

DEMONS 531

Chapter 531: Three Times the Laughter

Before Kat even knew what was happening she was suddenly sitting in the chair that she could have sworn was still in front of her staring at Lillian. Before she could recover properly she saw Red step forward and bow while saying, "I will leave you two together" before leaving.

Kat felt like watching Red leave, just to give herself something else to do other than staring at Lillian but it didn't exactly work. Kat felt a bit like her brain had decided that it'd had enough for the day and was going on vacation. This was NOT helped when Lillian just smiled at her for a few moments before being enveloped in a blue light.

When it cleared up, there was two Lillian's, and a new chair for the extra. The one on the left nodded before gliding with the chair over towards another section of the desk and getting back to work. Thing is, Kat could see the chair underneath the desk, and it had no wheels, so how that was managed was a mystery.

"Don't mind her" said Lillian, still doing her mystery tri tone impression. Apparently it was just how she spoke, "She's still me. This copy of me shall speak with you while the other does the work, so it's all fine"

That explains why Lillian's time is only somewhat precious dammit. I should have seen this coming. Kat nodded dumbly and tried to find some proper words to speak. Sadly, all she came up with was, "I heard you wanted to speak with me"

This caused Lillian to laugh fully, throwing her head back and letting her triple voice mix together in strange ways. The seductive voice was practically cackling, the old voice sounded like it was stifling an amused chortle, while the young voice laughed freely as if unburdened by anything. "I believe that to be self evident" said Lillian "Still, I'm not trying to be rude. It was amusing to me and I enjoyed that immensely. Not many are so willing to just come out and say something like that.

"They'd go on and on about how 'they are blessed by my presence' or 'it is an honour to serve' and other such drivel. As if the fact I can turn myself into a hivemind means I have infinite time to waste on their pretentious speech. Still, I'm happy to get down to things. The reason I have called you here is to attempt to recruit you to my faction, nothing more and nothing less. I'm sure my secretary already mentioned that part though, so... where would you like to start?"

"Um... I guess the big one is... why? I mean... even with the whole... clone army thing I'd imagine you have better things to be doing..." said Kat awkwardly while cursing herself internally for not being able to speak intelligently just yet.

Lillian smiled, "In terms of other duties. I don't really have much I'd rather be doing. Mixing with the new recruits is fun..." Lillian glowed again and Kat found herself sitting across from a perfect copy of herself. "... things like this help me fit in" and the voice matched. Gone was the strange multi tone, now Lillian sounded no different to Kat herself.

Kat gulped slightly. *That... well that's a thing I guess.* Lillian changed back quickly and said, "Yes" her voice back to the triple layered speech, "I sometimes pretend to be a lower ranking employee. It's great fun. Plus, I've gotten really good at delegating so I don't spread myself out that much. Fun fact actually,

there are only four copies of me around at the moment and you're in the room with two of them. The me speaking to you is actually the main Lillian, so... well actually I don't care if you're suitably impressed the look on your face is worth it"

Kat didn't even notice the change. Her eyes were wide and her jaw had dropped. She'd just assumed Lillian would use her copies for a lot of things. To find out that she was talking to the original, and that there was only four of her at the moment was a shock to Kat. "Now," said Lillian continuing, "that I've gotten that part covered. Why do I want you here?"

"The answer is broken into a few parts. The first is your nondem status. You have already gained two immensely powerful abilities at Rank 1 and your Rank 2 ability is quite valuable to us as well. Just that alone would probably be enough to get here. The addition of your particular appearance just adds to things."

Kat raised her eyebrow to ask the silent question not trusting her voice. Lillian nodded, "Yes your appearance. It's actually just as important as the other points if not more so. You see, its your horns Kat. They simply are not seen anymore. Now, I'm older than I look, obviously, and I was Rank 6 before this Hub even came into existence. Despite this, I don't recall ever meeting someone with horns in your specific configuration.

"Now, I've heard about them sure. And nothing I've found suggests that your horns are in any way special... but that in itself is weird. Plenty of other demons like to boast. You met my secretary, right? Well her clan is known for there intellect supposedly and their horn placement on the temples is a big part of that.

"How true it is, I don't know. I don't work with medical, and I'm not sure anybody has ever truly tested that sort of thing. Too much political pressure you understand. The strange thing though, is once again the lack of boasting and information. Sure, you might be like the bull horned Succubus that had large horns extending from the sides of their heads once upon a time like pit lords that just had the trait being bred out...

"But I'm not so sure. With that combined together with your nondem status, I expect great things in the future. Allowing you to join us here would be a great boon. Even if you never reach past Rank 5, it would still be worth it for us at Lust, and I can almost be certain you'll make it there. Call it an old demon's feeling"

"But... but you just turned into me, didn't you? Doesn't that count?" asked Kat still surprised about that part. She was right though; Lillian had changed horns and all.

Lillian shook her head in response though. "I'm afraid it really doesn't count. The form you see before is my default appearance. I make no secret of this fact, and while many demons still refuse to believe it... it is no less true.

"My shapeshifting abilities are great, and I can take on the appearance of basically anyone. I'm not even limited to Succubi. I could be a pit fiend if I wanted to. Nothing is stopping me. It's just not the same though. Even if I changed into... say a gorgon, I wouldn't gain the ability to petrify people. I might be able to spoof the effect, or use contacts or something, but just using my shapeshifting I could not. You however, are in your original form."

Kat pursed her lips and leaned back into the chair, happy it was allowing her wings to phase through it. "I... I still don't see why it's important I guess." Said Kat

Lillian gave a light childish looking shrug but for some reason it had weight behind it, as if Lillian was saying nobody could ever know. "Take it as an old demon's intuition if you wish. As I said there is no true facts for it. It's an interesting extra, and while I count it as important, I don't need to add it as part of my justification to have the others of the faction agree."

"Right... ok" said Kat gathering herself, "What would I be doing if I joined exactly?"

"Whatever you wanted within reason" said Lillian, "this isn't just a chance for you, but what is offered to everyone. Most demons join a faction and then gain employment there to avoid Contracts that are mandatory until Rank 3 without getting a special exception. If you wanted to just join us on paper there wouldn't be too much you'd be required to do at the beginning."

Kat narrowed her eyes at that, and Lillian continued, "Yes I see that question. Later on, you'd be asked for your help when things of more sensitive nature come up. Internal Lust matters. Perhaps someone in the faction needs your True Sight, or your Dream Walking. You would not be uncompensated, but... when you are higher Rank, and requested, it is likely because there weren't many other options."

Kat nodded, and felt a question bubbling in her throat but she didn't want to voice it. The question was asked anyway, apparently her mouth decided it was too important to ignore. "I won't have to... you know... do any aah... sexual acts right?"

Lillian's laughter burst out once again with its strange three tones of laughter all laughing in different ways, though it seemed the 'older' voice was laughing more genuinely now. "Of course not Kat. We have plenty willing to join our organisation for that sole reason alone. Not only is it barbaric to force something like that upon someone, we simply have no need for it. Those stations are popular ones and if it was found out somebody was forced into one there would be a veritable army willing to spring up to assist the victim with claiming vengeance."

Chapter 532: A Little Bit of Everything All of the Time

"Soooo..." said Kat somewhat awkwardly drawing out the word "You explained what I don't have to do... but what can I do? I mean... you said anything but... that's... that's a bit broad so... could I get some examples?"

Lillian gave Kat a polite smile at the question and said, "It really is that simple here at Lust. The biggest thing we do is simply being able to work with most of the other factions. We really do have everything on offer, even if they aren't always the absolute best.

"For example, we have our own chefs here. They work with people from Gluttony regularly and it's a fair exchange. We mostly specialise in quicker food, the type of things you'll grab while walking, or perhaps desserts. We still don't come close to the true expertise top Gluttony chefs have but we pull our weight.

"We also have an Enforcer division. Split between combatants and watchers. Watchers are the guards that you'll see around. They are combat trained but its more defensive in nature. Their job is to watch out for trouble and then call in a combatant if necessary. It's no Wrath, certainly, but we're more relaxed about a lot of things. Wrath is... it's a lot of pressure for some people.

"I know why they do it like that though. Wrath still has this... strange air of shared hardship. It's really hard to explain if you don't have it but even with our ability to make anyone comfortable here, we cannot replicate the feeling of standing beside someone you've fought for your life with.

"That's the thing. Fundamentally, we deal with entertainment, but are more than willing to branch out and work with others to keep ourselves somewhat self contained with collaboration. It's a strange philosophy but it works well for us. Greed even owns some of the stores in our compound, but we staff most of them. Things like that.

