

DEMONS 971

Chapter 971 UNLIMITED MAGICAL POWAH

Once Lily finished eating, Kat took it upon herself to clean the plate. There wasn't a fridge to put the leftovers in after all. Still, this combined with the small snack yesterday and Kat would swear she could feel the food being burnt in her stomach. It was not a terribly pleasant feeling to her mind. The feeling was shrugged off as Kat headed downstairs to wash and clean everything she'd used to prepare the meal. Once that was done, Kat moved the table and chairs back as well before the demonic pair left the house.

Once outside Kat made the short flight to her previous training ground and was surprised to note that the patches of ice she'd thrown were still around. The fire wasn't visibly burning but it was clear that some part of the effect had lingered just from the fact that there was still ice out on such a hot day. Kat walked over to one of the piles and gave it a good kick. The ice shattered without issue, letting loose a spray of ice and dirt.

So the ice wasn't strong... just persistent. I wonder if I could reduce the effects of my demonic fire. That... that might be a tough ask. It wasn't like I put much effort into those two throws, the fact that both patches of ice stuck around is a bit scary of I'm being honest. If I can do this right as I've stepped into Rank 3... what can a Rank 4 or Rank 5 do let alone something higher? Isn't my power level going to scale exponentially? That's... yeah that's a scary thought.

[I think we know why they don't send stronger demons to deal with lower-level jobs. Even just a bit of demonic fire from a rank 3 would probably be deadly to... well just about everything on weaker worlds. Do... do you think we'll have to leave Earth sometime soon?]

What do you mean?

[Well it's just... you can already do this at Rank 3. I... I sort of imagined that we'd move off Earth in a semi-permanent fashion after we'd grown up a bit. Maybe after a few decades? The fact that you're Rank 3 already... and just how strong you seem to be now... I wonder if we'd even be able to remain in that universe at Rank 4 or 5. It might be too much for it.]

Right but why?

[Well the universe restricts us right? It keeps everyone restricted and prevents the use of higher energy... but it doesn't work properly on demons and I'm just sort of wondering... let's just say Rank 9 because that's certainly strong enough. So say you're Rank 9 and the Universe tries to push you down... well... maybe you just breathe a bit too much and automatically push back... the universe might break or fundamentally change just from your existence at that point.]

That's a compelling point there. Though... hopefully it'll still be a while before that happens. I'm only Rank 3 and while it has been pretty quick, four and five should take longer.

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[Yeah but Kat... you're already rank 3 and if you complete that heartfelt Contract to learn to properly use your fans... if you manage Rank 4 before that it might push you to Rank 5 and then... well... that might already be pushing things back on Earth.]

Huh... I'd mostly forgotten about that. I guess it just hasn't come up in a long, long time. Could that be why I got to Rank 3 so fast?

[I doubt it, but you can ask]

System?

User Kat is currently still in the process of completing the Heartfelt Contract. No new Heartfelt Contracts have been offered.

Well shit.

[See Kat.]

I see, I really do. But stop distracting me. This was supposed to be a chance for you to show off. There's magic here and you wanted to see just how powerful it is now that you're in a world with mana.

[Look... I'm just... worried ok. I haven't really been able to do anything cool with my magic. Which... is fine I guess. I mean, I don't regret changing myself into a Memphis and I don't regret taking a mana affinity and going for paper but I just... I'm worried that I still won't be able to do anything. I want to be your partner. I want to stand by your side till the end of time.]

[I don't want to just be your pet cat.]

There was an intense wave of sadness and melancholy that radiated from Lily at that statement. Kat gave her girlfriend a mental nudge to transform, and when she did Kat was quick to wrap her up in a big hug. "You know you're not just a pet to me. You're my girlfriend. I thought I made that pretty clear, even just earlier this morning,"

"I know..." mumbled Lily, some wetness around her eyes as she buried herself into Kat's shoulder. "You're not making me feel like that. I AM making me feel like that. I'm sure you've noticed I'm normally a Memphis, and that's fine, I'm comfortable in that body, and I have no complaints but I just... I feel useless. I've said it a few times now but I just... I just haven't seen my magic actually DO anything useful yet and I'm worried..."

"I'm worried that now I'm here in a world that actually uses mana... what if I still can't do anything? I have absolutely no way to compare between worlds. Unlike you I have no baseline of what sort of strength to expect. Am I going to go from one measly scrap of paper to two? A whole doubling of my power? I don't think I could take it if that happened..."

Kat ran her hands through Lily's hair, scratching around her girlfriend's ears. "Hey, hey it's ok. Even if your magic doesn't work you aren't useless. Remember just last Contract? You were instrumental in scouting the area so that we could get Xuena free. That's not nothing! And what about the time before that, when we were in the city of water? That didn't take any skill or magical ability at all. It was just talking to people the whole time. Look, Lily, even if you perform worse then ever before, that's fine.

"I didn't confess to a magical powerhouse Lily. I didn't even confess to someone who was physically strong. I confessed to the adorable nerdy girl. I confessed to someone I saw at school every day. I confessed to the girl that gets too involved in weird research. I confessed to the girl I LOVE. Now are you going to keep moping around, or are you going to cast the spell?"

"I'm going to cast the spell!" said Lily with a cheer. She brought Kat in for a quick kiss on the lips, and didn't even blush. Then she turned to the open dirt plains, raised her arms and summoned a circle.

It flashed for a moment, before a second ring bloomed to life, and Lily fired without quite realising that fact. Kat felt like her breath was knocked from her lungs as a wave of paper EXPLODED. Lily it was a wave of paper, wider than Lily was tall and easily dwarfing her in height. The paper was densely packed, barely any space between the individual sheets of razor-sharp paper.

Lily burst out into laughter as she saw the wave of devastation the paper had left. Little pieces littered along a line at least 100 metres long with the earlier sections showing clear groves where the paper had dug trenches before stopping and later sections being coated in so much spare paper that it was hard to tell how deep the paper had dug. It was... breathtaking for Lily, especially considering she hadn't been trying for anything that grand.

Now, at this point, if Lily had a proper teacher, she'd be warned that the feeling of power coursing through her veins was mostly mental and not at all indicative of how much mana she had left. Such a teacher would command her to rest, not allowing her do more magic until she was settled and not likely to do something dumb. Lily... was about do so something dumb.

"Yes! This is magic!" shouted Lily as she summoned up three more circles and let her mana fuel them, exploding in three sperate, larger, waves of paper. Kat watched it all with a slight frown as Lily continued to grin wildly, seemingly not able to notice the fact she was already swaying on her feet. Once the three waves receded Lily turned to Kat and unleashed a grin... then fell forward straight into the ground.

Now, if Kat was asked, she'd try to say 'I was too surprised and let Lily fall'. Which was... barely true. Kat was in fact surprised, and she did let Lily fall because of that... but only the first few centimetres. Kat had plenty of time to stop Lily... but she also felt Lily deserved a little bit of punishment for going mad with power.

Chapter 972 Enter, the Titan Bodeir

As soon as Lily hit the floor Kat got to work double checking things. She was almost certain Lily was fine and just out of mana but it paid to double check this sort of thing. Kat only knew the most basic of first aid but she did what she could. First, Kat checked for Lily's breathing with a hand. It was steady... until Lily started to cough and Kat remembered all the damn dust in the air. Wincing at her own carelessness, Kat picked Lily up into a princess carry and dashed back to the house.

Kat was able to open the door with her tail and then make her way to the bedroom they used the other day... only for Kat to realise that Lily is very much not immune to dust in the same way she was. Hmm... it seems I've just made more work for myself. Let me just... Kat brushed off Lily's hair quickly before grabbing one of the pillows and laying her girlfriend down on the floor.

Once there, Kat confirmed Lily's pulse was stable and then pondered how worthwhile it was to give Lily a quick bath to get all the dust off. In the end, Kat decided it just wasn't worthwhile. She did go looking for a duster though. A few cupboards later and Kat had returned with a puffy feather duster made of actual feathers and got to work dusting Lily down.

Once Lily was clean, Kat moved her to the bed and checked her over once more. She seemed fine. At least, from what little medicine Kat did know Lily seemed fine and Lily's end of their mental link, while

giving off a feeling of sluggishness, didn't contain a hint of danger or distress. Kat didn't know if it actually would contain anything if there was a problem, but it served as another bit of reassurance Kat was happy to take.

Once Lily was tucked in bed, Kat went back through the cupboards she'd just checked for the feather duster to both return said cleaning tool and also pick up some paper she'd noticed. Acquiring a large quill that clearly implied certain things about whoever felt they needed to own it to compensate for something Kat wrote a short note to Lily explaining what had happened.

Now, part of Kat thought it was silly to write Lily a note. They were mentally connected and she was more than capable of using that to simply explain everything to Lily. The much larger part of Kat, the one that was still somewhat concerned for Lily after her earlier breakdown, decided a nice hand written note explaining things was, if not romantic, certainly more intimate.

