

DEMONS 21

Chapter 21: Your Princess is in This Castle

"Demon, I have summoned you for an important mission that cannot fail. I need you, to kidnap the princess" said the fox lady.

Ok, this is a very different request to the old king. Is there a no option?"Is there the option to refuse? I'm really not interested in kidnapping anybody" said Kat raising her tail behind her back slightly.

"Curious, for a Succubus to answer my summoning, it seems you are more interesting than I thought" said the fox

"What do you mean by that fox lady?" said Kat. The woman's eyes went wide at the question before licking her lips slightly.

"It seems, you don't quite understand how summoning a demon works, rather amusing if I might say so myself" said the fox

"Ok, well while your amusing yourself could you at least tell me your name so that I can stop referring to you as fox lady in my head?" asked Kat. The fox started laughing at this. Her icy confident and aloof stare breaking into a smile.

"Ok, ok, you win. My name is Chiharu, and I must say I'm rather pleased at the demon I've summoned this time, seems like my conditions all worked." Said Chiharu.

"Anyway I can assure you that kidnapping the princess won't be as difficult or inconvenient as you might imagine. That's because I'm her mother" said Chiharu. *Well that's a bombshell, that means she's the Queen?*

"Wait so that makes you the Queen, right? Then why do you need me to kidnap the princess, she's your daughter can't you just, I dunno ask her politely?" said Kat

"Well, this is actually her plan. Things are rather complicated you see. A nearby nation is trying to pressure me into handing over my firstborn daughter for marriage. That is the kingdom ruled by the beast people, and they've been trying to encroach on our land for some time. Unlike us, they pass the throne down to the strongest warrior after the old King dies, and then have a strategy competition for the royal advisor.

The problem is this time around the winners were twin brothers and one of them set their sights on my daughter. I'm young, despite my five tails, I'm of more comparable age with the beast twins actually, and because of my short reign I don't yet fully command the respect of my kingdom. I took over from my mother a short twenty years ago, though in actuality I was running the kingdom for a decade before that. Sorry, I'm rambling a little. The crux of the issue is that they want my daughter otherwise it's likely war and I don't have a strong enough presence to delay it by myself. That is why you demon who must remain nameless shall 'kidnap' my daughter" said Chiharu.

"The beast kingdom has access to a potent truth spell, and it can even effect someone of my power. Thus, I need someone who isn't one of my retainers, I don't know the name of, and has no connection to the kingdom that I can trust to look after my daughter. This way I can quite easily fool the truth spell and

my daughter won't be forced to marry some pompous fool who thinks threats of war are the way to a ladies heart" said Chiharu

"Ah, yeah I see, I'm interested in helping you with that, it's just that I'm not sure if I'm strong enough to help you. I don't really have any major powers to call upon, are you sure that it's safe to go escape with her?" asked Kat

"Honestly it should be fine, my daughter, Shizuka, is more than capable of sneaking out on her own, however I've kept that fact well hidden but she will still need an accomplice for a few things, especially because with some minor application of tracking magic it could be deduced that she left on her own if you're not with her and that would cause all sorts of problems" said Chiharu

"Don't we want to avoid being tracked though? I thought the idea was to escape from the beast king's forces, if they can track us how will we escape for a time?" asked Kat

"Shizuka can easily hide both of your tracks, I just need to provide evidence of a minor struggle and a perpetrator. Your identity as a demon will make a number of people create false assumptions about what's going on just because of your race. Most are rather distrustful of demons though I tend to find that it's because fools summon the wrong ones" said Chiharu

"So, is that enough details for you?" asked Chiharu

"Yes, I am willing to help you" said Kat

"In that case, I, Chiharu, Maemari task the demon before me to protect my daughter and aid her in her flight from the castle until such time Shizuka determines herself to be safe and dismisses you, do you accept" said Chiharu.

"I accept" said Kat, careful not to mention her and ruin Chiharu's plan. Ethereal chains rose up to great the pair but instead of flaming they were coated in ice. These frozen chains rapidly encircled both of them constricting around their entire figure before vanishing from sight.

"Thank you for accepting, I'd love to stay and speak with you more but I have to get back before anyone notices that I've been gone. Once you leave this room just make one left, two rights, another left, a right, two lefts then continue forward until you find a dead end and push the only stone with nothing carved into it" said Chiharu before swiftly exiting the room and turning right.

Well that wasn't confusing at all. Hopefully I got all the directions.

Luckily for Kat, she had indeed memorised the sequence of turns correctly from The Queen and swiftly found herself standing in front of a dead end with symbols covering the surface. There was just one problem, the tile she was looking for, the one without a symbol was just barely out of reach of her tail and arms.

This wasn't how this was supposed to go. How did Chiharu even expect me to press this damned button. She's shorter than I am so surely, she'd recognise that this is somewhat difficult

Kat scanned the corridor for something that would allow her to reach the blank square. Kat examined the wall lazily, trying to figure out any possible answers. She tried lifting herself by her tail but that was exceedingly awkward. Despite it's increased strength compared to the rest of her body it didn't provide

any kind of purchase and was quite smooth preventing her from straightening her tail out underneath her to provide more height. Kat was about ready to give up when she noticed that a particular brick at eye level had some words on it. When she read it Kat nearly died of embarrassment because in big bold letters, was the word 'nothing' inscribed in stone.

*Dammit, is this a joke at my expense? Or is this supposed to trick people who are impatient. No that doesn't make any sense either. *

Sighing Kat pressed on the tile. It clicked into place and the wall directly to her left opened up to reveal a conservatively but stunningly decorated bedroom. The walls all seemed to be made out of smooth black marble, with the occasional blue flower like crystals that jutted out from the wall and seemed to emit a small amount of light. The bed was a simple frame carved out of wood with a plain white mattress and sheet combination. There was a desk on the closer edge of the room to Kat and at the further side she saw what was likely Shizuka meditating on a slightly raised platform to separate it from the rest of the room. Shizuka was the splitting image of her mother in almost all ways, the exception was that she only had three tails and that she had a faint three lined scar running across her left cheek. Additionally, instead of the elaborate outfit of her mother she was wearing a simple white robe likely for training. Surrounding the young girl was several large chunks of ice which orbited her slowly until stopping completely and vanishing.

Chapter 22: So, you're here to kidnap me

"Greetings demon, I my name, is Shizuka. I assume my mother has filled you in on at least some of the details" said Shizuka as she stood up.

"I guess? I was told to kidnap you, but that it was actually your plan. I'm Kat by the way" said Kat

"Well Kat, I plan to escape the castle and head for my grandmother's hideaway in some mountains. Most people think she's dead but it's actually that she's a battle junkie who got sick of running the kingdom and faked her death to get out of it. She pretended to be weak for that first decade to make sure my mother could run things in her absence and then headed off to the wilderness to fight things again" said Shizuka

"Do you have any talents that can ease our escape?"

"Not really, I seem to have a calming aura I can project over people but it's not that strong" said Kat

"Hmm, a calming aura you say, please hit me with it. Don't hold back too much but no need for full power" said Shizuka

Kat centred herself and looked at Shizuka before allowing a wave of calm to wash out from her. Much to Kat's surprise though Shizuka collapsed like a puppet with her strings cut and Kat immediately tried to retract her aura before running to kneel next to the girl

"Hey are you alright, what happened, why did you collapse like that, my aura shouldn't be that strong" said Kat. Shizuka, started to mumble something before changing tactics and summoning a large ice cube she promptly shattered on her own head.

"There, much better. That calming aura is nothing to scoff at, I had all my defences down but still, if that's your version of not that strong I'm sure you'll be fine if pressed" said Shizuka

"No see, this isn't what I was expecting, last time I used that on someone it just calmed them down, helped them think clearly and relax. It didn't completely drop them" said Kat

"Hmm, strange. While certainly if I had my guard up it's a simple attack to deflect that wouldn't be without effort. Nonetheless, I have no complaints if you are stronger than you think, that will only aid in our efforts" said Shizuka.

"Well, with that established, I suppose I should go over the plan to actually sneak out of the castle. The plan is to wait for nightfall and the exit using the secret tunnels you arrived in my room using. Following those we can leave the castle and end up in the cities commercial district.

Now depending on how quickly we manage to get through the tunnels will decide our next move, if my disappearance has already been noticed I have a backup plan, but if not, we will simply exit the city as if nothing's wrong. I'll have a disguise on at the time and the guards rarely stop foot traffic from leaving the city.

