

## DEMONS 31

### Chapter 31: I Believe I can Glide

Kat's legs left the ground and she hung in the air for a brief moment before unfurling her wings to their full height. Her wings strained under the weight, forcing Kat to clench her teeth and do everything she could to simply glide. \*My wings are not happy with this arrangement. I'm not sure how long I can keep this up, but I certainly can't fly while holding Minor.\*

"Minor, where do I need to go, I can't fly like this if I even can by myself. I'm not sure how long I can last gliding either" Kat yelled to be heard over the rushing wind

"Just a little bit left" Minor yelled back. Kat tried to bank gently to the left but found herself going into a spiral. Kat's instincts quickly righted her again but now she was even more lost

"Ok, that, was horrible" said Kat.

\*System why did that happen? I'm using my wings for their intended purpose I think so why my instincts are so thrown off.\*

USER KAT, D.E.M.O.N.S WOULD LIKE TO REMIND USER KAT THAT USER KAT'S WINGS WERE POTENTIALLY NOT VALID METHODS OF FLIGHT JUST MOMENTS AGO AND IS NOW ATTEMPTING TO LIFT APPROXIMATELY DOUBLE USER KAT'S WEIGHT

\*Right... I really should have thought of that huh? Maybe all this walking has been getting to me as well. I'm missing things. Perhaps I haven't properly relaxed in some time.\*

"Minor, which way do we need to be going" yelled Kat

"Surprisingly we seem to have ended up facing the correct way" yelled Minor

Kat nodded in response. \*I guess I just fly straight, or glide I suppose. My wings are screaming at me so hopefully I don't have to keep this up too long. I keep feeling the need to flap them slightly. I wonder what we are- is that a wall?\*

Panicking slightly Kat said "Hey Minor, we got a problem wall incoming at 12 o'clock"

"What does that even mean?" said Minor

"There is a wall and we are heading right for it" said Kat with slight panic

"Um, eh, um we're too high at the moment, we need to be lower" said Minor

"And how do you propose we do that? I can't turn in circles too easily without going into a spin and I certainly can't hover in place; I need the extra movement to keep us both in the air at all" said Kat

"Um can we just hold onto the wall" said Minor

"Ah yes, let me ram face first into this wall with you in my arms" said Kat

"Look, if you have a better idea let me know" said Minor

The wall was rapidly approaching Kat and Minor were running out of time to make a decision

"How much lower do we need to be" said Kat

"I can't tell. I only get a sense of direction; the enchantment was never designed to work like this I don't think" said Minor

"Well think fast" said Kat

\*Ok what options do I have, face first, turning at the last second once I fold up my wings and letting it hit my back, trying to circle around a few times, or try diving down maybe? Circling around it has to be then even if we end up in a spiral at the very least it will slow us down a bit and I can try to correct, the others are far too risky\*

Kat angled left as carefully as she could trying to avoid spinning uncontrollably as her right wing screamed in protest, her back muscles and those lining the wing threatening to rip under any increased pressure. Gritting her teeth Kat struggled to concentrate on the gliding and looking for an entrance but the pain in her back was building and it was getting harder and harder to keep her mind in order.

"Minor, you have to give me some sort of signal, I can't concentrate properly the pain in my back is getting to me. Just tell me when I need to go straight" said Kat as she closed her eyes, they were already starting to water and the pain was making it hard to keep them open.

\* I guess I just have to trust Minor here.\* Time seemed to stretch on for an eternity for Kat, and it was only slightly shorter for Minor. She was concentrating as much mana into her eyes as she could and tried to split her mind between looking for a gap in the wall that was just barely within her vision and the feeling that sat at the back of her mind that told her where to go.

The pressure increased on the pair as nothing changed but neither could afford to let their concentration slip for a moment. The air was thick with anticipation. Kat waited for Minor's signal, and Minor desperately searched for any indication that it was time. Minor's intense focus on waiting for the signal left her almost unprepared for the signal to go forward, because unlike her normally subtle hints this one slammed into her as if an anvil had dropped on her mind from a great height.

"Now!" yelled Minor *NoVelnex.com*

Kat instantly tried to stop her spiral and direct her wings forward, but in that moment, she felt something tearing in the centre of her back. Using her tail to hold Minor she brought her right hand around to try and stabilise her wing desperately trying to keep them heading straight. Minor's panic however was twofold, she could see Kat struggling with her wing in the corner of her vision, but her main concern was the rapidly approaching wall. There was no gap. No seam in the rocks, nothing but solid stone as far as her burning eyes could see. Closing her eyes and raising her hands to protect her face the wall slowly approached.

A moment past and when no impact happened Minor opened her eyes to only to be greeted with the ground. Kat's legs impacted the floor throwing her to the ground with Minor who Kat instinctively tried to raise up at the last second only to fail due to the length of her tail. Minor quickly erected a small bubble of mana in front of her to dampen the impact but it popped almost instantly. The pair slammed into the floor and bounced a few times before coming to a stop in the corridor.

In the darkness Minor recovered first. She looked around to find Kat sprawled out beside her blood over the floor and face against the ground. Panic gripped her heart as she stared dumbly at the girl that had quickly become her only friend. Minor slowly started to reach out a shaking hand toward Kat when she stopped. All of the blood surrounding Kat was being sucked back into her body.

Pain. That was all that filled Kat's thoughts. She could tell she was in bad shape. Her back still burned from before but now her pain was concentrated in the front. It felt like she had decided to use a sandpaper slide as a method of transportation and her knee might have shattered. Slowly however the burning pain in her back chained into a strange itching. Her muscles wormed their way underneath her skin quickly reducing the pain in her back. Her knees felt like they were being compressed by a vice crunching them down until the pain there to stopped. Slowly, Kat begun to get shakily to her feet attempting to stand shakily

For Minor's part she watched in horror as Kat's body jerkily stood itself up, covered in still moving blood, then the things eyes snapped open through the blood and a deep purple light seeped out of them taking in the surroundings. The demonic visage in front of Minor suddenly began to cough, and wheeze before turning to the side and spitting some disgusting gunk out of its mouths then turning to Minor with a smile.

### **Chapter 32: Demonic Regeneration**

\*Finally, whatever that shit in my throat was, it was killing me.\* Kat's wounds across her body quickly closed and the remaining blood dried quickly before flacking off and falling to the floor leaving her completely cleaned of the foul stuff. Looking at the drying spots of blood Kat noticed something strange.

\*Is my blood black? What does dry blood look like again? I don't think mines the shade a healthy human body should have. Though I guess I'm neither of those things right at this moment. Looks like my outfits in tatters as well. It hurts to see it like this, even though it should repair itself pretty quickly\*. Kat continued to stare at her outfit for about ten seconds but noticed that it hadn't changed at all. \*System ideas?\*

USER KAT, DEMONIC ATTIRE CANNOT BE REPAIRED AT ASSUMED LEVEL OF POWER WITHOUT REMOVING AND RE-EQUIPPING THE ATTIRE A SECOND TIME. SOME CONCENTRATION IS REQUIRED, AND FATIGUE MAY FOLLOW.

\*Just great.\* Looking again Kat noticed a shivering Minor.

"What's wrong Minor?" asked Kat

"Um, I'm sorry mistress Kat, it's just that um, when you were um... recovering it was the most horrifying thing I've ever witnessed, and I've died once already. Your wings were broken and you blood was dripping down only to slide back up into your body and your eyes were glowing a deep purple that felt, wrong somehow, like it shouldn't be allowed to exist" said Minor

"It's ok Minor" said Kat instinctively moving in to hug the girl but Minor flinched back. Only for a moment but Kat's eyes easily caught the movement. Kat's arms fell to her side and wings drooped, even her tail was lying against the ground instead of hovering around her head like normal.

Minor was heartbroken by the scene, it was clear to her that Kat had noticed her flinching and was actually quite upset at the idea she could be scared of her. Making up her mind instantly she sprinted forward and jumped at Kat. The surprised demon reacted purely on instinct and caught the girl in her arms who then proceeded to wrap every available appendage around Kat.

"Don't look so heartbroken Kat. You looked really scary, bits of your face were falling off and the twitching was positively horrible. You saved me from the worst of the fall, and I only have a few bruises. I'm sorry I was scared of you" said Minor

Kat just sighed and stroked the girl's hair with her tail. \*I'm glad this was resolved so quickly. I don't know why it hurt so much to see her looking at me like that. I can hardly describe the feeling. It's like I'd somehow become everything I never wanted to be and it was reflecting in her eyes. But why? Why did that bother me so much? I didn't do anything wrong? Right? \* **nOVEL**next.cOm

Kat was unable to discern why that scene of Minor flinching bothered her so. \*It was only for an instant and she even came and hugged me immediately after realising that I'd seen her fear... \*

"I'm ok Minor, I'm ok" said Kat

Minor looked up at Kat with tears in her eyes "No Kat, you aren't not really"

"Well I can't lie so I must be ok?" said Kat with a grin trying to disentangle herself from the girl. Minor only squeezed back harder "I won't let you go unless you admit you aren't ok or you can say 'it doesn't bother me at all Minor I really am fine'"

"It-" Kat started but she could go no further. She strained to get the words out, to assure Minor that she was fine, that she wasn't bothered by it but the words refused to come out. Kat strained against the compulsion and Minor was surprised to see Kat's purple eyes return but no further sound could escape Kat's mouth. Eventually Kat relaxed, eyes fading. Sighing Kat said "I will be fine Minor, your second reaction really helped. I just, I don't know why this is getting to me so much"

After thirty seconds past Kat wondered why she hadn't heard a response from the small fox in her arms, but when she looked down she found Minor sleeping soundly. \*Ah, I guess it's really time for a break huh Minor.\*

Thought Kat as she brushed the girl's hair back. Kat walked over to the wall and carefully slid down it. \*I guess I should remake my clothes quickly before I sleep.\* Dismissing Kat's outfit her skin crawled, she felt exposed, not just from the lack of clothing but something else, some inherent sense of wrongness at not wearing her Demonic Attire so she immediately resummoned the garment.