"Though... perhaps I'm also getting off topic. While these are selling points I'm sure I have a new question for you Kat. Do you know why demons are told to pick a faction at Rank 3? Why so many people chose to stop going out on Contracts?" towards the end, all three of Lillian's voices became more serious, even the youngest sounding one.

"No? I mean... I just assumed it was a thing that happened, perhaps tradition?" answered Kat vaguely.

Lillian shook her head. "No it isn't much like that at all. There are a few reasons. The biggest is actually that some of your Rank 3 Contracts won't really be worth what you'll get paid for them. Same for anything higher as well most of the time. Now, Rank 3 isn't too bad. Some of them will be worth it but see, the problem is...

"A lot of worlds don't have anyone at the power level of a Rank 3 demon so they struggle to understand they exist. Now, even saying that, a good chunk of worlds can get close. They can also use technology or magitech if it's available to help bridge these gaps so it isn't so bad. Rank 4 is where it starts to be a real issue.

"Rank 4 is overkill in some many places. Worlds with Qi can most commonly deal with it, but some Mana based worlds never develop ways to strengthen themselves to a point where they could pose a risk to a Rank 4 demon. Let's not even get started on Rank 5's, or a Rank 6 like myself.

"Because of this, the more powerful you get the more likely you are to just get Contracts you can complete in a day and make hardly any currency from it. Then the factions come in. They allow you to work to substitute that. Now some people prefer working exclusively for their faction, but that's actually quite rare.

"The most common thing is that they'll chose a much narrower set of Contracts they'll be willing to take, or perhaps a price floor and just work whenever they don't get called in. Obviously, people in management roles like myself, well I cheat with clones, but normally like myself, won't be able to leave so easily, but for receptionists they are quite interchangeable if one gets called away.

"On the completely opposite side, sometimes people just want something steady. A nice nine to five job or whatever hours they choose. Even if it's not really what they want to do, a lot of demons still think its better then waiting for Contracts." Lillian breathes out a long sigh and Kat is surprised that it actually sounds normal. "On the other hand, some people really just want adventure or bask in the more interesting tasks they get assigned. It's pretty easy to live on a Contract wage as long as you're not going overboard. Besides, you can take extra Contracts if you really want. Anyway, I'm getting distracted.

"What really sits at the heart of things, is that you can do anything here that you want. You might need to make some concessions, but that might be worth it to you." Finished Lillian. As she did a screen brightened nearby and she glanced at it for a fraction of a second before flinging it down to her clone.

Well... that's all a bit to take in. But it makes sense really. Still that's a bit too much choice. "What sort of concessions?" asked Kat

Lillian grinned showing off a full mouth of teeth that were currently transformed to look like sharks teeth, interlocking and razor sharp. "Well, that really depends on the area you want to go in. Let's start with the obvious. Our... carnal pleasure areas. In general, the pay is actually quite poor.

"Demons who sign up for it get an apartment to themselves and free food from the shops around here up to a certain limit, but they get paid almost nothing. That might seem harsh but it's a very common ambition Succubi strive for. So it's a balance on our part as well. They don't get much money but they get a very nice place to live and all the food they could need. Nothing super extravagant, but it keeps the applicants down to those who really LOVE the job" when Lillian said the word 'love' Kat nearly jumped as her voices jumped up to five but they were gone before Kat could distinguish them properly.

"On the other hand, our security task force, they don't get nearly as much combat as they would in Wrath. Things tend to be pretty chill because we focus on relaxation and fun. The main thing they deal with in the end, are intoxicated customers a lot of the time. Ohn the other hand, they get free access to top of the line gym facilities, decent pay, and if they so choose, they can apply for a discount on all goods and services in the Lust facilities if they agree to act as a semi on duty officer when they are there.

"Another example is the receptionists. Their compromise is that they can take on more work for more pay. Just sitting at the front desk gets you barely anything, but if you take on additional paperwork that needs filing or make sure you're the one answering requests you can make more and more money. I know we had one guy actually, it was a while back, and they worked almost 24/7 as a receptionist for about six months. They manage to get one of the highest salaries in the entire building for those six months but it was a lot of work. We had to get them to cut back actually, as it was causing medical issues even though they had an ability preventing the need for sleep"

Huh... I guess... that is a balance between things. "So... assuming I was interested, but mostly still planning to continue with Contract work for now... what would happen? And what benefits do I get just from agreeing?" asked Kat

"We'll get to the benefits in a moment. As for what you have to do on your end, well, it's illegal for me to force you to sign anything at the moment. Pressuring people into Factions is highly illegal." Kat tilted her head a bit and Lillian held up a hand to stop Kat from asking anything, "No, what I'm doing does not count as pressuring. The laws are very clear on that. The essential points that allow me to do this boil down to a few things...

"The first is that I'm not keeping you here. You can, at any point, walk right out the door behind you and leave. I'm being polite of course, and hopefully this has been an enjoyable conversation, but theoretically, if for some reason it got heated or you started to wish to leave, you could simply get up. Neither myself nor my staff would be able to stop you.

"The next thing is that I'm not forcing you to sign anything to say you'll join us. I will ask, if you are willing, for a specific verbal affirmation, but nothing will be signed and nothing permanently binding will happen until your Rank 3. Even then, as this is the Lust faction, we don't even mind people swapping to other factions as much. I would have an issue if you went to Envy or Pride, but that would be more of a personal issue than a legal one from our charter's standpoint. The final thing is that I'm not making any threats at all. Nothing bad will happen if you say no"

Chapter 533: Humouring the Demon Loli

"And if I say yes?" asked Kat curious as to what she'd be agreeing to at what would be acquired.

Lillian nodded with the words a small smile touching her lips. "Well, if you said yes a few things would happen. The primary thing would be that other Factions wouldn't approach you for membership when you reach Rank 3. Technically there is nothing legally binding here, but we respect claims made this way and to disrupt that would be... very bad... let's just say. So, if you are worried about being bothered by recruiters that's the biggest bonus.

"The second thing that would happen is that for the period of a year and a day you'd be able to get an employee discount on the services here. You'd be treated as a Faction member, a low level one, but a Faction member none the less. Now, that's mostly positive, but it does also mean that if you cause any problems with the rest of the Faction things are more serious than just being an unruly customer.

"It would depend on the problem of course, but there would be repercussions. I can go into them if you really want? But I don't think it's necessary. You'd have no additional rules that a customer wouldn't and anything else is very common sense you know? Don't yell at staff, don't harass staff, don't deface property that sort of thing."

"Ah, that's fine I think. I don't believe I'm likely to cause any problems... I don't really drink or... do drugs or... indulge I guess... in many ways so I should be fine" said Kat

"We'll come back to that" chirped Lillian with a grin, her young voice overshadowing the other two for some reason, forcing them back. "Back to the bonuses though. The limit of a year and a day would be something you can extend. We aren't trying to rush you to Rank 3. You'd be able to make another verbal agreement at the end of it to renew things so don't worry about that.

"Moving on for real, you'd also be able to contact us through D.E.M.O.N.S. If something major comes up, perhaps you need therapy for yourself or someone else, maybe you just need to relax for a while, heck, maybe you're need to escape from your home world because the criminal underworld is coming from you. You can call us, and we can help, or we can summon you here so you can get help.

"Depending on the circumstances you may need to pay for the assistance, but it'd be at employee prices once again, and the transportation at least would be free. We also have loan schemes separate from D.E.M.O.N.S itself if needed but that's another thing I don't feel we need to go into right now."

Hmm. Those... it isn't exactly many benefits but at the same time... those three things are all pretty significant in and of themselves. Is it worth it though? I mean... it sounds like a decent option. "What would I have to agree to?" asked Kat

Lillian grinned, this time with human teeth, and said, "You would be required to state something along the lines of: I, Kat, accept this offer from Lillian in good faith, with the intention to join the Lust Faction upon reaching Rank 3. I have no desire to abuse this offer, and do not wish to join any other Factions now, or, to my knowledge, in the future.

"That's about what I'd need you to say. It's not binding of course, but because you, like all demons, must speak the truth it's essentially asking you to confirm your desire to join us of your own free will and don't want to cause trouble for my faction. Things can change of course, and depending on what they are, I might be a little annoyed, but that's sometimes just how things are. You would face no repercussions from going back except for a lack of trust, assuming there are no big changes."

"Is there a reason to expect big changes?" asked Kat "I mean... this really does seem to be the best Faction for me at the moment. Even if that's because I don't feel attraction towards a specific one, this seems the best of what's on offer, for... hopefully obvious reasons"

"Humour me, if you don't mind Kat. Please tell me what issues you have with the others" asked Lillian softly with a smile, now with silver teeth.

