

DEMONS 431

Chapter 431: The Little Things

"So... with that out of the way..." said Kamiko, shifting in place somewhat uncomfortably. "What's with the room layout? Why'd you change it?"

"Actually can I jump in?" when Kat said that everyone's gaze snapped to Kat in a slightly unerring way. It was as if she'd kicked a dog or done something unthinkable cruel... but they just stared for a while and eventually Kat continued, assuming she must have had permission. "How did you change it as well?"

The strange glares broke, and Kat wasn't sure exactly why they had, but the triplets resumed their normal countenance and Kamiko smiled and nodded as if she'd confirmed something to herself. Merra was the one who spoke up, she still had the paper around it, but she seemed rather content. "So... I'm guessing with higher energy... wait Kamiko first. We did it because we could. It was easier for the gag for us all to be on the couch so we took the time to swap things over.

"For Kat though... see that cupboard over there" Merra pointed over at one of the many cupboards in the kitchen. It didn't stand out, and from Kat's position it wasn't super clear which of two cupboards it actually was. She was tempted to move around and check but it didn't seem important so she nodded along instead. "Well, we keep a bunch of spare furniture in it"

Kat tried to prevent the confusion showing to badly on her face. She failed miserably. Her lips curled into a frown and her eyebrows creased with her nose twisting up just slightly. Merra's cheeks puffed out, and Kat realised it was to prevent laughter spilling out. That failed about five seconds into the attempt and Kat's confusion only grew. "I'm sorry. No really I am..."

"It's just. Oh you're face. I mean, it so perfectly captures the 'I know you can't lie to me but... are you lying to me?' face some demons get. Glad I could manage it with such little effort. Sorry though. To explain, all the furniture has shrinking charms on it, so we can make it smaller or larger if we need to. This is the base size, and we shrink it for storage."

Kat's confusion cleared up somewhat, but she still had a few questions. "Is that sort of thing expensive?"

It was Erra who answered this time. Her eyes seemed brighter when she did, and Kat wondered what the exact reason was. "Well that really depends on what you're comparing it to. It's much less expensive then the land and the house, but we have a large block for the garden and Mum and Dad bought it a long time ago when it wasn't so expensive to live here.

"Comparing it more to... furniture like things? Well, it's astronomically cheaper then the bathtub, which is probably the most expensive piece of furniture in the house. Though ours is sort of more like a room. Still it probably costs more than all the furniture sets combined plus everything in mine and Merra's room. Not sure if I could add Kerra's room to that figure because of her art.

"Anyway, with all that being stressed... for a more normal piece of furniture it's VERY expensive. Making things shrink and grow is not an easy enchantment, and because we also need it to have all the normal ones for people with demonic fixtures on our back it gets pretty bad. That's because stacking enchantments exponentially increases the cost. Granted, the ones for wings and tails and the like are very cheap all things considered that it isn't too bad but it's not great. novelnext.com

"On the other hand though. Considering how much everyone in the family bar Kamiko makes. It's not a lot of work to buy them, especially for Mum and Dad, even Elmony can afford something like that. The demon economy is... a little strange at time" explained Erra.

I guess that all makes sense. So many demons need things to make seating comfortable so I can see how that drives the price down. I'm a little surprised at the cost, but I'm not quite sure if she's talking about the whole set of furniture or each piece individually. The real question is though... "Well, I HAVE to ask now. Why's the bath so expensive?" asked Kat

To Kat's surprise the triplets all looked to Kamiko to answer. "Oh wait... um I'm taking this one? Well... urm... it's pretty simple I guess? Unlike enchantments for the furniture the bathroom's main cost is materials and enchantments. Both together is what makes it bad but materials especially.

"The big kicker is... well, our bath can get really hot and really cold and most of the time you can do one or the other and not both without the price getting really bad. The fact that we not only need a bath and a room that can withstand those temperatures but an enchantment to make a liquid... or well it's not quite making..." Kamiko stumbled a bit, not quite proficient in enchantments for demons.

"Erra how did the liquid work again?" asked Kamiko after giving up on searching the answer herself.

"Ok, so, what it looks for is a certain liquid that is stored elsewhere in the hub. Changes depending on if we want hot or cold, but we pick that, it gets transported to the bath and then the enchantment chills it for us and keeps it at that temperature the best it can." Replied Erra.

"Wait what?" asked Kat "You use teleportation for it? Is it expensive?"

Kerra took this question, with a shake of her head and a slight wave of her hand to gather Kat's attention. "No it isn't. The specialised liquid drains out and gets sent back to the facility. It's the expensive part, and as long as you return most of it when it goes down the drain there isn't a problem. It's cleansed before reuse of course though because of the extreme temperature it's not that often needed."

"Cool cool" said Kat. *It's honestly so strange to think about. We just use water. Always water, and always heated from a water tank on the property. Or well not always but mostly. It's weird to think that the taps actually send different stuff through the taps. It LOOKED like water that's for sure even if I know that it can't have been considering the temperatures.*

"Before we break up... anything else you want to know Kat?" asked Merrra

"Well... I would like to know about the Sins we still have to visit. Pride, Sloth, Gluttony and Lust" said Kat.

The triplets grinned at each other before speaking in tandem for the first time in a while. "Well, the first thing to know is you probably won't go to Pride. They won't all have the same reason for why, but we doubt they'd let you in. Pride just sort of does it's own thing and we forget about them most of the time unless they really want something. They'll run the gamut from 'We don't need help from convicts' to 'They are not worthy to serve us' and even 'Those being punished should not be allowed to enter our halls' very stuff those Pride guys.

"Lust, well they'll probably go the other way. They probably have a file on you, and because you're a Succubus with quite a few rare abilities they'll just give you a tour or something. Probably make a sales

pitch instead of punishing you. They know that you just failed the debt for awakening which is tiny and basically nothing so they'd rather use the time productively to draw you to their side.

"Public Relations is one of their strongest aspects, so it'll seem great, and honestly, it kind of is, if that's your thing. They are shockingly honest and open about everything, though that does make the few secrets they hide all the darker. None the less, it will either seem like a great idea or a horrible one, and you can go from there.

"For Sloth... we actually have no idea what they'll want you for. They have actual employees for most of the work there and what can be optimised by enchantments has been. Despite it being called Sloth, the whole operation is very efficient, and they just sort of... go about their day. Very... Zen, I guess? We're not sure how they'll slot you in. They keep things efficient so they can do the most work in the simplest way.

"Finally Gluttony. Could be a few things we suppose but it's probably going to be making food. They do more things than just eat but... well, one of the biggest parts of that faction just eat and make things when the... we hesitate to call some of the stuff they eat food, but they do, so I guess food it is. Like... some can take meats and make rare metals from it. Not a perfect conversion of energy but Gluttony demons like to eat for the most part, so it's the perfect job."

Chapter 432: That's a Long Building

It was the next morning and Kat was stretching herself out. Doing this had actually made her realise a few things. The first, was that her memory wasn't quite as perfect as she thought it was. Sure, she remembered 'everything' but it was more like she had a video recording of everything stored in her head alongside some director's commentary to include her thoughts. However, she only got vague impressions of what she was feeling at the time. Sensations were muted if they were there at all.

The next thing she realised, is that she might have been in worse condition than she thought. It seemed that reaching Rank 2 had improved her enough that she hadn't noticed how 'sluggish' she was actually becoming due to the buildup of demonic energy because she'd made such a big jump and then got thrown into a dream world instead of understanding exactly where her limits were.

The reason she figured all this out was, that she felt like someone had lifted off several layers of heavy blankets from both her body and mind. She felt loose in a way, even though she hadn't noticed herself getting slowly constricted. Additionally, the sleep was really nice. It was very easy to go straight to sleep and past meditation while low on energy. This did give her questions, but she didn't really want to ask them now.

This meant breakfast was a quiet affair. Kat just had something to drink, while the triplets all ate from one exceptionally large bowl of jelly they'd done up. Kat wasn't entirely sure it was healthy, but Kamiko was having a few unique fruits instead, though she wasn't exactly happy with it.

Kat really wanted to ask during breakfast why they needed so much jelly. The whole thing took up most of the space on the table and Kat was honestly a little surprised that the three of them could fit so much food in their stomachs even if it was just jelly of all things.

Still the triplets turned out to have picked a very thematic breakfast for the day because when Kamiko and Kat were teleported, they found themselves in front of the Gluttony compound, or at least, just outside one of their buildings.

