

DEMONS 501

Chapter 501: If it Doesn't Burn use More Fire

Once the three demons had backed up significantly and rounded a few corners they stopped. As soon as they did, Sue took the chance to ask, "Ok, what seems to be the problem? Why were you guys freaking out so much?"

"It wasn't a dead end" said Kat

"It was worse" said Kamiko jumping in afterwards.

Kat picked up where she left off with, "It was actually a giant rat. The whole dead end was one sleeping, or at least, breathing rat that was blocking it off..." Kat let out a long sigh at that, letting her thoughts catch up before she kept talking. "... actually, now that I've given it some thought, it might be even worse than that. I didn't see a tail at all, so we weren't seeing the back of the rat, and there were no breaks, so if it's like the side fat of the rat it's much larger than the hole"

Kamiko grimaced realising the truth of what Kat said, "Oh dear. This rat might actually be a bigger deal than I thought. I didn't want to fight it in that small tunnel with no space to really dodge around it. I really doubt it'll just stand there and let us hit it."

"Damn. If it's just a normal brown rat I doubt it's the original either. Just a bigger mass is not what a progenitor of a swarm gains. Shit, why did I sign up for this again?" complained Sue

"The money" said Kat deadpan.

Sue stepped forward so that Kat could certainly see her face and very slowly rolled her eyes before stepping back, folding her arms under her breasts and pointing. It didn't really work that well with the coat though, and it wasn't anywhere close to effective against Kat. Still, she just let out a sigh and let it be.

"So, plan of attack?" asked Kat

Kamiko shrugged, "I think we just have to bring out the demonic fire. Even my naginata can only really leave small wounds on it if it can even get through the rats hide. Sure we could give the old death by a thousand cuts but we have other things to do so I doubt that's a worthwhile option."

"Fair enough. I'm full up on energy, is everyone else?" asked Kat

The other two nodded and then they got back into formation. This time, Kat and Kamiko were both together in front of Sue who kept herself about the same distance back as before. It took no time at all to return to the giant rat. When they did, Kat debated slightly about where best to start from. Did they want the range or the firepower getting in close would provide them.

Looking at the size of the thing again, Kat let her tail wind its way up to her mouth so she could lightly bite down on it. *I can't shake the feeling I'll need all of my energy to take this thing down. If we start throwing out fire from a distance I think the energy loss will do us in. It'll be dangerous, but not as dangerous as being caught without energy.*

Kat shared a look with Kamiko and took a slow, but very deliberate step forward and waited for her response. She looked between her hands, the floor, and the rat a couple times before nodding and stepping forward as well. The pair advanced in sync the last few paces till they were practically on top of the other rat. Kat held up a hand with five fingers and then mimed dropping the first two repeatedly.

Kamiko quickly got the idea and nodded. Using her fingers as a guide, Kat started to drop them slowly, timing it with a fairly accurate internal clock, dropping on finger every two seconds. This was just to allow ample time for Kamiko to be ready. As she counted down, Kat made sure to place her hand right above the hair of the rat, not touching, but close enough for this.

When Kat's final finger dropped down, the two Succubi BURNED in tandem. Pink and purple flames swirled together as the temperature plummeted. The fire clung to the rats fur and sunk inside, though the speed of its movements was much slower than Kat had ever seen. About a second after the flames had begun, a roar that couldn't be heard because of the earmuffs, could certainly be felt.

Kat's bones rattled, loose dust and rocks vibrated and chunks of the walls and ceiling were chipped free by the noise. The large figure of the rat started to shake and move as it woke up, lifting the brain fluff to reveal part of a leg. The pair didn't let up though, simply continuing to spew fire onto the creature as best they could.

A few seconds of full power though, was started to strain Kat in a strange way. So much power so quickly apparently wasn't easy, as frost started to climb its way up her arms. It didn't hurt, but it couldn't be good. Kamiko was in a similar scenario, she was staring at her rapidly freezing attire and grimacing.

She glanced at Kat, and when she saw the other demon in a similar situation cut the flames and nodded. Confused but willing to accept Kamiko's lead on this Kat did the same. She found herself down to only fifty percent energy, arms frozen up to the elbow, and a feeling of stiffness when she tried to wriggle her fingers. That might have been the noise though making delicate movement. Hard to tell at that moment.

While Kat was stopping her flames, the rat was not ideal, it had stood up and was slamming the coated side into the wall to try and smother the flames. This spread the fire to the wall in question but did remarkably little to stop the flames themselves. The rat was icing over, however slowly that might have been, with the fire sinking through the fur and spreading the best it could.

As Kat was shaking out her hands, the rat was realising that it might need to go onto the attack. None had ever injured it so within this domain, and while the cold was annoying, and potentially dangerous, something needed to be done about the pests that caused it. Shifting around much faster than something of that size should be capable of, the rat lined a large set of jaws up around the tunnel, its mouth easily eclipsing the small opening.

It breathed in, and Kat couldn't help but try to throw a bit more fire into it. The mouth was right there after all, just a few centimetres away from her hands. It couldn't clamp down on them, the tunnel stopped that much. She wasn't prepared for what happened next. A wave of rats shot out from its mouth. Kat's mind slowed as she desperately tried to take in this new information.

She pushed out some more flames, careful to keep them to only enough to freeze the rats, no need to go all out on a swarm wave. This would turn into a horrible decision very quickly. Kat did indeed freeze the rats in question, though they were already dead. The issue was they were still travelling towards her

and Kamiko at high speeds. Kamiko's eyes widened as she realised what Kat had done. She grimaced and tried to move back.

As soon as Kat saw this, she realised. *I've really screwed this one.* Kat moved in sync with Kamiko, except she moved to take her old place. Kat wasn't about to let what might now be a few tonnes of ice slam into her friend. Sue had a great shield, but this was not a good stress test for the thing. Kat took the best stance she could and slammed both hands and her tail into the ice.

The force of the collision cracked the ice of course, but once that fell away it kept coming. Kat dug in and tried to slow it down. The ice pushed against her, arms straining to contain it, but was pushed back before too long. Still, it was an impressive feat, the rats icicle slowed considerable and bled of a large amount of its power. Seeing this, Kamiko moved to the side of Kat and tried to slow it as well.

Now with two demons working in tandem the effect was stopped in its tracks, but the pair were burning energy. Kat new she was done to around thirty percent left. Most of her energy had gone into the original fire, then another large chunk to freeze the oncoming rats. Now she was bleeding off more to stop the ice from crushing the pair of them.

Can I just drop this? What would happen if we just rounded the corner? I didn't really think of that. Kamiko's helping me now though... shit do we fight back? How much energy is that big rat using to stop us here? Dammit what do I do?! I'm realising I have a severe lack of combat knowledge I could really use right now...

Chapter 502: The Tail End

The choice was taken away shortly after those thoughts passed through Kat's mind because the pressure forcing the ice forward started to abate. Reflexively, Kat started to reduce how much pressure was being applied, she realised this might be a problem until she noticed in the corner of her eye that Kamiko was doing the same thing. A few seconds was all it took for the forces to equalise and the ice dropped a few centimetres to the floor.

Huh... didn't realise that was still off the ground... where we... where we wasting energy holding it up?

Kat didn't really want to dwell on that idea so she didn't. Looking around she saw that the gaps around the ice didn't really leave any room for them to squeeze past. "Ok Kamiko. What's the new plan? Carving it up or... something else?" asked Kat

"We could try and shove it right back? I mean... now that it's stopped the ice itself isn't too heavy. I'm sure between the two of us we could throw it back at the rat. The issue is mostly how much stuff is behind the ice and what'll happen if we trying shoving it all towards the big on. Has it sat back down? Is it thrashing? Honestly, it might just be safer to-"

Kamiko was cut off by a, presumably loud, slam which caused the walls to shake a huge chunk of the ceiling fell down next to Kat and she had to whip her tail out of the way to prevent it from being caught. The rock itself was about as tall as Kat's hip and three times her width.

"Nevermind, clearly we need to finish this fight. If the rat collapses the tunnel we might get trapped here. I think we at least try pushing it all back." Said Kamiko now more panicked compared to before.

The two lined up with each other, and Kamiko gave the countdown this time, copying Kat's five finger method. When they reached zero, they put all their strength into the ice and it flew backwards. This wasn't perfect, because the small gaps around the edge allowed the unfrozen blood and guts of the other rats to squeeze around and start to pool over the walking surface.

