

DEMONS 351

Chapter 351: Kamiko Punching Rock in the Face

Rock grinned. "Was that supposed to hurt, little wench in training?"

Kamiko smiled back. *She can't get to me. Don't worry about the fact that she's a cheating bitch.* Kamiko's eyes whirled, the stars blurring into one stretched shape. *She's not worth the anger... but hurting her for real. Now that might help me get over it.* "No! This is!" shouted Kamiko.

A brilliant pink laser shot from both her eyes and met in the middle, it took not even a blink to reach Rock and it slammed into her and started to burn a hole in the golem's 'flesh'. Rock grit her teeth and threw her hands up, taking the impact on the overly large appendages. Pieces of Rock's hands flew off in every direction as Kamiko felt her eyes starting to scream at her.

Can't keep this up much longer. The energy isn't that much but my eyes can't handle it. Dammit I need to practice more... but I already practice so much... Dammit, I have to stop this. Kamiko, tried to shut off her eyes, but found her anger was fuelling the beam. Forcing her eyelids closed was all she could do.

That shut off the energy, but it left her blind. *Dammit, I can feel that if I open my eyes they'll keep going. Dammit. If only I wasn't quite so angry at Rock.* Her thoughts were cut short by a punch to her face. Kamiko took the blow hard... but it wasn't enough to get through her defences. Kamiko turned her face back into the punch and willed her eyes to open again.

Good thing too, because a kick was flying towards her face as a follow up, which promptly got blasted away causing rock to stumble. Not willing to let the chance go, Kamiko followed that up by letting go of her naginata with her left hand and punching Rock right back in the face.

As she did so, she let her poison leak out of her nails and made sure to spread it across after the punch had landed. Still, Kamiko was taking no chances with the cheater. Once the strike landed and the poison was spread, she jumped backwards, to get some distance and placed a tender hand on her face.

Kamiko winced at the touch, just thankful that her eyes hadn't continued shooting lasers after that brief burst to get rid of Rock's oncoming kick. *Hmm, not good. That's actually pretty close to my eyes. I'm not sure how safe it will be to shoot any more lasers. It might just make the injury worse.*

Kamiko put her hand back to her weapon, and watched as Rock charged her once again. Deciding that what wasn't broke, didn't need fixing, Kamiko leaped over Rock's charge once again, using her staff, which caused Rock to grab it again, this time, trying to force her to land. Kamiko wasn't having it though, and used the extra momentum to alter her target and slam into Rock's head.

Just before her feet made contact though, Rock's short hair transformed, ballooning out into additional stone, which easily broke under Kamiko's heel. This slammed Rock straight into the ground, but elicited no expected grunt of pain. Kamiko, realising something was wrong, got ready to jump off but when she tugged on her feet, she found them stuck.

Kamiko could practically feel Rock's stupid grin as she realised, she'd been caught. Rock's hair growing around to encapsulate her feet and hold her in place. *Dammit... lasers again I guess.* Not willing to allow Rock to have her way, Kamiko forced her eyes to shoot once again, aiming for the spot between her feet.

As soon as the blast left her eyes, Kamiko jumped up and away, leaving her staff behind. As Kamiko landed on her feet, she felt a stabbing pain in her ankles. Glancing down, she saw that her outfit had been burnt through and there was an angry red mark on her foot. *At least it isn't bleeding. Still hurts though.*

"Aw, did the wittle trainee freak lose her staff? Guess it happens to every one of you at one point or another picking up the wrong rod. Still, your kind never cared about that did they?" said Rock.

Kamiko just tilted her head and stared at Rock. *Is... is that the best she had? Like... ok I was annoyed, and probably took her teasing too seriously but... now that I listen to what's she saying... I mean... it isn't even that bad? She... she does know that sex jokes are very common in succubi families, right? This isn't even in the top ten worst things... should I just... throw it back at her?*

"I mean, you're the one who took it off me. Clearly, you're just begging for a staff of your own. That ones a bit used, but I suppose if that's your thing I'm not going to judge" said Kamiko with a cheeky grin.

Rock's eyes bulged, as she took a step forward and hurled the staff like a javelin straight at Kamiko's face. It was hardly dangerous though, and Kamiko easily caught it in her hand. "Aw, you were so kind to return it. I know how hard it must be for someone as pent up as yourself. Maybe you think I'll give you a treat in return?"

Blegh. I'm going to hurl. I hate telling these jokes. It's just so crass... but it is getting to her. Maybe I should have come up with a better plan and keep my dignity? Oh no. Especially in front of Kat... wait she's also a succubus. I'm probably fine. Kamiko despite her supposed inner disgust was trying very hard not to laugh. Rock had veins of stone pulsing all across her head making it look more like a snake's nest then a face.

Rock released an inhuman scream and charged blindly straight at Kamiko. It was then, a rather simple thing to twist her staff and release the blades once again. Feeding energy into the weapon, Kamiko's pink glow wrapped around it.

Kamiko met Rock's charge by ducking down and allowing Rock's momentum to carry her straight onto the end of her naginata. The blade slid easily into Rock's chest. "Yield" said Kamiko.

"Nope. It's 'till first blood" quipped Rock gritting her teeth and pushing forward, grinding along the edge of Kamiko's blade to get in striking distance.

Is she mad? Kamiko looked to Uncle hoping for a resolution but he just shook his head slowly. *What the heck? That... that can't be ok? Right...?*

Kamiko grit her teeth and twisted the blade, causing Rock's chest to crack and groan as the weapon scraped around her body. Still, this didn't seem to deter Rock at all, who wound up to punch Kamiko once more. Kamiko jumped back to avoid it, more than willing to abandon her weapon in Rock to avoid another strike to the face. She wasn't willing to risk it starting to bleed.

Instead though, Rock just... followed through until she fell over. As Rock collapsed, a heap of dust was thrown up from the dust that had gathered on the floor due to her injuries. "MATCH OVER!" shouted Uncle.

Kamiko gulped. Rock wasn't moving. Edging closer to the body Kamiko lightly tapped Rock on the side.
Is... is she ok? She better not be dead... wait, she would have been pulled if she was about to die... what the heck is going on?

No sooner had Kamiko asked that question that a cracking sound split the silence. The source was obviously Rock, and Kamiko looked over at her confused. The cracking sound continued for a few moments before a small figure jumped out of Rock's torso.

"NEVER! I haven't lost yet!" shouted Rock...

Though she was much changed. Rock was now only knee height to Kamiko and her voice was much higher pitched. Kamiko couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of it. "None shall laugh at me!" squeaked the tiny rock, who 'ran' over and kicked Kamiko in the shin. It didn't hurt.

Kamiko continued laughing, as Rock kept kicking her in the shin over and over. "I. I'm sorry but. Oh this is so funny" said Kamiko in between giggles.

Rock growled, and marched over to her body. Rock placed a hand on it, and then suddenly it transformed into a small normal looking rock. Rock stood on her rock, before kicking it once, and launching herself over to the platform. Kamiko took this chance to pick up her weapon and dust it off.

"Make me big again Gramps!" shouted the tiny Rock.

Uncle smiled down at her. "No."

"Why not!" said Rock.

"This is your punishment for not only being rude, but also trying to get a cheap victory against your opponent. You knew you couldn't bleed so that condition favoured you ridiculously. You still lost though, and then had the gall to continue while you were impaled.

"I think you need a time out for the rest of these matches" said Uncle with a smug grin.

Chapter 352: Aftermath

We now return to the story of our regularly scheduled protagonist.

"What!" shouted the tiny Rock "You can't do that!"

"I can and I will unless you calm down Rock" said Uncle with a soft smile. While this was happening, Kamiko was making her way over. Her body still had a soft pink glow, but she was clearly wincing as she stepped, likely having trouble with the injuries she sustained to her ankles.

I wonder if she wants help? No, don't be stupid, of course the poor girl wants help she has massive burns on her legs. Why would you even ask that question?

Kat shook her head, realising she was much too used to her own ability to heal, and the stronger demons she'd seen. Even Seralina was mostly fine to move after her not insubstantial injuries.

Kat quickly flew down beside Kamiko and offered a figurative and literal hand. "Yes please. Sorry to make you worry" said Kamiko, keeping her speech short for once, which triggered a bit of unease in Kat.

Forgoing the idea to support her, Kat instead bent down and swept Kamiko off her feet and flew up to the platform.

While this was going on, Rock was still throwing a tantrum. She was stomping around the crushed rocks and looking exceptionally unimpressed with things. She was shouting a lot as well though Kat was tuning it out and Uncle still had a calm smile so it mustn't have been considered too bad.