From there we will walk to the nearest town and try to catch a carriage from there further into the country. I plan to disguise myself as a much older wizard, and you obviously will be my demonic servant. I don't know that much about demon summoning but most people will be too scared to ask, and besides, while demonic summoning isn't illegal it is highly discouraged, and you need a license for it. I already had a fake made some time ago for this so it won't be a problem." Said Shizuka

"Won't people be able to find us quite easily if they are looking for a Kitsune and her traveling demon. We'd fit the bill perfectly" said Kat

"Ah, but they are looking for a demon and a captive, with me calling the shots it won't occur to them that I'm the supposed kidnapped princess. Besides my mother has been using her illusion magic to disguise the fact that I have three tails for some time now, and while it's quite easy to hide a tail of a Kitsune it's nearly impossible to fake the aura change you undergo each time you gain an additional tail. It should divert suspicion possibly even better than the disguise" said Shizuka

"Ok well I trust your judgement, it seems like you have this planned out, when do we leave" said Kat

"Well, as I said we leave at nightfall, it's just after lunch you know?" said Shizuka. Kat's eyes went wide at this.

Shit, I'm going to be here longer than I thought. Though it sounds like I was sticking around for the whole journey anyway I'm going to be here for at least a few hours without getting back. What am I going to do... wait system can I contact the others?

USER KAT MAY PROJECT A MESSAGE USING D.E.M.O.N.S AT POINT OF SUMMONING VISIBLE ONLY TO SELECTED INDIVIDUALS IF USER KAT HAS INTERREACTED WITH THEM PRIOR TO SUMMONING.

Ok, um can you write "Kidnapping a Princess on her mothers' orders I'll be back as soon as I can, just stall if I'm not back yet"

USER KAT'S MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED

Ok that's one problem sorted now I think I'll really need a place to sleep. "Hey Shizuka is there anyway I can get some sleep before we leave? I was summoned just past midnight in my world" said Kat

"Of course, just one moment" said Shizuka as she tapped on a few crystal flowers on the walls. A soft hissing and a piece of the wall slid away to reveal a bed.

"Sorry it's a bit cramped but you can sleep here without anyone noticing you" said Shizuka

"Shizuka why do you have a secret bed in your room" said Kat

"Well, my Great Great Grandfather was actually responsible for building the whole castle and a good chunk of the surrounding town. To this day some thing he is the best earth mage to ever have lived. It was a gift to my Great Great Grandmother who said that the person who could provide the most impressive proposal gift would win her hand, Grandfather decided that he wanted to build her the greatest palace that had every been built and so he cleared the land for it, though some reports say that instead he chose a mountain and carved away the excess but our records indicate the castle was built from scratch and not carved.

Anyway the point is it has countless hidden areas around even my family doesn't know all of the little secrets, though I think we know the important ones that effect the safety of the castle like the entrances and exits but you never know" said Shizuka.

"Ok I think I understand, just um wake me up a bit before we need to go. I've always pretty well on low sleep" said Kat as she climbed into the cubby hole and pulled up the blankets

Though now that I think about it, despite always being up Friday nights now I haven't really felt that tired. Is one of my demon powers that I need less sleep?

"Have a nice rest Kat, and be prepared for tonight" said Shizuka as she closed the compartment

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Meanwhile, back on Earth, Saturday 9:00 am

Gramps, Sylvie, Vivian and a witness all stand in Gramps' office with a stack of papers in front of them. No one made a sound. All was quiet as they stared at each other waiting to make the first move. Gramps was behind his desk, working through a second stack of papers, not willing to rush the interaction. Vivian had taken up residence in one of the armchairs off to the side with Sylvie in her lap. Sylvie was enjoying snuggling against Vivian and rested patiently. The 'witness' for the signing was a nondescript man with a standard business suit and tie that appeared to be sleeping in the opposing corner to Sylvie and Vivian. Minutes past, as none of them wanted to make the first move.

After thirty minutes Gramps made the first move "Vivian, surely you must be busy, we can't wait around forever and get in the way of your work, would you happen to know when Kat is getting here"

"Actually I took the next two weeks off to so that I could spend time with Sylvie and Kat, I can stay here all day. I don't mind waiting" said Vivian

"Well, we can't hold up our witness, I'm sure he has very important work to do" said Gramps. His point however, was undercut by a soft snoring coming from that same man.

"I dunno Gramps, he seems to be enjoying himself, and I'm perfectly comfortable here" said Vivian.

Time continued to pass. Gramps filled out forms, and Vivian pulled out a board game from her handbag to play with Sylvie. Hours passed like this, until the time began to inch closer to mid-day.

"Well, I need to start getting lunch ready for the other kids, do either of you happen to know where Kat is. Anything you want to mention at all" said Gramps suspiciously.

Sylvie looked up, and gazed slightly at the witness in the corner still snoring away from their game to answer first "Why would Kat share that sort of secret with me, I'm just a nine-year-old after all, and Kat's secrets have the chance to completely rewrite world history how should I know?" said Sylvie.

Gramps sighed "Vivian, how about you"

"Why would Kat share that sort of secret with me, I'm just a twenty nine-year-old after all, and Kat's secrets have the chance to completely rewrite science and universal laws, why would I be trusted with something like that?"

Gramps just shook his head. Setting his work papers to the side he stood up and made his way to the door "Well, I guess we can just do this tomorrow then"

Chapter 23: Destruction of private property is a only a Minor concern

Kat slowly awoke to a pitch-black room and was startled, not from the lack of light, but because she could still see. *It seems like my eyes had more upgrades in them than I thought.* Trying to move Kat found her body not responding, her muscles silent and unmoving despite her commands otherwise.

Kat waited, and started to feel something strange, centred halfway up her back ripples started to exude from that point but instead of the calming sensation previous this time it seemed to worm through her muscles, bending and twisting them out of shape as that pressure continued to build in her back. Minutes past and the twisting got more frequent, growing increasingly uncomfortable and unnerving yet not causing Kat any pain in the slightest. Finally the pulsing stopped, but the pressure in her back continued to build, turning herself over so that she was now on her side Kat still felt something was wrong. Wrapping on the back panel of her hiding space it took only a moment for Shizuka to open it.

"Is everything alright? Night has only just started to fall you still have..." Shizuka trailed off when she saw the distorted look on Kat's face, quickly taking a step back to give her more room Kat pushed herself, desperately moving her twisted muscles as she fell onto the floor. Pushing herself slightly further away from the wall. Everything was still for a moment

"Kat, what's going on?" asked Shizuka. Just as Kat was about to answer, a great ripping and tearing sound occurred as from Kat's back emerged two huge leathery wings before Kat's body shuddered and she lay completely flat wings and all against the ground.

"What in Everfrost's name was that" asked Shizuka

"Well, if I had to guess, this is the next stage of my awakening" said Kat

"Yes but what even happened to you. Your face was twisted in pain and you have wings?" said Shizuka

"Oh that wasn't pain. Whatever it was, was extremely weird and uncomfortable, and I hope to never experience it again, but it wasn't pain. As for the wings, well I'm not a fully fledged demon yet, I am still undergoing an awakening which is meant to slowly increase my powers, I thought they happened after I

returned from my summoning once a week but clearly, I was mistaken. This time it's wings and maybe muscles? It felt like they were changing as well but hard to tell on account of not being able to move right now" said Kat *noveLN*ext.cOmm

"Will this impede our mission at all? This plan took a lot of preparation on my behalf and we can afford to delay it for a day if we must. Ideally I want the highest chance to succeed and for that the sooner we leave the better because the beast twins aren't here yet, but they are supposed to arrive within the week" said Shizuka

"Well that depends on a few things. Firstly how long it takes for me to move again, and secondly if gaining wings has messed with me in any way. My tail was a bit annoying but that was only because I wasn't using it properly because I had to hide it, my skin changing gave me no problems whatsoever and my eyes were the worst because I don't have a blind spot anymore and my brain freaked out" said Kat

"So, make a guess, we have a bit of time before it would be best to leave. I've already made an appearance for dinner but normally I see my mother before sleeping. Do I need to be prepared to leave when I return" said Shizuka

"I think, emphasis on think, I'll be fine. It's very likely that the wings will be like my tail. Centre of balance will be completely thrown off but somehow that will already be compensated for. As long as I don't need to hide my wings somehow it should be fine" said Kat

"Right, well the plan is for you to be my contracted demon, in fact the wings will probably help with that, your tail is easy to miss but I'm not sure if you've noticed, your wings are massive" said Shizuka

"Oh stop that, you're making me blush" said Kat

"I am, in what way? Why?" asked Shizuka

"Dunno, just seemed the right thing to say" said Kat

"Well, while you're having fun, I'm going to quickly say goodnight to my mother. I expect you to be ready to leave when I return or else we will delay the departure by at least a day understand" said Shizuka

"Of course" said Kat. Shizuka nodded and strode purposefully towards her door before exiting the room and leaving Kat to enjoy the scenic view of the floorboards her face had decided was a comfortable spot to rest. It took Kat five minutes for the horrible twisting feeling to leave her muscles and allow her to begin attempting to stand up. As soon as she had the thought Kat instantly shifted into a crouching position with her wings flared and tail poised over her shoulder. *How did I do that? I don't even remember how I stood up.*

Attempting to straighten out Kat once again found herself confused because as soon as she began to right herself, she found that she had already reached the position. *Ok, this is weird, why does it feel like I'm skipping through time?* Kat slowly rotated her hand in front of her face and found it did as asked, a slow rotation putting her hand on full display. Ok, so maybe time isn't messed up, what is going on then. This time trying to take a couple steps towards Shizuka's bed Kat was amazed to find herself beside it in only a few moments. *Ok this is weird; I seem to be a bit faster but not enough to account for how quickly I was able to change position. What is going on? *

Kat did some more tests, trying for flexibility this time Kat found it was now an extremely simple task to touch her toes... and continue long past that. Bending over backwards seemed to be similarly smooth until her wings got in the way blocking her progress. *Right so I'm super flexible now* Kat tried to switch between a number of poses as fast as possible and found surprising results. Much faster than she could have thought possible her form changed and shifted rapidly barely a instant between increasingly complex forms. *Ok so it seems that my body can switch between stances extremely quickly. I was still unfocused before so it was hard to tell, but it seems like I can't move that much faster than before. Maybe-* Kat's train of thought was interrupted by a small giggle.

