

DEMONS 211

Chapter 211: a Major battle continues

"What are you so mad for?" said Amelie tilting her head to the side and bending her ears over further to accentuate the movement. "Oh, Icey, that was a little cold of me to return your frigid advances"

Amelie kept her grin as each pun made Shizuka look less and less impressed with her friend. Attempting to ignore her jokes, Shizuka instead used a two ringed sigil to summon a sword for herself and charged.

"Oh, yawn my dear fox" said Amelie slowly sitting down "You aren't the warrior you think you are. Have all those weaklings skewed your perception to much"

Amelie eventually made it to the ground and stretched herself yawning. At the same time Shizuka reached her, she made a slash at Amelie's right arm, the one holding the trident. In response used her left hand to pull her arm to her side and continued stretching as Shizuka's ice sword stabbed into the ground.

Wrenching the sword free Shizuka struck out towards Amelie's right leg, but she just rolled over slightly so that she was now using her trident arm as a pillow with it wrapped around the weapon in question.

Yawning, Amelie said "This is very relaxing, just basking in your presence Shizuka. Feel free to stick around, you can even hug me if you want"

Having none of Amelie's sass any longer Shizuka stabbed down towards Amelie's face, confident that the wards would protect her, if her regeneration couldn't. However just as the blade was about to slice into Amelie, she sneezed, jerking her head forward letting the sword clang against the stone.

Shizuka snarled and readied herself for another strike, but was taken by surprise when Amelie pulled her feet from under her. Shizuka tried to orientate herself so that she could land flat on her back...

But Amelie abused her considerable strength to catch Shizuka completely and pull her into a hug. "Ahhh, so fluffy" said Amelie hugging Shizuka close.

"Let me go this is a duel of honour" said Shizuka angrily

"Ooh?" said Amelie, increasing the strength of her hug, causing Shizuka's bones to creak slightly "I can play rough if that's what you want my dear, but this is so much more enjoyable no?"

Shizuka wasn't willing to listen to Amelie's nonsense and instead summoned a two ringed sigil from her chest summoning a thick flat pillar of ice that pushed the two apart. Amelie let Shizuka go so as to avoid damaging herself.

This of course, had the beneficial effect of flinging Shizuka far away, as she had tried to compensate for Amelie's grip strength when designing the spell, flying once again to the edge of the arena.

As Shizuka crashed into the ground Amelie casually got up and dusted herself off before stalking over to Shizuka. "That was rather rude, trying to give me the cold shoulder" said Amelie

Shizuka struggled to her feet, this time summoning an ice shield to help her deal with whatever Amelie was about to do, hoping to use it to keep her distance. "Ooo, taking a defensive stance are you? I suppose I can go on the attack" said Amelie

Amelie readied herself, planting her legs in a sprinter's stance. Her muscles tensed and in the blink of an eye she slammed both into the ground shooting her off like a rocket. Heading straight for Shizuka, at great speed it was all that the kitsune could do to get her shield up in time.

A loud clang rang out as Amelie's buckler collided with Shizuka's ice shield, cracking the ice and breaking it in her hands. While Shizuka was still stunned Amelie slowly jabbed at Shizuka's side with her trident.

Reacting on instinct, she managed to twist out of the way. "You know, you really seem to be missing the point my dear fox" said Amelie, after her third attempt at jabbing Shizuka

"Crazy hare, why would I want to be impaled!" yelled an irate Shizuka back as she concentrated on getting out of the way of Amelie's lunges and occasional strike with her buckler forcing Shizuka around, but away from the edge. *nOVeℓnext.Com*

"See, that's what I keep telling people, but hardly any of them listen. I'm glad you've finally come around to my way of thinking" said Amelie, her face lighting up in a larger smile than Shizuka had thought possible.

"What the heck are you even talking about, you're the one trying to stab me you crazy hare" said Shizuka

Amelie pouted and went for a kick at Shizuka's side, just barely grazing her tails as she moved out of the way. "Ooh, is that my new pet name? I must say crazy hare wouldn't be my first pick, but if that's really what you want my little fox"

Shizuka's eyes went wide, summoning three sigils around her. The floor beneath Amelie started to glow, when a torrent of water exploded out from under her. A second later a second flash and the water was frozen over.

Shizuka started panting, backing off, while Amelie sat in her easy prison seemingly content. Kat used this lull in the fighting to check her energy levels. *Shit, I'm already past halfway.* realising this she promptly informed Minor.

"It should be fine Kat" said Minor without taking her eyes off the fight "We are more than halfway done"

"But... isn't Amelie frozen in place?" asked Kat

Minor shook her head, as Amelie started to speak. "You know Shizuka, as much as I'd love to stare at you all day, I'm afraid I don't want to cool off any longer"

Amelie gave a slight grunt of effort and the huge cube of ice around her shattered. Shizuka, still recovering, and looking like she had seen better days, backed up best she could, panting in the process. Kat couldn't see her sweating like Amelie, but she was unsure if that was actually Amelie's sweat and not just water.

Plus, Shizuka's strange ice avatar was making it hard to tell while she was unable to put any energy towards her eyes. It was however clear that Shizuka's stance had been ruined. She was no longer standing straight and ready, and her tails had started to droop.

Amelie is just playing around with her at this point. It isn't even close... but why does she want to drag it out like this? Is there even a point? She has regeneration perhaps comparable to me, she clearly has no issue with pain but she's just... playing around.

Amelie took a quick step forward and Shizuka stumbled back in response. She tried to summon a quick single ringed sigil for something but it faltered. "Ooo, don't give me that look" said Amelie "You make me want to forfeit"

Shizuka growled trying to recover some of her ferocity but it came out closer to a whimper. Amelie sighed and dashed forward, cracking the floor underneath her feet. When she reached Shizuka she pulled her trident back, throwing and threw it past Shizuka's face, whipping her hair as it past.

Shizuka stood there shocked, when Amelie booped her own the nose, and Shizuka collapsed. "I suppose that's it. Do you surrender Shizuka?" said Amelie with some resignation.

Shizuka jumped backwards, trying to use her hands to continue to the motion but failing, due to her weakening arms, where she instead fell head first into the ground. Amelie winced at the sight "Hey, this isn't quite so funny anymore Shizuka, you should surrender"

A single ringed sigil appeared in front of Shizuka. A small pillar slowly rose from the ground taking Shizuka with it. The pillar pushed into the top of her chest, and as Shizuka leant against it, it allowed her to return to her feet.

"It... it isn't over yet" said Shizuka, struggling to stand up.

"Hey look, just, um, admit your defeat with good graces please Shizuka" said Amelie with a slightly worried tone "I don't want to do anything more to you"

"Why... why don't you say that to my face" said Shizuka

Amelie, stomped on the ground and appeared directly next to Shizuka. She held her hand out for a second and the trident she had thrown reappeared. Slamming it into the ground hilt first Amelie looked into Shizuka's eyes and said "Stand down, please. You have lost. I'm not even tired at all. There is nothing more you can do, I'm just stronger than you"

Shizuka laughed in her half delirious state. Despite the beating Amelie had dealt her, it was clear the hare had been holding back, and it was the mana drain that was actually getting to her. "Stronger? Yes Stronger...? Then I just... just need to be stronger?"

"Yes Shizuka, but that won't happen right now" said Amelie

"Now...? No... I can't lose again... not again... I said... I said never again" said Shizuka

Amelie, looked at her friend strangely "But you've won every fight what are you talking about?"

A large crack resounded, like the sound of shattering glass. Amelie's eyes went wide, as a third tail sprouted from behind Shizuka. Unlike her ice avatar, this one looked to be made of water and stood twice as tall as the others. "I just need... to be stronger!" screamed Shizuka with wide eyes

Chapter 212: a Major comeback?

"Oh no" was all Amelie managed to say before a massive wall of ice slammed into her from above crushing her into the floor. The ground cracked, under the weight, of the pillar. Amelie tried to say something, but the force pressing her into the ground was too much for her jaw.

