

## DEMONS 771

### Chapter 771 Ready or Not? ADVENTURE AWAITS!

Kat decided it would be better to leave that particular can of worms unopened for now. She personally felt it was an unwarranted fear, but Kat was also quite sure Lily understood that intellectually anyway. So Kat handed Lily her book on paper magic, and occupied herself with running her fingers through Lily's hair as a means to pass the time while trying to meditate without sinking too deeply.

As it approached dinner time, Kat came up out of her doze. It wasn't proper meditation yet, she could tell that there was something missing when she didn't dive all the way, but Kat felt closer than before. Or perhaps that was just wishful thinking. What was surprising was Lily's snoozing form. Apparently the cat instincts were still strong.

The slight creak of the door pulled Kat's gaze away from her girlfriend to spot Vivian peaking into the room. Her eyebrows rows dramatically, in a slow meaningful fashion that seemed to imply a lack of true surprise on her part. Vivian carefully slid into the room and made a series of complicated gestures Kat couldn't even begin to discern. "What?" asked Kat quietly.

Lily's ears twitched at Kat's question and she forced herself to close the last few millimetres between Kat's body and hers before calming back down. Vivian, seeing this sighed and spoke, keeping her voice as quiet as possible, "Dinner is ready but I imagine you aren't so hungry and I dunno if you want to wake Lily for this or not..."

Kat shook her head carefully. Callisto's meals were great, but she also didn't sleep. Kat was pretty sure that if Lily woke up much later and required some food, Callisto could manage something. \*Considering her emotions were pretty all over the place earlier it might be best she rests for now. She seems quite pleased to have a human form again. I guess it's one of those things that you don't know what you're missing.\*

Vivian smiled and carefully made her way over to Kat to ruffle the demon's hair. After a couple moments of that, Vivian left, closing the door carefully. Lily's ears twitched slightly in response to the noise but didn't move otherwise. Kat tried to sink back into her meditation, but found her mind had other ideas. Sinking instead into proper sleep, the day ended there.

—

.....

Kat's eyes shot open as soon as she felt movement. What she saw was a slightly strange seen. Lily had shifted at some point to be half on top of her. Lily was currently taking a bit out of her kimono right above her breast while Lily's hands wrapped themselves tightly around Kat. Lily's tail had snaked its way around Kat's arm, and Kat's tail had coiled itself around Lily's.

Kat relaxed again for just a moment until a bright red circle of flame appeared above the two of them. Recognising the summoning circle for what it was, Kat shook Lily gently. This only seemed to get Lily to cling tighter. \*Dammit. For some reason I feel like she planned this. If I could get away with leaving her behind just so she has to confront her parents I would.\* "Lily wake up," said Kat.

"Nooooo" mumbled Lily, "I is comfy,"

Kat looked Lily over, hoping for a good way to wake her girlfriend up that wasn't too harsh. Lily's ears flicked slightly as she repositioned herself, giving Kat an idea. Leaning down, Kat carefully bit into Lily's ear. As soon as her teeth touched the sensitive flesh, Lily bolted upright. Kat was careful with the motion and let go off Lily's ear before it could be damaged. Lily herself was wide awake now. Instincts screaming at her something weird was going on.

"Good morning sleepy head. Seems you're going to get your wish. You don't need to visit your parents because we have a Contract," said Kat with a sickly sweet smile, looking very pointedly at Lily's ill-fitting clothes.

"Wait what?" Lily said as she glanced up. "Wait... I'm not ready. I don't even have anything to wear!"

"Well, you were the one who wanted to avoid going to your home. It seems some actions have consequences. Now, are you ready for me to accept? I don't have much longer I can sort of feel the internal timer ticking down. You might have enough time to get a drink, but that's about it," said Kat.

"Uh... um..." Lily sat up and looked herself over. It had been an acceptable compromise to just avoid going around naked but she wasn't really ready to go off on an adventure like this. Lily hissed, through her teeth. Tongue licking over her sharp canines and an idea coming to her. Lily punched the bundle of energy inside her and felt her body shift.

Kat watched as her girlfriend shrunk back down to Memphis form and hopped onto her lap. [Ready and reporting for duty!]

Well, I suppose that works well enough. Kat quickly fashioned a mental message to Vivian that basically just said 'on Contract' and accepted her trip through the flames. It never got old to see, but it could of course only be described so many ways by the author. Kat found herself wondering where they were going this time. It wasn't an emergency beacon, so it was somewhere completely new. Lily was trying to both wake herself up and calm herself down. Kat's little trick with her ears was like setting her entire nervous system on fire.

It'd jolted her awake, and certainly got her attention, but she was in full flight mode still. Kat's presence helped calm that, and her human mind helped suppress it further, but primal human instincts and primal cat instincts aren't so incompatible. A small part of her was still telling her to dash. On the other hand, she was taking proper stock of what happened in her half-asleep state. Her clothes had vanished when she transformed so presumably they were still on her body, but that hadn't been tested. A mistake.

The fire eventually disappeared and the pair found themselves in a cellar, a wine cellar to be specific. The circle that summoned them had clearly been hastily drawn using chalk mixed with something shiny, perhaps silver? Kat could already tell that it was barely enough to call her forth and that should she so desire, crossing the threshold would be a simple task well within her abilities. In fact, Lily could break it with her old human strength with a bit of effort.

They were in an area that had been hastily cleared. Two rain racks had been pushed up against the back wall and they were now empty. Additionally, on the left and right wall were raised barrels, presumably of wine as well, with some missing slots. It was starting to become obvious what their Summoner had used as payment.

They looked to be about Kat's age, perhaps a slight tad younger and of Arabic descent. Well, Kat wasn't familiar enough with various cultures to tell that for sure, but they were wearing clothes that looked straight out of Alladin, and while they probably didn't have anything to do with the Earth country, the olive skin tone on their Summoner helped the idea stick.

They were currently looking at Kat with shock and awe on their face. Eyes almost as wide as their mouth and they looked about two seconds from bolting in the other direction. \*Is summoning a demon so easy that some random kid can do it in their basement? No, that's a bit unfair, they aren't that much younger by the looks of things.\*

\*I just... I'm just not sure what they would want from us... at least if they are annoying I can ignore them unlike Xiang. Still... not sure I want to beat up someone who probably isn't even an adult yet... but I mean. They were summoning demons. Maybe it would be good to teach them not to do strange magic in their basement?\*

Apparently Kat's musing gave the boy enough time to gather his wits. "I am Ape-" the boy, cut himself off, coughing to hide what he thought of as a blunder. "I mean, I am your Summoner. Are you a demon of knowledge?"

\*Well no I'm not but I might have a Memphis of knowledge? Does that count?\*

"No, I am a Succubus. Supposedly a demon of passion though I myself lack the capabilities to enjoy what you'd consider my species 'standard work' I suppose," answered Kat trying her best to be mysterious and formal. No point shattering the illusion of being a powerful and competent demons just yet.

"Hmm... that might actually be better for me," the boy, Apep, though Kat didn't know that just yet, mumbled to himself. "Yes, I can see this working... I do wonder where I messed up though. Was it the powdered silver? That was a pain to still from my father... maybe it wasn't pure enough? I did have to mix it with chalk dust to get the circle done with what I grabbed. Then again... was it the wine? Might have been the wine..."

## Chapter 772 The Sunshine City

Apep continued to mumble under his breath and it was becoming clearer and clearer to the horned due that this guy really was just a kid, at least in attitude if not age. Everyone in the Tournament all had a certain air of experience to them. Apep, a name they still hadn't heard, was someone who managed to Summon a demon somewhat intentionally without a clear plan. Must have been some expensive wine bottles he traded away.

\*So should we interrupt him?\*

Apep hadn't stopped mumbling and was now starting to pace slightly as well. There wasn't exactly a lot of room for that so he just took two or three steps before turning around and repeating the process.

[I... I don't know? Aren't you the expert here?]

\*Lily, I've been to less than a handful of worlds at this point and I don't think any of them have been similar at all. There was a panicked king, a knowledgeable Queen, an apprentice who's master freaked out, a person who does this for a living, and a guy who was kind of an asshole. I have no experience with kids that only half expected this to work.\*

[Maybe we should interrupt him and find out what he's actually called us here for? Also, do you think you still get paid in Candles if the guy only used wine to summon you?]

Pretty sure I just get paid in Candles regardless of what they use. As for asking him... yeah I guess so? I mean I don't really see anything else we could do. He's just sort of pacing. I don't want to spook him though. He seems so out of his depth already that interrupting him might break what small bit of courage he seems to have.\*

[Kat just ask the kid a question. He's not a small child at the orphanage that's going to run off. He had enough courage to SUMMON A DEMON FOR HELP. Have a bit of respect for that.]

.....