It was very strange in shape. It was three stories tall, and longer than the eye could see, yes even Kat's. She did a quick boost to her eyes as well and found that didn't actually help at all, the building just kept going and going seemingly without end. *Ok this is just weird WHY IS IT SO LONG.*

Kat desperately wanted to say that it was an illusion, but of course her truesight would prevent something like that, so it had to be real. Plus if she looked carefully, she noticed that while the building was extremely long and seemingly endless, it was not completely the same. The left side of the building seemed to have a large number of doors of various sizes with signs advertising the kind of food the place sold and a copious number of demons of all shapes and sizes entering and exiting the doors seemingly at random. None stayed all that long, and the people were constantly shifting around. Kat was a little surprised that each shop did seem to have around the same number of people at a glance. At the very least, none stood out from another.

They... weren't really creative. Most of them stated what food they had in what amount, for example the closest one was 'Rank 1 size pizza' and another was 'All you can eat for 1 minute leminurar'. Kat wasn't even sure what that was. There wasn't any pictures to describe the items sold, just the name and an amount.

"Well... this is a lot" said Kat *novelNext.com*

"I've actually seen this before" said Kamiko "Kinda forgot to mention that yesterday, so I'm not as surprised as you seem to be. Sorry about that. It's just... so normal for me you know? A lot of people come here to eat even non Gluttony demons. The sign is what you get for the standard cost in each section. Each section is marked off by the signs all changing colour, though... I'm not sure if you can see the end of the first section or not."

Kat squinted, mostly out of habit if she was being honest, and tried to look as far down as she could. The walls just seemed normal, no colouring at all as far as she could see. Pushing some energy into her eyes revealed at the very edge of her vision, the walls changing to purple instead... maybe, it was a little hard to tell and it was right at the edge of her range.

Damn... if that's all just the first section this building is probably larger than my entire town. With the people around I'd say there's probably twice the number I'd see in the city... well maybe not. I'm not quite sure how good my eyesight is, it's a little hard to measure and I don't want to commit to such a large figure... but if this IS the whole of Gluttony coming to get food maybe it's a more reasonable assumption than one would think.

As Kat thought this, she noticed someone walking up behind them. It was a slow unhurried walk, but certainly heading in their direction. Kat slowly turned around to see who was coming for them, and was shocked to find such an ordinary looking person. There was no demonic traits on them that she could see at all. If she was told they were human, she'd believe them.

They wore a standard shaped chefs hat with gold and blue making up the stripes instead of it being clear white. His face was pretty normal as well. Black hair hidden mostly by the hat, and perhaps a hidden

hairnet, that was a thing chefs did right? His eyes were an unremarkable brown, the kind you'd find anywhere you look. His nose was a little too big for his face, but his short stature meant Kat didn't have to look at his nostrils.

Kat was perhaps most surprised though, by the acne. To this point, she'd never seen anything to even suggest that demons had skin conditions. Everyone either had perfect skin, or had something else that wasn't skin to keep their insides where they were supposed to be. His ears were nothing remarkable to Kat, they fit well enough on his face, though they were a little higher than she thought was normal. His lips were his standout feature for his face, if you could call them that. They were a deep rose red as if he'd put on lipstick recently, but the fact that he was chewing on his lip as he worked forward made that option unlikely.

The chef's outfit was just as simple as his face. He had a dark blue shirt rolled up to his elbows. Any defining features were either lost in the folds on his arms, or hidden by the apron he wore over it, which was a simple, if slightly annoying off-white apron that made it look more like the entire thing had been dipped in grease and never cleaned than a properly maintained part of his attire. It was a little weird because the shirt and hat looked much cleaner, and Kat couldn't smell anything terrible from the man.

His pants consisted of a long pair of jeans that were more on the grey side than could be considered standard with what must have been deep pockets. The reason Kat knew they were deep was because instead of using the pouch on his apron, he had a number of cooking utensils in the pockets in his pants. He had a ladle, a knife, a pair of cooking tongs, and a big wooden spoon in his top two pockets, and in the ones sewn to the front just below his knees seemed to be cutlery sets, but it was hard to tell with the flaps holding them mostly shut. His shoes were simply a pair of black derby style dress boots.

"Greetin's, the name's Fredrick, but you can call me Freddy" said the chef. "I'm assumin' that you galls are meh chefs for the day?"

Kat looked to Kamiko for direction, and she answered with, "If you mean we've been assigned to work at Gluttony for two days then yes we are."

Freddy nodded, chef's head moving with his head and not wobbling at all despite what conventional physics would have you believe. "Right thas good. Glad ta have you both. Got a lot o' work lined up fer you but I'm not sure which you'd be best at, so do you mind if I go over a few tings with you first?"

I mean... that should be fine? This isn't another envy situation right? He's probably just trying to ask us a few questions about our cooking skill... right?

Chapter 433: Special Cooking Talents?

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Kamiko, knowing the Gluttony faction better than Kat, wasn't worried at all about this being some sort of trick. They were suckers for food, and while some might consider it a weak point, they took it very

seriously, so using food as a distraction, or in a lie for information... that brought you more ire then any demon could survive, even when compared to Wrath having access to more execution talents. "Sure what do you need?"

"Well, I jus need ta know what your skills in the kitchen are like. We got plenty of drudge work for ya if you really got nothin, but you only have two hands so we got better people for tha if you're good fer somethin else" said Freddy.

Kamiko rolled her shoulders and puffed out her chest before boldly declaring. "I have basically no kitchen skills whatsoever!" Kat nearly choked at the answer. *Why is she proud of that?* "I've got a few too many people in my house that like to use cooking as a way to relax. Not all of them enjoy it to the same degree but it's rarely something I do.

"However, I have done the basic medical training for identifying edible foods. Not sure that's really any help to you guys though, but I've got myself certified for Succubi and general demons. On top of that, I have exceptional knifework for someone at Rank 2. I'm not a master of it by any stretch, even in my own family I only rank 4th, but that's behind a Rank 4 and two Rank 5's.

"It was part of my basic weapons training since I took an interest when I was very little before I could be allowed to use real weapons and something that I kept up. I also routinely do more elaborate carvings shown to me by my older sister, practicing them while on Contract and occasionally at home when she's not around to do it, as my family likes it but normally won't go to the effort is Elmony isn't around.

"Other then that... I have some minor practice with making demonically infused ice cream? My demonic fire is ice attributes and I've managed it, but only twice successfully, it's a recent thing that I don't really have much experience with."

Freddy admired Kamiko with a pleased expression. He looked about ready to lick his lips in anticipation. Not in a weird way, it was just clear he enjoyed food and had heard some better points then expecting. What was not expected was that his neck split open and a tongue at least two feet long licked up and down his neck. "Yes, tha's quite good. I can work with tha. Dependin on what yer friend knows I'm sure I can find a place.

"Even just the knifework is something appreciated by our more discernin customers. We ain't just food enjoyers but food lovers. The extra effort can make or break a dish so tha's something. Not sure on the ice cream. We got people fer that, but it's always in high demand considerin the rarity of frost fire. Twice ya said?"

Kamiko nodded, and in response Freddy pulled on his hat, pulling the top part down to meet the base, fabric stretching to accommodate the movement without it leaving his head. Kat was wondering if it wasn't a hat. She didn't like that thought, but it was creeping up on her. "Yes, I've made the attempt... four? Maybe five times? Completely botched the first, frozen solid with no hope of recovery. The second I messed up and put in some incorrect ingredients.

"Last failed attempt I remember I didn't put enough energy into the fire. Just came out as normal ice cream but at least it was frozen. Oh, but I didn't manage it twice in a row. The final failed attempt was in between the first and second successes" Wait what? Freddy was nodding as if this explanation made

sense. *So there is more to making demonically infused ice cream then just freezing it with your fire? I mean, sure you got to balance things out but it sounds like it's actually a bit more finicky then that.*

Freddy bit his lip, which, told Kat that he at least had teeth there as well. *Wait... does he have a mouth on his neck and on his face? Isn't that redundant? I... I don't understand gluttony demons.* "Ya that's not really the consistency I'd be lookin fer if to send you to the ice cream parlour. I understand everyone's gotta practice somehow, but in the Food Court... some... well... a lot o' us don't take kindly to wastin food so I'm not sure it's a safe idea to set you up there even if it would be useful. Kat, what about you?"