When Kat made it back to the platform Uncle turned and asked, "Kamiko, would you like me to heal you completely or just your legs? If it's just your legs you won't need your entire body covered"

"I think it would be best to do everything" said Kamiko still in Kat's arms. "It's actually a little hard to speak still after that punch in the face and I can feel it starting to swell up, so if I get you to do that as well I'd lose the ability to talk anyway."

Uncle nodded, and gestured for Kat to put Kamiko down on the chair that formed out of the pillar at some point. Kat did so, and watched as Kamiko was wrapped up like Seralina was, though obviously with much less beard.

Finally, Rock seemed to calm down, but as soon as she did so, she collapsed onto her back and seemed to pass out. "Um... what just happened?" asked Kat

"Rock has... a unique... I suppose you could say, ability. Most of her kind have a core that makes up all they are. This core controls the body, which is more like a puppet. Rock however does not. I personally suspect she has some Living Shadow ancestry to blame but I really don't know and neither does she.

"One of the benefits to this, is that she can survive just about anything, even better than you can Kat. While we aren't sure how small it's possible for her to be, she once ended up the size of your palm due to an accident in her childhood.

"The problem however, as you saw just then, is that because her mind isn't tied to a specialised core, but instead to her whole body... her intellectual capabilities scale somewhat with her size. She does have a limit, she can't be much bigger than you saw initially, but when she is smaller she acts... well not quite, but the closest example is like a child.

"The strange thing is though, when she regains her lost mass, she will still remember everything. I'm not sure where her memory is stored but it can't be in her stone because she loses large chunks of it semi-regularly but keeps her overall mind. Oh, and one more quirk is that she can't use rock she's used before for some reason" said Uncle.

Should he really be revealing this much information? I mean, don't get me wrong, I enjoyed listening and it was really informative but... is it right to just give away her secrets like this? Are demons normally so free with this sort of information? Kat bit her lip and decided to ask. "Are demons normally so free with that sort of information"

Uncle glanced over to Seralina, who looked happy to step in. "Not really no. Most demons keep it close to their chest, especially Wrath demons. It's actually a rather harsh punishment to spread the abilities of another. One of the greatest joys in fighting other Wrath demons is figuring out your opponents' skills and abilities.

"I suspect however, that is exactly why Uncle saw fit to inform you, or perhaps more specifically Kamiko. She did a number of dishonourable things. First, she insulted both of you, multiple times, then she declared a wildly advantageous combat type intentionally, and didn't limit herself because of it.

"Um, what I mean by that is... well it's like your wings. We know that you'd win, or at least make it exceptionally hard for any of us to fight if you used them Kat. We simply don't possess that ability, so it gives you such a strong advantage to be not worth the fight.

"Rock asked for a duel to first blood, knowing of course, that she didn't have blood. This is seen as rather... well, it's seen as the sort of thing only dishonourable people or cheats would use. I'm honestly rather surprised Uncle allowed it"

"If you don't mind me jumping in?" said Uncle, who with a nod from Seralina continued, "She's right that it wasn't something I'd normally allow. I'm still a little torn over it and not sure I should have allowed it... but on the other hand, both you and Kamiko are Rank 2 demons and already have a good advantage over the rest of them.

"Of course, that was the point of the day so it's not like they can be shocked, but I do want everyone to use everything they have in these fights. It's supposed to be hard or impossible to beat you two even with your lacking martial training.

"So, I wanted to allow it because it was a smart tactic. However, I also wanted to ban it or tell her off because it was a dishonourable one that was acted on because of spite. In the end, I allowed it because I believed Kamiko would likely still win but... I'll admit it might not have been the right decision"

It was at this moment that Kamiko's cocoon cracked open and she stepped out shaking off the pieces of solidified beard that still clung to her outfit. "It's ok Uncle. I did beat her. Well, I do really wish you'd called the match when she had my naginata sticking through her chest. I didn't know she'd be fine after all, and the match really was over at that point. Even if it took an extra move to really seal the deal, it was essentially no different"

Uncle coughed awkwardly. "Yeah... I probably should have ended it there... I admit my desire to see her returned to a smaller form after her transgression may have been a motivating factor"

Kamiko frowned. "Well, that's all well in good but if I'm honest I was a little traumatised." She said in a cheery voice that for some reason didn't undercut the point. "I mean, I had to twist the knife, rather literally in the poor delusional girl's chest. Even if no damage was done, and she can't exactly feel it I doubt it was pleasant.

"I know it certainly wasn't for me. I had bits of dust on me from her, which while certainly more sanitary than flesh and blood pieces is no less disturbing when you realise that it still very much is pieces of her body that nearly went into my mouth, and only because I kept my energy circulating, did I avoid that"

Kat shuddered. *That is not a thought that I really want to remain in my head.* Kat brought Kamiko into a big hug, and decided she didn't really care what the social graces were, she was using her tail to grab the poor girl as well. She seemed rather confident in the fight, but now Kamiko looked more than a little put out.

Kat was surprised then, that after freezing slightly when Kamiko felt Kat's tail wrapping around her, she quickly returned the favour pulling them both tighter together. A warm feeling spread through the chest of both girls. Kamiko for finally having a friend, and Kat for getting a new one. This action seemed to firmly cement what had been said earlier in the minds of both girls. If there were a few tears that sneaked out of Kamiko's eyes well... she certainly didn't have perfect recall, and Kat's clothing repelled water so there was no evidence at all.

While Kat and Kamiko were having a much-needed hug, Seralina went off to retrieve her wayward friend. Pulling the sleeping Rock into her arms, and then setting her on the top of her snake half, she slithered back to the podium while making sure that even while she was climbing, Rock wasn't going to fall off.

Chapter 353: A Good Solid Punch

Once Rock was back on the pedestal, Seralina put her down, and then Uncle reached into his beard with a fist made out of the same beard to pull out a large rock that was easily as long as he was tall and about as wide. *What? Where the hell was he hiding that?*

Kamiko's expression mirrored Kat's and when Uncle saw this he chuckled lightly and said, "Pocket dimension in my beard. Don't worry about it" and snapped the rock in half before placing it on either side of Rock.

"I'm tempted to leave her like this, but I don't want to inflict ah... hmm, I wanna say five year old? Rock on you all" said Uncle

Seralina bowed as well as she could as a Lamia. This mostly involved raising part of her snake body a bit further back as it seemed her spine didn't really bend the same way a normal human's did. It could go backwards fine, but not very far forwards at all.? "Thank you Uncle. I have no desire to deal with a younger Rock. She has trouble controlling herself at a young age and previously I promised her parents I'd ensure she didn't make a fool of herself in that form. Luckily, she can do that well enough in her full sized form, but I try" said Seralina with a slight giggle at the end.

"Right" Uncle said with a clap of the two hands he materialised from his beard for that purpose. "Kat are you ready for you next match, all energy returned?" when he received a nod he continued "Ok good, in that case who wants to go next?"

"I would be honoured if you fought me first" said Percy.

"Welp good enough for me. Get down there you two" said Uncle

Kat jumped down and asked as she was gliding to her circle. "What are we fighting till?"

"Serious injury or confinement" said Percy. "I believe my armour will protect me well enough that first blood would not be enjoyable for us both."

That might be true but I'm starting to wonder if maybe I need more practice dodging. I mean sure, my regen takes very little energy even for serious wounds and I can use that to trade for much worse injuries on my opponents but maybe I should get better at dodging faster people or ones that actually hurt? Food for thought I suppose. "Sounds fine to me" said Kat.

Percy took a bit longer to reach his own circling, having landed hard. He didn't seem injured but when he jumped off it took him a few seconds to start moving again. *I wonder if that's something I should look out for. Maybe he can absorb damage if he stands still for a bit or something? That would be interesting.*

Soon, Percy reached his platform, and Uncle started the countdown for them both.

3, Percy gave a quick stretch and shook his arms out as best he could.

2, Kat crouched into her running form, tail at the ready for its strike, knowing that her fists would be limited against the armour, and forgetting about the penetrating power of her nails already.

1, Percy dropped to a horse-riding stance. He had his arms crossed in front of him, one foot slightly forward and knees bent majorly.

Kat took off as fast as she could toward the Pit Fiend that was simply watching as she approached. As Kat got closer and closer, it became clearer and clearer that Percy didn't intend to move in the slightest. Kat took the challenge and slammed a fist into his armoured shoulder, and her tail into his stomach, not wanting to go for his now helmeted head. *When did that get there? Never mind I don't want to cause brain damage or something anyway.*

Kat's opening salvo didn't have energy backing it and so when she struck Percy, other than a loud clang of impact, he didn't even react. Kat pulled her hands back, and continued running past him, tail at the ready in case he made some move as she charged past but... nothing.