Kat bit her lip and considered things for a few moments. *I... hmm... I don't have to say anything... and I might be giving away information... but Lillian's right. This is a conversation and she's given me a lot of information so far and despite her strange voice, she's very pleasant to listen to. It's easy on the ears.*

"Well, let's start with Pride. They didn't even let me into their compound for punishment duty. Even if they were to invite me later when I reach Rank 3... I feel like... it just isn't polite you know? I'm quite sure I wouldn't fit in there... and... I'm pretty sure I wouldn't want to.

"Envy is similar. They tried to use the punishment as a way to extract information from me and Kamiko. I... I just don't understand why they'd bother? It was very weird to experience and the whole setup just seemed... off? Wrong? I don't really know but I wouldn't call it a pleasant experience. So, I'd rather not join up with them.

"Next is Wrath. I just don't enjoy combat. I don't hate it of course, and when it needs to be done on Contracts I can enjoy it... but it's not my life. I don't live for the fight. I don't want to be a renowned fighter. I'm happy to get some lessons and improve myself but... for Wrath it's basically a way of life and I'm not quite that into it.

"For Gluttony... that was actually a major workout when I went there. It's interesting certainly, but I have no real cooking experience and I don't exactly want any. I also just... I don't enjoy food the way they do. I eat when I'm hungry and that seems to be less and less these days. I've gone days without food and suffered no ill effects and that... just doesn't bother me.

"Greed... oh Greed... I've grown up with... minimal possessions and I never resented that fact. I don't feel the need to collect things or try and make a bunch of money... but they do have interesting artifacts. It's nowhere near as interesting as your offer but had Lust been... more what I was afraid it was Greed might have actually been where I ended up.

"Finally, Sloth was... weird? I fought a bunch of rats in a mineshaft and I'm not really sure that's standard affair for the Faction. I don't know I can judge them properly... but... I think I'd get bored, if I had to guess."

Kat sucked in a deep breath as she finished speaking only to realise she'd forgotten something. "Oh, and Medical. Um... I don't have any healing abilities?" said more a question.

Lillian gave a little clap when Kat finished speaking before she gave a reply of her own. "I'm very glad to hear that. I've taken great pains to ensure my Faction is looked upon fondly by many demons both for signing up and for potential partnerships. Just focusing on sex would be boring and such old hat.

"The other Factions have branched out a little more than it might have seemed to you, I'll admit as much, but I'm the real progressive of the lot. Not sure why, I'm currently the oldest Faction leader in this Hub, so it can't be age. Still, I guess for the other's if it ain't broken don't fix it."

Lillian flicked away another notification on one of her monitors before pulling her chair in closer and placing her hands on the desk. "Now, you also mentioned big changes..." said Lillian three voices branching out sounding more different then ever "... the main one that would be expected would be a healing skill and a subsequent desire to join Medical. We don't really keep many on staff, because we have an agreement with them. A lot of Medical employees, especially the healers, are essentially part of our Faction as well, just not on paper"

That makes way too much sense. I wonder if Nira is part of Lust like that? Her attitude makes me think that yes, she is, but as a Rank 5... she might be more beholden to her Faction. Ignorant of Kat's thoughts Lillian continued, "Other potential options are gaining an ability that requires you to have a unique diet. If it's particularly powerful but costly Gluttony might be the only option.

"Those are the main ones that come to mind. It's also possible of course, that your personality starts to shift in the coming years. There's no certainty that you'll be Rank 3 any time soon, even if I do expect it within the year. Maybe you'll start to enjoy battle more? Acquire the taste for it... or perhaps... see something traumatic, as much as I wish that it will not happen, it's a possibility. You might break and find the monotony of Sloth a suitable option."

Chapter 534: Large Weights on small Shoulders

"Wait... is that why Sloth is the way it is? For traumatised demons?" asked Kat

Lillian shrugged, "It's a complicated issue. Certainly not all of them. Quite a few demons just have Sloth imbedded in them the same way we have Lust. You can't escape it in some form, it is part of us. For some, Sloth is their calling and they cannot escape, many do not try, and many more have no wish to."

Wait... what part of me has Lust embedded? I'm not sure I've had a lewd thought about a single person, except in the abstract when imagining it as something I may want in the future... and normally it didn't really feel like a good goal anyway. Should I ask...? Maybe later...

Lillian did notice the look on Kat's face as she continued to speak, but said nothing, not willing to pry for now. "Others go there as a different kind of retirement to the stuff we offer here. A life of calm and peace, if a very samey one. I've been told it's relaxing, and we even have rooms for sensory deprivation here, or basic mundane tasks like stacking cards or putting blocks in matching holes but...

"I've been told it's not the same. I don't understand, and I'm not sure if it's because I don't need that sort of calm or if I'm incapable of seeing the difference for some other more fundamental reason that escapes me.

"Then finally... not that the people who are there would admit it, are the traumatised. I don't know I'd say Sloth does it intentionally, not like how we try to get them therapy. It just... it just seems to be where they gravitate for some reason, if not sticking around Wrath to remember the good ol' days or something.

"Some members of that faction... they feel so broken to my senses and I find it immensely sad. Still, it's not something I'm allowed to look too closely at. I'm part of a rival Faction and it's just not something I'm allowed to investigate. I could bring in someone else to look into it of course but... it never seems to be doing harm, and stating as much would be an extremely serious accusation. Plus... some of them do come for therapy here anyway, so it's not all of them that use it as a substitute..."

Lillian trailed off and Kat waited a few moments before speaking up once it was clear Lillian had nothing more to say. "What... what causes someone to break like that? It's... it's somewhat hard to picture"

Lillian sucked in a deep breath and seemed to age ten years in an instant. The effect was magnified because Kat could tell Lillian didn't actually alter her features at old. When she spoke next the childish part of her voice was so quiet Kat wouldn't know it was there if she hadn't heard how Lillian spoke before. "Demons can break in a number of ways.

"I understand you ask because you're a nondem, so you can only really see things from a humans perspective, or at least, what you think is a humans perspective. Demons break very differently and yet exactly the same. The first thing you have to know though, is that demons are not human.

"Some of us are very human, and share many of the same thoughts and feelings... but we still aren't. We also aren't elves, or beast people or dryads. We have different needs and emotional requirements. An example of this, is that for some Succubi, the mere idea of being unattractive can cause physical illness. Scarring is taking especially bad by this people and can cause them to suffer from other issues, a notable one is muscle atrophy."

Kat's eyes went wide. *Is that something I have to worry about?* Lillian shrugged and continued, "I can see the question on your face Kat, and honestly... I don't know. I imagine you'll be fine, but I don't know. Still, to further the point, a lot of Wrath demons don't look at death the same way.

"They don't see it as anything bad. Some of them are physically incapable of feeling guilt for killing someone. They see nothing wrong with dying in battle. Sure we have really good healing now so they aren't the ones dying anywhere near as often, not that it was common before, but to them it just doesn't register as a problem some times.

"For even more of them, violence is just something to heal away. They can be beating their best friend with said friends recently severed arm, finish the spar, and then everyone's best friends again suffering from no ill effects.

"Or, perhaps we could talk about Gorgons. They are very sympathetic to snakes. Even snakes they know have no higher intelligence. They struggle to kill them and it can cause their hair to attack them. It shouldn't be like that. There's no discernible reason but it is a well-documented phenomenon.

"Anyway, those are all just general things. Still, they give a bit of an idea how a demon can break. And when a demon breaks... something just sort of lives them. Makes them hollow. Their demonic fire doesn't really burn anymore. It's more like the dusty ashes from long ago.

"They won't ever kill themselves. Suicide is not something demons ever consider. Nobody knows why. We are one of the few species that don't seem to do it. Some smarter individuals than I believe we were made that way. Made to consider death as something that is never an option.

"With that limitation on us... living such long lives can be a huge issue. If you're completely crushed and have nothing left... well... that's when you slink to Sloth, blend in with the other workers, and just... stop doing anything. Become a cog in the machine gladly and never think about moving outside of it. For when the world is pain, make yourself into something no longer a part of that world."

Lillian let out a long sigh and tapped on her desk. A few seconds past and then a steaming cup of coffee appeared and she took a long sip. "Do you want one?" asked Lillian

"I'm not much of a coffee person, I'll be fine" said Kat

"I can call up something else" said Lillian, "water, juice of some kind, hmm, a bit young for alcohol, but soft drinks would be alright with your regeneration."

"Just some water then thanks" answered Kat.