Additionally, they watched as the ice slid into the room with the large rat, before it snapped it up and swallowed it with no trouble at all. It then bent down and let its large eye cover most of the hole to see them. Kat and Kamiko charged forward at the chance to target such a weak point, but it was able to avoid them easily.

While Kat and Kamiko were both faster, it only needed to shift its body slightly, the demons needed to dash all the way down the corridor. It simply placed its front paw in the way and waited for them to make contact.

When Kat's fist made contact, she instantly realised this was going to be a problem. The thick fur simply took the impact in stride, depressing slightly in a large area around her hand and bleeding off all the kinetic energy. Kamiko's fist met similar issues, so she pulled out her naginata and tried to slice into the fur.

Before she really had the chance though, the rat pulled away, before slamming back towards the hole. The cave shook somewhat, but the main issue was the air pressure, Kat felt herself being pushed back a good deal, her larger wingspan causing her issues in this department. She could control herself somewhat and managed to remain upright, but she had been shifted about twice the distance backwards as Kamiko had.

Kamiko for her part, had fallen over. She had been in an attack stance and the air had pushed her feet out from under her relying on the addition of the slick blood on the floor to seal the deal. Kamiko rammed her naginata into the ground and tried to push herself back to her feet. The lack of further air made it possible, but it wasn't easy, she needed to abuse her boosts to ensure she got back to her feet without delay.

Kat was sprinting up past her flames in hand. *Damn, hopefully I can get another good hit on this rat.* Kat's hands slammed into the rat a moment before Kamiko recovered her feet and made to do the same. This time, the instant her flaming hands hit the rat it started to move, pulling back somewhat, Kat followed it out into the room to keep up the pressure, slamming fire covered fist after fire covered fist into the thing, abusing what speed she could.

Kamiko joined in, coating the end of her weapon in her own pink fire and slashing at the fur, but it was almost as resistant to cutting damage as it was blunt trauma. Kamiko found her weapon getting stuck into the thick hairs that made up the giant rat's coat. She had to slash and then pull back to avoid getting pulled along as the rat thrashed.

It screeched again, turning, this time, it turned the other way, showing off its flank still on fire. From what Kat could see for a few moments the fire had spread onto the top of the rat and it was coated in a thick layer of ice. Still, that became less important when it turned so that its rear was fully facing the two demons.

Its thick tail slithered into the cave like it had a mind of its own, filling up all of the opening, clearly having needed to squeeze its way into the room. Kat and Kamiko were forced to step back as the appendage lashed out at what it could blindly swinging around the tunnel trying to damage them both in whatever way it could.

The pair were left stunned somewhat as they dashed back to the edge of its range. There was no clear showing of its physical skill as the tail didn't slam into the wall all that hard, but it moved at speeds they were only capable of keeping watch on while being boosted, more than enough to apply a good deal of pain if they got hurt and very hard to dodge.

Kamiko stepped forward first, trying to get a swing in at the end of the tail with her naginata. It bit deeply into the end of the tail, fire spreading somewhat but also pulling along Kamiko for the ride when she refused to let go of her weapon. Kat watched frozen as Kamiko was slammed into the wall. A bright light covered Kamiko when she made impact, a screeching sound that actually made it through the earmuffs was heard, and Kamiko let go of her weapon before she could be pulled around too much more.

As the tail came back around to strike Kamiko again with its wild flailing, Kat charged forward and grabbed onto the tail, trying to dig her nails into the beast. It wasn't super effective simply due to the rather short length of them. Still, the rat didn't seem happy and Kat was promptly thrown into the wall.

She kept her grip steady though as she grit her teeth and bore the pain of at least one bone in her wings cracking and the bruises her back was surely covered in healed up. Utilising the fact that she'd sunk her hands in somewhat, Kat relied on just one hand so that she could yank Kamiko's weapon free.

She managed to do so just as she hit the next wall, face first this time. She was actually much less damaged. Sure the bruising was going to be a pain for all of half a second, but that was much more easily shrugged off than the broken bones. *Note to self, wing bones are actually pretty weak. Take damage to front in future despite organs being potentially more accessible. They don't really seem to be a concern anymore.*

Kat prepared herself for the next impact as she tried to dig out her hand to leave the tail behind, when the impact happened... and no pain followed. What? Kat's confusion lasted just long enough for the tail to fall still, dropping to the ground alongside her ceasing all movement as far as she could tell.

Um... what? Kat looked around. Kamiko was standing off to the side panting somewhat and using her naginata for support, but she still had a steeling look in her eye. Sue was right at the back of this section of the cave. She had wide eyes that actually seemed to be leaking some sort of fluid. It was bright blue, and Kat really hoped it wasn't blood.

"Um... what now?" asked Kat as she picked herself up off the ground.

Kamiko breathed in a few more deeps breaths. "I... I don't know? Is it dead?"

Kat looked out over the now limp tail blocking the exit. "I really hope so Kamiko" said Kat checking her nearly empty energy reserves. "I really hope so"

Chapter 503: To the Victor goes the Spoils

Kat and Kamiko had to push the large rat back a bit so that they could make their way into its room, but once they did Kat realised a few things that were rather concerning, if for very different reasons.

The first was the demonic fire that she'd used. It seemed to have at least some will of its own. This was quite clear because it had coated the side of the rat they'd hit and then worked its way up to the rat's spine before trying to coat as much of the structure as it could. It didn't seem to have reached the rat's head before it passed out, but it was clearly making its way there. That wasn't to even begin considering the chance that fire had started taking out the rat's internal organs. Sure, for the amount of energy used the effect should be suitably deadly... but knowing the extent was another thing altogether.

On top of that, the other concerning thing was the size of the room. It was just barely larger than the rat itself. Its clear now why the thing didn't run away or back off and force them to come to it. The rat didn't have any way to do so. Now that Kat was just barely inside the room, she could see the rat filled it nearly to the brim.

Could we have taken this thing if it wasn't so boxed in? Would it have just been a matter of buying time for the ice to run its course? I mean we couldn't tell how well it was doing before so... maybe? Dammit, the whole thing was really tough though. Wasn't as fast as us, but with its size it doesn't really need to be. The tail was very strong, and as much as it pains me to admit it on some strange level, my tail isn't as strong. Really wish I knew why that bothered me. The small part of Kat that did know and wanted to provide the answer was swiftly ignored by the larger part of her that really didn't want to think about it.

How would I have fought this if it could move? Would hit and run tactics work? The thing's tail is long enough that it can probably hit me when I try to come in... maybe I'd just have to take hits from it and let Kamiko go after it... and what about Sue? Would we have been able to keep her safe? I don't really know how smart this thing is. Would it go after the two things clearly fighting it first?

"So what now my captors?" asked Sue.

Kat whipped her head around surprised at the other Succubus, not realising that Sue had managed to sneak up on her. "Oh... um... I have no idea? Is this worth skinning or something?"

Kamiko shook her head "I doubt it..."

"Kam's right" said Sue eliciting a slight wince from Kamiko, "I see, not a fan of that one... perhaps I'll keep using it. Anyway, she's right regardless of her distaste for my new nickname."

Sue pressed into the fur and watched as she made a proper dent into it, which surprised Kat a little before continuing, "See, so much of its strength was from the energy spinning around inside of it. Now that it's down for the count that's all draining out and it ain't moving anymore.

"Even if we had the tools and knowledge to keep it locked into the carcass, it still wouldn't matter because its all in the fur, and this furry bastard has course fur that nobody would want even if it wasn't from a disgusting rat. So... it's pretty much useless for us. Maybe we could find something good in its guts that Gluttony might want. I've heard that they eat pretty much anything, and a rat this size is bound to be worth something to them... but Stoney will probably deal with it. This is a mining outpost though, so he might have to call in someone else to do it. We'll just have to remember to mention it to him."

"Really?" said Kamiko "There's a lot of fur here. Surely it's worth something?"

Sue shook her head, "Clearly getting to Rank 2 didn't help your mind much. Fabric needs to be comfortable first and foremost before its strength even starts to come into play. Our Demonic Attire is just so much better otherwise. It always fits, it's always comfortable, and it's normally on par with the better materials you'd expect to find around your Rank unless its made with the fancy shit from the start. Though I've heard that can cause weaker demons some problems.

"Anyway, not only is this rat fur, which is fairly useless, its SWARM RAT fur which is nearly worth a negative value. Even if this one is a clear mutant it just isn't worth anything. Maybe... MAYBE you could get an ember for it if you handed it off to a researcher who wanted to study the mutation but really any other part would work just as well for that. We might as well move on."