Kat could no longer see what was happening under the ice pillar, but it was only a few moments before it started to crack. Several large ringing thuds accompanied each crack that grew larger and larger.

Shizuka, watching this summoned three more three ringed sigils pointing at the spot where Amelie was pinned. With a final thud the ice shattered and Amelie pushed herself to her feet, only to be met with a hail of icicles.

Eyes widening, she curled herself into a small ball, placing her buckler in between herself and as many icicles as she could, she channelled a bit of mana into her shield, activating a glowing orb around it, doubling its area, allowing her to just barely block everything.

"You have to stop Shizuka!" said Amelie "Don't ruin your future for this"

But Shizuka showed no sign of letting, up even as Amelie's projected shield started to flicker. "Minor, what is she talking about" asked Kat

"Well... when a kitsune gains her tail, she also gets a temporary boost in strength. We think it's because tails more easily form in stressful situations. The problem however, is that if you burn through all the mana it grants you, you can cripple yourself and be stuck at whatever tail number you waste your mana" said Minor

"Should we be concerned" asked Kat

Minor shook her head "Nah, Shizuka is fine, because her rank up is mine as well, so she gets twice the energy. Amelie and Major didn't know at the time of course, but yeah we don't have to worry"

Kat nodded, calming down, when she saw a slight increase in the amount of energy she was losing. If she hadn't checked at that moment she wouldn't have even noticed. "Minor... why am I using more energy?"

Minor frowned "I haven't changed anything... are you sure it's taking more energy?"

Kat nodded, and Minor frowned in response. "Well, if you drop to low let me know"

"Sure... I'm just a bit above a third left at the moment" said Kat

Minor winced but made no further comment as they let their eyes drift back to the action. Amelie had decided to take a chance, and was using her shield to push forward. She was keeping low, and using her powerful legs to hop, not unlike a hare, forward, keeping low and mostly using her knees to progress forward.

When she closed the distance to slightly out of trident range, she crouched behind her shield, and let herself fall forward. Kat felt like the world slowed, despite not using any of her powers, as Amelie fell.

When she was lined up perfectly, she pushed off with all her might, still hiding her body behind her shield, acting more like a human missile than anything else. Icicles glanced off the shield but it managed to hold firm through the onslaught.

Shizuka's eyes went wide as she saw her icicles fail to stop Amelie's charge. The world slowed again, so that Kat could have easily crawled the distance faster than Amelie was now covering it.

A massive three ringed sigil appeared directly in Amelie's face, as while Shizuka's eyes were wide, with cracks in them, that Kat took to mean they were bloodshot. As the sigil glowed brighter, and brighter, the air around Amelie chilled.

Then in a blink of the eye, even at this snail's pace, a massive ice cube formed around Amelie stopping all of her momentum. Shizuka started to relax, but before she even lowered her hands the ice started cracking.

Amelie had dismissed her shield and used the space she had obtain to slam her hands into the ice construction. A second large thud resounded as her hands broke through the edge of her icy prison.

This was followed by a grating sound as Amelie used this as leverage to rip it in half. With a final wrench, those two halves went flying, and as Amelie dropped to the ground she tucked in her legs before slamming them into the ground and shooting her that last bit forward.

"Yield" said Amelie as she slammed knee first into Shizuka's chest pinning her to the ground. Shizuka didn't even respond as a three ringed sigil appeared and a tidal wave of water crashed into Amelie, washing her off Shizuka

This wasn't enough to get her away though, as Amelie slammed her trident into the ground and held on through the rushing water that continued to rage on. Positioning herself against the tide, Amelie pulled herself forward.

As she inched forward, letting wave after wave crash against her, Amelie managed to reach a sideways crouching position on her trident. Lining herself up once more she jumped off slicing through the water, with her ears held back against her head.

She broke into the small patch of air Shizuka had created for herself easily and gripped her by the throat
???Yield! Please" said Amelie, with sadness in her voice "Don't do this"

Shizuka managed to just barely shake her head at the hare in front of her. Amelie took Shizuka and slammed her into the ground, as a sigil appeared, creating a bubble of water around Shizuka, dampening the force of the attack.

Seeing this Amelie frowned and let go. "I forfeit"

"What?" said a stunned Shizuka as her concentration faltered, and the sigil powering the endless stream of water cracked and broke, dismissing the raging tide.

"I forfeit" said Amelie "You've won"

As she said this Amelie recalled her trident and placed it on the ground next to Shizuka and then took of her bracer "I can't let you hurt yourself any longer. You've won" said Amelie

Shizuka seemed to come to her senses at this "Wait, what? No you were winning, why?"

Amelie sagged and let herself fall to the ground next to Shizuka alongside her weapons "You've told me how important getting your next tail is... and what happens if you don't do it properly. I won't. I absolutely refuse to do that to you"

Shizuka shook her head "No, I forfeit then. You can't just give up your weapons to me when you were winning"

Amelie laughed from her place on the ground "It's ok little fox, I knew this could happen"

Shizuka shook her head violently "No, nono, no I forfeit, you win... please"

At that moment, Kat felt like she was hit with a hammer. Coughing to relieve herself of the weight she saw that a huge chunk of her energy was gone all of a sudden "Minor, I just lost like half my remaining energy" said Kat

"The memory is nearly done" said Minor "Can you hold out a little longer"

Kat nodded weakly, the sick feeling she'd had at the start intensifying as her energy drained. "It's fine little fox. It's a bit disappointing to lose, but I'll live"

Shizuka tried to get up and move to Amelie's style but found herself slipping and falling flat, her arms like jelly, unable to move even a few paces to the right. "No, I, Princess Shizuka Maemari hereby forfeit this duel" said Shizuka

"Enough you two" said a voice Kat recognised as Chiharu, but couldn't see the question in person. "We can declare a draw"

"Hahaha" coughed Amelie, emotionally exhausted if not physically "Do we both lose then or do we both win. I vote for win"

"What does she mean?" asked Shizuka

Chiharu's sigh could be heard from wherever she was hiding "The rewards. You either treat it as if both contestants won and hand over the rewards, or both lost and nothing changes hands"

"Then... then loss" said Shizuka "Amelie shouldn't give up her weapons"

Amelie laughed "Ha, I don't care about those. Sure they are precious but-"

Kat felt the memory falter as she felt her flame get struck by some force. Energy poured out of her to try and fend off whatever it was leaving her almost empty "Minor" chocked out Kat

"Just a few more words"

Kat nodded but her vision was starting to get blurry.

"You can't mean that Amelie, why do you even care about my hand" asked Shizuka **novelNext.com**

"Hehehe, tell you what little fox... I'll... I'll tell you when I wake up" said Amelie, who collapsed completely, eyes closing.

Shizuka panicked and tried to claw her way over to Amelie, but was stopped by Chiharu's calm voice as she appeared beside Shizuka "It's ok rest now"

Ah... that... that sounds like a good idea. Kat felt herself letting go as the scene began to end, falling forward despite not having any ground to stand on. As she fell, she could almost hear Minor shouting out her name, but there was a ringing in her ears that wouldn't go away and blocked the sound.

Chapter 213: Thanks for the Memories

When Kat's consciousness came back to her, she felt a lot like a rubber band that had been let go after stretching too far. Groggily opening her eyes to blackness, she had only a moment to work out what was going on before that darkness retreated as a door opened. *noVelnExt.cOm*

In front of her, was a room. 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 Shizuka meditating on a slightly raised platform to separate it from the rest of the room. She was wearing a loose training robe and surrounding the young girl was several large chunks of ice which orbited her slowly until stopping completely and vanishing.

Hang on a moment this is familiar... wait Kat's mind shook as her eyes failed to move under her command.

"Greetings demon, 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

Kat's mind reeled. *I didn't say that... well I mean I did but not right now. Shit am I now part of the memory?*

"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?"