\*Oh. Sorry.\* "Excuse me?" said Kat to get the boy's attention. When her standard volume didn't work, Kat coughed and repeated "Excuse me!" at about twice the volume. Apep started as if he'd been shocked and slipped on the floor, arms shooting out and pinwheeling out. Kat growled and moved swiftly, shattering the weak protections around the circle and catching the boy before he fell over.

Kat pulled him back to his feet before letting him go and returning to the circle as fast as she could. A slight breeze was all the evidence she left behind. Apep sucked in a deep breath, hand over his chest before slowly looking over at Kat. "Did... did you just leave the circle?" nOvELnext.cOm

"Yes. Yes I did. It really wasn't hard," said Kat evenly.

Apep frowned and looked down at the circle which looked completely undisturbed. The only difference is the silver that once sparkled slightly in the light is now dull as the surrounding chalk it was mixed with. Lily eyed the change curiously because that is NOT how metal degradation is supposed to work. [What the heck did that do to the silver?]

"Um... that's bad right?" asked Apep, no idea of the internal questions bubbling in Lily's mind.

"I have no idea really," answered Kat.

Apep frowned and looked over Kat slowly. It was an odd look, not sexual at all. It was like he was trying to find a hidden weapon on her somewhere or he expected a third eye or claws or something equally horrific. Of course, Kat looked as she always did, just with a cat in hand now as well. "So um... do you know why you're here?"

"Presumably because you have a Contract in mind for me, but I have no clue as to the specifics," answered Kat.

"Is that because I did the circle wrong? It really shouldn't have been so easy to break according to those books I found..." mumbled Apep.

"The circle is just meant to ensure I can't cause any havoc until the Contract is decided upon. Some demons do specialise though, so they'd expect roughly the same sort of thing every time they are summoned. Now. What is it you need? We can trade questions later if we need," said Kat.

"Um... err... before I ask... I um... I have one more question. It's relevant though I swear!" said Apep, in that overly earnest way only younger individuals truly can.

“Go for it,” offered Kat.

“Right um... have... have you got a boyfriend? Or... or a partner or whatever? Do demons get married? If you’re married that would work...” said Apep.

Kat raised an eyebrow and pushed her slight concern down the link only for Lily to send reassurance back. Taking that as permission Kat answered, “I’m permanently and irreversibly bound to my girlfriend Lily. She is currently a cat,”

Apep looked really hard at Lily, trying to decide if he was being messed with or not. Lily sighed and hopped out of Kat’s arms, walking behind her for a moment to transform and poke her head up over Kat’s shoulder. She didn’t exactly want to show herself completely in such lacking attire, but it did prove Kat wasn’t crazy.

The sudden appearance of a new girl caused Apep to flinch back in surprise before his brain caught up to everything and realised what had happened. When Apep closed his mouth, Lily left her hands on Kat’s shoulder and transformed. Her Memphis form appearing where her hands were before she moved back to Kat’s arms.

“Ah... I mean... sorry I didn’t know you were gay. Um... that might be better though...?” murmured Apep carefully. Kat just gave him a ‘go on’ gesture. “Right um... well you see... ah... how do I explain this... oooh... it’s a bit complicated,” Kat repeated the gesture, “Ok fine. You are currently inside ‘The City of the Sun’. The greatest city in the continent. We have more people in our city than some kingdoms do. This is in large part due to our aqueducts that transport water from ‘The Endless Well of Life’ across the city.

“It is our most important and heavily guarded monument. Any crops that the water touches grows at a rapid pace and is exceptionally high quality. It can’t really be transported outside of the city, but the spring IS endless as far as we can tell. The more water we drain from it, the more water it provides. The only issue is it needs to reach wherever it is going in less than forty-eight hours, and it has to be connected to the main spring, so bottling it up doesn’t work.

“This has led to our city becoming the single most important trade hub in the known world,” Apep’s voice was starting to firm up. He was clearly proud of his heritage. “My family are part of the ‘Ten Defenders’. We are descendants from the original settlers who found the water. It was actually a group of fifteen, but there were five couples amongst the original group already meaning it was ten families who found it.

“We have guarded this spring for at least ten thousand years and I am the current heir to my own family. This is mostly because my parents have yet to have any other children and there are rumours of my Dad’s retirement on the horizon.

“I’m not sure if that’s true or not, and really it shouldn’t matter but it kind of does? Anyway. The problem I have is with marriage. It is traditional for members of the Ten to get married before our eighteenth birthday. There are a few reasons for this. Originally it was to prevent our lines from dying out, but now it is more of a task. In a city as large as ours, it is considered bad form to have not found anyone you connect with by that time.

“Marriage... marriage in this city is weird, from what I’ve been told. It is both sacred and easily broken. Both partners in a marriage are responsible for making things work. For ensuring that each other are happy, and it is a great shame to fail at such a task. Yet it is considered a greater shame to remain in a relationship you can never be happy in.

“I think it makes sense, but apparently it doesn’t to some outsiders. Now... I umm....” Apep’s bold and confident tone slowly started to fail, back into nervous territory. “I... I have ended up in a slightly embarrassing position. I managed to overhear my parents planning to set up a marriage between myself and a good friend of mine, her name is Jara. She’s wonderful, and my parents genuinely think I’m in love with her based on some... evidence... that um... is mostly not what it looks like?

“I mean. Jara is really sweet, and I wouldn’t be opposed to marrying her I suppose. I mean, I’d do it if I had to... wait no that’s rude. Um... she’s my friend and I... I certainly COULD spend my life with her... and um... it’d... it would be no hardship certainly. The um... the awkward part though is... ahh... hmm...”

“It’s fine. You can share,” Kat said in her soothing ‘it’s all going to be fine’ voice.

“I’M IN LOVE WITH HER MAID!” blurted out Apep.

Chapter 773 In Love with a What?

\*The maid? Why her maid? And which maid? Does Jara just have one maid? Wait why is it even an issue if it’s Jara’s maid? Lily I have questions and I don’t know if I want Apep to give me the answers.\* Lily sent a mental shrug along their connection prompting Kat to ask, “Why is that an issue?”

Apep breathed a heavy sigh, as if all the embarrassment before had drained out of him. It sort of had in a way. Instead of questioning him, or laughing they’d just gone for the more obvious question. “It’s complicated. Actually it’s complicated for a few conflicting reasons. The first, is that while marriage is sacred, I already mentioned that, it isn’t... isn’t terribly uncommon for a personal maid or butler to... include themselves in the arrangement.

“It’s somewhat frowned upon either way for different reasons. Not including the additional person is seen as disrespectful to their sense of duty. Most maids and butlers in our city built up this culture of being married top the job. Originally, what would happen is when it came time for an older maid or butler to retire, they would find an orphan to raise into the position. I’m not personally clear on when that started, and it hasn’t really stopped but...

“At some point it became more standard for the head maid or butler to... involve themselves... with the couple. Now, some of this was because...” Apep paused and looked from Lily to Kat and back a few times, “well because at the time we weren’t quite as tolerant of same sex couples. So it was quite usual that the relationship would be split into the Public Couple and the Private Couple. In public it would be the man and women, and in private, it would most commonly be that the couple was made up of two gay parties.

“We’ve come a long way since then, and now same sex marriage is no issue... but some of the wealthier merchants, and the Ten still practice it occasionally. Now, for me this isn’t a big deal. I don’t have a personal butler and I’m not gay... but the idea that I’m more interested in Jara’s maid, or her name is Zuhra, makes it sound like I’m saying ‘I want to have my cake and eat it too’ or that I’m interested, sexually, in both of them. It’s not... unheard of but it’s not really done and I DON’T WANT IT DONE,

“Not only is Jara my friend and I’d never do that to her, I like Zuhra and I’d want her to be my main official wife even if I was willing to take both of them, which I’m not. And... with Jara’s status. Even though it’s perfectly acceptable for us to find and marry a beggar, it is not acceptable for her to be anything less than head wife... but I don’t LOVE her. And she doesn’t love me.

“That’s the other issue actually, she’s asexual. She’s known she’s asexual for a long time. Longer than she should of. She used to say it when she was a kid, and nobody believed her than puberty happened and she stuck to her words, and... well I might have had a bit of a crush on her for a while, but it became clear, after a lot of watching on my part she was being completely honest. She was asexual, and knew it.”

.....

\*And like that. I suddenly understand why we were the pair that was summoned for this. I was a little confused why we were called for this one considering how new our relationship is, but with an asexual girl thrown into this mix it all makes sense.\*

Lily sent a feeling of affirmation down the link while Apep continued, unaware of the girls’ internal dialogue. “Now we do have precedent for this actually. It came about shortly after the precedent for same sex couples. See, while Jara does not NEED to marry because of this, she does still need an heir. It is considered part of her duty, even if the romance and marriage aspect of things is considered avoidable due to her sexual interests, or lack of them as the case may be. **nOvElnext.cOm**

“Now, the reason this further complicates things, is that admitting I like Zuhra, in a situation such as this, is a lot closer, culturally speaking, to saying I love Jara, but respect her asexuality and say I’m interested in her maid instead sort of... as a compromise I guess? It’s implying things I DO NOT WANT to imply about Zuhra.

