

DEMONS 931

Chapter 931 Who has friends? Not Us!

Once lunch was over and the food was cleaned up, Kat grabbed the chair she'd received from Lust and sat down in it to relax. It wasn't long before Lily joined in, and then Sylvie hopped on as well. Lily let herself be placed into Sylvie's lap without complaint, while Sylvie took Kat's own as her resting place. Callisto was still washing, but had simply shooed everyone away when they made the offer to help.

So what DO we get for Sylvie?

[What is this 'we' you're talking about here?]

Oh don't even try that. Now that WE are together, it's OUR responsibility to get something nice for Sylvie. So what are WE getting.

Lily huffed a bit mentally but didn't do anything to hide the fact she was pleased about Kat's suggestions. Sure she didn't really know what to get Sylvie either, but at the very least she knew they could work it out. [Well you know her better than I do. What sort of thing do you think she'd like?]

Hmm... I suppose I could get her a book on higher order mathematics or something... but I don't know anything about maths myself so I don't know what about it she finds interesting. Maybe psychology books? Same problem really.

[I didn't realise Sylvie was actually that high level...]

Eh... she's bordering on it. That's sort of why it would be a gift. Sure Sylvie speaks like she ate an encyclopedia but she's still a primary school student. A gifted one well above the rest sure, but still a primary school student. She used to steal, well I say steal, borrow really, my textbooks and try to keep up with me. That was rather hard for her, not because she didn't always GET it but because she was missing some of the earlier content to build on it. Intelligent Sylvie may be but she's not as knowledgeable as you.

[But more knowledgeable than you?]

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Probably? I mean... it's hard to say. Sylvie really likes to hit the books and doesn't have all that many friends... as she mentioned earlier... so she just... sort of reads all the time or hangs out with me? Board games are really the only social activity she participates in.

At some point Sylvie had handed over a comb to Kat, who was now running it through the smaller girl's hair. Sylvie had a smaller, finer comb and was running it through Lily's. Callisto took a seat and smiled at the scene. She noticed the changing expressions on Kat's face and assumed that some discussion was taking place, but she was fine to sit and sip tea for a bit to pass the time. If everyone decided to speak with her, good, if not... it was an adorable sight to behold.

[Could we find a... well I don't know if she'd prefer simple or not... maybe just go for popular? Can we find some popular board game in the demon Hub? Actually we'll need to go their for a check-up soon anyway... so if Sue or Kamiko could show us the equivalent of a shopping mall...?]

Well Kamiko is probably still on her mission but I think Sue is free? We can ask them certainly. I think it's also our best bet. I don't know what sort of games Sylvie likes to play other than chess, but if we get something popular from the Hub it'll be cool for novelty reasons if nothing else. Though... maybe look into a fancy chess set as well?

[Perhaps but we shouldn't look for anything TOO fancy. Remember, we, or at least Callisto and Vivian, want Sylvie to have friends. Obviously magical board games and chess sets wouldn't be usable with anyone not in the know. Though... maybe also get one that is? Perhaps that can wait till later? I'm not sure. I mean... how long do you expect to be able to avoid people noticing you're a demon?]

That's a good question... um... I have no idea? I mean... I'm hoping that at some point I get the ability to hide my demonic features before it really becomes an issue. I visited Gramps in the morning, I can shop over in the Hub. Heck, the only people who might have found out where your parents but they know now and you're a catgirl so...

[I don't feel like that's the healthiest mindset to have about it.]

Maybe not but I don't really know what else I can do about it. It would cause all sorts of issues if it became a big deal. I might be fine but nobody else would be. Even if in the strange even the government decided to leave us alone, at least ONE person would have to be an idiot about it all.

[Fine. I agree with you.]

Lily's continued thoughts, if she had any, were broken by a quiet but powerful sneeze, jolting her in Sylvie's hands. Sylvie broke out into giggles, placed the comb down and began to scratch Lily before she could recover properly from the embarrassment. "Naw... that was adorable Lily," said Kat out loud.

Lily cracked open an eye to try and glare at Kat for saying that out loud but Sylvie's face was in the way and the purring was really undermining whatever malice Lily might have been able to imbue into the glare. Lily continued to purr for a while before Sylvie's fingers got tired and she returned to combing. Lily appreciated the break.

[Ok... um... err... did you want to try out whatever new skill you have?]

Lily the scratches are clearly still muddling your mind. I am NOT testing completely unknown powers inside and I'm certainly not doing it anywhere near Sylvie. Plus, with the fact that I'm Rank 3 now I'm not entirely sure I should even be testing things out in the backyard. My muscle control is shot.

[Yeah I noticed that... do you think that's normal?]

I don't really have any way to know Lily. Well, other than D.E.M.O.N.S but I've noticed it's a bit of a blunt tool. Good for general information, but more like advanced Google than a person when it comes to answering questions. I think I'll talk to Nira about it when you go for your check-up.

[What were you planning to do before I brought that up?]

Honestly? I just wasn't going to worry about it until my next mission. I've got time off, I think at least, so I was just going to let whatever happened happen until next mission then find some time to test things. Maybe if Kamiko knew a place that was good for testing that sort of thing I'd ask but... eh? I don't consider it overly important.

[Right...]

Deciding to avoid that, Kat spoke aloud, "What are the current plans for Sylvie's party?"

"Currently there are no proper plans. I am attempting to convince her to invite at least one person her own age, but she has staunchly refused my subtle suggestions. Yes Sylvie, this is doubling as my way to direct tell you I believe you should have friends your own age," said Callisto evenly.

"I've already said that I'm happy as things are. If Kat's going to be here then it's fiiiinee," pouted Sylvie.

"Fine it may be, but you can't have Kat as your only friend," said Callisto.

"Of course not, Kat is my sister and Lily is my friend slash sister-in-law" said Sylvie easily.

Callisto managed to convey 'see what I have to deal with' to Kat just with her eyes. *Um... do we want to get involved in this?*

[I don't know... Callisto is correct that Sylvie needs friends... but the way she's going about it is never going to work. I mean... I don't think Callisto is under the impression that she'll actually manage to convince Sylvie of anything this way. I'm pretty sure she just doesn't know how else to go about it.]

I'd have thought Vivian would be able to help...

[Vivian can walk into a room and leave it with three additional friends all without having said a word. She might be even worse than Callisto at explaining how to make friends. At least Callisto would've needed to actually TRY.]

Perhaps, but we know from Callisto's story that it took years for her to get one friend... and that ONE friend is Vivian.

[We're all really bad at the whole friend thing aren't we. Actually... aren't you the one that has the most friends now?]

Kat flinched slightly and hoped Sylvie didn't notice. *Um... maybe? They're your friends as well though...*

[Yeah but while Kamiko and Sue might be fond of me they only know me as your girlfriend that was stuck as a cat. They barely know who I am as a person.]

They're still your friends though...

[Nope. They're YOUR friends that I happen to think fondly of and who like me. We'll probably be able to fix that quickly but it doesn't change the fact that currently, in this room, you have the most friends.]

There is something fundamentally wrong with this state of affairs. I feel like some cosmic force has shifted out of balance.

[Deal with it.]

Chapter 932 Lily's Backyard Slice

A day later and it was there that Kat and Lily realised that when Callisto said Vivian was 'out for work' Callisto meant 'Vivian was out of TOWN' for work and wouldn't be returning for a few more days. With

Sylvie at school and Callisto using that chance to pick up food. Kat and Lily found things oddly empty. Lily had decided to do the right thing and say hello to her parents... that were also both out. Lily left a note for her mother just to avoid any future issues.

This meant it was a good chance to test out Lily's new abilities. While Kat's were potentially dangerous, Lily had much greater control over her spells and none of them were all that threatening yet. With nobody around it was as safe as it would ever be for proper testing... but it was not going all that well.

Lily transformed back to her human shape to vent her frustration. Something they realised early on was that Lily actually had better control in her Memphis form, so that was where they started. Now though Lily was just letting off steam. Lily hissed as she whipped her hand across the old wooden board they'd found under a tarp in the backyard with a few other scraps. Lily was surprised at the resistance she felt for a moment before it fell away. Then the board split into pieces.

Lily and Kat stared at the board that was just recently being used for target practice now in pieces. "Welp, you hit the target!" said Kat cheerfully.

"Yeah but that was cheating!" growled Lily as she examined her hand. "I'm trying to hit it with magic not... well I have to assume it was my claws... but I didn't mean to call them up in human form... hmm... maybe I should be testing out that kind of shifting now?"

Kat just shrugged and continued to keep watch. They were trying to be safe after all. Just because their houses were empty did not mean the neighbours were out after all. Kat could hear that at least one person was in the house next door, though the street was relatively quiet otherwise. She tried not to pay attention to the specifics. Better for her sanity that way.