The discontent faded quickly but was replaced by a thick fog of fatigue. \*Huh, some fatigue might follow, you damned cheeky system.\* Thought Kat as she passed out collapsing against the wall with Minor in her arms.

Kat woke up still groggy from sleep, waking Minor accidentally in the process.

"Sorry about that Minor" said Kat

"Shmall riight" said Minor still only half awake. It was at this point Kat began to take proper stock of their surroundings and noticed something extremely odd. The walls were no longer smooth stone, and were not even carved brick, but instead they were tiled in a dazzling white.

\*Rather strange choice of décor considering it's pitch black, there a no lights and the pure white does nothing to help this fact.\*

"Hey Minor, what's with the tiles on the walls?" asked Kat

"Um, hmm, they look strange, white tiles? Oh hang on" said Minor escaping from Kat's lap she stood up and clapped her hands together loudly. Seconds past but nothing appeared to change.

"What was the point in that?" asked Kat

"The enchantment told me to" said Minor

"You can't just use that as an excuse to go crazy" said Kat. Minor just held up her hand in a wait just a moment gesture, and it was but a moment before bright lights started to beam out of the top row of tiles.

\*I stand corrected it seems, there are in fact lights, and apparently the tiles themselves do help this fact. Sorry tiles, guess I owe you an apology\*

Kat got up as well and tried to stretch and found her muscles surprisingly stiff, especially in her back region. They twinged and ached as she tried to stretch her body. Trying on just her arms she found that they were mostly fine, but still not quite perfect. \*It seems that my body isn't quite as repaired as I thought it was. I thought I was completely healed yesterday before I took a nap, but I guess not. Hey system, how good is my regeneration anyway\*

USER KAT'S REGENERATION DOES NOT YET HAVE ENOUGH DATA FOR CONCLUSIVE ANALYSIS.  
CURRENTLY BELIEVED TO BE LIMITED BY ENERGY CONSUMPTION.

\*Energy, what kind of energy? I don't feel hungry yet\*

USER KAT'S REQUESTED INFORMATION IS CLASSIFIED, USER KAT REQUIRES AT LEAST RANK 1

\*Well I guess that's fair then system. Hopefully I can find out more soonish because regenerating damage seems really useful.\*

"So Minor, what's the plan?" asked Kat

"We continue on of course, there is only one way forward and while I don't recognise this place specifically I think I might have a few guesses as to where we are" said Minor

"Well don't just leave it at that, what are the details" said Kat

"I think, we might be under my Grandmother's house. That doesn't quite make perfect sense because I'm pretty sure we haven't been traveling long enough but I don't know anyone else who'd be able to afford tiled walls in a secret underground passage" said Minor

"Didn't you say you your Great Great Grandfather worked on these tunnels, couldn't he have made the tiles" said Kat

"I mean, yeah I guess so but then why bother tiling just this section and not the one at the castle. On top of that from what I know of Grandfather he didn't really care for elaborate designs unless he was making something specifically to be showy and I doubt secret tunnels are a good way to show off to your friends" said Minor

"I dunno Minor, I'd love to have an ancient network of tunnels to show off to my friends" said Kat

"Well now you do Kat" whispered Minor quietly as she started walking.

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Meanwhile, back on Earth, Wednesday 9:00 am day 5 of Kat's disappearance

Sylvie and Vivian sat opposite each other with a shogi board in the middle, both of them were now wearing plain yukata's and sitting in seiza position. Lily sat off to the side legs cross with a tori drum sitting next to her beating it steadily in rhythm. Gramps' desk was now buried in paperwork and even the floor nearby wasn't spared from the stacks of paper encroaching on Gramps' territory.

In the corner of the room the man there to witness to signing was tucked away with his blanket, nightcap and face mask, complimented by his blue pyjamas covered in teddy bears. Gramps said something to the girls, but the sound was muffled by the papers. Knocking a bunch away from his face he tried again.

"What is the latest news on Kat's whereabouts" said Gramps

The drumming stopped and Sylvie and Vivian turned to look at Lily who was in turn looking at Gramps.

"My parents have assigned Kat twelve labours she needs to complete before they are willing to accept, she might, potentially, almost, not be a horrible influence on me. She has already slain a Lion with her bare hands and managed to strike a deal with Learnie the hydra for one of his heads as proof for my mother, I think she's doing something with a boar? I can't quite remember" said Lily

"Right well, how pray tell did you get the message this time" said Gramps.

"Heard it straight from Hermes himself of course" said Lily

Gramps just nodded and shook his head. He had too much paperwork to do to be worrying about Kat. She could take care of herself. He did however, hope that she would return soon.

### **Chapter 33: Modern Art is so Bad it Hurts**

Kat and Minor walked through the now well lit halls but at a drastically reduced pace. Where before they were constantly jogging the damage Kat sustained and the mana that Minor burned through meant that neither of them were keen to simply sprint ahead even if the destination was likely so close. Despite this Kat was putting her new muscles to work, keeping hair steps extremely regular and limiting the impact on her wings creating a surprisingly graceful scene. Minor on the other hand was focusing on regenerating her mana as fast as possible. This involved turning her gaze inwards and as such she looked a sorry site compared to Kat.

The silence was companionable though, Minor wasn't shaking, content to focus on her mana she felt calm enough to ignore the unease she felt using the body in Major's place despite the fact that Kat had not continued to use her calming aura after passing out.

It didn't take the girls long to reach the end of the tunnel where it expanded into a domed room with an intricate mural of tiles along the ceiling and the upper sections of the walls. The mural featured numerous scenes that also seemed to be connected by a white-haired fox with a varying number of tails.

"Woah, is this a compilation of Grandma's adventures?" mumbled Minor mostly to herself

"It looks like it, assuming that the white haired fox is your Grandma? Do you recognise her?" said Kat

"Well, the pictures aren't quite as detailed as I would like to figure that sort of thing out, and I haven't seen my Grandma since the ritual I'm, well I'm not sure I'd recognise her even if they were perfectly detailed" said Minor

Kat took a second look at the murals but found she couldn't understand Minor's confusion. Everything looked like a perfectly renditioned version of the events and she could even see the signs of age on the Kitsune as she passed from event to event without the aid of increasing tails.

"Hey Minor, you Grandma put that illusion on you before correct?" said Kat

"Yeah why?"

"Well, this mural has details to my eyes, I can see all the faces, the joy in that first picture when she is setting off on her first adventure, I can feel the joy radiating from her. And later on in the fifth seen the sadness in her eyes as she looks at what I presume is a grave is quite impactful" said Kat

"What? Why would she hide something like that? I wish I could see these pictures with your eyes Kat" said Minor

\*It is rather strange, why bother placing illusions over these murals. Or a better question I suppose is why make them with such detail if you're going to prevent people from looking at it?\*

"Um, Kat, do you think, maybe you could tell me about the murals if you don't mind. I don't really know anything much about her" said Minor

"Well, um sure. As I said, the first one seems to be your Grandma setting out on an adventure, she is wearing travelling gear with a slightly oversized backpack on and a smile on her face" said Kat. Minor nodded along with the story

"The second, is what I'm guessing to be her first fight, it's made up of three scenes and it has your Grandma trying to use magic on a wild boar but panicking and missing with the spell. After that she was charged by the boar but managed to miss being impaled but was dragged along anyway, and the final section has her using her hands to dig into its eye" said Kat who could feel a faint pressure building in her head.

"The third is your Grandma meeting someone, they look to be human I think, hard to tell because they are wearing a thick cloak and bandages, with burns on their skin but your Grandma seems so happy to see them I can't think of whoever that is as creepy" said Kat.

The heavy weight on her mind increasingly noticeable. \*What is going on, I know I'm not just imagining things, something is wrong with these murals.\* Kat's thoughts were cut off as she was shaken physically by Minor

"Keep going Kat, you can't end the story now" said Minor in a panicked voice, practically begging for Kat to continue. Kat stared at minor and was shocked at what she saw. Minor had a massive grin on her face but there were tears dripping down her face. And her eyes, they looked like there was no life in them.