Turning on a dime Kat found herself face to face with Shizuka who stood with a calm look on her face and no trace of the laughter that likely left her mouth but a moment ago. "I see that you are able to control your movements now Kat. Are you ready to move on" said Shizuka.

Two can play at that game Shizuka. Kat switched from a position of mild surprise to one of serene calm with her hands held within her sleeves before she bowed towards Shizuka.

"I'm ready to leave whenever you require Shizuka, I have completely recovered and have been waiting for you"

"Of course, just one thing left to do before we leave then" said Shizuka as she started gathering ice in front of her. Slowly building in size a light began to shine within the chunks until it shattered sending pieces of ice flying around the room bearing itself in the walls, the furniture and any other exposed surface available. Kat tried desperately to continue appearing calm and aloof in this situation but her wide eyes full of shock betrayed her efforts."Quickly, we must leave through the secret passage, the room is soundproofed but my spell may have damaged the enchantments somewhat. Let's leave quickly" said Shizuka as she pushed on of the flower petals on her walls to reveal a hidden passageway before she took off running at a light jog.

Chapter 24: Mental Breakdowns don't really help anyone

Kat quickly followed after managing to catch up without much issue."So do you know your way through these tunnels Shizuka?" asked Kat

"Sort of, these tunnels have a special enchantment in them that confuses those who are not of my bloodline and aids those who are. I do roughly remember the correct direction but I am relying mostly on the enchantments guiding hand" said Shizuka

"Wait if that's the case how did I managed to navigate the tunnel before when I was going to your room" said Kat

"The enchantment doesn't work on demons, it neither helps nor hinders because when the original was made my grandfather had no blood on hand to calibrate the formation. Though from what I know of demons most of you are distinct enough that we'd need a host of samples and it just wasn't feasible at the time, my many greats grandfather was no demon summoner, that's a path my mother chartered mostly by herself" said Shizuka

"I see, so, do you know how long we will be running through these tunnels? Not that I mind really but I doubt either of us can run forever" said Kat

"Indeed, sadly this is a rather long series of tunnels, it will take us at least six hours to navigate. I suspect there is a more efficient route, but the aiding enchantments aren't perfect, they will get you to your destination, just not in the fastest way possible most of the time and I'm afraid they are simply too useful for it to be worth preparing an additional path through this labyrinth" said Shizuka

"Ok, do you plan on taking any breaks along the way? Are there good resting spots?" asked Kat

"No not really, the tunnels weren't designed for casual use. The shorter routes don't need them, and the longer ones are intended for when we really need to get away from something like now. We can stop if you feel tired but with my three tailed physique six hours should be more than manageable if I burn some mana to empower them along the way" said Shizuka

"Ok" replied Kat

And so the two marched on, through an endless maze of bricked walls and lightless tunnels. Kat started to really get into the pace of things and use the chance to zone out and focus on her body.

*This is so strange, I haven't really gotten to use my wings yet but they already feel very comfortable to have around, and it seems that I was right, having them folded against my back doesn't screw my balance because it seems to be a normal way to store them. I do feel the urge to stretch them out occasionally but it's mostly fine. It also seems like my muscles are a lot more efficient then before I'm not sure if my top speed is actually much better outside of my posing shenanigans but endurance wise, they are much improved, we've been running for at least a few hours. *

It was at that moment Kat noticed the walls had changed, the walls were now completely smooth, and looked more naturally formed then the walls that came before them. This prompted Kat to remember that it had also been some time since the last turn or intersection."Hey Shizuka, how good is your night vision" asked Kat

"Honestly rather poor unless I dump excessive amounts of mana into it" replied Shizuka

"Well, the walls are smooth now, are we going the right way?" asked Kat.

At this Shizuka immediately halted her advance and Kat found it shockingly easy to stop in place behind her with a bit of help from her wings. Shizuka slowly walked over to the wall and begun to feel the smooth stone. Shizuka began to tremble slightly as her hands covered more and more of the wall before she raised on up creating an ice cube with a small light inside. Shizuka stared at the wall with disguised panic, that Kat didn't miss with her perfect dark vision.

"We might have a problem" said Shizuka

"Please elaborate, what might that problem be?" said Kat

"Well, the walls shouldn't be like this, in fact I didn't even know the tunnels had smooth walls in any section let alone on the route we were supposed to be on" said Shizuka

"So what does that actually mean Shizuka, I'm just following you" said Kat.

Trembling slightly Shizuka replied "It means one of three things, I think, and I sincerely hope none of them are true"

"Well, spit it out Shizuka, I'm not going to bite your head off for a mistake" said Kat

"Well, it's not quite that. At least one of these scenarios is completely unacceptable to me, but I'm forced to consider nonetheless" said Shizuka

"Stop dancing around the issue. We can deal with them whatever they are" said Kat

"Easy for you to say, you don't even know what the problems are, how can you say that" said Shizuka.

Kat remained extremely calm. *Do I need to use my calm aura on her, she's clearly freaking out a lot here and we need to get moving at some point. We can't just stay in the tunnels. I'll tell her first.*

"Shizuka I'm going to project my aura onto you, you need to calm down"

"No, I'm fine I don't-" Shizuka was interrupted by the calming presence that washed over her. Turning her back to the wall she slid down landing softly on her backside.

"I did need that. I'm sorry Kat, that was very unqueenly behaviour from me. The possibility, the fear of those options was a bit too much. So I suppose I should explain. The first option is that your presence somehow messes with the enchantment. It can't figure out if you're a friend or foe and so it's trying to lead us in a roundabout way so that I can lose you somehow. Honestly, I doubt that's the case, but it's the one I most want to believe.

"Secondly, the enchantments could be breaking, they have come somewhat unravelled and don't work correctly anymore leading us astray to be lost forever in these tunnels. And finally, that I am not my mother's daughter. Last time I tested the route she came with me, and the caves clearly recognised her, she always knew where to go but I only ever had a vague sense of direction and maybe, maybe they think I'm the intruder" said Shizuka

"Shizuka that third possibility might be the single dumbest thing I've ever heard" said Kat "What would you know, my mother is a wonderful Queen and despite my best efforts I seem only to have talent in magic, the affairs of state constantly escape me, I'm forever walking in my mother's shadow" said Shizuka rambling away

"Shizuka, have you ever looked in the mirror? I'm not sure what you think, but I have never seen a mother daughter pair that share their looks so completely. Plus your mother isn't an idiot, why would she let you use these tunnels if she knew you weren't her daughter. This is nonsense." said Kat increasing the power of her calming aura slightly.

Shizuka started cackling against the wall, tears leaking from her eyes. "Can it really be that simple Kat, I always feel so different from her, and I've never met my father... but what do you mean we look similar?" said Shizuka. Kat just looked at Shizuka like she really had gone crazy.

"Have you seen yourself in a mirror? You have the same hair, the same face, same build. So much of you is the same it's easier to comment on what's different the only thing distinguishing you from your mother is age and that scar you have, on your left cheek"

"What are you talking about Kat, I have red hair, and certainly no scar" said Shizuka

Kat walked slowly towards Shizuka as she sat on the ground, reaching out towards her face she traced the lines of Shizuka's scar "It's right here, what are you talking about" said Kat. It was at that moment

Shizuka screamed. Kat leapt away from the girl and watched as she started to glow. Shizuka had her hand shakily reaching up to her face as the light got brighter and brighter before it traced the path of Kat's fingers.

"I ha, have a scar..." said Shizuka haltingly before she snapped her head around to Kat and whispered softly "I remember" before promptly collapsing to the side falling limp and unconscious.

Ok Shizuka when you wake up I have some serious questions for you. Thought Kat as she lifted Shizuka over her shoulder. *Hmm, this is rather difficult with her tails and my wings.*

Moving Shizuka to the front and into a princess carry and resumed walking straight ahead. *I don't want to be trapped in these damn tunnels any longer than I have to be. Haven't even run into anyone else and already weird shit is starting to happen.* Sighing Kat continued on into the darkness, wondering how Shizuka could possibly have missed the family resemblance or what she meant about red hair.