Lily frowned as she stood what remained of the old fence post back up and swiped at the wood. Her claws did not manifest. "Hmmm..." Lily mumbled as she took a step back and swung, this time with about twice the force. Her fingers collided with the old wood, shattering it even as she winced back, shaking her hands out more out of habit than real damage.

"Well that didn't work..." grumbled Lily.

"Naw... want me to kiss it better?" asked Kat with enough seriousness in her tone to indicate that while she was joking, she'd do it in a heartbeat if asked. Of course, this got Lily picturing Kat seductively sucking on her fingers... which... well Lily hadn't known that was something she wanted before now... but apparently her brain was being opened to strange new things every day.

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Lily quickly shook the pictures away, "Um... no I'm good," said Lily despite the fact that Kat had gotten the entire string of fantasies supplied directly by her traitorous mind. Kat simply ignored the twitching in her eye as she nodded, not commenting on Lily's horrible attempt at lying. Even without the link Kat wanted to think she'd have spotted it... and she was reasonably sure she would. Lily got a very particular face now they were dating. It seemed the lack of active suppression meant that Lily's eyes glazed over and her mouth turned into a wide smile whenever she was imagining something lewd happening with her girlfriend. It was a very obvious pattern.

Really what stopped Kat acting was that Lily didn't actually seem to be in pain. It was more of a light tingle as if to remind her that smashing through wood, even rotting wood like this, with just her fingers was not an entirely normal state of affairs. The plank in question was completely totalled now so Kat brought out a similar looking replacement, stabbing it into the ground.

Lily flexed her fingers, slowing turning her hand over to look for any obvious triggers for those sharpened nails. Running a soft hand over them revealed they were certainly sharper than normal nails... but nowhere near enough to cut so cleanly. "Hmm... any ideas?" asked Lily as she prodded away looking for some biological trigger.

"You were pretty angry at the time... lashing out at your lack of progress... I imagine you either wanted to HURT something or CUT something to relieve some of the stress," offered Kat.

Lily winced. It had been an... uncomfortable realisation that for all she felt like her mana wasn't flowing well during their last adventure that it undoubtedly flowed MUCH worse here on Earth. It was so much harder here and even knowing what she needed to do to cast a spell things just didn't want to click. If casting a spell in qi infested areas was like trying to drag her finger through honey, here it was like trying to keep a pile of sand in a straight line while it was all vibrating and sitting on a sieve.

Something about the world disrupted mana on a fundamental level. Which... Lily thought she'd known before. Apparently she hadn't really been able to appreciate just what it meant in truth. In worlds with Qi, it at least accepted some kind of higher energy. It was... displeased perhaps, with mana, but it was almost like the universes here HATED mana. A big difference.

So Lily didn't really know how to feel about the fact that she could still slice cleanly through wood. That was the crux of the issue wasn't it? Her spells were nice, her spells were useful... and they were... certainly less brutal in her mind than gouging deep wounds into flesh with her nails. Part of the reason she was trying poorly to replicate the feet... was that Lily wasn't entirely sure that she wanted to replicate it at all.

Lily glanced over at Kat who just raised a single eyebrow and shrugged. Lily cursed under her breath "No choice then," which of course Kat heard as well, but didn't comment on. Lily imagined someone attacking Kat. She imagined Kat simply letting it happen to avoid killing them. She imagined the pain of being useless, and brought her hand down lengthwise. A slight tug on her fingers, a pull on her joints, and then a moment later the wood split into three mostly clean sections. A few bits had chipped off but it was a rotten piece after all. It wasn't going to split perfectly no matter the blade.

Lily glared down at her hand, blood pumping through it causing her fingers to involuntarily flex. "I don't like this all that much..." grumbled Lily.

Kat stepped up and slowly pulled Lily into a hug. "You don't have to like it, or ever use it if you don't want to,"

Lily wanted to call Kat a liar for that statement. The knowledge that it could not be a lie only burning the shame deeper. "That's a lovely idea Kat... but I don't think I can believe you..."

Kat shrugged, "I managed to say it didn't I? That means that it must be true!"

Lily sighed, "Perhaps... but I feel like I really should be able to use something like this if the situation calls for it... I... I don't know let me just try to get this down,"

Lily reluctantly separated from Kat and psyched herself up as Kat readied another bit of wood. This time Lily focused just on the cutting instead of all the emotions behind it... and whacked her fingers on the wood. Lily frowned at her hand, trying a few more times, focusing on the idea of 'attack' or 'slice' and suppressing her growing annoyance with this process.

[I don't like the fact that it seems I need to be angry or just... willing to lash out. I can't seem to actively attack like this. It needs to be a reflex. A reflex I could train yes but... I don't like the idea of training that way at all...]

Kat floated over and gave Lily a quick smooch on the side of her head. "That's completely fine. I imagine that you can do this because it's part defensive mechanism when you're stressing out. It might be something ingrained into all beastkin to make sure that they don't die or get injured just because they didn't really know how to use their abilities. It seems like a good safety net for them, if a bit deadly in practice,"

Lily nodded, "It does make sense from an evolutionary perspective even if I don't like how it makes me feel right now. That being said... if I think about it that way... I have hope that I can manage it intentionally without all the mental tricks."

Chapter 933 Check In, Check Out

Nira sat down across from Lily with a stack of papers. It was just the three of them now that the other two doctors had left already. Apparently 'nothing interesting to see here' type of results just didn't leave you all that up for discussion. Of course, they were much higher Rank than Kat so perhaps they simply went over all of their observations already. Whatever the case, it was apparently Nira's job to go over those results now. "So... for the most part there's nothing strange here. Your growth rate is a little behind schedule but that might be because Kat reaching Rank 3 disrupted things.

"Your mana is holding stable and there doesn't seem to be any corruption from your demonic energy. It's attuning itself closer to Kat's of course, but that's to be expected. I imagine you'll end up with the same sort of ice resistance. Additionally, you'll be completely immune to Kat's demonic flame even if she wanted to hurt you for some reason. It might not be all that useful regularly, but it will mean that if Kat isn't paying attention you can still walk through it which I'd consider a bonus.

"The only thing that's strange is the fact Kat was able to sort of merge with your mind. The fact you could see through her eyes is something that you're ahead of schedule for... but the combining of minds... that's something else. It doesn't seem to be harmful and your personalities aren't leaking into each other's so we're not worried about it. The current theory is that it has to do with Kat's Rank 2 skill. No other Memphis has been tied to someone with that ability...

"That being said, the fact that you're a Memphis beastkin might be changing things as well. The current intrigue of Memphis are all converted felines. They were never people so they showed a marked increase in intelligence," Nira noticed the slight flickering of confusion on Kat's face, "a group of kittens can be called an intrigue and it works well for Memphis as a species so that's the group noun."

Kat frowned further. *Yes that makes sense... but why isn't it some specifically demonic word? Why does it translate so well?* The answer to Kat's question was that Nira new how to use the translation function well enough to do things like this. Nira was focusing more on how she wanted to sound, and letting her ears work out a rough equivalent to what Kat was hearing. It was an interesting loop and hard to manage, but, practice makes perfect.

Seeing no response Nira continued, "Currently it's a completely undocumented ability. What we are curious about is if it's related to the additional intelligence and sense of self that Lily obviously has as a person, if it's just Kat's ability to enter dreams making the difference, or if the fact that you've been friends for so long. That level of trust is hard to find and the fact that you're dating each other might help push it into 'viable technique' territory.

"For obvious reasons we... screened out any individuals who had... proclivities for animal forms when matching up partners with a Memphis. We don't really know what the link would do if something like that was just one sided..."

"Wait... does that mean you wouldn't have allowed us to go through with this if I hadn't asked Kat out first?" questioned Lily with some concern.

Nira gave a slow shrug as she made it look like she was thinking over the question. With how fast her mind had to work though, it was likely for show more than anything else, "You were paying with a favour token. That opens a lot of doors. We probably would've gone through with it... but at the same time... it might not have been offered at all if you didn't like each other,"

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"Wait...are you saying that... hang on..." Lily mumbled as she reviewed her memories from looking over that massive list of races. "Was... was the entry for it missing the first time I looked through? It... hmm... I think it might have been after that I decided to confess to Kat... I wanted to tell her in my original body and then ask for input on my new one... if she was straight... I might have done something stupid. But... is that why?"