With that done Kat put away the quill and moved to the foyer... before pausing and realising she didn't really know what to do. *So, option one, go practice. Not bad per say but considering I destroyed the lock on the door here and Lily is unconscious I don't know that I'm willing to just leave her here without supervision. Maybe if there was even a hint of servants, I'd feel safer but there's nobody STILL.*

The counterpoint to that is that I've got nothing else to do. Unless... hmm... maybe I could flex my aura a bit? No that's stupid. Lily's unconscious at the moment and I have no idea what could happen to her if I hit her with my aura at full, or even half power now I'm Rank 3. So... clearly non destructive testing needs to be a bit more clearly defined. Hmm...

I guess I could just go through some demonic energy control exercises? I mean... I don't know any proper ones but letting it run around my body should be fine. Though... Kat summoned up a small ember and ran it around her body. The energy reacted to her thoughts very well, smoothly transitioning between speeds and even when she directed it away from herself the flame remained staunchly under her control.

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It seems that at Rank 3 my 'control bubble' is large enough to count the entire room. Once again... it somewhat defeats the point of testing my control. I could go for trying to move multiple little flames at once but I shudder to imagine what would happen if I lost control of a swarm of them. The whole house could be frozen in just a few moments if my concentration lapsed so that's a no-go.

Kat started to pace back and forth as she went over all her options but discarded each one in turn. There were varying reasons... but most of them still boiled down to 'I don't want to leave Lily alone in this house' and 'Now I'm Rank 3 I worry practicing this would effect Lily even on the other side of the house'. Kat was still puzzling over what to do when, to her great shock, a knock sounded from the door. Kat paused mid-step, freezing in an odd pose as her mind tried to work out what was going on.

It took her longer than she was happy with to realise that someone had actually arrived at the door. Quickly shaking off her confusion, Kat walked calmly to the door and opened it to reveal a very tall mountain elf man. He seemed to ooze power just from posture alone and his dress emphasised that. Kat's own power likely meant she didn't lose out... but it was just the way he held himself. He wasn't new to his power like Kat, he was STRONG and he knew it.

The elf in question had long flowing black hair all the way down to his knees, and his face was sharp. Instead of the rough wrinkled skin that most mountain elves had, this man's face was almost comically sharp, completely flat with a chin so pointed you'd mistake it for a spear. His eyes were white with a pure steel grey iris that complimented his face well. Overall, it he seemed to embody power and grace... so the noticeable cut on his cheek felt somewhat out of place. It wasn't large, but it was clear a few centimetres of it had been cut off at some point.

The rest of his body was similar. Instead of robes like most martial artists, he wore a tight fitting shirt and pants combo that must have been some kind of fantasy latex. It showed every muscle off without hiding anything. Yes, anything. Kat made the mistake of taking in his entire form and the man wasn't ashamed of his body at all. The man was built well, a lifetime of training and a bit of martial magic to tune him up a step further than thought possible.

Though he had one more major imperfection. His right hand, between his middle and ring finger was an ugly scar that ran down the back of his hand... and presumably his front to. It was an ugly thing, and made Kat think he'd failed at catching a sword with his hand at some point in his childhood, though that was silly? Right? "Greetings demon, I am the patriarch of this sect, Bodeir and I have come to apologise for my son's foolishness. I see that you are the Bodyguard, is the Escort available?"

Kat winced at that, a bit of pride welling up at the fact she was instantly recognised as the combatant, "I'm afraid she... sort of went and seduced the guide we had. She has not been back since,"

The man clicked his tongue, "I see. I am not sure if I should be annoyed at how unrestrained she appears to be with my subordinates, or be glad that she appears to know her job. Though, in that case, I have to ask who the other person in this house is?"

Kat swallowed, not entirely sure HOW Bodeir knew that Lily was in the house at all. *Best just to admit to it right...?* "That's Lily, my girlfriend. She is bound to me magically and can transform into a small cat like creature called a Memphis. She is currently sleeping of some magical exhaustion from some practice earlier. She will be my unseen eyes when it comes to guarding your son,"

Bodeir nodded, "Yes... a good team composition. I can see many uses for that. I suppose the fact that she is bound to you means I did not need to include her in the contract?" Kat nodded. "Understood. In that case, I can only be pleased with getting three individuals for the price of two. Now... if only my son was willing to do his part..."

Well, if that wasn't a good opening Kat didn't know when she'd ever get a better one. "Yeah... so... about that... where is everyone? We were expecting to meet your son, especially considering I'm set to guard him. Then there's the question of servants. While I do not feel the need for them, this house was clearly designed with them in mind so... I was wondering where they are?"

Bodeir let out a long sigh. "Indeed."

Chapter 973 That Stupid Son of Mine

Bodeir sucked in a deep breath, clearly a delaying tactic as he worked out how best to phrase exactly what it was he wanted to say. After a few moments of silence, he spoke, "My son has decided to be... difficult. It is something that does not surprise me... but does disappoint me. In the case of the servants, I have told them to serve as my son wishes unless it goes against one of my direct orders to them. As I

gave the order to move here temporarily to my son and not them... well when he insisted on staying elsewhere they followed them,”

Bodeir walked over to a nearby display table, picked up one of the ornamental balls that was there and started to pace as he rolled it around in his hand. The ball looked to be carved bone of some kind. It wasn't particularly elaborate, but it was nice enough. Bodeir continued speaking, “I do not fault them for this. In fact, this is exactly what I want them to do in situations like this.

“It is not there fault my son is being difficult, and it is there job to serve him. To give him a taste of what it means to be responsible for men and women under his command... yet he seems determined not to learn any of the lessons I am trying to teach. The biggest source of contention, and the reason he is avoiding you and your absent friend, is that I needed to step in and ensure his safety at the tournament...”

Bodeir let out a long sigh, throwing the bone ball high in the air as he did so, not even looking at it as he juggled it between hands, “You see. He is of the belief that he is old enough to make his own mistakes. That I am being overbearing and interfering with his life. To that... I say... OF COURSE I DAM WELL AM!” Bodeir bit of a growl. “Sorry, this is dangerously close to becoming a heart demon for me.

“My son... he does not understand. I believed him ready to make and learn from his own mistakes years ago. I have given him time and space to grow, where I offered only minor bits and pieces of advice alongside help when requested. I didn't stop him from doing a number of frankly moronic things, as he was not a child anymore. As he said... he is old enough to make his own mistakes...

“But after nearly a decade of ‘making his own mistakes’ I'm getting increasingly frustrated with his inability to own up to said mistakes. Often times he lies to me about minor things instead of owning up to them. I let him get away with such lies because for some reason he doesn't seem to think I'd have a spy set up amongst his servants. Yes, just the one spy. I want the others loyal to him, and I try not to order them around...

“But I still put a full spy into his entourage. Their mission was to be as blatant about it as possible while still doing half decent spy work. It's a retirement assignment for one of my most loyal men. He's slipped up hundreds of times, been reported by the other servants at least six, and still NOTHING WAS DONE ABOUT IT! I mean really, how can my son say to me he's old enough to do things by himself when he can't even notice one obvious spy that follows him around ALL THE TIME!”

Bodeir made to hurl the bone sculpture into the wall before pausing mid swing and breathing in deeply, centring himself. A few ‘calming’ breaths later and Bodeir continued with a slight inclination of his head, “Sorry, my son vexes me with his incompetence. I've given him so many chances to ‘grow up’ as it were and he has failed every single one. Now, an important dinner for our sect alliance is coming up and the threat of assassination is high. I NEED him to be safe, not just because he's my son, but also because of the political complications that would occur should he die,”

Bodeir sighed again, “My son doesn't seem to understand that his death would complicate things. I'd be forced to retaliate, wasting resources I frankly don't have lest I be attacked by both enemies and allies because they think I'm weak. His death could break my sect... and he is apparently too thick to understand that fact. Instead of accepting that for the first time in nearly a decade I need him to be as safe as possible... he has chosen to be a brat about it,”

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“Um...” Kat said, before waiting on a reaction. Bodeir simply raised an eyebrow, waiting for the question. “As someone that really isn’t knowledgeable of sect politics can you explain it to me why it would be such a political issue?”

Now, Kat wasn’t sure if she expected a proper answer. Perhaps a diplomatic dismissal, perhaps a vague generalisation as to the risks involved. Heck, even just a short answer of ‘it’s complicated’ would have been less surprising than the truth. Bodeir burst out into laughter. Full body laughter, as he bent over as chuckles wracked his body. Eventually Bodeir recovered, wiping away a few tears that were not clear, but instead a thick, milky white. “Ah, truly my son is a moron.

“You see, he has not once asked me what the consequences of his own death would be. He has not asked me, asked the servants I have pointed him towards, he has not asked his friends. He has not questioned this at his mother’s grave. He has thought NOTHING of what his death would cost me. And it is truly a grave cost.