“This is further complicated by the fact that even if my parents are willing to listen, which I’m not sure they will be because they’re good friends with Jara’s parents and have basically been planning the wedding for the last decade once they noticed we got along, Jara’s parents probably won’t be willing to give things up anywhere near as easily. Jara doesn’t have a lot of other friends, and I’m, both her closest friend and the only one that is male. Her parents are... to put it politely, not entirely believing of her ‘asexual’ stance on things.

“So they see me as a sort of compromise. If I married her, even if she was asexual, she wouldn’t be miserable about things and between the two of us we’d need at least two heirs. I think... um...” Apep’s cheeks started to colour, “I think they... they believe that um... if I just... just have sex with her often enough she’ll... err... ‘get over it’,”

Apep swallowed heavily. “Sorry... um... just... just give me a moment,” Apep stopped and breathed in carefully before breathing out slowly. Trying to recentre himself. “Sorry, I just... I kinda feel disgusted even saying it? Her parents really don’t have much room to talk because Jara’s grandparents are a gay couple and proved that heirs are still very much possible. It’s just that... they seem to think because Jara was certain of herself so much earlier than most...

“That she was ‘just saying it for attention’ and then ‘is too stubborn to admit she was wrong’ which... isn’t the best certainly. So... that’s the issue really. It’s one of the reasons I would be happy to marry Jara

if things were less messy right now. She's still my best friend and while I'd have to go elsewhere for sex if I went that direction, being married to my best friend isn't exactly a LOSS for me,"

Apep sighed again. "Of course, that isn't the end to complications really. If I was to just annoyance all this, lay everything out to my parents, then they'd turn the whole thing into a big production. I don't... I don't want to pressure Zuhra into this. That's the last thing I want. I'm pretty sure my parents wouldn't be... too heavy handed about it but..."

"It'd be a bit like... a foreign king coming and asking a serving girl to marry him as his queen. It isn't quite that bad, but it also isn't really something you can, socially speaking, say no to easily. I REALLY don't want Zuhra just saying yes because she thinks she can't say no. It's one of the reasons I haven't really hammered home that I don't plan to marry Jara. It shields my interest in Zuhra nicely, Jara knows and approves, and if things really do fail... well,"

Apep shrugs as he starts to pace slightly again, "I really would be happy with spending the rest of my life with Jara. She's expressed no interest in marriage but would be willing to accept it if it was me. Not enthusiastically, but we can both agree that it's 'good enough' I suppose. There's... there's just one more thing.

"Zuhra actually signed up as a maid later in life. Remember how most of them are trained when they are young? Well, Zuhra is a two years older than I, and... while I don't know the full story, she was planning to marry her childhood sweetheart. That seemed to have crashed and burned so hard she became a maid. A job famous for the fact most of them never get married.

"I don't KNOW what happened there. I don't know if Zuhra is even straight because she doesn't like to talk about whoever it was. I don't know if they cheated on her, if they died, if they tried to kill her. It could be anything and I've heard gossip that confirms basically every variation of the story under the sun.

"So I can't just approach her and ask in case I'm looking to cause her pain. It's hardly appropriate for me to ask about her potentially dead fiancé with plans to replace him or her. I just... I LIKE being friends with Zuhra. I spend a lot of time with her and Jara both. I would very much like to court her, but not so much that if it truly is impossible for me to do so that I would much rather not damage our friendship irreparably in the attempt. As I said, I could happily spend my life with Jara, I just don't love her. I have options, and I am thankful for that... but I... I guess I am trying to have my cake and eat it too somewhat."

#### Chapter 774 Finalising Apep's Contract

"Right..." said Kat slowly as she used her perfect memory to go over everything. She was pretty sure it made sense but despite Apep's attempts to explain everything 'properly' he was a bit all over the place. "Would you be so kind to just sum things up? While you did give a lot of... context... what I need is a rough outline of my objectives that are going to be part of our Contract,"

"Oh... umm... hmm..." mumbled Apep "I guess, the first thing would be to find out what happened to Zuhra's previous love interest, or no, I guess first thing is find out if they are a man or not. That'd be the easiest way to tell if I have a chance at all. Then afterwards... maybe try and sound out Zuhra to see how



committed she is to avoiding romance? I mean, while her position is fairly typically taken by individuals who never marry it might just be because she's about the same age as Jara and I...

"Um... hmm... what else... I guess maybe just some advice on how to approach this mess? I don't want to pressure anyone with my parents but I can't exactly move around the city all that freely even if it's just to visit Jara's house without my parents asking questions. We already see each other once or twice a week and asking for extra visits without giving a reason would make my parents suspicious and while they might be fine, Jara's won't be."

"Ok that all makes sense... just... is there a reason you haven't just talked to Jara about all this, both to help with Zuhra and to make sure she's alright with being a back up plan I suppose?" asked Kat.

"Um... no?" said Apep awkwardly.

Kat groaned internally, \*Lily. How should we deal with this? Like do we accept his deal and then start offering advice? Because like... the first thing I want to do is point out that I'M asexual and very happy with my relationship. Pretty sure if you actually got asked out I'd have either been miserable as I tried to be happy for you or actively sabotage their efforts. I'm just not sure how I trust that Jara isn't interested at all.\*

[Well Kat this is more YOUR wheelhouse than mine. If I'd known you were asexual I'm not really sure what would have happened to my crush. Well, if I found out really early on I probably would have tried, and maybe succeeded in stamping it out before it grew but I can't be certain of that. If I found out later... I'm not sure. It worked out well for us but we got to cheat.]

.....

\*Well, this world MUST have magic so they might be able to cheat somehow. Still, I won't say that Jara's certainly interested in him. She seems to be rather sure of herself. The only thing I want to know is why she hasn't tried to steer her parents away from marriage with Apep\*

[My guess is that she knows Apep has a crush on Zuhra and is keeping the parents focused on a marriage between their families so that none of them catch on to that little fact. I can't really think of any other reason. If she was actually interested in Apep just based on what we know she probably would have said something. Especially before Zuhra came into the picture. She had a lot of time to set things up before she got a personal maid. I mean... jealousy is weird and she might not have noticed till he found someone else to love...]

[But I struggle to think Apep could be friends with someone who was that manipulative. Or perhaps, so poor at it. She seems like an intelligent girl and the chance of her not preventing Apep's crush before it got to the point of summoning demons is unlikely if she was both smart and aware enough of her sexual preferences before she should have. Which is a little weird. I mean, I didn't know I was gay till I started to crush on my best friend.]

\*So we accept the Contract and then we ask him about it right?\*

[Is there a reason you don't just ask first?]

\*Sort of. The big one is that I'm pretty sure I'd get in trouble for solving a problem without making a Contract. Not certain, but I think it's likely enough that I don't want to risk it. Don't necessarily want to

ask D.E.M.O.N.S for confirmation either because then we it'll KNOW I'm thinking of working my way around Contracts. The second reason is that I'm interested in this city. I want to take a look around even if we solve things easily.\*

[I'm surprised Kat. That's almost sneaky of you]

\*Well... I mean... I've never really heard of a city like this. I can't even imagine what it looks like. On top of that, I want to see how this plays out. Even if Apep just asks Jara and things get solved I want to see the aftermath as well.\*

[Well, this is your show Kat]

"I see. So, will that be the Contract then? Determining the gender and status of Zuhra's previous love, discovering what chances you have with her, and offering advice for resolving the situation?" asked Kat.

"Er... yes... um... I Apep, heir to the 3rd of the Ten do so accept your terms," said Apep, finally revealing his name to the group. Kat wasn't surprised at all when an explosion of glowing blue chains that looked to be dripping shot out from Apep and tried to bind her. What was interesting to Kat though, was how they interacted with her. Apep's chains were like an endless wave, more and more pouring off him with every passing moment.

Despite that, as Kat stood there she could feel they lacked will. Lacked resolve. Perhaps if she was weak willed herself or still Rank 1 there was a chance at a death by a thousand cuts. Instead, she almost felt like the chains were flowing off her as they tried to wrap themselves around her body and soul. Kat could tell that if she really wanted, she could push back these chains so far that the binding on her was practically non-existent.

Kat did honestly contemplate doing so, just to see what would happen. A test of the limits of the Contract. It was a question she hadn't thought to ask before. Could the binding be nullified? Was there some minimal level of binding required for a Contract? Kat stilled that impulse though, pushing back on the chains only slightly. As interesting a test as it might have been...

