

DEMONS 51

Chapter 51: If a Stack of Books Falls in an Empty Bookstore, Who Has to Pick it Up?

Rounding the corner, the group found a hall with a shocking number of hairdressers. Four different ones to be exact. Vivian paused and made her way to the side of the hall to get out of everyone way.

"Right well, this is new" said Vivian

"Um is there supposed to be four of them" said Lily

"Nope, there was only two before and I can't rightfully remember which one the bookstore is behind" said Vivian

"It's that one" said Sylvie pointing towards the hairdressers in the back right of the hall. It was past a few other shops and the furthest hairdresser from the group.

"Um, how do you know Sylvie" said Lily

"Vivian said this is new, but only two of them. The two on the left are much newer than the ones of the right and the other one on the left is stuck between two other shops. The one at the back has another hallway if you look closely" said Sylvie. Lily and Vivian looked at Sylvie surprised, while Kat simply nodded and focused on looking for the hallway she'd mentioned.

Yup, I can see it there just past the hairdressers. It's actually pretty noticeable now that I'm looking. Thought Kat as she patted Sylvie on the head for her hard work. **NOvelNext.cOm**

The hallway behind the hairdressers was a well-lit service entrance with a large fire door at the end and lights all across the ceiling. Despite this it still felt dingy, the wall was stacked stone bricks without a covering and the ceiling had a number of pipes running across it near the lights. Towards the back of the hallway right next to the door stood an open shop front with books that almost spilled into the hallway. It seemed that the owner had taken care to keep the fire doors unobstructed, but this resulted in a number of precarious stacks of books lining the stores edge

"Ah, yes just like I remember it" said Vivian beaming.

"Wait this is normal for this store?" said Kat

"Yup its been like this for years, at least a decade I think" said Vivian

"What were you looking for last time" said Kat

"Second-hand textbooks for my university degree" said Vivian

Walking into the store they found a young clerk manning the counter. He was reading an unmarked book and simply waved to acknowledge the groups presence in the store without removing his eyes from the page. Kat found herself a bit wary of the strange stacks of books, her newfound appendages threatened to topple many of them if she turned to quickly or in the wrong way.

Even the tunnels under Minor's place weren't this bad. How do you expect self-respecting demons to fit in here. Plus, why are all the books in stacks? How do you tell half of these apart?

Lily however had other thoughts as she seemed to glide through the stacks of books like they weren't there at all. Vivian

showed similar grace and while it was not to the same graceful extent as Lily, Vivian was more than able to hop from pile to pile as she inspected books. Sylvie was simply small enough that she had room to spare and wandered the store with ease.

It's just me? Am I the one who's crazy? Surely normal people struggle with this right? And Kat was right, the piles were stacked in such a way as to challenge people who enter, they were never intended to stand for long, a gimmick the owner had come up with after finding a number of compelling books by accident, but Kat didn't know this.

Kat let her eyes scan the store in order to limit the amount of movement she'd have to do. What she saw however further reinforced that she had no idea what she was doing. The books in any one pile didn't seem connected to each other and were just as likely to contain a school textbook as a fantasy novel. Despite this the stacks did seem to be group together somehow; adjacent stacks seemed to have the same types of mixed literature.

For example if one stack contained a few business textbooks spread throughout the stack it was almost certain that its neighbours had the same. This continued with fantasy or sci-fi books as well, sticking in their clusters despite the muddled piles. There were a few other books that Kat saw no connection between, but simply assumed there must be something connecting them, as she was no bookworm.

It was just after Kat had finally made some sense of the filing system the shop employed that she spotted Lily. Now this wasn't strange, but it was her hands Kat noticed. They trembled as she hovered between books. Without Kat's new eyes she might not have noticed the difference but there was no excitement in Lily's movements, only hesitation. Lily looked like if she chose the wrong book her arm would be taken instead.

Lily would be so close to placing her hand on a book a number of times before pulling back and shying away. Kat made her way over to her friend, being extremely careful not to topple any of the stacks. Kat stood right next to Lily, clearly within eyeline but she didn't react.

"Hey" said Kat softly. Lily jumped half a metre into the air and spun around, coming awfully close to toppling a few of the nearby books in the process before staring at Kat like a deer in headlights.

"Is everything alright" said Kat.

"Y-yes, everything... is fine" said Lily swallowing

"Lily, you can talk to me about anything you know that right?" said Kat. Lily nodded to Kat but kept her mouth closed.

"Really, I won't hold it against you, no matter what you say" said Kat

"I... I don't know what I'm doing" said Lily finding the dust on the floor fascinating all of a sudden.

"I'm afraid you are going to have to be a bit more specific than that" said Kat

"I, don't know what to do now" said Lily

"Well, right now you need to tell me what's wrong" said Kat firmly

"I just, I don't know what to do with myself now that I've finished school" said Lily

"I don't see how that could cause you to make such a face, surely that can't be all" said Kat

"It's complicated" said Lily

"I'm sure it is" said Kat

"I meant to tell you, I did" said Lily sighing "I'd been putting it off for weeks, I probably should have included this in the birthday note, but I just couldn't. I can't figure out what I'm supposed to do Kat"

"I don't see how that would offend me" said Kat

"Well, I just... I'd planned to go to university, I think. But I can't figure out what to do, and I felt like I had to go. I was hoping to use this as a chance to learn some new things and get away from my parents" said Lily stammering "And look I know that's horrible to say, I mean you didn't have that chance and I'm running away from it. Then all this demon stuff happened and I mean, this has just been so much more important, and like I came here..."

"I came here to look for as many old textbooks as I could the cheap ones and just read them all so that I could find anything at all that I wanted to do, but I can't help but feel that I'm making a horrible mistake" said Lily

Kat brought Lily into a hug, careful not to automatically wrap her tail around Lily. *I can't be seen moving that, and I don't think I want to use my aura here. Lily needs to deal with this herself, or at least ask for help without prompting.*

"I think that's perfectly reasonable Lily. Your parents haven't been terribly nice, but I think going off to university is an admirable idea" said Kat

"But I don't really want to go" said Lily "Its an excuse. I wanted to be away from my parents, and I think for some reason I thought you'd be with me. I doubt that will be the case now" said Lily

"Hey, I can still come with you. I have no idea what I'm supposed to do with myself. Apparently, I'm being payed every time I get summoned. Once I awakened, they said, but now look, still not a cent to my name" said Kat

"I know, I just... I think I'd lose something if I went. If I decided to commit myself to a course that I hated just to get away" said Lily crying into Kat's shoulder

"Why not take a year off? Maybe work at the library or something" said Kat

"Hahaha" laughed Lily between sniffles "I... I hadn't even considered that. My parents seemed to expect me to go, the guidance council didn't even recommend it. I certainly never thought of it" Lily tightened her grip on Kat "I shouldn't have needed to hear that from you. I should have figured it out myself. But thank you Kat. Really, thank you" said Lily as she tried to crush Kat's bones with a hug. Luckily for Kat, hers had been improved since and was able to comfortably embrace her wounded friend.

Chapter 52: A Bright Flash of Light

Kat continued to hug Lily for a while. Reassuring her friend that it would work out. After calming down Lily slowly separated herself from Kat and said "Ok, thank you. I needed that, a lot. I think I'm still going

to look through these books. I think I'll find the cheapest textbook for the subjects I'm interested in" said Lily.

"Ok, I'll come and look with you" said Kat patting her friend on the head.

The girls spent a bit of time examining the books around the store. It wasn't hard to find assorted textbooks on a wide range of topics but comparing the prices was a nightmare. Some books were marked on the corners, others had a slip on the front cover and no small number had no visible pricing just a sticker with a barcode on them, a few even seemed to be lacking anything at all to identify the price.

"Maybe you should get a job here, clearly they need someone to organise this mess" said Kat

"Um, er, they have that guy out the front, he seems unconcerned" said Lily

"Yes, because teenage boys are the best benchmark for if a room is cleaned or not. I've lived with quite a few of them, and outside a few specific instances the mess just accumulates somehow. Honestly it's pretty magical to watch week by week" said Kat

"Hey wait a minute" said Kat after a moment of thought "Isn't your room just as bad as the shop?"

"Well, no, most of my books on the floor are heavily damaged and can't be read anymore. Only a few specific stacks are still fine, and I keep them orderly" said Lily blushing.

Gathering together four books that Kat and Lily could only assume were the cheapest in the shop they headed to the counter. Lily had chosen to cover, science, design, teaching and computer science.

"So I get the design, and maybe even the science but why the teaching and computer science?" said Kat

"Ah, well, the science and the computer science are both for researching. Science you've figured out, but computer science also has some research areas like data science. The teaching is because if I want to be a teacher librarian I have to be a qualified teacher as well" said Lily

"And you want to teach? In front of people?" said Kat raising an eyebrow

"Well, I mean, not really... I'm just keeping my options open. These are the only things I'm even remotely interested in I think" said Lily

"Well I hope you think otherwise nobodies got any idea what you're doing" said Kat *Novelnext.Com*

Lily and Kat placed the books on the counter and the boy behind the counter stopped reading long enough to ring through the prices before turning back to his book. Lily was about to walk away when Kat jabbed her with an elbow lightly and whispered "Ask him if there is a chance you could get a job here" said Kat

Lily paled and returned with "I'm not prepared for this, and I mean the city is a long way away"

"If you're sure" said Kat as she swiped the four books and went to meet up with Vivian and Lily who were waiting out the front.