“I’ll need to explain a bit of background though, is that ok?” Kat nodded and Bodeir continued, “Right, you see, as a sect patriarch, if something were to happen to my offspring I would be required to retaliate. This is because children of sect masters are supposed to be sacred here. It is encouraged by all the big players. Thievery is fine, and so is some light maiming. Oh sure we’ll send assassins or bounty hunters after them in retribution, but never anyone strong.

“It encourages heirs to grow you see. The problem is... it can’t be taken too far. If a young master, or mistress dies? Well in that case it’s a matter of hunting them down personally, as well as all their friends and family. Brutal yes, but if I did not do so then the other sect masters would attack me, for failing in my duty to defend the ‘honourable sect heirs’” Bodeir spat on the floor, in the corner. “A bunch of nonsense. Useful nonsense, but nonsense and one I don’t particularly like. Still, I cannot defend myself from so many...

“Thus I’d need to retaliate. Heavily. As my wife is dead and I have taken no second, my retribution must be swift, and practically genocidal. It would be such an unbelievable waste of life and time on my part, but I’d have no choice if I wanted to get my sect intact. Now, this would be fine... if it was just one person. But an assassin? Sent by another sect?

“Well then it’s WAR. A war that’s ‘Terribly personal and I cannot hope to interfere’ or that’s what my allies would say. I was... not the kindest individual when I was reaching for Rank 4. So while I have allies now... some of them have not forgotten old grudges. They would not help me. Of course, whatever sect sent the assassin would allegedly not receive aid either... but under the table dealings would be common, and they’d get great prices on resources from the allies for a time. Totally unrelated to them supporting my son’s assassination of course,”

“Of course,” answered Kat with a nod.

Bodeir nodded, “Indeed. Now, that’s why I need him safe, and I needed a demon to do it. He cannot die. The problem is the blasted brat is trying to make it as hard as possible for me. Sometimes I hate my wife for the problems she shouldered me with...” Bodeir noticed Kat’s wince and waved her off. “I married

for love instead of politics. My wife was a brilliant cultivator... much better at it than me. We trained together for decades growing closer and closer until we married.

"When she fell pregnant unexpectedly, she was... overjoyed but a little sad. I should've known there was an issue... but she never told me. Simply said she was sad to put her cultivation on hold. Lying bitch. The birth killed her, and she knew it was going to months in advance. It was an issue with her cultivation technique. SHE KNEW it was an issue. She'd known her whole life. Instead of warning me about it, or getting rid of the baby... she gave me a son, and died for it.

"I still love her of course, and I love my son... but I HATE that my wife did not see fit to inform me of this issue. That I was given no time to look for solutions, and that I had to raise my son by myself... and seemingly failed in that task. Still... as I said, I do love her and I loathe the idea of taking another wife. As such... I must do what I can for this foolish son of mine,"

Chapter 974 Bodeir, Bodeir, Bodeir, Bodeir, Bodeir, Bodeir, Bodeir

Kat pointedly didn't say anything in response to Bodeir's rather passion filled rant, making sure to give him time to calm down. It was clear he felt rather strongly about his wife, both positively and negatively, and Kat could understand the logic behind that. *Truly, if Lily knew she was dying and didn't tell me I would be beyond furious by the end of it. Getting a kid in return is... certainly a bitter taste. I mean... I feel like a bit of a bitch saying this but I'd prefer Lily over any child we might one day have. Granted... a large part of that might be because I imagine we'll adopt, and there's no reason that should result in anyone's death.

Still... I'm somewhat impressed he still loves his son and has clearly tried his best. Or well... that just might be the impression I'm getting but I don't think Bodeir has lied about this. Exaggerated perhaps, but not lied. That's a whole lot of emotions my teenage ass is NOT equipped to deal with. Oh how I wish Lily was awake, then I would have the chance to consult her and see if she shares my feelings on the matter. I think she would...? But maybe I'm weird.

What I'd like to know is what exactly this means for my Contract. Is it appropriate to ask him now? I mean I feel like it has to be. This IS important and I do need to know... but I'm basically asking about work after his rather passionate speech about his dead wife. I can't just jump straight back into work after that right?

But what the heck else can I say? I can't imagine what I'd do if someone I cared about died suddenly like that. Sure I've got experience with all the kids that leave the orphanage but that's really not the same. I might never see them again, but that's a far cry from them being dead... and even Gramps who... is somewhat old... well...

After that talk I had with him... I was going to say recently but I guess it was actually MONTHS ago now. Man time gets weird when you're on the road. Anyway, my point is that Gramps might be sticking around for the kids... but he'll want to join his wife in whatever afterlife actually exists. I'm not sure how sad I'll be when he does pass. It's something that... while he's not rushing towards... he clearly looks forward to. Perhaps giving the old man a chance to rest wouldn't be so bad... *noveLnext.coM*

Problem is, that still leaves me with nothing at all allowing me to relate to this guy. I suppose I could point out both of my parents are dead? I don't really want to compete though... and I don't even feel

bad about the fact I never knew my parents. Does the son hold a grudge? Does he dislike the fact he never knew his mother or is that something he's gotten over? How much of a teenager is he actually? I don't know anything about elf maturity.*

Dammit. Whatever, let's just try to be... tactful about this. "I see that you've had your own share of troubles. While mine are not so great, I can at least empathise due to the fact that I myself am an orphan. This does not bother me much, but I do understand that only having a male role model instead of a set of parents does change a person. I was raised by the old man who ran the orphanage, I call him Gramps, and unlike many others I was never adopted. Somehow... I sort of became the mother figure in the orphanage, or perhaps big sister? Doesn't matter...

"My point is... while I can't understand what it's like to lose your wife that way, nor can I understand what it is like to grow up like your son I can at least empathise, and use my own condition to try to comprehend it. That being said..." Kat sucked in a deep breath letting the words hang for a moment. Bodeir seemed calm, as Kat eyed him and decided that meant it was safe to continue, "I have to ask what that means for me. As crass as it is to talk about work when you've just given me such a meaningful glance into your own life...

"I AM bound by Contract. So I need to know how this will effect things with your son and my own charge to protect him. As well as how this will change Sue's job, that is, the Escort for your son,"

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"I am not offended, it is a very reasonable question," said Bodeir promptly. "I can say that my son WILL be on that boat tomorrow before lunchtime even if I have to drag him there myself and tie him to the mast. I suppose the main concern for you will be just how much effort my son will decide to put towards avoiding you. Perhaps once he is away from our sect, and 'my' influence he will calm down and allow you to guard him as he should...

"Alternatively... he may decide to... intentionally make things difficult. I hope, in such a case, that... Sue you said?" Kat nodded, "I hope that in the case that my son, who I now realise I have not named. Most know it, as my wife decided Bodeir Jr was a good name for him. I... I do not know if I am pleased with the decision but it was the last thing my wife asked of me and I will not gainsay it. Though, do please just refer to him as Bodeir, he does not like to be reminded of the fact we share a name,"

Oh come on Bodeir's Mum... wife? Both? Both I guess. Still... what the fuck were you doing? I knew people named their kids after themselves but come on. His father is already massively powerful and a cultivator that's clearly known continentally. Bad enough to be in his shadow figuratively you had to pass down the name as well?

Kat couldn't hide her wince, something Bodeir caught and acknowledge, "Yes... my wife... I question many of her decisions now that she is gone... it is just one of the many that make me question how put together she truly was. Still, I will not speak ill of the dead, especially when such person is my beloved wife. Please, let us return to my son," asked Bodeir, though it was clearly not a question.

"In the case that my son proves to be... difficult... I want you to prioritise his life and your own ability to respond in time. His comfort is... a secondary concern. Your own comfort... well I will simply leave that part up to your own discretion. If you do not feel you can do your job acceptably camping out on a roof,

or by commandeering a nearby room, simply kick him out of his bed and stuff him in a sleeping bag or something. Heck, tie my foolish son up if you need to.

"I'll just suggest that... taking a deliberately antagonistic role may make my son decide to cause yet more issues for you. As I said, I won't force the issue, and his life comes first... but please be smart about how things go. As for Sue... I obviously want her to keep him as distracted as possible. The more time he spends staring at her tits, the less time my fool son can spend causing international issues or trying to avoid his protection detail..."

Bodeir gave a few more examples of behaviour he was perfectly fine with herself and Sue engaging in, but really most of it boiled down to 'do what you have to do, try not to offend someone too much' and 'increase the risk of attack' and 'ignore my son if he complains too much' which... Kat thought was... reasonable enough. She did have to ask though, "While I am not saying I am incapable... I would like to ask... if things are so precarious why did you not also attend the gathering?"

