Well... I suppose we can leave Rock to recover. I don't really want to heal her and encourage this sort of behaviour so she can wait till last for a real fight. Krekron and Percy can finish their fight or get kicked out of the tent" said Uncle.

Kat, scratched her face awkwardly and nodded. *I already forgot about those two.* "Kamiko do you want to take the first fight or shall I?"

"Oh, Um... you can take it if you want to?" said Kamiko rather unsure.

"I really don't mind. I can recover faster than you, so I don't mind fighting first or even a few extra times." Said Kat

"Um... well I guess I'll... no I'll let you go first. I need to warm up" said Kamiko.

Kat nodded, and Uncle turned to the two Pit Fiends that were still arguing. "HEY IDIOTS! Stop the argument! We got fight's on!"

To Kat's surprise, that's exactly what they did. Stopped completely in place, nodded to each other, and walked calmly over to the area that Uncle had led everyone else over to. Once they managed to reach the circle they were in, Uncle tapped the ground and the circle raised up out of the ground.

"Um... we just going to leave Rock?" asked Kamiko

"Yes" said everyone else except Kat, as if they expected this outcome.

"So, who's fighting Kat?" asked Uncle.

"I will, if nobody else minds" said Seralina. "Smacking around Rock really wasn't a proper work out but I am at least warmed up"

Kat just shrugged and jumped down into the arena, letting her legs take the impact, and heading for the glowing circles that appeared when her back was turned. One was smaller, and the other much larger, clearly designed to fit each of the contestants' respective frames... though Kat's didn't seem to take her wings into account.

Seralina followed after Kat, coiling her lower body to take the impact like a spring before slithering over to her circle. "Just as a by the way, I can still speak, even if it's a bit harder during combat" said Seralina.

Kat wasn't quite sure what she was talking about, until Seralina's upper body disappeared and was replaced with a huge snake head fitting the rest of her body. Seralina's new eyes were gold, slitted, and about the size of dinner plates. *You know what. That actually is impressive.*

"How good are your defences?" asked Kat

"Sssomewhat good. If you break a sscale don't tear it off pleasse, I can repair them but growing them back isss much harder" said Seralina, now clearly with Kara's speech defect. *But that doesn't make any sense! She had the snake tongue in her human form as well! Why now that she's a snake did it come up?! And she said it was harder to talk like that... I just don't understand.*

"FIGHTERS!" Shouted Uncle. "ON MY MARK."

At his command, a giant glowing 3 made out of fire appeared in the middle of the arena as the central pole retracted into the ceiling. Kat spared an instant of thought over why it was even there if it could just be removed, before focusing on the number.

Two. Seralina coiled herself up, overlapping her body multiple times and keeping as much of herself against the ground as she could, while tensing her muscles.

One. Kat flexed her hands and deliberately folded her wings against her body, ensuring that she didn't use them to glide slightly when she charged.

Zero. Both demons shot off, Kat kicking off the ground while circulating demonic energy over her entire body and slowing her perception of time, while Seralina used her massive body to launch herself straight at Kat jaws wide open.

Seralina was surprisingly fast, and Kat watched her travel at what was appeared to be the pace of a light jog. Kat stepped lightly, dashing to the side just enough to dodge Seralina's gaping maw, however, Seralina's eyes caught Kat's movement, and turned her head to follow.

Kat's eyes narrowed at this, and she jumped up, keeping her wings tight so that she wasn't gliding and attempted to soar over Seralina's mouth instead. What she was not expecting, was for the Lamia to simply tilt her head and follow the movement, having her body double back and follow along as well.

Kat's eyes widened as she just barely managed to avoid Seralina's fangs, but in her hurry, she wasn't quite prepared to land on the back half of Seralina's body. As Kat landed, she felt her feet starting to slip on Seralina's scales, and pushed off to the side. This, was all watched by Seralina's massive eyes, and even though she was slower than Kat... when Kat jump straight into the oncoming tail well... what more needed to be done.

Kat crossed her arms and tried to distribute the impact as best she can. Seralina's tail slap sent her flying backwards, and while it didn't hurt, the Lamia's attack was far from over. As Kat flew backwards, she saw Seralina's head coming in from the side.

Dammit! If I could just fly I'd be able to dodge this in a heartbeat. Even just a little gliding would get me safe! Instead, Kat charged her tail with as much energy as she could and slammed it into the floor,

cracking it slightly and halting her momentum completely, forcing Seralina's body to continue past her for some ways.

