

## DEMONS 831

### Chapter 831 The Walk

Lily smoothed down her outfit the best she could and tried not to regret her decisions. The clothes she'd... acquired... from Jara were nice. Good material, well styled... they just weren't really appropriate for trying to convince your worried parents that you were responsible enough to go dimension hopping. The clothes were baggy in all the wrong areas to hide what curves Lily did have and they called the mind to certain... not quite family friendly dancers. Lily could see it as she looked in the mirror and her parents would be able to as well. The minor wrinkles from being stuffed into that bag didn't help matters either.

Nothing could be done about it now though. She had to leave in five minutes or less to make sure her dad could participate in the conversation... and as it stood he probably wouldn't be sticking around for the end of it anyway. \*Calm down Lily. It's fine. This is fine. You look great. There's nothing wrong with the clothes you picked out aside from a few barely noticeable wrinkles.\*

[Indeed you look beautiful] cheered Kat mentally. Lily pouted into the mirror. While Kat's words did warm her heart they were undercut by the fact she was alone in the bathroom and Kat had yet to actually SEE her in the outfit. Oh Lily knew well enough that Kat would argue she was beautiful all the time and the clothes didn't matter... and it was even true now. At least, she thought so.

Her looks might not be model worthy, or at least, that's what she tells herself. For Lily, her new body was wonderful. She thought of her current body as the best she could possibly look. From most perspectives that part was true. The real sticker was the 'not model worthy'. Her new appearance was perfectly symmetrical and contained no blemishes at all. She hadn't really noticed but other than a few freckles that were intentionally placed so her face didn't look fake, she had no blemishes at all. That's not even getting into the lack of body hair where it wasn't wanted. All that is also ignoring the fact Lily was never ugly... she just had issues with self esteem after... certain individuals.

So, there she was. In front of the mirror killing time by nervously trying to smooth down her outfit ineffectually. Lily wanted to grumble and complain. To procrastinate. To find some excuse to avoid dealing with the mess she was about to walk into... but there wasn't much chance of it working. Assuming Vivian herself didn't come in and drop her on the doorstep if she got too worked up Kat was bound to come in and comfort her, ruining her chances at just hiding away.

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Lily pulled her lips into a wide smile showing her teeth as she checked them over again. Vivian had left her a spare toothbrush and her canines were not kind to the abused plastic. Apparently having sharp teeth was not always a boon. The little bits of plastic she needed to pick out attesting to that. \*Maybe I can just use my smile to intimidate my parents?\*

[I'm sorry Lily but you're too adorable for that] was the reply she got back from Kat.

\*I really need to find some way to stop sending you all my thoughts.\*

[I can pretend I didn't hear anything if you want?]

\*No... no I don't. I might NEED to find it and maybe it'd be useful sometimes... but I don't know I could ever bring myself to use it often without feeling guilty.\*

[Hey, I keep my thoughts to myself occasionally. It's fine to want privacy especially in your own mind]

\*In concept perhaps. In reality I don't like the idea of giving up our connection, even just muting it somewhat on my end to hide some thoughts. I don't know why it's worry me. It should be perfectly normal but it feels like such a foreign idea...\*

[Well now you're just working yourself into a worry. Come on. It's time to get moving]

Lily sighed and took one more glance at herself in the mirror before heading for the door. Kat was right. As much as she wished that wasn't the case. So out of the door and into the wide world. Lily led their two man group to the fence. A small part of her suggested going the long way... but she'd wasted too much time already and she'd miss her father. Even if that was a goal potentially worth aiming for...

It was probably best to confront them both at once. They'd keep each other in check somewhat. Dear old Dad would never gainsay Mom... while Mom never wants to look unreasonable in front of Dad. That and... it's nice to have Kat come with. Wait. Kat you know you aren't just escorting me right? I do expect you to come in?

[Yes Lily we covered that earlier in our planning.]

\*Right. Yes. Of course I did. Lily breathed in deeply as she hopped the fence. Only to pause and realise... she'd just hopped the fence. Lily creakily turned her head backwards to watch Kat do the same thing... but... I... how did I do that? I... oh dear. I didn't realise I was that strong... I just... I just sort of jumped over...\*

Kat chose to remain silent on the matter and lightly scratch behind Lily's ears to chase away some of the worry. Lily blushed deeply as even that light touch sent a deep rumbling purr spilling out of her from deep in her chest. It wasn't quite enough for her to completely lose her mind. Which was both good and bad. Good because she didn't really have the capacity to be quite so worried anymore... and bad because that worry was being replaced by mortification. And she's just scratching my ear!

That excuse was feeling more and more hollow by the second. It was true yes but part of Lily was starting to wonder if it was technically an erogenous zone for her. Sure she knew what... that... felt like and this wasn't it... but... with her new body and... being so close to Kat... she hadn't exactly had any time to... 'test some hypotheses' about her new humanoid form. What was applicable before may not be applicable now and vice versa. It was probably not indecent... but by the demon's grace it was close.

In the future, Lily would protest any mention of the pained mewling she DID NOT make when Kat took her hand away. The fact Kat hadn't even continued scratching for thirty seconds was... never mind. Lily shook her head and tried not to pout at the action. It had calmed her yes but now she felt jittery and wired. Like she'd downed a pack of energy drinks in a few minutes. She felt wired and alert but also terribly unimpressed by the sounds her body wanted to make in protest.

So Lily sucked in a deep breath once again and walked around to the front of her house. As she stepped closer and closer the house seemed to get much larger. Her family home had never loomed before. It was a quaint house. Not too large... not too small. It had space for everything with only a bit of clutter... and of course space for new things as well. Now though... now she felt small. Like she was back in Memphis form. The walk around the side of her house dragging as her mind either sped up, or her perception of time shattered.

As she turned to the door Lily felt like she'd just ran the hundred metres. She was so much fitter in her new body. She could jump fences in a single bound. She shouldn't be winded. Her tail should be nice and calm as well. It shouldn't be puffed up to thrice its size and waving around like it'd been set on fire. Lily's new sharper teeth ground into their slots her mouth provided for them. Had they been weaker, she was sure her newfound jaw strength would have caused them to break and shatter. She stepped over the small raised lip of the house to be directly in front of the door. Too close really. She brought her hand up...

And it stayed there. Raised in the eye mere millimetres from the door. She just had to knock and then she'd be inside... talking to her parents. Just what she wanted right? If only she was trembling a bit, then maybe the shakes would cause her to close that last little bit of distance and she could say that she'd knocked and they'd heard nothing. Despite that though, she remained completely still, teeth grit, tail fluffed and arm raised. Just a single, minuscule motion. Yet Lily felt like it was a nearly insurmountable difference. That all the strength in the world wouldn't be enough. Then Kat leaned carefully on her back, pressing into her and Lily felt her heart blossom. She was better than this. She could do this. She knocked.