Kat slammed the full weight of her calming aura into Minor, eyes glowing purple she reached out to grab the now collapsing Kitsune who went completely limp in her arms. \*What the hell was that? Are the murals cursed or something? Why am I fine but Minor was acting out.\*

Slowly lower Minor to the ground the girl didn't move at all. Only the slight movement of her chest gave Kat any indication she was alive at all. \*Shit, what do I do about this. Is she asleep because I slammed her with calming aura or did my aura actually break whatever effect was on her but freeing her from it forced her to sleep?\*

Kat looked around the room nervously, looking for anything that might help but all she could see were the murals, and the strange patterns on the floor.

\*Right, now the question is do I try and wake her up or do I leave her to rest. We've just woken up so I don't think its exhaustion keeping her down but what's the appropriate response to, uh I don't know? Mind Control artwork? System help please?\*

INFORMATION ON MAGIC OF ANY KIND IS LIMITED TO AT LEAST RANK 1 CLASSIFICATION.

\*Of course, I guess I've been getting away with too much stuff because it's more closely related to me but because this isn't in the slightest, I guess the system won't give me much. Which is fair I guess; it did warn me about this but I just wish it would help. Um what about, system why wasn't I affected by whatever that was.\*

USER KAT'S IMMUNITY TO THIS MAGICAL INFLUENCE IS UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME. D.E.M.O.N.S RECOMMENDS FURTHER TESTING. POTENTIAL SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE, STRONGER MENTAL FORTITUDE, ABILITY RELATED TO EYE MUTATIONS, DEMONIC NATURE

\*Ok, that actually gave me some information. So it can really depend on what type of question it is. This means the magic is probably some kind of mental thing or it's related to visuals. That gives me something to go on. And Minor said she couldn't see them and I don't think anything went wrong till I started describing them. Ok I think I'm going to try to wake her up and be very careful not to mention the murals. Even just casual like I did the first time lightly describing them, I can't be sure that wasn't when the manipulation started\*

Kat placed her hand over Minor's eyes so that when she started trying to wake up Minor she had no chance to look at the murals again. Shaking the girl she twitched and seemed to wake up, the girl started to squirm and break free of Kat's grip but Kat pushed a small amount of calming aura over Minor while speaking "Something is wrong with the murals, I've covered your eyes for now but I'm not sure if your back can you give me a sign or something" said Kat

"Um, what are you talking about? The last thing I remember was asking you to describe the murals to me" said Mino



## Chapter 34: Modern Art is so Bad it Hurts Part 2

"Well, after I started describing them, I felt a pressure in my head but thought I was imagining things. I continued reading out another one but then it got worse, so I stopped reading and you freaked out and tried to get me to keep telling you about the murals, but your eyes had no light in them. That's when I knew something was wrong, so I blasted you with my aura and you collapsed" said Kat

"I don't remember any of that I'm sorry Kat. I didn't hurt you, did I?" asked Minor

"No, just the shaking before I knocked you out" said Kat

"That's a relief. I'm not sure what I would have done if it turned out I hurt you" said Minor

"It wouldn't have been your fault Minor; it would have been whoever developed the enchantment on the murals. Do you think your Grandma is behind this?" said Kat

"Um, I'm not sure, she does use illusions but, I don't really know enough about her to say that it was intentional" said Minor

"How could something like that be unintentional?" said Kat

"Well, um I know there are some special pieces of art in the castle that I've never been allowed to look at because they can cause some serious damage if you aren't strong enough or you have a weak mind like me. Maybe the illusion placed over the mural was actually to prevent people that were weak like myself from getting hurt but because you could see the mural anyway it didn't work properly when you started to describe everything to me" said Minor

"I thought you said you didn't know much about enchantments" said Kat

"Well, um I'm not sure if the paintings are enchantments per say, it's complicated and hard to study because no one would let a priceless artefact like one of those be taken apart just to find out what happened. I only know about these specifically because Mother was extremely clear that we must never look at those paintings in the castle. Apparently, she needed to display them for some reason but she never said why. Just to stay as far away as possible" said Minor

"Well that is a little scary to hear. Trapped in a room of magical murals and I have no idea how we are supposed to get out. At least it seems like I'm somewhat immune to the effects as long as I don't start talking about them and even then, I certainly didn't suffer like you did" said Kat.

"Yeah, honestly that probably saved us. I have no way to recognise magical paintings and if you hadn't shrugged off the effects who knows what would have happened" said Minor.

"Well, the new question is how do we get out of here? I can't see an exit anywhere" said Kat

"Um, the tunnels certainly wanted me to go into this room but I can't feel it anymore. I guess this room isn't part of the enchantment network that has been guiding us but hopefully this is somewhere in Grandma's house"

"Well, what's the plan Minor, any idea how to get out of this room Minor, you'd know your Grandma better than I would. Any idea how she would have hidden the exit?" asked Kat

"No, but if you don't mind can you lead me back out of the room just to confirm this is the direction we need to go. I was a little excited when the lights came on and might have missed it if the enchantment tried to steer me somewhere else. It isn't perfect" said Minor

"Sure" said Kat

Kat held Minor's hand and directed her towards the exit. Kat had removed her hand from Minor's face but the Kitsune made sure to keep her eyes completely closed and tried to keep her mind off the murals by focusing on the sound of her footsteps. As soon as the pair stepped out into the hallway the weak but ever-present indication of which way Minor needed to walk to reach her destination returned and this time there was no mistaking that it was indicating she needed to return to the room.

"Kat, I wasn't wrong, we need to find the way forward in that room somehow" said Minor

"Is there anything else in the room Kat? Anything at all" said Minor

"Well the floor looks really weird" said Kat

"Describe it, um broad strokes, as unspecific as you can be just in case"

"Well it's kind of a mess, lines and squiggles everywhere, nothing I recognise at all" said Kat

"Is there any straight lines? Any order at all to it that you can see" said Minor

"Nope none" said Kat

"That's very strange. If the floor was enchanted in some way I'm pretty sure there would need to be at least some straight lines to make it work. See I asked because a lot of enchantments are hidden in other things, like pieces of art or basic patterns on the walls but as far as I know they do need some regularity and a few straight lines are a must. I think, any enchantments Grandma has are certainly above me but I think that rule holds true, enchanting is like a language so you need patterns" said Minor

"Right I understand, so the floor isn't enchanted. What's the next place she could have hidden something" said Kat

"Well, Grandma can fly I'm pretty sure, or if she can't it's pretty easy to jump up to the murals. I hate to ask but can you take a closer look at them with your wings" said Minor.

Kat stretched her wings carefully feeling a twinge in her back still remained.

"Not really Minor, I tore something in my back or wing, I'm not quite sure where the line is drawn, but anyway, I damaged it before the landing, and it hasn't completely healed. It's already much better than when we went to sleep. In fact I haven't been as careful as when walking and I didn't notice at all, so maybe if we waited, I could try but for now at least that option is limited to us" said Kat

"Hmm, your eyes are really good right? Or can they just see in the dark?" asked Minor

"They seem to have been improved a bunch but it's hard to tell a lot of the time" said Kat

"Well I'm thinking, um you know how they glow occasionally?" asked Minor

"No? My eyes glow?" said Kat

"Um, yes, I'm not sure why they do, but they can at least. They're purple when they glow, but I was thinking that if they light up like that you can probably try and use the same technique, I do to push mana into your eyes. If they glow occasionally already it should be hard to damage them like most people" said Minor

"I don't think I have any mana" said Kat

"Oh right you're a demon, well you certainly have something, we call it demonic energy just uh, force that to your eyes or something" said Minor

Kat shrugged towards Minor then realised she couldn't see her response.

"I guess I'll see what I can do" said Kat. \*Hmm, channel energy into my eyes. The easiest thing I can think of is to try and push my calming aura into my eyes. It probably isn't demonic energy but it's the main power I have control over so let's try it.\*

Kat summoned her calming aura but instead of allowing it to flow outwards she concentrated it on herself. Pushing it towards her eyes she felt only a slight resistance before her vision expanded and she felt like she could see everything. The grains of the stone, the wear on the tiles, the dust that had barely accumulated despite the room seemingly being abandoned the secrets of the world almost seemed like they'd opened up to her. Kat's mind was adrift in the detail, it was simply too much for a human mind to take in and Kat wasn't able to properly process everything she was seeing. Suddenly Kat felt a push on her side and her concentration broke. Her eyesight returned to normal and she looked curiously at Minor who still had her eyes closed.

"What's up Minor, I didn't spend that much time looking" said Kat

"Kat, I don't know how to tell you this, but you haven't moved in about fifteen minutes. I was getting worried so I thought, if something had gone wrong maybe a little push could fix it" said Minor

"Curses, I hadn't noticed at all. It felt like an instant to me, or perhaps an eternity. It was too much for me to concentrate on. If there is something in the room I need to be more careful and not just shove all my power into my eyes" said Kat

"Ok, just be careful Kat, please" said Minor

"Of course, how about this, if I don't say anything for five minutes push me again" said Kat

"Ok" said Minor.