"Yeah um... how exactly?" asked Kat looking at the room filled with rat. From where they were standing there was no obvious way out and the rat was scarping the ceiling as it was, with barely enough clearance for it to move around let alone enough for someone to climb over it easily.

"I guess we'll have to climb, or more likely, I'll have to do it" said Kamiko

"Is it safe for you to do that?" asked Kat "I can go first if you need me to"

Kamiko shook her head. "I'm the smallest out of all of us, and even though I'm pretty sure my boobs are a little bigger then yours Kat, that's completely offset by the small size of my wings. Your horns are possibly the biggest issue because of where they are on your head. I should be fine, and worse comes to worst I can just come back"

Kat bit her lip. *I don't really like sending Kamiko off on her own... especially not when she'll likely be out of range for Sue to help... but I guess I should let her do this.* "Alright stay safe" said Kat

Kamiko nodded and dismissed her weapon before she started to climb the rat. As soon as Kamiko made it to the top, Sue turned to Kat and said, with a thoughtful look on her face, "I think you might have the bigger ass though. Would you call that a win?"

"I'm sorry what?" asked Kat confused

"Well, we all know I beat you guys handily for T and A but, comparatively, while Kamiko has bigger tits, you might have the bigger ass. It's close though, much closer then the tits." Said Sue studying Kamiko as she climbed up the rat. "Hmm... no actually you guys might just be the same size"

"Is this really appropriate?" asked Kat "She's doing us a favour and checking things out, should you really be checking HER out?"

Sue shrugged, "She can take it, and so can you. We're Succubi, surely she's aware of what she looks like. It's just the truth anyway. Don't feel bad about it. Plus she can hear us. Kam would tell us off if she wanted"

Kat rolled her eyes internally. *I don't really care at all Sue, it just seems unprofessional. Must you really compare us like this?* A second passed and Kat realised, *actually maybe she does? Maybe she HAS to compare everything like that.*

"Fine. I like your hair then. The length is impressive and while I don't think I could ever take care of mine well enough if I let it get to that length I do think it's pretty cool" said Kat trying to move away from crude topics

"You don't take care of your hair? With red locks as nice as those I'm actually surprised. Surely you got a few secrets for it...?" said Sue with wiggling eyebrows

But Kat shook her head. "I mean, I clean it properly but I don't really do anything more than that. I've always had good hair, and I'm proud of it honestly. Still, I've kept it about this length for as long as I can remember. Well, proportionally you know? Just past my shoulders has always felt right to me. What about you?"

"Well..." said Sue dragging it out, "This is actually my Mother's style. I... I've always loved her hair and so as soon as it was my choice and I could properly push the matter I put down my teeny tiny foot and said 'Mama, I wanna have long hair like you' and she said 'it'll be a lot of work to take care of' and I did not listen or understand at all.

"I thought it would be a bit of work, but having hair this long, especially if you want it around your arms and strong enough not to just break if it gets cut? That takes effort... hang on. How does your hair work with your regeneration?" asked Sue suddenly very curious.

Chapter 504: Chattin with Sue

*You know... I've never thought about that. How DOES my regeneration effect my hair? In humans hair and nails are dead cells for the most part so I'm not sure if they'd be included in my regeneration. Hmm... *

Kat looked back over the fights she'd been in and tried to remember an instance when her hair had gotten damaged but her cursory look at those memories didn't reveal anything. *Huh... so maybe not... then again... * Kat ran her hands through her hair and tried to imagine the length.

Doesn't seem to be any longer... but it hasn't been that long since I became a demon. WAIT! My hair got completely replaced during that process... I'm not exactly sure what that means though. As far as I'm aware my hair isn't like Uncle's. I can't control it, it isn't alive.

Kat looked down at her nails, now those she was sure hadn't changed. They were at exactly what she considered the right length. They were just barely long enough to be considered nails sticking up maybe one and a half centimetres off her skin.

Hmm. My nails would have been longer if they were growing still. What does this mean? "I have no idea, Sue. My nails seem to have not been growing, but I'm not certain about my hair," said Kat.

Sue frowned, "I would be so jealous if you can grow it with your regen. You have no idea how much time and effort I spend on my hair. I have to use special product to make sure it'll stand up in a fight. It's not indestructible so much as dispersing. Ugh so much effort. Still, try it Kat. See if you can make your hair longer or something so I can complain"

Kat shrugged. *I suppose I can give it a try.* Closing her eyes Kat pictured her hair getting longer. Slowly extending until it reached her rear. She didn't really want it that far if she was honest, it might get in the way of her wings. *Still, it would be a good t-* "Oh, LOOK LOOK!" shouted Sue clearly excited.

Kat's eyes flew open and she grabbed her hair to bring it around to the front... only it looked the same length. Kat raised an eyebrow and looked at Sue who she could see now was trying and just barely succeeding at holding in her laughter. "Hehehe, I got you good with that," said Sue.

"Why?" asked Kat pushing down the desire to lightly cuff Sue over the head for the joke.

Sue shrugged, "I mean, it was pretty easy. Just had to say look look and I got a good laugh out of it. Didn't even have to use any of those funnier techniques and risk running afoul of the translation engine".

"What do you mean by that?" asked Kat ignoring the joke for now, and focusing on the second part.

"Well, the translation works on a few things. It works on... I think it must use the collective consciousness of a language, alongside your mind and the person speaking. It's why I can actually say D.E.M.O.N.S and demons with a difference being audible.

"I believe I mentioned it a bit earlier, that people abuse it for names quite a bit. You can... you can almost see how it's spelt when someone introduces themselves. Anyway, because we can't lie, sometimes if you try to lie just a bit by using some creative wording, the translation gets mixed up and it gives the game away. Like... hmm... wait, Kat, what language do you get things in?" said Sue

"English, I think," said Kat

Sue nodded, "Well then I really can't give you any examples. I don't speak English, whatever language that is. I speak Infernal, which is the original tongue of the first demons. Most demons get taught it in school. I'd have thought... well I guess it doesn't matter; I can't hear the difference anyway. I'd never have known if you didn't tell me. Guess I can't give you a good example of how things can be twisted"

"What does, Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo" sound like to you?" asked Kat

Sue got a slightly dazed look in her eyes. "Woah... what was... that was a little weird. I heard you saying two different things at once there. One was about bullying and the other was just the same animal over and over...

"Well..." Sue started before stopping and waiting a few more seconds to shake her head out. "Ok please never do that again. That might be the weirdest thing I've ever heard anyone say. I can practically feel my ears rebelling after that. What... what was even the point? Why did that work?"

Kat shrugged, "It's some fancy wordplay in English. That one would can make a whole sentence because it means a few things. It gets weird"

Sue shook her head, "Yeah well seriously don't do that again. It's weird. I've never had the translation magic freak out so much."

I think I know why. I know the sentence more as an entity in and of itself then I actually do know all the different meanings of the word Buffalo. I wonder if that's part of the reason why it didn't work well. I know what the sentence means, and I know what Buffalo means, but I don't really know which buffalo actually means what off the top of my head.

"Shall we go back to talking about hair then?" asked Kat

Sue shook her head, "Nah, your weird English voodoo house kinda soured me for a bit. I'd rather insult you a bit, but honestly it's a lot less fun insulting you than Kam".

"Why is that?" asked Kat

Sue sighed and said, "I can't believe you're just asking me. Look, it should be pretty clear. She has better reactions. She twitches slightly when you say something she doesn't like but isn't willing to speak against. She pouts a good amount and it looks adorable on her, and quite frankly it's easier.

"Oh sure, you'll keep me in line before she will, even if I was insulting Kamiko in a major way and not for fun, you'd still come down on me before her. But your reactions are so boring. And when you tell me off... it's like... like you're only really doing it because you haven't got a better response you know?

"Like... um... hmm... how do I explain this... it's not like you don't have anything to mock me about. For some reason I feel like you could if you wanted, but it's more like... I don't want to say you feel it's beneath you because you aren't really condescending... apathetic maybe? Like... you don't really care enough to insult me back? Which... I mean... yeah that takes the fun out of it"

"I don't particularly feel bad about that," said Kat, "I suppose I could return some jabs but... it really isn't my style. I mean you look quite good as all Succubi do, your voice as pleasing to hear, if a little strange to hear from someone who feels around my age, your personality is the only thing I really feel the need to jab at, but it's not that bad that I'd really criticise you"

Sue's eyes widened at that last part. "What really? Not going to go after me for all the complaining I did? Not going to tell me to stop talking about your various assets?"