Bodeir spat, "Politics. Well, there is also the risk of attack, but mainly politics. If I showed up personally, I'd be saying to our allies that I don't trust them enough to take care of my son. Which of course... I DON'T but at least with an outside contractor such as yourself I can lie about just how strong you are. Even if it wasn't planned... I can imply that I have two Succubi on hand to... keep my son company," Bodeir saw Kat flinch slightly, "Oh don't worry. You don't need to do anything but guard my son. Even if it's blatantly obvious you're a guard, the fact that I can at least imply you aren't is a powerful negotiating tool. That and I'll just say neglect to mention you're Rank 3... maybe fudge a few details regarding what I actually had laid out in the Contract," Bodeir grinned. "I mean... demons are just so much stronger than us right... accidents can happen..."

Chapter 975 Exit Stage Left, Enter Stage Right

With that somewhat ominous statement Bodeir simply left, saying "The ship will leave at 1:00pm tomorrow and my son WILL be on it. Don't be late, unless you want to be playing catch-up." Bodeir didn't even look surprised at the door when he looked pointedly at the 'locked' position of the nob. He just made it clear he knew... and then walked out. Kat just sort of... stared at the door for a few moments as everything that just happened washed over her.

Kat shook her head to clear it and wandered into the kitchen, grabbed a glass of water and then headed into one of the sitting rooms. The chairs were more... bean bag adjacent things. They were fluffy seating that was set into the floor and mostly circular. Kat threw herself into one and let out a long sigh. "Welp. Now I have to deal with... this... and Lily is sleeping off her power trip. Sue is out probably getting fucked and I'm the only one around so I have to talk this through with myself..."

A flash flew through Kat's mind as she considered summoning her copy and hashing this out with her... but as soon as the thought finished solidifying a strange sense of disapproval seemed to come from nowhere. *Huh... is that... KatE? Or is that my subconscious? Lily? Hmm... I have more connections to my head than I thought. Still... that does seem to take that option off the table.*

"So what am I going to do with Bodeir? How much shit am I willing to put up with?" Kat asked the air. Really, it would depend on how Bodeir was likely to go about it. Kat knew she could put up with a lot of complaints against her personally... but if that went on too long Kat also knew that Lily would snap at

him eventually... then he'd probably chastise either Lily, if he knew she was a person, or just tell Kat off for not 'controlling her pet' which would in turn set Kat off.

Which... not an ideal scenario but certainly one I can see happening. I'll have to talk to Lily and try to get her to just... let these things slide. A large part of Kat's mind pointed out that Kat still wouldn't be willing to put up with any shit directed at Lily... so why would Lily accept Kat taking insults? Kat of course, pointed out that Lily had already done that at school. To which her mental voice pointed out that Lily didn't have the power or confidence she does now.

Huh... that's actually a decent point. Lily probably held back a lot both because of how much physically weaker she was then me at the time and out of worry that I'd figure out she had a crush on me. Now that we're dating and she's a magical cat-girl... I'm doubtful she'd let anything too insulting pass. Doubly so now that she knows her magic is actually quite powerful. Or at least looks that way.

Kat tapped her finger on the flooring nearby. It was still strange that so much of the 'furniture' was set into the ground, partially just to distract herself from the idea of an angry Lily... but she did stumble onto another interesting thought. *Probably due to the lack of wood. In fact... the rather simple table and chairs I found might actually be fancy dining equipment here. I guess I hadn't really considered the logistics of something like that. Hmm... I wonder how spatial storage changes pricing for things like that? There's no mass production so it'd still be expensive... but if someone just loaded up a storage ring with a forest's worth of trees it could work out.*

Kat turned that thought over a few times to no real avail. It was an amusing thought at least... but it was now time to get back to Bodeir Jr... or maybe Sue? *Where is she? I mean obviously she stayed over to sleep with our guide... but when is she coming back? I hope I don't have to go looking for her so she doesn't miss the air boat. I really hope I don't need to walk in on her and drag her out of there. God I'm glad I don't know where she's staying. I can use that as the perfect excuse if someone tries to con me into it.*

Just as Kat was basking in that thought, she heard a knock at the door. Frowning, she pulled herself up and walked to the door... and found Sue! "Oh! Sue you're back! It's good to see you... um... should I ask... about the... or... the..." Kat frowned as she tried to work out if it was polite to ask what had happened. Not about the sex... but the rather noticeable black eye Sue was sporting. Kat also now knew that a demon with purple skin moved closer to pink when it was bruised.

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"The sex was great, thanks for asking Kat!" said Sue with a smile that looked only slightly pained. Most of that was the half closed eye and the wince when her cheek moved.

"Yeah... I wasn't talking about that... more the black? Is it still a black eye if your eye is pink? It's not pink eye... that's completely different. I think..." grumbled Kat.

Sue laughed and said, "Oh it's nothing major, Hughlfe just kneed me in the face while I was suck-" Kat quickly slapped a hand over Sue's mouth. She of course, immediately started licking and sucking on Kat's fingers.

"Nope, I don't want to know, not now that it's clearly a weird sex thing... and would you cut that out?" said Kat as she pulled her hand away.

“Hey, if you’re going to stick something in my mouth I’m going to start sucking. The fact that you’re surprised by this is an honest disappointment to me,” retorted Sue.

“I’m not surprised in the slightest, I just don’t want your drool coating my fingers,” said Kat.

Sue gave Kat a confused look and said, “You do know it’s already dripped off your fingers, right? That’s just how your skin works right?”

Kat, not wanting to admit she HAD forgotten that point instead responded, “That doesn’t mean I want spit on my fingers for any length of time Sue. Just because it falls off quickly doesn’t mean the feeling is pleasant,”

Sue took a step back and placed her hand over her ‘heart’. This of course means that her hand was really grabbing a large amount of her tit. Sue even went through the trouble of squeezing it a bit as she pretended to look horrified. “Not pleasant? Kat you wound me. I can assure you that my skills are up to par. Why just this morning... and afternoon... and like ten minu-”

Kat, despite her better judgement, slapped a hand over Sue’s mouth again. Kat could feel Sue’s mouth shift into a grin before she started to lick Kat’s hand again. This time Kat just sighed, “Fine whatever be that way,”

Sue stepped back, stopping immediately and pouting, “Well it’s no fun if you’re just going to let me do it out of apathy. Where’s the emotion Kat? The lust, the joy, the anger, the reactions!”

“Sue, you’re my friend and I’m asexual. Having my fingers licked isn’t going to turn me on, and no amount of groping yourself will change that. As my friend though... it’s not like I care that much about the spit. It’s weird but I think my regeneration is enough to offset any issues it could cause... if it could even do anything in the first place,” said Kat blandly. “In fact... does that actually work for anyone?”

“You’d be surprised,” responded Sue. “Sometimes it’s the weirdest shit. Well... in this case most men start picturing me sucking on their-”

Kat once more slapped a hand over Sue. “I’ll do it again. I will, I swear,” Kat then took a step back and released her hand before Sue could start licking this time.

“Naw, Kat you’re bullying me! Lily! Kat’s bullying me! Wait...” Sue looked around with a frown, “Where is Lily?” concern laced Sue’s voice.

Kat made a placating gesture, “She’s asleep at the moment. Lily was initially worried about her magic... then she found out it works really well here... and she went a little... crazy with the casting... then passed out,”

“Ah... yup, that’d do it. It’s like runner’s high I think. Or well, that’s what I’ve heard. Anything else interesting happen?”

Kat groaned and nodded, “Look... it’s... it’s a bit of a story. I guess... I met Bodeir, the patriarch of the sect and Bodeir Jr’s father. Bodeir Jr who we’re guarding and well... it’s like this...” Kat started to recount her meeting with Bodeir, the ups, the downs, the rather emotional parts. She tried to cover everything in as much detail as she could. Kat wanted Sue’s feedback... even if most of the commentary was ‘I’d let him get that anger out with a good pounding’ and anything things of that nature.

Chapter 976 Jiggle Physics

Kat spent the rest of the afternoon going over things with Sue. It took a while, considering Bodeir had a lot to say. By the time Kat was done with that it was Sue's stomach was complaining. "Apparently I didn't swallow enough!" Sue cheerfully added.

For that comment alone, Kat was tempted to tell Sue to get her own dinner... but Kat had practice cooking for large crowds and the idea of just... not giving Sue food was a strangely unpalatable one. Kat hadn't realised she had such an inclination, but didn't find it too annoying. Still, it wasn't really a hardship to prepare a bit of extra food. Kat was even pleasantly surprised to see Lily stumble her way into the kitchen about five minutes before it was done.

The three ate dinner together, or more accurately, Kat watched the other two eat dinner. Sue made a few... choice comments but Lily was still rather wiped out from her exertions earlier in the day. Lily explained it, "I feel a bit like somebody decided to use one of those juicers people use to get orange or lemon juice out of the fruit. I feel wrung out, dry, and like my insides have been shredded a bit,"

This of course set Kat into a mothering mood. Carefully poking and prodding and pampering Lily who kept insisting she would be fine. Of course, that didn't really help. This was the first time Lily had ever really gotten hurt on one of these Contracts. It didn't matter that Lily saw it as mostly her own fault. No matter how true those thoughts were, Kat seemed determined to baby her about it.