Kat once again tried to force her aura into her eyes, however this time rather than trying to shove her aura into her eyes like an overstuffed suitcase she tried to pour it into them instead. Initially there was no reaction but as she kept imagining herself pouring her power into her eyes the details slowly started to sharpen. Glancing carefully over the room Kat noticed that just at the back of the room underneath the first section of the mural the one of the tiles had the slightest discolouring to it in the centre.

"Minor I think I've found it" said Kat as she walked over to the tile in question. Placing her finger gently on the discoloured section she felt a click and heard a rumble coming from behind her. Turning around she noticed that the top of the room had disappeared, and a platform was dropping down seemingly by itself coming to rest in the middle of the room

"Minor I've definitely got our way out, a platform just dropped into the centre of the room. You think it's safe to hop onto?" asked Kat

"Yes, I think so, it's probably a levitation platform, they aren't very common because they are ludicrously expensive to run mana crystal wise and it only gets worse the longer the distance they need to float so most people still use stairs" said Minor. The girls carefully walked over to the disk and placed their feet onto it. As soon as both of them were firmly planted on the disk it started to rise slowly up towards the ceiling.

### **Chapter 35: Meeting Estranged Family Members is a Dangerous Pastime**

As the platform rose up Kat questioned Minor. "So what we can we expect from your Grandma?"

"Well, I haven't really seen her since the ritual, she had to be around to place that illusion on Major but I don't really remember that, I more so have the memory of Major remembering that? If you follow? From what other people have told me she is really adventurous but hates tedious things. She also gets side-tracked somewhat easily unless she decides to focus intently on something in which case there is no hope of getting her attention. That's probably how the murals down in the room below were made. She probably worked on it non-stop and that caused it to shift into a masterwork artefact" said Minor

"Hmm, ok. Where are we likely to come out?" said Kat

"Well, probably near the entrance hall I'd guess, but then again it depends if this is supposed to be a secret from everyone or just the standard riff raff trying to visit her" said Minor

Kat nodded at Minor. The platform was extremely slow in it's movements which helped keep Minor calm but for Kat it was slightly irritating to see it slowly inching upwards. \*I know these platforms are horribly inefficient but are they even good for anything? I could run up a flight of stairs faster than this.\*

After a full five minutes Kat's head poked into the room that housed the elevator and she was quite confused. Looking around the room was filled with a random assortment of items simply thrown in the room with seemingly little care and everything was covered in a thick layer of dust. So thick that Kat was concerned about breathing in the air in the room, and Minor was already coughing. Swiftly grabbing Minor under her arms and wading through the junk towards the door she burst out into fresh mountain air. Slamming the door behind them Kat breathed in deeply while Minor kept coughing trying to get all the dust out of her lungs.

"What the hell was that, there was so much dust in that room I have to wonder if it wasn't some kind of trap" said Kat

"I agree" Minor managed to get out between hacking coughs. Taking a moment to finally expel the last of the dust in their lungs Kat and Minor started to take a look at the scenery. They appeared to be in a mountainous region and could see the cliffs surrounding the clearing they were in. In all directions except forward where they saw a large single story house that expanded far off in either direction and presumably into the horizon as well. In the more immediate surroundings was an intricately cared for garden with a small river flowing through the centre. There were all sorts of plants Kat had never seen ranging from small purple flowers that looked a bit like dandelions to monstrously sized bamboo stalks in small groups of about three scattered around the garden.

"Well, I guess it's time Minor. Let's go meet your Grandma" said Kat. Minor nodded and made to follow behind Kat but as soon as they stepped onto the cobblestone path in front of them ice shot up from the ground and encapsulated them completely leaving only their eyes and nose exposed

\*Well, at least this isn't cold for whatever reason.\* Thought Kat as she re-examined her surroundings. Looking over Kat found Minor in a similar state.

\*So, do we just wait here till this ice melts? Or should we expect Minor's Grandma to show up? And I mean, this does have to be Minor's Grandma's house right? Why else would that mural be here but at the same time why would you have it under a storage shed, and one that isn't even maintained properly. I guess all that's left is to wait for someone to show up... When the hell did she get here.\*

Kat's eye widened at the woman now standing between her and Minor, panicking for just a moment before calming down completely.

If Shizuka and Chiharu could be set to look similar, then Chiharu and this lady were practically the same person down to the shade of hair. If someone had at this moment told Kat that the Queen stood before her she would find nothing amiss, except for the two extra tails that adorned this new arrivals back.

"Now, what shall I do with you thieves, I suppose I've been a bit to lenient in the past if you still had the gall to show up and try to steal from me. A little fox and a demon, a suppose you summoned something to help you carry off more of my valuables. Shame you got one with such scrawny arms. Little shits the lot of them, why I'm tempted to kill you both right here. Well, anything to say for yourselves?" said the woman

\*Say anything, what nonsense are you spouting you have our mouths frozen shut.\* Thought Kat with wide eyes. Minor was even more panicked, tears in her eyes struggling to move at all.

"Well, you both sure are quiet, aren't you? What fox got your tongue" laughed the lady as if it was the funniest thing she'd ever heard.

"Ah, maybe killing you would be too boring, it's not every day a demon tries to steal from me, so points for creativity perhaps? Strange that you look like a Succubus, I'd not known your kind enjoyed thievery though I suppose you likely thought yourself appropriately skilled in illusions or shadow magic anyway" said the lady. Kat tried to push her calming aura onto Minor but trying to curve it around the crazy lady in between them. Evidently Kat failed in this because the woman spoke up again.

"What sort of tricks are you trying to pull demon, you have a strange aura but not one strong enough to affect me. Did you think you could use it to scare me perhaps? Maybe try and break out of the ice first darling and I'll take you seriously." She said with a grin

\*Ok, why doesn't she recognise Minor, this has to be her Grandma, the resemblances is just too much for this to be someone else. What is going on here.\*

"Ok, since I'm feeling generous, I'm going to melt the ice around your mouths, I'd like you to give me one reason each why I shouldn't kill the Kitsune. The demon dies and gets banished either way, but I think it's only fair I give you both a chance to speak" said the woman.

\*Ok then, we need to think about this carefully, what can I say to convince her we aren't thieves. Hopefully she knows demons can't lie so that whatever I say will add weight to it. We just need to think for a moment and-\* Kat's thoughts were interrupted by Minor beginning to speak

"We are just here to see my Grandma" said Minor in between sniffles

"Bah, you think I'm going to take pity on you because you're crying, think my memories so bad I don't remember the faces of my Grandchildren" said the woman

"I have no doubt contained within me that you are Shizuka's Grandmother" said Kat.

The woman whipped around to face Kat and swung her hand tearing through the ice catching Kat around the neck and lifting her up with one hand.

"Oh, think you can get around me with a little wordplay do you. Seems like you have true sight as well, quite rare in a demon like yourself but not the most surprising" said the woman

"Come on, nothing else to say dear? No more misleading statements to try and twist the truth to suit your convenience" said the woman.

Kat struggled in the lady's grip flapping her wings to try and prevent some of the damage being done to her throat. Forcing air up into her mouth to struggle out a further replay Kat managed to point towards Minor and say "She is your Granddaughter"

The lady threw Kat lightly away onto the floor as she laughed. "Ha, I see some set up has gone into this joke of yours, so I'll give you one more chance to speak demon, then I'll rip your heart out myself"

\*Shit, ok, what can I possibly say to get her to believe me. I'm pretty sure getting my heart ripped out isn't going to be good for my health hmm.\*

"My name is Kat, I refer to my companion as Minor, she is the daughter of Queen Chiharu Maemari, and Minor is the princess" said Kat clearly her throat already healed from the damage it sustained.

The woman took a step back in shock. Her eyes whipping from Kat to Minor and back again showing no signs of stopping. After thirty seconds of this her eyes settled on Kat again. "My Granddaughter doesn't have red fur, it's impossible, it can't be done" but her voice was shaking, she had sensed something was very wrong with these thieve and knew that demons must speak the truth.

"Currently Haruka is in control, though she no longer enjoys that name. Something happened to Shizuru temporarily, we hope, and Minor has been in control ever since" said Kat.

The woman vanished and re-appeared behind Minor smashing the ice around her and pulling her into a hug as she began to cry. "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry" whispered over and over again as she hugged the crying form of Minor.

Kat walked over towards them and slowly extended her calming aura over both of them. The woman glared at Kat sharply when the aura touched her but quickly turned away after she felt the effects. She sat there stroking Minor's hair for a long time crying and muttering that she was sorry until Minor spoke up "It's ok Grandma, I don't blame you for what happened" said Minor.

"I was a fool, how could I ask you to trade your life for Shizuru's, I'm a failure of a Grandmother, I should have saved you both, I shouldn't have pushed that choice on you" said Grandma Maemari

"Grandma, I'm still here, Shizuru was always the one in control, something happened but we can explain that later. I'm still here, it's ok, you did save us both" said Minor as she stared at Kat begging her to increase the power of her aura with her eyes and she complied.