Nira shrugged and said, "Officially I can't be sure of anything. It's possible you just missed it, it's also possible that it only appeared after you committed yourself to telling Kat. It's equally possible that it only appeared after Kat became more aware of her own feelings. I know from what I've managed to wheedle out of my daughter that Kat did some serious thinking on relationships while she was down in the mines. Unofficially... I suspect that if it wasn't ever going to work out then you wouldn't have seen the option at all,"

"What does that mean?" asked Kat

Nira shrugged, "I honestly can't say,"

Do you think she means 'I don't really know anymore' or 'I literally can't tell you'

[Considering she was able to just explain to us that you can have an intrigue of kittens I'm pretty sure it's the second one Kat. I doubt Nira says anything at all that she doesn't mean. In fact, she probably says three thing she means underneath all her sentences just because she can.]

Yeah... that was a dumb thing to ask now I'm thinking about it.

[It's ok. I can be the brains of this operation no trouble.]

Great, if I don't have to think I can spend more time thinking up ways to tease you!

[I sense I have made a mistake. Can I retract my previous statement?]

Nope! Kat even managed to mentally pop the 'p' in the word nope. She was quite pleased with that. "Is there anything else to go over?" asked Kat.

Nira shook her head, "Not unless you have any specific questions for me,"

"We do... but it's not related to treatment," said Lily.

Nira nodded slightly, "Well I can't stay and chat forever but if it's just one question it should be ok,"

"Well... a birthday for someone who is essentially Kat's little sister is coming up. She's a big fan of chess and we're thinking about getting her a nice chess set or maybe an interesting board game? She knows about demons and magic... but if we want her to actually use them with other people it probably shouldn't be overtly magical..." explained Lily.

Nira tapped a finger on the table, "So you're just planning to go around and look?"

"Sue said she'd be able to meet up with us after this so hopefully she'll be able to play guide," said Kat.

Nira nodded, "Yes that makes sense. It's a shame Kamiko is still off on her current mission. She would've loved to show you around. The triplets are actually home at the moment but I won't push you onto them or vice versa. They happen to have a few friends unlike my sweet Kamiko. Still, Sue should be...a decent enough guide. Her tastes in everything trends towards more... adult themed content. Probably not 'little sister' material, especially if it's for use with human friends...

"That being said I do trust Sue to know her way around the main shopping areas in the Hub. Certainly not all of them, but enough to find what you're looking for. I'd say... hmm... there is a special tag, it's a bronze tag with a piece of paper on it. That marks the game as 'Ancient Style' but in less fancy language it just means the pieces are completely unenchanted. If that's what you're after, keep an eye on the box for that marker. It's quite standardised and punished harshly for using it without permission.

"Quite a few demons still prefer that kind of board game. A popular saying amongst that crowd is 'If I wanted something fancy that did everything by itself, I'd play the video game release' which I suppose is fair. I'd counter that with 'seeing the physical pieces fly around the room is part of the fun' but most board games are rather finely calibrated and don't work in every universe."

"Wait... does that mean if we'd got something enchanted it wouldn't have worked on Earth anyway?" asked Kat with a bit of annoyance.

Nira gave a 'so-so' gesture and explained, "Some of them would work, some of them wouldn't. It depends how much tolerance it built into the enchantments, how exactly the pieces interact. I'm not big into the scene so I can't say what percentage of them will work anywhere, but it's not something that's regularly strived for. It's more a happy coincidence when they work. Sure a few of them are obviously robust, and others are so high end that not taking universal rules into account would be considered sloppy, but the standard games? Eh... it's just not something they'd test."

Kat and Lily nodded together, "Ok, we'll keep it in mind," said Lily. "Thanks for the checkup and the advice!"

Chapter 934 Sue's Suggestions

Kat raised an eyebrow as she looked at Sue. They were standing in front of Kamiko's house and Sue had taken the chance to change up her outfit. She was now in booty shorts that were small enough to let half her ass squeeze out the bottom and a crop top that covered the important bits and nothing else, while being just as tight, letting the edges spill out. Her hair was wrapped around her neck making it look a bit like a scarf and she was just leaning against the fence nearby. Lily, the poor lesbian soul that she was, struggled not to ogle at the nearly naked succubus and failing. The mix of arousal and shame was strong.

Lily, it's fine, it doesn't bother me that you're looking.

[I should have more self control then this! Sue is hot yes but I don't need to be looking at her like this when I have you!]

Lily I'm not standing in front of you mostly naked. It's a perfectly natural reaction from what I've been told.

[I am still MORTIFIED by this 'perfectly natural reaction' Kat. Why am I like this now and not last time? Why is this different?!]

I dunno. Context? It was a pyjama party before maybe that changes things.

[Well I still don't like it.]

Kat just shrugged as Lily buried her face into Kat's arm. "Hi Sue!" said Kat waving with the other arm.

"Hey Kat! Finished with long Contract?" asked Sue.

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Kat slid in next to Sue and nodded, "Yeah, what about you?"

Sue shrugged, "Eh, it was a simple Contract really. Some young noble ponce made a bet about an orgy. He claimed his team would be the last ones standing without knowing much about sex at all. Dumb idea, but I mean, I ain't complaining. Took me two days but I got through the whole enemy team with only a touch of backup. The ponce that summoned me passed out in the first hour though,"

Kat blinked slowly as she glanced at Sue with a raised eyebrow. "Right... is that... normal?"

Sue shrugged, "I wouldn't say 'normal' but this is the second time I've dealt with something like this so... I'm not going to say it's unheard of certainly,"

"So... is that why you've shaken up your look?" asked Kat.

Sue shook her head and said, "Eh... not really? If I'm going around showing you good places to by board games and whatnot I want something that's a bit easier to pretend is completely socially acceptable,"

Lily couldn't help but transform and hide behind Kat to ask, "That's considered 'socially acceptable'?"

"Well hello to you as well Lily, see something you like?" purred Sue.

Lily just squeaked and hid further behind Kat. "That wasn't the question I asked..." mumbled Lily.

Kat of course, couldn't just let Sue's totally genuine question go unanswered though, "She does indeed. Finds it very distracting and is have trouble coming to terms with that,"

Lily glared at Kat's back with a huff, but didn't say anything else. Sue grinned and let out a small chuckle, "Oh dear, I'm ever so thankful for the attention but I wouldn't want to get in between the two of you so I'll just have to pass. Besides, girls aren't really what gets me going..."

"Kat's still more attractive!" blurted out Lily before she could stop herself. Slapping both hands over her mouth.

"Ho, ho, ho, I didn't say anything about that. Though... hey Kat can Lily lie still?" asked Sue.

Kat nodded, "Yeah she doesn't have that problem... but I can hear her thoughts so she can't lie to me or herself without getting caught."

"Stop giving her ammo!" hissed Lily.

Sue nodded, "Ah this is going to be SO MUCH FUN. Though, to answer your question seriously. We're pretty open here, it's just a matter of not corrupting the really young children, like below five. What I'm wearing covers everything and more than half of the factions don't really care and even then the ones that do care for different reasons. Lust, Greed and Gluttony wouldn't blink twice, Sloth would be more concerned with how tight it is," Sue picked at the elastic holding her tits in place and let it snap back into place. Lily couldn't see it, but she could easily image the ripples going through Sue's flesh.

"Some people in Wrath would care, but most of them would just dismiss it is 'non-combat' attire. Really it's just Envy and Pride that care much at all, but if they take me to task about something like this, I can say 'it's just jeans and a crop top what's the problem' and if they try to make a stink about it they'll have to admit to staring at my ass. Which, well Envy might comment, but Pride wouldn't dare admit they were staring at someone inappropriately in public. Why that's downright scandalous,"

"Can we, maybe, possibly, stop talking about Sue's ass now?" asked Lily as she struggled and failed to stop thinking about Sue's ass.

Sue looked over at Lily and gave a light smile, "It's all in good fun Lily. You're reactions are adorable. I might not be a lesbian, but if I decide to swap out meat for some carpet for a bit I know exactly what kind of lesbian I'll be looking for,"

Lily glared at Sue over Kat's shoulder. This just prompted Sue to slap her ass and wiggle her eyebrows in response. Lily returned to hiding. "So..." Sue drawled, "I won't say I'm not going to keep messing with your girlfriend," Kat nodded in agreement. It was all in good fun, and Lily's reactions were a-d-or-a-ble "but I guess we can go over our options.

"There are a couple of malls we can check out but it'll be a bit sterile. Just, get in, find the board game shop, and get out. Board games aren't exactly a popular pastime and space in a lot of the better malls is at a premium. So... not sure if you'd find anything you really want at them. Here in the Hub space isn't

an issue, but 'Prime Real Estate' is always hotly contested if that makes sense. Still, maybe you'll want to check out the other stores afterwards? Maybe you just like the look... but there is also..."