She wasn't willing to make a young boy bear the burden for that testing. Even if he was somewhat close in age to herself. On top of that, Kat was actually quite on board with this particular task. She was interested in the city. Interested in meeting Jara, another asexual if Apep's words were anything to go by. Interested in finding out more about Zuhra and why she would sign up to be a maid so late in life. Kat could feel her own curiosity burning beside Lily's and knew that even if Apep's bindings on her were so weak a slight breeze could break them... it wouldn't matter.

Much stronger chains were binding her to this task. Those of curiosity. The fact that these chains were entirely self-inflicted making them all the stronger. Kat wasn't sure what she'd be paid for this, but whatever it was, it was too much. Kat knew she'd be willing to do this job purely for the interest factor even without Lily's own intrigue being added in. The blue chains sunk in, weak, but powerful in their own way not as a true force, but as a reminder of the greater one.

The lights show started to die down as Kat breathed out easily, her eyes dancing with delight and the slightest touch of purple flames from her resistance. Apep meanwhile was staring at the open space and patting his chest, as if trying to find where those chains had escaped from. His hands roamed his shirt, carefully looking for holes and finding nothing of course. "Woah..." he whispered.

[He's a bit like a puppy. So easily fascinated by everything and easily side tracked]

\*Well, I'm more of a cat person so...\* Lily found herself purring in her response as she pressed herself into Kat.

[I should not be finding that statement so enjoyable. It is also a horrible pun, but I can feel the love behind it.]

"Well, Apep," said Kat who waited a few moments for the young boys gaze to return to her. When it did, he quickly hid his hands behind his back as if somehow that would obscure his previous actions, "I feel like the first step in this investigation is probably just to talk to Jara. She'd probably know at least some of Zuhra's past. Have you done that?"

Based on Apep's shocked expression, Kat was going to go with... 'no'.

Chapter 775 Going over the Details

"It ah... didn't seem like a good idea at the time?" offered Apep awkwardly with a shrug.

"Apep... how long have you had a crush on Zuhra?" asked Kat.

"Um... maybe a year?" said Apep uncertainly.

[Know that feeling]

\*Don't you start that. He isn't thinking this through.\*

[Oh I doubt that. I think he's overthinking everything like I did. If anything, we should be encouraging him. We have proof it works out eventually when you overthink things.]

\*No we don't. Your impending body transfer cracked what resistance you had causing you to blurt out your confession to me before breaking down sort of. It was super stressful for you and I doubt it was a good idea to suppress your feelings for so long.\*

.....

[Ah but I managed to snag you FOREVER. If I could go back in time and tell my younger self how well things turned out she wouldn't believe me. Or if I told her she'll get the girl if she can manage to suppress her feelings for two-ish years she'd probably laugh at 'how short' the timeframe was. Honestly... I'm not sure what I would have done if I actually went away to university. Would I have grown more fond of you, only able to talk occasionally, or would I finally have been able to get over my crush by giving it up for good? Part of me wants to say, no I wouldn't... but human nature seems to imply I would. What were we talking about?]

\*We were discussing Apep's inability to confide in Jara.\*

[Oh right. Guess we just ask if we can chat with her?]

"Apep... would you mind talking about why exactly you haven't spoken to Jara about this?" asked Kat first, trying to gauge his response.

“Well... I mean... Zuhra is normally around as well and I don’t want to be overheard... and even if she isn’t there right at that moment, it wouldn’t be weird for her to walk in soon after...” said Apep. Kat raised an eyebrow and stared, hoping to get him to crack and give out more information. It worked. “Ok fine... I just... I don’t really want to tell her. I mean. She’s Zuhra’s friend as well... and I feel like it’d make things awkward...”

Kat sighed, “Well seeing as it was serious enough for you to summon a demon to help sort things out I think we’re past the point of it being ‘a little awkward’. In light of that, is it ok if WE talk to Jara about this?”

Apep glanced around the room as if the myriad wine bottles would hold at least one answer. They didn’t clearly, so he changed to the stone. Alas, the cracks between stone bricks are not known for being talkative either, so he turned to the barrels. Dead wood tells no tales of course so he looked back at Kat and Lily, but they asked the question in the first place. “Do you have to?” said Apep, asking his own question.

“Technically speaking we don’t have to do anything in life, but it is certainly the best course of action I can see at this point,” explained Kat. “We don’t know anything at all about Zuhra’s ex-whatever. We don’t know who she was friends with before that, who her parents were or really ANYTHING of note about Zuhra from what you’ve mentioned,”

“Oh... well I mean, I know her favourite kind of flowers are Jasmines, and that she likes to, for some weird reason, dip certain vegetables in milk when she eats them. Not even sweeten stuff just normal milk. Her favourite food is-” Apep started to ramble before Kat cut him off.

“Apep,” said Kat forcefully, “Not that Zuhra’s likes and dislikes aren’t important in a relationship, but they do not help us find information about her past. We haven’t even seen what she looks like,” Apep’s eyes started to get an odd glow, “so we’ll need to visit for that as well.”

“Oh oh, I can describe her perfectly!” shouted Apep gleefully.

Sadly for him, Kat was prepared to cut that down, “No, it’ll be better to just see her in person,” \*and because if you are anything like Lily we’ll have to spend a long time listening to a description that probably won’t help us much.\*

[I wish I could say you’re wrong Kat...]

\*Hey, I love hearing you talk about my appearance. But that’s just because I like hearing you talk about your passions. It just so happens one of your most prominent passions is ME. I’m fine with that, and even if it’s a little embarrassing to hear sometimes, seeing your whole face light up as you talk makes it more than worth it. The problem however, is that his descriptions probably won’t be that useful for asking after her to other people. I mean, imagine you asking for my whereabouts using only your most... passionate thoughts about me.\*

Kat felt deep embarrassment permeating from Lily’s side of the link, [Oh. Oh dear... I... I can imagine in and I wish I couldn’t. Oh I am so glad I was trying to hide the fact I have a crush on you. I can see myself doing something foolish otherwise. Asking if they’d seen ‘the redheaded girl with legs for days’ or something. Probably something a lot more flattering and a lot worse for my sanity honestly.]

\*Indeed, and Apep is clearly nervous so he'd start to babble and we'd probably get a bunch of information about details most people would never notice about her. Or at least, that's the feeling I get about it.\*

Lily sent a mental nod of affirmation down the link as Apep tried not to sound whiny asking, "Are you really sure? Isn't there some other way? Some magical demon powers or something?"

Kat gave an unrepentant shrug, or her attempt at one anyway, "I'm not entirely sure what ability would be required to get that sort of information. If it exists," \*which truth be told it probably does. Maybe something Envy demons have?\* "I don't know of it, and I most certainly do not have the ability to track down such things without asking around. I'm not entirely sure why you haven't spoken to Jara about this, but maybe it was too risky.

"Well, we're going to FIND a way to ask Jara about it. I'll at least agree that going to Zuhra with those kinds of questions or intentions would probably be bad, but I just can't see anyway to avoid bringing Jara in on this at least a little bit unless we can get that information from her parents, which seems even less likely,"

Apep sighed "I guess it sounds like we don't really have a choice when you put it that way..."

Kat nodded, "Indeed. Now, the question is how exactly are we going to get to Jara's?"

Apep noticeably paled at the question. "Um..."

\*Oh dear...\* "What seems to be the problem?" asked Kat.

"Well... um... I already said I probably can't go but um... I'm not even sure how we're going to get you out of here..." said Apep trailing off slowly at the end. Kat made a 'please continue' gesture and he did. Slowly, "Right... um... well... we're in the wine cellar right now... which is in the basement of the kitchen storeroom. You get here through a hidden button but that's not really the point... um..."

"I'm not entirely sure how to... get you out of the compound itself let alone getting IN to Jara's... see... a lot of the guards focus on making sure nobody gets IN but there are a few that make sure to watch the inside and make sure a sneaky person isn't trying to get OUT as well... and while a lot of them are... willing to overlook the fact I snuck into the kitchen... and probably... probably... won't tell my parents..."

"They certainly WOULD tell people about the weird horned girl following me that appeared from nowhere... I mean... the guards are all nice enough... they just... well it IS their jobs after all.... And I mean... you are a Succubus so... some... ideas... might be thrown around. Untrue ones of course... but... um... chances of getting attacked... especially if you get spotted are... um... a little high?"

\*Well this isn't ideal. We need a way to sneak out of here without the guards noticing, and we also need it to be repeatable because we want to break IN to Jara's place. Have you got any ideas?\*

[Not really... I mean, my first idea is to send me ahead to scout? With our link I can act as your eyes and you follow behind me... but... wait what time is it?]

"What time is it Apep?" asked Kat.

"Um... a bit before breakfast?" said Apep.