"Hey, I can help with that Kat" said Lily. Kat responded by lifting the books with just one hand.

"They really aren't that heavy" said Kat

"Still, I shouldn't make you carry them" said Lily. Kat then lifted the books up onto two fingers. Kat was struggling a bit to balance them, but the weight was no issue.

"Fine" said Lily pouting.

As the group started walking Kat noticed that Vivian was holding a book "What did you buy Vivian?"

"Actually, Sylvie suggested it, we are going to make our way through it together" said Vivian. Turning the book around it read 'Shogi for dummies'

I feel like I should have questions, but I can't figure out what they are.

"So where to now?" said Kat as they left the store

"Wherever you girls want" said Vivian

"Why are you leading the way then" said Kat

"Would you like to lead the way?" said Vivian. Silenced followed, as no one replied

"I thought so" said Vivian "I'm just planning to go through the hall mall. Just stop me if you find anything interesting" said Vivian

And so the group continued to wander around the shops. Occasionally Vivian would lead them into a store for them to look around for a moment but nothing of note was purchased. Things were relatively normal until two girls around Kat's age tapped her on the shoulder from behind. Turning around to face the pair Kat saw that they were both wearing matching outfits of jeans and split sleeve shirts.

These girls have to be twins, or at least sisters. Actually, they remind me of Annie and Amanda. Could it be the same girls?

"Do you think we could get a picture with you" said Twin 1

"We'd be quite grateful" said Twin 2

"Sure, if you'd like" said Kat, and before she even finished her sentence Vivian had appeared beside the twins.

"I'll take the picture" said Vivian bringing out her phone

"Thanks" said the Twins

"So how do you want to do this" said Kat as they moved out of the central walkway into a bit of a corner.

"If you don't mind" said Twin 1

"We'd like to stand either side of you" said Twin 2. Kat nodded and took position along the wall. The twins took up positions either side of Kat posing slightly with there arms crossed, leaning away from Kat slightly.

Should I be posing as well Kat decided on crossing her arms to match the twins and leaning backwards slightly.

"Everyone ready" said Vivian lining up the shot with exaggerated hand movements "Say demons"

Kat flashed a grin, and while the twins responded faithfully with "Demons" The camera flash went off and Kat was pleasantly surprised to note that she wasn't blinded by it at all. The twins however both had to blink their eyes a few times before they headed over to Vivian to check out the photos.

"Huh, I didn't think Kat had purple eyes, strange photo" said Twin 2. The world slowed as Kat's mind went into overdrive. *Why are my eyes showing purple? I didn't use any powers, did I? Shit, the flash, could it have caused this? I used a bit of demonic energy to counteract the flash and they showed up purple?* As the twins turned to face Kat she put the barest hint of energy just behind her eyes hoping that it would replicate the purple tint shown in the photograph.

"Huh, I guess you're wrong sis, she's got purple eyes right now" said Twin 2

"I thought for sure they were blue just before" said Twin 1

"Might have been the lighting" said Twin 2

Vivian paled slightly while this conversation was going on connecting the dots same as Kat had done with only a little more time in between.

"Hey girls, how did you want me to send you this photo? Email? Text?" said Vivian calmly trying to redirect the conversation. The twins both shared a look with each other before nodding to some unspoken agreement.

"Send it to '[\[email protected\]](#)'" said the twins in perfect sync.

"Sounds great dears, just one moment and..." said Vivian fiddling with her phone "Sent"

It was at this point Kat noticed a line forming around her. *Oh great. I say yes to one picture and now I have a crowd. Normally I wouldn't mind but Vivian said we have to leave in time to visit her friend. Plus I don't really want to be taking pictures on my day off when I could be hanging out with everyone.*

"Ok, I apologise but I have things to do. I'll do five extra pictures. You provide the device to my friend" said Kat pointing to Vivian who waved and smiled "and we can take one picture. I don't mind if you want to partner up or have a few groups at once. Just be mindful of each other, no fighting and don't take too long" Turning back to face the twins who were beginning to walk away to avoid the crowd "See you both next time Annie, Amanda"

The twins waved back not really thinking about it and continuing for a moment before turning and realising what Kat had just said, though when they turned Kat already had quite the crowd. So they left to continue their day out.

While this was happening Kat heard a shutter go off from the crowd. *Should I be mean about this? Yeah I think I will.*

"Ok, that's one photo" said Kat. The crowd made displeased grumbles but couldn't identify the person. Because of this the crowd started to ramble and had the voices mix into indistinct sounds before the

seemed to reach a census. The groups surrounding Kat split roughly into four groups. *Well, I guess this is how we are doing this now, school choir style.*

As everyone was getting into position Kat carefully released her calming aura to surround everyone.

Better off using this now to prevent an issue. Hopefully we can just calming get a few group photos and I can be on my way...

Chapter 53: Photos are a Great Way to Practice Using Demonic Energy

While everyone was gathering together Kat was finding it hard to maintain a slight level of demonic energy behind her eyes and maintain the calming aura at the same time.

Why didn't I practice this... Actually I know why, it's because I never thought I'd need to learn how to change my eyes slightly purple to prevent a bunch of random people noticing my eyes changing colour. But really this is what's actually going to get me caught, my eyes?! I have wings for crying out loud and my eyes that just sometimes change colour are what get me.

Kat couldn't believe how things had turned out. *Should I pretend to take out contacts maybe? But no I can't do that because if any of them have the flash on they'll go purple again.*

During Kat's internal monologue she kept lightly applying her calming aura to the surroundings. *At least I have an instinct for calming aura that tells me how heavy I can lay it on people before they notice.*

To Kat this feeling was something akin to knowing how hard you could squeeze a grape or knowing how to keep a shovel balanced on your hand. She was constantly making slight adjustments to the aura to keep it from getting noticed lowering and raising the intensity as needed to keep everyone calm but unaware. She was surprised at just how easy that was compared to lighting her eyes up slightly.

During these thoughts the first group had assembled around Kat, kept a mostly respectable distance from her but everyone was packed quite tightly into the corner, so a little discomfort was expected

"Ok, so I've got this girls camera" said Vivian pointing to one of the girls on the edge of the crowd "you can see her for this picture afterwards" Vivian waiting another moment before giving the call "Say demons"

"Demons" said the group, and as the flash went off Kat felt the energy behind her eyes lurch forward straining against her control to further reinforce her eyes. She was able to hold it together for a moment until more energy crashed into the energy she was holding and sent the lot of it into her eyes. Luckily the area was more than well lit and whatever light there might have been went unnoticed.

Damn that was close, I need to be more careful next time. The crowd dispersed somewhat slowly but Vivian shooed them off and ensured nobody was trying to sneak into extra photos.

The second group was much like the first except this time when Kat stared intently at Vivian's hand and the moment before the flash went off released the energy. Kat felt it return towards her core only to burst forth to cover her eyes once the flash began. *I can't believe I didn't notice this reaction when I was in the tunnels. It's so easy to tell when my body is using energy for stuff. Wait do I use it to regenerate as well?*

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User Kat likely uses Demonic Energy to regenerate. While D.E.M.O.N.S is unable to confirm at this time, it is only standard for certain other species of demons to use other sources of energy such as Gorgers which can also use stored mass.

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Kat nearly jumped out of her skin when she saw the familiar burning text appear in front of her. *I'd almost expected not to hear back from the system at all until it'd sorted everything out. I'm, actually kind of glad it's still here though.*

Quickly recovering from the shock Kat watched Vivian direct everyone to some other poor sap who had to go through the effort of getting a group of fifteen-ish peoples contact information.

The third group of people were now crowding around Kat. Gathering around, lining up, getting everyone to fit into position. Kat prepared her energy behind her eyes ready to let go just before the flash just like last time. The moment Vivian's hand touched the button Kat let go of the energy and waited for a flash... that didn't come. *I didn't think they'd have the flash off.*

Kat panicked and tried to grasp the energy she had been keeping behind her eyes but she felt it slipping away back into her core. Putting the full weight of her mental energy behind it only made it halt in place traveling neither up or down. *What am I supposed to do? Why can't I move this.* Time slowed as Kat searched for a solution.

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User Kat is informed that Demonic Energy will return to the User's core if possible after completing a command.

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Ok, I can work with this. Dropping her control of the current energy she reached into her core for more and found plenty awaiting her command. Pulling it swiftly up behind her eyes once again Kat could only hope that she hadn't lost the purple glow when the camera took her picture.

The final group was preparing to take the last picture. It had quite a few extra people in it who had joined in towards the end but it was just barely a manageable amount for their little corner. Kat however was distracted.