Lillian gave a slight nod of affirmation before pressing in a slightly different area of the desk summoning a glass of water and throwing it towards Kat. Kat reacted instinctively and caught it out of the air... and then looked down in surprise to realise that despite being exceptionally full not a drop had spilled out.

"Sorry, that got a little heavy there Kat." Said Lillian, "It's a topic close to my heart. It's actually the main reason that I pushed to have therapy as part of my Faction and not medical you know? It's not currently consistent which Faction takes on therapists in each Hub, but I was never going to settle for it being someone else's problem while I'm in charge here."

"That's very understandable" said Kat, "Is... how curable is it? I mean... I'm not sure I've ever seen anyone as broken as you describe so... even though it's hard to picture I don't even know where recovery would start"

Lillian let out another long sigh. The childish part of her voice rising up slightly but not much. "It takes a lot of work honestly. The biggest hitter is when they lose their romantic partner, or, D.E.M.O.N.S forbid one of their children... or both. That normally breaks them down quickly.

"Demons as a species just kinda... keep spreading out. Old age is rarely an issue, and when it is, normally the parents aren't better off so they'll... deal with it first I suppose. It's always a horrible thing to lose a loved one. For demons... some of them just never move on. To even start working on them we sometimes have to wait decades or centuries just to get them to talk to ANYONE. Not a therapist, not their boss... anyone at all.

"Once that's done, it tends to take a lot of effort from somebody close to get them to therapy. If it's me, or just a concerned citizen, they tend to brush it all off. That it doesn't really matter. That we're a stranger we won't bother with them. Or, that if we do bother with them we'll leave as well, eventually.

"Once started it's really up to the therapist in question. I'm actually licensed but... I find my shapeshifting ability doesn't help. If I go as myself, which I legally have to, because impersonating a medical professional, therapist or doctor, is illegal for us. That actually doesn't change if you're a doctor trying to be another one, even if they don't exist.

"So when I get clients... oh so many of them ask me to transform into the people they've lost. Which, I can't do. I don't get memories. I'm just a shapeshifter. Well, a bit more, but I don't have any memory related skills. I can't steal them, can't find them in other people. Nothing. So... it just doesn't go well. A lot of demons feel like I'm holding out on them by not transforming but I think using my shapeshifting as a coping mechanism is horribly manipulative on my part at best and gross negligence and painful at worst"

Chapter 535: Nothin' Like a Good Callander

"Well, that's enough about me for now," said Lillian, her voice returning to its 'natural' state. "however, I'd like to offer you a chance for some more information. Completely free of charge. It's the things I personally think a young Succubus needs to know. Mostly about your powers but a few other things as well"

That sounds really useful. I'd never say no to that sort of extra information and I think it'll really help. Kat gave a genuine smile at the offer, practically radiating happiness. "Yes please. Kamiko has been a big help but I'm sure there are things she just assumes I know. In fact it's happened a few times already so I know it'll happen"

Lillian nodded slightly a few times timing things to be a slight bobbing motion mostly with her chin, "Yes, yes, I understand that. I've actually had the pleasure of meeting other nondems before you so I may be able to help a bit more in that regard. They weren't Succubi, but that hardly matters.

"Now, the very very basic stuff I'm sure demons told you, and the step up from that I'm sure you've worked out by now. The big things you probably haven't been told are that Emergency Beacons, if stolen can forcibly summon you. Even if they don't have permission, with the artifact in question and some time and effort it can be done. They still can't really force a Contract on you but they can hold you there for a while before D.E.M.O.N.S can pull you back out.

"That's actually the leading cause of death in young demons. Some powerful individual gets wind of a Beacon and Summons you for something nefarious. It's not as big a problem as it once was, and D.E.M.O.N.S is constantly upgrading the security on them, but they are just so closely linked with you, in this case KAT as a concept, that magic will find a way.

"Qi can as well, but that's more about brute force. Magic finds a unique and interesting way around it, a sufficiently strong Qi practitioner, or Cultivator as they are known will use the Beacon to rip you there with brute strength. They basically just convince the world they're strong enough to grab you and they just sort of... can? It's very weird even by our standards but it's a thing.

"There is a limit to protecting against them as well. Defending from Qi is both easier and harder. It's easier because you can just put my energy into the protections, but harder because that's really all you can do. Sure Cultivators might be able to use the smart way, but compared to mana it just... isn't that good so punching it hard enough to summon you is actually easier.

"The issue of course, is that because of how connected it is to you, we can't just throw endless amounts of energy at it. It'd eventually destroy your connection to it once the unaffiliated energy reaches a certain threshold."

All of Lillian's voices got serious. "Now, I'm not telling you to stop giving out your Beacon if you need to. I can only trust your judgement in that. However, I do implore you to be ready for ANYTHING when you get called with one. Safety would be nice but it cannot be guaranteed when using them unlike a normal Summoning where you can be pulled out if you deny their offer."

Lillian took another quick sip from her cup and paused for a moment. "That's the basics about beacons, and important for everyone. We don't just tell people because it's a worry and there isn't much to be done about it really. It's seen as needless worry even though most parents will mention it.

"Now, next thing... is this" Lillian whipped out a stack of pictures and showed the first one to Kat who instantly twisted her nose up in distaste. It was a picture of several very naked men posing together and she quickly made to look away before taking in any further details except that they were all quite colourful.

When she did though, she found Lillian back in her line of sight with a different picture. This one with just the one naked man, obviously a incubus, and Kat was still not happy with the arrangement. "Is this really necessary?" whined Kat

"Yes" said Lillian with no trace of humour in any of her voices as she switched out the card. This next one was a large group of women instead. All naked of course. The same variety was on display as the mail version, and Kat's more significant comfort with the female body led her to give Lillian a deadpan look.

Lillian just smiled and switched it over to a single demon by herself, and Kat let out a long sigh. Seeing this, Lillian swapped through a few more. All just a single Succubus by herself with nothing, NOTHING, being hidden from the eyes, but all had vastly different features. One might have large breasts, another almost completely flat, a third with tiny horns, a fourth with large ones. Some had muscles, other were exceptionally lean. Hair length and style varied by the picture... both above and below.

Eventually it all started to blur together and Kat started zoning out. It just wasn't something she cared about enough. As soon as this happened though Lillian swapped the pictures up again. This time they featured a larger collection of demons, ranging from Beholders (which normally didn't wear anything anyway) to Gorgons and beyond. It was a rather eclectic group, some of which Kat was certain weren't demons.

Kat was honestly more interested in the sheer variety of species on display then the fact they were naked, a thing that Lillian actually seemed to pick up. She simply threw the cards up into the air and they all vanished. "Was that really necessary?" asked Kat as she saw the cards fading away.

Lillian nodded and started to fly back over to her old position. "It actually was. From that little test I can tell that you aren't straight, you aren't a lesbian, and you aren't pansexual. A few others are unlikely as well."

"Right... but why is this important? Actually, no wait, before that... why would you show all that to me? Isn't it a little rude to be just... giving those sorts of pictures out without permission?" asked Kat

Lillian burst out into laughter, shoulders heaving as she couldn't control herself and fell forward with her face on the desk. The demon bashed heavily on the desk as she tried to control herself, sending off shockwaves of air from the impact sight as she just kept laughing. Eventually, Kat started to get caught up in the laughter, not really finding it funny, but 30 seconds of prolonged giggles was too much for her.

This continued for a while, as Lillian slowly got control over herself. Lifted her body up, and then looked Kat in the eyes and saw... something before bursting into laughter once again. It took multiple attempts before things calmed down enough. Lillian was wiping away glowing silver tears from her eyes and collected them for some reason as she carefully regained her breathing. "Oh that... Kat you sweet summer child. That's a precious attitude that needs to be protected.

"If I didn't think you'd keep feeling bad for them if I failed to explain why your answer was so funny, I'd keep you in the dark. Such innocence should be protected after all... sadly I'll have to chip away a bit of that.

"You see Kat... every single person in those images is a rather hardcore exhibitionist. They all get off on the idea that literally anyone could end up with those pictures. From what I've been told that's exactly the reason I've been given them, or more accurately my previous secretary.

"While she was working for me she started up a... newsletter? That's a good enough term. She started up a newsletter for people who want to receive nude pictures once a week. It was originally once a month but she got so many submissions that she... expanded the offering I suppose you could say.

"It's actually why she left the position. It was a bit too successful of an idea and she decided to work on it as a passion project. It's making her a great deal of money now, and they have a very popular annual calendar that they make now. They have a version for each sexuality they cater to, and even a special family friendly addition with everyone wearing thematic costumes. That one is actually my favourite."