Chapter 832 Evaline's at the Door

Still Lily's perspective

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Kat took a step back as soon as Lily knocked on the door. It was a heavy blow to Lily's fragile confidence but it was also a necessary step. Lily knew very well that having Evaline open the door to see Kat pressed against her was not the start she wanted. Her ears were straining to hear what was going on inside. They told her someone was coming to the door, and based on many years of experience she knew it was going to be her mother that answered.

When the door cracked open to reveal said mother in question Lily wasn't surprised. Her tail was still puffed up and her eyes were wide, taking in as much information as they could. Evaline seemed to pause at the threshold before her face morphed into a wide smile that didn't reach her eyes, "Lily! Oh it's so wonderful to have you back, and Kat as well, nice to see you both. Please come in before... people start asking questions you don't want to answer,"

Lily just nodded and walked inside after her mother with Kat following up the rear. They were just passed the lounge when Evaline said, "Please go on through and speak with Harold. I just need a quick word with my daughter first.

Kat nodded and didn't say anything, adhering to Lily's orders about not speaking unless she had to. As soon as Kat was gone Evaline put a heavy hand on Lily's shoulder and yanked her further down the hall. There was a moment, just a moment where her body informed her she could fight back. That she could claw and bite and that she was much stronger than this pushy woman... but that same pushy woman was her mother, and all the strength in the world wouldn't allow her to fight against Evaline.

So further down the hall they went until Evaline released her hold and took two further steps before turning on Lily. "Three weeks! Three weeks without a single call or so much as a 'I'm doing well Mum'. I

had to find out you were mostly fine from Vivian! And that's only because I went and confronted her about it!"

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Lily kept herself calm. There was no need to turn this into a shouting match. Not yet. "Mum, I was in another dimension," still technically true even if it seemed like the misdirection was going to continue for at least a bit long, "pretty sure my cell phone, even if I'd kept it on me, isn't that powerful!"

"I'm sure you must have had some means to contact us," insisted Evaline, and she was right. Lily technically did by relaying things through Vivian with D.E.M.O.N.S... but that hadn't seemed like a good idea before when she was hiding from her problems. Still didn't now honestly, as while her mother was freaking out... she was only freaking out once.

"I was stuck as a cat at the time," said Lily as calmly as she could manage. Which was quite well, but there was a certain edge to her voice that could just barely be heard. Well, that and the much larger and sharper canines that could be seen when she talked, even if Evaline wasn't quite clueing into them consciously.

Still the words brought Evaline up short. Lily could see as the anger warred with confusion in her mother's mind. "I... you what?" the words still sounded angry but the so very confused look on her face really undercut the angry glare Evaline had been attempting.

"Well it's something I was going to go over now that I'm home but you called me away..." offered Lily as peacefully as she could.

But Evaline wasn't having it. "Lily Hannah Furos..."

Apparently neither was Lily though because her brain immediately started to tune out the yelling. \*Hear we go...\*

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At the same time, in the kitchen.

Kat and Harold were both sort of just awkwardly looking at each other. Evaline hadn't really pulled Lily that far down the hallway and only her first few words were even trying to remain quiet. Even Harold with his perfectly normal human hearing could hear the argument in the hallway. "So," said Harold.

Kat nodded, "This... is indeed happening it seems..."

Harold glanced down at his empty plate and sighed, wishing for more food despite not being hungry. It would have been a great way to pretend things were fine. "Does... does Evaline think we can't hear her?" asked Kat unable to avoid asking despite going against her instructions not to talk.

Harold looked Kat dead in the eyes and said, "You can't hear her. I can't hear her. There is no argument going on in the hallway. Remember this lesson and it will serve you well,"

Kat frowned at that bit of information and returned with, "I... well even if I thought that was a reasonable way to do things... I literally can't lie Mr Furos... so... I mean... I can't just lie about it,"

Harold shrugged, "You learn these things over time I suppose. It's just better for everyone if my dear wife thinks I don't realise she has a tempter, or that she's overly controlling most of the time. Or that she thinks I don't know what's going on in my own home."

Kat opened her mouth to say something... what that something was took a few seconds to articulate but eventually it was the question of, "Why?" Harold just raised an eyebrow, "I... I mean... why? Why put up with it?"

Harold sighed and took a long drink of his likely soon to be empty coffee. "Well, the primary reason is that despite what it may look like I do love that woman. I also found that I NEED that kind of control in my life. It might look bad now but most of the time it works out wonderfully. You may not see it, but I'd say my Evaline completes me. Just as I complete her. I get someone to help me organise my life and keep things on track, and she gets someone to steer and direct without inflicting it on the wider world."

Kat, due to her recent... education... realised multiple things in that moment. Multiple things she really didn't want to know about Lily's parents. Or anyone that wasn't Lily really. But she 'knew' them now so the best she could do was grit her teeth and make sure it was never confirmed. "I... I don't think Lily and I have that sort of relationship..."

Harold nodded, "Of course not. You're both completely bonkers,"

"What?" asked Kat confused.

Harold wave Kat's confusion off, "Oh everyone's a little insane. I'm just quite sure that you are both less sane than most,"

"Right..."

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"... and this? Is this what I can expect from you in the future?! Why I..." Evaline was still going and Lily honestly didn't know half of what had been said. Still, the rant would hopefully end soon. Evaline was starting to repeat herself a bit and Lily knew that meant she'd run out of things to complain about. "... this family..."

\*Sometimes I really don't get how Dad puts up with it. I mean, I love Mum but this is just ridiculous. I can't tell if she's treating me like a child who doesn't know anything or like a random adult that needs to repent for all of her numerous sins.\*

[You don't want to know.]

\*What?\*

[Nope. I'm giving you no hint Lily. I KNOW things now.]

\*Wait are you talking to my dad?\*

[Who knows? By the way... I may or may not have been told, 'there is no argument going on in the hallway' so take that as you will.]

\*Yeah that sounds about right. I don't know how Mum never notices...\*

“... are you even listening to me?” hissed Evaline.

\*No.\* “Yes Mum,” said Lily easily. A lie yes, perhaps something they should be avoiding, but this particular lie had been told... many... many times. So it might as well be the truth at this point.

“Well how about you repeat what it was I have been saying?” asked Evaline.

Lily new she was screwed... except for the fact this was familiar territory and she had a response lined up. “Where do you want me to start from? ‘Lily Hannah Furos’? Perhaps ‘As a member of this family’ or I could even go for, ‘I can’t believe that you’d’?”