Well shit I dunno how I stack up at all. "I'm... not really sure what to compare myself to honestly? I grew up in an orphanage and while the caretaker normally cooked, I took it upon myself to learn how from him and managed to cook occasionally. Most of the time the caretaker would make sure it was all done, or at least mostly done before I was awake, or a few hours before meals at lunch and dinner.

"Despite that, I can confidently say I've cooked for an orphanage, so while my cooking skill is certainly acceptable, I have additional skill when it comes to making food for multiple people... or maybe in this case just large portion sizes? I can work perfectly well if not better with large pots and three ovens and the like..."

Kat was going to stop talking there but Kamiko gave her a slight nudge as if to say she should continue. Seeing this but not understanding, Kat boosted her reaction time to puzzle it out. *Ok, clearly Kamiko thinks there is something else Freddy might want to know. What could it be? The orphanage had a shockingly large variety of meals. I think Gramps ordered whatever he could get cheap at the time and wasn't afraid to mix the meals up.

So maybe I know a larger then normal variety of dishes? Still, I probably only know how to confidently cook... twenty or so? Is that a lot for normal people? It was just whatever ingredients I had around but it's not like I improvised, it was always recipes Gramps had shown me or slight variations...

Elmony probably had more fruits on her breakfast table then I've ever seen in my life so it's not like I know that great of a variety... WAIT. Is that it?*"Sorry one moment" said Kat, before giving Kamiko a big hug, before continuing, Freddy raised an eyebrow at the scene, slightly scrunched face.

"Will yer be doing that ofen?" asked Freddy

Kat shook her head. "No Kamiko was just trying to prevent me looking like a fool, without giving away I was forgetting something major to you. I think she should get some credit." Kamiko blushed and looked away slightly but Kat could see enough of her face to see her smile had grown even larger. "I'm not from the Hub, I'm from a different dimension, and while I know how to cook with what I'd say is a large variety of ingredients on my home planet, I don't actually know that much about the foods here."

Freddy stopped in his tracks freezing completely still, before his face started to morph into a slightly fearsome visage. His neck mouth opened slightly revealing jagged teeth that looked ready made to rend and tear flesh countless in number while his 'main' mouth on his face broke into a full sized grin. "Oh tha's just perfect. We can charge so much for a decent cook from off Hub.

"Despite the variety we can't claim to do non-Hub food all that often. Gluttony of course likes ta keep things movin so if yer store has been operatin for a certain amount of time it stops being considered 'non-Hub' after just five decades, of cookin or if you've lived on the Hub for ten.

"It's even worse for adopted dishes. If ya just use somethin you learnt from a Contract then ya only got a year of sellin before it's considered Hub food and the price goes down accordingly. I think I can find yer's a job easy. Just gotta find us an empty space and some familiar ingredients. Should be very possible. Can advertise fer two days only!"

I'm wondering if I've just made a mistake. Then again... if they really take this so seriously if they found out later and thought I'd lied it would be worse.

Chapter 434: The Details

At this point Freddy turned around and gestured with an arm for the two to follow him. "Now, before I get into the real questions, Kamiko, are ya happy to work with Kat choppin and preparin ingredients? Some people aren't but it seems like a fine use of your abilities and seeing as I'm settin the shop up just fer this, we'll need some people. Just the three of us might not be enough"

Kamiko rolled the idea over in her mind, and realised it sounded quiet fun. Her smile was already working it's way across her face, the sides of her lips rising unconsciously as she pictured the fun she could have working with Kat on this. Not to say it would all be easy, but Kamiko was just happy to work with Kat properly.

Unlike Kat, who had honestly been having no trouble with the tasks up to this point Kamiko was much less enthused. The first day, Wrath, had been 'fine'. She didn't love combat but she also didn't hate it. She enjoyed learning and improving her skills, especially working on the details and improving her skill with her blade. Wrath didn't really help with that. She wasn't a fan of direct combat, and avoided it, especially the more deadly kind whenever she could.

Wrath however, was the equivalent of smacking each other in the face with big sticks. It was just boring and overdone to her mind. She didn't fight another blade user to enjoy a nice dance, it was just a brawl. Working with Kat was good... if she wasn't terrified of screwing up the whole time, souring the experience as well.

Greed was much worse though. She got to work directly with Kat, but at the cost of her sanity. Despite her friend insisting she didn't mind at all, Kamiko had to repeatedly stab, bludgeon, shock, set fire to, attempt to freeze, and a number of other horrible damaging abilities aimed all towards Kat. It wasn't good for her poor heart, and even knowing Kat could take it, both mentally and physically, Kamiko only barely managed to make it through both days.

Envy was... it was ok. She knew intellectually that it was the best day, but she didn't get to spend any time with her friend Kat... and she learned that her mother was right and she really did need therapy. Sure the knowledge was nice to have, and acknowledging that fault would probably be good in the long term but she was honestly a little bitter of it all. She hadn't given over any terribly sensitive information but she did know how easy it was to let something slip, which she might have done. Fairly sure she hadn't, but she didn't want to promise otherwise.

So in Kamiko's mind, even if she had to do grudge work in the kitchen this was a great chance. She could see Kat's cooking skill at work, she could learn more about her friend, and she could spend time with her friend in a nice calm environment... even if she was ignoring the fact that Gluttony kitchens are rarely calm.

Still, she looked to be getting a better than average deal. If she was in charge of slicing, especially for a large number of customers, she could really take the chance to train her speed and accuracy. Even with a family as large as hers, it wasn't often she had the chance to prepare larger meals so this was an opportunity in more ways than one. "I'd love to Freddy!" replied Kamiko

"Right, good good, I'm glad to have ya with us. Now," said Freddy turning his body just slightly so it was angled more towards Kat, but not turning around anywhere near enough to reveal his face, it was more a signal he'd changed who he was speaking to than anything else. "Kat, what sort of kitchen will you need for your dishes?"

Well that's a heck of a question. I'd love to say normal but I don't know what that means. I could still maybe say it an impress the idea of 'normal kitchen' into the words like some demons are able to, but I'm not sure if that will be enough, I don't exactly have practice. Actually wait...

"What portion sizes do you want?" asked Kat tail flicking around behind her as she realised the scope of what she was dealing with. "Oh, and do you have ways to speed up cooking time? I'd assume so but I've not seen anything to suggest it..."

Freddy fiddled with his fingers in mid-air as if calculating something. "Yes, we do have a few ways to speed tings up. Still not instant mind you, but we've got some enchantments to keep things moving don't you worry. As to portion sizes... what would you consider a portion?"

Kat wavered on that, as portion sizes at the orphanage were somewhat varied. Most meals were things such as lasagne or pizzas or another similar dish that could be easily divided by necessity allowing for younger kids to eat less and older kids to eat more. Not to say, that anyone ever went hungry. Gramps would always ensure there was more than enough food for everyone, putting away what was left to be eaten another day or just when hungry.

Knowing this though, it was really hard to say what portion sized would average out to for some of the meals she had in mind. *I'm just not sure how to describe it. Why is this so hard? I mean I've never done it before but I just... I didn't think I'd ever NEED to. How the heck does one describe a portion size?

Like... even some snacks are 'for X number of people' and I really am starting to wonder how they count that. Is it by calories? Weight? Something else? I really don't know. How can I even start to describe a serving? Maybe with objects?*

"How large are your standard plates?" asked Kat "Because I'm honestly having a hard time figuring out how to explain things. It just... doesn't come up where I'm from. Everyone eats..." Kat thought of the... rather large difference in weight some people have and realised it would be a lie, so instead she said, "ok most people, and certainly all the ones I know, just sort of eat the same amount of food unless their children"

Freddy turned around but kept walking, simply switching to walking backwards while facing Kat. He held out his hands to about the width of his chest then frowned, slowly widening the gap between his hands until it was about an inch past his shoulders on either side, before lighting his hands up.

Kat was surprised to see his fire was a mix of gold and blue, the colours mixed with each other swirling around and dying each section their own colour before moving on to conquer more land in an endless cycle making it look like his hands held a small cyclone. Despite this, Freddy's eyes intensified for a moment and his muscles clenched, as the flame started to spread out slowly in a circle.