This meant that Kat and Lily turned in early. Lily had just yawned once. She wasn't even that tired, she was simply still recovering from her previous nap... but Kat wouldn't hear any of it and carried Lily off to bed, before wrapping herself around Lily as much as possible. Tail, wings, blankets, arms, legs. Lily was glad Kat didn't run very hot after becoming a demon. In fact, with the heat, Kat was actually cooler than the ambient air. It wasn't too bad... but it was rather suffocating. This was of course balanced out by the fact Lily could feel Kat... EVERYWHERE.

The next morning, Lily actually woke up first. Granted, this might've been due to Kat staying awake for most of the night stressing out about Lily before losing consciousness sometime in the early morning... but what really mattered was that Lily was up first... right? Of course, as soon as Lily moved, Kat was instantly awake, ready to attend to whatever Lily might need.

Lily felt the panic going through Kat's head, and in her somewhat groggy state decided to do something about it. She turned, with some difficulty, in Kat's arms until they were face to face... and Lily pulled Kat into a kiss, sticking her tongue as far into Kat's mouth as she could. Lily felt Kat's surprise, then surprise turned to happiness, which turned into contentment.

Lily... Lily could feel herself burning just a bit. Sure this was apparently quite relaxing for Kat but for Lily it was the opposite. It set her blood pumping, made sure she was very awake, and set fire to the area just below her stomach. Lily had to stop herself from pushing her lower half onto Kat's knees and trying to generate a bit of pressure. Lily... wasn't quite ready for that and this was to calm Kat anyway. The fact it was an amazing kiss was just a nice bonus.

When Lily was finally forced to break away just to get a bit of air, Lily dipped back in for a quick kiss on Kat's nose before transforming to escape Kat's grasp. Lily couldn't help but laugh when she looked down at Kat's pouting face as Kat's hands tried to grip onto her now missing girlfriend. When Kat turned

upward, Lily couldn't help but laugh at the adorable pout Kat was wearing. It almost made Lily feel bad about escaping... almost.

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Kat then leapt up and pretended to chase Lily around the room for a while, the pair of them laughing all the way. Lily transformed back to open the door and then continued running to the kitchen where she 'allowed' Kat to catch up to her, the pair 'falling' onto one of the fluffy ground based chair things. It was a good time, though Lily's stomach decided they couldn't just have a calm moment, and as such Kat got up to make everyone food.

Today was nothing too tough for breakfast. Knowing that nobody else would be staying here, Kat just grabbed whatever looked interesting and good to eat right now and carried them up to the table near the kitchen. Sue, perhaps using some strange sixth sense, managed to jiggle into the room right as the food was being set down. Though... 'jiggle' was definitely the correct way to describe the way Sue entered into the room.

Apparently Sue liked sleeping in the nude, either because of her desire for nightly activities, or just habit at this point. Sue also apparently couldn't be bothered to even summon up her demonic attire. Kat and Lily both stared at Sue, though... with very different expressions on their faces. Kat's was a deadpan stare that said 'you're too lazy to just WILL clothes onto your body? I'm disappointed' while Lily tear her eyes from the wonderfully torturous sight. Lily didn't know where to look, if she should look, or what Sue wanted her to look at.

Now, a small part of Lily's mind was trying to remind her that she was in love with Kat, and that she really didn't NEED to look. The rest of her mind was a thirsty lesbian who was watching a naked succubus 'jiggle' into a room. Perhaps if she wasn't a teenager, or perhaps if Lily hadn't engaged in a serious make-out session then baited Kat into chasing her Lily's hormones would've been a bit more controllable. Alas... Sue.

To Lily, it really was a sight. Without anything at all to stop Sue's body from wobbling every which way everything was jiggling. Lily wasn't sure if she should be looking at Sue's boobs, which bounced noticeably with every step, her ass which she could swear gave off clapping sounds... or... no, Lily wouldn't look at that last option. It wasn't as tempting when she didn't actually want a taste.

Sue sat down more with a... plop then a thunk, and then reached over for the food, letting her breasts rest on the table as she did so. "Really Sue? You can't even be bothered to put on proper clothes?" asked Kat with a sigh.

Sue shrugged, deliberately putting more motion into her chest as she chewed on some fruit. "It's just us girls here and Lily's enjoying the show immensely. Is there really any need to cover up? Could it be... jealousy?"

Kat sighed and said, "Sue, while Lily is attempting to devour you with her eyes instead of the breakfast, might I point out to you that I know you're not interested, and Lily while definitely a lesbian, is not so starved for affection she'd just jump you. Also... the windows are all open,"

“So? What do I care? They can look if they want. Not that I think any of the houses nearby are close enough... but heck maybe a cultivator replaced his eyes to see better or something. I wouldn’t want to disappoint him,” retorted Sue.

“Sue, now is not the time to indulge in your exhibitionist tendencies, I’d like to actually discuss the job we’re going to be properly starting in just a few hours,” said Kat patiently.

Sue waved her off, with a hand as she shook her head. “Ah, you see technically I don’t qualify as an exhibitionist because I don’t get any sexual gratification from being watched. I just don’t care if they do. Exhibitionism requires a lot less apathy on my part,”

“Pretty sure you’re enjoying this a bit too much for it not to count as exhibitionism,” ‘corrected’ Kat.

“Hmm... I dunno... perhaps we can get Lily’s opinion on the matter?” said Sue as she waved at hand in Lily’s direction, making sure to flick her rest and set her chest to jiggling again.

“Boobs” was Lily’s intelligent response.

“Stop torpedoing my girlfriend’s IQ please Sue. I do mean it when I say we’ve got things to discuss,” requested Kat.

Sue turned to Kat and said, “It’s really nothing to worry about. We’ll have plenty of time to discuss this on the boat and see how things stabilise. I don’t see the point in making any plans before we’ve even met the guy. Sure he might be a bit belligerent, but I’m sure if I flash the goods in a tasteful manner he’ll fold like wet clay,”

“You consider this a tasteful manner?” queried Kat with a raised eyebrow.

“Oh not at all, this is flashing someone... indulgently. Perhaps excessively,” said Sue, as she wiggled in place to set things moving again. Lily was just about to snap out of her daze after all. Couldn’t have that.

“Sue... is there a reason you’re being a bit... distracting this morning? I mean, it’s not completely unusual... but I feel like you’d normally be a bit more tactful about things, or not be quite so inclined to go for the low hanging fruit,” said Kat with some slight concern.

Sue grumbled, “Well, there’s two reasons. The first, is that we’re going to a fancy party with a bunch of cultivator women. They’ll all be supernaturally beautiful and trying to use that. Lily needs to be able to resist that and this is a funny method of training. Secondly...” Sue let the words hang for a moment until she was sure she had both other women’s attention, even letting Lily regain a bit of her wits. “I’m enjoying the feeling of not having sand everywhere. Trust me. It’s not fun, don’t ask,” The sound of two heads slamming into the table rung out.

Chapter 977 All Aboard!

Sue continued to brush off Kat’s attempts at planning, insisting that it would just waste time. They’d be trapped on a boat for two days. There would be time to plan later. Of course, Sue seemed to be sticking to that argument mostly as a way to amuse herself and as the day wore on Kat started to go along with the joke, giving increasingly obscure reasons for needing to plan for things, some of which were the following: Freak Meteor Attacks. Mind Control Virus. Illusions that only Kat could see through. Food Poison, and Sue’s personal favourite, What to do if Bodeir Jr jumps off the boat while in motion.

Sue found that last one funny enough to give a real answer “You’d have to jump after him obviously. It’s your job to make sure he doesn’t kill himself,” Kat then went on to point out Sue had a shield ability to which Sue just laughed and ran off again. Still with no clothes on, even hours after the fact.

It did work to harden Lily’s resolve against such tactics though. After barely an hour of time Lily was already treating Sue normally. No matter how much Sue bounced around as she was running it didn’t distract Lily anymore. Well... that’s not entirely true. Apparently Lily’s instincts kept telling her to pounce on Sue’s tail. Not in the fun way for Sue though. The one Lily got in range, Sue just let her do whatever... and that whatever turned out to be biting down on Sue’s tail.

Not a fun experience for either girl. Sue ended up with two rows of bite marks in her tail while Lily found out that demon blood is disgusting. That did halt the game for a while... but not all that long. Sue started to run around and slowly act as if she was going to knock various ornaments to the floor. Kat had to chase after and catch them before any broke. Sue always made sure Kat was nearby when she dropped things... but Kat wasn’t entirely sure that Sue wouldn’t let them break if Kat didn’t get there fast enough.