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Meanwhile, back on Earth, Sunday 9:00 am day 2 of Kat's disappearance

The same individuals were present. Gramps scanned the room over stacks of papers that seemed to double since yesterday while the witness in his suit and tie sat in the corner now covered in a blanket with a spiral design on it. It seemed to lull the onlooking into a calm state of mind and help them relax. Sylvie and Vivian were sitting opposite a chess board readying the pieces for their first match.

noveLNext.cOmm

Two hours past, Vivian was in check and things were looking bleak when their game was interrupted by Gramps voice "So, is there any news regarding Kat's whereabouts" "Actually there is, turns out her aunts cousins third daughters stepmothers niece's childhood friend is from a long lost line of professional yodellers and Kat happens to be particularly well suited to the profession. As such she was dragged off into the mountains to complete a training course without much say in the matter. Oh and there should be no cell reception because they are so far away from everything" said Vivian"Right, well... if there was no cell phone reception how did Kat get this message to you? You informed me that you had no idea where Kat was yesterday" said Gramps"Her message was delivered by carrier pigeon" said Sylvie. Gramps just shrugged and went back to his paperwork as the witness continued snoring."Checkmate" said Sylvie.

Chapter 25: The Dead(?) Twin

Kat jogged forward with Shizuka in her arms hardly noticing the increased weight when after about 30 minutes of running a coppery red started to bleed into Shizuka's fur. *Um, is this a good thing? Shizuka seemed to think she had red hair, but she was also concerned she looked nothing like her mother... Is this an improvement or not?*" Kat sighed as she jogged.

Honestly when I promised to protect Shizuka I didn't think I'd need to protect her from herself. Or maybe I'm the one going crazy... I wonder how the contract factors into that, like if someone tries to compel me to hurt her. No matter just keep running Kat, you can get your answers once she wakes up.

And so Kat continued her jogging unaware of the passage of time until her passenger stirred in her hands. Carefully placing her off to the side Kat watched as Shizuka slowly woke herself up when suddenly Shizuka's eyes snapped open and she stood up.

"Finally, I'm no longer trapped in her head" shouted Shizuka? with her hands on her hips staring at the ceiling.

"Um, what are you talking about?" asked Kat. Shizuka?'s eyes flashed to Kat before she let out a long sigh.

"It's complicated Kat, really complicated" said Shizuka?

"Soo, are you the same person or not? And am I supposed to be protecting you or is this a problem" said Kat somewhat confused

"Well, it's a bit of a long story, I am Shizuka and she is Shizuka but we are not the same person, or maybe we are? I'm not sure anymore, this wasn't supposed to happen, and it really screwed with her head. Hmmm, ok for simplicity let's call the other one Major and myself Minor, that sounds fun and will help you understand things as I explain them" said Minor

Kat simply watched Minor expectantly.

"Right, right, further explanation. Ok so I died, or maybe she did? Hmm let's start from the beginning. Originally there were two of us, twins, mum had two daughters Shizuru and Haruka. I was one of the two, um I think I was Haruka, I'm not quite sure it's hard to explain.

"Anyway that's not the point. There were two of us until we were attacked, assassins were sent to the palace with orders to kill my sister and me. At the time we shared a room, so they only had one place to sneak into. I'm not quite sure how they snuck in even to this day but clearly something went wrong and my grandmother burst into the room before they could finish us off, so they just used their mana to combust themselves on the spot. The explosion knocked me, or Haruka out and pretty much killed Shizuru" said Minor *noveLN*ext.c0mm

"Right, but that doesn't explain" Kat gestured vaguely in Minor's direction "this whole thing"

Laughing Minor continued "Right, so well, sorry I get a bit scatterbrained, it's really hard to hold my thoughts together now that they are so much more free. Sidetracking right never mind. So my Grandmother was already there and she quickly picked us both up and rushed us somewhere deep in the castle and began to set up a strange formation. I woke up, or Haruka did, still complicated, and I mean I am getting there, it's just... right so Haruka woke up and Grandmother explained that she could save us, one of us, and I, I think, decided to save my sister. It was explained that everything that I was would be used in the formula to heal Shizuru's body and soul and that I'd die, but the choice had to be made willing or we'd both die instead"

"Anyway something went wrong, Major, or Shizuru, maybe I think... woke up but she knew something was wrong, she could feel Haruka dying and decided to try and keep me around. Well.... That didn't work quite as well as one might hope, when Shizuru decided to hang on to both of us, we sort of combined a bit but we also split? It's really hard to understand Kat. Anyway, Major seemed to get the biggest parts of both our personalities, sadly I was a bundle of worry and insecurities so Major got most of those, and

I seemed to be scraped together from what's left" said Minor. Kat stared at Minor unsure of what to say, mind reeling with the implications of the story.

What am I even supposed to think about that. What the hell am I supposed to do? Anything? Nothing?

"What happens now?" said Kat

"Well I didn't quite finish my story Kat, see Major had a few problems, well more than a few problems. Because she took so much of myself with her I was very tiny at the start, hardly a fragment of what once was, and so I couldn't do much at the time, that came later. Major on the other hand was freaking out because she felt like she was responsible for her sisters death, but also that she was dead, and then she had all of Haruka's petty childhood insecurities suddenly thrust upon her and she snapped a little. Just a wee bit.

"Anyway one of the major sticking points causing these issues was my insecurity regarding the fact that I didn't think mum was my mum you know? I looked so different and she always seemed so much cooler than me. Silly in hindsight but it was my deepest rooted fear that all others stemmed from but obviously Shizuru actually looked exactly like her, so one of the major things that was breaking her mind was that inconsistency, so Grandma placed a really powerful illusion on her to make her appear to be me. Plus somehow, we decided to take both names, because using one or the other felt so fundamentally wrong because neither of them were her names" said Minor.

"Right, but your hair appears to be red again now? I thought you said that was an illusion" said Kat

"Well, my hair, Minor's and Haruka's is red, when Major is in control it will go back to being blue. I guess you have true sight or something because nobody else noticed" said Minor

Kat felt a powerful headache coming on pressing against her skull. "So what am I supposed to do in this situation?" said Kat

"Well good question dear, Major's not dead, you've just taking a sledge hammer to the little box she keeps all the nasty memories in when you told her that she looks like her mother. Honestly, I'm just as stumped as you are in regard to what we should do. Honestly, I don't really want to be in charge. It's weird. I mean sure being in control is kinda nice but I really hope this means she will talk to me and besides, Kitsune have a pretty simple cloning technique we can learn off Grandmother and that should let us have a proper conversation, until then I'm really not sure...

I also don't know how long I'll be in control for. See I call her Major for a reason, this is still her body not mine, just at the moment she's in a few too many pieces so I'm the more put together one at the moment, I expect that to end somewhat eventually... hopefully" said Minor

"Right... soo should I tell Major about what's going on when she wakes up? Will you still be around?" asked Kat

"Um, hmm, well depends? I mean, in the ideal scenario when she wakes up Major will be in control, but she can still hear me. If that isn't the case then I don't know if it's best to tell her or not, our minds are already really fragile as they are and I'm not sure if taking another hammer to Major's would be ideal, especially considering the stress she's been under" said Minor

"Ok. What do we do now?" asked Kat

"Well, in the long term we continue on to meet Grandmother, we need her for a few things now, sanctuary from the Beast King, the cloning technique and maybe a little bit to stop our combined minds falling apart rendering us comatose and unable to think. But I mean no rush" said Mino

Chapter 26: Why are we here?

"Well, in the long term we continue on to meet Grandmother, we need her for a few things now, sanctuary from the Beast King, the cloning technique and maybe a little bit to stop our combined minds falling apart rendering us comatose and unable to think. But I mean no rush" said Minor

"Minor, that sounds like a very good reason to rush" said Kat

"Eh, I say we take a nap right now, come, sit next to me and wrap me in your wings, I bet that's nice and warm" said Minor

"Minor focus, you just outlined all the reasons we do need to rush" said Kat

"Kat, we are hours, days, weeks maybe from Grandmother's house. We cannot run for that long. Plus, I'm very tired, piloting the body is hard and it was already tired when Major collapsed, it's really not easy for me to stay awake here" said Minor

"Fine, I understand" said Kat as she sat down. She placed Minor on her lap and wrapped her tail and wings around the pair of them.

"I could get used to this..." said Minor as she drifted off to sleep.

What sort of problem have I found myself in. What am I supposed to do about this. Is any of this my problem? I get the feeling that breaking a contract is really bad for everyone involved but how does it work with Major and Minor. The Queen contracted me to protect 'her daughter'. Does this count? Does Shizuka count as one daughter or both now? These questions rattled around Kat's mind as she drifted off to sleep enjoying the fluffy tails that surrounded her.

When Kat awoke, she felt extremely refreshed but in need of a good stretch. She refrained however on account of the sleeping girl on her lap. Kat managed to hold off the urge to snuggle into Minor's fluffy tail until the girl began to stir.