Is it because I used up all my energy and lost some power I had over myself?

"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 didn't even feel anything as Shizuka collapsed under what must have been her calming aura. She did however notice that the dream seemed to shake slightly.

"Hey are you alright, what happened, why did you collapse like that, my aura shouldn't be that strong" said Kat. *Yeah I never did quite figure that one out. Looking back on it maybe it was getting stronger over time? I'm not really sure... I never so grossly overused my aura ever again, I always sort of had an idea of how much to use. *

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." Said Shizuka, however instead of continuing to list the plan as Kat remembered them, time seemed to skip for a moment, and Kat found her body in a slightly different position and answering Shizuka

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

"Now" said Shizuka.

Wait what? Kat's thoughts where interrupted as a pair of wings broke through her back. It was a weird feeling, and didn't feel at all like it did the first time, it was like she just suddenly gained awareness of her wings. *Huh... I didn't even know I was missing them... wait what about my horns.*

"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

"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

"No" said Kat

"Understood" said Shizuka

"I'm ready to leave whenever you require Shizuka" said Kat

You know... I feel like I'm skipping around a bit here. Wasn't I previously enjoying the great feel of the floorboards? Wait that's right! We also completely skipped the fact I went to sleep first

"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.

"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.

Now that Kat was jogging, she decided to use the ample time she assumed she'd have to see if she kept her horns. This was a bit harder because she couldn't really feel them without demonic energy running through them and she was running on empty.

Kat tried to strain her eyes to see the bottom of her horns, and while she failed in moving them, as she started to follow Shizuka the slight bobbing motion was enough to give her confirmation... except she COULD see her horns.

Ok seriously what is going on here?

As Kat jogged the background started to pass extremely quickly, as if she was watching the scene played in fast forward. Despite her body not moving faster than it was in her memories, the walls flew past at amazing speeds.

That was until everything came to a screeching halt. When it did so, the walls darkened drastically, as Shizuka spoke. Kat found herself rooted to the spot. Unable to move.

"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

Oh no... no no I know where this is going. Kat tried to rally against her unresponsive body, but was unwilling to spend the meagre amount of demonic energy she had recovered to truly force the issue in case she simply collapsed in place when using it.

"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.

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

"No, I'm fine I don't-" Shizuka was by something. *My calming aura if I remember correctly.* Turning her back to the wall she slid down landing softly on her backside.

Chapter 214: a Minor misstep

Kat could only watch with mounting horror as the memory continued rolling. She tried to move her arms, legs, even her wings or tail would be enou... *Did my tail just move a bit?*

"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

I guess I'm going to have to watch myself say it aren't I... the thing that started this whole mess... Kat kept trying to move despite her thoughts, focusing her efforts on her tail. As she did so however, in the corner of her eyes she spotted something.

"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.

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. **NOveLnext.COM**

Minor! Kat realised who the figure in the corner of her eyes was. She looked concerned, but her eyes were firmly focused on Kat's tail.

Let me see if I can show her. Kat focused all her attention on her tail, moving it to point at Minor in three short jabs. *Yes!* Kat saw Minor's eyes go wide, and knew she had gotten the message.

"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. *Don't do it me.* Kat lashed her tail around grabbing onto her arm and trying to pull it back. However just as she was about to stop herself from touching Shizuka's scar Minor shook her head.

Dammit... do I just have to watch this? Minor nodded as if she could read her thoughts, and Kat freed her hand, allowing herself to make the mistake she knew she must.

"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 darkening. Shizuka had her hand shakily reaching up to her face as the darkness bubbled, and slowly started to seep out of the scar on her head. Oozing out like a tide of ink.

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

As Shizuka drop to the ground, the world shook and Kat regained control. "Minor I can move again what the hell do we do" said Kat careful to avoid the blackness spilling out of Shizuka's body as it lay on the floor.

"I don't know!" said Minor panicked, making her way over to Kat. "This isn't a memory anymore it's a dream, the rules are completely different if we want to move forward"

Kat grit her teeth "Moving forward isn't the concern, it's keeping ourselves in the dream"

"Oh we are fine on that front" said Minor

"What do you mean" said Kat with narrowed eyes "Isn't all this black gunk Nightmare stuff?"

"No" said Minor, touching her hand to the edge of it to prove a point. Sadly it was not the one she wanted. As soon as her hand came close to the black pool of sludge Kat had been carefully avoiding, the mass reared up and tried to attack Minor.

Moving instinctively, Kat's tail lashed out, wrapping itself around Minor and yanking her back away from the muck. Spreading her wings out, once Minor was out of harm, Kat placed Minor down before taking Minor in her arms and kicking off the ground.

As Kat hovered above the ground, she found herself out of reach of the growing sludge. Shizuka was no longer visible, and the surroundings were being slowly filled with black goop. *Huh... I wonder if I can fly comfortable because this is a dream, or if it is because I'm rank 2*

"Want to rethink how safe that black stuff is" asked Kat holding Minor close to her so she wouldn't fall.

"I... I... I don't know... it doesn't FEEL like Nightmares... like... they have this sort of... fear, as I mentioned and I just don't feel it from that" said Minor.

"Well, what exactly is the plan then. I can't actually keep flying like this for long" said Kat

"What?" Minor paled "You could glide at least for a while before, and you don't seem to be struggling... why can't we just stay here?"

"It still costs me a bit of energy, and I didn't exactly have time to recover much. I've got..." Kat checked her reserves "around a quarter left, and it's falling decently fast. I'd give us five minutes"

Minor frowned "So no cool tricks with demonic fire I assume"

Kat looked down at the roiling mass of darkness that hadn't stopped expanding, and was even starting to climb up. Kat wasn't exactly hovering far off the ground because of the ceiling, but it was safe enough.

"Nope. Though can you maybe give me some space to fly?" asked Kat

"Hmm... yes, because this isn't a memory any more it should be fine" said Minor, looking up. Kat watched as the ceiling gained a hole in it. Flying through revealed an empty dark space with an endless coating of stone as the 'floor'

"Don't touch that floor by the way" said Minor "It isn't exactly 'real' from this side, you'll fall straight through"

Kat frowned "How does that work?"

Minor shrugged "As I said, once the blackness started, we changed over to more of a dream like state, though even that might be a bit misleading, because it isn't like we were completely outside of a dream before... look it's complicated"

"Can you make it simple, seems like the ink didn't take too kindly to leaving it alone" said Kat as she looked down.

The mess of darkness had already spilled out of the hole Kat had escaped through. It looked to be spreading out and upwards, acting more like a pile of sand than the liquid it was supposed to be.

"Ok... um, so, we need to find the representation of Shizuka now that we are here. I'm not quite sure how to do that but... We can sort of warp logic a bit and force things to work" said Minor

"So, what we can go through a door and find her?" asked Kat

"Yes... but it would be really hard for me to make a door, and even harder to make it to the right place" said Minor

Hmm... what about if I can make just like... a door of fire. Skip the details and pretend to open it? Kat checked her reserves and saw that the plan might require some time, as she was still burning energy.

"Can we find a place to rest? I really need more energy for this" said Kat

"Maybe?" said Shizuka "Try flying up as high as you can. That should at the very least change the scenery"

Kat shrugged and took off, watching as the sludge beneath her seemed to get further and further away. Though... it didn't seem to be helping the perpetually dark surroundings, but at least it wasn't moving at all.

Chapter 215: a Minor twist

Kat continued to fly higher and higher, with the only way to tell she was progressing at all, was using the increasingly shrinking roiling puddle of darkness, but eventually even that was out of sight.