Seralina was already moving onto the next attack though, and was attempting to constrict her body around Kat. *Hmm,* Kat looked for a path to escape and grimaced, thinking she'd probably have to jump either into or near Seralina's tail or jaws. *Jumping up is also out because she can catch me out in the air with her mouth as well...*

Kat grit her teeth. *I really don't want to do this... but if she wants to make this a contest of strength maybe I have to oblige.* Kat pulled back and slammed her fist into Seralina's side. Kat heard the scale crack slightly, as her fist glanced off, forcing her off balance, and giving Seralina the chance to complete her hold.

Kat felt her arms get bound to her side as Seralina hissed slightly powering through the recent bout of pain. Kat could feel Seralina increasing the pressure as she said. "Do you yield?"

"Nah I'm good" said Kat, not really feeling the strain. It was hard to raise her arms and contest Seralina directly with her arms, but the constricting pressure wasn't actually that bad. *Hmm, this is a bit of a stalemate isn't it... she can tighten all she wants but I'm hardly feeling it. Honestly, her scales might give out before my bones, especially because I can feel the cracked on as it moves around me. Maybe I should try and flick it or something as it passes me?*

Kat's thoughts were broken as she spotted movement and glanced up to see Seralina's head bearing down on her jaws open wide, saliva dripping, and maybe a bit of venom mixed in, Kat realised this stalemate might not be quite as even as she thought. *Welp... shit.*

Chapter 348: That's Gotta Hurt...

Kat's mind blitzed through her options as fast as she could, but Seralina was no slouch and was rapidly approaching for the 'final' blow to finish Kat off. Kat quickly considered and dismissed all her abilities until, she remembered her most recently acquired and least used ability so far.

Dream walking. As soon as Kat focused on the idea, she exploded into mist and engulfed Seralina's face. Kat found herself in a black void, but before she could get her bearings a sharp pain lanced through her mind stopping any rational thought.

Then suddenly, Kat was back, and being flung away from Seralina's head, with an uncountable number of Kat's all leaking black blood as she flew. From the outside, starting when Kat went up in smoke, it looked like she simply disappeared into Seralina, for all of three seconds.

Seralina's eyes sharpened, and when she shook her head to clear it, Kat was ejected during one of the shakes sending her flying. Her form was rapidly rebuilding itself, but purple smoke trailed behind her as she slammed into the wall.

Kat grimaced, as she got to her feet, tearing open a few of her recently gained wounds that she hadn't quite gotten to heal yet and looked up at Seralina. She saw the Lamia's eyes were still rather dazed and she was continuing to shake her head in an effort to regain her focus.

Kat took the time to take stock and let herself heal. Her cuts were disappearing quickly but so was her energy. Despite not using any of her demonic flames she was already down to just under a half of her

energy. *Shit. I guess that dream walking trick is probably what cost me so much energy. Something clearly went wrong, and it's probably because Seralina was still awake.

I wonder if it was the ability itself or the fact that I was kicked out that cost me so much. Not to mention my wounds are still burning through more to heal them up... actually now that I'm concentrating I'm seeing them take a bit more than normal I think? Perhaps I also damaged my energy channels a bit with that stunt. Oof, that might have been more dangerous than I thought...*

Before Kat could really consider the issue any further Seralina managed to regain her mind. Spotting Kat standing, 'fully healed' but in a pile of blood she said. "That isss sssuch bullsshit. You have teleportation?"

Seeing that Seralina was actually giving her the chance to answer, Kat pulled herself to her feet and shook her head while saying. "No, I don't, I have poor survival instincts and a dream walking ability"

Seralina opened her large mouth. Closed it. Opened it once more, before closing it again and switching her head back to her humanoid form just to shrug, before changing back and lunging at Kat. It wasn't very serious though, Kat could tell, and it was less than half the speed of all previous attacks.

Taking the opening for what it was, Kat easily dodged the strike and made it away from the wall... Only to be forced to raise her hands up into a crude guard to take Seralina's tail strike. *Of course. She was being nice, but not THAT nice. I suppose this is a spar so it's all fine but I mean... rude!*

Kat forced her energy to the limit causing her arms to leak purple mist and slammed said arms into Seralina's tail to try and counter the force. A loud boom rang out as the limbs made contact with each other. Kat felt her muscles straining against the much greater weight of Seralina's body. Kat's bones shook under the blow as well... but Kat gave a second push, and managed to throw off the tail.