When it was all said and done it was, at a guess, about eighteen to twenty inches diameter. "About this big? Or thereabouts for standard size" said Freddy

Nope. No way, that's a massive plate. Kat couldn't help but shake her head. "Nope. Not even close to that size. Our plates are half the size of that if not less." Grimacing as the idea solidified in her head. "Honestly, if that's standard... a whole batch of food might only be enough for one serving, maybe two depending on what I'm making..."

Freddy pursed his lips at that. It wasn't a frown, not quite, but it wasn't exactly pleasing news. "Are you still comfortable cooking with sizes that large?"

Am I? I mean... I think it'll be fine. I'm much faster, superhuman levels of speed, even before I start to further enhance myself with my energy. With Kamiko helping, and maybe Freddy or some other people I think I can manage it... but it'll take some getting used to. Oh, and we'll need those tricks to speed the food's cooking time up as well as the space to have more than one going at a time.

"It... might take me a bit. I think I'll be fine, and I don't want to say it's impossible. In fact, it really shouldn't be that bad but I have no experience making quite that much food, as I'm sure you understand," at Freddy's nod Kat continued "so if you're willing to forgive a mistake or two as we get started I think I'll still be fine. Though... you did tell Kamiko she wasn't on the level for ice cream..."

Freddy nodded but seemed to be recovering his smile slightly. "No no, that'll be fine Kat. The ice cream is nice, but others are doing it still. You're offering... well honestly it's probably not completely unique food, but it's at least a chance and many will take that as good enough."

Chapter 435: A Real Recipe

"So, with that settled, can ye tell me the rough steps. Just so's I know what ye need" said Freddy

"Well..." said Kat stretching out the word as she considered her options, "Just the one recipe? That seems to be the norm around here"

Freddy nodded before turning back to face away from them as they continued their march down the Food Court. At this point they'd been traveling for a while but they were no closer to seeing an end, and Kat was starting to realise that Gluttony really did put their money where their mouths were when it came to food.

*Honestly I'm thinking it's a little excessive. Like sure Wrath had plenty of places to fight but even then it wasn't all they did. It was more like a very intense hobby combined with a part time job rather than an entire way of life. Greed made even more sense. It was a job that they all loved. Or well I'd assume it was, we didn't actually see much else.

Envy is probably the hardest to judge considering we didn't start outside, but instead inside two rooms to be interrogated. Even still, I can't imagine that all they do is interrogate people. I'm certain they must do other things, but even with the insistence from multiple sources that Gluttony isn't just about food I can't help but think that might not be the entire truth. It seems that food is at least as important as combat is to Wrath, even if it isn't the whole story.*

"Let's keep it with just the one for now Kat. Perhaps tomorrow we can branch out, but we don't have any rep. Not that we need it really, but it does help a little. Can you go over the process and what I'll need to grab yer?" Said Freddy slowly. He was clearly still thinking as he said it, as if the answer was the obvious one that he didn't quite want to commit to.

"Well, in that case I'll tell you everything for one of the easier foods we used to make. It's good because we can split it up however we want really based on the size of the dish and the number of ingredients we throw in. Should be the easiest dish to scale that I know and fairly nice besides" said Kat

[Lamb tagine with dates & sweet potatoes Recipe]

"To start off, we'll need some olive oil, or just cooking oil really, but what we use is olives, do you recognise those" Kat was honestly a little surprised to see Freddy nod. Taking that as a sign she continued "Next is four full onions that I'll be chopping, or maybe Kamiko doesn't matter. Sorry I'm getting distracted, just the ingredients.

"So we need, the olive oil, the onions, some ginger, lamb?" Freddy shook his head, "Right um... do you know mutton?" Freddy waved his hand in an uncertain manner "It's from a fluffy animal with fur on it...?" Kat trailed off, seeing the lack of real understanding.

"We've got a few of them, so try and narrow it down..." said Freddy

"Right um... it's fairly easy to sub in steak or pork if you had to" Freddy nodded at those "but lamb is from a sheep, they are fluffy and white animals. Um... the meat ages both well and poorly at the same time. The older the animal, up to a point, the richer the taste but it's really quickly becomes tougher and much harder to eat" explained Kat

"Right, we can make sure ye get somethin like that. Can't promise it'll be perfect but it'll be good enough I think" said Freddy easily

"Right, um, then more spices, cumin, paprika, coriander and cinnamon?" Freddy nodded at this so Kat continued, "Sweet potato" Freddy got a mad grin at that ingredient so Kat moved on, "and some dates. There are a few things you can put over the top as well, but we can deal without if we have to. That's normally a 'throw what we have around on' type thing."

[6 tbsp olive oil

4 onions, thinly sliced

2 tbsp finely chopped fresh root ginger

2kg boneless lamb shoulder, cut into 5cm chunks

4 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp each paprika and ground coriander

2 cinnamon sticks

850ml passata

700g sweet potato , cut into chunks

350g pitted date

To serve

100g blanched almond , toasted

good handful coriander , roughly chopped]

"I'll admit ter my surprise over the potatoes. One of the most common foods in all the multiverse. Those buggers show up everywhere. So we'll certainly have plenty of them. I think the only other one that might be an issue is... the er... date?" asked Freddy

Kat opened her mouth before closing it twice as fast. You know. That's a shockingly good question. I... I'm not sure I've ever seen undried dates. Freddy, you ask the hard questions. "Honestly Freddy, now that you ask, I realise I don't really know either" replied Kat.

This, was clearly a mistake. Instantly the air felt like it was five degrees cooler, and there was a pressure emanating from Freddy that was not at all pleasant, like Kat was being crushed on all sides by heavy rock. Kat grit her teeth before she reacted by pushing her own aura out and trying to cover Kamiko as well, but it wasn't much help. Freddy was clearly superior, even if he wasn't trying to damage them actively.

The silent war raged on for around thirty seconds before Freddy finally managed to real himself back in. "I... I'm very sorry Kat. That was unbecoming of me. It is rather frowned upon here to use ingredients you do not understand. I do realise ye aren't one of us, and I shouldn't be mad but... please understand it's hard.

Kat used the dwindling pressure to cover Kamiko more thoroughly with her own aura. The smaller demon was obviously uncomfortable with what just happened and Kat decided that aura induced fear was something she had no compunctions removing with aura induced calm on her own end.

"It's fine" said Kat, trying to project the understanding that really it was, but her voice flat, and the underlying concern for Kamiko who was still shivering slightly beside her having not been able to fight against Freddy's aura as easily.

"Right well... tell me as much as ye can about these dates" asked Freddy

"Well, they are really quite sweet, it sort of seeps into your mouth very easily and they are quite chewy, at least when dried. Very squishy, and I know a few kids like to have them in their mouths to just chew on when they are younger with weak teeth." Explained Kat

Freddy frowned. "Yeah... I'm not actually sure we have that... sure we got substitutes but... the picture I'm getting from this isn't quite the same as anythin in my memory. We got raisins, but they ain't what ye after right?"

Seeing the shake of Kat's head Freddy pondered his options for a moment as he walked. Recipes were delicate things, he knew this, and didn't want to insist on something that would change it up too drastically. It needed to be similar enough not to hurt the dish, but obviously he'd not tried the original so he only had Kat's word to work with.

Still, he wasn't a Gluttony demon for nothing. His mind was already going over hundreds of candidates to replace the 'dates'. Many were discarded based on the fact they simply didn't feel the same in the mouth as Kat had described. That coupled with the image he'd received it took some time to find something sweet and chewy but finally settled on a fruit, but needed a question answered first.

"Where in the dish is it used exactly?" asked Freddy

"It's one of the last things you do actually, besides the garnish. Once you've got everything else in the pot, and you've let your sweet potatoes cook you add the dates right at the end and stir them throughout the whole pot before cooking it for about five minutes longer. At the end of that you double check the seasoning and start plating" said Kat

[Add the sweet potatoes, stir well, cover again, then cook for 20 mins or until the potatoes are just tender. Stir in the dates and heat through for 5 mins. Taste and add more seasoning if necessary. To serve, spoon the tagine into a serving dish and scatter with the almonds and coriander.]

"Right right" said Freddy "We can work with something I have in mind a substitute. I think it might be a little more stringy then I'd exactly like for a true replacement but these 'dates' might be unique to your home world or simply too close to some other fruit I don't personally know for people to overlook."