Should I use some energy to improve my eyes? Kat checked her reserves and found them teetering on the edge of nothing. *Definitely not! I can't fall now... though actually... does gliding use up energy? Could I recover that way...*

Kat's thoughts on gliding were interrupted however as she came into contact with a sticky film like substance pressing down on her horns. It was a very strange feeling. She was about to question Minor, but her kitsune companion spoke first. "Keep going if you can Kat, if you can break through the edge it should change the scene"

Kat nodded and renewed her efforts. As she tried to fly and push against whatever this substance was it increased its resistance to her efforts. Eventually she was flapping her wings as fast as she could, and yet she was still trapped in the current scene.

Do I use some of my flames? I don't really have the energy for that, I'm already risking falling down and locking up... what about just stabbing it... with my tail I guess?

Kat coiled her tail around itself, making sure to keep up her efforts and stretch the wall as thin as possible, before lashing out, striking the edge. As soon as her tail came into contact with it, Kat heard a quiet pop.

Then suddenly she wasn't straining against a thick film, she was face down in the snow and Minor was no longer in her hands. Trying and failing to move, Kat strained her eyes hoping to find some clue that Minor was ok.

"Kat? Is that you?" asked Minor from somewhere nearby.

Well... yes it is me but I can't exactly move at the moment to warn you now can I?

Kat felt the edge of her left wing get poked a few times. *Yup, that's me, can you just I dunno pull me out?*

Luckily Minor was thinking along the same lines as Kat, and had started to dig away the snow surrounding Kat. A few minutes later and Minor was crouching beside Kat who had been left leaning against a nearby tree.

"So... ah, how normal is this?" asked Minor "I mean, it was weird when you disappeared only to reappear in that next memory, but now you are just kind of sitting here... but I can sort of tell you're still home? If that makes sense"

I suppose that means she can tell that I'm not just a husk, or a fake Kat... which is good information to have... but I can't exactly give you any encouragement at the moment... unless my tail maybe?

Kat focused on her tail and tried to get it to move, but it was happily curled in her lap courtesy of Minor, and seemed to have no desire to move at this point in time. *Well... that's a bit of a lost cause.*

Wait what about a little bit of energy in my eyes? Kat reached towards the few embers of demonic energy she had left and tried to order them towards her eyes, but found it to be similarly unresponsive.

"Well... I guess you might not be able to hear me... though your eyes are open which is a little weird... anyway at least we seem to have a mostly safe place to rest up. Hopefully you aren't affected by the cold... that could be a problem" said Minor

Wait how come you aren't? I mean I don't know why I'm fine either but at least I can recognise that my powers are bullshit and don't make sense. Minor's used to make at least a degree of sense.

"Huh... I can almost see the question in your eye. Well, I mentioned that the only thing that really affects me here is the Nightmares and I mean that very literally. I can just choose not to be cold because I'm more like the scenery than anything else" said Minor

Huh... still not sure that makes sense. I mean now that I look the snow is falling though you Minor, like, it just ignores your existence. At least the trees have the decency to collect some snow once and awhile.

"Anyway, as I was saying you can just relax for a bit. I can keep a look out, and make sure that the black stuff or the Nightmares appear. Then we have to find our way out of this part of the dream... I think it's here because of Major's ice affinity. We were sort of half in a memory before but now we are really in a dream. I think Major might be trying to keep us away for some reason" said Minor.

Well that's just great. But I still don't understand how this is different to the memories? Or why exactly we can move through them? Like isn't a dream a dream? Why can we move between them?

Minor seemed to be done talking though as she sat down next to Kat and pulled one of Kat's wings around herself before gazing out at the snow swept landscape. Kat let her mind drift to random topics once Minor was settled, for she was right, Kat just needed a bit of energy to be back on her feet.

A short five minutes later Kat managed to flex her fingers. Control slowly returning to her body. Minor felt her shifting and looked over waiting for confirmation. "I'm fine. This is just what happens when I run out of energy. It's kind of weird. I'm not unconscious but I just can't move at all"

Minor frowned "For how long?"

Kat shrugged "Until I recover. I think I can do little things if my life is threatened but I've only seen one example of that"

"Ok... so what should we do? Keep waiting?" asked Minor

Kat shrugged again "Well, I should be fine to walk, that doesn't really eat up much if any more energy than sitting around. It is stuff like flying and running at full speed that drains me. Especially my demonic fire. Summoning that can be a massive pain"

Minor nodded "Ok... hmm, I say we sit here for a little bit longer I have a plan"

"Ok?" said Kat before settling back down slightly and leaning into the tree. *I wonder what her plan is? Does she want me to fly up again? I mean I guess it could work but at the same time... I feel like that's a little too easy.*

##

After another thirty minutes of recovery Kat was back to full. But for once she'd actually had the peace of mind to properly examine the recovery process. It seemed like it wasn't as linear as she'd originally thought.

So it seems like, as long as I'm sitting still, my regen increases exponentially? Or at least additively. I was only around a third at fifteen minutes... but does it increase the longer I stay motionless, or the more energy I have? It has to be motionless right? Because the drain and regen is constant when I fly or run.

"I'm full, and ready to go Minor" said Kat

Minor shook herself out of her stupor. At some point she had fallen asleep. *Which is still really weird. I mean... can you sleep in a dream? How exactly does that work? I'd have thought she'd sleep when Major did but now that I think about it, Minor's 'world' would be more active at night.*

Standing up and stretching with a yawn "Ok, so I'm going to see if I can twist this little trick into a skip for us. Give me just a moment" said Minor

With that she started to peel the bark off the tree they had been leaning against. Once she had a small pile of bark in her hand, she proceeded to snap it into smaller pieces and built a tiny campfire on her hand.

"Can you put a bit of fire on top Kat?" asked Minor *noVelnExt.cOm*

Nodding, and summoning the requested flame Kat let it spout from her finger, and hovered it slightly over the campfire. "Now just hold it there" said Minor.

She took a step forward and held out her hand while looking at Kat's flame and the sticks in her outstretched hand. After much humming and hawing, Minor nodded to herself, and dropped the sticks.

Instead of them falling like Kat had expected, she felt her flame leave her control and vanish. Startled she looked around, and noticed a bright light in the distance. Enhancing her eyes revealed... it was a campfire.

"Ok, what? How did that work?" asked Kat

"Well, I just made a campfire, lined everything up and then... bent things a little with my control over Major's mind. Now come on, we should head for the campfire" said Mino

Chapter 216: a Minor story

The snow crunched under Kat's feet as she followed Minor towards the campsite. She was still trying to wrap her head around the whole thing. *So... I can sort of see how the logic works here. You have a tiny fireplace, and instead of it being tiny and in Minor's hand it's large and far away*

But how does this help as move on? And why does it work? Are all dreams like this? Or is it just how Major's works. And if that is true, this is just how Major's dream works, is that because Minor is here inside her head as well, or would my dreams work like this?

Kat watched Minor walk through the snow in a strange fashion. She almost seemed to be standing on it. She sunk just barely through the top layer of snow but left no footprints. *Is that another part of her not really being affected by the dream? Or is she just that light? Actually, maybe that makes more sense than anything else*

Because sure I seem to have weight here, but is that just because I think I have weight? It does really seem like how we are thinking about this has a large effect on the surroundings... or at least how Minor thinks about things does...

"So, how will this fire help us leave?" asked Kat

"Well, this particular scene is an endless blizzard. However, if we have a warm fire to huddle around the logic follows that it will stop snowing eventually, because we are nice and warm. This should break the scene, or at least give us a way out" said Minor

"Wait... are we trying to break the scene now? Like the Nightmares?" asked Kat

Minor paused in her stride at that. It was a good thirty seconds before she starting moving again, and when she spoke, it was with a heavy voice. "Actually, that might not be too far off. We are the invaders this time. That might be why the gunk didn't fill me with fear, because I'm the one who doesn't belong..."