"Well... um... right... um... well I'm not one of those, I'm sure. Then again... the family friendly calendar seems like it could be a fun idea. It might make a cool souvenir for next year, something from the Hub to take back home that's probably pretty safe and reasonably priced..." said Kat with an odd town Lillian could place, but decided not to.

Chapter 536: Embarrassment is the Key to Learning. Obviously

Kat let her awkward response hang in the air, and Lillian let the silence continue to give Kat some time to really ground herself. It was always hard for the more innocent minded individuals to start realising that EVERYTHING is a fetish if you try hard enough. Lillian knew that the models for the newsletter made basically nothing. Most of them just a free subscription. There were more than enough demons interested in signing up that pay just wasn't necessary.

"Right. Ok. I've got it now... maybe..." said Kat "Um... can we go back to WHY you were showing me those pictures? It really isn't my thing... but I'm sure you noticed that easily... so why?" asked Kat

Lillian nodded and said, "Yes I did notice. It's a test of sexuality. Not a comprehensive one, but it's quick and easy. I can check most of the main ones for Succubi really easily with it. Having one that isn't revealed by that test is very rare among our race. You have to understand that most Succubi at the very least have an obvious type. I mentioned Lust is a part of us all in some way. Though some less than others obviously.

"Now, the reason I needed to take you through it is for a few reasons. The biggest one is that I need to know what areas of the compound not to take you to. You clearly reacted pretty negatively to the naked men, so I'll stay well away from them for you. Honestly, we'll stay away from all of the sexual services because it seems not to be your cup of tea. Certainly nothing casual anyway.

"The next important one is actually your skills. See, a common Succubus skill is pheromones. It's not just a skill, but we'll get to that. Succubus pheromones are either something you can toggle, something that stays passive, or something you can breathe out in a very obvious cloud.

"The thing that quite a few demons don't actually know is that it's based around your sexual orientation. If your pheromones are of the aphrodisiac sort, the most common by far, they will not work on people or things you would never want to have sex with. Sure they won't all be people you'd agree to it with, but at the very least there has to be a CHANCE.

"For example, if you were straight and picked it up, it would only work on men. Oh and it only ever works on sexually mature individuals. We... dealt with a certain type long ago. They don't appear anymore..." Lillians eyes narrowed and a force voice seemed to join the fray, it was deep, ancient, even more so then the queenly one and promised VENGEANCE "... anyway. Yes, men. If you are attracted to them that's all it would work on.

"Same goes for if you were a lesbian. It would only work on women instead. It actually has a slight... 'go away' I suppose you can call it, for people outside of your tastes normally. So for whichever you didn't fancy it would try and send them away. Of course, if you are bi it'd work on both genders... and if you're pan well... it tends to be... a LOT if you're pan.

"Now, the difference between the three types is somewhat pronounced. The passive type can be turned down a bit but never off. It's less likely to be an aphrodisiac but some people still get it. Can't do too much about it really. It just... smooths things along. Enhances things a bit. Think of it like a garnish for a nice dish.

"The next stage is a toggle. It's useful for crowds and prolonged exposure. Once you turn it on, if you spend enough time with someone and maybe use some pointed words and a little bit of normal seduction it'd work wonders. You could pick up almost anyone that's interested in you. Remember, while it will work on whatever is your preference, it doesn't mean it will always have the effect you want. Gay men aren't going to want to sleep with you no matter how horny they are. They'll find someone actually in their strike zone if they can"

Kat winced at the idea. *I do not even want to think about that. I mean sure, live whatever life you want but I don't really like the idea of ever picking up this ability. I hope it's enough to just... avoid it forever.*

Lillian smiled a bit at Kat's expression and continued. "Other than that, finally is the mist version. It's basically a fog of whatever colour your energy is. You throw it on people and wait for it to take effect in a few seconds. Very obvious and very potent"

"Right..." said Kat awkwardly. "I guess that was nice to know... but I don't WANT any of those abilities so I doubt I'll get them. Isn't that how it works?"

Lillian smiled, once again with shark teeth. This time they were black with silver edges to really play up the sharp points. "Yes but there's something that most people don't know. I managed to mislead you about the passive ones. All Succubi develop them at some stage in their lives"

Kat paled quite a bit at the statement. "Please tell me you're joking"

Lillian shook her head and said, "Of course not Kat. You know I can't lie. The passive version is something that some Succubi aren't even aware of. It reacts to your mood more than anything else and it's very specific to the individual. It tends to suit them exceptionally well.

"The range and potency tend to correlate with how much the individual wants to use their pheromones for... let's call them extracurricular activities. It's something you need to be aware of. While it seems like you aren't interested in sex... it does also mean that if you ever get... particularly worked up from abstaining it will effect those around you."

Kat went bright red at the insinuation. "I... I mean... I'd never... I... I don't... Um... help?"

Lillian waited for Kat to try and smother her embarrassment. After about a minute Kat was mostly successful. Her cheeks still had a light dusting of red and she wasn't looking Lillian in the eyes, but staring at her mug. "I... is that a concern?"

"Maybe" said Lillian honestly, "If it's an itch you feel the need to scratch you really should. Preferably away from other's you don't want influenced. Now, if you never feel that tug, that burning sensation, then that's perfectly fine. Rare. But perfectly fine. I just need you to know that... if you happen to be in denial instead. And just... let things build up in the background it would be... very bad. Especially if you're home doesn't have many magic users."

Kat shook her head. "No, no I'm... very much not interested. It just... it's not my thing and I'm quite sure I'm not in denial. If... if that IS the case what does that mean for me? Just... not have a partner? I mean... I don't know if I've ever found someone I'd want to be together with... is... is it a risk now just in case?"

Lillian shrugged. "Well, if you are ace, there's something you should probably know. It seems possible, though there are still some options. Still, if it is the case you aren't attracted to anyone sexually... you need to be prepared..." said Lillian ominously.

"Prepared for what?" asked Kat with a raised eyebrow.

"You know. I'm not sure I should say. I don't want to influence you unduly dear" said Lillian with a Cheshire grin, making it clear this was more for her amusement. "Why, if I was to cause you to make a mistake in romance because I gave you bad advice... why I'd be very sad"

Kat let out a sigh. *That's somewhat annoying. I'm really not sure what I want to do in answer to that. I could ask sure, but this was bonus information really. I can't even say I want it as part of joining the Faction because it really does seem like that best for me. I feel like she's enjoying this too much. Still, I know I need to be on the look out for... something I guess.*

"Anything else you need to cover then?" asked Kat resigning herself to her fate.

"Not really" said Lillian. "I mean, there are little fiddly things, like the fact you don't have a period like most other species, it's just not quite how we work. Um... what else... you'll keep your looks as they are now forever unless you intentionally change them right up until the last year of your lifespan. At that point you'll age exceptionally rapidly until your body gives out... but between your current Rank 2, your regen and your nondem status I think old age is already close to an impossibility for you.

"Um... what else... your body fluids will taste delicious to people you find romantically pleasing? It's one of those weird things that doesn't come up much because it doesn't just work for casual flings. What

else... your tail is NOT an erogenous zone. Not sure where that rumour came from but unless it's a fetish or you like the pain that comes from pulling on it, it's no more sensitive than anywhere else... of course with the right technique anywhere else can be sensitive indeed.

"Hmm... any more embarrassing details?" for Kat was bright red once again at this point "hmm... you're nails will probably stay at whatever length you want them because of regen but you can cut them... hair is a bit weirder... and that's about it I think"

Chapter 537: Coming on a tour?

After Lillian had sufficiently embarrassed Kat they both settled down to hash out the final details. Kat said the oath Lillian had mentioned earlier on. Lillian signed off on a few forms confirming as such and tidying things up a bit. Once that was done and the nearby files were put away Lillian asked, "Now that that's all dealt with... do you want to explore the compound with me?"

"Sure thing, it sounds interesting," said Kat. As Lillian nodded, Kat stood up and stretched getting ready for Lillian to lead the way. So Kat was not at all prepared when a blur of motion was flying towards her. Instinctively reaching out her hands to catch the object, Kat easily caught what she realised was a young girl in her arms. Then she took an extra half second to look at the troublemaker.

In Kat's arms was a much smaller demon that looked similar but not quite the same, to her. It was obviously Lillian, but looking down at that moment, it was impossible to tell without extra background knowledge. The most prominent thing was of course the horns, now styled to match Kat's though they weren't as tall at the front, only coming up a small ways. About half-sized proportionally.