Ok, so how do I safely manage this. I need to hold the energy behind my eyes to keep them purple. I also need to let go of that energy when the flash turns on so that my eyes don't actually start glowing. But I also need to be careful about if there isn't a flash. If there is no flash, I'll need to pull the energy up myself after I let go of the first batch to keep the amount behind my eyes consistent enough.

Vivian prepared to take the final photo, her bright smile slightly strained. She'd seen Kat's expression go through a number of rapid changes during the four photos, Most people wouldn't have noticed but Vivian was keeping her eyes squarely on Kat, perhaps the only other person to pick up on the rapid and subtle expressions was Sylvie but she was a bit short to see over the crowd.

Vivian pressed her finger down and once again there was a flash. Kat quickly let go of the energy behind her eyes before grasping at some still in her core. Letting the first crash happen Kat waited until she could feel the protective energy fade from her eyes before she pushed more up to take its place.

Ok, I think I've managed it. I'm somewhat disappointed there was a flash. I need to test this sort of thing out in the future. Perhaps after today I need to spend some time really testing out my abilities. Now that I've awakened, I doubt I'll be going through so many rapid changes.

While the groups were distracted with handing over their contact details to Vivian's chosen sacrifice, Vivian managed to round up the girls and slip through the crowd unnoticed. How she did this was beyond Kat's understanding. *How is everyone so distracted? Vivian just walked through them, with me in hand and no one even glanced back.* In the end Vivian lead the group to the food court for lunch. Kat found herself to not feel like food at all, which was strange because it was now 1:30pm. *Hey system, is there a reason I'm not hungry at all?*

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User Kat has fully awakened. As a demon not of the Gluttony Classification food consumption has likely been drastically reduced. User Kat is likely capable of ingesting food still but the quantity has been limited slightly.

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Good to know, I guess?

"Kat, are you sure you don't want anything?" said Vivian already munching on her salad.

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"Uh, no thank you. Apparently, it's because of that thing from yesterday" said Kat

Vivian nodded in understanding but turned to Sylvie "Has Kat always eaten well before" said Vivian

"Yup, she always ate more than me at meals" said Sylvie also with a salad in front of her. Sylvie seemed to be enjoying it less than Vivian but was making no complaints.

"Yeah, I can confirm that as well, I've seen Kat eat a bunch at school" said Lily who was the odd one out eating a burger.

Kat blushed slightly but it was very noticeable to the others.

"I didn't eat that much. I mean, I did plenty of physical exercise just getting to and from school so it's fine" said Kat. Sylvie nodded sagely, while Vivian and Lily stifled laughs. Choosing to ignore the two Kat through out another question for the system. *If demons can get classifications like gluttony does that mean I'm related to lust because I am a Succubus?*

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User Kat does not yet have a classification. Demon Classification is traditionally done after the User reaches Rank 2 and powers relating to the Classification begin manifesting. Some demons can display Classification Markers earlier, but User Kat has shown no defining characteristics of any Classification at this time.

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Just great, I've got a whole world of sin still open to me... I do wonder what I will be classified as though. I don't think I'm particularly sinful in any area...

Chapter 54: Honestly I need to Get Back to Summonings, I Promise Only 1 More Chapter of Earth Stuff After This

After the group finished eating lunch Vivian addressed everyone and said "So, we don't have much time before we have to go and meet my friend. Kat you have five minutes to go buy something"

"What are you talking about Vivian?" said Kat

"Well I did say that you need at least one thing to decorate your room" said Vivian

"What about Sylvie? She only picked up a book, I can just pay for one of Lily's" said Kat

In response Sylvie pulled out a bag and placed it on the table. Inside were a number of decorations for her room. Some notable inclusions were a tiny rug, a stuffed demon toy that had batwings and a tail similar to Kat's, with black hair and red eyes and of course the book mentioned earlier.

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"When did you pick up so much stuff" said Kat

"When you were getting your picture taken. Lily and I grabbed a few things that looked nice" said Sylvie with a cheeky grin.

Ugh, so now I have to go looking for something? Like what?

"What am I even supposed to grab Vivian? I've never really decorated my room before" said Kat

"Well you have to pick something, and you have four minutes now, go shoo" said Vivian

Kat looked around for help from Lily or Sylvie but they just both shrugged at Kat like it was none of their concern.

"Really Lily even you?" said Kat

"Honestly Kat, I think having a bit of personality in your room will do you good" said Lily

Kat sighed and looked around the food court searching for something easy to grab.

"You won't find anything right here. You'll have to find something outside of the food court. Better start walking. I promise we'll keep up" said Vivian with her trademark smile

Fine... I think I saw a shop with some nicknacks around. Backtracking a slight way Kat found the shop she had been looking for. It didn't seem to have a visible but inside it had a large collection of random things.

From clocks to coasters, from sculptures of fairies, to carvings of toads somehow this shop seemed to pack everything into it. *The only problem with this shop is that most of this stuff isn't that well made.* Thought Kat as she examined one of the nicer looking fair sculptures before putting it down.

Kat let her eyes wander through the shop. *So what can I get? Maybe a clock? That's at least somewhat practical for me to have.* Moving towards the section housing the clocks Kat was surprised by one clock in particular. The clockface was fairly standard but the edges were decorated with a fire pattern that seemed to shift and change in colour. *There's no way... Hey system is this a magical clock? It shifts a bit like the flames when I get summoned.*

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D.E.M.O.N.S can detect no magic within the identified object. User Kat is required to touch it for complete affirmation.

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Should I? Is it worth the risk? Kat reached a shaky hand out towards the clock. Just as she touched it she felt a spark jump to her fingers and she stepped back. *Was that enough confirmation for you system?*

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User Kat is informed that the clock contains no higher energy of any kind. D.E.M.O.N.S believes the highest probability is that the clock is simply malfunctioning and released a static discharge.

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Kat felt her eye twitching as she looked at the clock awkwardly. *You mean to tell me, that the clearly bizarre clock in this strange store that changes colour and shocks people isn't magic?*

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Yes. The chance of this object having magic is 0.0000000000000001%

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"Something up with that clock Kat" said Vivian.

Kat nearly jumped out of her skin. *I didn't hear Vivian sneak up on me. Actually how did she sneak up on me anyway? My peripheral vision is exceptional now. How could I have missed her?*

"Nothing, it's a completely normal clock" said Kat

"Hmmm, but you were staring at it so intently. Is this the kind of thing you like?" said Vivian

"No, it's just... This reminds me of the summoning portal. It's all rainbows and fire. I thought the clock might be special, but it turns out that it's a completely normal clock" said Kat

"Well, I that's a shame. And I will say I'm a little disappointed that you are trying to cheat and get a clock" said Vivian

"How is it cheating to get a clock?" said Kat

"You should get something that speaks to you, I bet you thought of getting a clock because it's at least somewhat practical right?" said Vivian

Vivian's words hit Kat hard. "That was-" Kat's retort died on her throat. She was incapable of finishing the sentence to deny Vivian's words. Vivian for her part just smiled like the cat that ate the canary. Or perhaps the canary had its chance to eat a Kat.

"Fine, I promise to keep looking for something else" said Kat

"Do I have to make you sign a contract dear" said Vivian with a pout.

"You don't have to go that far. Plus you should be careful trying to invoke a contract with me. You've seen the chains Vivian, that isn't my power, or at least I don't think it's really mine... I just don't understand what it does" said Kat

"Well, just don't go trying to break them hmm" Said Vivian

"Fine" huffed Kat

Returning to scanning the shelves Kat was struggling to find something that was worthwhile. After some further investigation Kat realised her first impression of the store might have been uncharitable. *It isn't like there's no finely crafted things here, it's just that they aren't the majority.* Switching tact Kat instead walked over to Lily to see if she'd found anything of note.

"Hey Lily, found anything worthwhile" said Kat

"Well..." said Lily "I might have found something but, it's... well I'll just show you"

Lily lead Kat back over to the sculpture section. Brushing aside some of the less well crafted ones Lily pulled out a sculpture of an angel sitting in the back. The angel was sitting down and holding a book in her hand. She had long wings that encircled the front of her body, not closing completely but being pulled forward a decent way. The angel's body was sitting on an intricately designed chair of thorns. The angel seemed to be both young, and yet ancient at the same time, especially when you looked at the eyes, that were pitch black.

"This is really nicely done. What's weird about it though?" said Kat looking the figure over.

"Well, I just can't shake the idea that the face looks familiar somehow. I mean it's not like I really recognise it but I get the feeling I should" said Lily

Kat held the statue up to her eyes. Taking a quick glance around to ensure that they were alone she pressed a bit of energy into her eyes and looked at the face. The angel had large eyes, a small nose and mouth, and Lily was right. The face invoked a strange feeling of familiarity. *Huh, Lily was right. Why could this seem so familiar? It's really well made but this feeling is a little off-putting especially when I can't figure out why it looks familiar.*

Putting the statue back Kat spoke "So anything else you recommend. I think you're right, that statue does look familiar and it bugs me"

"Not really, sorry Kat" said Lily looking down.