"Who do I have the honour of greeting this fine morning" said Kat

"Still me of course, I think when Major takes over again my hair should go back to being blue, I said that already. And who boy if it was Major you asked that question to, I worry over what would happen" said Minor

"Of course, I'll take that into consideration" said Kat with a grin

"Anyway, let's get moving Kat, we have no food and no water, now I don't know how long demons can survive without it, but I'm going to need some soonish. And sadly I don't have Major's ice powers so I can't conjure up water" said Minor

"Um, is conjured water safe to drink?" asked Kat

"Nope. But Major is smart enough to pull it out of the air and get it that way which is safe to drink" said Minor as she started marching along, swinging her arms and legs wide

"Um, Minor, is fine to generate so much extra movement as you walk, you will tire more quickly" said Kat

"Bah, tell me something I don't know. Moving the body is hard Kat. I was hoping it wouldn't be this bad but it is. I guess that's what happens when you're a disembodied voice inside your sisters head for a decade but who's counting" said Minor. Kat sighed at Minor's back with a wry grin

Not even five minutes later Minor spoke up "So Kat, let's talk as we walk, do you have any questions for me. We have hours to kill and I'm going to make the most out of having a mouth for the time being"

"Hmm, a few things I suppose. Why is it that you only think you are Haruka?" asked Kat

"Well, I'm not sure how it is for Major, remember she boxed a tonne of this stuff, where as I was the box so it wasn't really an option. Anyway, despite the fact that I have most memories from both of us somehow Haruka's memories sort of feel like mine, you know? And the name as well. It feels like my name, like it belongs to me. Though of course not as much as Shizuka, but that's a whole 'nother can of worms to open up" said Minor

"Well since you brought it up" said Kat *noVELNext.com*

"Yup, I did, I was hoping you'd ask. So remember how I said that Major was a little broken after the ritual, well one of the things that really helped stabilise both parts of Shizuka was actually taking that name. Despite being Haruka and Shizuru before, whatever we were afterwards it wasn't either one. We were both so changed from the experience even though we did actually both stick around nothing was correct.

"When Major took Shizuka as her new name something shifted in both of us, like an out of alignment puzzle piece had just slotted in. Somehow, we both knew that Shizuka was our name now. So in the order of names, Shizuka ranks the highest for both me and Major, Minor is my designation, or at least that's the one I gave myself for now, Haruka feels like it was me, but wasn't, and Shizuru feels like it definitely isn't me and never was despite having quite a few of those memories"

"I see" said Kat. *Though I'm not entirely sure I do. Well I guess I must because I could actually say the words, but even still, how can you just think of yourself as a minor addition, and yet she's so cheerful. Minor even says that she wants Major to get the body back in the ideal scenario. I wonder if that's all talk or if she really prefers being a passenger*

"Do you really want to go back to just being a voice in Major's head once she wakes up?" asked Kat

Minor stopped "Honestly Kat, yes, yes I do" turning around Minor had tears running down her eyes "I'm not supposed to be here you know. She sacrificed so much of herself to keep me around, and honestly I'm not even sure I want to stay. I'm somewhat glad to be able to talk to a person for once, that's been a great joy to me, but it all feels so wrong.

"This fur may have turned red but it isn't mine and I can feel it, the wrongness of it all. I hope, that if Major creates a clone, I can move my mind into it for short timeframes. I don't quite like existing for a lack of a better term. Not that I want to go away completely, I'm not ready for oblivion, I refuse to go

that far, but this isn't right" Kat ran up and wrapped her wings and tail around Minor, releasing her calming aura into her as she sobbed.

In between choked sobs Minor continued "Please, keep the aura on" said Minor as she came back to herself "I can already feel it calming me, and it seems to help with the wrongness I was describing" Minor tried to pull away to keep walking but Kat tightened her grips

"It's ok Minor. It's ok Shizuka. It's going to be alright" said Kat as she stroked Minor's head

After Minor had calmed down Kat reasserted her grip on Minor before speaking "Now, I'm really sorry I have to ask this after what just happened, but your... episode... reminded me of a question that needs to be asked. What is going on with the enchantments and why are we stuck in a straight tunnel"

"Oh, that's actually easy Kat, and no worries the crying helps. So, um, I think Major was completely wrong. I think the real reason is because Major didn't want to go to that prepared house in the city. I'm not quite sure what she wants, my thoughts aren't quite her thoughts and vice versa but our subconscious might be, or at least I think they are more closely linked then are, um main minds, I guess, are.

"I have two guesses, one is that she wanted to go to Grandmother, not the house, and the other is that she was trying to find me and the tunnels, maybe they did something to help with that, I'm not sure if they are advanced enough for that but if they are I think it's the more likely option of the two" said Minor

"What do you mean she was looking for you?" asked Kat "I thought you said she locked those memories away and she couldn't hear you"

"Well, those things are both true, but she hasn't completely lost her memories just, let's say put them in long term storage. I think her subconscious must know I'm still in there, I mean it must be, considering I think mine and hers chat quite a lot, noisy buggers they are, and that because she wasn't wholeheartedly set on the fake house, I prepared so things went astray. The enchantments on these tunnels are powerful and very old, I don't know how they work, but I can almost believe they wanted to help us" said Minor

"If that really is the case, and the tunnels help us go where you subconsciously wanted to go, would that at least mean we aren't likely to starve to death or run out of water" said Kat

"Yes, I think that it is likely, but that is only if my gut feeling is correct, I have no proof and no real knowledge of enchanting. It used to fascinate me, still does but obviously Major dictated what we read so I didn't keep up. Honestly Kat, even if it's a 95% chance we don't starve I think that's still a risk we don't take, might as well continue as fast as we can, and hopefully major wakes up soon so that water doesn't become an issue. How much do you need Kat?" asked Major

Good question

USER KAT REQUIRES AN UNKNOWN AMOUNT OF WATER PER DAY, FURTHER STUDY IS REQUIRED

Perhaps you can make a guess? What about normal demons

DEPENDING ON HOW USER KAT DEFINES NORMAL, THE ANSWER CAN EITHER BE ALMOST EXACTLY AS MUCH AS A HUMAN, OR ALMOST NO FOOD AND WATER. GLUTTONY DEMONS HEAVILY SKEW THE DEMONIC AVERAGE OF FOOD CONSUMPTION, HOWEVER THE D.E.M.O.N.S WOULD LIKE TO INFORM USER KAT THAT USER KAT HAS NOT YET COMPLETED AWAKENING. D.E.M.O.N.S ADVISES YOU CONTINUE TO CONSUME FOOD IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Good to know, good to know. "No idea, Minor, I have no idea at all" said Kat as they strode of into the continual darkness

Chapter 27: Questions. So many Questions

Jogging along the tunnels Kat started to zone out again. For her she could see the endless tunnel extending endlessly in front of and behind her. The heavy rhythmic footfalls of both Kat and Minor falling in sync. One, two, one two. The peace of the journey was not lost on Kat, it was satisfying in a- "Hey Kat did you run out of questions already" said Minor

"Well, I have no burning questions anymore. And I'm not quite sure what other questions I'd ask"

"Well, then I have plenty of questions for you Kat" said Minor as she turned around and started walking backwards

"Like, what's your favourite food, mines mooncakes, or what's your favourite colour" said Minor

"Hmm, well in terms of food, I'll eat just about anything but I'm quite partial to pears I guess if I had to pick something. It's just food though really. As for colours, I've actually always been really fond of my hair since I was a little girl, so that would have to be my favourite colour" said Kat

"Boo, I can't see your hair Kat. I've figured out you have some sort of super night vision considering you could see my fur change colour, but I can't. Like sure I saw it when Major was in control but it's not the same. I think? Anyway what do you mean you're not that concerned about favourite food. That's like, the most important question all the time Kat" said Minor

"Well, I just eat whatever Gramps cooked, and even after he taught me to cook myself I never really get the chance" said Kat

"Gramps? Who's Gramps? Is he like your grandad or something?" said Minor

"No, Gramps is... well I guess it's a bit hard to explain. Do you know what an orphanage is?" asked Kat

"Of course, just because I'm a princess doesn't mean I'm that bad" pouted Minor

"Right, well Gramps is the one who ran the orphanage I grew up in and that's just what I've always called him" said Kat

"Huh, that's kinda weird that you grew up in an orphanage, I wouldn't have thought demons had those" said Minor

USER KAT, BEFORE YOU CONTINUE D.E.M.O.N.S INSISTS THAT IF USER KAT INTENDS TO REVEAL INFORMATION RELATED TO HOW USER KAT GREW UP THAT USER KAT ALSO EXPLAIN USER KAT WAS NOT ORIGINALLY A DEMON. ADDITIONALLY THE INNER WORKINGS OF DEMONIC SOCIETY AND OPERATION ARE CLOSELY GUARDED SECRETS. DO NOT SPEAK ON THEM

Well, I guess it's nice they were clear about what I can and can't talk about.