Kat shook her head, "Nope. I don't plan to. My problems with the complaints were more that they represent a lack of trustworthiness in combat, but you managed to keep Kamiko's shield up in that hectic fight just before, even when the rat... beam? Rat beam. Came after us, so... that buys you a good deal of leeway"

Sue bit her lip, "Ok no, that can't be all right? I mean surely I've got something you can pick on right? I thought Kamiko was the crème puff not you..."

Kat shrugged, "What it really comes down to is that you don't necessarily mean what you say. Or... no well, not quite that... you make unflattering observations yes, but you do it as a pastime and there is no malice. The insult is... it feels more like a creative outlet I guess? It isn't mean in quite the way I think it could be." Said Kat, keeping her eyes locked on Sue's who promptly looked away.

"Oh? What makes you think that?" said Sue still not making eye contact with Kat again.

"How about this, try it. Insult me Sue" said Kat sternly.

Sue grit her teeth and turned to Kat. "Well, maybe if you took that crown of horns of your head I'd have feel more comfortable about not getting pricked. On top of that, your low-end breasts make easy targets, but I've seen you fight and know you probably like that..."

Kat raised an eyebrow and said, "That was kind of weak Sue. I'd argue the first is probably a compliment."

Sue winced. "Look, this is spur of the moment type things. I gotta catch a good taunt where I can. I don't just keep a running list of everything I think up. I say em as they come."

Chapter 505: Trying to Fit In

"Ok, I'm on my way back" said Kamiko shouting from across the rat.

"Is it good news!" Sue sent back.

"Honestly... no!" shouted Kamiko in return.

Kat frowned at that. *I wonder what the issue is. She was able to get back fine, and she's yelling without a care so it doesn't sound like rats are the problem... or if they are just the little ones.*

Still, there was nothing to do but wait, so that's what she did. It only took a minute and Kamiko was dropping down beside them. "Hoooo, that was interesting. Even I had to be a little careful of my horns as I was exploring. It wasn't easy" said Kamiko

"Can we even follow that path? If you struggle won't we" said Sue

Kamiko sighed and nodded, "Yeah that's pretty much exactly the issue. See, the rat, that's fine, a little tight, but I'm sure you could both get over it. The problem is the exit for this room. It's a crawlspace that's only just barely big enough for me to fit with my head up looking forward. Neither of you two would be able to manage it. Your horns are longer then mine... and well... Sue's..." Kamiko ran her hand along Sue's frame.

"I know this jacket is a little bulky but I feel like I should take offence" said Sue with a wink.

Kat bit her lip not willing to rise to that bait. "Well, what do you think Kamiko? Could we?"

Kamiko winced a little and wrapped her tail around her arm. "It depends really. I'd wager that it's possible. Despite how... generous Sue's breasts and behind are they can be squished a bit. The real issue is the horns for both of you. It makes crawling and watching where you're going an issue.

"If you were willing to just keep your head looking at the ground and just sort of... going with the tunnel and having me call out turns and stuff... we would fit. The issue then is that I'm not sure if the tunnel gets smaller or if we are likely to run into rats or something. We won't exactly have room to move around if an issue arises. I think it really just makes it a matter of if we want to take the risk"

Sue sighed hearing this. "I feel like I should say I'm against this on principal, but really staring at your underwear would be considered a win for many" Sue said with a smirk.

Kamiko grinned back. "Oh? Well I suppose you might be able to enjoy that if you can stop looking at the ground. I wasn't aware your horns were that sharp."

Sue grimaced realising the mistake she'd made. "Ah"

Kamiko nodded, "Yes, 'ah' the other issue is the matter of ordering. I have to go first because I'm the only one who can see properly in there. Then who goes next? Sue probably so she can shield me... but then Kat is wasting away at the back. If we need to get into combat when we exit the tunnel Kat really

needs to be there. And Sue jumping out, perhaps into combat, so that Kat can help properly will take time..."

"Yeah this ain't looking great chief" said Sue "Do we need to go digging through ice again? I don't mind chillin my buns a bit while that happens again but... I'm not saying we have to turn back."

Kamiko raised an eyebrow. "You're ok with the risk?"

Sue shrugged, "Look Kams, seeing you both beat up this giant rat. Terrifying. But also a little cool. I watched the resident musclebrain" Sue gestured at Kat as she kept talking, "jump on the rats tail to try and make sure it wouldn't hurt you. I trust that you'll keep me safe if worse comes to worst. So... I guess what I'm saying is... what are the odds we get attacked straight away?"

Kamiko bit her lip and looked over at Kat who just shrugged. *How should I know?* "I guess... hmmm..." Kamiko rolled her tongue around her mouth, letting it poke out a bit to wet her lips. "I think the chances are low. This is the giant rats are after all. It's territory. I think the little cave would have either been full up or it will be completely empty like it seems. So... I'd say it's likely to be safe. And if the worst case happens, I can freeze everything in front of me and we can back out. It might be a little hard but we can manage, I'm sure."

"Well, it sounds good to me" said Kat, "thoughts Sue?"

Sue just sighed and nodded before starting to climb up the rat. Kamiko jumped up after her, passing Sue who'd just grabbed onto the rat from the ground. Kat waited for last and made sure they were both ahead of her. When Sue got to the top of the rat, there was a bit of tension. She had to really push herself down into the rats fur to make sure that she didn't get stuck on the low hanging ceiling.

Kat was less careful, and when she made it to the top, she felt her horns catch on it. Some part of her wanted to just lean forward, to see if she could scrape through the rock with her neck in a show of strength. But quickly the more sensible part informed her doing that was likely to end with rocks falling down the back of her outfit.

So she took a step down, just enough to get her horns free, before following over. The next issue was getting down. It was clear now why Kamiko had taken so long. It was one thing to just go down, but the small exit the rat was blocking required you to be lying down. Kamiko had to do an odd sort of repositioning where she made herself flat horizontally against the rat and lowered herself using right side to carefully push herself down. She was close enough to the wall that it held her in place against the rat.

Sue was having a bit of trouble. It was clear she had just been planning to climb down head first, which still would have been an issue, but now she was trying to correct. The issue of course being that her width was much larger than Kamiko's so as she moved the jacket could be heard scraping against the wall. Unlike Kamiko who pressed herself into the rat and carefully slid, Sue had to make her changes in short jerks of movement as she forced herself into position and then downwards.

Kamiko still slid slowly going with gravity, Sue had to fight against being completely stuck. Kat took lessons from both of these making sure that her wings weren't just closed against her back, but FLAT. She stretched them out as far as they went and pulled them in close. She let her tail snake straight 'down' between her legs so that it wouldn't be sticking out too much as she moved.

Once that was all done she kept her head flat against the rat so her horns wouldn't catch on anything and it was easy to get down. She actually managed to do so well she had to wait for Sue. Still, with a bit of patience and jostling they made it.

Kamiko of course hit the ground first, she then managed to bend herself practically around the corner that was the entrance to the small cave. Kat wasn't entirely sure a human could bend like that, especially when it got time to pull her legs in, and Kat would swear they bent a little to the side as well to make it through.

Sue went next, and it was very clear that it wasn't going to be easy. She just barely fit. If for Kamiko it was an uncomfortable situation, for Sue it was just shy of impossible. Her breasts combined with the jacket filled the entire cave up forcing her to put her arms forward and pull herself along rather than Kamiko who was able to actually use her elbows a bit. Sue's back end was just as hard a fit and Kat was determined to help out once she got down there.

So it was a good thing when the third and final member of the band entered the cave it was very smooth. Kat was able to squeeze in pretty easy, with her wings being the biggest issue. She decide to wrap them around her front, and was thanking the hells that they were so smooth so that it didn't hurt her as she dragged them along. If she'd realised it was going to be like this, Kat would have probably taken off her outfit and wrapped her wings under it... of course, if she thought it through slightly more she'd realise her wings could phase through it and fix it in transit.

Chapter 506: Secret Tunnel

"Hey Kat, you enjoying the few back there?" asked Sue 'innocently' to try and take her mind off how hard it was to move through this tunnel. Super strength was nice, but when you had basically no leverage it was still a challenge to use.

"Sue. I'm looking at the same dirt you just past over. I can safely say I'm finding it thoroughly mediocre" Kat said in reply, trying not to be too derogatory about it. Just the fact Sue was taking the time to distract them from the task with something was nice.