The three girls continued to mess around until about twelve when Lily heard a knock at the door. She’d been hiding in behind a rather ugly looking pot and waiting to surprise Sue. With less teeth and claws this time. At Lily’s mental call, Kat yelled to Sue “We’ve got company!” and then made her way to the door. A female mountain elf was there, head bowed.

A beat of silence passed between the four, before the maid spoke, “I am here under Patriarch Bodier’s orders to show you to the boat,”

Everyone accepted that at face value and left for the boat. It was roughly where Kat expected. That odd mound that she’d seen just outside of the city’s ravine. There was a door in the side, leading to a staircase that sent them into the rock and eventually to what looked like a fancy dock. There were a few ships parked there. Some small, clearly private vehicles, a few others were large enough for a small family, and finally there were two large vessels that were just short of a full football field in size.

It looked very ‘age of sail’ and Kat couldn’t help but wonder about the why of it all. *I mean... surely they’re smart enough to realise that this isn’t very aerodynamic. I mean they have massive sails and OARS for crying out loud. Do they think they can paddle through the air or something?*

[It might be a symbolism thing? Perhaps the fact that it’s ship shaped is important. Alternatively, the enchantments used on it could be based pretty heavily on sail boat enchantments. Perhaps they haven’t innovated past that.]

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Eh... I guess? Just... surely basic observation would prove that it doesn’t work as well as it could.

[Perhaps Kat... but it’s clear that they DO work. Regardless of how much better we think we could manage they’ve clearly been using this magic for quite some time. I mean, think about it. Just the time it’d take to build the boat would be months of work, if not years. Then add enchantments on top. This could be the cutting edge of technology for all we know.]

Kat and co walked across the gangplank and onto the deck. A number of people in what looked like warm weather outfits scurried around the deck. Most of them had their jumpers tied around their waists

by the sleeves, with some even rolling their pants up a bit. Presumably to keep a bit cooler while down here on the ground. In the middle of it all though, was the woman they assumed to be the captain.

Kat and Lily were making that assumption based on the giant hat the woman was wearing. It looked like some unholy cross between a tricorne hat and an ushanka. Whatever it was called here, it was very fluffy, comically large, and likely to get caught by the wind. That's what the strap was for, clearly... but it did make the woman look a bit like a kid who couldn't be trusted to keep her hat on her person.

"Greetings demons! My name is Creshe and I'm the secondary captain aboard the Floating Rock!" said Creshe as she tapped the mast fondly.

"Wait... this thing is called the Floating Rock?" asked Sue, unable to hold back her shock.

"That is correct my good passenger!" said Creshe cheerily. "The Mountain Shaker sect has a long tradition of naming its boats with amusement in mind. You can't see it, but the hull has the name carved in. It makes for a good laugh, and a good security system. Plenty of folks think it's bad luck to fly in something with a name like the Floating Rock here and we've seen a large drop in theft attempts since instituting the change. It's only been practiced for a hundred years though, so who knows where we'll be in another fifty."

Clearly this isn't cutting edge tech then.

[Yup. Clearly. Guess it has to be symbolism then.]

"Is there any questions you'd like answered about your time on board? If not I'll just show you to your cabins," continued Creshe, unaware of the internal commentary from the peanut gallery.

Of course, with the offer of questions so readily on the table, Kat had to ask, "Why is it a boat? Like I get that we're using it to travel, and it's a good way to have space... but you have a sail and oars! Surely there are better ways to move through the air right?"

Creshe nodded, "Indeed there is. We've got some smaller vessels that aren't based on nautical designs at all... but they are remarkably less stable and not all that much faster, especially when scaled up. The whole ship is covered in an invisible barrier to make us much more aerodynamic than it seems. At the moment, the best combination of stability, speed, and safety still seems to be the old classic ship designs.

"It's a bit of a debate actually. Are they so stable because we've refined the heck out of them? Or are they simply more inherently stable with the symbolism, the enchantments, and the shape all put together? There are a lot of arguments on either side... but it all comes down to time. We're still finding little tricks to make this version of the flying craft better, so clearly it's not completely optimised. Might be better to try other things... but it works and it's getting better. Not worth the risk to R&D up something that's probably not going to work better,"

Kat nodded, and the group continued chatting with the captain about notable places on the ship as they waited for the young master to show up. By the time they heard movement, Kat and Sue had learnt where all the main spots on the ship were, as well as what leisure activities were available. Apparently they even had a pool.

The group paused in that explanation when they heard marching from the gangplank. A group of maids and butlers made their way on, carrying a bag of things over their shoulders... despite the fact Kat was pretty sure they were all wearing storage rings. The fact they all had the same style of ring on their middle fingers giving that away. They were pretty varied in appearance but identical in uniform, between both men and women.

Each had a brown robe on it with a large pocket at the front. The collars on the robes were somewhat puffy, though looking at other servants revealed that it could be pulled up and over the face as a sort of makeshift face mask when required. Their shoes were closed in... but with open gaps in the sides where the arch of the foot went.

As a group they marched to the captain, gave a short half bow, then moved on. Clearly knowing where to go. The issue was... when the train of servants ended there was still no sign of the young master. *Oh dear. Looks like we're not about to get off to a clean start.*

Chapter 978 Bodeir VS Bodeir

At exactly 1:00am there was a deep rumbling sound as the ground shook. The large wall that kept the Floating Rock penned in slowly lowered. Kat couldn't see them, but it was the work of three teams of cultivators working together with an Earth mage to bring the wall down. The Captain Creshe headed off to start operating the shift with the other captain, or captains.

The demonic trio, Kat, Lily, and Sue, all stood nearby and watched as the boat started to move. The oars were slowly paddling from the side and they did actually seem to be moving the boat. Eventually, the boat left the docking section and got onto the main straightaway... but instead of going forward it started to drop backwards. A confused glance showed that all the scurrying crew members weren't reacting at all. Apparently this was intended?

Kat soon found out why. At the back of the hanger was a large device that gripped lightly onto the side of the ship and pulled it off to the side where there was a series of tracks. A few creaks and groans later and the Floating Rock started to move around the circle. The speed rapidly increasing as the outside blurred to normal eyes. For Kat, her vision was good enough to keep up... but just barely. Without demonic energy even her sight was starting to blur around the edges.

Even still, the Floating Rock continued to gain speed. Kat was bracing herself for the launch... when she heard a thunk. Turning to the source with a small amount of fear... Kat spotted Bodeir standing over another mountain elf bound in rope. Bodeir clearly wasn't happy with whoever that was, but Kat had a pretty good guess. It was confirmed when Bodeir said, "My son. Present and accounted for. Don't let him do anything so stupid it gets him killed,"

"FUCK YOU DAD" growled the elf on the floor as he tried to get out of the normal looking rope. If Kat was to take a closer look, she'd seen that while the rope was normal, Bodeir the elder had reinforced it with rock enhanced by his qi. His son would never be able to break it no matter how he struggled.

"I'm sorry son, but I've not had sex since your mother died. I'm not going to break that streak for YOU. I'm afraid I have no interest in men, or children. Still, now that you've made your interest in men clear, I'll remember to look for a good male escort service in the future," said Bodeir dryly.

"Dad, that's fucking gross. And I'm NOT GAY!" shouted Bodeir Jr.

“Well son I’m just not sure I can believe you. In fact, I’m starting to think you might also be a masochist. I mean, it would’ve been much easier for everyone involved if you’d just listened to me the first time, the second time, or the third time. In the end though, I had to tie you up and drag you here after you tried to flee. Surely that says something about you my son.

“Then there’s your problems with women. You see, you never could pick good ones. So many spies and gold diggers. But, but I have HOPE! You see, if you’re gay it would explain why you can never seem to pick out good women. It’s because you’re not really trying. Well, it’s ok son. Despite being a masochist pervert who gets off on some weird shit, I don’t mind having a gay son. It might make passing my title down to you a little difficult, and unless you adopt someone early and they turn out to be a great cultivator you probably won’t have a successor of your own... but that’s ok son. I’ll support you because I love you,” Bodeir said with such sincerity that you felt like you had to believe him.

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Kat didn’t notice it... but her eye didn’t even twitch. It sounded sincere because it... sort of was. The best lies were those mixed with a bit of truth after all. Bodeir really did care about his son. Regrettably... his son really wasn’t enjoying the attention, “GO TO HELL DAD. I DON’T NEED YOU RULING MY LIFE!”

“Son, you nearly missed your boat ride. If I hadn’t come to help you out of the goodness of my heart,” Kat’s eye twitched but Bodeir continued, “I’m sure you would’ve been late and that’d be rather embarrassing for you, I’m sure. It’s ok, I don’t expect anything thanks for this. It is my duty as your father to make sure you’re on time, just like when you needed to attend lessons as a child. Ah the memories...”

“I WASN’T GOING TO BE ON TIME BECAUSE I WAS PLANNING NOT TO COME. WHY DO YOU THINK I WANT TO HANG OUT WITH TWO DEMONS YOU HIRED TO WATCH ME! I CAN LIVE MY OWN LIFE!” shouted Bodeir Jr.