Chapter 436: Finished the Recipe

"Right ok" said Kat, her tail flicking in irritation. *Seriously why such an obscure thing. Does that mean dates only exist in my universe? That's a strange thing to think about.* "Anyway, assuming that works I believe that covers everything"

"Right right" said Freddy "I'm glad to hear that, now would ye mind explainin how it's made. I can think of several dishes I could make with similar ingredients fer people. Oh, and don't worry about the timing too much, I can make sure that when we do this fer real the appliances are on 'rookie mode'"

Kat's tail snapped to attention, mostly straight up but with a curve right at the end signalling her slight surprise and curiosity. "What do you mean by rookie mode?" asked Kat

"Right well... once ye become a proper Gluttony chef and learn how to use the appliances, we use mostly unlabelled pre-sets with modifiers on them. It gives ye more fine control while also being more specific most of the time. Like... we say ye want ta cook a nice steak, we got a button fer that, but maybe it's venison instead. That's less common so you put some modifiers on the steak setting.

"Though that being said, of course, everyone likes their steak different so the modifiers come into play. Look, just don't worry ye lovely head about it too much." Said Freddy, clearly just being friendly, despite the word choice "It'll look like a normal oven, or stove or whatever you need."

Kat nodded, her tail returning back to its swaying before she spoke. "Right well, the first step is to find a deep pan. Gotta be... I want to say at least... this much" Kat put waved her splayed fingers which Freddy turned around to see "you know the type I'm sure. Anyway, you pick that up throw in some oil, along with the onions... which I guess you should chop before hand. Actually, you can chop and prep all the ingredients beforehand if you want. Anyway, assuming the onions are done.

"Throw them into the pan, and keep frying them till they get soft. Then add the in ginger and meat, about a handful... er, a bit less then that. Like... just grab a bit, easily and add them slowly to the pan as you go. Make sure to fry everything on both sides properly, stir everything around then just let it cook.

[Step 1.

Heat the oil in a large, deep pan. Add the onions, then gently fry until softened, about 5 mins. Stir in the ginger, add the meat in batches, then fry on all sides until lightly coloured. Return all the meat to the pan, stir in the spices and cinnamon sticks, then cook for 1 min.]

"After that's done, you want to add in the tomato sauce, that's all passata is really..." Freddy choked hearing this and Kat paused. "What?"

"You... ye really don't know? Ye... are ye tastebuds dead or are you just... dumb?" asked Freddy

"Hey!" said Kamiko "I know I've not been super involved with this, but I'll back Kat up on this. I know the difference unlike her, but it's not a major one really, and for something like Kat's been describing I hardly think it matters."

Freddy shook his head, facing forward so the two demons couldn't see the tears in his eyes. "This is a sad day. I didn't know that Succubi had such poor tastebuds that they couldn't distinguish between types of condiment. I wonder if it's genetic... are you two related at all?"

"Nope" said Kamiko happily, "We're just good friends"

Freddy scoffed at that, "I'm not sure I really consider either of ye that good now. Honestly not knowing the difference between passata and sauce. Next you'll tell me that Penne and Mostaccioli are interchangeable"

Kat and Kamiko shared a glance. "Kamiko you know what either of those two are?" asked Kat, slipping in closer to Kamiko to whisper

"I think... well I think Penne is a kind of pasta? Maybe? I'm not sure." Replied Kamiko in a faux whisper that Freddy no doubt heard anyway.

This was confirmed not a second later when he said as much. "I don't know if this is the sadder answer or not" said Freddy with a long drawn out sigh. Kat could almost see him wilting before her. "I cannot believe ye don't know of them. Still... I suppose I am letting myself get distracted. What was the next step Kat? After the sacrilege?"

"Right..." said Kat "So... passata, that thing you're going to provide because I've not seen the difference" Freddy huffed but didn't interrupt "goes in the pan along with about the same amount of water, before bringing everything up to a boil before adding in the spices and letting the whole thing simmer for... like an hour and a half to two hours to let the meat tenders up."

[Step 2:

Add the passata and 800ml water, then bring to the boil, stirring. Season well, then cover and simmer for 1? hrs, until the lamb is tender.]

"That takes a while, and you can pretty much leave things while it's cooking" said Kat "It normally gave us time to work on anything we wanted on the side if we wanted. It didn't normally come up though, so it was mostly used to cut and prepare meals for another time if I was helping Gramps out."

Kat licked her lips, she wasn't exactly getting hungry, in fact she felt no desire to eat the food she was describing at all, but she did feel the need to lick her lips and she was now starting to think about it. *No seriously why? Like... my lips don't get dry anymore, and isn't that a godsend. But yeah they don't get dry, I'm not hungry... I'm just talking about food. Is that enough? It's not like I'm salivating but... maybe it's a habit I picked up?*

Ignoring the potential for an internal crisis Kat shook her head and continued on, knowing there wasn't much left to the cooking. "After you've got the meat nice and tender you chuck in your potatoes, hopefully in chunks from either the before you started cooking or in that two hours you were waiting, and then cook it for another twenty minutes.

"Once that's done, you chuck in the dates, though you said you had a replacement for those, and stir everything well for about five minutes. You have to keep stirring, just lightly but continually for those five minutes. After that, if you want, you can taste it to see if it's right for you. I didn't do that much because it was just weird to me, but Gramps forced me to check when I first learnt."

[Step 3

Add the sweet potatoes, stir well, cover again, then cook for 20 mins or until the potatoes are just tender. Stir in the dates and heat through for 5 mins. Taste and add more seasoning if necessary. To serve, spoon the tagine into a serving dish and scatter with the almonds and coriander.]

Freddy shook his head sighing again. "See, this is why ye will never make a true chef."

Kat rolled her eyes. "Is it going to be a problem?" asked Kat genuinely curious as to the answer.

Freddy sighed once more, longing and more soul draining this time. "Honestly. Honestly honestly? No. As much as it pains me to spick the words, most of em won't care. It's a new recipe, developed off hub by a unique chef from that same dimension. It's... to my sadness, not really about the taste for most of them at the level we'll have to be on, it's more about the bragging rights and the uniqueness."

"I see..." said Kat. *I don't really want to say much more. I think it's a bit pedantic to go as far as Freddy seems to want to go for just food... especially when it seems these demons order by the plate and just go to town rather than enjoying it. Freddy treats it more like art than anything else.

And I mean, I guess I understand a bit better having seen Elmony's work the other day. Sure I knew before that people, some of them anyway, loved food, and others love to go all out and make the best food they can but...

It's just not me. I don't care. This was a nice simple dish all things consider that Gramps and I could put on in the afternoon and let cook for a while that the kids mostly enjoyed. Additionally, it scales real

easily. Not quite sure I'd be confident to go up to a pot, but if they have a really big pan I can probably manage it well.

Still, I... I feel almost bad for the guy. It does make me wonder though. Why is he the one grabbing us? He seems much more involved in the... cheffery? Is that a word? Cheffing? He treats this all like a passion, and I just feel like it's a bit weird two demons on punishment have ended up with him.*

Chapter 437: Deep Thoughts with Kat.

Once Kat had finished her explanation of the recipe, she was looking to use the group lapsed into a semi comfortable silence. Kat didn't really know where she wanted to take the conversation. Well, that wasn't true, she wanted to talk to Kamiko and go over many things.

Such as 'is this normal for Gluttony demons' or 'have you ever eaten here before' followed by 'are you ok with me leading the charge here' and several other questions relating to the situation but Kat held her tongue. She knew that she'd be overheard by Freddy and after seeing how she reacted to some slightly mislabelled sauce she wasn't willing to risk setting him off by mentioning something else.

Freddy seemed like a laid back guy, all easy smiles and casual gait with, an honestly kind of goofy look to him. He was plain, but the chef's hat bobbing around on his hand, held in place by either magic she didn't know of, or actually connected to his scalp – something she wasn't willing to discount either – kept him feeling like a nice neighbourly sort that you could hang out with and have a nice chat with in an afternoon.

That wasn't his true face though. His easy going attitude hid a passion for food and a dedication to the artform of 'cheffing'. His accent didn't help show off that passion either, but now that Kat had seen, and felt, the effects of getting truly upset by something it was hard to just have a casual conversation behind him without worrying about it.