### **Chapter 36: Letting Estranged Family Members Apologise is less Dangerous but Equally Unnerving**

After some more crying. A lot more crying. Kat was now standing in front of Minor's Grandma who was in dogeza with her face firmly planted on the ground. "I apologise for attacking you after you got my Granddaughter here safely. I still don't trust you but I do apologise for freezing you in ice... and choking you... and throwing you across the garden"

"Grandma Kat's really nice, apologise properly" said Minor

"She's still just a demon, you can't trust them" said Grandma Maemari

"Kat's different" said Minor

"Prove it" yelled Grandma back with her face still in the floor.

Before Minor could retort again Kat spoke up instead. "I would protect Minor with my life if the situation called for it regardless of the contract that exists between us"

"C-can you repeat that" said Grandma Maemari

"No, you heard me perfectly fine the first time" said Kat

"Dammit, if only I didn't know how your truth compulsion works I'd call you out on being a lying manipulative traitor, but, I do know how it works and that was way too specific and certain for me to complain" said Grandma Maemari "I still don't like you though"

"Well, anyway, Kat why did you say that Grandma looks like mum? She isn't that old" said Minor. \*What is she talking about they look exactly the same- Illusions, it's more illusions isn't it. I'm really getting sick of them to be honest.\*

"She probably has an illusion on Minor, to my eyes she looks identical to your mother. In fact if she didn't have the extra tails and wasn't trying to kill me I'd believe they were the same person no hesitation. Though I guess your mother has a much better personality"

"I can hear you demon" said Grandma Maemari

"Uh yeah, that makes sense Kat. So many illusions, they really haven't helped us much have they" said Minor ignoring her Grandma entirely

Grandma Maemari stood up and said "Well now that that has been dealt with, Granddaughter would you come with me to discuss what's going on, I'll make some tea for you."

"Sure let's go inside Kat, we have quite a few things to go over" said Minor. Grandma Maemari's left eye twitched at this but she decided not to contradict Minor, as much as it pained the old woman to admit her Granddaughter problem trusted this demon more than her. Grandma Maemari led them through a

number of hallways stopping briefly to pick out a tea set from one of the cupboards and bringing it with her until she entered a small sitting room with a view of the valley below the mountain. Taking a seat on the far side of the table Kat sat across from her and much to Grandma Maemari's dismay Minor chose to sit next to Kat, but she made no further comment.

"So, my dear, can you explain what exactly is going on with all this?" asked Grandma

"Well, where do you want to start. Why I'm here, or why I'm in control?" asked Minor

"Um" said Grandma Maemari Maemari genuinely stumped "whatever you want to start with I suppose"

"Well, I'll go through why we are here quick. Beast King wants to marry Shizuka Major took offence to that and to avoid pressuring us with war mum summoned a demon to guide us to your house because she needed someone trustworthy and strong to keep me safe that didn't work for her so she could beat the truth magic" said Minor

"Ha, that daughter of mine never listened to me when I said demons aren't to be trusted, of course she summoned one for such an important job the fool" said Grandma Maemari

"Hey, I'd probably be an incoherent mess without Kat's help. Not to mention I'd never have made it through the tunnels" said Minor

"Oh, and pray tell how this demon saved you from that fate. I suppose her wings were handy for the last section of the tunnels but there are better ways I'm sure"

"Kat has a calming aura and I needed that many times to stabilise myself to stop me from ending up in Major's position or worse" said Minor

"Ok but can you explain this whole Major Minor thing to me" said Grandma Maemari

"Well, that spell you used didn't quite work properly back then because Shizuru wanted to keep me around, and while she did succeed, she stole most of my personality. Which admittedly was whining about things but a big thing was that I had a hang up involving my appearance, anyway, Major, that's what I call what became of Shizuru, was complaining to Kat that she didn't look anything like mum and well, you know" said Minor

"True sight" said Grandma Maemari with a grimace

"Yup and that caused Major to remember everything and it maybe sort of broke her mind more than a little bit" said Minor

"So it is this demon's fault" said Grandma Maemari

"Stop blaming Kat" yelled Minor "Something like this was always going to happen. I can feel her repairing herself and I don't even want to be here!" said Minor

"What. What do you mean by that" said Grandma Maemari worriedly

"Existing with a body and everything is horribly unnatural to me, that's why Kat needed to use her calming aura on me most of the time. I'm what's left of Haruka but that isn't much, and I was basically tapped in Major's head for over a decade. That brought a certain amount of peace, and while I am



thankful to speak I don't enjoy having a body. Ideally I can learn the duplication technique so that I have a body occasionally but I'm more than happy for Major to take over again" said Minor

"I see, well Granddaughter we have much to talk about, but first we should dismiss this demon" said Grandma Maemari

"No, why do you keep doing this Kat hasn't done anything wrong" said Minor

"Yes, and while I want her gone regardless now that she has delivered you here I assume her contract is up? You probably have to dismiss her personally, but you cannot keep a demon around for too long, there are consequences to that, you will be required to pay for their continued presence in some way" said Grandma Maemari

"Kat isn't like that, she wouldn't hurt me" said Minor

"Perhaps not, but I'm not sure, Kat, you said, has a choice in the matter" said Grandma Maemari

"Perhaps" was all Kat said. \*This system already said I'm not allowed to talk about it so I'm pretty sure this is already pushing the limit.\*

"I will allow you one thing my Granddaughter, you may ask Kat for a beacon to allow you to summon specifically her, if, and only if you really need her in the future" said Grandma Maemari. \*System what is she on about?\*

A BEACON IS A METHOD FOR INDIVIDUALS TO BE SPECIFICALLY CALLED FOR WHEN SELECTING A SUMMONING TARGET.

\*Right, and how do I make one\*

USER KAT CANNOT TRULY MAKE A BEACON BEFORE FINAL AWAKENING. HOWEVER ON ACCOUNT OF THE REWARDS GIVEN BY SUMMONER CHIHARU, USER KAT'S CLOSENESS TO FULLY AWAKENING, AND USER KAT'S THOUGHTS ON INDIVIDUAL CLASSIFIED AS MINOR (SHIZUKA) D.E.M.O.N.S WILL ASSIST IN MAKING A ONE-TIME USE BEACON. USER KAT WILL NEED TO REMAKE IT AT A FUTURE TIME IF NECESSARY. PLEASE PICTURE USER KAT'S SIGIL.

\*Um, what, ok um. What do I want for my beacon. What do I want to represent me? Something like a coat of arms? I'm just not sure what I should do. There are so many things, and you are just putting me on the spot? Do I have to do this right now?\*

"Kat, please can you give me a beacon? I promise to take care of it and summon you in the future" said Minor staring at Kat with eyes not dissimilar to Sylvie's when she wants something

\*Right now then I suppose...\*

### **Chapter 37: My Kingdom for a Rug**

\*Actually system? Is it possible for me to just, make a Sigil at a later time? You said this wasn't a true beacon so can I just have something as a placeholder?\*

THAT IS A VALID OPTION FOR USER KAT, AS IT IS CORRECT THAT YOU ONLY NEED A SIGIL FOR A TRUE BEACON. HOWEVER IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT USER KAT'S FALSE BEACON STILL CONTAIN AT LEAST SOME REPRESENTATION OF USER KAT.

\*Ok, I think I can work with that. Creating a Sigil should be something I do after thinking about it for a while. It seems like my Sigil will follow me for the rest of my- \*

"Demon, are you willing to give my Granddaughter a beacon? I'm more than happy for you to leave right now" said Grandma Maemari

"Kat don't listen to her you can stay as long as you want" said Minor

"No, it's fine Minor, it's just that I am unable to create a true beacon. I can make a weak version that you can only use once, if that is acceptable. If you summon after some time has past I will hopefully be able to provide you a real one" said Kat

"That's fine, whatever it takes to summon you again is fine" said Minor

"Fool" said Grandma Maemari pressing her aura into Minor. Kat tried to push her aura against Grandma Maemari to give Minor some room to breathe but her attempts were for naught. "Don't you ever say something like that to a demon you are lucky I can't see the chains of contract binding right now else I'd be sorely tempted to kill you myself. Never ever promise anything to a demon. If they accept your offer it can be just as binding as an official contract" said Grandma Maemari

"Leave her alone" said Kat eyes glowing and aura push still ineffectually against Grandma Maemari. "She doesn't know any better, she's just a girl, she doesn't need you putting such fear into her" finished Kat. At this point Minor was trembling eyes starting to roll back up into her head before Grandma Maemari dropped the aura and let Kat's crash into Minor.

"She deserves that and worse you fiend. A promise like that could put the whole realm at risk. I don't care how much she trusts you that sort of power should never be given to anyone least of all a demon" said Grandma Maemari

"How can you do this to her, she might look like a young adult but remember Minor has been unable to talk to anyone for years! Plus nobody ever told her the dangers of demon summoning, how was she supposed to know" said Kat.