"Well, normal demons don't. I wasn't always a demon actually. Hang on a moment"

Did I ever ask the system why I'm turning into a demon... I think I just sort of accepted it. Hey system

USER KAT IS UNDERGOING THE RARE PROCESS OF AWAKENING. NORMALLY ONLY FULL DEMONS HAVE ACCESS TO SYSTEM. SOMEHOW USER KAT CONNECTED TO THE SYSTEM THEREFORE D.E.M.O.N.S INITIATED AWAKENING PROCEDURES.

Right, but how did all this happen

USER KAT CERTAINLY HAS DEMONIC HERITAGE BUT AT THIS TIME D.E.M.O.N.S HAS DEVOTED NO RESOURCES TO INVESTIGATE THE EVENT THAT LED TO USER KAT'S CONNECTION TO THE SYSTEM. IT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PAST, AND WILL LIKELY HAPPEN AGAIN, BUT THE FREQUENCY OF SUCH EVENTS ARE SO LOW THAT D.E.M.O.N.S DOES NOT CONSIDER IT REPEATABLE.

Ok... well then

"I've hung on a moment Kat, what do you mean by normal demons don't" said Minor

"Well, I don't really know how it works for others, but I wasn't always a demon" said Kat

"What, how can you not always have been a demon. I know about demonization, and that does some baad things to people, but you clearly aren't demonized. Or I mean, maybe you are? It's an appropriate term I guess, no focus Minor. Why aren't you like the others?" said Minor. *System?*

THE PROCESS BEING REFERRED TO IS LIKELY KNOWN BY D.E.M.O.N.S AS CONTAINMENT FAILURE OR FALSE AWAKENING. TO EXPLAIN HOW THIS OCCURS WOULD REQUIRE EXTENSIVE TIME AND A HIGHER RANK. D.E.M.O.N.S IS WILLING TO PROVIDE EXTREMELY SIMPLIFIED VERSION THAT DOES NOT INFRINGE ON CLASSIFIED INFORMATION. IS THIS ACCEPTABLE USER KAT?

Sure go ahead

DEMONS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH A VERY SPECIFIC FORM OF ENERGY THAT DRIVES ALL OTHER RACES WITHOUT EXCLUSION TO MADNESS. IT IS MORE POTENT THEN OTHER SOURCES OF ENERGY BUT COMES WITH A NUMBER OF ISSUES THAT DEMONS HAVE EVOLVED TO IGNORE OR EMBRACE FOR ADDITIONAL POWER.

Can you elaborate on that?

NO.

"What makes me different? Well, I think that normal people trying to become demons fail because they simply aren't demons. We use a different energy source then most other species and it does horrible things if they aren't compatible. I guess that I was. Someone in my family was probably a demon, but I never knew my parents so I'm not sure if it was them"

"That's so weird though. But meh, I don't actually care about that. Tell me more about this Gramps" said Minor

"Well, what did you want to know about him" said Kat *noVELNext.com*

"What's he like? Isn't it kinda strange to run an orphanage by yourself? Or maybe it isn't... I wouldn't – Kat are you seeing this" said Minor. Kat looked ahead confused, the only thing visible was an intersection and more grey walls.

"Do you mean the intersection?" asked Kat

"Of course I mean the intersection Kat. This is everything we've ever dreamed of" said Minor

"I don't follow" said Kat

"We'll, finally I get another chance to see if the enchantment is leading use one way or another. It also might give us a cluse as to where we are going, though honestly I'm just excited to see any change of scenery" said Minor

"I suppose so"

Minor ran up to the intersection and screwed up her face in concentration "Left, we definitely have to go left"

"Lead the way" said Kat. Continuing on down the halls it wasn't long before Minor started speaking again.

"So what were we talking about... doesn't matter I suppose, so how about that kimono of yours, is it magic? Your tail goes through it but not like mine where it has a hole how about we speak on that" said Minor

"Minor, why do you keep jumping from topic to topic so quickly. Do you want me to answer these questions?" asked Kat

Minor stopped in place and turned to Kat

"Please put the calm aura back on" said Minor

"Is that really a good idea Minor, you shouldn't become reliant on it. I don't really know what it does to people" said Kat

"It's fine, please Kat then I will explain" said Minor

"Ok but I'm turning it off if you don't give me a good answer" said Kat. Kat activated her calming aura trying to keep the intensity very low. This seemed to satisfy Minor as she nodded and went back to walking

"So, you asked about, the questions, and the calm aura. Which one do you want to start with?" asked Minor sounding much calmer at least

"The aura please" said Kat

"Well, I might be a tiny bit more broken then I thought" said Minor

"What do you mean, you don't seem broken to me. A bit scatterbrained but certainly not broken" said Kat

"Right, um how to explain. So, I mentioned that Major is control most of the time. Well most of the time the biological signals are all sent to Major, I don't ever deal with them. At least until now. And walking like this, it, it does something to me" said Minor throwing her hands into the air "I can't quite explain it well, but the best thing I can compare it to is that normally I sit on a balcony, no sound except the calming wind. Then all of a sudden you blink and you are in a crowded market place. It's just too much

"The talking helps though, it makes everything else quieter when I speak because this voice is louder than the little ones and it also really helps when you speak because I suspect your voice has a bit of calming aura in it. The main one, it doesn't so much as shut the little voices up as um. If we go back to the analogy your calming aura changes it to a hearing instead, they each come forward and calmly state their disagreements. It's not that there are less problems but that the problems that are there are being reasonable about it?" said Minor

"I'm not sure it's healthy for me to be propping you up like that Minor, what will you do when I'm dismissed after the contract" said Kat

"Ideally I'll be back in Major's head at that point, the voices weren't so bad before we went to sleep. I say voices, I don't literally mean I hear voices in my head I'm not crazy..." Minor slowly placed a hand over her face sighing as she continued to jog

"Please ignore what I just said. I don't hear voices in my head because it isn't my head... I'm the voice. I know I'm real, I think... Having two sets of memories really helps with that whole I'm probably not crazy angle but you never know" said Minor

Minor started to ramble about how sane she presumably was or was not, touching on topics a number of times repeatedly and reaching the same conclusion ever time. "The memories don't make enough sense plus I'm red now according to Kat, and I can still feel Majors little thought box she's holding up in" before once again going through all the reasons she had to be crazy.

Chapter 28: I'm Sorry, The Questions Haven't Stopped

Minors ramblings continued for about half an hour before she stopped.

"Well, that was nice to get out of the system, thanks for keeping the calming aura on me the whole time. I might have been having a small crisis, but I wouldn't worry about it too much. So, tell me about the outfit you have on. The kimono seems magical and its really nice, possible better made them mom's, and I've noticed you have your hair up but Major didn't pay attention before and it's too dark for me to look at it properly now. I think that's the question I want to ask the most"

"Before I answer that, do you need another hug" asked Kat. Minor raised one finger, lowered it. Before raising it a second time

"Yes, I do, but we can't stop yet because I'm certain I won't be able to keep walking if we stop and I can deal with it for now"

"If you're sure. This outfit is made up of a few gifts actually. Well except the shoes, those are just the only good pair I had around. The kimono is from Gramps actually, the guy I told before, it's the more significant piece so I'll leave that for a bit. The sash is the same, but the hair sticks were a gift from my best friend Lily, she gave them to me when she helped me put my outfit on, I can't tie the sash so I had

to get her help with that and she gave them to me then. Honestly, they are one of the nicest things I've gotten as a gift and I'm shocked she even managed to get me something at all" said Kat

"Wait just let me interrupt. Why were they one of the nicest things you've been given and why would your best friend not give you a present" said Minor

"Well, that requires a bit of a tangent, do we want to go down that rabbit hole?" said Kat

"Yes" said Minor

"Right well, I didn't really expect much from Lily because I'd only known her for two years at that point and-" Minor cut Kat off to ask "How is she your best friend if you've only known her two years"

Does Minor want me to answer my original question? Whatever I guess, if it keeps her from having another crisis on me I'll answer whatever she wants

"So that requires a few things. Um first is that most of the people I knew, or know? Not sure how you want to count that, are the kids from the orphanage I grew up in, so both inside and outside of school I'd always just hang out with those guys but, they are in this sort of weird grey area of family and friends you know?

"Well, I guess maybe not. See I lived with them for a few years and so you sort of treat them more like part of your extended family then just friends, but on the other hand there is so many kids at the orphanage, and mine in particular managed to adopt out most kids without too much trouble. Anyway, eventually as I got older I had less and less people to play around with because not only was I older, I was also now in charge of the orphanage duties

"So, orphanage duties are things like waking everyone up, making sure they all eat breakfast and what not and for most of them except Sylvie I just became well, I guess something like Gramps' assistant rather than another kid at the orphanage. Plus at school we were always the orphanage kids with our own sort of group, and once the others all moved away it was just me. I wasn't terribly phased by that, but I managed to become friends with Lily and honestly, she's fun to chat with, and the only person I really go out of my way to spend time with outside of Sylvie and Gramps.