Kat glanced over at her friend, trying to see how she seemed to feel about the whole thing. Despite Kat easily settling her face back to its resting form without the tension Kamiko seemed to feel, it was Kamiko who truly looked the most at ease at this moment. As much as Kat has attempted to perfect the face of a mostly apathetic acquaintance, the other kids at the orphanage would tell you her resting face looks more like a cross between someone who is watching children happily play around, and someone who is ready to start handing out punishments.

Of course, these weren't close to Kat's real thoughts either now, or most of the time back at the orphanage, it was indeed simply where Kat's face rested when she was unconcerned with the world. Now though, it was slightly pinched at the edges. Her smile not quite relaxed, but taught at the edges, clearly set in their position and not softly resting in place. Kamiko though, she seemed to have cheered up completely.

Her shaking had subsided and her natural smile had come back out to play. She walked easily, following behind Freddy with a slight extra bob to her tiny wings that couldn't come from the light steps she made following after him. She just seemed to be pleased with everything for some reason, though, if Kat paid a little more attention she'd see the glances in her direction, indicating she was simply happy to be with a friend, a feeling that she'd carried for this entire week. Well... Greed was a bit harsh on her.

Still, Kat was left without anything to do but stew on her thoughts, knowing that Freddy would hear any she voiced. *And isn't that a pain. There is no way Freddy is anything less than Rank 3, and my hearing would be good enough to catch everything shared between me and Kamiko if I was in his position before taking into the extra boost from demonic energy.

I just... I wonder how she can recover so quickly. Or is it me that's dragging things out? It's not like I'm scared of him personally, but I am scared of the effect it had on Kamiko. As nice as she is... it seems I have more willpower. Though... that is perhaps a scary thought when you realise that willpower might matter much more in a world where magic exists.

I think I can understand a bit more why the triplets tried to interrogate me. It might not have been the fact that I was her friend, but the issue is that she hadn't had a friend before that and they needed to know I wasn't using some power of mine to simply feel in the place of one.

Is that a thing succubi can do? Friendship pheromones? I've at least figured out they can do... other things with their powers. I've picked up what type of work they enjoy from how everyone says it even if I don't really like to think like that. Still, even back on Earth I believe the term is 'sex sells' and it isn't just speaking about the act itself. Pretty individuals are simply nicer to look at than those who are not.*

Kat bit back a sigh at that thought. *It makes me wonder how nice I actually looked before. I mean, nobody really approached me, not seriously anyway, on the romantic side of things. Then again, it's not really like I had that many friends either.* Kat smiled once again, thinking of Lily, someone who, despite her timid nature, had really stuck by Kat since they'd actually become friends.

*Man, I'm not sure I gave her enough credit when she stuck by me when I panicked through those first few weeks. A lesser person, hell a lesser friend would have run, or maybe freaked out a little bit. Ok, she did freak out about the tail a bit but as soon as she got over her shock she started buckling down and helping me figure things out.

Anyway, I'm getting distracted. I've not really gone out too much since the change, and I do wonder how much more attractive I look now.* Of course, Kat was very ignorant of the fact that her change had barely touched her looks outside of the extra features. Her skin was slightly paler, and that was about it appearance wise. It felt softer, and her muscles were stronger, with much nicer hair... but without touching her you'd certainly never see the difference.

I wonder if it'll make a difference in the future? Do I even want it to? I think I have to be considered attractive now even if I wasn't before. Comes with the territory doesn't it? Still, I... I don't know if I want that. I've never been interested in the physical side of things. Never looked at someone in the way a few novels we've been assigned for English has described.

Kat actually did sigh this time. She felt herself rapidly leaving the topic of food, but couldn't really bring herself to care. The worry that had been building draining out of her as she let out the breath.

*I'm getting silly. Perhaps hanging around with Succubi so much recently, meeting Kamiko and her family has me thinking about if that's a path I want to go down. Kat hardly needed to think on that one. I think... it isn't really. I have no interest in having kids... or well, not physically having kids.

I'd probably just adopt. Though... I do worry about if I'd just start an orphanage accidentally if I went down that route. Too easy to fall into the old habit of looking after every wayward child nearby if I went that route.

A bigger question, is if I do find someone, what am I going to do about my lifespan? * A small, traitorous part of Kat that new she wasn't being honest with herself on a number of the things running through her head whispered 'it's already being dealt with' but she ignored it. *It might become a big concern if I start looking.*

Even if we ignore the fact that lifespan extending items aren't that rare for demons, or likely all that valuable considering we just get it all by default... if I picked a human they might just go crazy. I've heard it say a few times that the human mind isn't built for immortality. Hah, I wonder if the demonic mind is. Does my improved memory help or hinder me in that regard?

Kat chewed her lip before dismissing the lifespan issue entirely. *Maybe I shouldn't be thinking about this. I've always been told that looks aren't everything, and that when you find someone it will be what's inside that's more important. What inside her mind that matters.*

Kat of course, missed the fact, that in her musings she was starting to fill little details in. Despite her clear desire not to truly get physically involved with someone, the romance was something she was starting to consider slightly. The deep emotional connection that seemed to glue Kamiko's family together. It was something she somewhat lacked at the orphanage. Sure she shared it with Gramps, and now to a lesser extent Sylvie, alongside Lily as well. With Vivian and Callisto working up to something. But the other kids never filled that role. They stuck together yes, but it wasn't quite a family. Faces changed and kids filtered out too quickly for that to really happen, and Kat was wondering, what she wanted going forward.

Chapter 438: Deep Thoughts 2, now with 98% More Kamiko

As they walked Kat found her thoughts getting less and less specific. She just didn't know where she wanted to take them. It was easy to see what Kamiko's family had, *And what is her last name? Do demons have them? I never asked...* and realise that it might be something she wanted, but it was another to work out how to get there. What Kat knew was limited, and she didn't really feel like finding a potential husband or wife candidate.

While Kat's thoughts were mostly just running in circles getting nowhere, Kamiko's thoughts were also somewhat deep. She was thinking, mostly on her encounter with Envy and how she wanted to go about finding a therapist.

*Where should I start? * Thought Kamiko. *I've admitted I need therapy, that... it wasn't as hard as I thought it was to admit. Also... money shouldn't really be that big of an issue. As much as I might feel a bit bad about asking Mum and Dad for money like this, not only will Mum get a huge discount if I go through either medical or Lust because of her position, I can also get access to the better ones.

Is that what I want though? Sure I probably will need Mum's help paying for these sessions but do I want her to pick someone out for me? I... I don't know, that's actually a much harder question.

I certainly don't want to see anyone from Medical, I don't think. Not only is this not related to a medical problem and thus not really their expertise, then even if I do trust Mum to pick someone out for me,

they still have to worry about the fact that she's their boss. Depending on their employment contracts certain information might have to get sent to her.

I mean... I don't think I have anything that bad, but one of them is Meridithna. I want to talk about her and I'm not sure how happy Mum would be about that fact or if there is a general watch on information about her, I wouldn't put that past Mum. She wouldn't do it maliciously, and might have even forgotten she'd put out the order, but I can see her wanting to know any time her name comes up from patients or perhaps if she actually checked into one of Medical's facilities.

So, no Medical, but do I take her advice when it comes to finding people in Lust. I... I don't really know.* Kamiko smiled to herself. Despite her worry she knew her mother would try her best to help if given the chance. She'd make it somewhat over the top in all likelihood, but this wasn't something she'd tease her about. Kamiko knew her mother liked to push things, but also knew when to stop very well.

The thing about letting her pick someone from Lust... is that even if she'd chose someone she thought could help me the most. She'd only be able to choose well if I outlined at least some of my problems, and... I'm not quite ready to go over them all with Mum yet. Dad either, he wouldn't be much help anyways.

Kamiko cringed at the thought. She certainly didn't like badmouthing her father. She knew he was a good man, one the nicest demons around, with a core of iron when it came to protecting his loved ones. A shame then, that the core of protection also held his tongue whenever it came to fighting within the family.

Still, as much as everyone else might loath to admit it, he gives the best hugs. Kamiko also knew that he was the best person to go to when you wanted someone to just listen. More than once she could remember latching onto him like a limpet and bawling her eyes out when he was younger. *Mum would make fun of me for weeks after the fact for that. Sure she'd give me a day or two to make sure I'd really recovered but... she'd keep brining it up and making jokes about it to help me move on.*

That was another thing, now that Kamiko thought about it. Her mother was great, and she'd helped Kamiko through rougher things, mostly rumours that other girls her age had brought up, and Dad had no idea how to combat. *But in saying that... she just... she likes to pick at things. Perhaps it's because of her career as a doctor where she needs to needle people all the time and ensure they're telling her the full truth.