“Don’t get smart with me now young lady,” growled Evaline.

\*Ah but that’s what I need to do. It’s not like your rants are original Mum. If you were calmer you’d notice I just went with the same words that appear in every rant of yours I’m involved in.\* “Of course not Mum,”

Evaline glared back, debating over what to do next. Calling Lily’s bluff, not that she knew it was one, or using this break to go and start the conversation proper in the other room. Evaline’s teeth clacked together as she clenched her jaw. Hard.

A moment and a breath later, Evaline was stomping back towards the living room and kitchen. Lily didn’t sigh, she simply released a large quantity of air and followed behind her mother. \*Argument one complete. Now I get to enjoy round 2. FUN!

Chapter 833 Evaline Tries to Be Serious

Lily

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“What have you pair been talking about?” asked Evaline as she took a seat beside Harold. Lily of course took up a seat beside Kat. Perhaps not sitting directly across her parents would be better. It would be a less obviously drawing of lines certainly... but there wasn’t really a choice there in Lily’s mind. She would sit beside Kat even if it meant the conversation was potentially harder.

“Oh, nothing really, just waiting for you both to get here,” said Harold easily. Evaline looked over at Kat who simply looked back without answering. It had not sunk into Evaline’s mind that Kat couldn’t lie. Not properly at least so she didn’t take this as anything other than a confirmation of what Harold said.

“I see... well... Lily I suppose you can begin then,” said Evaline already trying to take control of the conversation. The thing was... they had to let her. It was much too easy for Evaline to do so it was best to just accept that loss of initiative.

“Well... as you can see,” Lily made her ears twitch, “I’m a cat girl now. Technically I’m a Memphis girl but the differences aren’t too major in this form. That’s the second thing... I can now swap between this humanoid form and one where I’m just a Memphis. I look like a small kitten with horns and wings. I also now have the capacity for three kinds of magic... and technically this isn’t my body. Or... well it’s not my original one. It’s still mine I guess,”

Evaline frowned, "How can that not be your original body? Also, does that mean you need a new round of immunizations?"

\*That's... not something I considered... Um... no probably not? I mean... Nira would have said something if I did right?\* "Well... souls are real so... wait no why is one of your questions about immunisations?" asked Lily.

"It's the little things that you forget when you're rushing ahead. You might be a great researcher Lily but occasionally you get ideas stuck in your head and go straight into the deep end missing a lot of the little foundational stuff. In this case, I'm asking if you'd need new immunisations?" asked Evaline.

"I... I don't think so. I feel like that's something that would have come up during the procedure... and I have to go back for a few check-ups to make sure everything is fine," Evaline got a slightly concerned look at that but Lily continued quickly. "Mum it's nothing strange. For an operation of this type it's quite normal to have those follow up check-ups"

Evaline sighed, "I know but I certainly don't want you to be away for nearly a month a second time," Lily winced. Something that was very much not missed by Evaline who zeroed her gaze in onto Lily. "Is there something you'd like to elaborate on?"

"Well... Vivian might have been just a tad misleading when you spoke to her..." offered Lily.

"Oh? Do go on," said Evaline.

"So... well there were a few things... the first is that I was stuck as a Memphis for a while... just till things stabilised... and I didn't exactly want to talk to you both when I couldn't talk to you... so I put that off for a bit... and then Kat had to go on a Contract and I went with her because we aren't meant to be too far apart for a while... and well a dimension is obviously too far..." said Lily.

"You mean to tell us," Evaline emphasised the 'us' despite Harold's clear look of 'don't drag me into this' on his face, "that you could have visited and let us know you were fine before now?"

\*Wait I can get through this with a technicality.\* "No... I couldn't talk remember? So what would have happened is Kat would have shown up with a Memphis in her hands and you'd both have freaked out. I couldn't and still can't talk when I'm like that. So really... I couldn't tell you anything,"

"Well go on, show me," said Evaline. Lily nodded and in an instant she was in her Memphis form. On the chair. Lily turned her big eyes to Kat and gave a soft meow. Can you pick me up? Kat didn't have any reason to refuse and soon Lily was bundled in Kat's arms and looking at her mother across the table.

Evaline had a rather conflicted look on her face, clearly unsure how to take it, while Harold's face was alight with undisguised interest. To him this was such a fascinating moment. He had proof beyond proof that this was all real. Sure Kat's horns wings and tail looked real but she didn't do anything too fantastic with them in his sight. Seeing his daughter turn into a cat wasn't something you'd ever mistake.

"Can I pet you?" asked Harold, ignoring the glare Evaline gave him at the question.

\*Um... should I let him? I... what do you want Kat?\*

[This shouldn't be about ME Lily. It should be entirely up to do with yourself.]

\*Right I... I guess I'm just looking for an excuse to say know. I mean... I can hardly explain to my dad why it might not be appropriate. But... I mean... if I was ever going to let someone who wasn't you... I would be my parents. And it's not inappropriate really... it just feels like it sometimes...\*

[Whatever makes you comfortable.]

\*I... I think I want to give it a chance.\*

[Ok. In that case go for it.]

With Kat's acceptance secured Lily hopped out of her arms and made her way across the table to sit off to the side of her dad, making her way around his plate and cup. Evaline frowned and looked like she wanted to complain about something but didn't say anything after Harold started to lightly scratch Lily's head.

It was instantly clear this was different. Lily curled up and let her dad scratch her freely... she even started purring... but it wasn't the same. She actually had to START purring. It was a clear choice to make. Sure the sensation was pleasant but the feeling wasn't really comparable. \*Why? It's not like Dad's technique is that poor. The difference shouldn't be this big.\*

[I mean... I don't really get lust and what not but you kiss your parents right? I very much doubt it feels the same as kissing me.]

\*I did not need that thought in my head Kat. Grumbled Lily for a moment before acquiescing. Still... that is a good point. I didn't really think about it like that because you were always the person petting me... and it was pretty clearly on the edge of decent. Then again... hugging you feels that way now sometimes as well. I'm hyper aware of your breasts and thighs and hands... and just... your everything.\*

\*Not that I wasn't before... but... but before I could stamp those feelings down pretty quickly and just enjoy the hugs. Now not so much. Even if it's an innocent hug it makes me so warm. So... maybe I was worried about nothing? Still... I'm going to say this is a step more intimate than hugging. So close friends and family only.\*

[Whatever you think is best Lily. I barely understand the nuances or this sort of thing as it is. I'd probably give the same recommendation as your friend... but as your girlfriend making sure your happy takes priority... so whatever does that.]