“Is this about the fact they’re both women?” asked Bodeir ‘innocently’. His hair and clothes not moving at all despite the fact the ship was still increasing its speed as it rushed around the circle. “I already told you I didn’t know you were gay before. I’ll make sure to summon an Incubus next time, but can you put up with it? Just for a few days son? For me?”

“GO FUCK YOURSELF WITH A THE LARGEST, DUSTIEST ROCK YOU CAN FIND YOU COCK SUCKING OLD MAN!” shouted Bodeir Jr.

Bodeir sighed, “I thought we already established I’ve only ever loved your mother. Has the fact you repressed your own sexuality made it impossible for you to see that I’m not gay? Strange... I might have to take some drastic measures to correct that. Would an incubus orgy help you son?”

Bodeir Jr yelled something in response... but Kat couldn’t really tell you what. It sounded more like someone had given a bulldog with rabies a massive shot of adrenaline then kicked it then a person. No... that was rude. The bulldog in this scenario would’ve been much more eloquent.

“Son, use your words please. I know you’re a masochist, and probably a bottom too, but I don’t speak bottom, I need you to use proper words,” said Bodeir as he gave his son a small pat on the head.

Bodeir Jr just glared up at his father. Completely silent. Bodeir gave his son another round of pats, causing Bodeir Jr to growl, breaking the silence. Bodeir grinned at his son who glared off in the distance,

knowing he'd just been played. "Well son, it seems like you've calmed down, and the boat is leaving now so I have to get off. You've got one guard, and one escort. Both of them are smarter than you, better looking than you, and have better attitudes by far. Hopefully you learn something on this trip. I don't even care if you place last in the tournament as long as you learn ONE useful thing from the demons,"

"Why can't you just let me live my life Dad?" asked Bodeir Jr in a whisper.

Bodeir the elder paused. He'd been in the process of turning away and jumping off the spinning ship, but hearing his son ask such a question, in such a quiet voice, a spark of hope lit up. Perhaps his son was finally willing to listen? Bodeir turned to his son and sat down on the ground before pulling his son up and leaning him against the mast.

"Now son, I'm glad you asked. The thing is, I can't trust you anymore. I gave you years to make mistakes and learn from them. I gave you test after test, trying to show you bits and pieces of the real world... and you just haven't noticed anything. The reason I've become more overbearing in the last few months is because I gave you the chance to make mistakes, and learn from them..."

"But you haven't learned. You've made dozens of mistakes that I've barely managed to prevent from turning catastrophic. I'll give you your freedom when I can trust you not to get yourself killed. The problem right now, is if I gave you a bit of rope to climb a cliff. If I left you by yourself, you'd find a way to choke yourself with it. I know you want to get away from me. To live your own life. Well, you had that chance and you failed. Now I'm going to have to try beating the lessons into your head.

"I don't take any joy in this son... but know I do love you. Not only are you my son, but you're the most important thing left to me by my wife. I have tried to raise you well, giving you more and more freedom over the years. Letting you get a taste of leadership, letting you find love, and lose it... and I just can't anymore. Our world is dangerous son and I have yet to see any evidence to say you can handle it,"

Bodeir paused, waiting for a moment, "Also you've had a spy as one of your servants for a few decades now and I can only ask them to make so many mistakes before they're basically just shouting in your face they're a spy. I mean come on son, I gave you spy craft lessons myself, did none of them stick?"

Chapter 979 Bodeir Jr... is... well...

After the older Bodeir finished his rant there was nothing but the whipping wind to fill the silence. The ship was ready to leave from a technical aspect, with just a bit more speeding up to be done. The sail was strapped back. The oars were ready to be used again, but tucked into the ship. Creshe had returned and was standing nearby. Perhaps waiting for orders from Bodeir, or just to be present in case there was any questions.

Nothing seemed to be forthcoming though. Even as the wind started to go from a whistle to a whine and the boat started to creak, nothing was said. When the wobbling started Bodeir cast a saddened look down at his son before turning to Creshe and said, "It seems it is time to depart. I cannot hold you up any longer. Son, think on what I've said to you. While I have poked at a number of your insecurities, I will not be the only one to do so in the next week. I need you to be better than you are right now. I don't care if that takes you months, years, or decades... but you need to make an honest attempt. If not... I'll

either have to go from overbearing, to puppeteering you so much I might as well add strings to your limbs. That or disowning you, and casting you to the wind,”

Bodeir Jr cringed but didn't say anything. He just laid down on the ground, ignoring his father's presence. Bodeir sighed again. “I really don't want to do either of those things son, but my position makes it dangerous to do anything else. For me, and for you. I love you, and want you at your best... but I love you too much to let you die before me. If that means I have to start being heavy handed, I WILL,”

The last words seemed to slam down onto the deck with the force of a mountain. Kat's aura flared out and took the pressure easily, protecting herself, Lily, and Sue without too much trouble. Kat certainly felt the effort, but it the pressure wasn't directed at her and could be weathered much like a windy day. The sailors grimaced, all but a select few taking a knee and using the railings nearby as support.

Creshe soldiered through the pressure. She wasn't close enough to Kat to receive any assistance from the demon, but while Creshe didn't look comfortable, her clothes rippling in a non-existent wind. Bodeir Jr clearly got the worst of it. His face was being pressed into the ground and there was a faint trickle of blood leaking from his nose. As soon as said blood trail reached his mouth the pressure let up.

Bodeir gave one more nod to Creshe before walking to the edge and leaping off. As soon as he was gone Creshe whistled with her fingers and in that instant, the tracks changed and the boat was redirected onto the straightaway. Kat barely got a glimpse at the hanger before they were in the sky. They rocketed away from the ground, and the mountain the city was built on. When they cleared the first layer of clouds the sailors started to take out the oars again, setting them back onto automatic.

When the boat finally started to level out, the sail came down but the boat didn't slow at all. They sailed gracefully through the sky for about a minute... when some flying creatures came to intercept. “FIRE THE WARNING SHOTS!” shouted Creshe and a moment later a synchronised series of booms sounded out from the ship, scaring most of the creatures away. A few stayed close though... “Those within range FIRE AGAIN!” another round of booms.

Only a few of the creatures got hit, but most that did went down and the rest of them backed off. Apparently that was enough to make it clear the boat wasn't easy prey. Creshe looked over everyone here for a few moments. Kat and Lily were still watching Bodeir Jr who didn't seem like he was interested in getting up for the moment. Sue had shaken herself off and shuffled over to the railing to take a good look at the surrounding area.

Seeing that the demons were occupied, for now at least, and Bodeir Jr wasn't going anywhere... she just nodded and walked off. It was her job to help out... but not babysit anyone. With the ropes, Bodeir wasn't going to be doing anything stupid for the moment. Or at least, no so stupid that she'd need to address it. If he still didn't want to talk even after his old man was gone? Well that was no business of Creshe.

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Eventually Bodeir Jr seemed to give up on the whole not doing anything... thing. He once sat up against the mast again and started to try and free himself to minimal effect. “Well? Are you going to help me or not?” hissed Bodeir Jr.

Kat looked over at him with a raised eyebrow, “And why should I do that?”

"Aren't you supposed to be my Escort or something? Wouldn't freeing me allow you the chance to feel me up or something?" 'grumbled' Bodeir.

Kat looked down at Bodeir with a significantly colder gaze, not even noticing the little embers of demonic fire that danced around her, ready for the command. "Ok, first off. I'm not the Escort, I'm the guard. Second off... I'm thinking your much less likely to do something stupid if you're tied up. I'm rather tempted to leave you there,"

"Well I only need one guard. I could just order you to switch roles," said Bodeir with conviction that only a truly ignorant little shit could muster. Frost started to spread along the nearby planks of wood. If it wasn't a perfect circle and instead leaned a bit towards Bodeir Jr here... well... nobody was going to complain. Not even Bodeir if he knew what was good for him.

"Ok, first off, just because I'm a Succubus doesn't mean I have an interest in sex. Secondly, even if I did have some interest I have a girlfriend and she's much more intelligent, and better looking then you are. Finally, that is NOT how this works. We were hired, by your father, through an intermediary and nowhere amongst that chain was I ever told to listen to your orders. So no, you cannot just order me to take up Sue's role," stated Kat flatly.

I really hope Sue's not annoyed at me for this though. A quick glance over at Sue actually showed her making a thumbs up, though hidden from Bodeir's view. *Wait... she approves? I'm gonna need to ask about that later.*

"Whatever my dad's paying you I'll double it," said Bodeir Jr, once again, as if that was a perfectly reasonable thing to say.

"Ok... first off... it's really not about the money. Second off... where do you think you get the money from?" asked Kat.

"My allowance? Obviously?" stated Bodeir.