Seralina hissed, and twisted her way around to try and block her tail from view, but Kat noticed the sharp movement, and realised that despite not knocking Seralina's tail back all that far, it had been rather drastically damaged, and most of the back of Seralina's tail now had broken and bent scales to show for it.

So, her scales are good, but not quite that good. In a direct contest of strength, she might just edge me out a bit, but my more focused attacks can break and damage her scales. I don't know how far I want to take this though... do I really want to just go and break all her scales?

Kat then remembered that Seralina was a giant snake, with very little else she could attack other than her ribs and spine. So, unless she wanted to try and knock the other demon out, she was actually rather lacking in ways to subdue.

Seralina charged Kat again, not even taking the time to coil up. She was slithering as fast as she could, but Kat noticed that while it was faster than the previous charge, Seralina did seem to be slowing down over all. Kat watched closely, waiting till Seralina was just about to reach her while building up as much energy as possible in her legs.

Just as Seralina reached Kat, Kat sidestepped the attack. Seralina, seeing this started to turn her head to make use of the short distance Kat moved to keep up the attack. Kat though, had other plans. Turning

on her heel, Kat kicked out with all her force, burning demonic energy like it was going out of style and leaving a trail of purple in its wake to slam into the side of Seralina's head.

Seralina reacted purely on instinct, and snapped her jaw open allowing for Kat's leg to soar between her teeth instead of impacting her jaw. Seralina tried to capitalise on this opening by slamming down on Kat's leg, but she wasn't fast enough.

Kat too, had good instincts and let herself be carried by the force of her kick and continued the moment, slamming her tail into Seralina's now closed mouth. A sound like shattering glass rang out as Seralina's jaw was knocked around, and a quick, snap, signalled the breaking of that as well as the scales.

Seralina, seeing this swapped back to her human form, revealing a broken arm and an already huge bruise developing on her side. Before Kat could do any more damage, she said. "Er sururnder" which Kat took as the signal to stop, considering the broken jaw Seralina had.

Still, Kat hadn't exactly stopped spinning so, to make sure she wasn't going to do any more damage to the Lamia, Kat jumped and flared her wings allowing herself to slow down carefully and completely avoid accidentally hitting Seralina again.

"A great match!" shouted Uncle from the side. "Come over here and I'll heal you up Seralina."

Seralina first bowed to Kat, looking up at her descending form with... well it wasn't quite as smile but it was clear she was trying with what she had. "It was a good match" said Kat, not really knowing what else to say, or if she needed to do anything else.

It really was. Thought Kat as she watched Seralina slithering over to Uncle. *She nearly got me there. I only have a little bit of energy left. I mean sure... I could have maybe contested her strength a bit more but for a rank 1 she is STRONG. Even if a lot of that energy was from misusing my dream walking... I didn't exactly have any other ways of getting out so I was forced into it anyway.

Even that old man from Xiang's world didn't give me the same run for my money... though he did also use fire so he was kinda screwed from the beginning... and I was much more willing to just take damage to score a hit instead which... well Seralina's size means that a 'small hit' isn't anything to scoff at when you think about it.

I wonder if I could have done anything better? Well, I could have probably if I knew more about my dream walking. I'm... I'm not exactly clear on what happened between trying to enter Seralina's mind and getting thrown away. It did get me out of her coils, but how much time passed? Was it a few seconds or a bit longer?

I also wonder if she was more prepared for that if I'd have been more screwed. She seemed really stunned after that and maybe it was because of the skill, or maybe I was just abusing my higher rank to force myself into her mind. I'm not sure that will work again...

On the other hand, it did in fact work, and I did win even if it wasn't by that much. I know I'm not proficient in fighting, and Seralina seems to know her way around the block. I wonder how well the others will do.*

Kat decided she'd had enough thinking for now and followed Seralina back over to the raised platform the others were on. She could think on it more later on.

Chapter 349: Kamiko Time!

Oh, I hope everyone is alright. Kamiko looked over her new friend and the beautiful Lamia as their match ended. *Kat was so cool. Even when she was trapped she still managed to find a way out. She was bleeding everywhere but didn't even let it slow her down after she was launched off to the side...

I wonder how that happened? She told me about all her abilities and I don't think she ever said she could turn into mist... was she lying to me? No... Kat wouldn't do that right...? I mean... we're friends right? Wait, no we can't lie, and she said it. She said we were friends!

Oh... wait she also said she'd told me all of her abilities... hmm, does that mean it's part of something else? Is she part mist wraith or something? No that doesn't make any sense. She doesn't seem to have any wraith blood in her...