It does however, keep the pressure on quite regularly. If she notices you getting hung up on something her response is embarrassment or laughter. She really does think it's the best medicine, and with how much research she's done, maybe she's actually right... but... hollow laughter might be more painful than silence.*

Kamiko quickly wrenched her thoughts away from that dark turn. She was happy, she'd figured out an issue, and she was dealing with it. There was no need to make it unnecessarily dark. *I should probably also talk to this therapist about Kat. She's not done anything wrong of course but... I have no idea how to maintain a healthy friendship.*

Kamiko thought this, not knowing that Kat really had no idea either. Her only real friendship was with Lily, and that wasn't exactly a normal friendship. Kat would count Sylvie as a friend and little sister

figure, but that certainly didn't count either. Kat could make acquaintances very easily but failed to retain friends. A skill and a defence mechanism she'd grown over the years.

*Still, having one friend is certainly progress. Might have to... unpack a bit about the whole not having friends for over a decade thing... but I have a big family, and they helped. Or did they...?

That's one of the big things about this realisation isn't it? I've had to rely on my family perhaps more than most, and in turn I've had no chance to properly work through the issues I have with them. They have become too important and central to my world view for me to even contemplate airing my grievances and having them dealt with.*

Then again... Kamiko started to perk up, her eyes regaining a bit of colour. *I managed to speak to the triplets about my biggest problem with them. I mean, it was only that one issue, but it was a big step. AND THEY DIDN'T HATE ME FOR IT. That's... well I don't know if I was really scared about it, but I was afraid of how it would change the way I'm treated.

I'd love to say it hasn't changed it... but it's not like they've had the time to show any change. It was also interesting to see that it wasn't something they were all equally aware of. Perhaps... perhaps I am also guilty of treating them as interchangeable?*

Kamiko cringed at the thought but it sort of rang true in a weird way. She wondered if she thought of them almost like two separate groups. Merra, Erra, Kerra as well as The Triplets. *I'd need to really think about that one. I'm not sure if I do that... but if I do perhaps I'm part of the problem? I only want them to be individuals some times? No that doesn't seem right. I want them to be individuals all the time, but I'll never mind if I spend time with more than one of them.

Perhaps... Perhaps what really needs to happen is for them to spend more time in pairs? It might make it clearer they are their own people. It's easy I think perhaps, to see them as a group, or when alone as a representative of the triplets, instead of whoever is actually singled out speaking for themselves.

Of course, the issue with that, is, as much as I talk about them being individuals, they share a hell of a lot of opinions. A very surprising amount considering their different interests. And when you speak on one of those the other two just agree most of the time.

Wait.*

Kamiko paused in her thoughts. An odd idea niggling at the back of her mind. *Have... has their connectivity power caused some issues there?*

Kamiko knew most of the powers her family has of course, including the fact that the triplets could send messages to each other and keep themselves connected mind to mind.

*But I'm wondering now... is it not just messages? Are they changing each other's opinions on things? I'm... I'm not sure but I wonder what would happen if I asked Erra or Merra about what the best art piece was? They don't know enough about art to answer anything other than one of Kerra's works but... if they give a real answer, and one Kerra agrees with... that's a scary thought.

Maybe I'm not the only one who needs therapy.*

Chapter 439: Hi-Tech Cookin' Part 1

After Kamiko realising that the most well-adjusted members of her family, the triplets, probably needed therapy as well, Kamiko deciding to just enjoy the walk. She felt like she didn't need or deserve any more world-shattering thoughts that were completely changing the way she viewed her family. There was a small part of her that wanted to consider if this all happened because she met Kat, but once again, she was avoiding thinking about any further thoughts that could potentially destroy her world view.

Kat was in a similar position, not allowing her thoughts to form. She didn't want to consider them anymore. She felt like she'd done her due diligence and tried to work out the thoughts that had crept into her mind but they weren't going places she was fond of. The best she could work out was that maybe she should be going out of her way to try flirting with people or something, but the idea of going out to search for such left a foul taste in her mouth. She was surprised as well, that her internal energy also seemed to recoil at the idea, as if it was an antithesis to her nature.

And that was the state the pair was in when they finally arrived at the kitchen. Freddy himself gave no indication they'd reached their destination until he turned on a dime and headed for the door nearby. He didn't even say anything as he opened it and led them through a few corridors before stopping just a second outside of a white wooden door with a stamp that had been burned into the wood.

From what Kat could tell, the stamp actually gave out the details of the room. Each door had one, and most were similar in appearance with slight differences. The one the group seemed to be using was a square with a straight line down the centre splitting it in half. At the top was a set of dots all packed together leaving barely any space between them. Along the two sides was a mix of crosses and circles, alternating one after the other, with a triangle added in every six other shapes.

"Well, come on in. I'll explain what everythin does so you ain't confused. Thing will look different to the kitchen you're both used to. We got quite a few expensive pieces of equipment in here, but don't worry. It's all sturdy stuff you couldn't break if you tried so no worries." Freddy pushed on the door and led the way inside.

Before Freddy could even begin speaking, Kat could see the room was quite large for a kitchen. It looked like it would be good for a few more workers, but perhaps with the extra speed she'd gained from becoming a demon, the space would be more comfortable rather than feeling excessively large.

As Freddy walked towards the back he tapped the centre island. "I'll get back to this. It'll be last. It's a might complicated but don't worry." Continuing on, Freddy made his way to the back of the room where an appliance took up the entire back wall.

Kat couldn't instantly discern its purpose. It looked to be a cupboard really, with equally spaced cubes sectioned off every twenty-five or so centimetres. You could see this because the while whole thing did have four doors all evenly spaced across it that ran from the floor to ceiling they were made of a blue tinted see-through material. It also looked vaguely crystalline in nature made up of faint lattice structures that could only faintly be made out but were obvious when looking at it as a whole.

"So, this right here is your food stasis. Ya can keep things hot, cold, dry, whatever you need. It stops time on food basically. If ya want to get really technical, it doesn't actually use proper time magic, but that's mostly because that shit is expensive and there is no reason to waste energy like that.

"Now, you'll notice that all the sections are the same size? Well, what you can do is this," Freddy walked up to the cupboard, opening the centre left door and pulled it open before lightly placing his fingers on one of the walls that separated two boxes. His fingers flared with light for a second before he slowly pushed in the wall, doubling the width of the compartment. "You can do that to every solid piece you see back here.

"Just gotta channel a bit of energy into it to tell the thing it's not locked in place anymore. Ya can also do the same with the horizontal slats as well. You can make the space as big or as small as ya want" explained Freddy, "Though, do make sure to seal the door when you're done. It don't work unless it's completely sealed so push it closed with a bit of force. Don't worry, once again, at breaking anything cause..."

Freddy pulled his arm back, before it bulged, doubling in size. Red and gold fire erupted around it as well, and a slight wave of force rolled off him, though nothing compared to when Kat had called passata the same as sauce. Freddy then turned around slightly, legs bulging as he did so, before finally the muscles on his back expanded, becoming unwieldy natty things bulging with power. Freddy held himself in place for just a moment before brining his fist rocketing forward into the door.

Kat couldn't keep up with the movement in the slightest. Even when she instinctively put energy into her eyes it was still too much. All of a sudden, his fist was just in contact with the door now as if it had teleported. Wind whipped around the kitchen, blown about by the impact, but it was barely a gentle breeze. The strangest thing though, was that making contact with the door made no sound.

"See, sturdy construction. It absorbed all the force from me hand and them some. The wind was all from before I made contact that's the only reason ya got anything. Hopefully that gives ya both peace of mind to really slam it shut. Make sure ya do, I won't have you complainin about ingredients going off alright? It'd never happen if ya shut the door" said Freddy jovially as he deflated back to his normal appearance and splayed his fingers a few times.

I wonder if that hurt. On the one hand, he punched it as hard as he could and that should hurt. On the other, it didn't make any noise and the door apparently just... absorbed the energy from that punch. I'm pretty sure that's not how that's supposed to work, but I suppose physics isn't exactly a sure fire thing anymore, more of a vague guideline.

After seeing both Kat and Kamiko nodding in acceptance and trusting that they would shut the door properly, Freddy moved over to the right hand side bench, leading them around the centre island. The first station was a deep basin. It started at just above Kat's elbow height and sunk into the tabletop all the way down to her knees.