Apparently fun time was over though because Evaline quite loudly cleared her throat. Harold turned to face her; confusion that must have been fake plastered on his face. It was a good fake... though the twitches of Evaline's cheek implied it was seen through. "Do you mind Harold? I believe we were having a serious conversation with our daughter,"

Now, normally Harold would just let Evaline continue with her discussion... but this was a unique experience. He was also willing to bet that his daughter wouldn't be quite so available in the future. This was an opportunity he was willing to make use of. So instead he said, "Oh come on honey. Feel our little Lily's fur. It's quite soft and she seems to be enjoying it,"

Evaline's hand twitched closer to Lily before her other hand grabbed it and pulled it back. It was clear that on some level she agreed with Harold. That it was a good, nay, spectacular idea. The instinct to 'pet the cute thing' was strong and seeing her husband's smile implied it was a good decision. On the other



hand she was trying to be serious. Trying to express her displeasure with Lily's recent choices. Becoming a cat thing on short notice? Fine, she could forgive that. It seemed to have turned out well. Ignoring her parents for weeks? That required a bit of grovelling on someone's part and it wasn't going to be her.

Chapter 834 Evaline Tries Again

Lily

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When Lily returned to human form much of the anger had been stolen from Evaline. It was so hard to stay angry while petting something cute. That thing in this case being her daughter which really didn't help her hold on to any of that anger. "Now that we've been sufficiently distracted," said Evaline trying really hard to sound angry. She was failing, "can you see while I'm not terribly pleased with you at the moment Lily?"

Lily gave a slightly repentant shrug, "I'm not really sure what else I could do Mum. I couldn't talk to you before so I don't see it as mattering too much,"

"Do you think we wouldn't want to see you?" asked Evaline, hard edge in her tone returning.

"Of course not," said Lily. "But I wouldn't have been able to really DO anything,"

Evaline huffed, "We'll come back to that. What I want to know now is what's this about you going on Contracts with Kat?"

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"I need to stay close to her for now," \*for now being forever,\* "and being separated across dimensions isn't particularly healthy for us at the moment," \*nor will it ever be,\* "so I had to go. Now we can talk about it. I want to make it clear though. Even if I didn't HAVE to go I still would want to go," said Lily.

"Is this true?" asked Evaline clearly looking at Kat.

"It is," said Lily.

"You've already said as much, now I'm asking your f- girlfriend Kat," said Evaline. Go for it Kat.

"It is. For Lily's health it's best we stay in close proximity," said Kat slowly taking care not to say too much or make it seem like she was hiding anything.

"Right... and can you tell me why that is?" asked Evaline still clearly looking at Kat. Lily opened her mouth to answer but Evaline raised a hand and glared at her daughter for a few moments before Lily backed off. In those moments Lily sent this towards Kat. \*You can try and deflect if you want. Try not to have too many follow up questions available for her. I don't want her to focus on you. This is MY problem and I don't think Mum would press me as hard.\*

[I've got a great idea.] "I was not involved directly with the entire procedure only for the establishment of the bond. Lily was given a much more comprehensive version on account of having time to speak with the doctors involved in it tall. I didn't really have that chance," said Kat.

Evaline frowned at the answer and looked to Lily who nodded. \*Great counter move Kat. It makes me seem responsible and gives her little reason to keep asking you about it.\* “I see... well can you tell me about why exactly this bond was necessary?” asked Evaline.

“It’s an important function of the race I chose. It helps stabilise the demonic energy I have now. It requires bonding with a demon and I of course chose Kat for that,” said Lily.

“Is this permanent?” asked Evaline, eyes narrowed.

“The bond can be broken but it’s not particularly easy nor would it be healthy for Kat and I... but it can be broken,” \*and if she knew that wasn’t actually a good thing because breaking it means we DIE she’d be freaking out.\* “so I don’t have any plans to break it and don’t want you thinking of them either. Not that I think you’d manage it...” said Lily.

“What sort of side effects does it prevent?” asked Evaline, “they must be rather important if you would willingly chain yourself to someone for any length of time,”

\*Oh sure they are... but I’d have ‘chained myself’ as you so crudely put it over a pittance. Heck I’d pay for the service. Oh WAIT WE DID!\* “Mum... even if they side effects weren’t a problem I’d have still chosen to have the bond,” \*because the bond is the whole reason I picked this race!\* “so I don’t really like how you’re suggesting it’s a problem. Also the side effects are horrific,” said Lily... and if she was barring her fangs slightly... well... Evaline didn’t flinch so it probably wasn’t a big deal.

Evaline sniffed at her daughter and tried not to look too put out by the words. “I see... would you care to elaborate on those side effects?” Evaline said.

“Not particularly,” answered Lily flatly, trying not to sound smug.

“I wasn’t asking. I was telling you that you will elaborate on those issues. I was trying to be polite oh daughter of mine,” said Evaline with gritted teeth.

\*No... no you weren’t.\* “Are you sure? They aren’t great to talk about...” said Lily even as Evaline nodded firmly. So with a sigh she complied. “Well there’s the basic ‘turning into a mindless monster’ but in the short term you have... shakes... high chance of manic breaks, megalomania, narcissism, uncontrollable rage, horrific mutations, spontaneous combustion, sociopathy, more general psychosis, schizophrenia, psychopathy, depression, random mutations of the body, endless hunger... and insomnia. Those are just some of the issues that can occur but I think you can the idea...”

“And... and you think this was a worthwhile risk?” asked Evaline with an unimpressed look on her face.

“Well, I have three magical affinities, all potentially strong ones. I’ve got Paper, Shadows and Space with the full ability to manipulate mana. Most people have only one, some rare people have two, and three is potentially something you wouldn’t even see every generation. On top of that, I’m tougher and stronger than normal and my eyes have a cat’s low light vision even in human form. It’s... a lot of potential,” said Lily with a passion she didn’t really intend to come across, especially in the beginning. Her eyes burning with ideas, the light making it seem like the flecks of gold were moving around, shining on their own.

Lily could see Evaline wavering somewhat at that. Three schools of magic for her daughter to play with... but even still. “Lily. I can’t punish you for taking so many risks in your transformation. I want to, god I do but I did technically give you permission. Even if you withheld what seems to be a rather big drawback in

my eyes, I can see to you that it isn't. Still. Permission is permission. I won't go back on my word there. Though don't think I've missed the fact this bond is probably going to be permanent. Well?"

Lily was expecting it so she didn't even flinch... she thought. Luckily for her the biggest indication of her distress at the question was her tail fluffing up but unlike Kat's it was much smaller and hidden behind her body at the moment, "I thought I spoke on that already,"

Evaline rolled her eyes, "Indeed you did... but even if it isn't permanent you expect and want it to be and that's perhaps enough for me to see it as an issue. I'd ask you for the exact details of this bond if I thought for a second you wouldn't just lie to me about it,"

"I wouldn't lie about it," retorted Lily somewhat earnestly.