"Yeah... I always wanted to use that line you know? I haven't gone on any Contracts with multiple people yet or gone on a proper expedition. I did also imagine the scenario happening with a ladder and not a tunnel I can barely squeeze through. Plus the jacket probably covers everything saucy anyway. I had to take the chance though. Who knows when the next chance I'll have will be?" said Sue

"I can empathise" said Kamiko from the front, "there are a few things I've always wanted to say to people as well, so I don't begrudge you taking the chance"

"Oh, like you can talk. You can still see" said Sue with absolutely no bite whatsoever, clearly trying to fill the silence.

For that's what it was. They'd been crawling for about five minutes now through a few turns, and one section they really had to squeeze through that was an S curve. None of them were having a good time, and Kat was very glad her wings could tough out being dragged along the ground underneath her.

"Well what type of Contracts have you done Sue?" asked Kat trying to come up with something they could all chat about.

"Oh you two do NOT want to hear about my escapades. I'm sure you're both off slaying monsters and saving towns. I mostly get called on to have sex. Don't get me wrong, I love it. Easiest embers of my life, but I know you pair well enough now that I'd get no enjoyment chatting about the sordid details.

"Kamiko's reactions are great, but I can't SEE them at the moment so all I'd be doing is embarrassing her, and annoying you because you'd think, rightly so I suppose, that I'm picking on her. Your not much better though Kat, because you'd probably just say, 'that really should be private' or 'do you really feel like sharing that' and you know what? I actually do.

"I have no shame about it and if the person I'm chatting with can tell me of their own sexcapades that's even better... but neither of you can so... it'd just be my talking about my ass for a while. Though... there was that one time I ended up as a guys date to a fancy dress party.

"No idea why the dude couldn't get a real date. He was a wizard of course, tonnes of magic power and really precises with his work. Managed to summon me specifically because a friend of his had actually summoned me for the night before. Anyway, so this guy summons me, he's got thick robes on and a staff, and he tells me to be his date.

"So, I'm thinking, 'I can do this. Standard wizard youth, probably gangly, bunch of acne, and no social skills. Just stand there on his arm and smile like you have something important in mind if he's at a wizard function, or like all you've got is hot air if it's a noble gala' so I accept the Contract ready to do a good job.

"Crazy fucker takes me out dress shopping. So, I'm already calling this a win. I get a great outfit, that's a bit silly so that it can hide my wings and horns without it being obvious I'm hiding something in the outfit... and then we get ready.

"Dude comes out in a suit that I swear must have been painted on. Abbs for days showing through this shirt that's practically screaming at the seams, and you know what... I freak out a little. This decent guy, with a more then decent bod has summoned me for a date. Now all of a sudden, my pride is on the line here.

"Now, I'm not just some gangly wizards date. Now I'm the date of what has to be the hottest wizard in the city with a personality to match. And well... you guys have actually talked to me so I'm out of my element here. Now I need to limit my crass jokes, and actually be a good date for this guy.

"I try my best. I get him to laugh at a few jokes that I was surprised passed muster. I got him included with quite a few nobles that were higher rank then he was with my charms. I lead him all around the venue, working my ass off the whole night to do the best work I could. Probably the most effort I've ever put into a Contract.

"So things are going great. The nights winding down. He picks up that other wizard, you know the friend who summoned me first? I'm thinking this is my reward. His friend isn't the best looking but at least he cared. Didn't dead fish you... no, I guess you have no idea. Anyway, point is the guy tried, so I'm thinking things are going REALLY well for little ol' me.

"Nope. Turns out there both gay. That first wizard who summoned me? He was in the closet and wanted proof. Apparently, I was that proof. If that wasn't a big enough blow, the jacked guy who summoned me

only did it as a favour to the first wizard because he didn't want to be outed as the wizard who summoned me's partner.

"Do you know how big of a blow to the gut that is Kat? Especially because it wasn't even one of the realms where being gay was outlawed or even uncommon. It was super common because that world has a special plant that lets men create children together. Pretty rare, and no female version, but it made the condition very acceptable amongst the nobility.

"And I. I WAS THE ONE who proved that first wizard he was gay. Kept the outfit though. It was great quality, and it wasn't the worst date I've ever been on. I'd give it a solid 6/10 summoning." Said Sue.

Kat was stunned. She only kept moving because it was automatic by now. *What the hell do you say to that? I really... I have no idea. I don't even know where to start with that.* "Is that... common?" asked Kat struggling for something to say, but as soon as she said it, she knew she'd made a mistake.

Sue took in a deep breath before exhaling. "That is some consolation actually. I'm not the first Succubus this has happened to and I sure as heck won't be the last. Apparently it's pretty common for gay men to try and prove to themselves they ain't gay by getting a Succubus to perform for their first time. Inevitably it doesn't work, they realise it's just weird and well... who knows what happens after that. I know one girl, acquaintance of mine, not really a friend, she slept with this guy four times before he decided he was gay. Not sure if she's that good in bed, or if he was just that stupid." Explained Sue

"I'd never heard of that" said Kamiko "I guess none of my family really goes for those types of missions though..."

"Really nobody in your whole family?" said Sue "Not even that one weird uncle or aunt nobody likes to talk to at the family reunions?"

Kamiko shrugged, though nobody could actually see it. Realising this she let out a sigh before saying "Eh, we don't really have that much to do with the rest of our family. Maybe? As far as I know nobody takes those jobs, but I was much longer when I last asked so I'm not sure if I'd have been told. Oh, knowing my Mom she'd have told me in a heartbeat, but I can't remember who I asked. Dad would never tell me, heck he wouldn't tell me anything now. Thinks I don't know how kids get made"

"It's pretty common in my family" said Sue "My Dad likes to say 'we've got someone for everyone' in the family because we've got most of the sexualities all within like on generation. Not quite true because we don't have anyone that's Ace or the like, still, for people looking we do have everyone."

"I can understand that" said Kamiko "We have a decent mix of sexuality in my family as well. Though for some reason my Mom likes to joke that I'm gay. Not sure why she does it or how she manages because I'm certainly straight."

Sue shrugged, then realising the same thing Kamiko did, which was that nobody could see it and the rustling didn't sound different to just dragging herself along. "No idea on that one. My family doesn't really have that issue. It's VERY obvious where there tastes lie."

Chapter 507: Sue chats about LIFE

The girls lapsed back into silence after that. Still, it didn't last too long. Ten minutes later, Sue was the first to speak again. "You guys ever just think about life?"

"Not really" said Kamiko "It's interesting enough without thinking about it too deeply. I enjoy my life, and even though it can be rough sometimes, it never stays an issue. I think life just sort of is, so I don't really meditate on it or anything"

"Aah haa... that was a deeper answer than I was expecting. I mean, I know what I asked but I didn't quite mean like that... um... what about you Kat?" asked Sue

"Well, I'm a nondem. Did I mention that? Anyway I'm a nondem so I've had to question everything recently. Like... souls exist. It's not the most surprising thing, but the system just casually threw that one in a while back. Oh and that resurrection, while perhaps rare, is still common enough that they have standard protocol for it which is all kinds of strange.

"On top of that is obviously turning into a demon. We aren't looked fondly upon in my world's culture so it was a little bit of a shock. The fact that my best friend didn't really care much helped. I also didn't really feel any different and the change was in a few stages so I had time to adjust but... yeah I've been thinking about life a lot" explained Kat.

"Shit clearly I asked the wrong pair. You've both done way more thinking than I have. Granted I was mostly using these last few minutes of silence for it but still" said Sue with a pout Kat was pretty sure she could hear somehow.

"Well, you should share anyway" said Kamiko "It'll keep things interesting. If I'd known the tunnel was so long, I'd have recommended the ice"

"Gee, well... it ain't as fancy as you both but I've been thinking I never want to do this again" said Sue, pausing for a second. "Ok that might have come out wrong. I don't want to do anything quite so... shit now I can't think of a word that's not an inuendo. I'm trying for you to hear you know?"

"Whatever. So I don't want to do anything quite as dirty as crawling on my hands and knees through a rat infested tunnel again. I may have complained a bit at the start, mostly because I realised what I'd agreed to, but I still wanted a bit of an adventure I guess.

"I get very samey Contracts. Sure they're good fun and I'd do them even if it wasn't something the system forced me to do, but I wanted to do something different. Didn't realise I'd get thrown into a rat cave, but still, I did want a bit of adventure.

"Honestly this has been too much adventure. Give me a nice clean city. Heck, scratch that, I'll even take barely acceptable medieval city with poor cleaning standards. I'm so wound up even though this tunnel should be safe. I feel like I'm about to get shanked, even though I had to drop my barrier to keep my energy up I can't help but feel like I NEED it on.