Her hair was blue instead of red like Kat's and the same length. Which meant, once again, proportionally it was all out of whack. 'Lillian's' hair was down to her waist, and while it was blue it had the same look and feel as Kat's own hair. Little Lillian's eyes were now purple, the same purple Kat's eyes went when glowing... but Kat was pretty sure she hadn't shown that colour off yet.

The outfit was adorable as well. It was a much more family friendly version of Kat's own. Not to say Kat's was all that inappropriate, but where her own outfit had large slits on the sides to allow her legs to be shown off, Lillian's was completely enclosed and went all the way down to her ankles. The only thing that wasn't quite proportional was the sash around Lillian's waist, it was only slightly smaller than Kat's own, which made it take up most of the 'girl's' midsection.

Which were covered anyway. She had traditional looking wooden shoes with the white socks that disappeared into the outfit somewhere, presumably they were at least knee high. The rest was matching Kat's to a frightening degree. The flowers all in their correct positions and the sleeves were just a little bit too long for 'Lillian' so they flapped about somewhat and just barely covered the 'young girl's' hands.

The wings and tail matched quite well, and were the correct size proportionally. This meant that both appendages were actually quite large with Lillian's wingspan being about the length of Kat's arms, with a tail of a similar length to both wings, only slightly shorter overall. The faint trace of purple at the edge of the spade tip sold the deal.

"Onwards Big Sis Kat!" shouted Little Lillian, with a voice that now highly resemble what Kat remembered herself to have sounded like at that age. It wasn't quite the same, of that Kat was quite sure, but it was very close.

*I wonder how much of that is guesswork and how much of it is intentional. I mean clearly she looks like a smaller version of me... but is she able to, with a glance, turn into a younger version of myself then tweak a few things so that she doesn't just look like a direct copy of me? I wasn't looking so I didn't see the transformation process but I wonder how much is automatic.

Like... did she tell her power 'I want to look like Kat but X age, with Y changes' or, did she have manually sculpt her body to that exact shape without any assistance? Both could be viable depending on when she got the ability. If it was later on, while I might expect more assistance, she likely has the brain power to slow down time and do it in a second even if it takes longer from her perspective.

I also wonder what's standard? Can she choose how it works? Like if she saw someone she could just swap into them, but if she had a picture she could sculpt everything and then go from there. Actually wait... is identity theft a big problem here? I know Lillian said it was strict for doctors... but what about other people?

Then again. It can easily be solved with a simple 'are you X person' but... I imagine you can get around that by answering yes, because 'you are X person... at the moment' so maybe it isn't as safe as I thought. Still, the real X could say they didn't do it and have no idea who actually did. Hmm... I wonder how common shapeshifting is... Oh and also...*

"Is it entirely appropriate for me to carry you around?" asked Kat as she adjusted her hold on Lillian. Having grown up in the orphanage it was a simple matter for her to get the 'kid' into a more comfortable position for both of them and her increased strength meant it was even less of an issue. Kat knew she could hold Lillian for hours, probably days, without issue physically.

"Well it's not against Faction policy I made very sure of that so... nope!" said Lillian happily.

"I meant more from a... well I suppose the perspective that it might be a bit demeaning for me, a lowly Rank 2 Succubus to carry around the great and mighty Lillian" said Kat with a good hint of amusement.

Lillian grinned, seeing that Kat was already on her side and knew she'd chosen well. Even happier with her decision to try and recruit Kat early, "Well, I certainly don't feel embarrassed in the slightest" said Lillian in the most childish way she could, adding on to her already childish voice, "I mean, my natural height is about what you see right now and I abuse it whenever I can.

"Besides. Trolling the employees is a bunch of fun. Especially because not all of them are used to it. I can't do it on my own any more because they've wised up to that... but you're knew. Nobody has really seen you before so... why can't you be bringing your lil' sis along right Sis?"

Kat smiled down at Lillian with a grin. *Well at least I've gotten definitive approval. This sounds like fun anyway. I do wonder how she's managed to say she's my sister. Is it the form? That makes sense. That form is 'Kat's little sister' and as such that makes me her big sister by some somewhat circular logic... but it just might work. If she's decided I am her sister for the time being I don't see where the issue would arise.*

Kat gave a shrug and headed for the door, not seeing the chairs returning to their larger sizes or the bookshelves leaning back towards the walls a bit at the tops. She certainly didn't see the two smiling Lillian's that had been left at the desk, each with a stack of paperwork but a wild grin on their faces.

The black door opened automatically at their approach and opened into the lobby this time. Kat took note of that interested feature that really is necessary for a door of such height. It would take up too much floor space otherwise.

The lobby was still mostly empty, but now the little desk near the elevator had Red in it. She was typing away on a physical keyboard while looking at a holographic interface. Kat could hear the slight clicking from where she was, as it echoed in the room.

Huh Lillian's office must have good soundproofing. Lost in thoughts of why only that keyboard seemed to be mechanical, Kat didn't even consider looking back at the door which showed her carrying Lillian. As they reached the desk and Red looked up, she did look over their shoulder and saw the door's version of Lillian wink back.

"Ah. I see" said Red in a slightly bored tone. "Terrorising the newbies again I suppose? Did you make sure to leave a clone for work up here!"

"Yes maaaaam" whined Lillian trying to make 'mam' sound as much like 'mum' as she could without the lying limitations kicking in.

"Don't you sas me Lillian" said Red, "I may be just a secretary on the surface but I remember the document I signed unlike SOME of my predecessors. My job is as much keeping you in line and working as it is organising the things you don't really need to deal with and keeping a schedule for you. I know you're perfectly aware of the fact this position is actually an elected post and not one you chose yourself"

Excuse me what? Red got chosen as the secretary not the other way around?! What the hell sort of implications does that have?

Lillian just pouted at Red for a few moments before pointing to the 'elevator' and saying "Onwards my steed TO THE ELEVATOR!"

Chapter 538: The Ball Pit

Once Kat and her 'little sister' Lillian made it to the elevator Kat wasn't quite sure what to do. Lillian was the one who would be directing the tour, or at least that's what Kat was assuming, and the number of buttons here was quite high. Even if the big G for ground right at the bottom was an obvious start.

The alternative of course, was letting Lillian press the buttons herself, but considering the size of the smaller demon Kat knew she'd still need to be mostly correct. This of course meant, that when Lillian just sort of stared hard at the buttons and they lit up before flickering through them all and settling, not on a single number, but a clear circle. Kat was surprised.

"How did you do that?" asked Kat

"With the power of imagination!" said Lillian in an over the top cheerful voice.

Kat rolled her eyes at the answer. *I wonder how she managed to say that. I guess as a much older demon she's got a few tricks but... that seems to be a bit more than I'd thought she could manage. It isn't a lie, but it certainly isn't true. I really don't know how she's stretching the truth to speak those words.*

Kat didn't get time to think about it long though, soon the doors were open and Lillian announced "FORWARD!" as the course of action with her pointing to the left actually so Kat followed along, examining the hallway as she did so. The walls were painted with various sea life and seemed to be one continuous mural that was distinctly different on either side.

The ceiling also somehow showed what looked to be the sky outside. Of course, knowing there had to be a floor above this meant Kat knew there had to be some trick, but it certainly wasn't obvious and the slight bending of the walls outwards at the top made it look like the hallway was opening up into the sky and really stopped it from feeling claustrophobic in the slightest.

Kat listened to her intense desire to take in a deep breath and found that the air here was just as interesting as the ceiling and walls. To her, it smelled like she was sitting at the beach, with faint hints of trees in the distance and the slightest hint of rain either just past or on the horizon.

Ok now that is impressive. Move over air fresheners. Whatever the heck this is, is the real shit. I've seen a lot of cool and interesting technology before this that feels like just fancier versions of what we have on Earth but I don't even have a clue how this was done. It all smells perfectly natural and because of my vastly enhanced senses, if it was artificial, it should have been even easier to tell.

"The smell is lovely Lillian, how did you manage it?" asked Kat

"Hehehe" giggled the 'little girl' "I can't take credit for that one actually. Work done in previous Hubs I was able to carry over. You'd be surprised how much it really helps people relax to give them something that feels natural. Arguably it is depending on your definition of natural."

"Oh?" said Kat as she kept walking "Where does the argument come in?"

"Hmm..." mumbled Lillian as she wiggled in Kat's arms, playing up the 'kid' disguise a little as a pair of other Succubi walked past. "Think of it a bit like... wait do you have photographs?"

Kat nodded, not noticing that the people walking past weren't able to see Lillian or her speaking. "Yes of course. I don't quite see how it translates though"

"Well" said Lillian putting on a kids version of a proper lecturing voice. Kat thought it was adorable, and Lillian was smiling genuinely, enjoying the act as well. "think of it a bit like a scent equivalent of a photo or arguably a video. This mix of smells IS real, or was once upon a time. We set up the capture equipment for it, let it capture the scent and then brought it here.