"Of course not. You'd just tell half-truths, I'm sure. Lily, I did teach you that particular skill when you were eight. You might not have taken to it for the most part but you're not stupid," said Evaline. [I feel like that says more about Evaline that she thought the art of half-truths should be taught to an eight year old]

\*Sylvie already knows how to tell half-truths.\*

[Yeah, maybe but I didn't teach her that and neither did Gramps] Evaline of course couldn't hear this internal conversation and continued on, "Still. What I can perhaps say for certain is that I can punish you for not coming over earlier. Even just with Kat to tell us you were stuck for a while. We may not have been happy with the situation but frankly I'm not particularly happy right now. So... we can discuss potential punishment for that,"

"Is that really necessary dear?" asked Harold.

"Our daughter went off to who knows where to help her girlfriend with who knows what without so much as a 'I'll be away for a few days Mum' I think I AM entitled to punishing her a little for that," said Evaline.

"Ah but it was pointed out that she couldn't talk at the time so she couldn't have given you even that," said Harold as if it was the most logical thing in the world.

Evaline was about to argue when a watch alarm sounded. Harold frowned and turned it off before rising, "Sorry dear, flower, but it seems I'm off to work," Harold grabbed his plate and cup dumping them into the sink before heading off the door. "I'll see you both later!"

\*Ah shit.\*

[What?]

\*Mum's going to work out my punishment without Dad to help mitigate things... and he left right as she announced that fact. This is basically like giving her permission to go nuts.\*

Chapter 835 Third Time's the Charm?

"I suppose I'll give you a few chances..." said Evaline sweetly. "Would you be so kind as to tell me what adventures you went on without permission?"

\*First off. I'm nearly old enough to be considered an adult. Second off. This is a trap. Third... I have no way to avoid it.\* Lily could feel Kat's mental wince at the third point, but neither girls' face betrayed them. \*Kat do you think it's better to mention the time spent hanging out with Kamiko and Sue? That isn't an adventure but... it could count in my Mum's mind.\*

[Well... Kamiko is Nira's daughter. You can say you were there for a check up and then we spent time with Kamiko after. It's even true. Kamiko organised the meeting specifically around your check-up. I think you should make it clearly separate, but that's just me.]

Lily resisted the urge to nod... barely... but it wasn't quite enough to suppress all her reactions. Her ears flicked forward slightly and her tail swished... but Evaline wasn't used to these new non-verbal tics so they didn't raise any red flags. "Well... the first Contract I didn't really do anything. I think it's because my body and soul were still stabilising but I basically just slept through the whole thing. Not sure if it really counts as an adventure because of that..."

"The second trip was to this city with essentially infinite water and we needed to help this heir deal with his love life. It was a little weird but Kat and I got to explore the city and it was quite nice to see. We ended our time there by flying around as a bit of a date. It was nice..."

"And well... I'm not sure if this last one counts... but in between that Kat and I needed to go to the Hub again to get a routine check-up for me. It all came up good and then we spent time with Nira's, my consulting physician I guess, daughter. Her name is Kamiko and she's pretty cool. I didn't really get to interact with her properly because I was still a cat at the time, but it was nice enough," explained Lily.

"I see... and Kat... what were you doing during this?" asked Evaline.

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Sensing approval from Lily, Kat answered, "Well I was nearby when we spent time with Kamiko and Sue, just as I was for the romance thing. As for the first Contract I was participating in the Tournament I was summoned for,"

"I see... how dangerous is this tournament?" asked Evaline again, leaning forward slightly and pressing her elbows into the table.

[Hmm... how accurate should I be? It's not very deadly to me for a number of reasons and Thyme would never let anyone die... but in general it is a bit deadly.]

\*I'm not really sure. One implies competence while the other helps mitigate the apparent danger. Frankly I don't know what would be more reassuring to Mum. That you can deal with dangerous things... or that it wasn't actually dangerous.\*

[I think I'll try and go for a bit of a mix. Just easier to avoid getting caught up in lies that way.] "It depends on your perspective of danger. For me it wasn't anything to be concerned with at all. The first round was a fire-fighting exercise but none of the flames were even hot enough to burn my clothes. Then it was a real life version of Ultimate Werewolf, or Mafia where we had to pick out traitors.

"We also had this weird funhouse with butler and maid ninjas we had to sneak through. My partner for that got injured but she was patched up quickly as well, before the round even ended actually. Then we had a fight... and then something that could vaguely be called a fight but was honestly kind of sad..."

“So you’re trying to tell me you were at no risk of getting maimed or injured?” asked Evaline.

Kat gave a ‘so-so’ gesture, “It’s hard to say properly. Maiming isn’t really a common thing in those sorts of worlds. With healing magic a lot of issues we still haven’t figured out how to fix are minor problems. Even without that my regeneration is good enough to fix basically everything as far as I know. I’ve been stabbed in the heart and then gone on to complete my mission afterwards,”

Evaline flinched back, “That doesn’t seem particularly safe...”

Kat shrugged, “Well it was my ally that did it so I wasn’t exactly ready for the betrayal.”

“You’re not selling this well Kat...” said Evaline slowly.

Kat shrugged again, “But it wasn’t a problem. That’s what I’m trying to get at. Even something so seemingly serious wasn’t actually a death sentence or even a source of permanent issues. You may think that sounds deadly but I don’t even have a scar from the incident,”

“Well what about Lily? She is not so sturdy as you seem to be and I doubt she could survive such a thing,” said Evaline with a harsh tone.

Kat nodded, “Indeed but D.E.M.O.N.S is able to pull us out of Contracts before they become deadly. Even if I wasn’t willing to put myself between Lily and anything that might hurt her, we’d be kicked from the dimension first. The fact that I was allowed to take those wounds is a further sign that I can handle that sort of thing,”

Lily flinched, something Evaline caught on, “Something to add Lily?”

“No Mum...” said Lily softly. Evaline just raised her eyebrow in a ‘really’ gesture, continuing to stare until Lily sighed and continued, “I... I just trust that Kat would do that... and I don’t really enjoy the mental image,”

“She’d be fine though,” pointed out Evaline.

“It still hurts though!” retorted Lily.

“Is that true,” asked Evaline and Kat nodded. “Interesting... but you think you’d still save Lily from anything?”

Kat rolled her eyes, “Evaline... I saved someone who wasn’t yet a friend from a fall. It resulted in me having to feel what its like to have gravel rash so bad the gravel digs into your skin. Then it healed and I got to feel it going back out again while spitting up a few lumps of blood and rocks. I’d do it again to. Pain is... well it just doesn’t bother me that much anymore. Maybe it never did,”

“Is that the worst pain you’ve experienced?” asked Evaline.