Sue was clearly drawing the second option out. Kat just raised an eyebrow and a foot, as if threatening to start tapping. Sue was twisted around sideways, arms outstretched "The Endless Bizarre!"

"We're probably going there aren't we?" cut in Lily.

Sue pouted at the interruption but shrugged, "Well that's up to you isn't it? See, the Endless Bizarre has a bit of a story to go along with it. Apparently, a bunch of people were sick of Greed muscling in on their profits so they found a spot on a nearby moon, added atmosphere to it, and then set up shop. Everyone was welcome, nobody would be turned away. It turned into a sea of tents set up to sell personally hand crafted wonders!"

"It's all owned by Greed now isn't it?" asked Lily.

Sue nodded, "You bet your cut little ass it is," Lily squeaked and tried to duck back behind Kat, but Kat's tail curled around her and pinned her in place at Kat's side, preventing Lily from just hiding again.

"Perhaps the story is true, perhaps they paid someone who wasn't a demon to say it was true and get it spread. Still, Greed does help keep the piece, make sure nobody causes trouble and I've heard the rent is pretty reasonable. They were never going to let such a good way to make money go. Not sure if they managed to get in later, or yeah, as I said, they just made up the whole story and paid someone who wasn't a demon to say it first,"

"While that clearly sounds like your preferred option..." said Kat slowly, "how are we going to find board games? And are hand crafted board games really something we want to buy? I mean... we don't really know what we're looking for and finding all the board game tents would be annoying..."

Sue shook her head, "Oh the story is NICE but not everything is handmade either. Plenty of people just bring in and sell stuff that's mass produced somewhere. The important thing though, is that to act as a bigger draw a lot of the more niche hobbyists clump up together. I know for a fact there is a big 'board game' themed area of the Endless Bizarre we can hit up,"

"Why would you know something like that?" asked Lily suspiciously.

Sue grinned at the question, "Why? A pure maiden like myself? Why would I not enjoy board games?"

"WAIT HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO SAY THAT?" cut in Lily.

Sue's grin widened, "Now... I can't be sharing all of my secrets..." Sue said licking her lips lecherously. Lily glared back, "Now now, I can tell you that the reason I know is the same as everyone else. I've bought some things from there before. Of course... I wasn't shopping for a younger audience..."

Chapter 935 2nd Base on Offer

As they came out of the teleportation Lily was surprised they ended up a good metre off the ground. She panicked, clinging to Kat who simply took the fall damage on her legs without issue. It was then, that Kat realised why they weren't summoned on the ground. It was completely intentional. When Sue's feet hit the ground her assets bounced slowly taking the laws of physics as suggestions. The light clap of what had to be Sue's backside was in Kat's opinion, a step too far.

“WHAT THE HECK! Are your boobs made of jelly or something?” hissed Lily, thoughts filled with images of what it’d be like to squish Sue’s boobs in her hands. They all the harder to dismiss because she knew Sue would allow it, should she ask, and Kat likely wouldn’t care knowing it was more about curiosity and the lack of proper romance. Still, it was only Sue that would ever suggest such a thing out loud.

“Mine certainly aren’t” said Sue bending forward and letting her chest sway from side to side. She also lifted her tail up showing her backside to the crowds of people behind her at the teleportation point. “But perhaps you’d be more interested in a hands on example? Instead of just taking my word for it?”

“Flirt on your own time lady there are kids around!” shouted a demon from the crowd. That was of course, when Lily realised they had an audience. Kat had been paying them minimal attention, Sue was actually the most aware of her surroundings. A second look would reveal that Sue had actually angled herself to show off to Lily yes, but also to the group of adults walking by. Children could see her sure, but the four groups with children in them were all off to the side and would need to move to see anything properly.

Sue stood and turned to the demon who shouted. He looked like a cross between an eagle and a vampire. His skin was chalky white with bright red eyes. His back had bird wings on it and his face sharpened to a point. It was only a slightly different colour, but it caught the light in such a way as to make it obvious it was a keratin beak, or whatever equivalent demons had. His outfit was a pure black suite with a dash of a red tie revealing a chest of feathers underneath his jacket instead of a shirt. He did however have one strange feature... his hands were tentacles.

So when Sue spotted that she grinned and said, “Who me? Why my god sir I am hardly doing anything indecent. Especially when you are so brazenly allowing your own assets to be on such a proud display? Why... if I were to get a little closer I might be worried for my chastity!”

The demon just sneered at her and walked off. The few others that were watching the ‘show’ looked away as well, forming into one big line that progressed into the sea of tents surrounding them on all sides. “Damn, that one actually knows how to play. Prude he might be... but he wasn’t going to win if he responded to me. I feel... unfulfilled,”

“Um... right well... what direction are we heading?” asked Lily cautiously, hoping not to provoke anymore teasing.

Sue gave Lily a look that said ‘you aren’t fooling me at all. Or getting off the hook’ “Follow me my friends! It’s still a fair way but this is the closest teleportation spot to the board game quarters. They are... thisaway!”

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Lily pretty quickly decided she wanted nothing to do with the crowds and transformed in Kat’s arms before hopping up and taking Kat’s head as her place of rest. It let her see most stalls a lot better and prevented her getting packed in or carried away by the tide of people. Lily and Kat were of the opinion that the crowd really should be a bit more orderly. People were swiftly heading too and frow and while there were two main lines on the footpath, one for each direction, many people were ignoring them to get to stalls, or just pushing their way through.

What was strange, to Lily at least, was that quite a few demons would regularly try to reach out to Sue, brushing her chest or ass. Most of these Sue clearly let pass, either keeping herself going in a straight line, or in a few instances, actually pressing herself into the touches. The odd thing was though... Lily managed to barely catch one attempt that Sue smacked away, and Kat caught three more. [Ok... I've gotta ask what is Sue doing?]

Yeah I want to know... "Sue... what exactly are you up to?" asked Kat.

The pair could feel Sue's grin even before she looked back to flash them the smile, "I was waiting to see how long that would go on for before you asked. Well, it's pretty simple really isn't it? Nearly everyone here is a demon, faster and stronger than this mortal speed I'm walking at yeah? It's beyond easy for me to dodge pretty much any of those grabbing hands but I am advertising that I'm open to it,"

Kat opened her mouth to question that statement before Sue gave a notable flick of her tail, "No let me finish. See, it's a cultural thing in many ways. For other cultures, what I'm doing might not be considered an open invitation. Here though, it really is. The reason for that is not only can I do the same thing back, something I WOULD be doing if I wasn't with you guys, they aren't actually reaching for me all that fast.

"If I wanted to stop them, I'm more than capable of that. If they're moving at my 'normal' speed I can see those sorts of grabs coming and if I was really just dressing up to show off? I can avoid them. What I'm doing though? You see these hips? Every step I take I'm swaying them just the right amount to get maximum bounce for my efforts. I step and land heavily on my heels to make my chest bounce noticeably.

"For a race like ours, these are massive flags showing off. I'm doing practically everything short of ripping my top off and shouting for all to hear that it's perfectly ok to touch, but I'm not stopping to have fun because I'm playing tour guide,"

"What about the ones you hit away?" asked 'Lily'

"Well it depends on the hand in question. The first guy I hit away was because he had a girl on his arm. Now, I'm not against getting down with a group, it can be fun, but that girl was glaring a hole in the back of the poor guy's head. Slapping his hand away was for her benefit not mine. It shows that I may be a whore, literally I do make my Contracts doing this type of thing, but I am a RESPECTABLE whore. It's a big difference.

"The next one was a girl that was trying to touch me a second time. Bit rude really, she was running through the crowd and looped around abusing the fact she can go... sort of 2D? That's just holding up traffic, and maybe if it was a hot guy I'd take it as an invitation to have a bit of fun somewhere... but I'm not that into girls I don't want to encourage people to set up a merry-go-round nearby to try and get some. That's also rude.

"The third one, was another girl, she was going in for a flick, trying to see just how much she could get my ass to jiggle. Which. Rude. That's basically her way of saying she doesn't think my technique is up to snuff or she thinks I'm abusing a skill to fake it. That's basically spitting on my pride. I worked hard to look this good while walking through a crowded street, so I'm not going to let her get away with that sort of shit,"

Of course through this whole conversation Sue was able to 'grab' a further attention. "So... this is just normal?" asked Kat confused.