"Also, this whole thing has been kinda gross. Rat corpses everywhere, and I just don't think I'm really prepared to deal with this you know? Maybe if I had to kill one big monster out in the woods it wouldn't be so bad but trapped in here with the remains is just... yuck. So... yeah. Guess I just wanted to get that off my ample chest. Didn't need any more weight on it"

"I think that's very cool of yourself to admit Sue" said Kamiko sweetly, "knowing what you like and dislike is sometimes harder to pin down than people think. Doing something just because it's expected is very common"

"Oh don't talk like you have ancient sage wisdom Kam, I'm older than you, I'm twenty three and I bet you ain't even hit two decades... Kat I could go either way on" said Sue

"I'm seventeen," said Kat

Sue coughed a bit upon hearing that. "S-seventeen? Oh... I um... thought you were a bit older than that. I was thinking eighteen nineteen. Welp, too late now I've already made most of the worst jokes I could so it's too late to save you from that. Makes your decision not to be horny a stranger one though"

"Why is that?" asked Kat confused

"Oh dear me she doesn't even know. Kam... be a dear and it explain it please, I feel dirty just thinking about how I'd answer it and well... now I'm not sure I want to answer it properly you know?" said Sue

Kamiko smiled at the front of the line, "Oh no Sue, you've gotten yourself into this mess you can get out of it. Maybe if you call me Kamiko, or at least Kami I'll assist..."

"If you weren't so much faster crawling then me, I'd give you a good slap for that Kam" said Sue "Fine. Kat, most demons get serious urges when they are teenagers... though I guess you might not since you weren't always a demon... but I think that should only make it worse. Now that you are a demon you should be getting like half a decades worth of horny all at once"

"Is that a real thing?" asked Kamiko "I've never heard my mother mention it..."

Sue shrugged though nobody could see it and said, "I really don't know. It's something I've heard, and being demons and all it tends to be true, or at least mostly true. How do you feel about those types of things Kat? Anyone make you hot under the collar?"

"Nope" said Kat easily "I don't think I've ever really looked at anyone like that. My demonic energy tried to tell me I actually did like some boy from school but I didn't even remember his name before the energy brought it up let alone feel any attraction to him"

"Nobody?" asked Sue "If I say Precious Treasure what comes to mind?" when Sue said the words 'precious treasure' something strange happened, it was like she was speaking three things at once, all overlapping and the meaning blurring to mean something different to what she seemed to say.

Kat was confused for a second before a flash of brown hair and a pair of glasses phased through her mind. "I didn't see anyone," said Kat

Sue gasped at that. "You did see SOMETHING though didn't you Kat? I didn't say it wouldn't be a person... so what did you see?"

Kat bit her lip and decided to ignore the implications by saying "Nothing distinct, just a flash of brown for some reason"

"Oh? That's all?" said Sue in a teasing manner but decided not to push it. She decided if Kat wanted to be that blind it wasn't Sue's job to beat the answer into her. "Well what about you Kamiko?"

Kamiko shook her head, and the others could here the sound of her horns scarping the ceiling a bit when she did so. "I saw a flash of my family but that's it."

"Damn I guess you really haven't found anyone have you Kam" said Sue

"I didn't exactly have a lot of friends during my academic years. Kat is sorta my first one..." said Kamiko reluctantly.

"Oh" said Sue. Thirty seconds past with nobody saying anything, until Sue spoke up again and said, "You know what... c-count me among that number Kamiko. I may not be a good friend, heck I'm clearly not good friend material for you but... well... if fighting a giant rat together doesn't make us friends, a bit of shared adventure well... I don't know what does. If you really need something... hopefully for my sanity it's relationship or bedroom advice, come chat with me or something. You too Kat."

"Thanks Sue, that means a lot" said Kamiko quietly

"Indeed, thanks Sue, though I'm a bit better of then Kamiko" not willing to point out that while it was technically true, she wasn't much better, and Kamiko's larger family might arguably put her ahead. Kat only had five people she would consider close, Kamiko had more sisters then that.

"Don't mention it. Seriously don't. I need to mock you guys a bunch now to balance out how cheesy that all was. Hmm, I don't really want to say anything mean about Kamiko now though. Hey Kat um... enjoying the view back there?"

"You've used that one, and my answer is the same as before. The ground is just as fascinating as when you looked at it before" said Kat

"Ah, but now it has dust trails from my tits scraping against it, so it's at least twice as entertaining for you I'm sure" said Sue somewhat shakily

"How does that apply to you and Kamiko then?" asked Kat

Sue groaned. "I'll find something proper to insult you with, just you wait Kat. It'll sneak up on you, like a ninja in the night, or a scorned lover that wants hot revenge sex. If it's me, I'd hope for the second one, but I suppose you'd rather fight the ninja"

"Every time" said Kat

Chapter 508: The Rat's Go Marching

"Hold up guys" said Kamiko suddenly. "I think I've found something weird..."

"Funny haha weird or oh that's kinda bad weird? Perhaps even oh dear god no weird, or is it just weird weird" shot Sue.

Kamiko hummed in thought as she tried to answer Sue's silly question anyway. "Maybe a bit of weird weird mixed with oh that's kinda bad weird. I found the rats..."

"That's not weird" said Sue without hesitation

"... except there all marching in formation" finished Kamiko

"I'm sorry what? Did you say in formation?" asked Sue

"Yes. I don't really know what to make of it... oh and they are pretty far below us, the exit for our whole is in the ceiling" answered Kamiko

"That doesn't sound like swarm rat behaviour at all," said Sue. "I know they can act together but even the smartest swarm rat leader is still an animal. I don't think they'd even know what marching is, let alone be capable of forcing the others to follow along. From what little I know about hiveminds I know that the central mind, if there is one, has to have a really clear picture of what it wants to get the swarm to respond.

"That's why things like attack and move here or there are so easy. It's simple to imagine and doesn't require a tonne of thought. Just gotta point and say go. But... to march, not just individually but... they are in sync right?" Kamiko nodded, "Yeah that's gotta take some real smarts. I... I don't know that we're dealing with swarm rats anymore"

"Should we turn back? This sort of information might change everything." said Kat/

Sue bit her lip but refrained from answering. This was a more serious situation now and even though she DID want to leave now that things seemed to be more dangerous, it was likely that leaving things as is would be dangerous as well in the long term.

"I'm torn," said Kamiko, "looking at this, it's very clear that something strange is happening. Swarm rats can't do this. I don't want to just leave this as it stands. I think we should try and sort it out to ensure that nothing worse happens...

"On the other hand, this might be too dangerous for us. We have no idea what really created this infestation, and if they aren't just swarm rats, the range for mutations is larger. I thought the Giant Rat we fought was pretty strange, but still within the limits of what I'd have expected. Now that's all out the window.

"On the other hand, or tail maybe? Anyway, the third point to make is that I'm not sure anyone else could get here. Stone certainly couldn't make his way through, and I'm not sure if he'd be able to shift the stone around here. I didn't notice before but it's a different colour so it might not be safe to move.

"Anyone other than Stone might have a worse time. While Sue is a little or well, a LOT stacked up top and bottom none of us have particularly wide shoulders, so we can move our arms around with a reasonable amount of difficulty. If they sent any miners down here, they might be too wide to fit down the tunnel, then we'd be called back, or maybe they'd bring in someone else. If they did have to get someone else that's more delays.

"Adding to that, the fact that these rats are just casually marching and haven't noticed us talking makes me wonder how deadly the final boss might be. Adding on to that, is that while these might not be swarm rats, on average they aren't any stronger. Sue could take on a whole pack by herself if she really needed to. These things are weak. Cannon fodder. They might as well just be normal rats still. So... I wonder if it's worth pushing forward."

"Without sounding too cocky, I'm happy to continue. I'm not advocating for it though," said Kat. "I am much safer than you all. Worst comes to worst, I think we could block off a passage with our demonic fire and just leave, but I'm not risking injury in the same way you both are. Even getting back up to this little cavern. I can fly up here, but I'd have to help you both. It seems risky, but I'm certainly willing"

"Thought," said Sue "We're evaluating the risk to ourselves versus leaving the rats so far... but what about the fact whatever is controlling the rats might not have noticed we're here yet? The fact that rats are marching doesn't mean they know. Simply showing that someone knows about the swarm rats could be a problem. What were the ones you cleared out like? Organised at all?"