\*Oh come on. We're going to be stuck here aren't we...\*

[Why?]

\*Not you too Lily. If breakfast is soon and this is underneath a storeroom connected to the KITCHEN\*

[OH. There will be a bunch of chefs that we don't want to spot us as well. Yeah... that's... less than ideal...]

## Chapter 776 Doing Summa Dat Worldbuilding

"Ok. Apep, is there like a secret backdoor or something we can use? With the cooks in the kitchen on top of the guards I'm not sure we can get out..." said Kat.

"Not really?" said Apep awkwardly.

Kat let out a long sigh, "Right. So do you have any suggestions at all? Or will I be stuck here until night time? When do the chefs start lunch anyway?"

"Um... pretty much straight away most of the time... they have a lot of food to serve. Not just my family but the guards and the rest of the staff as well..." answered Apep.

\*Well that's seriously not ideal...\* "So... how exactly did you plan to avoid getting caught?" asked Kat.

"I um... sort of didn't? I just assumed I'd get caught by the chefs so I was going to sneak out with a piece of jerky or chocolate or something and pretend that was the whole point?" said Apep.

Kat frowned and said, "Right ok... so... I can understand that but... but what exactly where you planning to do with the demon you summoned?"

.....

"I kinda... just sorta... assumed you'd have the answers to my issues and we'd um... just... go over them and then I'd fail to sneak out but know what to do about Zuhra?" offered Apep as his answer.

Kat sighed again, she was doing that a lot in this conversation. "Right..." Lily do you have any ideas?

[I mean not really... the guard patrols are probably pretty good and we don't exactly have stealth skills that are particularly advanced... certainly not good enough to get past trained guards actively looking for issues. Sure we could probably bust out and get away with it but the problem is we need to get back in to see Apep to deliver answers and we can't just charge back IN. Though, we should ask how we'll find Jara's house.]

\*Good idea. That's something. Keep working on potential exit strategies I guess. I wish my mist form was a bit more versatile. Then I could like ghost out of here.\* "Well putting that to the side for the moment... how can we find Jara's house?" asked Kat.

"Oh that won't be too hard... um... if you can fly you can just get high enough to and look for the buildings with giant 6's on them. My house has giant 3's as well so... that might be useful? Um... if you aren't coming at it from the top, look for any of the larger compounds and walk past the front gates. They'll have whatever Number of Ten they are... so that's another way I guess. Um... also the estates are

laid out in order actually, well except for nine and ten. They got swapped around a long time ago. It was this big thing... um I can tell you if you want?" explained Apep.

\*Do we want to hear about this? I mean it doesn't exactly sound relevant but I think it could be interesting.\*

[Sure go ahead. I think I have an idea to get us out of here without being seen. Well, not without being seen at all. I just need to think on the details and you'll need to help me test something...]

\*Righto,\* "It sounds like it has to be a bit of a story right? I'm happy to listen," said Kat.

Apep nodded and said, "Sure... um... ok so... when I say this was a while ago, I think it was... five hundred years? Maybe it was more than that? Sorry I'm not so good with dates. The Tenth of the Ten family was slowly dying out. We're not sure why even to this day. Countless healers checked for poison or other kinds of foul play, but checking the records this was actually happening to the family for a long time. Their bodies were just sort of giving out on them.

"Things sort of came to a head when there were only two people in the lineage left. Twin brother and sister. The brother stayed on to manage the estate while the sister happened to marry into the Ninth of the Ten. They were having a slightly different issue at the time, but it's a lot more complex and doesn't matter for this particular story. So, she married into them and managed to have three kids, which is meant there were the most descendants from Tenth of the Ten in like... 600 or so years. One again, don't quote me on the dates,

"This was sort of fine and her brother managed to marry... but he died fifty years later with no heirs. Apparently not from lack of trying... but I learnt about this story when I was a lot younger so I didn't understand what my tutor meant when they said that. I do NOW but it also means I never thought to ask if one of the husband or wife was barren and if so which one, or if there was miscarriages. Anyway, I don't know so I guess it doesn't matter.

"It did mean though, once he died, that his sister was the first and only person in line to be in charge of the Tenth. Which... created a bit of an issue. To prevent succession issues, the Ten families made a pact which was later made a law, that when you take on another family name as part of the Ten, you are waiving your right to inherit the title. Not the lands, just the title. This meant that the sister, owned all the Tenth's holdings, but nobody was sure if she could be the new Tenth or not.

"This was further complicated by the fact that she was openly gay, and married a women but had kids with the butler, though this was all before it was socially acceptable. Anyway... this was a bit of an issue for everyone because she had, technically speaking, bastard children that might or might not be able to inherit the position. It could only go to her, but she technically gave it up, so her children should have it but they were bastards and she was already married.

"Oh, um, a bastard can inherit as long as the parents marry before the child is elevated. That particular law was codified pretty early on. The only issue was, the sister had no interest in fixing that particular issue because she was very happily married and her wife was perfectly on board with everything. They raised the children together in fact.

"That's where everything went to shit though. See, the Ninth was having issues internally with succession. Mary, oh that was the twin sister and her wife was Joeline, forgot that. Now, they were

suddenly maybe in position to be the two ladies of the Tenth. This was before people were totally accepting of gay couples though. So they weren't happy with that, and the rest of the Ninth was undertaking a small civil war because the current head was an idiot.

"See, he said that it was to be a fight between his heirs. We think, he meant a series of honourable duels but instead everyone started poisoning each other and going for assassinations. Joeline, seeing this, backed out of the race and abdicated her position as the 3rd daughter to take her completely out of the running and keep her kids safe.

"Which would be great if the last Tenth didn't die during this fiasco. So now, despite not being in line for the Ninth, she was in line, or at least 'her children' were in line for the Tenth. So a couple assassins try to go for her and failed. Well, she showed them who was top bitch," Apep gave a polite cough as he looked warily around the room. "Um sorry. She showed them who was boss by just murdering the rest of them. Now, some accounts differ here. Some say she murdered everyone, and their spouses and their kids, while others say she murdered the people responsible for the assassins and offering surrender to the rest who rejected it.

"Either way, she was the only one left. And since technically she didn't abdicate properly, because she kept her family name. Now she's in charge of the Ninth and potentially the Tenth as well. She didn't want the power though so she pushed for her children to inherit one each. Sounds fine right?

"Well the final issue was that when they came of age there was a rather large fight. Both wanted to take up the mantle as the Ninth of the Ten. The older child because they didn't have any interest in the old compound, and the younger child because they wanted to honour Joeline and become the new Ninth of the Ten. This was settled by Joeline, forcefully, because she didn't want another civil war.

"She split the estates and titles and basically told everyone else to deal with it. And so that's why the Tenth of the Ten's compound is out of order, because it was originally the Ninth compound but they got swapped around!"

[Great timing on the ending. Kat. I have an idea that's so crazy it just might work]

Chapter 777 Lucky Number 7... If only that was relevant.

Remember, because Lily is taking charge [These are Kat's thoughts] **nOvELNεxt.com**

—

Lily took a glance over at Apep, checking his appearance once again. The fact he was wearing what amounted to a jacket with no undershirt swayed her choice. Lily hopped down from Kat's arms and transformed back into her humanoid form. "Ok, so. We'll need to work together for this. Well sort of. See Kat," Lily turned to face her girlfriend and tried very hard not to blush over her attire. She failed, but she did try. "I'm thinking that if you use your dream walking ability on me, I can stay in Memphis form, and Apep can pretend to have found a stray kitten he was feeding in the storeroom.

"Once we get outside we're pretty much set. Either Apep gets told to get rid of me, and he can just drop us off at the front gate where we're free to leave, or I can pretend to be annoyed at him for something and run off. It should be fine as long as the guards aren't shooting down random pigeons or whatever. What do you both think?"



“Well, I’m not entirely sure if I can use that skill on you while awake... otherwise I don’t see any issues,” said Kat as she turned to Apep.

Apep tapped his foot softly a few times as he thought it over, “I... I think it’ll work? I’ve never snuck in a pet before but that’s because we have a family wolf. Lazy thing he is but very fluffy. Still... I’m just trying to think... hmm... I think it might be fine? The issue is that familiars or just possessed animals. I think we have wards against that on the perimeter... so I’m not sure how that would affect you both...”

.....

Kat and Lily shared a look. Lily just shrugged and turned back to Apep, “What’s supposed to happen?”

“Well... I think for possession it’s easier to just to end the link. People don’t tend to connect too deeply to the animal because it causes issues on both ends... so... worse comes to worst I think Kat would be forced out of your head... but then again that’s NOT how possession of animals works. Umm... because from the sounds of things Kat’s body isn’t going to stick around right?” Kat nodded, “Right so... there’s not really anything like that...”