\*Heck I didn't even know, so I can just accept things people promise me and force them into it? Is that a thing I can actually do?\*

Grandma Maemari clicked her tongue, clearly unhappy with the development but willing to somewhat concede Kat's point. "It was just a bit of killing intent, nothing to worry about. Much more standard than your strange 'calm aura' that isn't how these things are supposed to work" said Grandma Maemari trying to shift the conversation away

"You know what, give my Granddaughter the beacon and I'll even let you ask for a gift, a bit of extra payment, if you leave afterwards. Is that a deal?" said Grandma Maemari

"I don't need anything extra, I'm happy to give her the beacon regardless" said Kat

"I said, a beacon, extra payment, then you leave" said Grandma Maemari pressing her aura into Kat.  
\*Fine, if this is how it's going to be, have it your way. System how easy is it for Minor to summon me if she has my beacon?\*

INDIVIDUAL MINOR (SHIZUKA) MAY SUMMON USER KAT BY CONCENTRATING A MODERATE AMOUNT OF MANA INTO THE BEACON WITHOUT ANY NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS. DO NOTE HOWEVER THAT IF NO PAYMENT IS GIVEN TO SUMMON USER KAT IT WILL NOT COUNT AS USER KAT'S WEEKLY SUMMON QUOTA AND IF SUMMONED REGULARLY USER KAT MY BE REQUIRED TO COMPENSATE D.E.M.O.N.S

\*Ok, so I'll just give Minor the beacon and worst comes to worst she can summon me somewhat soonish with basically nothing as long as it doesn't happen to often. So what do I want my temporary beacon to be? Hmm-\*

"Have you had enough time to think on my offer hmm? What gift do you wish for" said Grandma Maemari glaring at Kat already. \*System make it a glass copy of the spade on my tail. That's good enough for now I don't have time to think about it.\*

UNDERSTOOD USER KAT PLEASE HOLD OUT YOUR HAND AND FACE INDIVIDUAL MINOR (SHIZUKA)

Kat followed the instructions and in her hand a glass spade tip manifested in her hand with a faint purple glow inside of it. Gently handing the false beacon to Minor, Kat turned to face Grandma Maemari again and said "I'll take the best rug you are willing to give me"

"A... A rug?" said Grandma Maemari. She was extremely confused at this answer. Grandma Maemari was under the impression Kat's moments of staring off into space was Kat thinking of ways to extort her for an extravagant gift. Now she didn't rightly know what to think.

"Why in Everfrost's name would you want a rug of all things?" asked Grandma Maemari

"Gramps collects rugs and I need to apologise for being away so long without telling him" said Kat

"Why would your Grandfather want a rug as an apology gift?" said Grandma Maemari

"Oh no, please don't misunderstand, Gramps isn't my Grandfather at all. And as for why a rug, well he collects rugs, you should see his office, it's covered in them" said Kat

Grandma Maemari looked at Kat like she was speaking in tongues.

"If he isn't your Grandfather then why in the name of Everfrost do you need to apologise to him instead of your parents you unfilial child" said Grandma Maemari

"My parents are dead, I grew up in an orphanage and Gramps runs the place" said Kat.

Grandma Maemari put her hands on her temples and rubbed them vigorously she desperately wanted to leave the issue there but each answer of Kat's only served to confuse her more.

"Demons have orphanages?" asked Grandma Maemari scared of the answer

"I have no idea" said Kat

Grandma Maemari stood up and walked towards the door.

"I give up, I don't even want to know. Follow me I suppose, I have some rugs somewhere I'm sure and just... I mean... I don't even" said Grandma Maemari trailing off into a mutter towards the end.

Minor and Kat got up to follow her and as they were walking Minor spoke up "This beacon is really pretty Kat, thanks for giving it to me. I'll take good care of it until you can give me the real one" said Minor

"No problem Minor, no problem at all" said Kat. \*Well one problem... Grandma Maemari but I mean who's counting\*

"It's going to be strange with you leaving Kat. I mean, I'm thankful that you brought me here and all, and it's nice to see Grandma again but, even though I've been... awake I guess? For a long time, you will always be the first person I ever talked to and all Grandma's grumblings won't change that" said Minor.

"Thanks Minor, that means a lot" said Kat

As Minor and Kat continued to follow Grandma Maemari, Minor was focused on the beacon in her hands, before she turned over her left hand and slowly pressed the beacon into it. Kat was facing forward making sure to keep up with Grandma Maemari and missed what was going on. Grandma Maemari as well was quite lax in her observation of her Granddaughter as she was still trying to puzzle out what scheme Kat was pulling with her strange answers. Kat's beacon sunk into Minor's hand leaving behind a large tattoo of a spade. After this Minor quickly hid her hands in her sleeves to avoid anyone noticing. Several twists and turns later through the house they came upon a room full of chests. They were simple in design just large wooden rectangles with iron bandings on the sides. The room was small and yet it still had three large chests against each of the walls except the one with the door.

\*These look more like treasure chests than rug chests. Though I guess considering Gramps' thoughts on the matter perhaps they are...\*

### **Chapter 38: The Real Treasure was the Rugs we Found Along the Way**

"I believe the three on the right might have some rugs. I have no love for any of them really so I suppose I will stick to my word. Please take your pick" said Grandma Maemari

"What kind of rugs are in each chest" said Kat

"No idea, I've received a number of gifts over the years that I care naught for but I do keep them around most of the time just in case somebody decides to make a big deal out of it. This room is where I keep the tapestries, the rugs, I think one chest has particularly ill-fitting clothing articles that aren't even close to being correct" said Grandma Maemari

\*Is that something I'd prefer I wonder? So many gifts that I need multiple rooms to store them all. It really is a bit excessive but if she was the Queen at one point maybe this is relatively few things.\*

Kat didn't respond out loud to that and simply opened the three chests Grandma Maemari had indicated. The rugs Kat found were all well made though the designs were often questionable. Everything from extremely intricately woven rugs depicting one of Grandma Maemari's adventuring achievements to a simple well made rug with a checkered patterning on it. Kat carefully lifted each rug out of the box examined it for a moment then re-folded it and put it to the side if she was uninterested. Minor sat on one of the nearby chests watching Kat go through each rug occasionally offering nods of

approval, but it seemed her mind was elsewhere. Grandma Maemari on the other hand just stood menacingly in the corner eyes trained on Kat as if she was certain Kat was just waiting for a chance to sneak off and rob her blind, but her eyes would occasionally drift over to Minor and soften before snapping back to Kat

In the end it was four rugs that stood out to Kat the most. The first was the previously mentioned checkered rug. It was well made and consisted of alternating red and black squares. It was a simple rug but well made, perhaps the best made rug in the chest if you ignored the lack of a more detailed design.

The second rug had two foxes growling at each other from either side of an artistic rendition of a chasm. The foxes were very intricately woven, and the individual pieces of fur could be seen stitched into the rug. At the same time though, the rest of the rug seemed to be stitched poorly and was just barely passable. Finally the rug was actually really small, just barely 50cm across which made the poor stitching on the rug even less excusable considering all the others were at least a metre long on their shortest side.

The third rug was a garish mess of clashing colours and shapes. There was seemingly no rhyme or reason involved in how they had chosen to arrange the colours on the rug and it seemed more like someone was showing off the variety of dyes that they had on offer rather than attempting to make a rug that was even vaguely appealing to human eyes. Or demon. Or Kitsune. The reason it was still in the pile for consideration was that as much as Kat may dislike it, if Gramps were here he'd take that one in a heartbeat.

Even still that was on the rug Kat was almost certain to choose. The final rug, the fourth one, was a strange piece. It was a square rug that had a number of fox tails arrayed out from the centre like flower petals, alternating colours red and blue. Sadly it was not the soft blue of Major and the Queen, it was a dark, murky sort of blue didn't quite look clean. This contrasted with the red which was so bright Kat nearly needed eyewear on, it shone almost as if it was backlit by something. Finally the rest of the rug was a simple black which would have been fine if it wasn't so uncomfortably close to the blue.

\*I think the one with the alternating tails has to be the one. It isn't Gramps' pick but this is my gift, and I do much prefer this one. Plus it has some meaning, I can remember the tails of Minor and Major, and I mean sure the colours are unbelievably wrong but at the same time Gramps did always prefer those sorts of rugs that were at least a little crazy. He always liked to find the weirdest ones and put them in a very visible spot in the office.\*

"What do you think of this one with the tails Minor? I'm thinking of choosing this one" said Kat

"Um, it looks, ah, nice. Yeah, looks nice Kat" said Minor with a slight grimace on her face.

"It looks horrible, I'm surprised I even kept such an ugly thing in my storage, though there were worse ones in there. I wonder what my younger self was thinking sometime" said Grandma Maemari

"Grandma, don't be rude" Minor hissed

"No your Grandma is completely correct but that is fine, Gramps loves the stranger rugs and this one has a little bit of meaning because the colours, while be extremely off, are still blue and red like Major and Minor" said Kat. Minor grimaced at Kat's agreement but then her face morphed into a real smile when she mentioned the other reason, she chose the rug.