Sue nodded, "Eh... I wouldn't say it's normal exactly... but it's something you learn as a Succubus that wants to attract that sort of attention. Those people you saw me leaning into? They were basically just teens. They were just trying to cop a feel because they saw other's trying it, not because they know. I gave them a bit more of a handful to show them it's ok, but it's not like I have time to explain the rules of this sort of thing,"

"Seems a bit dangerous thing to have culturally acceptable" said 'Lily'

Sue shrugged, "If it ever gets too far, just let out a bit of demonic fire. It's not going to do much damage to a demon, at least, not quickly if they're the same Rank or above... but it's a big 'FUCK OFF MATE' sign. My little slaps are part of the game really. Besides if you haven't noticed, not a single person has tried to do the same thing to Kat, despite the fact that her legs are on display.

"You've got to go WAY over the top to make people feel comfortable to go for things like this. I mean, you've seen me Lily, you've certainly noticed. I have like half my ass and a third of my tits out. These pants only fit on me because they have a size reduction enchantment on them to shrink once they're on and a few medical ones to prevent any potential damage,"

"That... that seems like way too much effort," said 'Lily'

Sue nodded "That's what I mean. I've clearly gone through a bit of trouble to look like this. So those who know? Well they know,"

Chapter 936 Wandering the Markets

Deciding that Sue could... do Sue things if she really wanted to, Kat and Lily turned their attention to the markets proper. Every stall was carefully boxed into a ten metre by ten metre space. A surprisingly large chunk of land for a market stall, but not all that large once you factored in the crowds and wares. Most people didn't do anything fancy, just sticking to tents to mark their area if they even bothered to go that far. Some people just had four posts in the corners with a bit of security tape to mark the edges.

Something Kat did notice, was that as similar as some groups of stalls might be, those were also the ones that made sure to more firmly mark their own territory. She wasn't sure if that was because they didn't want to mix up their products or some other reason but it was a notable trend.

A lot of places sold one or two types of items of varying quality. Perhaps they had a stack of cutlery all carved out of wood. Another store had a series of necklaces and... no, just necklaces. Definitely just necklaces. There was no other use for large glass beads strung up on a rope. Any memories pointing to the contrary were firmly locked away. So really, it was a store that sold necklaces, and if Sue happened to slow down and take note of the location to visit later... well it was probably for completely innocent reasons, right?

So... what do you think of Sue's... habit?

[It's... it's certainly awkward and I'm really not sure how the culture could develop to allow something like this... but there does seem to be clear limits... and this does seem like the sort of thing Sue would...

well she definitely gets off on it. I don't know if it's the risk, the fact other people are watching... or if she just finds it funny.]

I'd be willing to bet all three... though... maybe not? I don't know if voyeurism is actually a fetish of hers. I think... I think that part might not be sexual. She just likes attention.

[Hmm... yeah I can agree with that.]

"You pair are thinking awfully hard back there," said Sue suddenly.

"Wait how did you know?" asked Kat, "So many people have noticed when we do that. It's supposed to be entirely mental communication!"

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Sue gave an obviously fake laugh, "Hu, hu, hu, bow before my might!"

"If I was to bow right now I'd end up with a face full of your ass, and I'm afraid I just have no interest in that," said Kat keeping her voice as deadpan as possible.

Sue broke out into real laughter, "Hehehehehehehehe, oh that was brilliant... I... oh yes! Welcome... welcome to the dark side," Sue managed to eek out some words between the laughter, "I see you have learned the joys of teasing. I mean, it's a bit less fun because you don't quite GET it but that just means I need to up my game.

"Just for that, I'll be completely straight with you. It's your face Kat. It always softens in a major way when you're talking to Lily. It doesn't matter if it's when she's beside you, or just in your head. It's a pretty noticeable shift to anyone who's paying attention. If someone knows about the link it's not hard to guess... plus, a little trickier to spot but for a demon like myself...

"Your tail swishes a bit more. It usually just helps you balance and sways a bit, and it's not like... a dog that's just found a lifetime supply of bones... but it is noticeable to people who are used to reading tails as part of their body language. So... yeah, you pretty much give the whole game away. I mean, from what I'd guess Lily isn't any better but normally she can mask that by being a cat,"

Do you think that's something we should work on?

[I don't really know... I mean... yes probably but we've already got plenty of things to train. I think... it might not be worth it for the moment.]

Kat nodded carefully, making sure not to throw Lily off with the movement and got back to looking at their surroundings. There were some interesting dresses. Quite a few had some sort of lights on them, either as accents or as a flowing pattern. One dress Kat found particularly nice looked like a river filled with coral, movement and all. Some others... well... they were clearly for someone like Sue. Small bits and pieces of the outfits were missing in... conspicuous areas. Not just for women either. While thankfully nobody was wearing anything quite that bad... Kat saw a few people make purchases so they were a popular item.

More knick-knacks of course. Another store filled with wooden carvings, one of which was even a nice chess set made with carved flowers of different kinds for the pieces. Small wattle buds for pawns, a willow tree as the knight, a fir tree as rooks, saffron flowers as bishops, a desert rose for the queen and

a kahala rose for the king. All made of slightly different wood to match their natural colourings. Though of course, Kat didn't recognise every plant on display.

Hmm... do you think that could be a good gift for Sylvie?

Lily turned to look at the carving in question. Lily as about to nod when she saw a bee fly out of one of the 'flowers'. Lily kept her eyes locked onto it until it disappeared into another chess piece, melding with it. [Nope. I'm afraid it's been enchanted.]

Bother.

Kat kept her eyes peeled for more things but after Lily's comment she noticed that a lot of things were enchanted, even if it less then obvious ways. She watched as a hat resized itself to fit on someone's head. She watched a jacket allow for a set of wings to phase through it. A jug of water that was on display with disposable cups that vanished when throw into the ground. The jug itself also seemed to be infinite, or perhaps pulling from another water source.

There were a few toys around that, were the same. A plan that flew around the marked 10x10 area, a disco ball that kept the lights tight around itself, a flowing waterfall of sand that was clearly on a loop. A snow globe that didn't have any glass and allowed you to poke at the things inside without disrupting the snow. It was actually pretty wonderous stuff. It just... wasn't what they were looking for.

"Kamiko's house is actually pretty low tech isn't it... actually wait... why did we meet up at Kami's house?" Kat started to ask her first question before swapping over to the second, once it occurred to her.

"Hmm... now do you really want to know the answer to those questions?" asked Sue with a cheeky grin the other two couldn't see.

"Yes," said Kat and 'Lily'.

"Well to answer the second question first... because there's a good chance my parents were at home having sex," Sue managed to look over her shoulder right as she made the big reveal, grinning at the shocked looks on Kat and Lily's faces. "Oh yes. I don't keep careful track of their schedule... but they've long since stopped caring if I see them go at it. Which... honestly is still a bit awkward. I'm a sexual deviant, and I know my parents are as well, if a lot more monogamous but it doesn't mean I want to watch my parents like that. It's one of the few fetishes I'm not even willing to entertain,"

"Can't relate, I'm an orphan," said Kat with a teasing tilt to her tone.

Sue glared, "I can't really say much to that one Kat. Touchy subject,"

Kat shrugged, "I mean, no offence to my parents but I never met them and it really doesn't bother me. Make those sorts of jokes all you want,"

Sue just shook her head again. "Nope, not worth it. There's no way I'm getting into the habit of making jokes about something like that. I've already told plenty of raunchy jokes to children reflexively. I can't be making jokes about orphans as well,"

"Fair enough," said Kat with a slight wince.

“Yup, then I’d no longer be endearingly deranged, just deranged!” cheered Sue.

Kat rolled her eyes. “Right... and what about the lack of things in Kamiko’s house?”

“Eh... remember Nira has that whole garden out the back. She’s probably got an area somewhere else for all her stuff. Kami’s dad is obsessed with family so he probably spends time organising family photos or something. Kami’s sisters all have their own vices but frankly nobody in that family NEEDS much enchanting. They’ve probably got a few sets of replacement furniture, all the appliances would be enchanted, and I dunno maybe they have a games room? It just isn’t necessary for them but I’d guess more of it was enchanted then it seemed.”

Chapter 937 Board Game Arena

It was very obvious where the ‘board game area’ was once you spotted it. There was a two-booth gap around the entire perimeter. After just how packed things had been the comparatively massive gap was very strange and both Lily and Kat wanted to know, “Sue... why is there space all the way around the board game area?”

“It’s a bit of an informal agreement,” said Sue, easily, having asked that very same question when she came here before, “it makes the area look a lot cleaner, gives ease of movement, clearly marks it as separate... and everyone who shops at the board game arena, yes that’s what they called it, arena not area, all agree never to shop if people set up in the ‘buffer zone’ between it and the rest of the Endless Market.

“Apparently a few people have tried to bypass that... and it’s against the rules to properly harass or chase off other customers... but people who shop into the board game arena held to it. They barely acknowledged the existence of those stands and would occasionally give their best dismissive glares at anyone who did bother to shop in those spaces. Eventually people stopped coming, and then the sellers stopped selling... well... all except one...