Kat spoke up to answer, "No, they might as well have been normal rats. The little gem they had was the only thing that made us think they were special. I mean, sure we know now they obviously are, but they didn't have increased intelligence or durability or anything. We just cut up a bunch of them with Kamiko's weapon and my nails"

"Fuck it, let's go attack them" said Sue

"What? Sue? You're advocating for this?" asked Kamiko

Sue nodded, "Yeah. You know what? I didn't just crawl through a tunnel that requires me to compress my tits against hard stone for the past half an hour just to turn back. This is a risk, but I trust you pair to get me out of it alive if it's at all possible. I'm not scared of the rats, and maybe we should be scared of what's at the end, but I do know we aren't going to die. The mines might not be good for teleportation, but the teleportation itself works. It's the rocks in the mines that might not survive. Let's pucker up and go for it"

Kamiko bit her lip. She'd actually been leaning towards backing out at this point. Seeing as how the rats would find them if they attacked, it didn't seem worth it. Still, with the other two confident enough to continue on, Kamiko didn't want to be a dissenting voice. "Should we just attack or should we try and sneak?"

"What do you see?" asked Kat "Is there space to sneak around? I assume they're covering the floor. Is there like... a ledge or something we could camp out on? I'm not sure I can fly with two people so we'd have to find space to sneak around or something..."

Kamiko shook her head. "No, now that you mention it, there's nothing. The rats take up the whole floor. If we go in, we have to just commit to an attack. Probably commit to either going all the way to the end or retreating... Wait! How is Stone supposed to come pick us up if he can't fit through the tunnel?!"

That threw a dampening on their mood. The knowledge that they should have brought a watch, or that Stone might not be able to tell them when to knock off. "I better be getting extra pay if we stay on late. Just because I'm willing to keep going doesn't mean I've suddenly lost a chunk of brain cells"

"Well while you have those brain cells," said Kamiko, "do you want to fight with me? Kat can't jump down without you also exiting the tunnel."

"It's just rats right?" asked Sue

"Yes" said Kamiko

"Alright I'll do it. I'll just stomp the buggers I guess." Said Sue

"Ok, follow behind me then" said Kamiko as she pushed herself forward and into the fray. She started to carve up rats instantly as soon as she hit the ground. Sue on the other hand, had a good deal more difficulty getting down, as the opening was slightly smaller than the rest of the tunnel.

Still, even with Rank 1 super strength it was enough to squash herself down just a bit more to escape out into the far more open tunnel. Those extra few seconds it took though, were enough for Kamiko to basically finish slaughtering the entire rat brigade.

"That's strange" said Kamiko

"Why?" said Sue kicking away some blood heading for her shoes.

"They didn't react at all," said Kamiko "even the normal rats at least flinch out of the way... these ones... it was like they didn't even feel it..."

At this point Kat managed to jump down, though her wings were all too willing to embrace their newfound freedom, so she glided down slowly. Once Kat hit the ground she gave herself a large stretch, letting her wings flare to their maximum.

"Showing off are we Kat?" asked Sue

Kat just waved the other girl off. "No, it just feels right. I don't think I can pull a muscle, or at least, not permanently because of my regen but my wings just did not feel right wrapped around me, I need to stretch them out," Kat continued stretching she spoke, "Still ignore me. What's this about the rats?"

Chapter 509: A Devastating Blow

"They didn't react at all, Kat. No flinching, no retaliation, they didn't even deviate from their marching path as the other rats around them were killed. The most reaction I saw was one rat walked around a particular large chunk of another rat I'd cut up, but it just moved around it then got into formation again. This can't be normal"

"But what does it mean?" asked Kat

"I really have no idea. I don't think I've ever seen a monster fail to react at all to an attack. Even hiveminds will retaliate against an irritant, or threat reflexively. It seems a lot more like mind control" explained Kamiko

"That's a thing?" asked Kat

Sue nodded, "Yeah, decently common Succubus ability, but it's not as great as it sounds. It only really works on things that are so much weaker than you, you could just kill them with default physical strength levels. If you are Kamiko had it, it probably wouldn't even work on me. You have to MAJORLY outclass someone or destroy their mind first and puppet their body"

"That's... a little disturbing" said Kat

Sue shrugged. "Look, some consensual mind control is HOT. I studied this fairly extensively. Sadly, it doesn't really translate to real life. It just doesn't take. Like... it's not even a matter of breaking out easily, it would more than likely just not work. Not only do you need to be a lot stronger, it doesn't work well against demons because our demonic energy fights against it automatically.

"Best you can get is using it on... animals..." Sue trailed off at the end and looked quizzically down at the rats Kamiko had killed.

"Could a demon have done this?" Sue asked, voicing the question now on everyone's mind.

I have no idea, this isn't really my realm of expertise. Kat looked over to Kamiko with a shrug, hoping she had a better idea. "I doubt it..." said Kamiko, not entirely certain of her answer, "I assume that Stone has ways to know if a demon came down here without permission. Plus, this is a new area of the mine isn't it? How did the caves start before the mineshaft if it was demon created"

"Stone could probably do something like this if he wanted" said Sue

"Yes, but what would be the point? He's more than strong enough to laugh off attacks from rats like these. It's no real threat to him, he has much deadlier ways of dealing with people surely..." said Kamiko hesitantly

Sue nodded, and said, "Yeah there is that. I know he could do some crazy shit if he really wanted to. Likes to say he retired to the mines, but if he wanted he could break the whole tunnel system in a couple of seconds"

Kat felt herself pale just slightly at that thought. *Damn, it really is something else to picture that. I KNOW Stone, and I can believe it easily. Shit, no wonder back on Earth we had horror stories of demons. If just one or two powerful ones decide to mess things up they can hardly be stopped. I wonder if someone actually is the source of those rumours on Earth.

Actually, I wonder what stories are real? The multiverse is large, presumably, and I know some of those artifacts I saw in Boss' warehouse were at least passingly familiar. I don't know if it's infinite. I guess if it IS infinite the stories have to exist because of that old monkeys and typewriters proverb. Wait. I'm getting distracted.*

"So what happens now? Do we charge on in? Will they notice the rat group missing?" asked Kat

"We've committed now. I'd had to be the kind of person that likes pulling out. Such a waste" said Sue

Kamiko's eye twitched very slightly but she nodded along with Sue before saying, "Would you like to try and take on the next set of rats? They aren't strong at all. Just if you want to. It's no trouble for us"

Sue bit her lip and twirled around before finishing with a bounce. Presumably this was to induce movement in her tits, but the large oversized jacket she was still wearing meant nobody saw anything impressive. Sue seemed to realise this when she glanced down for a split second and sighing. "You know what. Getting a chance to smash would be great right about now" said Sue before licking her lips.

Kamiko raised an eyebrow and Sue summoned a massive maul in response. It had a long silvery metal pole nearly as thick as Sue's arm that she could only barely get her fingers around, the pole section of the maul had carefully carved vines running along the side leading up to the top which 'bloomed' into the double sided hammer head with each having a flower at the base with the hammer section growing out of it.

Taking that as acceptance, the three started off down the corridor with Sue in front. She kept it to a light jog because her maul was actually a bit heavy for her. It wasn't really designed to be carried while running, it was something she could conjure up after all. Still, she didn't want to be surprised so she carried it at the ready for whatever came next.

It was ten minutes later that the next army of rats marched towards them. They didn't falter in their steps for even a split second upon 'seeing' the three demons. The rats simply marched right up to Sue who slammed her maul down into the centre of the group cracking the stone nearby and destroying the floor to a degree Kat wasn't even sure she could manage.

Holy shit! Sue wasn't done though, her maul bounced back up and she used that as a chance to sweep it to the side striking cleanly on the right wall, cracking that too, before bouncing the other way and clearing out the rest of the rats before she hit the left wall. Sue was breathing heavily at this point, her arms shaking just slightly as she let the maul vanish. "That felt pretty good."

"H-h-how?!" managed Kat "How did you get so much power out of it?"

Sue grinned cheekily not intending to answer the question but Kamiko stepped in, recognising the process, "It's filled with mercury, or some other similar metal"

"What?" asked Kat

"Booooo, ruin my fun will you" said Sue with her tongue sticking out.

"You can explain it if you want?" said Kamiko innocently, something she did very well

"Fine, guess I can at least have that little droplet of joy" said Sue "Right, so the basic principle is to keep this thing both balanced, and really deadly, the inside is filled with liquid metal. It IS mercury because I'm not really strong enough to use it properly with any of the heavier stuff.