Um... ok? Kat stopped and turned around and saw he was still there, same position, hardly moved at all. *Is he still in there?* Kat turned her hearing to the guy and realised she could clearly still hear his breathing in the suit. *Well now I'm just confused.*

Kat walked slowly back towards him, taking her time to plan her next move as she did so. *Right, the sounds confirm that he is still inside that armour, and that he isn't hiding somewhere else. I could use more force perhaps but I'm not sure that is the best idea. I could also try and tear pieces of his armour off... but I'm not sure how easily repaired that is.*

Wait no, it's almost certainly demonic attire, so it should be fine right. "Hey, is that armour repairable?" asked Kat.

To her surprise, it was actually Uncle who answered. "Anything you wear into the arena is to be presumed destroyed!" with a shout to carry the words.

Ok, first off... why did you yell? Do we not all have super hearing? Actually maybe we don't, Percy might not, and Uncle probably wanted him to hear. Ok, next... that doesn't really answer my question. Sure it's a self-imposed limitation but if I'd be destroying valuable armour I think I can find a better way. I mean, I'm here because of my debt, and while it isn't too bad, that doesn't mean I want to send someone else down this path.

Kat had reached Percy at this point. She lightly tapped his armour on the back between his wings, and it seemed just as solid as before. *Hmm, wings aren't moving but...* Kat tapped them as well... and found that they gave a metallic clang when she did so. Huh, interesting.

Poking at the wings a few more times established that something interesting was going on, and trying to move them with limited force didn't seem to work. *Right, so Percy seems to be pretty tough. How do I want to break him? Exposed skin clearly isn't the way because that's just as hard, or at least close but... wait a second.*

"Hey Uncle... does this count as confinement seeing as Percy isn't moving?" asked Kat

Uncle gave a big laugh, and Seralina was giggling as well. Percy's brothers seemed less amused at the question, for while innocent, was rather rude in their eyes. "Not really. I'm sure he can move if he wants." said Uncle.

Well alright then. Kat then went to look over the outfit. Her plan was to search for any buckles or straps that she could undo to start taking off the armour Percy was wearing, thinking that it would be easier and polite to do so, just in case it was strong.

What Kat was surprised to find though, is that there wasn't any. The pauldrons were bolted to the chest, with a leather strap running from the other side to the arm. The chest piece seemed to be practically welded on, and the armguards were just as impossible to remove.

What the heck? Was he like baked into his armour or something? Kat paused for a moment. *Actually if this is demonic attire that isn't the craziest idea. He can summon and dismiss it as he wants, there are less weak points because the armour doesn't need to come off, and it's fitted perfectly because it was made around his body.*

Welp, time to punch shit really hard, I guess. Kat took a step back so that Percy was just barely in punching range, and then comically spun her arm around as she charged it as full of energy as she could. Once a purple mist was spilling out of the arm in question Kat released all that power straight into Percy's back between his shoulder blades.

What happened next, would be a surprise to both contestants. There was the awful sound of tearing metal as Percy's boots that were actually connected to the floor were ripped from him as he went flying. His flight slammed him head first into the wall with a horrible cracking noise.

Percy's unconscious form lay slumped against the wall he'd just hit and Kat stared dumbfounded. Even Uncle's call of "Winner Kat! Match Over!" did nothing to break her stupor.

Ok no seriously what just happened? I mean why didn't he move at all if he was that weak? I didn't even use my legs; I just punched the guy? Sure, it was full strength but... that seemed to be his only gimmick? Is... is he really weak or is Seralina and Rock... or maybe just Seralina, actually rather impressive for Rank 1's?

Kat looked over where the boots were still clearly connected to the floor. *Was this... no I don't follow. Was he trying to use the power of the floor maybe? My punch was too much and took out the weakest link which was the bottom of his shoes for some reason? Maybe I'll just ask the others...*

Chapter 354: Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger

Kat looked over at the pillar with everyone standing on it with a sheepish smile and asked. "Um, what just happened? Is he ok?"

"For a certain definition" said one of Percy's brothers. Kat couldn't see their tabards from this angle to figure out which one it was.

"Um... elaborate please?" asked Kat.

"Can you bring him up first?" asked the other brother. "Just so Uncle can heal him and ensure no permanent damage"

Oh right. That's actually a great idea I really should have done that first thing. Walking over to Percy, Kat grabbed him by the armour and then jumped back to the pedestal using her wings a little to ensure she had the extra height alongside a soft landing. As soon as Percy was placed down Uncle wrapped him up in a doubled layer of beard hair.

"Ok, now that he's getting healed up" said the second speaker, now revealed to be Sekron. "He should be fine, Uncle's healing is spectacular and if it was anything Uncle couldn't take care of, he would have been teleported to the hospital, D.E.M.O.N.S is smart like that. His pride however... well that might never recover.

"See, we all have our own way to reduce incoming damage substantially, with Percy having the best ability for it. I won't say how it works exactly, but it does mean that he never really trained to dodge... or fight. He's supposed to be an immovable object but... well you just punched him into a wall.

"That's the sort of thing that really breaks a man's confidence, and it didn't even look like it was that hard for you. Hopefully he won't remember that part though" Sekron finished speaking and looked over at the cocoon of his brother with a wry smile.

Well, it wasn't that hard really. I didn't even use my legs with that punch. Probably all the energy I could pack into my arms, but yeah my body really wasn't in that punch still though... "Why would that break him so much? I'm Rank 2, isn't it kinda expected that I'd be able to win the fight?" asked Kat

Sekron shrugged. "Well, in matters of pride it isn't necessary to set reasonable expectations."

Kat nodded, not fully understanding. *Perhaps it's close to me being weird about my tail...? Then again that is just a demon thing from what I've been told. Is it possible that pride as a whole is something they can't take? Eh seems a bit extreme.* "Sure... I guess I'll keep in mind"

"So, I am required to ask but, who won that fight" said Uncle.

"Kat" responded everyone else.

"Yeah, that's pretty much how it is. Percy only had one tactic and Kat thoroughly outclassed him, leading to his defeat. This is actually a rather textbook example of what I'm trying to teach you six today with Kat and Kamiko's help" said Uncle.

"I'm not as strong as Kat is though" said Kamiko

Uncle shrugged. "I'm not too sure about that. It isn't as though Kat used her abilities, just some basic strengthening. I'll admit, she can probably put more force behind it than you but I doubt the margin is significant in a case like this"

Percy's muffled growling could be heard from his cocoon but was swiftly ignored. "If you say so Uncle. Personally, I think Kat is much more impressive than I am. I certainly don't think I could have defeated Seralina... however that actually does leave me wondering why she is so strong. I've never really fought across Rank barriers with too much seriousness if you don't count my parents training us... and I mean I don't, they could have sneezed and won those fights."

"Seralina do you want to answer that, have me answer it or not have it discussed?" asked Uncle.

"Hmmm" hummed Seralina. "I'd like to try if you don't mind, and then you can jump in if I get something wrong correct?"

Uncle nodded in acceptance and Seralina started speaking. "So, the biggest thing is my transformation to full snake. That actually isn't standard at all for a Lamia. Many of us don't get it till much later on, and I know some people who retire before they do.

"Our full snake form isn't just a transformation to remove the Succubus looking half, it also makes the entirety of my body a bit stronger, a bit faster and increases my eyesight by quite a lot because well... my eyes are like four or five times the size. That's the big thing is the true upgrades.

"The second big thing is that I simply have so much additional mass compared to everyone else." Seralina blushed a bit at the confession, as if it wasn't immediately obvious with her much larger form. "So, I can actually use more of my strength. Um... just as an example Kat might have... say fifty? Sixty? Kilograms of muscle in her body.

"She can use them much better than I can, as well as pumping more energy through them because of Rank but... at the end of the day I have at least twice as much muscle, perhaps even three times when in my full snake form as Lamia have a hard time getting fat unless they are Gluttony demons.

"We just get longer with more muscle, up to a point of course. The final thing that helps, is that I can use most of my muscles at a time to help me with my tasks. Whereas Kat has to use her legs for movement, I can use the whole length of my body. That pretty much covers it all."

Uncle nodded. "A few extra things to consider as well, that Seralina might be embarrassed to admit, but she is one of our best trained fighters, having been trying to learn how best to use her body before she unlocked her flame. She's been doing this basically as long as she possibly could and the effort she's put in really shows. While Percy, Sekron and Krekron have also been doing some training, it really is nothing compared to Seralina."

"What about Meron?" asked Kamiko "It's rather hard to guess how much training he has had"

Uncle nodded. "Yeah, it's actually really hard for us to train the same way you all do. Moving our beards around isn't exactly a muscle, and Meron is actually the weakest here, no offence"

"None taken" said Meron with a shrug. "I know I'm mostly here to watch the other fights and try to learn to control myself in intense situations."