Kat shrugged and pulled Lily along. This time looking for Sylvie instead, perhaps she'd found something of interest. They found Sylvie closely examining some of the wood carvings.

"Anything good over here?" said Kat

"Not really" said Sylvie as she glanced at the other two.

"Welp, you'll have to pick something because I've already given you ten minutes" said Vivian as she appeared from nowhere.

"How do you keep doing that" said Kat. Vivian just shrugged in response.

"Pick something, right now, quick quick" said Vivian

Uh, um Kat's thoughts stuttered as she walked back over to the angel statue Lily had found. *The whole overly familiar thing still bugs me but I guess I don't have the time.*

Picking up the statue and taking it to the counter, the lady hardly glanced at Kat twice as she scanned the item and put it away in a box. *Huh, I thought I'd at least get some response from her considering I'm a demon buying an angel. Guess this city is more used to this sort of outfit than I thought.*

"Good, I'm glad you picked something nice, we do really need to get going though" said Vivian as she scooped up Sylvie and started to lightly jog out of the store.

"I can carry Sylvie if you want" said Kat

"Nonsense, I'm abusing this chance to carry my daughter" said Vivian

"I'm probably stronger than you are now" said Kat

"Strength has nothing to do with it, I'll pick you up as well if you want" said Vivian as she moved Sylvie onto one arm and made grabbing motions with the other.

"Huh, heh, ha" panted Lily "Slow down, please"

Kat simply picked Lily up in a princess carry as her response. Not to be outdone Vivian switching Sylvie to the same position.

"Kat this is embarrassing" said Lily

"Don't worry about it" said Kat. *I thought she was having difficulty keeping up what's the problem?*

Lily just sighed at Kat's response, resigning herself to her friends' antics.

Chapter 55: Chekov Pushka

The girls bundle into the car once again and set off straight into the city centre

"So, where are you taking us Vivian?" said Kat

"Well, I already said I'm taking you to visit a friend of mine. If he heard I didn't bring such interesting girls to visit he'd be really disappointed in me" said Vivian with a put

"Um, that sounds kind of suspicious Vivian" said Lily as she hid her face behind a book

"Oh, don't worry, Chekov is completely enthralled by wood work and I refuse to let Kat and Sylvie have a room without a desk. If he find's out I went somewhere else for that he'd be heartbroken" said Vivian

"Right... So what does he do?" said Kat trying to slightly redirect the conversation

"Chekov is a carpenter I suppose. He works with just about anything related to wood carving but for some reason he has a bizarre fascination with desks and will go above and beyond for an interesting client. I should have remembered to show you mine before we headed out. I had intended to, but you wanted to go for a short trip to the woods and threw off my schedule" said Vivian as she smiled into the rearview mirror

"Sorry" said Kat. Her full wingspan and tail collapsing downward. *I've just been adopted by Vivian and I've already made her go through such a traumatic event.*

"Don't look so down Kat, I enjoyed the scenery, the snow was lovely this time of year" said Vivian as she admired the bright sun.

The conversation drifted off somewhat awkwardly and they made their way past the city centre and towards the outskirts of the town opposite the way they'd originally entered. Finally right at the very edge of the city outskirts Vivian pulled up to a nondescript shed that took up a large plot of land by itself.

"Well we've arrived let's head inside" said Vivian as she opened the doors and picked up Sylvie. To the shock of Kat and Lily the little girl just curled up in Vivian's arms and let herself drift off.

I guess it's been a bit of a big day for Sylvie huh. I'm surprised she didn't fall asleep on me in the car if she was that tired though?

Walking towards the door they were surprised to see it kicked open and watch as a man came flying out. The man bounced a few times against the concrete before dusting himself off and walking away from the store.

"And stay out I tell ya, I'm not going back" said a voice from inside the shop

"Chekov! It's lovely to see you" said Vivian

"Ah, Vivian, it is good to see you. Why you back so soon? If I find out you've destroyed my desk already I might have to ban you from store" said Chekov with a laugh

"Oh I could never do that to you or your desks Chekov, I've bought more victims" Vivian coughed
"Customers, I've brought you some more customers"

"Um, is that man you just threw away alright" said Lily

"Ya, he's fine. I throw him every other week" said Chekov

"Why does he keep coming back then?" asked Kat

"Well, that's long story. I'll tell you short version for Vivian's sake. I used to work for some unsavoury people before I moved here and they want me back. I tell them I'm not coming back, they say I am, I drop a few tonnes of lumber on their business and then suddenly they calm down a bit. Not sure why though, it was honest mistake" said Chekov

"Right..." said Kat as she looked towards Lily and tried to ask with her eyes if she was hearing this as well. Lily gave an almost imperceptible nod

"So, more desks for these three yes? Why do you think I'd take this job Vivian?" said Chekov.

"Well, I'm pretty sure you'll find them all interesting, plus I adopted two of them" said Vivian

"What that roommate wouldn't let you take the third? Too much responsibility?" said Chekov

"Nah, Lily leaves next door? Huh, well... hey Kat does it count as next door if we share a fence" said Vivian

"How should I know" said Kat

Vivian shrugged "Sylvie probably knows but I don't want to wake her up"

"Lily is still a neighbour even if it isn't directly next door. She is still adjacent to your property" said Sylvie without opening her eyes

Chekov burst out laughing "Well, that's at least one interesting lass you brought me. Come inside out of the cold" said Chekov as he walked back inside.

Walking into the warehouse it was stacks of wood as far as the eye could see. Stacked high to the left and right and even against the wall house the door it seemed like Chekov had enough wood to furnish a small town. Sitting in the middle of everything was a small desk and chair. The desk was well carved, if a little amateurish looking.

"Um, Mister Chekov, if you don't mind my asking. Why is your desk so simple. Considering what Vivian has told us shouldn't your work be a bit more elaborate" said Lily

Chekov nodded "If I'm a Mister anything it's Pushka, but I don't go by that name anyway. Just call my Chekov. This desk though" Chekov slammed his hand against it "Is the first desk I ever made, and I am not one to disrespect the passion that went into its creation.

Huh, I wouldn't have thought Chekov would have been so sentimental about something like that.

Chekov walked behind the desk and opened the drawers to take out a pair of glasses.

"Now, let me have a look at you all to determine your flame. I have to know what type of desk I'm making after all" said Chekov

Wait flame? And hang on, he hasn't even mentioned my demonic traits either. What is going on? System is this guy a wizard or something?

--

D.E.M.O.N.S finds the idea unlikely. Due to the composition of User Kat's Universe it is impossible for any type of higher energy to exist. Demonic Energy is able to just barely circumvent this restriction. Individual Chekov is certainly not a demon.

--

Can you elaborate on the higher energy thing?

--

User Kat requires rank 1 for that information

--

Of course. Chekov fixed his glasses and first tried to look at Sylvie

"Vivian, do you have to hold the little one. Your flame is still just as needlessly bright as last time and it hides the little one's" said Chekov

"Chekov, what exactly are you doing" asked Kat

"I see, things when I look at people. I know them, and what they are. It is family trait I believe" said Chekov

"So, what did you mean when you described Vivian's flame as needlessly bright" said Kat

"Ya, Vivian has bright flame. It is almost like staring at the sun. Endlessly bright, and forever burning" said Chekov

"Oh stop you flatter" said Vivian

"Just put the girl down for a moment" said Chekov.

Vivian pouted but placed Sylvie onto Chekov's chair at which point she sprung to full attention and looked him in the eye. After an intense staring contest Chekov broke eye contact first

"Little one... she is strange. I am already looking forward to this" said Chekov grinning "Little one's flame is strange, it feels ever-present, and yet even I can't quite see it. I know it is there, but it is not"

What the hell does that mean? And wait what is he going to see when he looks at my flame? Will it actually be my Demonic Flame? *nOveLnext.cOm*

Chekov turned next to Lily who instantly broke eye contact. Chekov lingered on her face a little more before speaking "Interesting flame again. You is like the last bit of fire in candle before you turn in for night. Flame looks weak, but it will not fail you, it has lasted you through the night and it will continue until the end"

"Um, I'm not sure I like being told I'm weak" said Lily

"Ya, but you is nearly smaller than Little one. Your desk have five hidden compartments ya?" said Chekov

"Wait I'm getting a desk, and hidden compartments... I mean" Lily was cut off by Chekov

"Not, it is more, thirteen? That is unlucky number for you though... Seems almost fitting though. I do fourteen" said Chekov

"Um, I'm not sure how I'm supposed to pay you back Mister Chekov" said Lily nervously

"Don't worry you will. You is loyal little flame, I do it free now, you pay later" said Chekov

"I can't, I mean, I don't even know when I will get the money" stammered Lily

"You pay me back within decade, I know it" said Chekov patting Lily on the shoulder before turning to Kat.