"Hey, Minor it's ok" said Kat

Minor nodded but her voice was still heavy when she spoke "No I understand. This is the Nightmare Major is stuck in and we need to free her from it whether she likes it or not"

Kat nodded "Yes we do. I'm a little worried that we might be doing some damage, but I guess we are past the point of worry. Damage can be fixed, but if her body dies out in the real world it's the end"

Minor gulped "Yes. We've already had one second chance. I doubt the great fox would see fit to give us another"

"Great fox? What's that? I've heard you curse in the name of everfrost... or Major might have done that, but not the Great Fox" said Kat

"Well, actually this is perfect" said Minor as she reached the edge of the fire "Sit down and I'll tell you about the Great Fox and why we don't curse its name"

"So, how much do you know about beast people?" asked Minor

"Nothing really" said Kat "My home dimension doesn't really have them"

Minor nodded "Ok, well I might have to go a bit broader with my explanation then but that's fine. So, you may notice that kitsune are not part of the beast kingdom. There is a reason for this, and the main one is that we aren't all that compatible with each other.

"See, a standard beast person may choose to have children with any other. In this case, the child will be able to draw traits from both parents mostly randomly along with what race they are. Now, this doesn't happen often because beast people tend to find people of the exact type more appealing but things can change

"Kitsune however, are always born kitsune. It doesn't matter who we choose to take as our significant other. Some even say we don't need a partner at all, but I'm not sure about that. Now the main reason for this difference is in how we each began as a sentient race.

"The beast people are descended from the great beasts. It is said that as they reached for further strength, they found their bestial forms limiting, and so they came together to perform a major ritual to provide them the chance to shift into a more human form... well, actually they sought to emulate the elves, or so the stories go, but some debate this.

"That is mainly because they ended up sharing significantly more traits with humans and each other than the elves, which causes questions of who they wanted to emulate, but that is neither here nor there.

"So, they performed this grand ritual, hoping to grant them the gift of shapeshifting, and allowing them to switch between their two forms at will. Now once again, accounts differ as to if they succeeded in this or not, but what we do know is that it did not transfer between generations

"Either over time, or because of the ritual, the tribes became locked in their two-legged forms. Now, they still have remnants of their old physical strength, but nothing compared to what great beasts were supposed to have"

Minor paused to take a short breather. As she did this Kat noticed that the snow had slowed its fall and was now falling straight down as if the wind had died out almost completely but chose not to mention it.

"Now, the kitsune, we are different. According to legend, we were always one of the greater existences of the realm. We did not yearn for a human like form unlike the beast people. We were content with our growing territory, and what is now our kingdom.

"This however, all changed when the Queen of our people fell in love with someone from one of the other races. Sadly we don't actually know which of said races it was. Our records even include the great beasts, so we know this happened before their ritual, so we know it wasn't a member of the beast tribes...

"But quite a few of the oldest records have been destroyed or lost over time, or even just mistranslated as our language has shifted over time closer towards common. Anyway, apparently this Queen was the strongest kitsune to have ever been born at this point

"And one of our main abilities was to take on a battle form, a giant fox that for the greatest of us was even larger than the mountains. This Queen was a master of this art and decided to stretch her powers and managed to construct a human form.

"Now, she happily married her chosen husband with no issues. That was until she wanted to have children. She found that she couldn't alter her form during this time. Still, she was strong and this wasn't a real problem.

"Until the children were born in that humanoid form. Now this might not sound bad, but please understand that we don't gain our transformation abilities till at least our fourth tail, and usually at our fifth.

"This meant that their children were locked in their human forms. This was initially considered a negative until it was revealed that they were even stronger than any other kitsune of the same tail rank.

"And so more and more kitsune decided to follow in the Queen's footsteps. Now, the issue with this was, the transformation actually weakens kitsune children, it was the Queen's bloodline that kept her children strong.

"This was realised too late as multiple generations of kitsune that rarely made it to the fifth tail, and even rarer could transform. That's allegedly how we transformed into a humanoid race and some say we lost the ability to transform into foxes completely"

"The Great Fox, I was speaking of earlier is said to be that Queen's oldest answer, the first of our kind. But honestly we don't really know anything about her, or him. It's just a story unlike that of the Queen's which we can be relatively certain is true"

"Huh" said Kat "So did you guys actually lose that ability?"

Minor bit her lip. "Look Kat, I shouldn't answer that... but you're my friend. MINE. The first I've ever really had that I can call my own... and I really really want to answer you... but I'm just..."

Kat cut in "I swear on my demonic energy that I shall not reveal to anyone the truth of the kitsune without your prior approval"

As Kat said this, chains started to snake out of her body, they poised as if ready to strike. Minor looked between them and Kat and said "No. I reject your vow"

The chains rapidly vanished as if they were never there at all, but before Kat could say anything Minor held up a hand "I'll tell you anyway. I trust you. The truth is, we have never lost that power. We keep it as secrets and legends but it can be done"

Chapter 217: a Major-ly bad idea

Kat swallowed as she stared at Minor. *I mean... I guess that makes sense, I saw Euko in that memory changing just her hands... but... I feel like there is more to this... but do I even want to ask? Should I? Dammit I want to know.*

"How could you keep something like that hidden?" asked Kat

"Well... it actually isn't as hard as you'd think" said Minor "I mentioned that the ruling house, that is, us, are supposedly descended from that Queen who started our race? Well, one of the major factors supporting this is we are one of the few capable of even reaching five tails still

"There are of course, a few other houses that can as well, but it occasionally skips a generation, or more and normally we can explain why we keep it a secret. Also... I think you need to actually know it's possible for you to change. So... I'd bet mum doesn't tell them all.

Kat nodded "That makes sense I suppose. Still I'm surprised. It seems like you've kept this under wraps for a really long time"

"Well, we might have cheated a bit. See, when in our fox forms our control over our element is supposed to drastically improve, so, for example if Grandma wanted to use her form, she'd just create a fake copy of herself, then transform and coat herself in ice

"Giving the illusion it's just a powerful spell that uses our belief in the Great Fox to strengthen it" said Minor

Kat frowned at the last part "Wait belief plays a part in magic? How does that make sense?"

"Ah... well... ah, I don't really understand it, but I think it has something to do with runes. They all mean something very specific and you have to know and believe in what they mean to use them... or that's what we were told anyway. I never paid as much attention as I should have... I didn't think I'd get the chance to use my magic ever" said Minor

Kat nodded. *Hmm, I suppose that is fairly reasonable. She's been in Major's head for years and why waste the time learning a strange runic system you can't be sure will ever be available to you especially if she thought other things might help like remember key information for Major... wait but aren't runes key information.*

Well, whatever. Kat looked at the landscape and the sun rising over the horizon. *It seems we can leave this scene soon.* "Looks like it's time to head off Minor" said Kat indicating at the rising sun.

"Yes. Please be ready, I can only imagine that wherever we end up next will be more hostile to us. I'm not sure how far away we are from Major's consciousness but I think at least two, and no more than five" said Minor as she turned her back to Kat and started messing around with the snow.

"Why those numbers?" asked Kat

"Well, I know the environment will get worse and worse as we get closer, and really snow is pretty tame all things considered. Major could be throwing icicles or even just icebergs at us to keep us away. This is more... like a holding area" said Minor

"Ok, say how are we ending this scene anyway?" asked Kat

"I just have to find the ground and then push into it, change things a little. Like falling dominos and the scene should shatter and we will end up in the next area" said Minor

"Hmm, couldn't I like, make a door out of fire and then you make it a real door going straight to Major? Would something like that work?" asked Kat

"There's no way something... actually... hmmm" Minor said, getting a thoughtful look on her face.

"Perhaps... carving it into snow? Then outlining it with fire... Kat your fire doesn't melt ice right?"

Kat nodded "It creates more actually"

Minor nodded vigorously "This could fast track our progress greatly... ok just give me a moment"

Minor then proceeded to pick up a large pile of snow. How she managed to actually hold the pile without it collapsing was beyond Kat, as it didn't seem possible. Minor slowly started to pile snow up to the side of the campfire just outside of the light it casted.