Kat tapped a finger to her chin a few times, “I mean maybe? I don’t really keep track of that sort of thing. It was probably up there. The heart stabbing was also pretty bad but that was more... a strange incoherent numbness? The fact I was stabbed there more than once probably didn’t help at the time. Hmm... what else...”

Evaline paled slightly as Kat casually brought up more and more of her injuries and Evaline started to realise just how crazy her daughter's girlfriend was. Kat was continuing and Evaline gave a pleading 'is she serious?!' look towards Lily who just gave a sad nod in response. In Evaline's mind she was starting to wonder if this wasn't a harsher punishment than any she could give out already. She didn't exactly intend this but every injury listed was like a hammer blow to Lily, her smile twitching lower and lower every time.

Part of Evaline wanted to call it good with that... but it also felt like she'd be undermining herself if she did that. So instead, Evaline decided to play an interesting card, "That's enough Kat..." Kat stopped and nodded. "with... that out of the way. Lily. I'll ask you this. What do you think is a fair punishment? I'll accept your suggestion if it's good,"

Lily winced, "Is none an option," Evaline shook her head, "Of course not. Um... I don't really know... I mean... you could ground me but I'd just read or mess around on the computer... you could take the computer away but... I don't know that I'd care I'd just read or visit Kat. I mean... outside of extreme boredom I'm not sure what you can do now?"

"Smacking me is an option I suppose... but I haven't actually gotten hurt in this new body and I'm not sure it'd work... it's also a bit awkward... hmm... I feel like something suitably embarrassing would probably work best. I'd remember it at least... but I don't know what would fit that range. Like... walking around naked would be too much obviously... but putting my in something garishly pink and sending me off in public... I don't know if that'd really be so bad,"

"Hmm..." Evaline mulled over her daughters words. "I think I know just the thing. See... I believe we can brush up on your sex education..."

"No"

"... we can even have Kat sit in on it with us..."

"Mum stop you've already gone over this with me!"

"... I'll need to prepare some materials... have to be extra thorough this time..."

"Can't I just opt for going naked? Or locked in my room? Bribery?"

"... where did I put that old whip?"

Lily turned creakily to Kat as Evaline ignored them both. "Help,"

Chapter 836 Evaline Did it.

Lily

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Lily sat on her bed staring at the wall as Kat rubbed gentle circles on her back, "There there, it's over now. We survived,"

"I don't think I can ever look at my Mum the same way. Or whips, hairdryers or triple A batteries. Or really quite a disturbing number of things frankly. I didn't know half of that information... and somehow

a lot of it is only really applicable to lesbian relationships! I know my Mum is straight. She's told me that, even after knowing that I'm gay. If I didn't know otherwise, I'd think she was at least bi!

"But even still... I agreed to 'something somewhat embarrassing' as a punishment! That wasn't embarrassing that was mentally scarring and I wish I could remove it from my mind regardless of how physically painful it is. If repeated head trauma as a way of memory destruction was in any way reliable, I'd go for it. Even if it wasn't safe! It was that bad! How are you not a mess!"

Kat just continued to rub Lily's back as she explained, "Well see... it turns out that having a perfect memory can be good in some ways. Because I have some many memories they HAVE to be more organised than a normal human. I'd probably go mad drawing connections between everything all the time otherwise. It means that I can basically quarantine a memory and lock it away deep in the back of my mind. Perhaps not healthy from a long term trauma perspective,

"Cause I still know it's there. It's a bit like a big neon sign saying 'Evaline's traumatic talk. Do Not Cross' in my mind. So I'm currently super aware of the fact that it's in my head... but I'm not constantly replaying with it or actively dealing with the information involved. So I'm fine. For now. Perhaps I can keep it in the box forever but frankly I doubt it. I'm hoping to just... sort of let other memories build up around it until it becomes unimportant but we'll see,"

.....

"That doesn't seem like a healthy coping mechanism Kat," pointed out Lily.

Kat shrugged, "Perhaps but you aren't really taking it well and I doubt I'd be any better if I didn't do this... so... I can have my breakdown later if need be."

"Yeah... some of the things she knows about cats..." Lily shivered, "they were things I didn't want or need to know. I don't know that I'll ever feel comfortable with my Memphis form again... especially not near any other cats,"

"You like that form too much to give it up. Even after you got the ability to swap you still spend most of your time as a Memphis," said Kat.

"True," acknowledge Lily, "and I'll admit a lot of this is just me complaining to make myself feel better... plus as much as I wish I didn't know those cat facts it's not like I didn't know them at all. In fact I think I told Mum all of them when I was on a pet research binge. Probably why she picked them, a sense of irony. Doesn't make it any less pleasant... and I was serious about a couple of those things..."

"I'm going magic power for all my lights now. I did not need to know that about the batteries. I mean... really who does that?"

"Your mother apparently," intoned Kat dryly.

"Yea... see..." Lily started, stopped and then started again, "see... I just... I don't know if she actually does or not but... I think she might and it's really not the type of thing I wanted to know you could DO or the type of thing I wanted to know my mother does. That just makes it WORSE. I mean, at least with the whips I can understand. It's not my kind of thing but I already knew it was something people did you know?"

“Ah... not really?” said Kat, “I mean... yes now... even if I don’t actually know what you’re hinting at it wasn’t really something I looked into before Vivian had that talk... I didn’t really go into the details afterwards... so no I don’t know and that’s probably for the best really,”

Lily groaned and let herself flop down across Kat’s lap. Kat swapped from rubbing Lily’s back to carefully massaging Lily’s legs. Kat wasn’t particularly skilled at it, but her instincts were guiding her ever so slightly. Well, that and the fact she could watch Lily’s reactions for approval even with words. That certainly helped. “Do you think that’s the whole punishment?” asked Kat, “I don’t think she said you were done... just that ‘this session’ was done,”

“Oh god no please don’t say that,” whined Lily, “I don’t want you even suggest such a thing, just in case Mum didn’t notice before and is going to make use of it now!”

“What are the chances? Honestly?” questioned Kat.

Lily huffed, “Pretty damn poor Kat. Pretty. Damn. Poor. I bet Mum will hold this over my head for months. ‘I can still continue your punishment Lily’ or ‘If you do this I might forget about that second session Lily’ and ‘Well I said I wouldn’t do session 2, but what about 3, 4, and 5?’ It’ll be a nightmare. Kat can we go on a Contract and escape?”