"Your flame is strange to me. It is boring, and yet it dislikes my disapproval. Which is not boring. Your flame is strange" said Chekov

Chapter 56: I Lied we're still talking to Chekov

"What do you mean it's boring, and what do you mean that my flame dislikes you" said Kat

"Well, your flame is boring, it not seem to do much special. Companions all have very strange fire. But then, when I think this, I can feel your fire looking at me, telling me that I am wrong. That confuses me. Never have the flames been like that" said Chekov

"Um is my flame purple by any chance?" said Kat

"No? Why would flame have colour?" said Chekov

"No re-" Kat's reply got chocked off

"Oh, that is strange girl. What was that, flame was not happy with that at all. Why?" said Chekov.

"It's a long story, I'm not sure that I'm willing to tell" said Kat

"Ya, this is fair. Still that display make flame more interesting. Ok I've decided. I'll do the lot." Said Chekov as he pulled out a stack of papers

"Glasses, we already establish, you have hidden compartments everywhere, I'm also thinking shelves thoughts" said Chekov

"Um why do you think I need hidden compartments" said Lily as she tried to hide her face behind her hands.

"Look, you is hiding right now. You is hiding even when we are all friends here so surely you must hide even more from those you dislike" said Chekov as he started to scrawl in the paper. Whatever Chekov was designing it wasn't a desk. It almost seemed like words but it wasn't anything the girls recognised

"Watcha writing there?" asked Sylvie

"Ah, little one, of course you would notice. This is my notes. I write in... well it not code exactly but I understand it nonetheless, it sticks in my head to write this way" said Chekov "Now, Glasses, what sort of shelves do you want"

"Um, shelves for books?" said Lily as if it was a question *nOveLnext.cOm*

"Confidence Glasses. But yes shelves for books...." Said Chekov "You want more shelve space or more hidden compartment space"

"I don't need all these hidden compartments" mumbled Lily trying not to cover her face this time

"To quite Glasses, but I will build into main desk. Leave shelves mostly for books. Just one hidden compartment there" said Chekov "Now who is next, Little one or Pointy?"

"Wait, why am I pointy? I get the other nicknames but why am I pointy?" said Kat tail flicking slightly in mild annoyance but luckily Chekov remained fixated on his plans

"You has pointy tail, pointy wings, pointy horns. You have more points then spiked boots" said Chekov.

Oh. He's right isn't he. Even if he isn't going to comment on them I guess he did notice the demonic features. I suppose pointy is better than being called demon... though now that I think properly about it, at least demon wouldn't feel quite so much like an insult considering that's what I am.

Sylvie spoke up seeing Kat was lost in thought "Do mine next" Sylvie said with a big smile on her face playing innocent.

"Ha" Chekov barked out a short laugh when he glanced at Sylvie "Little one already has enough hidden things; I suppose you not need more"

"I don't need to hide anything" said Sylvie

"Ya, I suppose you're right Little one. You manage to hide everything and enough and that be much more effective than anything I can make you" said Chekov as he pulled out another set of paper, presumably for Sylvie's desk.

"So, I'll need a lot of shelves like big sis Lily" said Sylvie

"Ya, but you want space for computer or just more shelves?" said Chekov pausing in his writings.

Sylvie shrugged and looked toward Vivian "Ooh, I should really get a computer for you both as well. Hmm, I suppose we'll have to put that off later, but I think you'll need the space for a computer"

"Wait, why didn't you ask me that question" said Lily

"You have computer, why would I need to ask if you need space for it?" said Chekov

Lily's face paled at that. She didn't know how to respond.

Seriously system? This guy isn't using magic? How could he possibly know so much without it?

--

D.E.M.O.N.S stands by previous examination. Chance of Individual Chekov being able to use higher energy are to low to be worth considering.

--

How? This seriously doesn't make any sense. Kat glanced at Sylvie and Vivian but they both just seemed to think Chekov's logic was reasonable. Lily did already have a computer so why would he need to ask.

"So, little one, what design do you want? Theme?" said Chekov as he looked up from his worksheets

"Something with fire, and maybe snowflakes" said Sylvie

"No thorns for you Little one? Strange I could have sworn..." said Chekov as he looked through Sylvie, before turning his eyes to rest on Kat. "Ah I see. Ice fire it is"

"Now, Pointy, what would you like? Seems your fire doesn't quite approve of the elaborate set ups of your friends" said Chekov

"That sounds fine to me, but how come you didn't ask Lily what design she wanted" said Kat

"Glasses would never choose anything other than plain wood. Perhaps she might prefer a certain type of wood but I'd never let anyone else choose that in my shop" said Chekov.

Kat glanced at Lily for confirmation but saw her friend nod in agreement with Chekov's claims.

"Right, well, I think I'd like to keep my desk a bit plain" said Kat unsure.

"Hmm, your fire seems confused. It is so weird for it to react like that" said Chekov shaking his head

"How about one set of shelves but I'll throw in some extra drawers"

"What exactly do you mean by one set of shelves?" asked Kat as she tilted her head in confusion. This time Chekov did see the movement but he didn't react.

"Unlike Little one and Glasses whose desk will have a lot of shelves you will have small one fitted to the left.. right, right side apparently" said Chekov

"Right, that sounds quite nice" said Kat

"Of course, I have a design in mind, but I'm going to keep that part to myself" said Chekov with a strange grin.

Turning away from Chekov to face Vivian, Kat asked "What sort of design do you have on your desk Vivian?" *I can see Chekov won't say more but perhaps I can get a hint*

"Well, mine has quite a lot actually. Mostly different suns, but also a few other shapes mixed in, it's hard to explain really" said Vivian

"Vivian has... A number of designs I had to weave together. I don't quite understand how that piece was made myself. You can only gaze upon it but not understand" said Chekov with a grin that seemed both happy and pained at the same time

"It's not that mysterious Chekov, but it is a lovely piece" said Vivian returning Chekov's grin

"Well now. I believe it is time for you to leave. You have given me quite a lot of work to do" said Chekov as he picked up the paper now strewn across the desk and bundled them under his arm.

Vivian led the girls out back to the car and they all bundled in together. It was a quiet drive back home. The encounter with Chekov had seemed to come to an abrupt end, but even still he had left an impression on them all. It was not until thirty minutes had passed and the city was long out of sight that Lily spoke up. "Is Chekov always like that?"

"Yes, for as long as I've known him. A strange man, but a skilled one" said Vivian

"Much like yourself" Kat chimed in.

"But of course. We are both masters of our craft, he simply works more directly with the ingredients than I tend to" said Vivian.

I did not think Vivian would just agree with me. Is she really that similar to Chekov? Kat thought back to all the interactions she'd had with Vivian over the past few weeks. *Huh, maybe she is. Her strangeness is a bit less direct but she always seems to know more than she's letting on and has a much better understanding of things than it first appears.*

That was the last thing said on the matter. Lily managed to fall asleep rather quickly and Sylvie had nodded off before they'd even left the city limits. Kat didn't feel the drowsiness her companions did but she was content to simply relax and watch the scenery as it past by. The journey back was without interruption and Lily was dropped off at the corner like they'd done after the visit to the orphanage.

Vivian pulled into her garage and grabbed a sleeping Sylvie out of the car. It had gotten somewhat late in the afternoon, but the sun was still just barely peeking between the houses casting enough light to see by. The trio entered the house and could smell a meal already prepared for them.

Chapter 57: D.E.M.O.N.S Accounting Services

Kat woke up to the smell of ash and flames. *I guess it was about time something like this happened.* Propped herself up against the wall to get more comfortable Kat looked at the message that had been left for her.

--

User Kat's case has been handed over to the Accounting Department. Visiting this department will be considered User Kat's mandatory summon for the week. Please inform D.E.M.O.N.S of your desire to be transferred and a portal will open.

--

Why am I being sent to the accounting department for an error resolution? Shouldn't it be the support section or maybe the lawyers?

--

User Kat's case was determined to be most relevant to the Accounting Department. D.E.M.O.N.S cannot provide information on any other department at this time, but User Kat should be assured that this decision was heavily computed.

--

Guess I should get this over and done with. I'll just tell everyone. Um wait how long will I be gone for?

--

User Kat is not expected to be gone longer than fourteen hours at maximum. This is due to the nature of the error and that the Accounting Department User Kat will be sent to isn't open for more than fourteen hours at a time.

-- nOvelnext.cOm

With that Kat jumped off the bed and headed downstairs to explain what was going on. Only to stop and realise that nobody else was awake this early, except perhaps Callisto. Nobody really knew when she slept.

Do I just leave then? Is it better to try and leave and get this over with or should I let the others know. Hmm, a note then I suppose. Returning to her trip downstairs Kat entered the kitchen and faced another problem. She had no idea where they kept any spare pens or papers.

Running back upstairs Kat rummaged through her backpack and took out her pencil case and a notebook she used for English. Opening it to the last page Kat wrote down a message for Vivian, or whoever else saw it first and left it open on the dining table. *Hopefully someone will notice that. Ok system I'm ready to go.*

That burning smell of ash and the sight of spinning runes of fire greeted Kat. Placing her hand onto the fire she was sucked into the portal and left to float in that place of fire. Though this time unlike before where the fire would flicker and twist through many different colours it was a solid redy orange. The same colour D.E.M.O.N.S's words always appeared in.