A few minutes later, there was a large pile of snow with a door carved into the side. Minor had even gone so far as to include extra details like a doorknob and some simple carvings "Ok Kat, please light up the edges" said Minor

Kat nodded, placing her hand to the side of the pile. Flame leapt to her fingers, and eagerly filled slight indent marking the edge of the door as if it was being sucked in. Letting the power flow out of her soon gave life to a bright door, surrounded in glowing purple fire.

"Ok, stand back a moment" said Minor, and Kat did as she was asked.

Minor placed her hand on the doorknob and turned it carefully. Kat heard a click, as Minor then ever so slowly pushed forward letting the door open a tiny crack. As soon as she'd done this though, a great roar echoed out of the door.

It set Kat's teeth on edge, and seemed to worm its way into her body, vibrating through her bones, and especially her horns, which seemed to almost hum against the sound, trying to reject its presence.

Kat found herself paralysed, but Minor was already moving. She slammed the door closed with as much force as her smaller body could muster, and then proceeded to pile snow on top of the door.

This didn't seem to stop whatever was on the other side though. Loud thumps resounded as it hurled itself against the door. Clearly seeking to come for them "Kat can you get rid of the fire?"

Kat tried to shake her head, but the ringing of her horns made it hard. Finally, as an improvisation she moved her tail and created a close approximation of an X. Seeing this Minor frowned and said "Set it all on fire then"

Kat nodded, forcing the energy out of her body in a long stream. She was glad that it was listening to her. The sound had finally stopped rattling her body, and so she brought up her hands and unleashed a torrent of fire coating the hill.

As soon as the fire spread over the whole structure, Minor slammed her hand into it, and the beating stopped. Once it did Minor fell over backwards drenched in sweat "I have... no idea... what that was" panted Minor "But we will not be opening any more doors"

Kat felt her knees weaken, but held her ground, stumbling over to Minor and lifting her up into a hug "It will be ok... but what was that? Why was it even there?" *NoVeLnExt.Com*

"I... I don't know" said Minor "When I 'made' the door... I... I think I tried to find the largest concentration of Major's mind... but... maybe I just found a large part that was close..."

Kat gulped "Can we even deal with something like that if we meet it later?"

Minor buried herself in Kat's arms as she mumbled "I... I don't know... I think... I think there has to be a more sane version of Major somewhere... I mean... that can't be all that's left... right? I just... I think we need to keep exploring, and find the part that wants to help"

"Are you sure there is a part that wants to help us?" asked Kat unsure

However Minor nodded with more confidence now "Yes... yes there has to be. See, as horrible as that thing is... if that was all that was left of Major, she could use her body. The only reason her mind is trapped here... is because it is warring with itself. So... so that has to mean there is a counterpart otherwise... otherwise"

Kat pulled Minor in closer "It's ok. We will find our Major, not the foolish self-destructive part of her that doesn't know what it's doing"

Minor nodded and returned Kat hug, sniffing slightly but not outright crying. "Yup... we have to" said Minor

The pair stayed there for a while longer. Kat to regenerate her energy, and Minor to calm herself down and perhaps regenerate some of her own power. * I noticed she was sweating a bunch when she slammed the door shut... but now that I think about it... that might have been from when she OPENED the door. I think using her powers to change this dream might be taking a toll on her...*

I just hope she doesn't push herself too hard. I'll need to keep an eye on her and shut that down if I see her doing anything stupid. That's the least I can do. I promised myself I'd save them both, and I won't let the first summoning I fail be the one about people I care about...

Well... that first one doesn't count right? I mean... that one wasn't really my fault. Kat smiled to herself, as she patted Minor's tails. *Yeah. That wasn't my fault*

Chapter 218: a Major shower

After Kat thoroughly assured herself that she had not in fact failed any missions, especially because she was paid in full for that first one. *So how could I have failed?*

 As well as making sure that she had properly regenerated her energy, Minor set about sending them to the next area.

She was once again looking at a patch of exposed dirt. "Now Kat, because we spent some extra time and the sun is up in full this scene is likely to break on its own. I'm just going to force the issue a little bit.

"Please be ready for whatever might happen. I can only imagine what might happen next. Because it seems we are currently unwanted, I can only imagine that each one we break will be harsher and harsher somehow. I can keep myself mostly safe but I'm not sure about you" said Minor, voice steady, eyes locked on Kat's when she finished the sentence.

"I'll be fine. You've seen my regeneration" said Kat

Minor nodded and said "Well here we go"

As Minor's hand made contact with the ground there was a faint flash, and then the scene shattered. Kat had precisely one moment to make sense of things before everything started to go to hell.

Kat reacted by speeding her thought process up and taking a look around. With the change of scenery, she was now in the pouring wind and howling rain. She didn't need to put up with the sound just yet because the scene had only existed for a moment but Kat was sure it would be here in short order.

Now, wind and rain were issues, but no worse than snow. The real danger of this particular scene was that they appeared to be falling from a great height, with only a mostly sheer cliff face on Kat's right to help slow her descent.

Can I afford to use my wings? Even with time slowed as it is I can feel the wind, and see the rain. It must be blowing a gale... I'm not quite sure I can control myself in such poor weather. Perhaps with some training, or maybe with excessive energy expenditure... but I'm not sure

That was when Kat noticed, something. Minor was also falling. It was clear by how she had started to spread herself out, to catch the wind. Despite none of her clothes falling out of place, Minor was sinking slowly lower.

Dammit. Can she fly like me? Use her bend reality powers? No... I don't think I can take that chance. So, I need to grab Minor, that's fine, she isn't far. But does that change my issue with my wings?

Kat's lips would have pressed into a thin line but time was slowed enough that unless she was willing to burn energy, the action could only be performed in secret. *Ok, so, Minor is immune to environmental effects. So she should be fine if I have to catch her and the landing is a bit hard. Based on the direction of the rain, if I use my wings to catch her, slamming into the rock face is nearly a certainty.*

I just need to make sure that I'm prepared for a bit of pain and then cling to the wall. We can make a better plan once we can actually talk to each other. Kat kept increased thought speed as she flared her wings and pushed herself towards Minor.

She was only just barely out of reach and one solid flap was all it took to grab hold of Minor. Of course, spreading her wings like that have given the wind ample surface area, and as she brushed Minor's outfit, she felt herself being pushed towards the cliff face.

Grasping the cloth that made up Minor's robes Kat accepted the push and retracted her wings as quickly as she could. *They won't slow me down enough to make up for the extra push of the wind, so I'll keep them closed.* *NoVeLnExt.Com*

As the cliff face rapidly closed the distance, relatively speaking. Kat braced herself for the impact, moving her head to the side and leaning it back slightly while spreading out the rest of her body to absorb the impact.

Despite this, due to her horns, Kat still felt her head come into contact with the wall first. A loud crack, followed by a thud, as Kat's body got to experience the tender care of a stone wall.

Luckily, the wind was still whipping around, and her wings had unfurled slightly, moving on impact, keeping her mostly stuck against the wall. Using her hand that wasn't holding Minor, Kat forced her hand into the wall.

Rocks cracked, and were ground under her hand as she fed it energy to keep herself anchored, before she called out to Minor. "Hey Minor are you ok"

"I'll be fine" said the fox hanging from her left hand. "Can you pull me up?"

"Sure" said Kat and lifted Minor up to her height. The angle was a little awkward but to Kat's strength, Minor weighed essentially nothing. Once Minor was beside Kat, she placed her hands on the wall and just sort of stuck there.

When she turned to face Kat though, she had a large bleeding cut at the top of her head. "Minor are you ok! You're bleeding. I thought you were immune to environmental effects" shouted Kat over the wind.

"I'll be fine. I can choose if I am affected or not and well... I needed to be affected by the ground, to not just fall through... of course now that the ground was introduced to my face it was less ideal" said Minor

"What about you though? I heard a rather bad crack when you landed" asked Minor

Kat used her now free hand to reach up and explore the area where her head had contacted with wall. Running her hand along the side of her horn she felt nothing but the smooth wet surface of her horn soaked because of the rain, but otherwise undamaged.