Kat gave a horrified glance at Lily. *Is... is he actually that stupid? Like... I think I pity Bodeir, the older one. A lot. This is... I mean... how is he even still alive if he's so dumb? I just... I don't understand?*

[I don't either Kat. I... I can barely comprehend the level of stupid you'd need to be to say something like that. I thought that his Dad was being pretty fair but... my god Bodeir the elder is a fucking saint for dealing with this shit. How does he function?]

I have no idea. "Right... pretty sure that even if that was going to cover it... you do realise you get that money from your dad right? He'd never let you pay me... with what is basically his own money... to override his contract with me," said Kat... slowly. Like she was talking to a five-year-old. Kat wasn't hopeful that it'd get through.

"But that's my money! I can do whatever I want with it!" retorted Bodeir Jr.

My God. This is what peak idiot looks like. How the fu...dge am I going to keep this kid alive? Does he even have enough braincells to make sure he doesn't just suffocate to death?

"Right... I'm not even going to bother explaining the major issues with that logic if you can't already see them. So... yeah not your escort I'm your guard and every single thing that comes out of your mouth

only further reinforces that belief. That and despite the fact I'm pretty sure I can fight your dad... I really don't want to. So... you're going to sit tight for however long those ropes keep you there," said Kat. Once again... very slowly. The slightly glazed look in Bodeir's eyes not signalling good things.

"But why not? I offered you money right?" whined Bodeir.

Kat pondered if she could justify kicking the 'kid' really hard in the face for some vaguely defined safety reason. The best she could think of would be that it'd hopefully stop him talking... but Kat wasn't all that hopeful.

Chapter 980 Old Man Hromdir

Kat and Lily walked away from Bodeir trying to free himself. He complained as they walked away... but it was just too sad to listen to. Kat was now wondering just how much effort she'd need to put into keeping the fool alive. Kat took up position beside Sue and sighed, "So... what are your thoughts?"

"The view is great but the mark is dumber than a bag of rocks. I can only hope that all the blood that should've been devoted to intelligence made it somewhere useful," responded Sue as she gazed out at the ocean of clouds. Only the largest groups of clouds stayed in view long, they were rushing past everything at a rather impressive speed. It let them all appreciate the fact that, while this was a wooden boat, it was a FAST wooden boat.

Kat just let Sue's comment wash over her. Honestly, Kat had expected something along those lines. "Yeah but... why did you seem so unbothered by the fact he wanted me to be his date? Isn't that... kind of insulting to you? I mean... no I don't think I want to say anything else. Just in case,"

Sue giggled, "Oh Kat. Remember, I like to keep my sex life interesting. It's my primary motivation. He clearly doesn't have the brain power to suggest anything unique for any night-time activities... but the fact that I need to work a bit to get into his pants is at least something to keep myself occupied. Though... it would be a big disappointment if he was actually gay,"

"I'M NOT GAY!" shouted Bodeir.

Kat and Sue turned to look at him with a raised eyebrow. He'd been ranting for a bit now... but apparently he was really sensitive about his sexuality. "Bodeir, just... laugh it off in the future. People keep saying it because you keep giving them ammunition. If you laughed instead you'd be signalling that you found the idea so hilarious they'll put it out of their mind,"

Bodeir continued to grumbled, not really listening to Kat's well meaning advice, all "Not listening to you after denying my reasonable request" and "why should I listen to my father's pet demon" and a few other unflattering things Kat was trying not to think about lest she punch the idiot.

Letting out a sigh, Kat turned back to Sue. "Right... I guess I can understand the idea for a challenge but like..." Kat looked over at Bodeir again, "Is it really worth it? Like... at all?"

Sue shrugged, "It's not so much the destination but the journey in this case Kat. I'm not sure I've ever had to seduce someone so dumb AND stubborn. One or the other? Yup. Both... don't think so. Plus, I was pleasantly surprised with the last idiot I seduced. He didn't really need to think in bed. All instincts. Good instincts too. I was so impressed with him I cooked him something as a gift. It wasn't... great but I did try!"

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"How is your cooking?" asked Kat.

"Eh... it's not horrible but it's nothing fancy either. I know a few recipes and mostly just stick to those. Cobbler, meat loaf, salad I guess? But that's more ingredient prep, I've got no idea what it takes to make a good salad. I just throw in the ingredients my Mum usually uses... or whatever I have on hand and deal with the results. Honestly, I think it's all in the dressing but that tends to be the least available ingredient," answered Sue.

"That's... fair..." said Kat with a nod of understanding, "I didn't get to cook too much but my knew strength and muscle control means that I can be pretty fancy with it when I want to. That being said... for proper meals? I'm more inclined to cook for large groups. Growing up in the orphanage meant there was no such thing as wasted leftovers so the more food you could make at one time the better,"

"Yeah I can't understand that. I've only ever cooked for myself, my Mum and Dad, a few lovers and that's it. Anytime it was my turn to supply food for my slutty 'friends' meetings I'd just take everyone somewhere to eat out or get my Mum to help. A bit lazy perhaps... but as I said I'm not a fantastic cook," continued Sue.

Kat and Sue watched the clouds pass for a little while before the door opened and a servant stepped out with a bowl of water, and three cups of tea. The servant first stopped over at Kat and Sue, clearly offering the tea. Kat grabbed one to try and Sue did the same... then the servant bent down and handed the third cup of tea to Lily before walking over to Bodeir and dropping the bowl of water just out of reach and walking away. "What. The. Fuck," said Kat in shock.

"I... no I have no idea, what the fuck?" mirrored Sue. "I... if they thought Lily was a person they'd just bring tea for everyone right? Or... no well... but she got tea? Is it good tea? Is it cat edible tea?"

"It tastes nice," said 'Lily' "So I'm going to say yes it is good tea?"

Sue just stared down at Lily happily lapping and her tea, and then over at Bodeir who just glared at the bowl. He wasn't thirsty yet... but everyone was guessing he would be thirsty long before he got free of the rope. "I... are his servants normally this mean to him?"

"Nope," Kat, Lily and Sue, all jumped in sync with each other. Kat had moved to protect Lily and Sue with her fans out. Sue had summoned up her hammer, and Lily jumped into Kat's sleeve. The servant who just spoke had been the same one that delivered the drinks earlier. But... *didn't I see this guy leave through the door to the lower decks?*

"How did you get back here?" asked Sue.

It's really not that hard. There are plenty of windows in the side of the ship, and quite a few cannon emplacements. It's not hard to sneak out of one, and it's a then a simple matter of jumping back onto the deck," said the servant.

"Right... um... are you that spy Bodeir was meant to find?" asked Kat.

The man shook his head. He was the oldest looking mountain elf Kat had seen. His skin no longer brown but grey instead, though his hair still looked rather luscious. His skin actually seemed to have tightened

up over time, instead of getting droopy like a human. “No. My name is Hromdir and I was the personal servant of Patriarch Bodeir until he tasked me with watching over his son to the best of my abilities. I treat him much like my grandson, and as an infertile old man, I’m happy with that. Well... I share similar thoughts to Bodeir the elder in regards to his attitude... but still, he’s like a grandson to me... so...” Hromdir shrugged in a ‘what can you do’ sort of way.

“Yeah but... isn’t it a bit cruel to give him a pet bowl for water?” asked Kat.

“Eh, the lesson wouldn’t really stick otherwise. Servants can still be petty, and Bodeir the elder doesn’t really know how to punish his son properly. One thing the younger Bodeir managed to inherit is stubbornness. He has rather high pride and is actually quite accomplished as a cultivator despite his... lacking mental aspects. If he was just a bit more intelligent he’d be far and away the best cultivator of his generation...

“Alas, his extreme talent can only make up for so much of his mental deficiencies. Mountain elves can’t begin cultivating till they least fifty, and even then it is somewhat risky till they approach 100. The fact that Bodeir Jr can cultivate well is a showcase of great talent... and the fact he’s an idiot means that in a few decades he’ll fall behind. Sadly,” said Hromdir.

“Right... but what’s with the bowl?” asked Kat again.

“Ah, well, dehydration is a great humbling tool. Bodeir needs to either escape his father’s rope, or accept my mercy in offering him water by drinking from a pet bowl, as you said. He won’t just spill it to reduce the temptation, water is much too precious a resource to us as a people, it is nearly ingrained in our bodies, and certainly ingrained in our culture. That means he must stare at it. Constantly nearby, constantly tempting. His pride, or his thirst. I know which will break,” said Hromdir confidently.

“Ok... so is this... a lesson or something?” asked Kat.

“Indeed. He neglected to inform the servants about this trip, for obvious reasons. He ordered us to prepare different lodgings despite having one prepared for him, with food and everything. He defied his father’s orders, despite still being under his father’s command. These all show signs of a weak master, and as Bodeir says... Bodeir needs to learn. His freedom has come to an end... and if I can help get those lessons to sink in... well... I can discipline an unruly grandchild,” explained Hromdir.