Uncle nodded, but Krekron stepped in. "Actually, would it be possible for the next match to cover everyone who hasn't fought yet?"

Uncle frowned and stroked his beard with his beard. "Well, I suppose it is technically possible, it's not like we are working on strict rules here... but why?"

Krekron shrugged. "I'd like to try and work with my brother and Meron to beat Kat. I doubt we'd get much more than Percy out of a one on one duel"

"Well, if Kat accepts, I'm going to say it won't be to first blood. There's no point in either you or Sekron managing a light cut on her while she's distracted with three enemies, especially when she doesn't need to normally watch for something like that so I imagine it would be a very different style of combat. If Kat is willing to accept of course. Do you have all your energy back?" asked Uncle.

"I have full energy. So that part is no problem" said Kat

But do I want to fight them. Well, it could be interesting, but... I don't know how hard that would be. I do get to use my regen this time, and I can probably manage but... do I really want to fight three people?

What about Kamiko? Will she feel left out by missing a bunch of fights? Kat glanced at the girl in question, who looked back with a grin and a tilted head as if to say, 'what's wrong?'. *Ok so Kamiko is fine with this... wait why am I hesitating?*

What's the downside to fighting these guys? Kat rolled the idea in her mind for a while and realised... she really couldn't think of a reason not to. *Huh... I kinda expected some words of wisdom to help me realise this was a bad idea.*

But I'm just... well I'm faster, stronger, and just better in general than they all are, and I can actually use one of my best abilities which is my regen. I think this could actually be a really interesting fight.

"Well, as long as Kamiko doesn't mind, I'm ok with it" said Kat

"Yeah go for it Kat!" said Kamiko cheerily. "I believe in you, and I'm perfectly happy to avoid more fighting. I mean, if you don't really want to I can fight some more but... well what I mean to say is I can take it or leave it really? I mean... just do what you want"

Chapter 355: Outnumbered but not Outgunned

Kat gave Kamiko a really quick side hug before jumping down to her circle. It was exceptionally clear where she was meant to stand, as the other side of the arena had three circles for the other contestants.

That actually gives me a bit of an advantage. I only have to watch from attacks in the one direction. This might be easier than I thought. Wait, no don't say that, take them seriously. Even if this is supposed to be perfectly possible, and Percy was a weakling. Wait... is that rude to think? Eh who cares I took him out in one punch and I can be a bit rude to people in my thoughts.

Kat's opponents actually managed to take a rather interesting way down. Meron stretched his beard out into a staircase that Krekron and Sekron walked down. Kat did notice however, that they were never actually both on the staircase at the same time. Sekron stopped to look over Percy's cocoon and made it seem casual, but Kat noticed it was timed a bit too well. As soon as Krekron's foot left the beard stairs Sekron stepped on the top.

Ok, a weakness already. I bet that Meron can't actually hold the both of them. Should I just go for him first? How does this work exactly? Can downed people re-join the fight if they recover?

"Hey Uncle, what are they fighting till? I know I need to be disabled but what about them?" asked Kat

"Major injury I guess, same as you. Unless they have other ideas?" said Uncle.

"I am fine with major injury" said Krekron.

"I concur" said Sekron

"Um... I... well, I think I'll go with the same. I mean... I can't really bleed... I mean, not like Rock... ah..." Meron fumbled.

"Anything causing us to bleed is probably already a major injury," said Uncle coming to the rescue. "We don't exactly have much meat on us, so if you manage to break our skin, chances are the bones will follow, unlike the rest of you which have much weaker skin and tougher bones"

I guess that makes sense? I wonder if they have an exoskeleton? That could be why... eh not really relevant.

Everyone got in place and Uncle once again summoned the countdown timer. Meron was off to Kat's right, with Sekron on the other side and Krekron in the middle.

3. *Attack the healer. Not sure if Meron is a healer yet or not, but he also seems like he's probably the weakest so I'll go for him first.* Kat lined herself up with Krekron, masking her real target slightly.

2. Meron's beard started to flow around him, acting somewhat like a liquid, constantly rippling and moving around him like a living thing.

1. Krekron and Sekron summoned their weapons. Krekron's was a large war hammer while Sekron had a sword and shield. Krekron's hammer had a head the size of his chest with a spike on the other end of the handle. Sekron's shield was a standard kite shield with the same design as his tabard, blue and gold v's in a line.

When the buzzer hit zero Kat jumped forward at the same time as Meron and Krekron jumped backwards with Sekron moving to the front, shield at the ready. *Wait... why didn't he just take the middle podium?* Kat didn't have long to think though, because she was conserving energy, before she knew it, she was only a few steps away from Sekron.

Kat waited for him to be just barely in range and struck out with her tail, which Sekron managed to take easily on his shield by angling it away from himself slightly. While he was busy with that, Kat didn't stop her charge, and dashed around the distracted pit fiend.

This seemed to be expected though, as Kat was now able to see the other two clearly. Meron was hidden behind Krekron's large form that was already swinging at her with his hammer. Seeing that he was going for a strike on her upper chest, Kat decided to try something new.

Kat dropped to her knees, making sure to keep her kimono between herself and the ground, while bending backwards as far as her wings would allow. Which, at Rank 2 was actually rather far, allowing her to almost completely flatten herself.

Krekron's hammer flew over her head, clearly not ready for her drastic shift in height. Making use of the chance, Kat unfolded herself and bounced up, releasing a punch straight towards where she remembered Meron being.

Meron, it turned out, was already preparing. As she ducked under Krekron's rather slow but well timed hammer strike, he managed to create a ball of beard hair that surrounded him. When Kat smashed into the ball it went flying and hit the wall... but instantly bounced off and continued to bounce around the arena.

Shit, that probably didn't actually do much. Kat whirled around, just in time to see Krekron making another swing. Judging the distance, Kat realised she could still step back and out of range, but she wanted to see how strong they were comparatively. Bracing herself, Kat put her right arm up to block the strike.

The hammer impacted hard, and Kat now realised her footwork was rather horribly. That coupled with the fact she put none of her own force into fighting the hammer meant she went flying in a similar manner to Meron just was. Kat barely felt the strike, her muscles and bones taking it surprisingly well, and healing from what little damage was done.

Krekron however, clearly wasn't expecting the blow to land, and neither was his brother. When Kat hit the wall, she had all the time in the world to stand back up. *Dammit, could have landed better if I wasn't so focused on keeping my wings folded.* Brushing herself off, Kat was surprised by two things.

The first was that Krekron and Sekron hadn't moved at all. The second was that Meron hadn't stopped. The bearded ball was actually heading straight towards her current position. Crouching down Kat put her back against the wall, and prepared. Pushing as much energy into her leg as possibly, Kat waited till just before Meron was in range and kicked out.

It was perfect. She connected with Meron, there was a brief screech before he was sent of flying again, bouncing around the tent. The brother seemed to have gotten themselves together and were making their way towards Kat at a decent pace, probably sprinting, but to Kat it looked more like a light jog.

Don't want to get caught in the corner. Kat sprinted to meet them, not willing to be boxed in. Krekron and Sekron spread out, and attacked her as she charged. Sekron went high with his sword, as if trying to cut off her head, while Krekron went for her knees.

Kat wasn't willing to play either game though, so she simply turned in place and headed around behind Sekron. Kat didn't see it, so focused she was on the fight, but Uncle's jaw dropped when he saw the turn, and the internal scream of. 'That's not how that works!' could be easily read by Kamiko who was thinking similar things.

Sekron wasn't able to turn in time, and Kat's punch took him in the back... or that was the plan. Instead, Kat found a shield teleporting into her strike. She hadn't put her full power into it, still testing the waters somewhat, and unwilling to go all out straight to someone's spine. This did however mean that when her fist collided with the shield, it bounced back and her wrist was not happy with her.

Gritting her teeth, Kat's eyes started to light up with power as the world slowed. The shield wasn't moving, and it was taking up prime striking real estate. *Ok, what can I do? It's possible to reach around but that won't be ideal. I can go for a kick but he might just move the shield again... but obviously

punching is out... maybe both? I can't really do that well? Wait no I'm an idiot, tail, strike with a kick and my tail.*

Kat swung low going for a leg sweep, while striking the same place she'd just hammered her fist into with her tail. Sekron, it seemed, did not have eyes in the back of his head, as Kat's tail was blocked perfectly, but her leg sweep was unchallenged. Sekron lost his footing completely and went down hard, having no chance against Kat's strength.