"It's just on a loop, so the smell won't ever drift. That's the only thing you can really notice is that it loops on the hour, but the transition is smooth and I'm not sure Rank 2 is enough to spot the switch over. Of course, we have to keep it stocked with energy and certain samples but it's mostly a maintenance free system.

"That's why it's considered arguably artificial. All the smells are real. They exist and you could find where they came from. But they didn't come from this hallway and we are cheating a decent amount to make it smell so comparable."

"That's honestly really cool" said Kat as she thought on the implications of that. *This is a whole new branch of technology. Oh sure people back on Earth were trying to mimic scents in air fresheners and perfume but they have NOTHING on this. If I closed my eyes I doubt I'd be able to tell... barring the

absence of the necessary sounds. No ocean waves, no trees, wind I can hear but... hmm... I was thinking it would be air conditioning or something but I don't hear any mechanical parts... I wonder.*

Before Kat could ponder the implications of that particular thought Lillian said, "In here" and Kat looked over at the door in question. It was an odd mix of easy to see and yet blending in well. The door had a pile of what were clearly plastic balls on it but all styled to look somewhat like coral. A quick glance wouldn't allow you to see anything off but properly looking at it made it clear this was a door and that it was something involving those same plastic balls.

Pushing open the door, Kat was only mildly surprised to see a giant ball pit the size of an Olympic swimming pool. There was plenty of empty spaces as groups chose their little spots around the edges.

Kat wandered a bit to find an area for herself near one of the edging, because apparently the ability to fly meant the middle of the 'pool' was more popular than the human equivalent. "So... do I like jump in or...?" Kat let her question hang in the air.

"Of course you jump in silly" said Lilly grinning, "Doing it any other way would be boring and that's not what this is about. It's about having fun and relaxing, though do put me up on your shoulder first. I'm not going to drown and the balls have enchantments to keep them sanitary but that doesn't make them taste good"

Kat jumped in as she moved Lillian up and considered that point. *Huh, didn't even think about keeping something like this clean. Then again... I don't even know how they keep stuff like this clean on Earth so maybe that isn't a surprise.*

When she fell in, it was certainly an odd feeling. The balls parted way easily and she felt her feet hit the ground. It was soft though, and decently springy. It felt like the floor was made of something foamy, similar to the floor you drop down on in Kamiko's house, though sturdier than that at its bounciest certainly.

The balls around her seemed to get just about everywhere. She could feel a bunch squeezed around her wings that was odd, but not necessarily uncomfortable and her tail was sitting somewhere around the top as apparently the balls were solid enough and her tail flexible enough, her weight alone wasn't going to bring it in all the way. Shifting around through it was an interesting experience, an odd sort of resistance but once again, not bad, just strange.

The balls themselves went up to Kat's shoulders where Lillian happily kicked them around with her feet. Of course, with so many balls around, each that was kicked away only made room for more to fill in the gaps rendering the whole thing somewhat pointless from one perspective. However, it felt very interesting on the feet, and Lillian could still take plenty of small pleasures from life.

"Well this is strange" said Kat "Not bad certainly... but I don't know I have the words for this. I hardly remember if I ever encountered stuff like this when I was young but I can't help but think it all feels different now"

Kat leant back, trying to let the balls take her weight but quickly started falling into them properly when she did. Using her tail to correct herself, Lillian let out a "Wheeee!" of enjoyment at her sudden movements and waited for that to finish up before answering. "It's not for everyone but it's quite fun.

"We have more than one version of this room. This is for the families. We once again have... dirtier... versions of them, of pretty much EVERY room because it's someone's favourite place. Some of them more private than others"

Kat frowned at the ballpit. *You know what. I don't think I wanted to know that.* "At least they're sanitary" said Lillian interrupting Kat's thoughts for a second and sending them down a slightly darker path before Kat pulled right back. *I REALLY don't want to know.**noVELnext.com*

Chapter 539: Another Room!

The next room they ended up in required a trip back to the elevator, down another corridor and past a few doors, but had a very similar vibe. This room was much smaller which a collection of reclining chairs and beanbags all arrayed around facing each other with a large roll of bubble wrap next to them. Lillian prompted Kat to just pick one, and she chose a bean bag, intending to place Lillian in a similar one next to it.

However, when she sat down Lillian abused her much greater strength for once to break that grip and snuggle into Kat's side facing outwards. Kat was willing to accept that. Then a second, smaller roll of bubble wrap appeared next to the larger one at exactly the right height for Lillian, and Kat really wasn't sure what to do about that.

Did Lillian do that specifically? Or is it likely that there are a number of secrets hidden in these rooms? I wonder how standard this is exactly. I've seen plenty of demons together while here but Lillian is the only person that even looks like a child let alone any actual children. There MIGHT have been some in the ball pit but none of them were close to Lillian's apparent age.

"Hey Lillian... how common is it for Succubi, or just demons in general, to stay looking young like you?" asked Kat

Lillian grinned as she heard Kat's question, letting her hands work mindlessly on her roll of bubble wrap. "I'm glad you asked Kat. So many people are unwilling to ask the obvious. You can see it in their eyes but they clam up when you try to prod them into answering. Such wimps. I mean really, I'm not going to attack people who ask innocent questions like that." Of course, Lillian conveniently left out what she did to people who didn't ask with innocent curiosity and acted with malice or jealousy instead.

"Now, it happens to be very rare in the demon population as a whole. You need at least some Succubus blood in you for it to happen. No devil with any other heritage has ever naturally achieved a similar state. Oh there have been some curses, quite a few shapeshifters that prefer it to play pranks like myself, even though my default form is about the same size.

"It also seems to be proportional to your Succubus blood. It's much rarer in demons that only have small bits and pieces of Succubus blood. Actually, I know of it happening to only one person with mixed blood, they were a gorgon, and absolutely adorable with their little snake hair.

"Sadly, the other issue with this form is for some reason it tends to bring out extremes in power levels. You tend to either get stuck at Rank 1, or make it to Rank 5 without fail. I've never known anyone with my condition, to end up stuck at any Rank before 5 if they make it passed one.

"Of course, we are still very rare and many of those I know have passed away sadly, as it seems that lower Ranks are still more common. The total number of us throughout the demon Hubs is only a few hundred. There are so few that we don't even have a name for the condition. Sure a few hundred people sounds like a lot... but Kat please understand there are many many Hubs with billions of demons on them at least."

Woah... I didn't realise it was so rare. "That's very interesting" said Kat taking up some bubble wrap into her own hands and starting to pop them. She didn't really get the appeal, but then again, it wasn't a common sight growing up so it caused no feelings of nostalgia either. "I didn't realise it was such a rare condition. Does it... change anything else? I mean, other than the height and appearance"

Lillian shrugged as she kept popping and said, "That's a little unclear. Remember it's a rare condition and rarer still that we have the condition and reach a high Rank. It's very hard to establish any sort of pattern for other things. I suspect shapeshifting might be more common amongst us, as we regularly desire to be seen as anything other than children quite frequently."

"I've gotten over that long ago, but I went through that phase in my youth as well. I thought people would pay more attention and respect me more of I actually looked like an adult... sadly I was wrong. I had more attention because I was unique and rare with my condition. And respect... well just shapeshifting into random people or trying to age myself up didn't give me any respect either... because nobody knew who I was."

"Still, it's a common part of the condition, but I'm not sure if it's intrinsic or an environmental product. Strength and speed are surprisingly unchanged for the most part. Sure some of us are stronger, and some weaker, but despite our reduced size, our strength doesn't seem to be proportionally effected"

Kat hummed absently in response. *That's an interesting thing to note. I wonder how they know what their proportional strength should be? I mean I guess she must be many times stronger than you'd expect at that size but how large of a deviation can you find between physical strength at each Rank?*

"How do you age?" asked Kat thinking up another strange question. Seeing Lillian shoot her a slightly confused look Kat elaborated, "I mean... do you age until say five or six or whatever age your body happens to appear, or do you keep growing until your twenty ish just much slower?"

"Ah!" said Lillian once the question had been cleared up. "Right well... it's a bit of a mix actually. I personally aged for five years and then never changed after that. Well, my voice did change much later but that's not quite so physical, is it?"

Kat nodded, as Lillian continued, "Though I do know of at least one other like me that I asked and they said they aged much much slower from straight out of the womb. Before it even, as the pregnancy was twice as long and her ageing only got slower after she left. I was told it wasn't pleasant mentally maturing while her body refused to. I mean, I do understand to an extent of course, but she was very very tiny for a long time."