"Hmph, well now that you have you, reward, Minor it's time to dismiss your demon" said Grandma Maemari

"Do I really need to Grandma, can't Kat like, stay the night or something?" said Minor

"No. Even if I was willing to have a demon in my home I am not willing to pay the price should she be forced to stay once the contract has been completed" said Grandma Maemari

"Well, it's not complete until I say so, that was the condition I have to dismiss Kat once I'm safe" said Minor

"Indeed, and you are safe. You are trying to abuse a technicality Minor and trust me when I say that demons would never leave such a technicality in the contract if they weren't prepared to abuse it. They are the ones to get off on 'technicalities' not us" said Grandma Maemari

"Grandma, if you say one more thing against Kat, I'm leaving" said Minor

"You wouldn't dare" said Grandma Maemari

"I would too. Kat has helped me all the way here, been nothing but courteous to you even after you attacked us and then you have constantly been giving her snide comments the whole time. I get it Grandma you don't like demons, whatever. I trust Kat, I really do and I won't let you keep badmouthing her when she hasn't even done anything wrong" said Minor

"Fine then. She still needs to leave. But, I promise that I will help you summon her again. Not until you've gone at least a month away from her influence. Once I'm assured that you aren't being manipulated then summon her all you want. But my points still stand" said Grandma Maemari.

Minor looked like she wanted to continue to argue the point but Grandma Maemari glared at her hard. Minor stuck her tongue out at Grandma Maemari before walking over to Kat and speaking "You can stand up for yourself you know Kat. I don't mind if you say nasty things about Grandma that's all she has done to you"

"They're just words Minor. Her words truly do not matter to me because she has neither my respect of my affection. Perhaps she is right about the other demons, I've not met many, but clearly, she has some issue greater than just demons are bad. I think that something happened in her past, I don't remember seeing any demons on the mural but she is simply dismissing all the evidence to the contrary and her adorable Granddaughter is telling her how great I am" said Kat. Minor pouted and looked up at Kat with exaggerated sadness.

"Yes like that, perfect recreation Minor. How can anyone withstand the power in that gaze" said Kat. This seemed to only intensify Minor's pouting but it just continued to reinforce Kat's point, so she wasn't to phased.

Kat then turned to face Grandma Maemari with a sly grin on her face "But I will say Grandma, promising to help summon me, I could turn that into a contract, couldn't I? Wasn't it you who said not to make promises to demons?" said Kat.

Grandma Maemari had the decency to look somewhat taken aback but replied "I was making a promise to my Granddaughter not you, there was no risk involved"

"Right but isn't it also you who said that demons are the masters of exploiting technicalities? I mean it was a promise to help summon me. That's a dangerous level of commitment, right?" said Kat

"Get out of my sight fiend before I banish you myself. I can assure you the process won't be pleasant" said Grandma Maemari.

"Well Minor, you head the lady time to send me back" said Kat

"Um, I really hope this works..." mumbled Minor

"What do you mean?" asked Kat

"Well, I mean, the wording was that Shizuka had to dismiss you so I've been worried that it won't work..." said Minor

"Minor, you told me yourself. You are as much Shizuka as Major is. Besides just say the words, and when it works you will have your answer" said Kat

"Ok" said Minor with tears starting to form at the corner of her eyes. "I Shizuka Maemari declare that I am safe, and that Kat's contract has been fulfilled". A blazing circle appeared below Kat, the smell of fire and ash was thick in the air.

"See Minor, nothing to worry about, thank you for having me" said Kat as she bowed towards the crying girl.

"See you soon... Minor" said Kat as she vanished.

### **Chapter 39: Back in Black**

Colourful fire surrounded Kat as she drifted through the summoning spell. Kat breathed deeply and exhaled dispelling a weight she hadn't known she was carrying.

\*Perhaps this is the best part about the summonings, the beautiful fire, the satisfaction of a job well done. The relaxation... \* Kat yawned. \*I guess I'm more tired than I thought I was, I don't think I've been awake long but I suppose the last few days have been rather intense, especially meeting Minor's Grandma, I sure hope next time I get summoned she isn't going to try chocking me. Not an experience that I want to repeat anytime soon but I guess there was no lasting damage.\*

Kat was able to take a few additional moments to appreciate the surroundings before she was deposited into the centre of her room. Stifling another Kat glanced at her door. \*I should really let people know I'm back I suppose.\* Reaching for the door Kat took a slight glance out of the window and noticed the sky was full of stars.

\*Wait what? Why is it so bright in here? Oh, right, the eyes, so it's actually the middle of the night huh?\* Thought Kat as she turned around to face the bed. Kat dropped Gramps' new rug at the foot of her bed before getting on top of the bed and planting her face in the pillows Kat, had just one thought before she drifted off. \*A shower can wait, if everything is dirty in the morning, I can deal with it then.\*

###

Meanwhile, downstairs, Thursday 9:00 am day 6 of Kat's disappearance

Papers fill the room, all that can be seen of the witness is the pompom on the end of his nightcap and the occasional glimpse of his face when he breaths and shifts some of the paper in the room. Gramps sits atop a pile of papers; the chair had disappeared into the paper abyss some time ago. The last bastion against the encroaching paper apocalypse was a space in the middle left of the room where three girls sat around a card table playing poker.

"Why are you playing a game like poker at a time like this?" said Gramps as he read through paper after paper.

"Why are you using paper instead of a computer when you have so many files to read through and store" said Vivian

"Touché" said Gramps

"Well, anyway, we are playing for huge stakes at the moment so I need my full concentration" said Vivian

"Is it really appropriate to be gambling with large sums of money against children Vivian? I didn't expect this kind of behaviour from you" said Gramps

"Money? What Money?" said Vivian as she reached into the pile of paper to reveal a large cooler. "This thing showed up on my doorstep addressed to my roommate but she didn't want it so I brought it along" Pulling open the lid inside was tightly packed with exceptionally large cuts of meat.

"That is massive, I'm not sure I've ever seen so much steak" said Gramps

"Wait Vivian the winner gets the steak? I thought we were giving it to the loser, shit I was trying to win" said Lily

"You can give it to Gramps if you win like I'm planning Lily, don't worry about it" said Sylvie

"Well, moving on from that I suppose, what fantastic journey is Kat on today?" asked Gramps

"Oh she's passed out on her bed at the moment" said Lily with a shrug turning back to the card game.

"Wait what?!" said Gramps "We should get her down here to sign those papers"

"But then we would have to wake up the guy in the corner and he looks so peaceful" said Vivian. Gramps vision shifted to the stack of papers containing the witness.

"I suppose so, but if we get these papers signed today, he can sleep all day tomorrow with no concerns" said Gramps.

The three girls nodded at this wisdom, as if this reasoning had not occurred to them, which for two of the three was true.

"I'll go get Kat then" said Sylvie "Oh and I win, royal flush, Gramps you own the meat." Sylvie then proceeded to swim through the papers and out the door off to find Kat.

Kat felt something press into her side. Cracking her eye open she saw that Sylvie was poking her repeatedly while staring at her wings.



"What's up Sylvie" said Kat

"It's time to sign the papers Kat" said Sylvie

"Oh, I'm sorry I didn't mean to sleep so long what time is it" said Kat

"Around 11am" said Sylvie stepping back to give Kat room to get off the bed. Kat examined herself and found her demonic attire in perfect order. \*Nice, my clothes aren't wrinkled from sleeping in them, so I should be presentable already, the only issue is the wings hmm.\*

Reaching down to the foot of her bed Kat picked up Gramps' rug and draped it over her shoulders to cover her wings. The rug sat oddly, clearly held up by her wings but if no one looked too closely it was probably fine. Wrapping her tail around her midsection she headed for the door.

"Oh Sylvie, you can quietly mention my wings to Vivian if you want but don't mention it to Gramps, I'll tell him afterwards" said Kat

"What about Lily?" asked Sylvie as she left through the door

"Oh is she here as well? That's fine you can tell her as well" said Kat.

The two girls made their way through the hallways of the orphanage without being walleyed and made it to Gramps room. Kat opened the door slowly unsure of how to approach everyone, but Sylvie just scooted between her legs and went straight over to Vivian and Lily before gesturing for Kat to do the same. Gramps turned to face Kat and was surprised to see the rug she was carrying.

"So the Peruvian rug story was true after all, who would have thought" said Gramps.

\*Peruvian rug story? Never mind I'll just set everything straight after the witness leaves.\* "It's a long story Gramps, I'll tell you all about it once the papers are signed and everyone's settled down- Is that a poker table?" said Kat

"Yup we were playing for a cooler full of steak and Sylvie one, and then donated it to the orphanage. Makes my heart proud, so young and already so willing to help others" said Vivian wiping away a non-existent tear.

"Right... and, where is the witness, I'm happy to sign the papers with you now Vivian but I don't see him" said Kat

"I think he's in the right corner under a few papers" said Vivian

"I guess I should wake him up huh," said Gramps. Walking over to the snoozing man Gramps knocked him lightly on the head.

The man jumped up papers flying everywhere, eyes flicking around the room before landing on Kat. "Ah, I suppose I have to do my job now" said the witness yawning "Well, um, I witness this, something something, wake me up when I need to sign stuff" before promptly wrapping himself back up in blankets.