“Hmm... I mean... it might be closer to a familiar link... but even still I don’t think... wait how does this work? Where does Kat’s body go exactly?” Apep asked.

Kat shrugged, “I mean... I don’t really know? I mean... it LOOKS like it enters the body of whoever’s mind I’m going into... but I don’t... I don’t think that’s what happens? Because that wouldn’t really work would it. Hmm... now I’m not so sure...”

“Alright...” said Apep with a frown, “Honestly I don’t think that kind of... magic?” Kat made a ‘so-so’ gesture, “or not? Well... um... I’m going to say chances are you’ll be fine, or worse comes to worst you’ll both be split apart and can run... probably?”

Lily let out a quick huff. “Ok, that’s fine... but if it’s still a possibility things go south we need a plan to get in contact again,”

“Hmm... well Jara can contact me... if you get to her...” offered Apep

Lily rolled her eyes in response and said, “True, but have you considered that if your wards catch us whatever wards she has will ALSO cause us problems?”

“Oh... right...” said Apep clearly not having thought things through to their logical conclusion. “Um... hmm... we don’t really have protocol for long distance communication really... I mean we have mirrors for REALLY long distance communication but they’re too expensive to have for inter city stuff and we have the Emergency System for the really important things that need to be known right now!

“For... um... for communication just in the city we have couriers that are really quite fast. It doesn’t take more than an hour to get from one end to the other so thinking up something better just hasn’t really been important...”

“Could we send you a courier?” asked Kat.

Apep shook his head, “No no, you have to have permission from my father to send messages here. The system is a little strange but it works. You can choose who you receive messages from. It keeps the

complaints official and through intermediaries. Problem is... I don't have a personal message, just the general one to this house. So you'd need permission from my father..."

Lily frowned, "Is there seriously nothing?"

Apep shrugged, "I mean a skilled enough telepathy mage could work... but no. We'd need to connect everyone before that and I'm not sure if that'd work considering you're a demon. We've got a bunch of wards against it anyway..."

Kat frowned "Not to be too much of a downer but... do you have any ideas with a chance of working? While I'm not against sharing your thoughts... you seemed to know it was never going to work before you said anything about it..."

Apep winced slightly and said, "Um... no... not really..."

Kat glanced over at Lily. [I think we might need to just try this out. Demon stuff tends to bypass standard magic wards so I wouldn't be surprised if we're just going to be fine. I don't really see any other way to go about it. We can sit here and test ideas constantly and have it amount to nothing. I mean, other than just relying on demonic bullshit, is it really likely we outsmart whoever designed the wards? They probably had months or years to plan them and that's assuming they haven't just continually been added to over time]

\*I think you're right... though actually one more thing I nearly forgot.\* "Well Apep it looks like we might just have to try. A question though... do you happen to have a note we can give Jara to prove we are who we say we are?"

"Oh... um... hmm..." Apep started patting himself down and managed to find a piece of paper with something on it, Apep pulled out a pen from another pocket and was about to start writing when he paused, realising what exactly was on it and shoved it back into his pocket. "Nope. No paper here..."

"Apep... both of us have enhanced eyesight..." said Lily after a moment of shocked pause, "even if it's a little dark down here we can both see perfectly fine. Pretty sure we both saw exactly what happened,"

"Nope. No useable paper here!" said Apep with a shaky certainty.

\*Ideas? I mean... we still really need a note or something. We probably could push it but... my bets on that being a bad poem about Zuhra he never finished.\*

[Oh? How do you know? Did you write poems about me?]

\*Of course, not Kat. That's a brilliant way to get caught. No, I spent my time finding ways to write about you without making it look like I was writing about you. It was a surprisingly interesting exercise. Food was one topic, and landscaping was another. I think I might have also done a fake report about play-do as well. Not sure if I still have any of them. I deleted a couple when you nearly caught me once. Sort of panicked.\*

[Lily, that sounds adorable. I think we could have a lot of fun reading them one day]

\*Nope. No way. That's ridiculously embarrassing.\*

“Well do you have anything else we can use?” asked Lily pushing down Kat’s ideas and trying to ignore how warm it made her feel, “We do need SOMETHING. Oh and don’t say like ‘take this necklace I’m wearing that I never take off’ because that’s a sure-fire way to make it looked like we kidnapped you or something. Just... is there any way we can get a letter? That really is for the best...”

“Um... er... if I can get you to the main house there’s plenty of paper around. The city has a few paper mages get paid just to produce basic paper,” said Apep.

\*Oh. Right I’m a paper mage... hmm... could I actually make permanent paper though?\* Lily quickly tried to remember all the information she’d been over in the book but... \*nope. Doesn’t look like I’ve been taught how to do that dammit. That’s assuming I can even use mana right now. I theoretically know how to make fake paper but that doesn’t even last an hour.\*

“I think we’re going to have to just go for it. Apep. If I fall asleep that’s fine. Just carry us someplace where you can write us a note and then try and get us outside. Otherwise I’ll do what I can to help,” said Lily before turning back into a Memphis and looking at Kat.

“Um... alright I suppose?” said Apep nervously. Kat however was willing to trust Lily. She burst into a cloud of purple smoke and headed for her girlfriend.

Chapter 778 Inside the Mind of Lily

Still Lily’s perspective.

—

Lily felt Kat’s existence pressing into her mind and a visceral part of her wanted to simply cast the demon out. Kat’s skill was clearly based on entering the target seamlessly and undetected, something that couldn’t occur when Lily was very aware, both of Kat’s use of the skill and of what would happen afterwards. The fact that she was awake at all was causing issues. Kat’s guess was correct in that it wasn’t meant to be used on anything other than sleeping targets. Even without proper access to mana, Lily knew it would be easy to force Kat from her mind at that moment.

Of course, that was very much not what anyone wanted. Lily tried to relax, and allow Kat’s presence to sink into her mind. The problem with that was, while Lily could relax easily around Kat, she was also always aware of the demon in question before her transformation, and before the link. With all the recent events, Lily was more aware of Kat, and her feelings, then ever before. So even when she tried to relax, her mind never actually left Kat, and the fact Kat was in her mind meant it never gave Kat a proper blank spot to use.

Lily was starting to feel some pressure behind her eyes as Kat’s skill failed to properly take hold. The situation wasn’t something it was truly designed for and it was struggling. Either Kat should have succeeded or been ejecting at this point and the in-between state she was currently in was causing problems. Lily couldn’t even properly feel Kat through their link. It was all scrambled.

\*Wait...\*

When Lily properly focused on that feeling, the sensation of their link almost tying itself into knots Lily pressed into that feeling, angling her thoughts towards the link and trying to make it broader, more encompassing. She felt only a slight bit of increased pressure, this time under her horns, before it

vanished and things almost seemed to snap into place. Lily felt the building pressure vanish, and her mind could actually hear the clicks as things settled into place.

.....

Suddenly, Lily felt like she could see EVERYTHING even if her vision hadn't changed so much. Her mind was looking at two split images. In one vision, she was looking at the cellar, while in another she was looking at Kat, standing around in a copy of her bedroom, and very confused. What Lily couldn't see, was that her eyes had started to glow somewhat and the presence of Kat in her mind was giving her a limited version of Kat's True Sight.

"What the... why am I back home...?" said the Kat inside her head. \*You aren't actually home, just inside my head. Though... it seems like my default for 'home' or 'comfortable place' is your bedroom. Man, that's embarrassing. I have no idea what I'd be doing if I hadn't admitted my feelings.\*

"Wait... so" [what] "happens" [if I] "do this" said Kat alternating the way she spoke.

Lily could already feel the headache that caused though and said as much, \*Ok Kat. Just... no. Please pick one or the other. I don't really care which one but mixing them is awful on this end.\*

"Sorry..." said Kat, with an exaggerated bow.

\*It's fine.\* Lily shook her head and hopped over to Apep. She didn't really want to be carried by him when Kat was so close at hand, but needs must. Apep seemed to flounder a bit when she leapt at him but the boy managed to catch her before she slid too far down his chest. "Um... did it work?" asked Apep

Before Lily could even nod though he continued, "Oh right um... you can't exactly talk like that can you... and I mean... the fact you're moving is a good sign right? Right still can't talk um... do I like... if someone asks do I like give you a pet name or something or still call you Lily? Wait why am I asking? She can't respond,"

Lily mentally groaned as Apep continued to ramble. She was about ready to claw the fool for wasting there time but he was at least heading somewhere, presumably towards the exit so she let him be. Kat on the other hand was taking her time to look around the room, trying to ferret out any interesting notes. One of the first things she did realise was that the doll version of herself Thyme made was about twice the size it should be, and was currently tucked into bed.