Could it be one that she already mentioned? I mean it has to be... Oh? Could that have been part of her dream walking ability? I don't really know how that one works but... I think it's the only one it could be...

That's really cool though if it is, she's able to get so much mileage out of just a few abilities. I don't think I'd have thought to train up my dream walking for use in combat if I had it. And she didn't even bring a weapon.

Fighting a Lamia with just her fists is so badass. I'm not sure I can ever be THAT cool. And she WON too. I mean, it wasn't even close. Well, except for that one lock, but I mean, Kat got out of that easy! I'd probably have lost then and there but Kat managed to get out. Heal all her wounds and then go on the offensive!

She started cracking Seralina's scales really efficiently too. I don't think I'd have thought to use my whole arm to break most of her tail. I'd have probably only intercepted with the tip of my staff... It shows I still have a lot to learn.

I wonder if Kat would teach me? No, bad Kamiko. You don't ask favours from friends you just met. Especially if they're nice enough to actually agree. Then you're just being a bad person. We should wait... hang out a bit first. Maybe add each other as contacts...

Noooo, I can't ask for that. But... she's my friend already... so maybe it's fine?* Kamiko was jolted out of her thoughts when Kat flew down next to her and put an arm on her shoulder. "Hey you alright Kamiko? You seem nervous... are you alright to fight next?" asked Kat's voice.

Kamiko wailed internally. *No, dammit, bad Kamiko, don't worry your new friend. Say something reassuring. It's no big deal of course. I mean, I'm not extremely happy that you're showing me concern... wait no I am. Channel that happiness Kamiko. Shine a bright smile back at her and tell her things are ok.* "I'm doing great!" said Kamiko, fully embracing her happiness.

Kat raised an eyebrow. *Did I do it right? Can she see how happy I am she talked to me? Did I do it right? Why is she raising her eyebrow like that?* "Well, if you're sure. I think you'll do well. I don't actually have any proper combat abilities if you don't count my fire" said Kat.

*Well that's just stupid. Why would someone as cool as you even need other combat abilities? I need more of them all the time because I'm just not that good. I could never fight someone bare handed, and Kat even has fans in sash! I bet she's not using them so that the Rank 1 guys have a chance.

That sort of attitude is so cool. I bet the others didn't even notice she was hiding her weapon, so she can treat it like she's going all out for them, and they don't have to feel bad for fighting her unarmed. I wish I had the confidence to do that. Oh, and she didn't even flinch when all those wounds opened up!

I forgot about that, all the pain that must have caused... I don't even want to think about it. I'm not sure I'd have been able to keep fighting. I'll have to be careful when it comes to whoever I fight...

I don't really care who that is. I kinda want Kat to fight Rock again so that she can prove how cool she is to the stubborn girl... but I don't know if I want to force Kat into that fight. She already beat Rock once... would it be rude of me to make Kat fight Rock again... well, that would be humiliating to Rock if she lost again...*

Kamiko was pulled from her thoughts when Uncle started to move. And when he started to move you paid attention of course. Kat might have been super cool and ultra powerful for her level, but Uncle was clearly in a class of his own. *He might not be as awesome as Kat but I need to pay attention to what he does.*

And pay attention she did. Once Seralina made it back to the platform, Uncle lowered it so she didn't need to climb in her injured state and let her back on. Once Seralina made it to the platform, Uncle didn't even have to give a second command for it to move back up.

"Would you like me to heal you Seralina?" asked Uncle.

"Yesh ples" managed Seralina the best she could. *Ooh, yeah that broken jaw has to be nasty. I'm really glad Kat and I just did a small contest of strength. Even though she thrashed me she wasn't rude about it, and made sure I was alright afterwards. She was also probably really careful with Seralina but I mean, how else can you take down a Lamia?*

Uncle nodded when he heard Seralina's confirmation, and his beard started to grow. It bloomed out seemingly from nowhere and started to cover the platform as it snaked its way over to Seralina. She seemed unconcerned when it started to wrap up her body.

Around and around, again and again, Uncle's beard wrapped all of Seralina's tail up first before moving on to her upper body. It seemed like the wrapping wasn't that tight, because when it covered Seralina's top section, it was simply a flat curve, showing no sign of the Lamia's body shape behind it.

The grey hair slowly morphed until it was a pure white, and then it seemed to retreat and not. Some of the hair turned grey and slid back to Uncle, but his beard didn't seem to actually lose any hair as it retracted, eventually becoming that long, but not ridiculously long beard everyone knew and... appreciated.