"Um, can he just do that" said Kat

"Sure, I guess? Especially for something like this that's more of a formality. You and Sylvie aren't moving more than 15 minutes down the road and you'll both be able to come over and visit whenever you want, which is actually pretty unusual for this orphanage. The paperwork still needs to be filled out anyway but I'm not too worried about you three" said Gramps.

Gramps reached into the piles of paper surrounding him and brought out two stacks of forms before clearing away some space. Offering a pen to Kat and Sylvie Gramps gestured at the forms that Vivian had signed earlier.

"If you're sure just sign at the bottom" said Gramps.

#### **Chapter 40: A Wild Chain Appears**

Kat and Sylvie signed the paper without hesitation, however just as Kat's pen left the paper purple chains sprung up to wrap themselves around Vivian and herself. Coating each person in an uncountable number of chains before being absorbed into them and disappearing.

Kat shakily turned to face Vivian who had wide eyes on her face giving Kat a slight nod to indicate that yes, she had seen the massive number of purple chains. Slowly turning her gaze to the others Lily and Sylvie were looking at them both confused and Gramps had the same expression as normal. Flicking her eyes over to the witness to see that he had his mask on and hadn't moved since he said to wake him up later.

Gramps walked over and wrapped the man on the head again and he shot up. "Is it time then? Give me the papers I suppose" said the man with a yawn.

The man quickly signed both with a quick flick of his wrist. "Well, guess I should head off and do some other work or something" said the witness as he yawned and made for the door "Have a good day you lot"

\*Wait, why didn't he get chains around him like Vivian? He signed my contract, didn't he? Is it because he isn't part of the agreement just a witness? System? Wait, System why did the chains happen anyway\*

ALL CONTRACTS MADE BY AWAKENED DEMONS RESULT IN BINDING CHAINS. THE SECOND SIGNATURE HAD NO EFFECT ON THE CONTRACT BECAUSE IT WAS SIGNED AFTER THE CONTRACT WAS CONSIDERED COMPLETE, BY BOTH USER KAT AND INDIVIDUAL VIVIAN THUS THE CHAINS ACTIVATED.

\*Ok, good to know, don't sign contracts with people unless they know I'm a demon.\*

"Well, I guess that's everything you need then, here is a bag for the pair of you to help pack your stuff. Don't worry about returning it, I bought a bunch of them a long time ago and hand them out to everyone" said Gramps as he pulled out two plain brown duffel bags.

"Actually, Gramps, there is one more thing, or two more rather. Firstly this rug I'm wearing is yours, I'm offering it to you as a gift, and apology and a thank you, and well secondly, eh-" said Kat

"You don't have to tell me if you wish to keep it a secret Kat, every person deserves to keep at least some things close to her chest" said Gramps

"It's not that Gramps, um perhaps it's easier to show you" said Kat. Slowly taking off the rug she unfolded her wings out to a more comfortable range but not flaring them completely.

"Holy shit you have wings Kat" said Lily

"Wait Sylvie didn't tell you?" said Kat

"I didn't want to spoil the surprise" said Sylvie with a big grin. Vivian gave a thumbs up and a smile directed at Sylvie

"Well fair enough" said Gramps as he sat back down to do paperwork

"Wait that's it? Fair enough?" said Kat

"Well what else is there? I guess I should wish you good luck hiding your wings?" said Gramps

"I'm a demon Gramps, I've been getting summoned every Friday night" said Kat

"Well that is an awfully inconvenient time to be called in to work" said Gramps

"Gramps, why are you being like this?" said Kat

"Like what? I'm honestly saying that getting up on a Friday night for work is not a fun experience" said Gramps.

Kat groaned "Why was I even worried about what you would think. I forgot I picked up my 'what will come' attitude from you" said Kat with her face in her hands.

Sylvie had a big grin on her face nodding towards Gramps, Lily just shrugged and Vivian had a smile matching Sylvie's while saying "I like you old man, I almost feel bad for stealing this adorable girls"

"You better be, it's been a nightmare trying to get those three fools to wake the others up on time in just the few days Kat went missing, I have no idea how I'm supposed to handle getting up so early in my advancing years" said Gramps

"You get up earlier than me!" retorted Kat

"I do not, your supposedly at work in the middle of the night, I'm tucked in bed nicely" said Gramps

"You cook everyone breakfast" said Kat

"Have you ever seen my cook breakfast my dear Kat" said Gramps. Kat paused, Gramps had taught her how to cook yes, and breakfast dishes were included in those teachings, but he had only ever cooked with her at lunch or dinner.

Narrowing her eyes Kat replied "No, you haven't. You do cook in the morning though" said Kat. Gramps just shrugged.

"I don't really see where the problem is Kat, you are the same as you were yesterday, and the day before, and the year before that. Well I think you are a little taller but I assure you that's perfectly healthy for someone your age" said Gramps

"Gramps I have wings and a tail" said Kat

"And I have fake teeth" replied Gramps. \*Now I just feel really stupid for not telling Gramps earlier. I should have known he'd just accept this if I was ok with this. Wait did that sneaky old man know before?\*

"Hey Gramps did you know about this beforehand?" asked Kat

"Nope why would I?" said Gramps

"I dunno, my parents could have had some cryptic note or something" said Kat

"Nope, you parents were one hundred percent human as far as I know" said Gramps

"So what that's it?" asked Kat

"Well I mean, I knew something was up for a while, you were acting a little strange and I was willing to mostly ignore it until you got a new set of hair. Don't think I didn't notice how long it was just because you had it tied up. My dear wife had the same hairstyle for years and I swear I could tell you how many centimetres it grew in a day. Now sure, demonic powers weren't my first guess but it seems like a perfectly natural way to grow more hair so I'm really not that concerned" said Gramps

"Really? Just accepting that as a natural way to grow hair? This is hardly natural" said Kat

"It's still your hair isn't it? Same colour, same thickness, just a bit longer" said Gramps

"Yeah and tough as steel wire" grumbled Kat

"Well that is a nice bonus, extra protection for you" said Gramps. \*I give up, I could never match the old man in just taking things in stride. I'm rather lax about quite a lot of things but I'd forgotten that Gramps really just goes with it.\*

"Hey, um, now that you have um, had the grand reveal for Gramps could you perhaps talk about the fact you have wings" said Lily

"Sure, I have wings and I can fly now" said Kat

"Why do you say that like it's normal" said Lily

"Well it's true and I can't get rid of them so it is normal" said Kat. Lily buried her head into the papers nearby and groaned.

"Well while we are talking about Kat's new abilities, what were those chains?" said Vivian.

Lily immediately removed herself from the papers and looked back at Kat.

"What chains" said Sylvie

"Ah when I signed that adoption paper purple chains covered Vivian" said Kat

"Yup they looked really cool" said Vivian with a small clap

"Why could only you two see them" said Lily

"Well, I can probably see them all the time, and I guess Vivian could see them because she was the other party in the contract. It's an agreement between myself and her so it makes sense to me really" said Kat

"Right but what exactly do they do?" asked Lily

"Well, I think they are to enforce contracts made with a demon but I didn't know it would work on any contract" said Kat.

"Seems useful" said Gramps

"I wanna talk more about your wings Kat. They are really cool, can you carry me around with them?" asked Sylvie

"Well, probably not, they just aren't strong enough to lift anything other than myself" said Kat.

Sylvie pouted on hearing this but continued "Did you get anything else? Most of your other changes did something else"

"My muscles have all changed I'm a bit stronger and really flexible now" said Kat bending herself forward stomach flat against her legs.

Lily went bright red hearing this and looked away, trying to avoid attention but Vivian was watching.

"Lily dear, whatever is the matter, do you have a fever or something your bright red" said Vivian

"Nope, nope, I'm completely fine" said Lily

"Are you sure dear, you should take care of yourself" said Vivian with a wide toothy grin. Kat and Sylvie shared a look of confusion at the pair and shrugged, while Gramps just continued on with paperwork.

Turning away from a blushing Lily and towards Sylvie and Kat, Vivian asked "So how do you girls want to do this, while Kat was away I picked up some basic furniture like beds for you both but that's about it. Did you want to grab your stuff and head back with me now, or do you want to stay here for a few nights longer?"

It was at this moment that the contract Kat had signed really hit home. \*I'm finally leaving. What a strange feeling, I don't feel sad per say but I do feel like I have lost something. At the same time I also feel like I've won something precious. I don't really have anyone to say goodbye to except Gramps and Sylvie but Sylvie is coming with me and Gramps is here so I can do that now. Well I can just ask Sylvie and save myself the trouble\*

"Hey Sylvie, what do you prefer to do?" asked Kat

"I think we should leave with Vivian" said Sylvie

"Don't you have some goodbyes to say" said Kat

"Everyone else already knows we're leaving, I still don't really know my roommates but I said goodbye to them properly like a good girl earlier today when I saw you were back" said Sylvie

"Ok, I guess I'll go get my stuff" said Kat "Want to come with me to pack Lily"

"Sure Kat" said Lily following behind as Kat made for the door.