I kinda miss the lightshow already. Is this because I've awakened or is this because I'm being sent to the demon accounting offices? Perhaps they have a more stable connection to everything.

As the background faded Kat found herself dropped into a chair. Surprised not to be on her feet Kat was about to sit up when she noticed that this chair was much softer than it had any right to be. Relaxing Kat leaned back and was shocked a second time. The back of the chair contained slight indents for her wings to sit in. Fully relaxing Kat scanned the room.

The rest of the room seemed to contain a number of various chairs of varying shapes and sizes. There were a few more like bowls then chairs, a number that matched her own with a place to fit your wings. One Giant sized chair with wing indents and a few child sized ones lined the walls. The rest of the room was completely bare except for the maroon walls and a large door on the right-hand wall. It wasn't until Kat had relaxed and was examining the ceiling that she noticed there were no lights.

Huh, I guess it makes sense this place would cater specifically to demons. No need for lights if we can all see in the dark, and these chairs clearly aren't designed for humans. Or well, not primarily for humans, I suppose they'd work well enough.

However Kat didn't have long to enjoy the relaxing atmosphere when the door opened to reveal a giant eyeball. Coming off this eye was a number of tentacles and beneath it sat a massive set of teeth. It wasn't until the second glance that Kat realised the eyeball had a monocle and a rather tiny sunhat.

"Kat, your assigned accountant will see you now" said the eyeball.

Kat got up and followed the creature through the door. She entered into a hallway full of doors that seemed to stretch on forever. The eye didn't even stop to glance at them as it continued along its way.

Kat walked for around five minutes before the eye stopped at a door that seemed no different to the rest and pointed with one of its tentacles.

"You will find your assigned agent behind that door. I'll leave you to your meeting" said the eyeball before it flew away down the hall.

Kat slowly pushed open the door to reveal a giant behemoth of a man sitting in a beanbag chair behind a desk. His horns scraped the top of the ceiling in his office which was easily over five metres in height, though his horns accounted for at least half a metre themselves. He was wearing a surprisingly well fitting black suit that contrasted his bright red skin well.

"Ah, Kat? I believe it was. Please take a seat" boomed the demon before waving his hand and a chair appeared to Kat's side similar to those found in the waiting room. Taking her provided seat Kat found herself able to relax almost immediately.

"Let me just bring up your files here, and then we can get to sorting out your issue, I'm Krsfsdkfsr" the man said with a sound that was similar to grating rocks "but, that's a much older name from a time before I retired. Please call me Kraks" as he flicked his wrist once again. This time a portal of fire seemed to manifest beside him. Kraks reached his hand in and pulled out a stack of papers that seemed to be made from a strange orange glass crystal structure. The words in them looked like the trapped fire of the D.E.M.O.N.S.

"Right, so you were assigned to me for a, section 26,348 subsection JJS12, paragraph 18 exception 4..." at this point Kraks readjusted his glasses and then reread the words a second time to confirm what he'd just seen.

"By my blazing hellflame. I've never even seen a JJS12 let alone an exception for and I've been working here for centuries" said Kraks "I have to get some of the others in on this, that is if you don't mind? This is perhaps the most interesting case I've ever been assigned"

Um? Do I want other people in on this? Does it matter?

"What would be the purpose in inviting extra demons to view my case?" asked Kat trying and mostly succeeding to sound professional

"Well, I mean. The final decision would still go to me I suppose, or well D.E.M.O.N.S gets to approve my final suggestion. I'm only interested in bringing in the others for a bit of fun and to prove I've actually found a JJS12, we practically never see those and I doubt the others would believe me without a few witnesses" said Kraks smiling and revealing a row of shark like teeth. Somehow though it didn't seem scary at all.

"Sure thing then. Will your office have enough space?" asked Kat

"Ah, no problem at all" said Kraks and with a clap the room seemed to double in size if not in height, rapidly expanding to accommodate additional demons.

"Wait, if you can expand your room why don't you raise the ceiling a bit so that your head isn't touching it all the time?" asked Kat

"Well, that's actually rather complicated and to explain it properly I'd need to go into quite a few other things" said Kraks "Let's just say that because of the way the building is designed it has an almost infinite ability to expand outwards allowing for me to grow and shrink my office with a minor application of my power but raising the height, while technically possible is extremely difficult. Why do you think you had to walk so far when surely it would be faster to just have some stairs?"

"Honestly Kraks, I'm not sure that does make much more sense" said Kat

Kraks shrugged "You'll get used to it"

Kraks stood up and was able to pass Kat in just a few strides. Pausing at the door he turned around and said "I'm just going to grab a few friends then come back. Technically your free to do whatever you want in the meantime because this is a rather informal setting but seeing as you aren't even rank 2 I'd advise you to stay in this room"

"Why does it matter what rank I am?" said Kat craning her neck to face the demon behind her.

"These halls don't quite adhere to the laws of space all that well, so if you aren't powerful enough or skilled in a few specific areas it can really throw you off. Don't worry I'll be just a minute" said Kraks and he stepped through the door.

Well. Guess I don't mind waiting if the seats are this comfortable. Thought Kat as she closed her eyes and decided to relax for a while.

Chapter 58: Meet the Beholders

nOveLnext.cOm

Kat was able to calmly wait for Kraks to return with his friends. *I can't believe how much more comfortable it is to have a place to rest my wings. Have I just been putting up with it or are these top-quality chairs?* Kat closed her eyes and simply let her mind wander. She was in no rush and extra time spent enjoying these seats was time well spent.

Eventually Kat's ears picked up the sound the door opening but decided to keep her eyes closed. A few extra moments of relaxation were needed after her hectic last few days. As fun as it was to go shopping with everyone, it didn't give Kat anytime to unwind. *Who would have thought the best place to relax is in hell. Actually is this hell? Is hell real if demons are or would that be a misconception.*

Kraks for his part had returned to his seat with his friends in tow. Looking at the relaxed expression on Kat's face he was unsure if it was best to leave Kat or continue with their discussion. He was the one to break protocol first but at the same time he didn't want to be accused of slacking off. In the end he spoke up first. "Kat, would you like to continue the meeting now"

"Sure thing, these chairs are just really comfortable" said Kat cracking open one eye.

What she saw however surprised her. The room was now filled with six floating eyes similar to the first, though it was hard to tell these all apart. They all had the long mouth full of teeth but two of the eyes were cat or snake eyes instead, sporting a vertical slit instead of a standard circle. Otherwise they looked mostly the same except for one of the normal looking eyes that had a small tie hanging under its mouth.

Ok how am I supposed to tell these guys apart? The one with the tie is far enough but even the two with the snake eyes look the same. Kraks help me out here.

"So are you going to introduce me to your friends" said Kat

"Of course first are the twins Xaz'gelen and Vraz'gelen, those are the two with snake eyes" The two in question waved their tentacles at Kat "The one with the tie is called Xoglaxuch" who bobbed up and down in response

"And the last three are Rulrok, Tulvun, and Bob" said Kraks who all tilted their bodies forward slightly.

"Um, how am I supposed to tell the last three apart" asked Kat

"Hmm, I suppose you aren't used to Beholders then. It's quite subtle but I suppose I'll just do this" Kraks waved his hand and a series of beanbags appeared underneath all the beholders. Most of them were the same maroon colour like Kat's but two had unique colouring. They sat under two of the last three and were a dark blue and a grey colour.

"Bob has the maroon seat, Rulrok has blue, and Tulvun has grey. That should make it a bit easier to tell the difference" said Kraks

"I had expected that anyone sent to this office would be more able to distinguish beholders from each other" said Rulrok

"I don't see why that would be the case" replied Kat

"Was that your attempt at humour?" asked Rulrok

"Leave off the poor lass" said Tulvun "She's just barely a rank one. How can you expect her to be familiar with demons outside of her house"

"Bah, most demons should know the difference, why back in my day" started Rulrok but he was cut off by Vraz'gelen "If you had taken notice of the case number any JJ case involves someone who hasn't grown up around other demons. If you actually did your job you'd know this"

"Don't talk back to your elders. Just because you're a higher rank than me doesn't mea-" started Rulrok

"Enough!" said Kraks "I brought you here because it's an interesting case. I expect you to be professional Rulrok. Would you speak to a client like that" Xaz'gelen stuck her tongue out at Rulrok thinking Kraks wasn't looking "And don't even think about it Xaz. I think your all forgetting I'm the strongest demon in the room. Enough bickering"

Rapidly switching tone and turning to face Kat Kraks asked "Do you have any further questions before we go over your case? Just to clarify things?"

"Well, I'm not sure if it's rude to ask but why would Rulrok assume someone sent to this office would know how to differentiate beholders?" asked Kat

"Well, this particular office is only for individual that have certain augments to their eyes. Traditionally these are almost exclusively held by beholders. Not to say that other demon types don't have powers born from there sight, just that the ones that matter for this office are mostly beholder exclusive" said Kraks

"Like what? I mean I noticed there isn't any lights anywhere but that's about it" said Kat

"Well, light sensitivity is actually one. Another such ability is one that lets you see through walls. There are a few others but I'm not sure why you were sent here specifically, it isn't in the file I was given" said Kraks tapping on the glass tablet.