The shield followed though, and remained blocking his back. Before Kat could think on it too much though Krekron was swinging over his brother's fallen form, preventing Kat from following up. The spark of an idea to simply strike at the hammer did occur but Kat was willing to step back for now, while watching out for Sekron and ensuring he didn't stand up.

This of course, was the perfect time for things to go wrong, and Kat felt something impact her back, crushing her wings in a rather painful manner.

Chapter 356: One Down... and really Should be Out

Kat felt her wings getting smashed into her back, as she pitched forward. Her first instinct was to try and resist, trying to throw her weight back against whatever had just collided with her, but this was a fool's errand. She was already falling forward, and all her attempt to fight back did was further damage the connections in her wings, causing the ligaments to snap as she fell forward.

Krekron was slightly more prepared for this, but he'd also already made his earlier swing. Watching Kat fall forward though, allowed him another chance. Sekron, whose head had turned to view what was going on assisted. Moving his shield, Sekron caught Kat as she fell, preventing her from falling further. This left her directly in the path of Krekron's follow up hammer swing.

Oh no. Was all Kat could think as she threw her hands in the way. The angle was horrible though, and as the hammer made contact, she could hear her joints popping and muscles coming off the bone and the jarring strike. Kat was thrown away, and the brothers moved as quickly as possible, already trying to get Sekron to his feet.

Kat for her part, bounced a few times on the ground, to minimal effect as she started to put herself back together. Despite this, Kat found herself cursing internally, as her regeneration decided that her wings were a higher priority target as she struggled to stand.

Shit! I can't even use my wings and they are being healed first? I feel so cheated. Sure they took the most damage and I can use my arms with a bit of pain but I really need them to come online first. Despite Kat's pleas her regeneration worked to the best of its ability, pulling the loose pieces of bone back into her wings and resetting the muscles and ligaments. The holes in her wings were healing up just as her regen started to do more heavy lifting on her arms rather than just stabilisation.

Kat raised her eyes to take stock while the healing continued. Meron was still bouncing around randomly, while Sekron had managed to stand and was now picking up his sword that must have been dropped at some point in the fight. *Wait... why does he need to pick it up? Can't he move it like his shield? What's going on there...*

Kat gave a light cough and spat out a bit of blood as her wounds finished healing. *You know... now that I think about it... why does that happen? No really, it's not like that blood should be anywhere near my digestive tract or my lungs... ok maybe a bit might have gotten in my lungs from the wings when they broke against my back but I doubt it...*

Kat cleared her mind as her eyes caught Meron heading for her. This time, it wasn't straight on, and a slight adjustment would see him easily dodged... but she'd had more than enough trouble with the strange little demon and had decided to force him out of the contest. Stepping to the side, Kat lined herself up, pushing slightly away from the wall so that Meron would hit her dead centre in the chest, but she was ready to catch him.

Right on target, Meron slammed into Kat, but she dug her nails into the ball of beard hair, gripping it tightly. Her stomach had tensed for impact, flowing with demonic energy and was able to take the brunt of the force without getting too damaged. Her nails on the other hand, were to stop its endless spinning. Things weren't exactly doing as planned with that, but Kat considered it a bonus.

Instead of halting Meron's rotation, Kat's fingernails were slicing through his beard as he spun, destroying the structural integrity of the ball and slowing it a bit as well. Layer by layer the ball came undone until Kat hit a tipping point and the whole thing just unravelled and Meron fell to the ground. Clearly very unconscious.

What?

Kat looked down and Meron stunned, and then back up at the two brothers who had been charging at her, but now stopped in place, looking similarly gobsmacked. They all just stared at Meron for a few seconds before Uncle interrupted them with a "HEY! Throw 'im up here!"

Kat glanced at the other two fighters, and seeing them nod, Kat picked up Meron and threw him straight at Uncle. It wasn't exactly far, as she'd been hit towards the pillar at the back of the tent, and Meron was extremely light.

Uncle grabbed hold of Meron softly with his beard and placed a few strands on his forehead. "Yup this one's my bad. He's should have been out of the fight... maybe after that kick? Maybe before that? He's be out cold for most of the fight."

You've got to be kidding me. Kat groaned as Krekron and Sekron tried and failed to stifle their laughter. There were both shaking as they heaved big hearty chuckles. *I can't believe this. The best hit on me this entire time could probably be counted as my own attack, because I'm the one who sent him flying around. I don't know if I can ever recover from this.*

Krekron and Sekron however, were having a great time. At this point they had been brought to their knees and could hardly move because of how much laughing they were doing. Seeing this, a slightly devilish thought run through Kat's mind. *Does this count as restrained? These pair can hardly move... but at the same time, they are just laughing... then again, arguably I did this?*

"Hey Uncle, does this count as restrained" said Kat pointed at the laughing pair.

Uncle raised an eyebrow with a chuckle. "I mean, it probably should be, but this is training and probably won't ever come up in real combat so... let's say you're good to keep fighting"

The brothers weren't completely out of it just yet, and hearing that the fight was still on, they grabbed their weapons and tried to bring themselves to their feet. *Do I let them get up? Hmm, I think so, but also...* Kat dashed to where the brothers were, and stood just out of Krekron's hammer range as she watched them get up. Once they were decidedly on their feet, but still perhaps a bit shaky, Kat struck.

What? It's three against one. I need to take some advantages. Kat grinned at the thought, not really believing it properly either, as she jumped between the two and tried to kick them both in the side. It really wasn't a good idea. Krekron simply received the strike on his hammer, while Sekron put his shield in the way taking the strike aimed at him.

Ok so apparently showing off isn't a good idea. Kat dropped to the ground and used all four limbs to push off, throwing herself straight at Krekron who seemed to have the weaker defence. His hammer, still in position from the previous strike, dropped it lower to block the headbutt that Kat was aiming at him.

It wasn't enough though, Kat wasn't playing around anymore, and had determined they could take at least a few full powered strikes. Krekron's hammer screeched as Kat's horns dug into the metal easily, however the force was too much, and Krekron went flying backwards, his arms breaking in the process.

Of course, Kat ended up faceplanting after that, and Sekron used this opening to stab her in the back. Cleanly penetrating her skin, Sekron's sword cracked, but was stopped by her spine. *Well that's a real pain.* Kat turned her body, accepting the damage done as she moved with the sword in her and slicing up her side.

Grabbing the sword by the blade, without a care in the world Kat easily pulled it out, as her arms started to leak their trademark purple mist. Kat was willing to use her full power to try and end things. Ripping the sword from Sekron's grip, she hurled it away and then brought her tail around to strike Sekron in the side.

He was caught unaware and pushed away with the strike, bouncing a couple times before he stopped. Kat, pushed herself to her feet, the blood flow from her wounds quickly closing as she stood and healed.

Glancing over at Krekron made it clear that he was out. A major injury was done and even though he managed to stand back up, his right arm was hanging limply at the side. Sekron on the other hand, was standing up, and using both hands to do it. He was in pain, but it didn't seem to be a major injury.

It seemed however, it was enough for Sekron to count it, as when he managed to stumble to his knees, he winced, raised an arm, and said, "I surrender. The match is over" Sekron stumbled a bit at this, falling to his knee as blood started to leak out from under his armour. *Oof, ok maybe that was a bit more serious than I'd thought.*

Chapter 357: The Biggest Mistake?

Kat let out a long breath she didn't know she was holding and nodded. "Uncle you got Sekron?" said Kat, and without waiting for a response she headed over to Krekron and gently draped him over her shoulder making sure it was his bad arm on the outside.

"You know my legs were fine right?" asked Krekron with a grimace.

"Yeah, but did you want me to use a princess carry to stop your arm moving so much?" was Kat's response, and Krekron was mysteriously quite in response. Sadly, he didn't fully get his wish. Kat needed to carry him that way to make it up to the top of the platform where Uncle was already back and waiting after picking up Sekron. Still, it was agreed they'd not talk about it.

When she made it to the top, Meron and Percy were healed, and free of their beardy confines. Meron had a rather sheepish look on his face, and Percy seemed rather annoyed. *Must be that pride thing.* "How are you Meron? I would have gotten you healed earlier if I realised" said Kat

"Oh, don't worry about it Kat. I heard I actually got the best hit on you anyway" said Meron with a chuckle and a wry smile shockingly similar to Uncle's considering they weren't related.

"Yeah, Meron was actually really impressive" said Kamiko "I wonder if it's because your danger senses are too finely tuned. My guess is that because Meron was knocked out you didn't notice that he was coming for you because there was no intent behind the attacks"

"Is that a real thing?" asked Kat

Uncle shrugged "Somewhat. Everything has an aura. Demons have more direct access to it than many other species because it comes along with their flame. When you sense danger without actually seeing anything, most times that's you sensing their aura readying for an attack, or if it's a bit later, their aura bearing down on you trying to stop you from counter attacking.