Her quest for damage, was solved though when she started to pull back, and her hand brushed along a large gouge... in the stone near her head. "Oh... seems I found the crack. Turns out my horns are tougher than the wall is" said Kat

Minor nodded "I suppose that is to be expected really. If they were not solid constructions it would be dangerous to have them be a main component of your power" said Minor

"Um what?" asked Kat

"Demons powers relay on their horns to direct them, don't they? I mean that's what I was told" said Minor.

Huh... hey system is she right?

Kat's vision however was not obscured by any firey text she'd come to know and appreciate. *Oh right. I guess I forgot about that. I've been able to get Minor to answer most of my questions so I sort of let it drift to the back of my mind.*

"I don't really know... I think they help? But I also ranked up quite soon afterwards so I never really got the chance to see if the rank up helped or if it was just the horn"

Minor nodded "Ok... so now the question is, how do we deal with the cliff"

"Aren't you the dream realm expert? What is your plan" asked Kat

"Well... I'm not quite sure what this scene is supposed to be. So, it could either be plummeting to our death with you unable to use your wings lest you get dashed against the rocks... or it could be an endless climb to the top we will never find" said Minor

"Why would we ever fall to our death? This sort of rock isn't that hard, I just punched through it" said Kat "And you've seen my regen I'd be fine"

"Well, actually, Major never really saw any of that. She just knows you have wings, and perhaps a bit of extra stamina. I don't think she knows how much better you actually are, so that gives us an advantage" said Minor

"Ok... so what is the plan" asked Kat

"I think... I think we go up. My gut tells me that Major wouldn't have thought you could so easily break into the wall. I bet it's about the strength of normal stone, so by climbing up instead of falling we should be able to shatter the scene" said Minor.

"Will you be fine?" asked Kat

Minor nodded "Yeah, I can't get tired, and the rain just slides through me. Plus I can sort of just attach myself to the wall. Make the motions and pretend, and that's good enough for me" said Minor

Kat nodded. *Welp. Let's hope this isn't a long climb,* thought Kat as she started to climb slowly. She kept her wings in close, and her energy circulating her fingers, easily crushing the rock as she forced hand holds for herself. Though, her tail had curled itself around her stomach, perhaps so it wasn't forced about by the wind.

Chapter 219: a Minor climb

If you'd asked Kat what the chances are she'd be learning how to climb cliffs by digging her hands into solid stone and simply pulling herself up a few days earlier. She'd have laughed. Now, it wasn't quite so funny.

Honestly, it's just kind of dull. Checking her reserves once again, Kat found them basically full. *Turns out pulverizing a bit of rock isn't even that hard. Normally I'd love to enjoy the scenery and appreciate the atmosphere but...*

There's literally nothing here! And Kat was right. Due to the current scene she had the choice of looking at dark grey stone, or the endless wind and rain, or perhaps Minor, but she was having her own problems.

Minor's little trick to allow her to climb up worked well, but for some reason she kept falling off the wall, as if her power had been lost. Only for her to stumble slightly and cling to the wall once again.

It took them a rather embarrassingly long time to figure out that it only happened when Minor climbed past Kat. Apparently for some reason Kat needed to be leading the charge, or perhaps Minor's slight bent to reality worked better. They were still trying to figure out the specifics.

"I'm telling you Kat. There is no reason I should have to sit in line with you for my power to work" explained Minor

"Well, the only way to test that is if I let you drop down past me and see if that also causes you to lose grip but I'm certain I don't want to risk that" said Kat

Minor pouted "This could be important though. If I knew why exactly this wasn't working, it might help me in the future"

Kat shrugged "Look, we've been climbing for at least two, maybe three hours. Say you lose traction and fall down. I'll have to dive after you because it will mean you can't climb without my immediate presence.

"Then, we might lose an hour or so of progress, but because this is a dream and we are supposed to be falling, I wouldn't put it past the scenery that we'll be set back even further. Do you really want to risk it Minor? I mean you are the expert here, but I just... it seems like a bad idea" said Kat before spitting out the surprising amount of water that collected in her mouth.

A few minutes of silence passed as Minor considered what Kat was saying, making sure to keep pace with her. After around five minutes she spoke up and said "Look, I just... I don't really encounter things like this often you know?"

"I've been here so long that little mysteries like this have kind of been lost to me and I really want to know, but I also admit that it might not be the best time considering we are on the clock..."

"But like um... also it might not matter? Like if we are supposed to be falling, maybe we don't actually fall at all, the scene just loops so we fall forever" said Minor, who had no need to remove the extra water.

"If you're thinking like that though, I could argue that to break the scene we need to climb for five hours, and having us fall off wouldn't just set us back a few hundred metres but instead five hours. Oh, and can you let the rain wash off that blood? It's getting a little unsettling" said Kat

"Oh right, forgot about that" said Minor, and the bloodstain vanished. *She could have just removed that? I spent hours staring at the blood endlessly dripping from her forehead and she could just magic it away? I rescind my worry for you Minor I want a refund.*

"But you do bring up a good point. The thing is though... I don't really feel this scene weakening much as we climb" said Minor

"So it is weakening?" asked Kat

"Well, yeah, but that might just be because you're here. I don't really have a baseline for how quickly dream scenes unravel without you, and I very much doubt your presence was planned even if this is a reaction to try and lock us out.

"I at least... somewhat? Have a place in Major's mind so I can't cause disruptions too easily on my own. So, sure we could keep climbing, but I just don't know if it's enough. Plus I can tell your holding back your speed so that we can act together" said Minor *nOvElnExt.com*

"What are you talking about, I'm going pretty fast" said Kat

Minor stared blankly at Kat "Sure, but I bet you are at full energy, and if you wanted to burn through some more, you'd be able to double your speed"

Kat shrugged "Maybe, but this seems like an endurance thing" said Kat "Though, here is a question, how close to breaking things are we. You said we'd made at least some progress, right?"

"Eh... yeah, but just a bit. So... there are a few factors that go into breaking a scene. The first and major one is obviously how stable it is. This is sort of a measure of how true to the original vision it is.

"So... like, if the scene was an endless wait for food or water, pulling some out of your pocket, even if it's like one biscuit or half a glass of water, that might be enough to shatter the scene even without having myself around to force the issue.

"But, if instead you were trekking through the desert, and it was the slow wearing down of hope, finding a small amount could hardly waver that scene, because you are still trapped in the desert and your food is very finite" said Minor

Kat nodded as Minor continued "So, take the blizzard for example. It was about trapping us in an endless snow storm, so creating a bit of fire, then using that bit to create a campfire, and then telling stories changed the scene enough I could shatter it

"Because the whole point was for us to wander without direction, and we changed it to cosy stories by the fire. It wasn't that we stopped moving that broke it, but that we stopped needing to move. We had found our end to the snowstorm even if it was still going"

Right, so that means it's more about finding the core idea of a scene and subverting it. "And you said we weren't really making progress?"

Minor leaned her head to the side slightly "Well, once again, it isn't as though we are making no progress, but um... the other thing is how well put together the scene is, and simple is best. I might need say... 50% destabilisation, or 75% and we have... let's say 10, from 3 hours' worth of work"

Kat frowned "That sounds pretty bad"

Minor nodded "Yeah, but time passes strangely in here sometimes, so we might not be down three real world hours. Could be more, but is likely less to draw out her own torment. That's the sort of brooding Major does"

Hmm... so we risk losing a bit of progress from 3 hours, to see if we can climb faster... but then if I'm burning energy what are we going to do when the next scene is even worse. Minor said there would be at least 2 more so we've got something worse than this... though I guess I can just rest against the wall...