Kat bent down and gave Lily a light kiss on the cheek, “Lily you know that’s not how it works. Even if I could just call up D.E.M.O.N.S and get a fresh contract that’s what got us into this mess isn’t it? Surely your mum will be more annoyed if we just left without saying anything again...”

“Urgh... all this pain and I still don’t have permission. That means I’ll probably need to spend the night here at the very least to GET that permission. I’m not super keen for that... especially not with the fact I’m going to be made do a bunch of extra chores as further punishment, I’m all but certain. Maybe I can apply for early emancipation?” considered Lily.

“I doubt it Lily,” said Kat, “Even if you were actually ready to go through with it, and it wouldn’t cause irreparable damage to your relationship with your parents there’s still a few other issues. Such as the fact you’re noticeably a cat girl, something that would undoubtedly raise a few questions... and even if it didn’t you can’t put down ‘visiting other dimensions with my Succubus girlfriend’ as a job occupation. And with no job, no desire to meet in person, and as horrible as it sounds in this context, no criminal charges to bring against your parents... it’d never work,”

“How do you know so much about this?” asked Lily.

Kat sighed, “I... may or may not have looked into it pretty heavily at one point. I thought it might be better to apply for early emancipation at one point in time to save Gramps on the cost of having an extra person around. It was a bit before you moved to our school. Gramps found out and sat me down. Really explained how much work I did helping him around the orphanage and pointed out that if I wasn’t there, another child might be.

“I said they could take the bed, but Gramps pointed out there are other orphanages and it wasn’t my duty to try and make it easier for some potential future child that may or may not exist currently especially not when I’m one of the most helpful kids at the orphanage. Then he proceeded to con me into promising to finish school. I think that might be part of the reason he was so sad when he told me



I'd have to leave the orphanage soon. He promised to always have a home for me... and he was sort of put in a position where that wasn't true anymore,"

"Oh. I didn't know..." said Lily awkwardly.

Kat gave another shrug and brushed her hands through Lily's hair, "I think it was a bit of teenage rebellion really. I didn't have a proper plan for leaving. Thought I'd sleep in the woods or something... the memories are... more than a little fuzzy now. So I probably wouldn't have gone through with it even if Gramps didn't catch me. Well that and I doubt the government would have approved but that's a different issue."

"I thought you had a perfect memory?" said Lily somewhat hesitantly.

"Yes but not the memories from when I was human," said Kat somewhat sadly, "they are... much less clear. As time passes it only becomes more and more clear just how... fragile and unwieldy those old memories are. Pretty sure most of them aren't actually memories but memories of memories of memories at this point. A bit like a window with a crack in it. If you haven't noticed it's fine but once you see the crack it's always your focus."

"Comparing your new perfect memories to a cracked window seems in poor taste," said Lily.

"Would you prefer I instead say it's like running your finger through a layer of dust? It's so clean now I can see properly see and be offended over the dust on either side of the line?" proffered Kat.

"Yes. Yes I would," said Lily.

Chapter 837 Backyard Thoughts

We're back to Kat.

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After some time spent comforting her girlfriend, Kat and Lily decided it was time to leave. That was when Evaline ambushed them in the hallway. Instead of threats or punishments though, Evaline played up the 'it's been so long since I've seen you' card instead. Something much more powerful and Lily didn't have the energy to fight against it after her recent mental scarring.

A quick kiss later and Kat was hopping the fence. It sounded a lot worse than it was in reality. When Kat went inside though... it was rather quiet. Sylvie was having a nap and Callisto had set up in the garage. She appeared to be doing some woodworking. Her form obscuring most of the wood she was working with making it hard to tell what it was. The headphones on her head were what really sold the fact she didn't want to be bothered.

So Kat walked back out and into the yard before flopping down on the ground. She didn't know what to do. \*Ugh. I feel so... listless. I don't want to just sleep like Sylvie... but I can't bother Callisto... and it's a bit too late to walk to the orphanage I wouldn't make it before dinner and certainly not back in a reasonable amount of time. Well... that is unless...\*

Kat quickly shut down that line of thought. She was trying not to make a big deal out of the fact she was a demon and flying or running fast enough to pass cars in the suburbs were not good ways of keeping powers to yourself. Kat took a glance at the fences around Vivian house. The two on either side were

pretty high and you couldn't see through them. One was made of metal sheets and the other had a thick hedge pressed up against it.

With that established Kat hopped to her feet, summoned her fans and started to run through her katas. Letting herself speed up slowly. As she did though... she could finally feel it. The difference between earth and other dimensions. Oh it was always clear she was weaker and slower here but now that she was repeating the familiar movements it became crystal clear. Pressing demonic energy into her limbs didn't really help as it should have either.

.....

She couldn't feel the dimension doing anything to her energy but she could feel the lacking speed and know that the world didn't appreciate her efforts. As the movements started repeating Kat sunk into her mind. A chance to let herself think. About Lily, about Apep. About everything really.

\*First things first I need to visit Gramps while on break. I haven't talked to him in so long... I don't want him to think I just forgot about him so that's at the top of the list. The real question is, do I want to go alone or with someone... and regardless of that when do I want to show up? The best time might be early morning before the other kids get up. Help Gramps with breakfast and get out before anyone can get up and notice me.

The other possibility is to just head in during the day and avoid mealtimes. Gramps will be his office working though. He might appreciate the excuse to not be filling out more paperwork... or maybe not. I'm not a kid that he needs to give attention anymore... I wonder if that makes it better or worse. I'm not sure.\*

Kat ended the sequence with a strong punch and winced at the slight explosion of air when she snapped into place. When she was moving it never really caused issues but when she stopped whatever she did to the air around her to prevent friction burning her alive seemed to just shut off. It still wasn't that much wind or even that loud to the average person... but it was noticeable weird. If people investigated they'd have questions. Kat sucked in a deep breath and restarted her work. This time focused on going as slow as possible without changing her mental clock speed.

\*Then there's Sylvie. She's grown attached to Callisto and that's wonderful... but it seems like she still doesn't have any friends at school. None that she's told me about anyway. I should make time to do something with her but I'm not really sure what. Board or card games could be fun but that would probably pull in more people. A nice... family activity... strange to think about.

Still that really is more of a group activity unless the game is chess... but I'm not good enough to offer Sylvie a challenge. I'd need to spend forever abusing my demonic energy to speed up my mind and chances are I'd still lose in the end. That would be a horrible use of my time. I wouldn't enjoy it at all and Sylvie's too smart to miss something like that on my end.

Hmmm. I'm really not sure what we could do. It turns out that when you're not responsible for a building full of children or attending school you have a lot of spare time. No homework. No responsibilities. No hobbies either really. I've got my katas... but that's just one thing and really isn't a hobby so much as it is work prep.\*

Kat flipped in place and stomped the ground, wincing at the hole she made on landing. Note to self. \*Slamming your foot down is cool but also damaging to the terrain.\* With a sigh Kat moved off to the side and continued her workout. If it could really be called that when she wasn't even sweating.