“There’s a bit of a legend, he’s called ‘Crazy Joe’ and his stall sells food. It’s all grilled stuff and he’s apparently he’s got great marinade to really sell the flavour... but keeps it all boxed up in his stall with an enchantment. If you believe what some people say, they suggest he’s been there since the start of the Endless Market and never once moved. Other people say that he’s a descendant of the original Crazy Joe keeping the legacy alive...

“What I do know is two things. The first, is that my parents apparently knew about him. I asked just sort of off-hand and they’d heard of him... and he’s at least as old as they are but suspected to be much older. Additionally... well... he’s not really in that buffer zone anymore either.

“See, the story is nice, but the Board Game Arena expanded to surround him and now he’s considered part of the BGA instead of a weird guy on the edge of it. Though Mum and Dad did confirm that he’s older than the BGA setup. He really was here before them. Apparently when Mum and Dad knew him, they knew of him as ‘Crazy Joe, Soap Avoider’ because a couple ladies wanted to form a big soap making area here and he refused to move... or bathe... while they tried.

“It fell through apparently because there just wasn’t enough sales interest and if they were looking for big ticket customers... the market here just isn’t the place for it. It has history yes, and plenty of people with money come here... but they don’t come here looking to SPEND that money. If that makes sense...”

Kat nodded, "Is his food good?"

Sue shrugged, "I have no idea. It's always super busy at his stall, even has a space expansion charm in it to allow for the lines not to spill out everywhere else. He's here every day, making food every day, and I never wanted to go through the line, however long it actually is. I've heard plenty of figures but it just wasn't worth double checking any of them. Most outrageous I've heard was 'I sat in that shop and waited for a full week' but they didn't say they were waiting for food, or that they were in the line either... so..."

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"Did you parents try?" asked 'Lily'

"Huh..." mumbled Sue as she paused mid-step, almost causing Kat and Lily to run into her. Sue kept walking right after of course, but it was still noticeable. "You know... I didn't ask. How did it not occur to me to ask about that?"

"Well does it seem like something they'd do?" asked Kat.

"Not really..." said Sue carefully, "but you've also got to realise that after you live a certain amount of time... your sense of 'too long waiting' gets really skewed. Or that's what Mum and Dad have always said to me. What was that in response too... hmm... I think it was after I asked them what's the longest they'd ever been in a line after I spent the day at the theme park. I was complaining about one of the rides we decided to avoid because it had a full 24 hour wait time..."

"I think they said a month... or was it longer? No I can't really remember but it was a huge amount of time for younger me. I couldn't believe it at the time, but obviously it's true considering they could say it. I think 'a long time' has to be different once it's really sunk in you have forever. Well, if you get to that Rank,"

"Oh right... did I mention I got to Rank 3?" asked Kat.

"Some demons get all the like," grumbled Sue, "No you didn't mention it. I suspect it was part of the fight with Ozen you skipped?"

"Yup..." admitted Kat.

Sue shook her head... and the rest of her body for good measure, letting everything shake and wobble, "You'll have to tell me about it some time. I guess you don't want to be having this conversation in a place so crowded. It was clearly pretty deadly, and maybe packed with a few secrets. Though... did you get a cool ability at Rank 3?"

"I haven't tried to figure it out yet..." admitted Kat.

"Of course you haven't..." sighed Sue.

Sue would complain more but someone popped up in front of them. They looked to be a cross between a beholder and... something else? Perhaps a Succubus? Perhaps a medusa? They had a tight suit on that didn't reveal any of their feminine curves. It was all sharp lines to just barely avoid showing exactly where everything was. They had a heart tipped tail but no wings and their head...

Well it was just one you'd find on a beholder eye stalks and all. Though they had glasses on, every eyestalk had their own pair. It was really adorable but a little weird. Each stalk only had one eye after all so the fact they had glasses instead of a monocle was strange. The main eye wasn't typical either. They had glasses, and two pupils swimming around... but it was just one giant interconnected eye despite the two pupils. They seemed to be able to move independently without care for each other.

"Welcome to the Board Game Arena. I noticed you were wondering around but not really looking at anything. Can I help you? My name is Ludus," said the demon now identified as Ludus.

Sue took a quick step back and pushed Kat forward into her place. "Um... sure... though... do you work here?" asked Kat as she tried to think of the best way to describe what she wanted.

"Technically speaking I am a volunteer and I give my time freely. Practically, I receive a small donation from the Board Game Arena for my time. Not enough to count as a proper job, but I do enjoy the work and I set my own hours. I do this mostly for fun and to share my love of games! I've been helping out since it opened!" said Ludas cheerfully.

Wait... that's... holy shit how old is Ludas?! A bit of a rude thing to ask though so Kat started to explain, "We're," Kat indicated herself and Lily, with a hand, "looking for a good present for our little sister. She's adopted, like myself, and human. She quite enjoys chess and is exceptionally intelligent despite just being six, nearly seven. I'm not sure if this saying will translate, but she's approaching University level intellect despite her age and reads quite frequently to put it to good use,"

Ludas nodded and gestured for Kat to continue, "Right well... we need it unenchanted because we have some hopes she'll make friends... but despite not being arrogant she sees others her age as... somewhat pitiful idiots. Well... idiots might be harsh, she's smart enough to understand she's abnormal but well... I think she does still pity them a bit.

"So... we're hoping for something that can keep her engaged but also be shared with friends? Or maybe two separate games? One for her to play at a high level with Callisto, one of our adopted parents who is similarly intelligent but much older with the other one a good game for everyone? Oh, if we do go for both the hardcore game can be enchanted even if we'd prefer it wasn't, just in case it doesn't work back home,"

Ludas nodded, "I can accommodate that,"

Chapter 938 Going Over the 'Loot'

"Thanks for the help Ludas!" said Kat as she gave Ludas one last wave before Sue teleported everyone to a park near her house. The park in question was one where everything looked a lot like candy. It wasn't edible... well for most demons it wasn't edible. Gluttony demons were still banned from the park in question for a reason. It was awfully strange to watch someone take a bite out of a tree that looks like a lollipop when it sounds like bark, and tastes even worse.

Lily had managed to use her trick to hide the two smaller bags but Kat was still stuck one with one oversized bag containing a single box that weighed more than Sylvie would be able to carry. A minor problem, but an acceptable one. It wasn't enough to even stumble Kat though, despite Sue once again dropping them from the sky so she had an excuse to wobble. Sue quickly led the group off the path to one of the better, but secluded, spots to sit down.

They were led to a weird set of fairy floss like bushes that Sue flopped down on top of. The bush deformed around Sue and acted like a bean bag rather than a plant. Sue also dropped her own bag off to the side and gestured to one of the other plants nearby. Kat took up her own seat, and Lily transformed right on Kat's lap. It took a bit more manoeuvring to drop the bags off to the side but were situated before too long.

"I still can't believe you have so much money!" said Sue with no small amount of awe.

Kat couldn't help but blush. Apparently, Xiang's Contract was rather lucrative. She skipped all the way up to 10 Pyre. Without context that didn't seem like much at all... but it was enough for a small apartment in some of the less desirable areas of the hub, or enough gold to crash the world economy. It wasn't big money in demon terms... but for a demon that hadn't even been doing Contracts for a year it was a positively decadent amount.

The most expensive game, 'Clash of Gods in a Mortal World' cost about 50 Fireplace, which was still outrageously expensive. Apparently it was one of, if not the most expensive non-enchanted game you could buy that saw regular production runs. It was the equivalent of going into a mortal board game shop and walking out with a BMW instead. Of course to the now, apparently rich Kat, it wasn't a problem at all, but she didn't know what to do with that kind of money.

Clash of Gods in a Mortal World or just 'God Clash' was considered the pinnacle of strategy games. Not just enchanted, but unenchanted as well. You and your opponents were two competing 'gods' stuck together with just one world. Both started with a kingdom dedicated to them, and your job was to conquer the world. The part that was rather tricky came in the fact that it had multiple levels of play.

There was of course, the highest level, using your godly abilities to shape terrain, cause plagues, and destroy cities... but your opponent could reliably counter those sorts of things with their own powers. The layer below that was kingdom management. You had to manage the troops logistics, look out for spies, convert diplomats, and try to annex or conquer the smaller kingdoms that also populated the map.

The final layer was your 'Hero' unit. Each god could empower one person as their chosen 'champion' at a time, and you could directly... for the most part... control that hero unit to make major impacts on the world. Heros were more limited than godly pieces in terms of powers, but in exchange the enemy god couldn't attack them directly either. The only other strange thing is that 'gods' were encouraged not to clash with their hero units. The 'hero' that attacked first suffered all manner of penalties, like forcing the next hero unit to enter the field a generation late, at half power or other problematic issues.