And now that I think about it... I haven't gotten tired at all, not even the slightest bit. Well, there was that time I fainted, and the few times I ran out of energy, but like... I don't feel like I need sleep... hopefully

"If you want to test this, I'm ok with it" said Kat. *I think I might as well give her the chance. Worst comes to worst we lose a bit of progress, but I'm starting to think we are going about this the wrong way.*

"Ok Kat, climb further" said Minor

Kat shrugged and ascended a few more spots, watching Minor carefully. Once Minor was entirely behind her, nothing seemed to happen. "You still hanging on" asked Kat

Minor nodded "Yup still good. Do you want to go a bit further?"

"Sure" said Kat, making a few more holes in the wall as she pulled herself further up the side of the cliff. Looking down she found Minor still hanging easily against the wall.

"Ok looks like I can be behind. Maybe you should try and climb as high as possible" said Minor.

Kat shrugged, as Minor started to climb up after Kat, however the moment she started to reach higher, she slipped on something. A feat Kat knew was impossible because the rain shouldn't be having an effect on Minor

Nonetheless, the kitsune started to fall backwards away from the wall, and Kat of course jumped after her without hesitation.

Chapter 220: diving for Minor

Kat felt the wind whip past her as she shot down to grab Minor. Because the kitsune had stopped the effect of the wind, she was able to fall much faster than Kat who had to contend with the wind trying to force her against the wall.

Making sure to kick off each time she got closer and closer, Kat slowly approached Minor, gaining ground every time she kicked off the wall. *Why the hell is she falling so fast. Minor has spread her arms out to stop her fall a bit, and I'm as compact as I can be, why is she so much faster.*

I mean seriously, is she completely... unaffected by the... dammit of course she isn't just ignoring the wind and rain she's ignoring air resistance as part of that. "Minor! Let the wind effect you so I can catch up" shouted Kat

Sadly, the words didn't seem to reach Minor's ears as she kept falling at what Kat now realised was a slowly increasing speed. *Dammit Minor!* Kat pushed as much energy into her feet as she could and opened her wings.

She didn't flap them, but the extra surface area was more than enough to convince the wind to try and throw her against the rocks again. Abusing this, Kat did a series of rapid hops against the wall, kicking off and heading downwards and slowly gaining speed on Minor.

The issue was though, while Kat was now traveling faster, that was only for the immediate future. Minor was still continually speeding up and away from Kat and it seemed she had noticed that, but perhaps not the reason why.

Ok, new plan. I'm not quite fast enough to catch her I don't think... at this rate she'll start surpassing me in speed just before I reach her. I'm going to need something different. What about my voice? I can use my demonic energy for that...

But it just sort of projects that strange creepy demon voice, which yes makes sense, but doesn't seem helpful here... unless that is also louder? Or maybe it will make my voice travel further?

Wait but sound needs air to travel, if Minor is unaffected by wind, she won't be able to hear me... no wait, she could hear me just fine before despite the wind. So what the heck is going on?

Kat shook her head, as the water droplets bounced off her hair, still repelled by her demonic skin and hair, leaving her as dry as Minor, the one completely unaffected by the weather. *Focus Kat. I might as well try. I'm already burning a fair bit of energy trying to catch her, a bit more for a yell is nothing even if it doesn't work.*

Summoning as much into her lungs and voice box as she could without losing any speed, Kat shouted out "MINOR LET THE WIND AFFECT YOU!"

Minor flinched at Kat's words, seemingly hearing them. The kitsune took a worried look at the rock wall and then at Kat rushing down towards her before nodding seemingly making a decision.

The moment the winds effects returned to Minor was instantly noticeable. Instead of straight down, she started angling towards the cliffs, and her speed more than halved. Kat gave one final push and reached out towards Minor

Kat placed her hand between the cliff face and where Minor was supposed to be, hoping to catch her before she slammed into the wall. Minor helped with this, spreading her tails out and turning to face Kat with one arm reaching up.

Minor and Kat's hands met and Kat pulled them close. Once Minor was securely in her grasp, Kat planted her heel into the wall, as if she was skating. Rocks cracked, and crumbled under Kat's momentum.

She was slowing down her mad rush, but the rocks continued to give way and her falling wasn't quite halted. *Hmm, I don't want to change position... it might fling us into the wall, this just halts me a bit and tried to stand me further up, which is easy to ignore...*

But we aren't slowing quite as much as I'd like. I'm basically cleaving the rock... which is weird because I don't remember it being so soft... I wonder if this is because we are supposed to be falling.

Ok... new plan, I'll have to dig my nails in. "Minor, grab onto my back" said Kat

Minor nodded, and made her way around, letting the wind carry her back slightly before fastening herself onto the back of Kat, squeezing her wings uncomfortably, but Kat let it be. Kat also let her tail unwind, and wrap itself around Minor as well, before flipping herself once more to face the wall.

It was only a few seconds before the wind caught her and threw her forward, but Kat was ready. Stretching herself out, Kat infused her four main limbs with energy ready to absorb the impact, as well as giving a bit to her horns just in case.

Kat slammed into the wall and dug in. The rock crumbled under Kat's speed still, but with four points of contact, five if you count her horns, it was more than enough. Kat's limbs strained under the combined weight of Kat and Minor, as she brought herself to a stop.

For a single moment, everything was fine, and there was only stillness. That was until the rocks under Kat all started to give way. It had been enough to stop her, but now that she was in place though, they weren't quite up for the prolonged task.

Acting quickly, Kat pulled her feet back before slamming them into the wall, giving way beneath her feet. This wasn't quite enough, so she pulled back her right hand, using her left to find what purchase it could in the ruined wall.

Bring her right hand down, Kat ploughed a hole into the wall, pulverising rock as she went. It took only a moment all in total, to have three points of solid contact with the wall, and everything was fine.

Kat let out a breath she didn't know she was holding, before checking her energy reserves. She found them surprisingly high, despite all the chasing, and the smashing, it was all physical and in only brief bursts. She hadn't even lost a third of her energy.

Kat tried to flex her wings, reflexively, but a clingy fox prevented that, and Kat halted the motion once she realised the issue. "What's the plan now Minor" asked Kat

"Um... um... I'm sorry" whispered Minor.

Luckily, she was right next to Kat's ear so the sound was not lost to the wind and Kat could reply. "It's fine I agreed to test it same as you"

Minor nodded and buried herself in Kat's neck stifling sobs. "Come on Minor, you've shown plenty of courage so far. I haven't even really needed to use my calming aura. You're stronger than this, cheer up"

"But... but this one is really my fault. You warned me not to, and I can even feel that the scene has regained a bunch of energy from my mistake. It is in pristine condition now" sniffled Minor

Hmm, do I want to send out some calming aura? It's a good fix for the problem, but I sort of want Minor to recover herself... but at the same time... I can fix the problem; I can just make it go away. If she wasn't so intent in beating herself up over it she'd see there was nothing she could have done.

"Hey, hey Minor, we are going to be fine" said Kat tightening her tail around Minor

"But... but... I even had you wasste a b,bb,bunch of energy, and I mean... like, I just... I should have realised I was falling faster and fff,faster with the wind" said Minor.

"Hey, Minor, it's fine, I didn't think about it either till I went over the specifics in my head" said Kat

This didn't seem to mollify Minor though "B-but it's my power, I s-should know"

"Hey, I don't know everything about my own power, it's a learning experience, it's fine Minor" said Kat reassuringly.

"You've had plenty of good ideas, like we beat that sword with one, and we kept Amelie's fight safe with another" said Kat

"B-but you passed out that time, that was also my fault really..." said Minor

Kat bit her lip. *Dammit, I really want to do this properly and not just throw calming aura at the problem and be done with it... but we are on a time crunch... but I also have no idea how much of one... curses. Maybe I should ask? But Minor has always been quick to accept, and perhaps I've been too quick to offer... she says about to offer again.*

"Hey Minor, look, it really isn't your fault, would you like me to use a bit of calming aura so you can think it through properly?" asked Kat