"Ooo, can you tell us?" said Bob

"Now, it's considered inappropriate to request information on another demon's powers without offering an ability of your own, you know the rules" said Tulvun

"Sorry, I've just never heard of a succubus with eye magic that doesn't charm" said Bob

"But charmers do get sent to our office. Most beholders are immune to it, and I know Kraks pretty much is" said Vraz'gelen

This seemed to stump Bob. He got the feeling that Kat didn't have charming eyes and as he'd never had a succubus client come through on account of his lacking defences, he hadn't considered Kat might have such an ability.

"Actually, that would be important to know. I'll trade you information on my power instead. I'm capable of ripping apart magic formations or cultivator arrays with just physical strength" said Kraks

"That's cheating. How can you do that" said Xaz'gelen pouting. Or at least that's what Kat was assuming the action was. Lacking lips made it hard to tell.

"I'll speak no more on the subject" said Kraks fixing his glasses.

"Well, I don't have charming eyes. I don't have any charm powers. Is that what I was supposed to say?" asked Kat tilting her head in slight confusion.

"Yes, thank you. I'd not considered the lacking immunity Bob has, he's new" said Kraks

"No problem" said Kat

"I want you to tell us what your eye powers are" said Xaz'gelen "I'll trade this. I can shoot laser beams from my eye that put people to sleep"

"Well, I'm not certain about this because I haven't had it entirely verified..." said Kat "But I'm pretty sure I have true sight"

"What!" shouted the beholders

"How can a mere succubus possess true sight" said Rulrok

"It's not that rare Rulrok, everyone else has it in this room" said Kraks

"I refuse to believe that a rank one succubus has access to such a prestigious ability without underhanded tactics" said Rulrok

"Now, Rulrok, it isn't really that rare I mean" started Tulvun "It damn well is rare" said Rulrok

And that was when all hell broke loose. The beholders all started to hover out of their chairs climbing slightly higher and beginning to shout over each other to be heard. Kat was sure if she really wanted, she could make out what was being said, but she saw no point. *At this point they were just hurling insults at each other. I thought these guys were professionals.* But Kraks did mutter something that caught Kat's attention.

"Why do I even bother. Try to be the nice friend and bring these guys into an interesting error dispute and they make it about abilities and heritage. I left the Wrath faction years ago to avoid this shit. Do I attract these people?"

Huh, I can almost hear capitalisation in Wrath. Guess a few of the sins are factions or something? System want to chime in here?

--

No

--

Well alrighty then. Thought Kat as she closed her eyes and snuggled back into the couch. It really couldn't be underestimated how comfortable this was even with a horde of angry screaming demons floating next to you.

This argument continued for a few minutes before Kraks slammed his hand down on the desk. Everyone froze. Well Kat stayed relaxed, the beholders all froze and snapped their attention to Kraks.

"Right, now that you idiots have calmed down. I brought you here for one reason. To go over a case. I did this because it's interesting and I'm a good friend but don't make me regret it again or I'll kick you out of my office. Do I need to repeat myself?"

"No Sir" aid the beholders as the floated back down to their chairs.

Chapter 59: Error List

Kraks scanned the room, looking for any further comments for the peanut gallery and when none were forthcoming he faced Kat.

"First and foremost, Kat, do you consent to the reading in full of the error scenario list I have been provided to the additional observers. It is within your system rights to refuse such a request and while this will not trigger the chains of covenant it is still an important matter" said Kraks

"I accept" said Kat

Nodding along Kraks continued "Ok, now Kat I believe this is your first experience with an error. Would you like me to inform you of standard error procedure"

"Please" nodded Kat

"Ok. Disputes are a different category and will not be touched on. Errors are considered to have occurred when the D.E.M.O.N.S is directly responsible for an unforeseen outcome that causes harm to the User could have been prevented. When an Error is deemed to have occurred the User it affects is able to claim compensation proportional to the Error immediately and without prejudice. Do you follow?"

Kat nodded.

"Ok, in your case the reason for this hearing is that you have a number of conflicting errors that I will now list"

"An error in the awakening process that caused significant extra demonic energy to be expanded. An error in the awakening process causing increased likelihood of death in User Kat. An error in the forming User Kat's Demonic Flame causing unforeseen changes to the size and shape of User Kat's flame. Do you agree the following is accurate and understandable"

"Yes"

"Ok good. I apologise for the slightly strange language I am required to read out the error listing in full and by word before we address the conflict. Before we move on to that, observers do you have any additional questions" said Kraks

None of the beholders moved, Kat got the impression they just didn't want to annoy Kraks.

"Ok, now to begin with, these errors cause conflicting information when relating to the amount and manner of compensation. I'll go over the errors in order" Pulling up another tablet Kraks adjusted his glasses and continued

"Kat, during your awakening you were given an additional demonic energy that surpassed the amount necessary, to the tune of 500 standard units of demonic energy"

Kraks was interrupted by Rulrok "500 units? How could such a thing be allowed. That much demonic energy could be used to awaken 50 demons"

"Wait your turn" Kraks glared at Rulrok "But to answer your question, Kat had to undergo a full awakening"

"That only accounts for 100 units, why was she ever given another 400, that's not safe" said Xaz'gelen

"According to the report Kat's home dimension suppresses demonic energy and as such nothing was detected leaking from her during the final step" said Kraks

A barking laugh was heard from Xoglaxuch who had yet to speak "Heh. I never thought I'd see the day. A dimension that can suppress demonic energy, how can it possibly have done so"

"I'm not allowed to inform you of that, Kat might be, but I'm not" said Kraks

System can I inform them? Should I

--

User Kat is allowed to inform any Individual of the details of User Kat's home universe. D.E.M.O.N.S is unaware of what User Kat should do.

--

Great, thanks for the advice... not. "My dimension suppressing all forms of higher energy" said Kat

This got the old beholder's attention a flash of light gleamed in his eye before nodding slightly without saying anything.

"Why does that matter?" asked Bob

"It means, that the dimension can suppress demonic energy because it doesn't target it specifically it suppresses everything. Clearly it doesn't do so perfectly because Kat was able to awaken but just the fact that the universe doesn't collapse is interesting in and of itself" said Xaz'gelen

"Um, why would a universe collapse?" asked Kat

"I'll tell you, the others probably can't" said Xoglaxuch "A universe is built upon it's laws, and its higher energy. If an incompatible energy enters into that world, either the person using it is torn apart and killed or the universe is torn apart and killed. For some reason, no universe has ever been able to suppress demonic energy, they all tear themselves apart instead"

"How would we know though? If a demon has to travel there isn't there a chance they died instead?" said Kat

"I can explain that one." Said Kraks "It's only if the energy and the universe clash that this happens. Say you had mana and never casted a spell nothing would happen to you. On top of this, demons that have been summoned are automatically sent out of the dimension instead of dying. These two factors mean that a demon could find a world without it killing them but we never really have"

"So was my dimension completely unknown before this?" asked Kat

"Possible, but doubtful. The fact that D.E.M.O.N.S was connected to it implies that a demon was summoned there or at least visited in the past. Then again, I don't truly know how D.E.M.O.N.S does what it does, that's just what I've heard" said Kraks

"Anyway, back to the issue at hand. The first error is that you were given more energy then intended. This has some knock on effects, but for this issue the main point is should you be charged for the extra 400 units? You will already be required to pay for the initial 100 but you never asked for the additional amount"

"Well I think" said Rulrok "Nothing yet" finished Kraks

"These issues are too closely linked so moving on. Kat's increased likelihood of death. This is much harder to quantify because D.E.M.O.N.S has never experienced an awakening in a dimension like yours Kat. As such while you were likely put at greater risk, exactly how much is up for debate. Perhaps it was a negligible amount, perhaps you barely survived. We simply don't know. Kat was however not properly informed of the awakening process, and was never giving a way to deal with it considering her unique aura" said Kraks

"Finally" said Kraks eyeing the others for interruptions "Kat's starting flame isn't a fire, it has taken a shape"

"What that's it?" said Vraz'gelen

"That's all that's written under the error" said Kraks "I'm not entirely sure why this counts as an error to be honest"

"Isn't shaping a sign of at least rank 3?" said Bob

"Indeed, normally a simple shape will emerge at rank 3 or above" said Tulvan

"What shape is it?" said Xaz'gelen

"How rude, I can't believe you'd even ask that" said Rulrok

"But it could be important" said Xaz'gelen

And then the beholders were off to the races. The arguments started flying left and right, once again taking to the sky

"There they go again" said Kat.

"Ah the joys of the young, it warms my heart to see the old arts haven't died" said Xoglaxuch as he hovered behind Kat.