Above it, was a series of levers and two dials along with a seemingly normal looking tap. Even seemed to be made out of stainless steel. "Now, ya both probably won't use most of this here. In case you haven't realised. It's a sink. Currently, if you notice," Freddy tapped on the further left lever which was the only one pulled down "this lever is down. That's normal water. The two dials are for hot and cold water and how much. Hot water is just below boilin, and cold water is actually cold, just above freezin, so be careful about that. That will always be the case with whatever lever is down. Hottest the liquid can be and coldest and in whatever amounts.

"Now the rest of the levers, ya don't need to worry about today. Just for completeness sake though, I'll tell you. After the water lever, is the Biolen lever. It's a liquid mixture that acts basically as a water substitute but can go all the way up to about a thousand degrees. Lever after that is for Strained Lava, it's gritty and has an even higher upper limit on temperature. Mostly for cleaning really difficult dishes.

"On the other side, is, Icelin, which covers below zero to about negative a hundred, then Liquid Zero, which goes all the way down to nothing, and then a bit further. Don't ask how it works. Finally, that last tap on that side is also water, but we don't recommend you use that tap. It's water we use for sterilising wounds, so it's got a few other things mixed in. I don't know the whole list.

"Oh, and one more thing." Said Freddy tapping on floor of the basin. "If ya channel some demonic energy into the bottom and push or pull you can move the floor of it to accommodate ya. This makes sure that ya can fit as much dishes as ya need, or whatever. Also helps with gettin it into a comfortable position for ya arms"

Chapter 440: Hi-Tech Cookin' Part 2

"Right" said Freddy, "Any questions about those two? I guess I didn't really give ya a chance, just made sure ya new to shut the doors."

Kat shrugged, considering the gadgets that Freddy had shown them. *I don't really think so. It's all rather intuitive. Even the levers make a lot of sense once you know what they do. Plus you can remember which is which easily once you do. The... stasis cupboard? I guess it isn't a fridge so that name works, is interesting and I'd love to know more about it, but I don't have any questions about how it works. I wonder if Freddy would appreciate me asking? It's a toss up. He might see it as wasting time, or he might appreciate the fact I'm taking an interest... bugger it let's ask.* "So the stasis cabinet does hot and cold food?" asked Kat

Freddy nodded, before throwing his hands sideways to gesture at the cabinet. "Yup yup. It keeps everything exactly as it was when ya put it inside. The tech is a little complicated, but still cheaper then fuc- er I mean, blasted time magic. It uses a bunch of other enchantments based on the food to keep it as is. Like, it cools down cold food just enough for it to stay at the same temp, and a warmin version for hot foods. Also bug repellent and a few other things like that. I won't waste time on the full specs."

"That makes sense thanks" said Kat

"Good good," said Freddy before glancing over at Kamiko, when he saw that she wasn't looking to ask any further questions of him, he moved over to the next item. This was another cabinet, stretching from floor to ceiling. The front was made of another type of crystal, this one more obviously crystalline with deep grooves which dug out a hexagonal shaped lattice across the front. It was tinted black making it somewhat hard to see inside, but Kat put some energy into her eyes to see a series of trays. "This is you're standard oven.

"Or well, it's a standard Gluttony oven, probably more complex then something either of you have seen." Kat didn't know how to reply to that. Obviously it was a more complex oven, but after spending two days sorting through stuff in Greed it wasn't the most impressive item. However, Kamiko did seem surprised at the number of dials and buttons that were set into the door, because she nodded along a bright smile on her face. Seeing this, Kat gave her own nod as well.

"Yes yes," continued Freddy "This here can do some rather extreme stuff. It can do everything from cakes to rotisseries and more!" Hearing this, Kat was torn between smiling at Freddy's honest seeming excitement and frowning at how much this was starting to sound like an infomercial. "Further, it has a number of cooking options such as a timer, a time reducer, cook mode, and of course cook type"

"What's the difference between cook mode and cook type?" asked Kamiko before Kat could get the chance.

Freddy was obviously waiting for that question because his smile doubled, which was also a little creepy because it started to split his face, as it opened up slightly to allow for the smile to continue up to his ears. "Well, you see. Remember how I mentioned this could cook a few things? Well, cook type changes up the configuration. You have, standard" Freddy waved his hand over the cabinet, "concentrated," Freddy turned the dial one stage and most of the metal racking disappeared leaving only two in the middle. "rotating" Freddy pressed the deal again retracting all the steel shelving. Once that was done, a large metal rod came down from the top of the oven and extended all the way to the bottom. "heck there's even a few more..."

Freddy pressed the button again and ten buzz saws filled the oven. Kat flinched back in surprise, going into slow motion trying to determine the threat. When she was fully cognisant of what it was... Kat really didn't know what to think. "Um... what?" said Kat

"Yeah I got no idea" said Freddy "It's not in the manual and whenever I ask the techs about it they laugh at me. I... I think I might know why it's there now though..." Freddy then proceeded to shake his head, cook's hat flailing from side to side as he did so. "Right, um... there's a few more settings." Freddy pushed a button on the faceplate and a hissing sound was released from the oven. "This is vacuum cooking. All the air has been removed.

"There's another one" Freddy pointed out a deep blue button he hadn't yet touched and wasn't on the dial for modes but next to it "it's for filling the oven with water to cook things. It's not... the most necessary. If you want to cook things all the way through the other dial has options for that, but if for whatever reason you need to, you can use the oven as a giant pot."

You know what... that actually does sound kind of useful when cooking large meals. If you can do it concentrated mode you could maybe boil water as well. Still... maybe it's overkill? You could cook a person in that. Kat stopped for a second. *Is it cannibalism if you're no longer human and would Gluttony do that?* Kat wasn't sure she wanted the answer so she asked. "So, that's cook mode, what's cook type?"

Freddy gestured over to another dial and smiled, "Well, that's mostly for directional based stuff. Do you want to cook your food from the top, bottom, the back and front, all over evenly?"

"How is that last one possible?" asked Kamiko, a curious look on her face, head slightly tilted to the side as if she was trying to uncover a deep secret.

It actually turned out to be the case because Freddy said. "Honestly, no idea. I did ask, that sort of things important to know when your cookin after all, but the explanation when over my head honestly. Tried to ask them to simplify it and he said to me 'Simplify it? Simplify over a hundred years of culinary science in a few sentences to someone who wouldn't know how to put together a desk with instructions let

alone an advanced piece of tech like this!' so I punched him in the face. I was then banned from talkin to the techs, but I don't regret it."

Oof. That's... well, actually that's a pretty fair reaction. Seeing how hard Freddy can punch he obviously held back, or only punched someone who could take it otherwise they'd be dead. So you know what, that might actually be a fair response. They insulted someone who wanted to know because of their love of cooking, which I've quickly found out is one of his buttons.

"Oh, that's fine then" said Kamiko "I don't know anything about making artifacts so I guess I wouldn't understand either"

"Good good. Well, that's really all ya need to know about the oven. Moving on" Freddy said before stepping forward to the next contraption. It was the second last one, well second last type, from what Kat could see. There was quite a few more copies of the sink, the oven and whatever this device was lining the two walls. "This is you're stovetop.

"Now, I can already hear ya askin me 'Freddy, why isn't it atop the oven' well, that's because of these" Freddy said as he reached over to tap the thick piping lining the wall at the back of the stovetop. "These right here need a lot of space to work. Additionally, it helps stop the enchantments conflictin.

"Still, this is the most normal of the devices here. Just make sure that you point ya handles towards the back when you press this button here" said Freddy pointing to one of the buttons on the side, before gesturing to a set of eight buttons. "Now, those eight are to go up or down in increments of one, ten, one hundred, or one thousand degrees, which is simple.

"The button I pointed out before, the one ya need to be careful with raises the wall." Freddy pressed it and a red tinted crystalline wall reminiscent of the others came up. "This insulates you from the heat if you need, and it allows ya to use this other button" Freddy gestured to a dial right in the centre "to speed up the cooking process. Oh, right, the oven has one of those as well, the big red dial. It'll tell ya on the display above how much faster things are, but be careful never to take the cooking time below ten minutes. Some dishes don't need it or need a bit more to be perfect, but ten minutes is the golden rule. Remember that!"