Kat smiled at that and gave her doll self a pat on her head as she made the rounds. The next thing she noticed was that there were a few books lying around. Glancing at them, the covers had rather specific titles, leaving no guesses as to their contents. Books like 'the first time I met Kat' or 'When Kat stood up to me' or 'that first time Kat ended up in a locker' and things of that nature. Kat was tempted to look into the books, but was afraid of messing things up too much. Perhaps using one would send her into the memory and this was not the time to be testing such things.

Eventually, Kat took a glance in 'her' closet and smiled wildly at what she found. It would be a very good treat for Lily. Smirking, Kat carefully snuck into the closet, hoping Lily was distracted and shut the door.

On Lily's end of things, she was not all that comfortable. First off. Apep didn't know how to hold a cat. Secondly, he was not careful with her wings at all. One of his hands was constantly pulling her wing

down every step he took. It was annoying and certainly not comfortable. The next issue was her horns. Instead of holding her slightly forward or in the crook of his arm. She was pressed against his chest and needed to keep her head angled away lest she stab the fool as he walked. Things only got worse when he started climbing the ladder.

“Hey Lily!” said Kat, taking Lily’s attention back to the second scene her mind was showing her. It is worth noting that Lily’s view of the room was based on where the door should be. Something Kat was clearly aware of, as when Lily turned her full attention to the scene she immediately found herself in a compromising position.

In the real-world Lily hissed, but it was mostly just to vent the swirling emotions barrelling through her. Apparently, what Lily wasn’t aware of, was that the room was based on her own subconscious desires. This meant that ‘Kat’s’ closet wasn’t filled with her real clothes, but instead clothes that Lily wanted to see her wearing. She was getting a very good example of this right now.

Kat had managed to slip into a proper bunny outfit in shockingly good time. The back was completely open, swooping down to just below Kat’s tail, barely hiding the start of Kat’s rear from view to accommodate her wings. If that wasn’t enough, the front looked like it was painted on, started right around Kat’s chest, framing it wonderfully. Kat had a pair of bunny ears on as well, that looked a little odd sharing space with Kat’s horns but still quite nice. The fluffy tail was missing, but Kat had her own so that was fine.

What was really causing issues though were the tights Kat had slipped on for her legs. Kat was wearing two layers of stockings. Something Lily didn’t consciously realise she needed in her life. The bottom layer was a standard pair of stockings that stopped at Kat’s thigh, digging into it ever so slightly and leaving a nice bit of skin between that and her top. What really made Lily look though, was on top of that was a set of fishnet stockings that continued all the way up to her outfit and beyond and made Lily’s mouth water slightly from the sight.

It was an odd combination of the two, and Lily wasn’t necessarily sure it improved the final product but having it on certainly drew her eyes. The awful handling Apep was treating her to seemed much less relevant as Kat started to walk around the room, not in heels though. Apparently those were still off the table even in Lily’s mind. It was these motions that made it more than clear Kat could tell where Lily was watching from.

Kat walked around carefully, always making sure to keep something tantalising in Lily’s view but normally only one thing at a time. Perhaps she’d turn to the front and push up her chest, or pretend to lose her balance and let her back stick all the way out. Perhaps she’d just walk carefully, using her toes to stretch the material on her stocking as far as it could go.

\*Kat. Stop trying to give me lewd thoughts.\*

[I’m already in your head Lily. It’s too late. These are your thoughts now]

Chapter 779 The Many Outfits of Kat Part

Still Lily’s perspective

—

Apep, with some difficulty, managed to climb the ladder while holding Lily. If she was paying more attention she would have jumped out of his hands to make things easier. Of course, Apep might not have let go until he realised what was going on potentially causing other issues. Then again, that doesn't really matter because Lily's mind was being occupied by Kat messing around. Lily wasn't entirely sure what she should be feeling. Horrified, overjoyed, horny, or disappointed. They were trying to escape a heavily defended compound. It really wasn't the time for games. Of course, Lily wasn't doing anything at the moment anyway...

Apep stood at the door to the small patio area connected to the kitchen. The chefs kept a few herbs and spices growing in the small area. It had a small table as well, but it really wasn't designed for proper rest. The reason Apep was frozen though, was he realised that if he was going to be pretending to sneak food out for Lily, he needed to actually have some food in hand. So, with determination he turned to the wall of food supplies and came to the realisation that... he has no idea what normal cats eat, and even less of an idea of what demon cats that are actually people eat.

Back in Lily's mind, Kat dashed back into the closet. Lily was still rather shellshocked from the sight and even with Kat no longer dancing around the room, her mind was still filled with snapshots of Kat in various poses. Lily barely noticed the fact the real Kat was hiding away again. For Kat's part, she was abusing the fact this was Lily's mind. She was able to pull off her clothes with a sharp tug and a nearby clothes hanger. The extra steps not being necessary.

So when Kat eyed up the next set of clothes, she tried just slapping them against her chest. When it worked perfectly, her smile grew wide and sharp as she quickly did the same to the rest of the pieces before Lily could recover her wits. The shoes were actually the biggest pain because Kat found she had to put them on manually for some strange reason. Apparently slapping clothes on her body was acceptable but stomping shoes on was a completely different matter.

Back in the real world, Apep was no closer to finding something to pretend to be feeding Lily. This was the dry storeroom and didn't contain anything that needed to be kept cold. That meant any loose meat scraps, or nice cuts were kept elsewhere. There was jerky kept in a box at the back but Apep thought they tasted horrible. How his father ate them he'd never know. And that's just if you could avoid breaking your teeth on the awful stuff. Apep shivered and looked things over again. He knew cats were carnivores normally, unlike dogs who trended towards meat but were omnivorous. It made this room full of dry food look particularly useless. "Maybe I should just pick something they can assume is for the cat? As if I made a small mistake in my haste? Lily doesn't actually have to eat whatever this is..." mumbled Apep.

.....

In Lily's mind, Kat was strutting back out into view, enjoying herself immensely. All the feedback she was getting was purely from the mental link, which if anything felt deeper at the moment. It meant she was more aware of what Lily wanted but more importantly WHY she wanted certain things or how she felt. Kat could now more easily feel the conflicted feelings of proprietary, lust, love, and of course, exasperation. It was an intriguing mix that trended towards the positive side of things, and so Kat wasn't afraid to keep pushing.

The next outfit Kat chose was the nun's habit. This was mostly because, of the indecent clothing still in the closet, this was the least sexualised. Well, for a given definition anyway. Kat was pretty that this one was more about the fact she was a demon wearing a nun's outfit than the fact Lily found the outfit enticing in general. That didn't mean there was no attempt made though.

Kat doubted she could have gotten the thing on if she had to put it on normally. The whole outfit was uncomfortably tight everywhere except her legs, where it had no choice but to give her a bit a breathing room. Her wings and tail extended through the back magically just like her usual outfit. The headpiece did a decent job hiding Kat's horns... except for the very top at the front which poked out slightly. Kat herself thought that was part of the point. "Is this... blasphemous?" asked Kat allowed.

Those words were apparently enough for Lily's mind to reboot just enough to take in her new outfit. Kat was kneeling towards Lily's gaze, looking up with the most innocent expression she could manage. Which... was surprisingly innocent considering that to Lily it looked like Kat's breasts were one deep breath away from ripping themselves free of their current confines. \*Forgive me father for I probably have sinned and WILL BE DOING SO AGAIN.\*

Kat couldn't help but laugh at the ridiculous mental commentary, a laughter which only intensified when Lily realised Kat got the message loud and clear, as evident by the wave of embarrassment rushing through her girlfriend. \*You did NOT just hear me say that.\* "I did Lily. I did," said Kat, "But it is ok because God will forgive you, I'm sure. If he doesn't well... I suppose being a demon... I'll just have to take exception to it," Lily groaned mentally.

Back in the real world Apep had given up on finding anything better and grabbed a bag of jerky. Perhaps he could use the excuse that he didn't think he could get away with stealing real meat and had to settle? That seemed like a good enough plan. With that decision made he carefully opened the door, stepping out into fresh air for a few moments. The chefs were already hard at work so nobody was in the garden, making Apep pause for a moment. He locked his gaze on the small fence that separated this from the rest of the compound before shaking his head. "No, dumb idea. Not only would I need to carry Lily over, but I'm just as likely to get spotted. Might as well go through the kitchen," said Apep. **NovelNExt.com**

Tucking Lily under one arm like a parcel, and his real parcel held in the other, Apep pushed open the kitchen door and strode past like he owned the place. It was close enough to the truth that the youth had no trouble acting out the part. Sadly, while confidence is a good way to sneak into areas with lax security, and pretending to belong will make many people simply agree with your assertion. This doesn't work in the slightest when you're the young master of the house and very familiar to all the staff.