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It was a lot like three games in one, but each layer was connected. The whole thing had hundreds of cards, thousands of little pieces and frankly the rules went way over Kat's head. Lily was able to keep them all together... in theory. In practice she wanted NOTHING to do with the game either. It was closer to an exercise in balancing spreadsheets and risk management instead of a board game in her mind. Absolutely perfect for Sylvie and Callisto to go ham with.

Sure it might take up a whole dining room table sized play space, but Kat was sure they'd find some way to manage it if they started enjoying things. If God Clash turned out to be the Sylvie's favourite gift

well... there were a number of expansions for the game they hadn't even bothered to look at. Those would be perfect for next year. Oh, that was one other thing. 'Turns' took place over in game months and years. Actually playing the damned thing took 'Upwards of 100 subjective hours' so it wasn't getting finished any time soon.

"I didn't realise I had that kind of money either... I mean... I'd say I was overpaid a bit... but I did fight someone at Rank 4 and I was away for months so..." Kat said with a shrug.

Sue shook her head, "Kat, some people take Contracts for years and still get paid less. Overpaid is underselling it,"

Kat shrugged, "Well it does make me glad I didn't bother quibbling about how much money I ended up with the first time," Sue just shook her head in annoyance.

The second game they bought wasn't as complicated... though that was only from one perspective. It was called 'Down with the Demon King' or 'DDK'. This game was split into two asymmetrical teams, the Demon King of course, and the Heroes. The heroes played in a team of four to six players and it was their job to try and take out the Demon King. Each of the players had to pick a class, and were encouraged to work together.

They advanced down the board based on the roll of a dice, and could either move together or split up, though of course, splitting the party carried heavy penalties. Sometimes it was worth it... usually it wasn't. The hero team was very simple to play. Just fight monsters with dice and some basic cards, perform 'quests' for gear and eventually make it to the Demon King. The cards were all simple, the weapons were all basic upgrades. It was more about making sure the classes worked together.

The Demon King on the other hand had to manage a bunch of resource tiles, troop logistics, and a sort of background war with a non-player kingdom that was trying to help the heroes out. The Demon King had to fight tooth and nail through a bunch of complicated nonsense to get even small bonuses against the heroes... and was likely to still lose anyway even if they managed to play out of their mind. That was how the game was designed.

Kat felt like Callisto would happily take the Demon King role most of the time, and Sylvie might eventually get there if she made some good friends that didn't mind playing against her in that role.

Apparently the game was intended for parents of high rank to play against children. They really amped up the difficulty of the Demon King's gameplay to make it nearly impossible for a child to play at all. The Demon King was more of a dungeon master and watcher for the group rather than a true obstacle unless they wanted to really dig into the games system and eek out minor bonuses. The real test of skill was just how prosperous the land was after the Demon King was defeated.

There was 'Prosperous' where the Demon King was basically a good thing. All the resources gathered during the quest going to making the kingdom even better. Below that was 'Boom Time' where the Demon King encouraged the kingdom to come back stronger, with 'Beaten but not Broken' being a... more middling stage. Where the Demon King failed, and everyone celebrated but it was a hard fought thing. The final two stages were 'Devastation' and 'Demon King Victory' but according to Ludas, most people considered 'Devastation' a loss as well. The kingdom would be all but destroyed, many people lost to the war. Well, that was the background lore for it anyway.

The final gift wasn't all that special. It was just a rather nice chess set carved out of what looked like, and were in fact, gemstones. Kat grabbed it because it was super cheap by her new standards. It was only 10 Candle. Basically, a steal. It wasn't enchanted, but the gemstones were real. Kat... might just not tell anyone that last part.

Oh... and Sue got her own game... but... really... it's... well 'highly inappropriate for children' is putting the depravity levels lightly.

Chapter 939 Are They Worth It?

"Do you think I made the right choice with the gifts Sue?" asked Kat.

Sue rolled over slowly, letting her boobs shift noticeably before properly finishing the turn to face Kat properly. "Isn't it a bit late to ask that now? I mean, we went over it before with Ludas, and you've already brought everything... I don't see what having second thoughts about it now would help,"

Kat shrugged and let out a sigh, "It's... it's different I guess. I actually have money now. I can get Sylvie something substantial for her birthday and... and I think I picked well... but I don't want her to think I just threw money at the problem. Clash of Gods was expensive after all but I don't regret it... but I also don't know what I'd say if she asked me how much everything cost..."

Sue nodded in understanding and said, "At the very least the chess set was a great idea. Wonderful use of magically inert gemstones, it looks stunning because the work on it IS stunning. I'd guess it's someone's final carving assignment. Or well, probably the prototype they made to later enchant. Whoever made that is going places someday soon, assuming it was made recently. So that at least you can say was a bargain and worth at least ten times what you paid for it..."

"The others... well... I'm not sure what to say. Clash of Gods... it's in a weird place. It's popular yes, and it's not odd to know someone in your family tree that owns a copy with all the addons and a massive room to house it all. People go HARD on that game. If you take into account just how expensive it all is, it's unbelievably popular. Clash of Gods is an OLD game and it's stood the test of time as one of the greats.

"I don't know all that much about it myself. I've heard stories of course, of games that go on for months of intense back and forth struggle between the two players. I've heard of grand games involving whole families using multiple expansions that last YEARS. That being said... it IS expensive. So it's rare that people our age get into it. It's a massive investment and for most demons, demons that can't make it to Rank. 3. Before Twenty." Sue bit out with fake venom. The fact she was wiggling her shoulders killed the effect, "It's not a bad purchase... just..."

"Hmm... I don't really know how to impress upon you the cultural significance of the game. It's both fringe and yet oddly mainstream. Hmm... ok I know. It's the board game that all the big companies want to emulate, held together by a small passionate team that somehow hasn't lost touch with anyone. It's expensive, and most can't afford to buy their own set, but it's something anyone into board games wishes they owned a copy.

"This is not the sort of thing you casually hand over to a child. That being said... from what you've told me of Sylvie it's exactly the kind of game she'd love. She'd be the type of demon to save up for a decade or longer to get her own copy. In this case though... she doesn't know how expensive it is. Just that it's a

complicated board game she got for her birthday and I have no idea how that will affect her enjoyment. She won't know of the prestige. The days of playing with aunts and uncles and fighting for a chance at the table."

Kat let her fingers slowly run over the fluffy seating she was using as she pondered Sue's words. *Hmm... I can see what Sue means. It's probably a bit much... but if you ignore the cost and the cultural context it might be perfect. Good thing Sylvie knows nothing of the price of demonic culture.* "What about Down with the Demon King?" asked Kat.

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Sue shrugged, "I can't really say. I've actually played DDK, and I understand why it's so popular. It's funny most of the time with a bit of a serious ending. A think kids are a bit too interesting in playing the Demon King roll despite how difficult and unappealing they tried to make it. I think the theming is really weird considering we are all demons. I'm not sure.

"I think it's a good way to make friends... if she's willing to try. I just don't know that the game is interesting enough to push her in that direction. From what I know of her, she'd rather struggle with the Demon King role against people. Not the standard kid 'I wanna be the powerful guy' but in the 'I want to play the more difficult version of the game'. Personally, I worry what would happen if she plays against people as the Demon King and WINS."

Sue sighed, making sure of course to flex her chest as she did so, "I think that if DDK gets any proper use it'll be because you or your guardians force the issue. Is it a bad gift? No of course not... and it IS a gift FOR her but not for her if that make sense?"

Lily nodded, "I think I get it. The game is a good way to help her make friends... but what it does even better is provide us with a chance to force her to play a game with kids to make friends. It'll work more as a vessel for making those friends then one of proper enjoyment for her,"

Sue nodded, "Exactly. She probably won't appreciate DDK as a game, and probably won't appreciate forming a friend group necessary to play it... maybe later in life? I dunno. That sort of thing really isn't expertise. I'm used to working with adults and playing to their fetishes. Trying to work out what a small child that can't be called normal is far beyond my wheelhouse. I'm basically treating her like a younger, smarter version of Kat."

Lily opened her mouth to say something against that before closing it and looking at Kat suspiciously. "What?" asked Kat confused, "I don't really think Sylvie is much like me at all..."

Lily pulled out her hand and starting ticking off fingers as she said, "Responsible, no real friends during childhood, smarter then average-"

"I'm not sure that last one is applicable..." mumbled Kat somewhat embarrassed. Lily raised an eyebrow and made a 'go on' gesture. "Well... honestly Sylvie is probably smarter then I am NOW let alone when she was my age and I don't really get good grades at school,"

"Kat you got mostly A's all throughout high school without trying..." retorted Lily.