Kat nodded and let the conversation lull for a bit, allowing silence to descend like a warm blanket with the careful popping of the bubble wrap keeping things just slightly more interesting than pure silence. After a while however, when Kat was starting to relax, she couldn't help but ask. "Do you know what causes it?"

"Now there's the real question" said Lillian "The answer is... no not really. We don't have a lot of proof any which way, but the current leading theory is that the Succubus specific ability to retain a youthful appearance right up until the end starts to come for them is the reason. Now sure, most demons behave similarly, but not to the same extent. They can become... aged I suppose. We don't really gain wear lines or wrinkles without supreme effort and sometimes not even then.

"The theory is that whatever causes that youthfulness is vastly overcharged for people like myself and they don't keep us in the prime of our lives, but in our adolescents. As I said. No proof, but that's the current best guess. I can see the logic in it, but it does cause me to wonder why there are at least two variations of the condition. Does that mean there are two separate answers? Or just the same answer expressing itself in a different way?"

Hmm. Shame there isn't a real answer but I suppose with it being that rare and not really a major inconvenience they don't look into it. I mean sure, it's not ideal, but Lillian can shapeshift and presumably fly so most of the big negatives are removed right there. I wonder though... she said it also means you aren't likely to crack Rank 1. I wonder if that's just normal or if it really lowers the chances? Like... if you treat Rank 1-4 as low, and Rank 5+ as high, does it actually change your chances of being sorted into those two groups? Sure you end up very low on the low end but 5 seems like the big one.

Trying to lighten the topic, Kat decided to redirect things. It was about as subtle as a brick but Lillian didn't mind. She was actually hiding her laughter at Kat's attempt. "So is this a private room or is it normally open to a few people at once?"

"Private room" said Lillian, "It's designed for one group of people. There are others for individuals but this is a bit nicer and it wasn't being used so I saw no harm in directing us here."

Chapter 540: All the Rooms!!

After the heavy conversation in the bubble wrap room, Lillian managed to convince Kat to focus more on relaxing and decided that showing off the other options would be a good way to do that. It meant she didn't really get to troll anyone like planned... for now. Still, spending time with Kat was enjoyable, mostly because Kat still didn't really grasp how powerful she was or how important. Lillian decided it would be best to keep it that way.

After leaving the bubble wrap room the next room was a surprising one to Kat. It was a fake hillside with real grass and trees and a fake sunset off in the distance. The grass wasn't quite normal and felt more like a nice carpet than normal grass but it did prevent the need for a picnic blanket. The sunset was a nice redish yellow with a hint of purple lining the horizon. There were a few trees at the edges of the room and near the door to try and make it feel more natural, but the outcropping was quite bare. Lillian mentioned the room's main purpose was for romantic dates and for screaming off mountain tops. Kat tried the second one a bit but found she wasn't all that stressed and it didn't make her relax any further.

The next room was filled with sensory deprivation tanks. There were hundreds lining the walls in a few different sizes. They seemed to start at a 'medium' size clearly meant for people of around Kat's height, before going to a 'large' one that was about three times the size, then an extra large about five times the size of that. There were only three of the largest size all lined up at the back, and Kat knew she could go deep sea diving in them they were so large. Still... Kat found them... underwhelming. Mostly because shortly after entering them she started meditating and once you got to that point it really wasn't any

different to meditating somewhere else. Sure it was relaxing and she felt better, but floating around didn't encourage it much.

Honestly, it's a little surprising that it wasn't more effective considering how closely linked my meditation is with water. I'd have assumed it would have done something more than just let me meditate. "Is that normal Lillian?" asked Kat after explaining the experience.

Lillian had joined in using the tank next to Kat, and was currently on fire to remove the water. It didn't feel hot or cold or anything really. It was a testament to Lillian's control that only the visuals showed up past her skin, with the surroundings being completely unaffected. "It's not uncommon. Some people love these though. Anyway ONWARD" said Lillian happily. Kat smiled, and found the small giggles Lillian was letting out as she pointed forward was more relaxing then the previous to rooms. It was just nice making someone smile and Kat was happy to grin at that thought.

The next room, Kat was ready to veto almost instantly. It was a mud bath, and apparently good for the skin. *I do NOT want to be anywhere near that. Getting a bit dirty is one thing but... just diving in there... I feel unclean just looking at all that mud.* "I'd really rather not... plus isn't my skin basically perfect already?" mumbled Kat

Lillian just shrugged and let Kat lead them back to the elevator. As she did so, Lillian mentioned, "You either love it or hate it... but yes unless you go to the higher end areas where Kamiko currently is the treatments don't do much for Succubi other then relax them. If mud isn't your thing, we have plenty of other places."

The next area was just an open box. Sure, the box was huge but nothing stood out about it at all, and Kat was wondering what the point was until Lillian jumped out of her hands and started flying around. This prompted Kat to join in and she actually had a lot of fun. Their were air currents in the room that allowed for you to drift around but Kat knew them to be specially programmed somehow.

They provided just enough lift for Kat to turn her mind off and just sort of float around randomly. The currents shifted and guided her around the centre of the room for the most part, making sure she didn't run into any of the walls. Sure she did have to flap her wings occasionally but it was all automatic. Before long she found herself smiling, flipping over occasionally and following Lillian around when she needed direction.

It ended up being by far the longest time spent in any of the rooms so far, but it didn't involve a lot of talking. *I wonder if there's a way to change my meditation to something where I just fly around. Sure my pond is nice and it's a lot calmer feeling... I get submerged in it and I appreciate that... but this brings me a hint of joy alongside the relaxation. Hmm... doesn't really matter. This is fun. I can come back here when I want, or just fly around somewhere else.

Letting her mind drift further Kat considered something else. You know... this is one of my longer flights at this point and that's kind of sad actually. Sure I got to fly around at the Tournament a bit but for the most part I was with other people and it didn't really count.

I've been stuck with people for all of my Contracts and I'm not strong enough to carry them along properly. Maybe in the future I can get a monster hunting Contract or something and just fly around.

That would be really cool. I do also need to use my dream walking ability more... well... maybe not. I spent quite a while in Major's head with Minor... plus I need to learn to use my fans first.*

Eventually, Kat's enjoyment started to wane as more and more things she hadn't noticed properly came into mind and she didn't want to just dismiss them. So she gave each thought a bit of consideration before finally landing and letting out a long sigh. "Didn't you enjoy this room?" asked Lillian confused.

"No no no... I mean yes? Wait how did I say both... damn English..." mumbled Kat

"The intention comes across easily with the Translation Kat, please continue" said Lillian

"Oh right" said Kat with a slight blush on her cheeks. "Forgot about that. Um... so... I did enjoy it. Quite a lot actually. This is probably my favourite room, if we don't count how cool your office, especially the door, was. The issue is that I started to think on a few things after my mind had wandered and they weren't all great. Mostly things I need to do"

Lillian jumped towards Kat and allowed herself to be caught easily. "That's fine Kat" said Lillian as she gave Kat a 'big' hug from within Kat's arms. "It's clear you enjoyed yourself, but it does mean this wasn't truly the best room if you were still unable to really just relax and ignore your other thoughts."

Kat blushed and admitted... "I think I was distracted the most when I started thinking this would be a better meditation base than my water one but... maybe not?"

Lillian shrugged as the pair headed for the door. "I'm not sure. I don't tend to recommend changing meditation types if you can even manage it. The one you get first is normally the best, especially if you manage it organically. Perhaps you should try swimming in your mind more?"

Kat shook her head and explained, "No it isn't quite like that... it's more like I separate INTO the water"

"Oh that one" said Lillian, "I'm afraid I don't really know anyone very personally that uses that specific meditation type so I can't help you there"

"No problem" said Kat just as they hopped back on the elevator.

The next room they came to was a mixture beach and tanning area. Lillian assured Kat that it wasn't the fake sun tanning people in reality, it was a specialty mix that could be used in place of sunscreen that really did all the work and was activated by the light source. Still, Kat wasn't interested in that, and the idea of swimming wasn't that appealing at the moment after coming down from flying around. The sensory deprivation tank wasn't doing the idea any favours either.

So in the end, Kat picked up some slices of what looked like watermelon, though it tasted much sweeter, and hopped on a beach chair with Lillian under one of the umbrellas. It was at that point, Kat noticed she was actually pleasantly warm, and a thought crossed her mind. *Wait a second... how hot is the room?! I can feel the temperature change! Note to self... DO NOT bring Kamiko here, she'll get cooked.*