Quite a few chefs looked over, but the head chef, a tall woman that looked like she could bench press the oven with one hand while needing dough with the other started to walk over. Apep, the poor boy, thought he was safe as he put his hand on the door. He thought he was completely in the clear. So when his reach for the handle was interrupted by a much larger hand and a looming shadow, Apep couldn't help but gulp. "Um yes...?" said Apep trying to pretend he wasn't very afraid of the Head Chef.

While Apep was getting intimidated, Kat was changing outfits before Lily could get over her embarrassment and recover her faculties. Kat quickly 'ripped' off the outfit that once again ended back up on a hanger and looked over her options before spotting one that looked a little out of place. It was a slightly ragged white dress that was only held up by the right shoulder. It had a jagged edge and when

Kat slapped it on her shoes vanished and she found a necklace of rocks around her neck and a bone holding her hair up, hair that seemed to be a bit longer than it should be.

Kat stepped out once again, this time keeping herself turned so that the dress looked slightly more decent. Lily was aware enough to look over in confusion when Kat turned straight on, showing off the low cut of the dress and the fact it only barely covered Kat's lower half. "Is this a reference to something?" asked Kat.

Lily didn't want to answer that question. Then she remembered, that unlike Kat, she could lie. \*No. No it is not a reference to anything at all. Certainly nothing prehistoric.\* Kat of course rolled her eyes. At that and turned around, showing off the lower than normal back that accommodated her wings. "You sure?" asked Kat. Lily of course. Didn't deign Kat with a response. Mostly because she was incapable of thinking coherently when the twirl revealed Kat the dress didn't come with... extras.

Chapter 780 The Many Outfits of Kat Part

Still Lily's perspective

—

While Kat and Lily were having fun, or rather, Kat was having fun with Lily's reactions while Lily tried not to enjoy herself immensely. Apep was slowly turning his gaze around and up towards that of the looming shadow of the Head Chef. "Now young master," Apep could practically hear the unsaid 'little boy' in her words, "what might you be doing in the kitchen at this hour?"

Apep swallowed down his immediate answer. Yes he had one. He wasn't just buying time at all. His mind scrambled slightly trying to come up with an answer, and he instinctively looked down to Lily for an answer, only to jerk his head away as he realised he really wasn't supposed to draw attention to the 'cat' in his hands. "Nothing?" said Apep.

The Head Chef placed a heavy hand on Apep's shoulder. It wasn't meant to be threatening... well not overly so anyway. It was the gentle hand of a very large adult that had caught her charge doing something he shouldn't have been. "Nothing?" asked BIRTHA, the Head Chef, "Well, if you are doing nothing then should you really be in the kitchen?"

"No?" said Apep, though it clearly sounded like a question.

"I see. In that case, if you are doing nothing, and people who do nothing should not be in the kitchen... why are you in the kitchen?" asked BIRTHA as if this whole conversation was a reasonable one between equals, and not as if she was subtly threatening a minor.

.....

While Apep was desperately coming up with some form of answer for BIRTHA, Kat was having more fun with Lily. After she'd denied that Kat's current outfit was a reference to anything, Kat just shrugged and stalked back into the closet, letting her hips sway and her tail draw attention to her backside. Kat was letting her instincts run wild and honestly have a great time of it. She might not find people sexually attractive, but Kat was finding that attention, specifically Lily's attention, was a very welcome thing.



So into the closet she was, and she needed something quick to put on, even with the quick change. So she discarded her white outfit for the swimsuit nearby. It was interesting actually, because this was the only item of clothing that was real. Somewhat anyway. It wasn't actually the swimsuit Kat wore when the school, or the orphanage kids, went to the local pool for a day and not just because this was all in Lily's head. Kat also didn't miss the fact that once the outfit was on, she felt like a bucket of water had been dumped on her.

Kat padded out of the closet, not concerned at her state now that she was soaked through. Lily, well Lily was trying to decide if this was too far, or if it was purrfect. Kat was of course, in a very nice swimsuit. It was a one-piece swimsuit in a navy blue that was basically black. It was leotard style and showed off Kat's whole body quite well. It was, like the nun's habit, plastered on. It was at least one size too small, probably two, and unlike the habit that hid Kat's legs from her view, now they were on full display and covered in a slight sheen of water.

Lily felt her mind completely short circuit. It was too far.

Kat pouted at the fact her girlfriend had just completely checked out this time. Apparently, this was too much. "Well bother. Then again..." Kat glanced down at the swimsuit and was not ignorant to the fact that this particular model wasn't actually designed for the water she was currently covered in and provided a rather... complete... view of things where wet material clung to her body. Considering how tight it was... well... Kat decided it was in fact a bit much for her poor girlfriend and headed back to the closet.

"No reason?" was the best answer Apep could give to Britha's question. Even with a plan beforehand. Even with Lily obviously in his arms. Even with the packet of jerky Britha would know well enough was NOT for him. Apep couldn't find it in himself to do anything other than tell a very obvious lie.

Britha let out a long sigh, as if she had been deeply and personally wronged by such a non-answer. "I see... I see... so what you're saying is the cat thing your carrying has nothing at all to do with the jerky that certainly didn't come from our storeroom?"

"Um... yes?" said Apep only for Britha to raise both eyebrows. She couldn't actually do the single eyebrow raise, but she was intimidating enough it didn't matter. "Can I change my answer to no? I mean... I'm not even sure I know what you are asking anymore but I feel like my first answer wasn't correct for some reason..."

"Ah just get outta here kid," said Britha with a 'light' slap to Apep's shoulders that made his teeth rattle and would have been enough to get Lily to take notice of the real world again if she wasn't completely checked out. Apep just nodded, opened the door and ran for it. He pretended not to hear Britha's barking laughter ringing out behind him before the door fully shut. He just kept running. All the way to the main house. The guard at the door just opened it for the young master as he charged past.

Unlike Britha, who had regular contact with the family and had worked as the chef for quite some time now, this guard had never even talk to the family of the house. He also was not paid enough to go outside of his job description, which was 'alert someone else if you see an intruder and delay'. Well, Apep wasn't an intruder, and the cat didn't count... probably. They had wards for that stuff. So it wasn't his job. Lily, once again, was too out of it to notice the rough treatment.

Back in Lily's head, Kat was in the closet once again and looking for something that at least looked a bit more acceptable. After glancing through the outfits, many of which were just underwear, Kat decided on the maid outfit. It wasn't all that accurate, even when compared to the stuff Callisto wore, which was a step removed already. Kat smiled at it though because as she slapped it onto her body, the water vanished, something she hadn't quite thought of, and she noticed that her tail wasn't phasing through anything. Kat grinned and strode out once again.

"Sorry about breaking your mind a bit Lily. Let me clean up the mess!" said Kat cheerfully. Lily was of course dragged out of her stupor by the sound of Kat's voice. Part of her was afraid of what she would see. Part of her was right. The maid outfit Kat wore had bright white stockings, something they both new would catch dirt like nobodies' business, and small Mary Jane style shoes with an oversized buckle that shined in the light. ~~nOve~~*lNext.cOm*

The top was a puffy blouse like setup that actually covered Kat's chest well. It drew some attention, but nothing like the others. Kat had the headpiece on as well, and her wings were free at the back. That's where the decent parts of the outfit ended. See the issue was the skirt. It wasn't even that short. In fact, by pure measurement it was of an acceptable length. This was made completely irrelevant by the fact it started at belly button height. It just barely covered Kat's undergarments like this, and Lily was perfectly aware of the fact it did NOT continue to do so when Kat walked. White as well of course, with matching little bows.

Lily knew her blush would be molten if she was in human form. It was... just barely acceptable. She wanted to look away from the scene just to save herself so small part of her modesty but not only could she not look away, this was all in her mind, so she had neither hands no eyelids to block the sight even for a moment. Of course, the rest of her was BURNING THE SIGHT INTO HER MEMORY because it was wonderful. \*Glorious. Though I might never be able to look at Callisto the same way.\*

"Well hopefully it's not in the same was as me. I might feel a little jealous," teased Kat. \*You know very well that is NOT what I'm talking about in the slightest Kat. I mean. This is completely indecent who would wear this in real life.\*

"Well, point one, I would happily wear this for you in real life. Point two. This is YOUR head Lily. I didn't come up with the designs. YOU did," said Kat with a teasing smile.

\*Have I actually been a pervert this whole time? NO It must be Kat who is the pervert.\*

"Keep telling yourself that you useless lesbian,"

\*Kat where did you hear that?\* Thought Lily with some shock, not actually believing her original statement on Kat's perversion.

"I dunno... the longer I'm in your head the more ideas I get..." said Kat carefully in response.

\*Kat... should you maybe... not be playing into my fetishes? This... you um... yeah... pretty sure that's um... some bleedover from me... cause... yeah... that's... that's not something you'd ever say... and I have concerns now.\*

"Eh, I regret nothing," said Kat. It did not pacify any of Lily's worries.