"It does make it weaker structurally, but for a demon made weapon structural integrity is a joke. We've got so many ways to add durability that it's not even funny. The trade off is completely worth it. It does make the maul into even more of a blunt instrument because you can't really hold back with it.

"Every strike is like blowing your entire load. You obliterate everything you hit. The compound strikes from the initial impact, and then the mercury inside does a tonne of damage to anything that's nearby. With even my Rank 1 strength I can do a lot of damage... but that's all.

"I have no finesse with it. It's just not designed for it unless you're MUCH better than I am. Changing directions is nearly impossible once the maul gets going. You have to move with it, or let it hit the target and... well... it has two settings. Mush, and fine mist. Oh sure, you could both stand up to hit because you're strong enough, but it'd be potentially deadly to Kamiko at least if it wasn't such a slow weapon."

Kamiko nodded, "Yes, this sort of maul is one of the weapons Elmony tried once upon a time. They're truly devastating, and because you can upgrade the internal metal past mercury so that you can add weight to it without sacrificing striking power it scales much better than normal blunt weapons.

"While bladed ones can keep up using speed or technique, these mauls are for people with minimal training and the need to hit things really hard" said Kamiko

"Yup, I give anything I want a hard pounding, and while normally they can't take it, the few that do are keepers." Said Sue wiggling her eyebrows.

*Truly a deadly weapon. If I wasn't already committed to the fans because of my promise to Grace and the fact I have a nice set courtesy of Thyme, I think I'd consider this really heavily. It's simple, effective, and if I need to deal less damage I could probably just use my fists. I don't even care if they get a bit dirty

like Sue probably does, so it seems like one of my best options... though wait. I don't think Grace would agree with that. She didn't list them... I wonder why? Is my personality compatible but not my body?*

Chapter 510: The Rat Guard

Continuing onward the thing that was most noticeable was the size of the tunnel. It was around the same height as the ones the miners had dug out, and was even wider. It was just shy of large enough for that giant rat to fit comfortably, but with some effort it could traverse it certainly... and that was something weighing on Kat's mind.

What can we do if we run into more of those things? I don't know how fast they potentially are so blasting some demonic fire at them and running might not be the safest bet. What else can we really do though? Still... is it really that likely we'll find more?

Kat bit her lips as she looked around the cave. Kamiko and Sue didn't seem to notice her distress, and while she was hiding it well, Kat knew what it really meant was they hadn't quite figured out the implications. *I just don't know. Are these tunnels naturally occurring?*

Kat took a glance over at the stone on the walls and tried to see if there was anything denoting the path as man-made. The problem was she had no experience in this area. The mines were easy for they contained mostly straight paths that were all a uniform width. This tunnel changed width very slightly as it continued and wasn't afraid to snake around occasionally. Still, Kat had a feeling the size of it was just a bit too uniform to be natural.

I don't like this at all... Just as Kat's thoughts started to turn in a dark direction another rat patrol wandered in. Kamiko just gestured for Sue, who took the chance to vent a bit more frustration clearing out the rats in no time flat.

See, this is just too easy. Surely whatever is at the end of this isn't incompetent... wait. They could be insane. "Hey Kamiko, what are the chances that we find someone or something corrupted by demonic energy at the end of this tunnel" asked Kat

Sue dismissed her hammer and let the other two pass her before speaking up in Kamiko's place, "I see your horns don't take up much space in your skull Kat. That sounds pretty plausible to me"

Kamiko, deciding to answer the question addressed to her anyway said, "I'm not sure I agree with Sue. While it does seem likely on the surface it's rather hard to get to the Hub. Plus, it's pretty pointless because of the demonic energy in the air. It's not an instant death sentence or anything but you wouldn't last long. Still, I can agree that something seems likely"

"So... if that's the case..." said Kat, "what do we do if we find a person?"

Kamiko shook her head sadly, "The only answer is death I'm afraid."

"Really?" asked Kat, not truly surprised by the answer.

"Indeed Kat. It's a sad thing but as soon as the corruption starts it's really just the beginning of the end. Never once has anyone ever been saved. It's an ongoing project that Mom doesn't like to participate in. I've heard some things. They are willing to do some rather disturbing things in their quest to find a solution. Luckily, they don't need to forcefully corrupt anyone to get more test subjects..."

"But they have plenty anyway. They'll go out and bring in some that can be easily subdued and run them through a batter of tests. Most of the ones nowadays don't even have any scientific basis anymore. We've tried everything that makes sense, so we've been trying things that don't as well. Demons truly want this issue solved Kat. Despite the power it gives us to keep it without a cure, knowing how to reverse demonic corruption is a long sought-after goal." Said Kamiko sadly.

"It's true" said Sue joining in. "Everyone's heard of it at one time or another. The process starts quickly. If you're showing symptoms, it's too late. Now, everyone has a little bit of resistance to pure demonic energy. The stuff that corrupts. If you get just a little bit in your system sometimes it can pass through with no trouble. You can't use it obviously, but it's possible to expel with time.

"Once the threshold is passed though... nothing comes back. It's been like that for as long as we can remember, and testing has been going on just a long. There is no mercy for the corrupted because there is no record of any of them keeping their minds, and no record of anyone being cured."

Kamiko hopped in again, "Oh, and do try not to get too complacent. You're natural demonic energy you expel mostly just by existence won't easily corrupt anything but it still potentially can"

"Wait... should I be worried about the people I live with?" asked Kat, now that the idea had been brought up.

Kamiko shook her head quickly. "No, not casually anyway. You'd have to inject them with your energy to cause issues. Demonic energy disperses pretty quickly into the universe and even if it doesn't, attuned energy takes longer to lose its... flavour for lack of a better word."

"What do you mean by flavour?" asked Kat

Sue couldn't resist the chance, "Well everyone has a unique taste of course! Some are musky, while a few are even sweet. It's the same with demonic energy. It keeps a little bit of you along for the ride. A little bit of intent. Unless a bunch of your demonic energy is injected into someone that bit of intent prevents it going wild and corrupting people so you don't have to worry about accidentally ravishing people. They can take it as long as you go in slowly"

Kat frowned at Sue, but decided to believe she was just trying to lighten the topic and not dismiss it. "So I'm really not likely to have issues regarding it?"

Sue laughed, and spoke up quickly, "Oh yes. Don't worry. Plenty of Incubus inject their 'essence' regularly and that always packs a punch. Imagine what would happen if that caused people problems on the regular. No, it's so hard it's basically impossible to accidentally corrupt something yourself.

"Oh it's pretty easy for them to do it. A bunch of wild energy in an artifact, an obscure ritual that summons demonic energy instead of a demon. Trying to break into the Hub to live here. Plenty of ways for other races to mess it up, but it's much harder for a demon to be the reason. You have to try. It's like one night stands. Getting a few is easy. Having someone stick around after is much harder."

Kat groaned but was thankful enough for the information to not make a comment about it. Just as she was wondering what to say, they rounded a corner and spotted two new rats, clearly guards. They stood at either side of the tunnel in slight alcoves they might have carved out for themselves. They walked on

two legs, and the gem they had on their foreheads was twice as large proportionally, bleeding into their entire face and encircling their eyes but leaving them uncovered.

Kat and Kamiko moved as one. They didn't know how deadly these new rats were and didn't want Sue involved in the fight just yet. Kat took the one on the left and Kamiko the right. The rats were able to react to her presence and sent an attack her way, but Kat was fully focused on the battle and was able to slow her advance so the strike missed.

Following this up she launched into a series of light punches that were blocked with some difficulty. The rat's arm shaking every time it made contact with her fist. Still, it was able to keep up somewhat, making short sharp movements that let the rat block her attacks well. Not wanting to drag things on, Kat slowed slightly, and 'fumbled' a strike. The rat didn't even think twice before trying to drive its claw into Kat's side.

Seeing this as her chance, Kat stepped forward, letting it dig into her stomach as she brought her hand around and took off the rat's head. She was actually at how easily it collapsed. Ripping the claw from her body, she turned around as it healed to find Kamiko dispatching her own rat with the same efficiency.

For Kamiko, she simply unleashed a myriad of cuts across the rat's body that were oozing blood. When she started the fight, unlike Kat, Kamiko watched it take a few swings and blocked them with the edge of her blade, scoring a few cuts and saving herself from damage. The rat's hide hardly helped it at all, so Kamiko stepped things up, swinging her naginata around mercilessly cutting every available surface to her leaving the rat more blood than skin. As Kat turned it was collapsing from blood loss and Kamiko quickly cut off its head just in case to finish the kill.