Kamiko could see that once Uncle's beard was retracted the cocoon around Seralina started to pulse. It started at the top of the head and worked its way down all the way across her exceptionally large body before shrinking down to nothing at the end of her tail.

"Now, Seralina can still hear us and I want go over her match a bit. Seralina, you can ask me questions once you're out, but first I want the others to give their opinions, so this also doubles as a way to ensure you don't spoil any of the answers" said Uncle. "So, who won that fight?"

"Kat obviously" said Kamiko, before covering her mouth with her hands. *WHAT ARE YOU DOING KAMIKO! Why would you say that! Kat was so humble about the whole thing, declaring it a good match and you had to be an idiot and say that. I'm so sorry Kat, Seri, it was a great match.*

Uncle smiled, as if he saw the inner turmoil of Kamiko laid bare before him. Of course he also chose to ignore it and said. "So... Kat. Obviously. Does anyone else have another opinion?"

"Well," said Sekron, the blue and gold brother. "I think that Seralina probably had the win when Kat was completely restrained. She had immobilised her target and was going for the kill, but let's all be honest she was never really going to complete that strike, this is not that kind of match. Instead, Kat clearly used some kind of risky technique to get away causing herself a large number of dangerous injuries instead of just forfeiting as this is a spar."

Kamiko gave him a confused look. *What nonsense is he talking about? Of course, she took more damage then if she'd forfeited but she'd have lost if she did that? She also has such awesome regeneration so why wouldn't she take advantage of that? I mean, that's like saying that Seralina shouldn't have used her snake form because 'this is just a spar'. Nobody really put any limits on either of those things. I think Sekron, you might just be jealous you don't have cool mist powers.*

Chapter 350: Kamiko's Choice

"I can see what you're thinking Kamiko, would you like to share with the rest of the class why you think Sekron is wrong?" asked Uncle.

Kamiko awkwardly turned away from the crowd. *I didn't realise he could READ MINDS. That's really weird. I mean... that's also kind of rude? Wait, Kamiko don't think that, if he can read minds you're basically insulting him to his face. Quick, say something!* "Well, unlike Seralina who sustained damage slowly over the course of the fight, Kat was able to heal up completely from her injuries."

Uncle nodded. "Yes, very good. While you all shouldn't attempt to emulate Kat, as for you triplets, your regeneration isn't certain not to scar if you don't take proper care of it. Only Rock should even consider doing something similar, but her regeneration is more complete if still very costly, so using that trick many times isn't great.

"Still, I think despite the fact Kat made the right call, in many ways Seralina did actually win the match when she cornered Kat." *What! How could he think that?* "Kat had to use her Rank 2 ability to escape, and while technically that is the purpose of today, fighting stronger opponents, without that ability to escape Seralina would have won right there.

"Kat deserves some credit too of course. She managed to realise the best course of action and how to subdue her opponent, but Seralina figured it out much faster and was nearly successful. I doubt anyone else here could manage a similar feat" said Uncle

"No way!" shouted Rock. *Here she goes again. Why can't she be nice to us? I mean I'm kind of used to it at this point but Kat doesn't deserve the harassment! And she actually fought so why are you mad? Kamiko then noticed Kat was glancing at her, and her worries vanished, smile returning. Even though Rock's being rude again, she's still paying attention to me. Oh it's great to have a friend!*

"Would you care to elaborate Ms Boulder?" said Uncle

Wait her name is Rock Boulder? You've got to be kidding me. "No. No I do not." Said Rock. *Her name IS Rock Boulder!* Kamiko felt her jaw drop.

"And why is that?" asked Uncle.

"Well, I can't be giving my secrets away before the fight now can I? I'm going to win and prove just how weak those slu-" Rock was stopped when a regenerated Seralina burst out of her cocoon to slam Rock in the back of the head again.

"Thank you Seralina." said Uncle, before turning his gaze back to Rock. "Now Rock, you've been rude, and now you aren't thinking properly. Even if you won your match, if it was against Kat, then you still would be inferior to Seralina. She managed an exceptionally close match blind. You now know how Kat fights, what abilities she has, and are no doubt thinking of strategies for that.

"There's nothing wrong with being prepared, but being rude to your sparring partners and belittling them is a sign of complete disrespect. In fact, Kamiko" said Uncle turning to her. *Oh...?* "Would you like to fight Rock now?"

"Wait but I haven't recovered!" shouted Rock.

"It doesn't matter. You chose to pick a fight. Well I'm giving it to you." said Uncle as if the answer was simple.