"Now, personally, I don't think that's quite what happened in that fight, but it was well managed. Sekron especially, I give some large props to. You managed a great block that forced Kat to be more careful with her attacks and you also managed to get in a great strike against her exposed back. Sure it didn't exactly do much but you didn't have many other options.

"In the future, when something like that happens, in the real world, I suggest going for either a stab into the eye or ear. Now, I admit that might be a bit brutal for a spar even when your opponent has regeneration like Kat does, but it IS something I want you to keep in mind. Many species have strong bones, or just protections on their back.

"So, I wouldn't recommend that being your first place to go for. Wizards actually, also come under this category. If they don't block it with a spell, they can still cast magic without their legs and can be very deadly. Sure, it isn't the worst place to attack, but against opponents, especially ones you know are stronger, go for more vulnerable areas"

Huh... I never really thought of that. Then again I haven't really fought many things that are stronger than me. Really just that worm and that bird from Thyme's challenge and you weren't really meant to fight them just avoid them. Wait... why is that?

"Something just occurred to me Uncle" said Kat, "why is it that I don't really encounter many things that would be classified as 'stronger' than me?"

"I imagine it's because that sort of thing doesn't interest you. D.E.M.O.N.S takes things like that into account as well. Say there was somebody who desperately needed some powerful but mindless enemy defeated... like a drake for example.

"If the person doing the summoning doesn't have anything worthwhile to trade, a Wrath demon might still get summoned anyway, because the FIGHT itself is part of the payment. You might wonder why that is, but the simplest way to explain it, is that if you enjoy fighting enough it becomes its own reward, and D.E.M.O.N.S takes that into account."

That's a little weird... I wonder what sort of thing the system counts as a reward? Maybe nothing? Maybe the whole experience? It's honestly pretty neat, and I enjoy it... mostly. Kat shivered thinking of Xiang. *If I never see that idiot again I'll be more than happy.*

Seeing Kat accept the information, Uncle went back to talking about the fight, explaining some of the little details about everything that happened, then asked. "What was the biggest mistake made in that round? I want an answer from everyone then I'll comment on them" said Uncle.

"They were wimps!" said Rock. Looking over... she was still laying down, but now the stone nearby was being merged into her and she was looking a little better. Still kinda out of it though, and probably wasn't thinking about what she was saying.

Still, everyone took that as the cue to answer. "I neglected my sword a lot in the first half of the fight" said Sekron.

"I should have been watching my back properly while Meron was bouncing around" said Kat

"I should have stuck closer with Meron and Sekron. We were close, but we were trying to stay out of each other's way and Kat was able to pick us off" said Krekron.

"Um, getting knocked out right at the start?" suggested Meron.

"Sorry Kat, but it was probably that strike from Meron to the back that you took. It was pretty deadly and was nearly a turning point in the whole fight. It was probably more reasonable than the others, but it was a key moment and a huge, if understandable, mistake" said Seralina.

Percy clicked his tongue and said, "Not following up. Basically everyone"

Kamiko smiled and said, "I actually think Sekron and Krekron messed up riiight at the start when they let Kat get to Meron. He's not really a front-line fighter, and by the sounds of things, if he wasn't technically taken out right at that moment, then he was in a more practical sense. This took you down to a two on one.

"Even though Meron's unconscious body did get a lucky hit in, that's really all it was, luck. It was just as likely to have hit Sekron, or Krekron and so I think that was the biggest mistake, letting him get stuck in the ball, or taken out, or however you want to call it was the biggest mistake."

Uncle took a long breath and looked over everyone. "You all have some good ideas. Percy, you probably want to explain better in the future, but I suppose it's true that everyone failed to follow up properly at least once. I wouldn't call it the biggest mistake though.

"Sekron, really nice note about your sword but I'm actually going to say you did fine with that, and you're being a bit harsh on yourself. Rock... well, as poorly worded as it was, she's kind of right. Kat was the main instigator of all the confrontations. Even though she's faster than you all, that's no reason not to try and take the initiative, especially with three of you.

"Still, Rock doesn't have it either. Seralina and Kat... neither do you, but it was a very good point. Certainly, it was the second largest mistake, even if it was very understandable as Serlina said. For you Kat, it probably was your largest mistake, and because you were the only one on your team, that team's largest mistake... but not the big mistake of the match.

"That honour goes to everyone else, who, are in some way all saying the right thing. Meron, getting taken out was a big mistake, but Kamiko was right in that the blame also lies with Krekron and Sekron, and Krekron, you too are correct in that you all needed to stay closer, but you didn't highlight the big mistake, but more of a general one you made the whole time

"Still, that was very good for so many of you to see it. The main reason this is the biggest mistake is that you needed to abuse having three people as much as possible. It was the only way you were going to have a chance to take down Kat, and that was with teamwork.

"Once it was down to two people, it was much easier for Kat to go after one and not the other, just by standing to one side out of reach of the other person. Now, you could have mitigated this advantage by using the tent walls somewhat as an extra layer of defence, like how Kat used it to brace herself for the second attack on Meron, but that's a really a whole 'nother topic. That we aren't really studying today. That's more learning how to use your environment" said Uncle.

Hmm, still not sure that really was the biggest mistake. I mean, sure it sounds good to tell them to stay together and all, but I was going to try and peel them apart somehow. This just let me do it a bit faster. Really, I think the only way to avoid it would have been to brace themselves against the wall and fight me that way.

Chapter 358: Battle Plans

Kamiko was playing with her sleeves as she thought about what Uncle said. *Well... it's nice to be right but I have to wonder what else they could have done? I mean, they tried, and I don't think they were so far out of position it was actually a big deal... I mean, yeah I guess it kinda is but still.

Then again... maybe it's more about preparing us for the future? He is about to make this a two on six match, so maybe he's just trying to make sure we all work together properly. I saw him taking more than a few glances at Rock to make sure she was paying attention. It... it didn't really seem to work, but I mean he did try. I wonder if he didn't point it out to her more clearly because she didn't want to listen? Is it matter of not helping people who don't want to be helped or not helping people with a bad attitude? Maybe both?

I guess this means I should try and stick with Kat and... let her protect me? No that feels wrong... but I'm not sure what else I could do.* Kamiko's thoughts were interrupted by Uncle saying "I'll give you all a moment to think about that before the next match. Talk amongst yourselves if you want, but do some independent thinking first" as if everyone hadn't already started to analyse his words.

Kamiko glanced at the now thoughtful faces and realised she might be overestimating their general intelligence. Only Kat, Seralina and Meron seemed unphased by his words. *Well... maybe I should use that? No... I don't really see a way to rely on their limited thinking skills when they have proven they have good instincts. It's not like they'd stand there and let us pick off people even if they didn't think about it.*

So, back to how Kat and I have to manage this. Kamiko took a glance at Kat using her drastically extended peripheral vision, and saw Kat was clearly thinking as well, and decided not to bother her just yet. *So, I don't want to just be protected... and Kat can't exactly tank hits. I mean sure, she is tougher than me and can take more... but it's not like she has a shield or a proper way to defend. She can only block one or two hits for me at a time and with six of them I really shouldn't rely on that.

What will I need to do then? Well, let's go over who I can avoid. The brothers are easy. They aren't fast at all, but if they corner me I'll never escape. I don't have the jump power to clear them AND their weapons. If push comes to shove, maybe I could get out if I use the wall by coming straight up and then kicking out but I dunno if I could escape three of them on all sides, maybe with help.

Rock I already know I can dodge, but she's not THAT much slower than me. Meron... well actually I don't know enough about him really. Kat did get hit by him... but he didn't exactly do anything to cause that. I wonder if he'll try to make it happen again? I'm not sure.

Well, the real problem is Seralina. My poison will never work on her. Even if she isn't immune as a Lamia, her body mass and the fact she's a demon will make it impossible. Not to mention I'm really not sure I can get through her scales. I might just have to leave it completely up to Kat to deal with her.

That's a bit of a scary thought though. She's not super fast, but she is very agile and can turn on a dime like Kat despite her size. She can also move her whole body around as a weapon and that's a rather large weapon if you consider it that way. At least she's not a full-grown Lamia, I can deal with her current size. Probably.

Now is there anything else? Should I chat with Kat maybe?* Kamiko looked around and saw that the other group had already huddled together but no sound was leaking from them. *Hmm, probably more sound stuff like the auditorium.* "Hey Kat did you want to talk strategy like the others?" asked Kamiko as she tried to project as much cheer and as little embarrassment into her voice as possible.