"Though Gramps is pretty hard to track down. Anyway that's why she's my best friend. She's the only person I've really spent time with that's certainly not family and I really enjoy hanging around with her. Oh, and she only moved to my town just before I met her" explained Kat

"That's actually kind of sad Kat" said Minor

"I don't think so, I've had a huge family my whole life, Gramps has always stuck by me, Lily really is a great friend, and Sylvie's adorable. I think I've had it pretty good"

"But didn't you say that you were surprised by Lily's gift? How is that good friendship behaviour" said Minor

"Her parents really hate me, I don't know why but hey that's how it is. She'd get in all sorts of trouble if they found out she spent money on me. Actually originally, she got me a handmade note which was really sweet, it was only later she snuck the hair sticks to me, and I think if she gets caught it'll be pretty bad. Hopefully she was right and that they won't notice" said Kat

"Oh, ok. I guess that's fine, I don't really understand considering my situation. Even Major doesn't really have proper friends. Comes with being a princess I suppose" said Minor

"And you mean to tell me my life was sad" said Kat

"Well, I mean, Major does pretty well. I think, she as acquaintances and people after the kingdom, much like the beast twins but younger, and less powerful. Plus we've always had mum around no offense" said Minor

"None taken, I never knew my parents and it doesn't bother me at all" said Kat

"And well, thanks Kat. For everything" said Minor

"What do you mean?" asked Kat

"Well, I mean, thank you for caring, I guess. You've kept the calming aura up and I'm starting to feel much better. You put up with all my questions even though I dragged us on so many tangents. I know you are here on a contract from my mother but I'm pretty sure you don't have to be so nice to me. And not just Shizuka, me Minor, and it's really helped me deal with the fact that I have a body for the moment and that Major needs me to keep things together while she sorts everything out despite how much I wish to hide back in her mind."

"Anytime Minor, we may be trapped underground but honestly it's been an interesting time. I may not have to be nice to you because of the contract, but that's no excuse to be cold towards you. We've had good conversation, we are journeying through the bowels of the earth, what more could you want" said Kat

"Food and water" said Minor

"Now listen hear you little bugger" said Kat as she ran to catch up to her charge.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, Monday 9:30 am day 3 of Kat's disappearance

Sylvie and Vivian stared intently at the game board, the game was still chess, but the contestants now sported formal suits and the board featured a chess timer set to two hours or rather, Sylvie had two hours and Vivian's clock was steadily draining and around the one-hour mark. They both still had plenty of time and it was anyone's game. Gramps desk now contained even more papers, filling the wide oaken surface with stacks of paper. The witness was now decked out with a sleeping cap and eye covers in addition to his blanket.

"So Vivian, Sylvie, can you tell me if you've heard anything more from Kat" said Gramps

"Right, so the delivery bird this time was a falcon, and it stated that she met a Peruvian rug merchant selling exotically partnered rugs during her training in the mountains and she was offered a rug for free if she guided him across the mountain line. Accepting the challenge she is now fending off mountain lions and tigers as a chance to hone her families secret yodelling techniques" said Vivian

"Right and when will she be back. If she is guarding a rug merchant surely once that's complete she can return correct?" asked Gramps with a deadpan look

"Well, Peruvian rug merchants are notorious for backing out of unfavourable deals, perhaps she will need to put in some extra work to earn the rug" said Vivian

"Vivian, your timer is still going" said Sylvie

Chapter 29: A Bit Parched

Minor laughed as Kat followed behind her. Minor wasn't really running much faster than before and Kat made sure that she only gained the ground in small increments as she chased after the fox. That was until Minor stopped and put her hand up. Kat froze in place and watched Minor's ears twitch constantly as if searching for something.

"Can you hear that?" asked Minor

"No what is it?" asked Kat

"I think I can hear rushing water; do you see anything in the tunnel up ahead?" asked Minor. Kat walked up to stand even with Minor and peered down the tunnel and was disappointed to see the plane flat walls.

"It all looks the same to me Minor" said Kat

"It must be further up, follow me" said Minor

The two girls picked up their pace, Kat managed it easily but Minor struggled to maintain their increased speed. Despite this she led the way without complaint until Kat did see something. At the edge of her vision she could see the tunnel starting to expand.

"The tunnel opens up at the edge of my vision, that must be where the water is" said Kat. Minor picked up the pace once again for the final sprint before charging into the opening.

They stood in a smallish cave with a river rushing through the centre. It contained crystal clear water to Kat's eyes and a dark abyss to Minors. This didn't stop her from charging to the edge and dunking her head in.

"Minor, does that actually make it easier to drink then say, cupping your hands" said Kat looking down at the princess.

Pulling her head free from the water with a gasp Minor replied "Nope it's wildly impractical, I swallowed basically no water and my face is freezing" despite her words though Minor had a big grin on her face.

"Why do you seem so happy then?" asked Kat

"Haven't you always wanted to dunk your head in a river? It's pretty cool" said Minor with a wink

"Points for trying Minor" said Kat

"Come on, that was great. Gave me a real rush" said Minor.

It was at that moment that Minor's grin rapidly retreated and was replaced with a look of concern.

"What's wrong Minor? Did the puns catch up to you?" asked Kat

"This is a body of water Kat" said Minor

"Thanks for the observations there Minor" said Kat

"No, it's just... You don't understand" said Minor

"Nope, not at all, are you going to tell me what's up or keep making funny faces" said Kat

"This room is a dead end, and the enchantments are nudging me to backtrack we were lead here so that we could get water" said Minor

"Right but how is that a bad thing?" said Kat

"It means that we won't be reaching our goal anytime soon, and that Major is unlikely to wake up for quite some time" said Minor

"Shit. Because the enchantment sends us places it had to send us here so we could stay hydrated..." said Kat

"Exactly, and while I am very thankful for the water it has some bad implications. Like should we turn around. We've committed a lot of time to this, but with water here I don't know how much longer we need to walk. And what about food? The enchantment will probably do its best, but it can't give us something that isn't there" said Minor

"Well, it's entirely up to you if you want to turn back. As for the food situation can't we just fish in the river?" said Kat

"Ah yes, let me just pull my fishing rod out of Major's storage ring. If we're lucky she might even have bait in there" said Minor with a big grin and strained enthusiasm

"You have a storage ring? That seems really useful why didn't you pack it with food" said Kat

"Wait you thought I was serious? Kat storage rings pretty much don't exist. Someone made a few of them a long time ago. We're not sure how many, but they appear in legends. Basically unbreakable, can store almost anything. Why would I ever hide something so useful when I've been in desperate need of water for at least a few hours" said Minor with confusion

"Um, it just seemed pretty useful to have. And the enchantment on the tunnels seems really powerful, I just assumed that it was possible. I didn't know they were so rare. Or that they existed at all for that matter" said Kat

"Right, um sorry. I shouldn't have done that, your calming aura helped me realise I shouldn't have said that, and I did it anyway. Guess it doesn't prevent poor decision making huh. I keep forgetting what it really means that you've been summoned here, and I started saying that as a joke, but I was sorta venting at the end. Sorry, it's just. I know you can see but I can't really. It's getting really hard to keep the little bit of mana in my eyes to barely see. My control is slipping and I'm freaking out a little bit because I don't want to stop and rest, but I can't see, and I'm a bit scared" said Minor staring at the river to avoid looking at Kat

Walking up behind the fox girl Kat brought Minor into her embrace, covering Minor with her wings and wrapping the girl up Kat spoke "It's fine Minor. I can see everything bright as day, literally. I have no idea

how that works, or even makes sense at all, but I can see. I won't let anything happen to you" said Kat. Minor lent back putting her full weight on Kat.

"Sorry I keep breaking down so much. I'm a little unstable, but I'm not sure increasing the power of your calming aura would help me. I mean in the short term maybe, but what you are doing with it now, it's helping my deal with things but not ignore them, if that makes sense. You're right we will get through this. I want to keep going. Major planned this escape for months. Sure we completely botched the plan less than a day away from the castle. Sure Major's basically in a coma, but who cares. We are visiting Grandma, going on an adventure, and tricking the Beast King. What could be more fun" said Minor.

It's hard to keep up with this girl's mood swings. I probably would have amped up calm if she hadn't said anything because the poor girl needs help. Now is really not the time or place though. Pitch darkness, on the run, cold stone floor. It can wait, or better, perhaps her grandmother can deal with it.

"Minor, we are taking a short break" said Kat

"Wait, but Kat I can-" Minor was interrupted as Kat squeezed her hand. Not enough to truly hurt her but enough to interrupt Minor's words.

"It was a statement not a question" said Kat

"Ok, but just. Just. Just a little. Bit" said Minor head drooping immediately.