Rock glared at him, and if looks could kill, there would be a beard drifting down to the floor right about now. Of course, looks can kill when you have laser eyes. Shame that only Kamiko possessed that ability.

*Oh, what do I do? Uncle has given me direct challenge. I can't really say no to him... and Rock is very rude. If I could beat her maybe that would shut her up but... I don't know if I can beat her. I mean she looks really scary... I don't know if I'm ready to fight her...

Oooh, but she's weak right now for some reason. I mean she looks fine but... clearly based on their reaction it must be true. Maybe she's down on demonic energy? Or... or maybe she needs to eat a certain amount of rocks for her regeneration? I heard that's a thing for some races... I guess... maybe now is the best time...

Would Kat be happy with this though? She dealt with her the first time... maybe she wants to finish her off? Some demons are weird like that... but Kat's so nice. She wouldn't hold a grudge against me for fighting right?*

Kamiko, let her gaze drift to Kat, who just smiled and patted her shoulder. *OK! I CAN DO IT.* "I accept."

Rock just scoffed at her answer, and jumped into the arena with a scowl on her face. She landed with a super hero landing and Kamiko frowned. *Isn't that horrible on your knees? Why would you do that.* She glanced at Uncle, who nodded in confirmation.

Ok then. Kamiko jumped down after Rock, making sure to land properly and roll afterwards, tucking her head in properly to avoid scraping her horns on the floor just like she'd been taught, before hopping to her feet and walking to the unoccupied circle.

Kamiko pulled on the air and her double sided naginata sprung into her hand. A glance over at Rock's physique though... *It's also a training match so I should probably... not use the blades.* Twisting the

centre, there was a click and the blades folded into themselves leaving both ends with a smooth metallic sheen that was slightly rounded but not quite a true cylinder.

Ok, what have I got? Poison? Yes apply poison first Kamiko quickly got to work, and started to leak paralysis poison over both ends and watched it seep into her weapon. As she swapped to the other end she considered... *should I use other poison? Hmm, no probably not. I need to incapacitate her... this is to first blood right?*

"This is to first blood right?" asked Kamiko to make sure.

Before Uncle could say anything, Rock yelled. "YES! It is to first blood!" with an odd smirk on her face. Uncle looked displeased at the answer but Kamiko was already back to preparing her weapon and missed it.

Hmm, ok so... maybe I should use the blades then? That... no that might be a bit mean... then again... she is still made of rock so the blunt edge is probably better. I imagine it acts as sort of a natural armour... could just blast her with my eyes a few times... but honestly that's so weak.

Swinging her naginata around Kamiko felt herself warming up, letting the demonic energy flow through her. A chill started to burn through her arms as a soft mist of pink gathered around her body. Kamiko's eyes flashed and started to rotate in preparation for the fight.

On Rock's side, she punched her hands together twice and then they doubled in size. Growing until it looked like she was wearing gloves. Her fingers still moved dexterously but eventually she settled on clenching them shut and entering a sprinter's pose.

You can do this Kamiko. You've been in fights before. You've gotten very good at dodging. You had to. Now use some of that knowledge. Show off in front of Kat. No wait don't show off. Kat was really calm and humble in her fight. Don't act like an idiot. Um... calm and flowing like a river or something?

3. Kamiko swallowed the worries down her throat and got ready, staff in both hands out front, to meet Rock's very clearly telegraphed charge.

2. Behind Rock two small stones grew up from the ground, elevating her feet slightly as if they were sprinters blocks, while her stony form seemed to pulse with power.

1. Rock kicked off, and started running already before the alarm went to zero. She was still building speed and didn't cross the line until...

0, the match started. *Dammit, she's already being a bad sport about it*. Kamiko eyed the charge, readied her stance, and just as Rock was about to reach her, Kamiko slammed her staff into the ground using it as a vault to fly over Rock. Rock, seeing this, grabbed onto Kamiko's staff and tried to hold her in place.

Kamiko grinned, and using the full strength of her upper body threw herself down slamming into Rock's back, with a cracking sound, causing the staff to be freed and Kamiko to jump off to safety.

Yes! I got her! Kamiko turned to see Rock getting up, back clearly caved in slightly... but no blood soaked the shirt? What's going on? I heard her back crack... why is she still moving and why doesn't she seem injured? I only went for such a dangerous strike because Uncle can heal but...

As Rock stood up, small chipped pieces of her fell from her shirt and Kamiko's eyes went wide as she realised the problem. That cheating BITCH! She doesn't have BLOOD!