"Sure thing Kamiko. It seems like the others won't be able to hear us so we can talk without issue. Uncle is probably controlling it somehow" said Kat turning to face Kamiko

Wow. She's so calm and ready to fight those guys. I wonder how she does it. Thought Kamiko oblivious to Kat's internal worries. "So, who do we deal with first? I mean, if the biggest mistake is to lose someone early in the fight, the best idea is to try and ensure the other side loses someone at the start of the fight right?" said Kamiko.

OMG what did I just say? That... why Kamiko. Why would you say it like that? Kat, also oblivious to her friend's inner turmoil, responded easily. "Well, going after Meron is a possible choice, but I think they'll be ready for that. The other two options I see are Percy and Rock, but they both have their own problems"

Hmm? I don't quite understand why she's singled those guys out. I agree with the Meron thing, but Rock was kinda hard to fight and I don't know if I can do much to Percy. Well, I guess Kat would be fine... "Why is that? I mean, I agree with Meron, they'll almost certainly protect them but... why those two and what problems will we have?" asked Kamiko.

"So... the issue with Percy is mostly that we don't know how he fights, we only know how he defends. I doubt it will be so easy to take him out this time now that he knows my punches are too much for him. If I can get an easy takedown that's fine but I wouldn't count on it.

"Rock is harder because while I'm sure she'd leave a tonne of openings if we taunted her even a bit, I also bet that Seralina will protect her if necessary and... well I can't really take her and whoever then jumps in to help. So, Rock might also be off the table... but it's not like we can really take anyone else out right?" said Kat tapping her tail against her chin.

Hmm, yeah that's true. Seralina is actually a huge asset to them. Fighting her and the rest would be a problem for anyone. "Well, what about Sekron and Krekron? You said Percy might be hard but what about those guys?" asked Kamiko.

Kat bit her lip slightly and continued with the tapping as she spoke. "That might not be the worst idea... Sekron is probably a no go. I'm not quite sure what his power is but he can block strikes quite well with his shield and if either of his brothers help block my follow up strikes, I'd be left very open"

Kamiko looked down in a frown. "Yeah... and it's not like I can really help you with Seralina. I don't have the strength or speed for it. I might be able to do some damage with my eye lasers... but that really depends on her scales. I'm not sure how much it'd do to them, and I can't poison her. I could go for the eyes maybe but... that's a bit to mean for me. I don't think I can do it"

Kat nodded as if this was no problem even as Kamiko felt guilty for vetoing such a powerful tactic. Especially after Uncle had suggested it already. "Well, how about we leave that for now" said Kat "how do we want to go about keeping each other safe?"

Kamiko bit her lip, miming Kat somewhat. *Hmm that is a good question. I'm not as fast as Kat and it's not like she can just carry me around on her shoulders or something silly like that... or is it?* Kamiko started to properly consider the idea as more than just a joke.

That might actually have potential. My weapon is long enough not to get in the way... I can watch Kat's back rather easily and my back is certainly flexible enough to bend and cover anything from behind as well. My lasers don't really care about the extra height and honestly... I don't think my poison is doing anything against anyone here...

"Well Kat... see I have this crazy idea... I dunno if you're going to like it but I think it might actually be our best bet..." said Kamiko

Chapter 359: Not So Crazy Ideas

Kamiko started to outline the various battle ideas she'd come up with in her end, and explained how she'd come to the decision that it was best she sit on Kat's shoulders. Kamiko was smiling when Kat seemed to support her idea. *Oh I'm very happy. I didn't know if Kat would be comfortable being in such close proximity to someone else... though she does seem to be a very huggy person, which has been great... but I wonder if that's normal or if she's treating me like some lost puppy... wait, no, she's going along with my plan. I can take confidence in that right?*

"So... just one problem" said Kat. In that brief moment before Kat actually elaborated on the problem, Kamiko's mind seemed to be a series of endless alarms all blaring out warning. "What are you going to do about your dress?"

All the alarms screeched to a halt. *What?* "What?" said Kamiko

Kat gestured down at Kamiko's outfit. "Well, either you have to pull your skirt up a ridiculous amount of you have to... well I guess not wear it? I mean... I'm just... this is a bit embarrassing for me to point out..."

Kamiko looked down at her dress as it starts dawning on her what Kat was talking about. *That's sweet... but doesn't she know how to edit her demonic attire? The again, she has such a lovely outfit I doubt she really sees the need for it. Plus... mum did say it was actually pretty hard to learn.*

"Watch this" said Kamiko, as she summoned her weapon, swinging down, she sliced through the centre of her dress up till just before it would show her undergarments. Then, dismissing the weapon, she bent down and pressed the frayed edges together, pinching them carefully and apply a very specific mix of aura and demonic energy every time she pressed down.

Once repeated on the other side, Kamiko had separated her dress into trousers that were... well the edges weren't exactly pretty but they were functional. The seam was very apparent and the edges weren't perfectly even but for just a bit of work Kamiko was rather happy. *It won't survive a dismissal but I don't need it for anything more.*

"How did you do that?" asked Kat

Ah, it seems like she doesn't know how to to modify her attire. "Well... it's normally something your mother would teach you. Tradition you know?" Kat's eye twitched just faintly at that. Kamiko only noticed it at all because her eyes were trained on Kat and was abusing her great eyesight to look for any clues to see if she was doing right by Kat that she noticed it at all. "Um... did I say something wrong?" asked Kamiko.

"No, not really. I'm an orphan see, and the person in charge of the orphanage, Gramps, didn't know how. He wasn't a demon at all see" said Kat.

Stupid Kamiko stupid! You already heard the man who raised Kat was called Gramps when she refused the nickname for Uncle. Dammit, how could you forget that! Obviously he wasn't her real grandfather otherwise it wouldn't have been such a big deal. She did tell me though... and that makes me feel wanted... no Kamiko bad. Having your friends tell you about horrible life experiences is not something to be happy about... wait? No, you can be happy they told you, and sad it happened. Ok, deep breaths.

"Omygodimssorryldidn'tmeantosaythat" is what Kamiko managed to blurt out.

Kat smiled softly and said, "It really is alright. I never knew my parents, but Gramps is great. A bunch of other kids got adopted, but I never really resented them for it. The orphanage was my home, and I loved it there"

Despite Kat's words, and smile, Kamiko couldn't help but notice the past tense in her final sentence. "Was?" asked Kamiko somewhat afraid to ask.

"Oh, it's... well it's a little complex and simple at the same time. I was getting old enough that I soon wouldn't be able to stay, but I did get adopted because of some strange circumstances. If I wasn't going to be forced out I probably wouldn't have been willing to go along with it. The person who adopted me, Vivian, is great, but I mean, I've known Gramps all my life.

"This dress actually, used to belong to his wife. He doesn't really get us proper birthday gifts, too many of us for that really, but he actually gave me this and it means more to me than anything else I've received." Said Kat a somewhat wistful expression on her face.

I have no idea how the hell I'm supposed to take this. I didn't plan for this! It sounds like she really likes this Gramps guy... but no presents? But then again... her kimono is top quality and if it was his late wife's... that's one hell of a gift... but he was kicking her out? No, it seems like it probably wasn't his fault, just something that had to happen... hmmm... ok let's just think about this another time. Deflect... ah... what were we talking about... Demonic Attire!

"Right... well, I guess I can tell you. I'm not really good enough to teach it, but I can explain how it works? If you want?" said Kamiko and when Kat nodded, her heart sored. "Right so, to edit your demonic attire temporarily, which is what I did because I'm not good enough to make it permanent, you need to mix your demonic energy and your aura onto your finger.

"Different mixtures produce different results and some things have really tiny ranges. One of the easiest is mostly demonic energy with a hint of aura, and you can use that to... staple pieces together, for lack of a better word.

"It isn't super useful once you get more powerful, because even MY outfit repairs itself at Rank 2 and I have no regeneration. However, it's a really good starting point and it can't really hurt your attire long term because it only works for that summon so most people leave it.

"Um, I can't exactly show you... that requires way more control than I have to demonstrate but... maybe once the punishments are over, I can ask my mum?" said Kamiko smiling while fiddling with her feet.

Kat nodded. "That sounds great. Um... how would we get in touch for that?"

Oh... she doesn't know about that one either? Wait, she said she wasn't raised by a demon... that's... actually now that I think about it, that's super weird. I... won't ask about it though, I'll just tell her. "We just share... well they aren't proper beacons but she sort of pushes the idea into your energies and then lock hands. It then lets our systems communicate with each other" said Kamiko.

Kat instantly held out her hand, with a smile on her face, and Kamiko could feel her own face light up. The girls clapped their hands together and a burning, 'Contact Added' came from D.E.M.O.N.S.