* I didn't expect she was that tired. How was she comfortable saying that she could keep going when she's passed out in front of me. Seriously Minor take better care of yourself. Now the question is should I keep walking while she's asleep. It's tempting, I think if Minor had actually taken a proper drink before she passed out I would but I'm not sure she actually drank any of the water. Guess I'm committing to sitting in this position until she wakes up.*

Kat set her mind adrift. She wasn't in a position to be sleeping, and the sound of the water was a soothing thing, especially with the contrasting silence of everything else. Kat let the sound float around her, keeping her calm and relaxed. When Minor started stirring it was hard for Kat to know how long it had been. It hadn't felt like much time at all, but time was rather inconsistent in this place. Slowly opening her eyes Minor looked around at the cocoon of wings she was in and sighed contentedly before starting to get up.

"We have to backtrack, likely to the intersection and head the other way. Are you ready to leave" said Minor

"Yeah, let's go" said Kat. The girls took another gulp of water before heading out back into the endlessly repetitive tunnels.

Chapter 30: A Leap of Faith

They made it through to the intersection with no trouble and continued on. Minor seemed frigid but wasn't asking questions. Kat remained silent and just enjoyed the jog.

*Should I try talking to Minor? I think it's fine, she can ask me something if she needs to hear things again. I suspect she's trying to deal with it. Unless it starts looking really bad I'll leave her to heal on her own I think, there isn't much I can do for her if I don't want my calming aura to become a major crutch,

Though maybe it doesn't work like that, but it'd make sense right? Surely that sort of things wouldn't be good to keep on. Hey system*

D.E.M.O.N.S IS UNABLE TO PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS ON CALMING AURA. ALL DEMONS HAVE AT LEAST SLIGHT VARIATIONS IN AURA FROM ONE ANOTHER HAVING DIFFERING EFFECTS AND USER KAT'S SEEMS TO HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY DEVIATED. FURTHER AURA INFORMATION REQUIRES AT LEAST RANK 1

Good to know, I guess. Wait what's that up ahead? Kat squinted into the distance; the tunnel didn't seem to open up really. Maybe a little bit but the ground seemed to disappear. Placing her hand on Minor's shoulder Kat stopped the girl in her tracks.

"I think we have a problem up ahead, the ground disappears up ahead" said Kat.

Minor shivered slightly and wrapped her arms around Kat's before indicating she was ready to proceed. The two approached the whole slowly and Kat noticed she'd be wrong, the tunnel did open up, shame it was right around the edge. Stopping a few strides away from the whole Kat tried to glance over the edge trying to see the bottom, but even with her dark vision, whatever lied at the cliff bed was hidden from her sight.

"This is absurdly steep what are we supposed to do here Minor?" asked Kat

"Um, you're not going to like this. I don't even like this. Apparently, we have to keep going, past the edge and forward is where we need to go" said Minor

"Just great" said Kat "Just to be sure the ground really vanishes there right? I'm not just seeing things?"

"I suspect so, I get the feeling that I need to go forward but I shouldn't go forward, if that makes sense" said Minor. The pair carefully shuffled towards the edge where Kat bent down and tried to place her hand over the gap to find it passed through thin air. *I do really wish that this wasn't an endless drop.*

"What's the plan now Minor" said Kat

"Well we just have to fly across I suppose" said Minor

"How do you plan to do that? Do you have magic that would let us fly?" asked Kat.

Minor looked confused at Kat.

"Demons can't lie correct?" asked Minor

"Yes" said Kat

"And this affects you correct?" asked Minor

"And you have no idea how we would be able to fly in this situation" said Minor

"Nope" said Kat

"Kat..." said Minor looking at Kat with some disappointment

"Why are you looking at me like that?" said Kat

"You have wings Kat" Minor yelled.

Oh... Oh! Yeah that would be useful. Am I strong enough to fly while carrying Minor? Actually, can I even fly with my wings? I didn't have any time to check before we entered the tunnels, and this isn't exactly the best time to check these things.

"Minor, I don't really know anything about my wings I don't know if I can fly by myself let alone if I'm holding you" said Kat

"What's the point off having wings if you can't fly. Plus I get the feeling we can cross this" said Minor

"Didn't you say the enchantment wouldn't know what to do with me because I'm a demon though?" asked Kat

"Hmmm" Minor pondered for a moment "I think it's fine Kat. It's not sure how to mislead you through the tunnels and is likely unsure of what you are but I'd guess it knows if you can fly or not" said Minor

"I don't see how that makes any sense even-" Kat choked back her words. System I'm not aloud to mention you am I?

USER KAT IS CORRECT, D.E.M.O.N.S DESIRES THAT USER KAT DOES NOT REVEAL D.E.M.O.N.S EXISTENCE TO SUMMONERS. USER KAT HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO FRIENDS BECAUSE OF A NUMBER OF FACTORS.

And those factors are?

THAT INFORMATION IS CONSIDERED TO BE CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TO USER KAT

Ah the good old classified because my rank isn't high enough good times.

"Um Kat, are you alright?" asked Minor

"Yeah I'm fine, just some things I'm not really supposed to mention" said Kat

"I understand, I might be happy to reveal my secrets to you, but I've protected Major's for the most part. Don't feel bad it doesn't bother me" said Minor

"Right, well. The question is what do you do?" said Kat

"Well we just jump off the cliff together" said Minor

"Well that's hardly safe" said Kat

"Well then you jump off by yourself and then fly back up and get me. I'm happy to take the risk with you, I'm pretty sure it will work" said Minor

But what if I can only glide? Perhaps my wings aren't strong enough for me to fly and I jump of and glide where I need to go. What then? I can't come back if that's the case. But what do I do if I can't glide with Minor in my hands. I'm sure I'm strong enough to hold her for however long but are my wings?

"I just don't know Minor. On the one hand if I can fly this is all fine, but if I can't fly, and I'm only able to glide even by myself I'll have no way to come back and get you" said Kat

"Simple we jump together then. No hesitation Kat. We've got this" said Minor

"I'm just not certain I can do this without you getting injured. It's a risk I'm not sure we need to take"
said Kat

"I have my full faith in you Kat, I am at your mercy" said Minor

"But it doesn't matter how much faith you have in me Minor. I don't know how good my wings are and I don't have a chance to test them properly" said Kat

Shrugging Minor replied "Details details Kat, I say we jump and see where we go. Worst than can happen is that I die and you get banished easy" said Minor

"Where did the scared girl from before go?" asked Kat

"She fell of a cliff" said Minor with a grin.

"Fine, ok. Fine I'll try this for you but I swear if we die I'm going to haunt you in the afterlife" said Kat

"Sweet you can keep me company then" said Minor as she jumped up. Kat caught her in a princess carry and sighed. *I guess this is fine. For some reason I can't bring myself to just turn around and my guts says me wings will work. These changes have all been beneficial. Well, maybe the tails a bit hit and miss, but everything else is an improvement. Surely the wings work, right system*

D.E.M.O.N.S DOES NOT CURRENTLY HAVE MUCH DATA ON USER KAT'S WINGS. THEY MAY OR MAY NOT BE USABLE FOR FLIGHT

What about your average demon?

APPROXIMATELY HALF OF ALL DEMONS WITH WINGS CAN FLY WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF A SPECIAL ABILITY UNLOCKED AFTER THEY GAIN POWER

Just great... a 50/50 split on if I can fly.

"Come on Kat, jump. Don't be a scaredy Kat" said Minor. Kat didn't reply. She simply turned around and walked for a few minutes before facing the chasm once again and sprinting off into the abyss.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, Tuesday 9:30 am day 4 of Kat's disappearance

Sylvie and Vivian sat opposite a shogi board. Neither had made a move, each had been staring at the shogi board for at least 30 mins.

"Why did you pair decide to bring a shogi board today" asked Gramps, face now almost completely hidden by the papers upon his desk

"Because I don't know how to play chess" said Vivian

"Wait, you two spent two days playing chess and neither you know how to play?" asked Gramps confused

"I can play Gramps" said Sylvie pouting, though this was hidden from Gramps' view as she was still facing Vivian

"Right, well I guess that make sense then, but why shogi?" asked Gramps

"Because neither of us know how to play, and I lost the rulebook somewhere" said Vivian. Gramps looked awkwardly at his stacks of papers. He could only hope he wasn't responsible for its disappearance. Clearing his throat Gramps asked "So, any further word on Kat"

"Your turn this time Sylvie" said Vivian

"Fine. We might as well tell you the truth. Kat's actually a demon and she got sent on a contract to go kidnap a princess in another dimension on the order of her mother the queen. She's been going on plenty of adventure these last few weeks actually" said Sylvie

"mhm, and how did she get the message to you if she's in another dimension" asked Gramps genuinely curious as to the answer

"Interdimensional carrier pigeons" said Sylvie

"Really?" said Gramps

"No it's actually a wall of flaming text in her bedroom" said Sylvie as if that made infinitely more sense. Gramps just shrugged and went back to his papers. In the corner of the room, forgotten by the others the witness slept. A new weapon in his arsenal to compliment his blanket and nightcap, he had replaced his shoes with thick woollen socks, that now proudly extended past the blankets end.