Kat shrugged, "I don't really think I'm all that impressive compared to you and Sylvie. At least not in the intellect department,"

“Ah” said Sue, causing the other two to turn around. “I think I see the problem. Kat is friends with the smartest person in her school, you Lily, and the older sister figure to perhaps the smartest child in the state so it’s skewed her perspective,”

Lily nodded, “I think so at least. Kat’s no idiot. Though... I’ll also admit school isn’t too hard and is really a horrible measure of intelligence,”

Kat shook her head, “Look can we just not go into this? I don’t really care how smart I am compared to everyone else. I’m happy with my intelligence and I can overclock my brain to ridiculous degrees. With that alongside my now perfect memory, school would be a joke. It hardly measures me real intelligence so can we just... not worry about it?”

“Wow. Sometimes I forget how bullshit your powers are Kat,” said Sue.

“What do you mean?” asked Kat with a frown.

Sue rolled her eyes, “The perfect memory might be a side effect of your True Sight. I didn’t think about it before... but that’s my guess. You also have great regeneration, and that was all stuff you got at Rank 1,”

“Right...” Kat sad slowly looking between Lily and Sue’s nodding, “can we go back to the gifts?”

“Kat, you’re worrying over nothing,” said Sue. “You spent hours going over options with Ludas while I followed along. I lost count of the number of games you rejected. I think that you get plenty of points just for the amount of effort you put in to finding something that Sylvie will like. The fact that I think you succeeded in that is almost irrelevant,”

“Yeah Kat,” said Lily, “I think we did well. I mostly let you run this show because you know Sylvie best, but I’m happy to put my name on this project. Well, no I feel a little guilty I didn’t do much more than provide you with confirmation you’d made a good choice, but really that’s all I think you needed. These are GREAT GIFTS KAT. Just... just try and stop worrying about it Kat. You’ll know you’ve made the right choice when Sylvie rips open the paper in a few days,”

Chapter 940 Decorative Conversation

It was just Kat and Callisto, working together to set up the room. Lily had been guilted into spending the day with her parents, Vivian was back but apparently there was some issue with the cake that had been ordered so she was running around trying to solve that. Sylvie was at school of course... so that left the house empty of most its occupants. Setting the room up with simple in theory. Of course... the ‘in theory’ part was the problem.

Callisto had decided to use this as a chance to make some products as well. Instead of flimsy paper decoration she was going all out and with Kat not really doing anything else, she was conscripted into the preparation plans. It wasn’t really a bother for Kat, but it did mean she wasn’t doing anything all that intellectually engaging. She also felt like contacting Lily while she was spending time with her parents would be a bad idea.

So, she just followed instructions. Find this piece of fabric from there, stitch these two things here. Apply paint here, stand it up there. Don’t let dust touch this, spill water across that. Wipe out this mess, move the mess over there. All simple stuff really. Kat was keeping herself entertained by holding a bit of flame above her head and imagining it in different shapes. Of course, she couldn’t actually see the fire in

question, what with it being above her head and all. So she had rely on her senses to tell just how close she was... while occasionally checking with the mirror of course.

"So... do you think the boardgames I picked out were interesting enough for Sylvie?" asked Kat.

"You are truly worried about this are you not?" responded Callisto.

Kat wanted to say that she wasn't concerned... but of course her mouth couldn't form those words.

"Dammit... yes I am. I don't know why. I spent hours picking out just the right games. I know she'll enjoy them at least a bit... but I just don't really know what I'm doing I guess..."

Callisto walked over and gave Kat a few awkward pats on the head before she continued with her work, "I cannot say I understand, not fully, but I do empathise. This is your first chance to buy something nice for Sylvie. Vivian and I are in similar situations you know? While I think it is clear we have not agonised to the same extent, you do, it is still important. This is the first proper birthday since the adoption. Vivian is probably more excited than Sylvie truth be told,"

"Huh... but you're not?" asked Kat warily.

Callisto gave a long sigh, "It would be wrong of me to say that I hold no excitement... but I do not celebrate my own birthday. I am happy for Sylvie, and I will take this chance to spoil her without worry in both hands... but I still do not really think of birthdays in a fond light. I have not even told Vivian my birthday, though I suspect that she knows when it is by now. As an... odd show of support she has not been celebrating her birthday either when she can get away with it.

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"Unlike myself, she has many others that are quite fond of her. So even if she were to swear off the holiday, meaning every word, she would still find presents on her doorstep. At the very least Vivian's parents would send her a box of cookies, no matter how much she protested. I imagine a few business associates would send her cards as well. So I suppose it is more accurate to say she tries not to do anything fancy for her birthday. I do not mind, but she can be rather stubborn about what she deems fair,"

Kat licked her lips as she grabbed the tape. *There's... well there's a lot to unpack there. The obvious question is 'why don't you celebrate your birthday' but do I really want to touch on that? Hmm... no... no I don't think I do. At least, not yet.* "Are we likely to meet Vivian's parents?" asked Kat, hoping that at least was a safe topic.

Judging by Callisto's smile, it seemed to be. "It is likely you will at some point. They are travellers. Vivian's parents are quite wealthy. Most of that isn't in simple liquid assets, but they own a number of homes all around the world. They rent most of them out and use the money to travel. If they like a destination they tend to pick up more property. They will visit at some point I am sure. Though... actually..."

Callisto paused for a moment, a frown settling on her face. "Now that I am thinking of it, I am rather surprised they have not dropped by to see who their daughter adopted. That is rather atypical behaviour from them... unless... would she? She might... hmm..."

"Care to enlighten me?" asked Kat.

Callisto slowly turned to look at Kat and said, "It should be obvious from my context clues. My best guess is that Vivian neglected to inform her parents that she had adopted two girls. Vivian is a little scatterbrained sometimes and she exchanges letters with her parents instead of text messages. This is both due to a lack of cell phone reception at many destinations, and also because the whole family believe letter writing to be more intimate.

"In this case, I would hazard a guess that Vivian mentioned it in a letter she drafted but forgot to send, and then believed that her parents would already know she adopted you both in subsequent letters. I imagine she mentions you both, but without context you may just be new friends or short term charity projects. I... may need to get confirmation about this. They will be awfully annoyed to know that we celebrated, what is essentially their grandchild's birthday without even informing them they had a grandchild,"

"Surely it would have come up..." said Kat with a wince.

Callisto shook her head, "Potentially not. It can take up to two months for a reply to come through. It is also possible for letters to get lost in the mail. I suspect that we won't know until they show up one day to visit unless I can contact them with a phone. I will have to double check where they are as well, it would not do to call them in the middle of the night without warning after all."

Kat nodded but didn't say anything else on the topic. It seemed that Vivian inherited her attitude from her parents. Carefree but with a penchant for making money somehow. "How old are Vivian's parents?" queried Kat.

"Not very old at all," said Callisto, "They are just a little past forty,"

"Seems odd that they've basically retired already," said Kat.

"Some might see it that way, but as far as I can tell, they made enough money to retire... and then did so. They realised that their bank accounts could go up forever if they wanted... but it wasn't at all what they dreamed of. So they transferred the ownership of the company, kept a good chunk of the shares and then made good use of their real estate investments. They may also have an online video series? They joked about it for a while so now it is unclear if they actually went through with it not," said Callisto.

The conversation sort of stalled there. It was clear that Callisto knew some things about Vivian's parents but really, it would be better to ask Vivian herself about them instead. Callisto did know, but it was likely her information about them was filtered through Vivian for obvious reasons. It meant Callisto had to make assumptions and leaps of logic or stick to more generalisations about them. Kat felt a little bad about not even knowing their names... but Callisto hadn't mentioned them either. Well, if Vivian's parents were anything like their daughter it was quite likely they had some strange nickname they insisted on being known by.

The quiet was fine for a while... but then Kat felt the need to ask. Perhaps it was corruption from spending too much time with Lily. Perhaps it was because Kat felt comfortable with Callisto. Perhaps, she felt the urge to tease a bit. Whatever the case... eventually Kat could not help but ask, "What about your own birthday? Would you like to talk about why you don't celebrate it?"

Kat watched as a ripple seemed to go through Callisto's body. Every muscle locking up one after another starting at Callisto's toes. Her legs froze in position and her arms paused in their motions. Callisto's eyes were sharper than ever, looking ready to lash out at the slightest movement. Then a shuddering breath racked Callisto's frame. Her legs relaxed, her arms resumed moving, and Callisto carefully spoke the words. "No Kat. I do not believe I have any interest in discuss that matter with you right now. Perhaps another time,"