"Awesome" said Kamiko, not really noticing that in her happiness the stars in her eyes were spinning around slowly and twinkling slightly. When Kat saw this, she was forced to look away and hide her giggles. Kamiko, luckily was much too happy about learning she had a friend who wanted to come and visit to care about Kat's strange change in attitude.

"So, are you ready to get on my shoulders?" asked Kat

"Hmm" murmured Kamiko. *Well, yes obviously but...* Kamiko glanced over and saw that the other six were having a rather animated argument at the current time. It seemed like there wasn't anyone who wasn't speaking. *I sure am glad I'm not in that mess...*

Still, as fun as it would be to spend the rest of the wait time sitting on Kat's shoulders... I'm not sure I want to reveal our strategy. "Not that I'm opposed Kat, because I think it'll be great fun on your shoulders... but I don't think we should reveal it just yet." Said Kamiko as she gestured over at the other group.

"They all look like they aren't having a good time, and I'd hate to do give them something to focus on. If I jumped on your shoulders, I'm certain at least Seralina would notice and probably Rock too. Despite her arrogance, she does actually pay attention somewhat, and they might be able to claw back their conversation to the realms of usefulness if we did something they could focus on." Kamiko elaborated.

Kat poked her chin with her tail a few times before nodding. "Yeah, that seems like a good idea actually. I hadn't noticed how rowdy they were because I can't hear them."

And so, the pair of succubi calmly started to watch the increasingly wild gestures the other team was making, sometimes having some additional fun by putting words in the other contestants' mouths.

Chapter 360: The Battle Begins... Mostly as Planned

Skipping ahead a bit in time, Kat and Kamiko found a slight problem to their plans. They each had their own circle they needed to stand in. The other side, had similar restrictions and the pair of succubi were wondering what to do.

Hmm, dammit. Should I run straight for Kat? We can meet in the middle and charge people? Or should we use this chance to pick off someone on the edges before meeting up? Like, I could try and poison... nope that person on the far left with me is Percy, I'll never get through his armour.

"Meet in the middle? I can't do anything to my side." Said Kamiko quietly, hoping that the others weren't paying that much attention and Kat could hear.

When she saw her friend nodding along, Kamiko got ready as well. They both mirrored each other in their preparations. They'd turned so that they were actually in line with Seralina, who had taken the centre position and largest circle. For the other side, it looked like they were going to charge straight for the Lamia.

Beside Seralina, was the brothers on one side, and Meron and Rock on the other. It was a little weird. Seralina wasn't... exactly in the middle, but her circle extended into it somewhat so that Rock and Percy could be in roughly the same place on either side. Nobody on their team looked especially happy.

It wasn't clear to Kat and Kamiko what exactly had gone on, but eventually, Uncle had said "Enough!" and sent them all down to fight. Kamiko did wonder if it was because they were running out of time, or if Uncle was sick of listening to them argue, but suspected it was a combination of both.

The only people in somewhat good spirits was Meron, who looked happy just to have another chance in the ring, and Seralina who... well, she didn't look anything actually. Being a giant snake made it rather hard to tell how pleased she was, but the lack of hissing was something Kamiko was taking as a good sign.

3. Kamiko and Kat confirmed their bearings, and had them both angled for 'Seralina' when in actuality they were aiming for the centre of the arena right where the tent post had been. Kamiko's stomach was churning, as she prayed that the manoeuvre would succeed, especially with Kat looking so calm to her eyes. Of course, Kat was internally screaming praying for the exact same thing, and noticing Kamiko also seemed confident.

2. The other side readied their weapons, well those that had weapons. Meron and Seralina weren't doing much just yet. Percy actually had a large tower shield that equalled him in height Kamiko hadn't seen before. Sekron and Krekron had their weapons, while Rock had opted for smaller gloves that had large spikes on them this time.

1. Meron turned his body completely to face Seralina, while Rock got into her sprinters pose. It was a little awkward with the spiked gloves, but she managed. The brothers had all turned and looked ready to run to Seralina as well.

0. It all started, Kat and Kamiko wasted no time, with purple and pink respectively coating them both as they rushed for the centre. Meron didn't waste any time either. Morphing his beard into a spring he launched himself onto Seralina's head with a bounce. Rock of course, charged at Kat, angling herself slightly to try and catch her in the middle but she wasn't going to be fast enough... if they'd just charged through.

The three brothers first formed up with Percy in the front and one brother on either side, before moving off to put Seralina against their backs. While that was happening, Kamiko and Kat were making their play.

The girls met in the middle as planned, but Kamiko realised something. *How the heck am I supposed to get on Kat's shoulders?* Kat was faster than Kamiko, and had ended up slightly ahead of her. *Dang, do I have to just try and make the jump?* Kamiko grit her teeth and made the attempt.

Kicking off the ground, she flew straight at Kat, however it was very clear as soon as she left the ground, she didn't have the height needed for her jump. She was going to make it to Kat's upper back at best, and crash into her wings. Luckily, Kat was keeping an eye on Kamiko, and turned herself so that instead, Kamiko ended up in her arms.

Before Kamiko could start moving again, Kat let the momentum continue through, and had swung her arms around to settle Kamiko on her shoulders. *Yes! Kat's on the ball to make up for my mistakes.*

However, Kat's pause, combined with her additional effort to get Kamiko to her shoulders, had given Rock enough to time reach the pair. Rock pulled back a gloved fist and aimed it for Kat's head. "Two whores for the price of one!" shouted the golem.

Kamiko felt rage bubbling up in her, and didn't even realise she'd shot a laser straight into Rock's face until she felt the pressure leaving her eyes. Rock saw the attack coming, recognising what the spinning stars meant, and managed to raise her other arm in time to block and slam her other fist into Kat's face.

Kat wasn't idle though, with Kamiko secured on her shoulders, Kat brought an empowered tail around to block Rock's oncoming fist. The two collided with a boom. The impact threatened to throw both demons back, but the extra weight from Kamiko and the pressure from the strike kept Kat in place for a follow up, while Rock had turned her feet into larger stones that clung to the floor.

It didn't help her when Kat's fist collided with the side of her head. Kat may have been more than fed up with Rock's antics already, and had charged a full powered strike straight to the temple, which shattered Rock's head and neck to nothing, sending the rest of her body flying away regardless of the trickery with her feet.

Rock's body bounced several times before colliding with the wall and shattering into smaller pieces.

Woah! Kat's so cool! I wish I did that well against Rock! Was what she was thinking when Kamiko noticed that one of Rock's legs was transforming into a small body for the golem.

Hmm, I wonder if she's not out just yet... I'll have to keep it in mind. Swapping her focus back to the front, she saw that the others seemed to like her idea. The three brothers had tried to get on Seralina's back but they were in the process of jumping off as the pair of succubi turned their attentions to them.

Seralina was large yes, larger than any other competitor... but the three pit fiends all together was just a bit much for her. It would have limited her mobility quite a lot and it wasn't like there was any good spot to sit other than the flat area on her head. Her spine wasn't all that flat and most of her back was at an angle so she could deflect attacks. The brothers would have been able to stand with at most one foot on her, and it was deemed unacceptable.

At least they liked our idea if they tried to copy it. Well, the Meron stuff was probably planned but even the brothers tried to get in on it. While Kamiko was thinking, Kat was already acting. Seeing that the brothers were on the back foot, Kat charged at the closest one, which happened to be Sekron.

Kamiko pulled herself together long enough to summon her weapon and make a mostly coordinated strike at Sekron, but he easily sidestepped the swing, while intercepting Kat's own punch. Krekron too, had been watching his brother, and easily imposed his hammer between Sekron and Kat's tail that she'd tried to use as a follow up.

Kamiko kept her naginata spinning, trying to come back around for another swipe, but it wasn't quite as long as she'd been hoping, allowing for the pit fiend to dodge her with precise movements, while Kat was being held down.

Suddenly Kat jumped backwards, forcing Kamiko to hold onto her stomach as they swiftly moved backwards away from the place Seralina's head had just smashed into. *Urgh... I don't know why I even feel sick! Get yourself together Kamiko, Kat isn't even moving that fast. You've moved faster before!*

Of course, she'd not moved this far under someone else's power, and the sudden motion had thrown her off... but she wouldn't recognise this for what it was, instead throwing more power around her stomach to try and combat the effects of it instead.

The three brothers used Seralina's opening to set themselves up properly next to her again. They'd accepted that they'd need to stick to the ground, while Seralina had decided not to use her full speed so that they could stay together. Meron had wrapped his beard around Seralina's... neck? So that he could hold himself on in the event of sudden movements. Rock... was mostly forgotten.