Spinning around in shock Kat looked at the tie wearing beholder. She hadn't heard him move behind her. *Then again, if you don't have feet perhaps that easier.*

"Why do you say it warms your heart?" said Kat

"Well, beholders have traditionally found diplomacy and research to be their true battlefield. There's only one other family that can claim the same, though I'm not allowed to speak about them" said Xoglaxuch "But in the more recent centuries more and more beholders have chosen the way of combat. It disappoints this old soul to see the old arts lost. It's not the end for us by a long shot but the youth are more hot-headed these days"

"Uh huh" mumbled Kat not really following "Anyway, why does it matter what my demonic flame looks like?"

"Well, it is an immensely personal thing to share ones flame. Even speaking on it's true form is consider something for close friends and family" said Xoglaxuch

"Though not always family" Xoglaxuch muttered softly but more than loud enough for Kat to hear.

"Right... then why did they even ask?" asked Kat

"Well, they've not worked here a long time. The kids are used to getting absolutely every scrap of information relating to the case, and something as important as a rank 1 demon with a shaped flame is valuable and interesting in the extreme" said Xoglaxuch *Novelnext.com*

"I think I understand Xoglaxuch. Do you think I should tell them? I do believe it to be somewhat relevant but if it's so precious I'm not sure I should share" said Kat

"I think, if you believe you must, bind them with the chains to never speak of your flames appearance to anyone. Actually do it properly and prevent them from even considering informing others in any way shape or form. It sounds like your flame is going to be quite shocking, and you don't want other fools to come barking at you" said Xoglaxuch

"Thanks, I'll keep that in mind" said Kat as she sunk back into the chair. *It seems like another argument I'll have to wait out.*

Chapter 60: Chibi Kat

This time the argument raged on with no end in sight. Kraks even tried to interrupt them a few times but the group of arguing beholders glared at him and brought power into their eyes causing them to glow a little. Kat had the feeling Kraks would have won anyway but it seems like he was willing to let it drop.

After over an hour of relaxing Kat decided enough was enough. She was more than willing to wait if there was actually an end in sight, but this was excessive. *Why is this such a big deal to you all? I'd have shown my flame if you'd just asked but no, had to start an hour long discussion about it.*

"Enough!" said Kat and forced her aura onto the beholders. To her shock and their own it crashed over them instantly dispelling the fight.

"What... what sort of Aura is this?" asked Tulvun

"It's my aura and I think this fight has gone on long enough" said Kat standing up and flaring her wings "I'll show you my flame as long as everyone in the room agrees to never reveal it's form to anyone, anything, and in any shape or form. Do you accept?"

Xoglaxuch, Tulvun, Xaz'gelen and Vraz'gelen instantly agreed. Kraks and Rulrok however paused. "What does your aura do?" asked Kraks "I hope it doesn't influence them to agree"

"No, I don't think so. I suppose it could be an issue of semantics on what constitute that, but... I'd say no" said Kat pondering on that question herself

"I'm sorry but I refuse anyway" said Rulrok

"Well I'll have to ask you to leave then" said Kat *I'm tempted to let you stay but that would just be unfair to the others at the point.*

"Understood" said Rulrok who floated leisurely to the door and left without complaint.

Tulvun and Kraks eye's nearly fell out of their heads. Tulvun just stammered and waved his tentacles at the door but Kraks spoke up "How did you even do that?"

"My aura probably helped, but I don't know if I want to say too much more than that" said Kat.

"Well, I suppose I also accept" said Kraks. As he said that a myriad of coloured chains extended between the demons. Each chain seemed to dye itself a slightly different colour but it was hard to tell as they shifted and warped underneath the gaze of everyone in the room.

"Woah, why did those chains have so many colours" said Kat

"Well, normally the chains are the same colour as your demon fire but because this contract involved so many demons the flames mixed together to change it. Sometimes it has some weird effects, but it's all visual I assure you" said Kraks

"Right well now that's settled. How do I actually show you my flame?" asked Kat

"Just think about projecting it. Feel into you core and push it in front of you. Some like to push it out of their hands" said Kraks

And so Kat followed his instructions. Finding that well of power in her stomach and pushing out with it. Purple flames erupted from Kat's chest and shot towards the centre of the room. Kat dropped her

control instantly in a panic and the fire faded. Blushing awkwardly and looking at the ground Kat mumbled "I don't think that was quite proper"

"Hahaha, you failed spectacularly, even newly awakened demons can do it. Haha" said Vraz'gelen

System can you tell me what went wrong. Thought Kat as she continued to stare at the floor.

--

User Kat's Demonic Flame makes up 95% of User Kat's demonic energy. Projecting it could have serious consequences to User Kat's health. It also seems to have limited User Kat's ability to project the Demonic Flame

--

Wait so does that mean I can't use it outside of my body at all?

--

User Kat will likely have no issues with this. It is only projection as User Kat is not capable of releasing User Kat's full reserves of Demonic Energy in such a fast fashion. Theoretically if User Kat slowly projected User Kat's Demonic Flame it may still be possible.

--

Well, how long would that take?

--

D.E.M.O.N.S estimates the time taken will exceed 10 hours.

--

Great...

The beholders for their part just sat and watched Kat patiently. They couldn't see D.E.M.O.N.S's messages but they did recognise the tell-tale signs of a young demon who was conversing with it. The slightly focused stare just in front of their face. The eyes that roamed across the lines of text. The slightly twitching facial expressions in response to various news.

Do I have any other options?

-- no**VelnExt.com**

D.E.M.O.N.S is calculating to devise a suitable method of false projection. It is deemed a necessary demon skill. As such D.E.M.O.N.S believes a solution must be found.

Calculating...

Running simulation...

Discarding Results ending in crippling...

Discarding Results ending in gender reversal...

Discarding Results ending in death...

Discarding Results ending in excruciating pain...

Discarding Results that contain euphoric pleasure...

Discarding Results deemed unsuitable for this story...

Final Results Calculated. Options remaining 3

Recalculating...

Discarding Results requiring advanced power level...

Final Results Calculated. Options remaining 0

Error

Recalculating

Final Results Calculated. Options remaining 0.5

Method deemed acceptable.

--

Um, should I be worried at all system?

--

User Kat is advised not to worry.

--

Right, I'm advised to, but what are the chances this goes horribly wrong?

--

Define parameters for "Horribly"

--

Oh I don't know, um death?

--

D.E.M.O.N.S calculates chance of death using final method to be 5%

--

Isn't that kind of high?

--

D.E.M.O.N.S informs User Kat this is only for the first activation of skill. Once complete successfully
D.E.M.O.N.S will know with certainty if death will happen

--

Fine let's have a go then. Kat sighed. Following the instructions given to her by D.E.M.O.N.S wasn't too hard. Bend a bit of power here, twist it there. Push it towards the hand outstretched and spin.

The demons in the room were watching Kat spin in circles with some confusion so Kraks decided to speak up "Um Kat why are you spinning"

"D.E.M.O.N.S had to come with a way for me to use false projection. Can't talk concentrating" said Kat.

Finally after seven rotations the power in Kat's hand flared and on it appeared a tiny copy of Kat made of fire. It had its arms laid out in front of it mirroring Kat's position but unlike Kat the fire copy of her appeared to float with her feet hanging down. Fire Kat's wings were spread as well with her tail coiled into a hook. Firey Kat's horns also seemed to glow brighter than the rest of her figure.

Unknown to Kat however projecting her Demonic Flame onto her palm was having an effect on her as well. Kat's eyes glowed purple matching her flames while her horns turned much further to a purple shade with tiny licks of flame spouting from the end. Her tail burned with fire surrounding the tip while her wings glowed purple along the bones.

The beholders were shocked. Jaws dropping they plopped back into their chairs and just stared at Kat uncomprehendingly. Kraks however pales significantly. Kat's manifestation looked like a fearsome display of power and control that even he would struggle to imitate.

"Um, Kat... what rank are you" said Kraks

Kat who was admiring the small figure in her hand replied "0.5, I think the system said"

"Right but how strong are you?" said Kraks

"Just rank 1 I think why?" asked Kat looking to Kraks who had recovered from his shock slightly.

"Could you double check for me?" asked Kraks

"Sure?" said Kat confused tilting her head to the side. Sadly the mini Kat didn't imitate her movements.

--

User Kat is roughly equivalent to a rank 1 in power. D.E.M.O.N.S is unsure why User Kraks would ask this question.

--

"Nope, says I'm rank 1 and that it's confused as to why you'd even ask" said Kat

Now it was Kraks turn to look confused. Glancing off to the side he checked the system and received a similar answer.

"Right, so... your Demonic Flame naturally looks like you?" said Kraks

"Yup, though I have to say this version of my flame is much cuter than normal" said Kat

"Right, well... Um" Kraks struggled with his words and looked to the beholders for some assistance.

It was a shame for Kraks then that they hadn't yet managed to pick their jaws of the floor. They did not understand the significance of having a shaped flame unlike Kraks but after hearing Kat was only rank 1 they seemed to share in some of his confusion.

"Huh. I think I understand why I was assigned to this case now. Things just got a lot more complicated when it comes to dealing with your error report. Whatever has happened to your flame it is obviously changed and likely for the better. This sort of benefit is likely impossible to quantify and now makes it nearly impossible for us to calculate the compensation you are owed if any" said Kraks "What a headache..."