\*Sylvie's a bit young to read stories too I think... hmm... might be best to find something neither of us are good at and spend some time trying to pick it up. Maybe art? Probably wouldn't make any noticeable progress in a few days though. Or the fact that I can control my muscles so finely would be too much of an asset. Maybe. I've not really done much art outside of mandatory art classes.

I'll put that in the 'maybe' pile. I'll probably just end up asking Sylvie what she wants to do anyway. Now what about Vivian and Callisto. Callisto is probably the harder of the two. I'd offer to do the chores for the day but Callisto seems to actually enjoy cooking and cleaning. Probably helps her wind down and helps with the whole 'doesn't really sleep' thing.

So that's off the table. She also has the same problems as Sylvie when it comes to a lot of other activities. Board games would drag in people and I'm not good enough at chess to play her seriously. Kat let out a deep breath as she thought on what Callisto usually did before an idea wormed its way into Kat's mind. Maybe she'd appreciate help moving the furniture or something? I can easily lift couches, chairs, tables. Basically whatever Callisto wants. I could carry buckets for cleaning the windows two and take out the glass frames without even straining my arms. I think I like this idea. I'll make the offer at dinner.

Vivian... Vivian... she'd probably just enjoy spending time with me. I could let her drag me to the shops to look at clothes or something... she might also enjoy having me along at her work? Hmm. Not sure I can excuse the horns properly or if Vivian would want to have me around. No that's not fair, she'd probably prefer I was but clients might not like her bringing a kid to work. I really need a way to hide my horns and wings. Might have to put off doing stuff with Vivian out and about until that's dealt with.

Then there's Lily... I should probably take her on a date... but I'm not really sure how to do that without running into the same issues I do with my plans for Vivian. I need some way to hide my horns and wings. Lily's ears being squishy makes hiding them under a hat pretty easy... even if her tail is less easily hidden. Hmm... maybe if Callisto doesn't mind helping me out I can set up a picnic lunch? That's a nice date idea and we could either do it here in the backyard or with a bit more help from Callisto or Vivian we could head out to the forest and hang around there. \*

Kat finished her set and slowly brought her hands down to her sides before dismissing her fans. \*I also really want to train properly. It's hard to do on Earth. Especially my demonic fire. I might be better off contacting Kamiko and trying to work out some way to practice with her or whoever it is that teaches Kamiko. Spars between the two of us should be pretty even unless my regeneration is coming into play. I'm not sure I want to go that route though... I don't want her to think I'm just using her for lessons or something.\*

#### Chapter 838 Visiting GRAMPS!

The next morning Kat found herself jogging down the road towards the orphanage though... perhaps we should back up a bit. Lily had informed Kat via their link late last night that she wouldn't be free of her parents for at least another day, probably two. There also might be another conversation but that part remained to be seen. With Lily unavailable Kat decided it was a good chance to visit Gramps.

Vivian had looked a little frazzled when she got home after work, so Kat was going to follow up on that as well. Callisto and Sylvie were fine. Especially Callisto. When Kat informed the 'maid' about her intentions Callisto just nodded and told Kat to see her in the morning. When Kat got up out of bed at 2:30am Callisto was still up and handed Kat a bento box.

Kat's first question was how Callisto knew Gramps' wife had been Japanese. Callisto just glared pointedly at the sleeve of Kat's kimono peeking out over the baggy jumper she was wearing. That answer the question and reminded Kat of just how uncomfortable she currently was.

Kat had folded her wings up against herself as best she could and then put a jumper on over the top. Moving her arms was horribly awkward and her wings were bent at unnatural angles. Where her bones weaker, a sharp jostle would have them snapping like dried twigs. Her tail was also wrapped around her stomach and while still inconvenient compared to her wings it was practically heaven.

"Thanks for this Callisto. I'm sure Gramps will love it... just... why do you have a fancy bento box around. I only know what it even IS because Gramps still has a few around in his cupboards and I asked about it one day. This one looks particularly nice actually..." asked Kat.

Callisto grinned and said, "I like variety in plating options, and sometimes I like to make Vivian something really fancy for lunch while she is out at work. The reason it's so high quality is that I got Chekov to work on it. It was a pain in the ass to get him to agree to it though so I only have the one set of four."

"Well, thanks for this," said Kat as she turned and left the house. It was early morning and the sun wasn't up at all... but the occasional splashes of light on top of the moon and stars were more than enough for Kat's eyes to let her see perfectly. She restrained herself in the jog though, trying to remain at what she thought were reasonable human speeds. And they were... over shorter distances.

.....

Kat was still running at that same speed an hour or so later when the orphanage came into view. Kat's running was only barely within human limits. The best marathon runners were the only ones who could compare... but Kat had none of the training, she was carrying a bento box in her hands preventing her from using proper running technique... and as she reached the orphanage grounds she wasn't sweating or panting hard despite an hour of running while wearing a large jumper.

That was the real issue. The whole run Kat had to fight with her wings to just spread out and shred their way through the fabric. They kept twitching and straining against the fabric. It was a constant struggle not to just give in. With that on top of the uncomfortable feeling of folding her wings like this made the whole run rather unpleasant. It was like someone had pulled her hand back and over her shoulder before taping it there. The pull wasn't quite painful but over an extended period of time it got close. Her regeneration was surely a major factor towards making it bearable.

Kat hadn't done anything about her horns. She didn't have any hats that could cover them properly so she decided if anyone asked she'd just say it was a headband. When she got to the orphanage it was sometime after 3:30am, Kat didn't have a watch to check and felt reluctant to ask D.E.M.O.N.S something so trivial. A few lights were on. Kat was pretty sure they were the kitchen lights, and perhaps a few nightlights for the younger children.

Kat tried to open the front door only to find it locked. A slight grin found its way onto her face as she moved to bush nearby. Reaching her hand in she found the slightly loose piece of bark and pushed it to the side, letting it swing open. Stuck to the underside of the bark was a spare key she quickly liberated and used on the door before returning the key to its hiding place. Stepping inside breathed in deeply, smelling the familiar scent of the old wooden flooring, the slight sent of harsher chemicals for some reason, and cooking food.

Kat snuck her way down to the kitchen making sure not to make too much noise. When she reached the canteen Gramps was standing over the counter and rapidly chopping up ingredients. Considering the oven was being preheated, Kat was guessing he was making a casserole of some sort. Kat was able to make it all the way to Gramps side without anyone noticing. Kat waited for Gramps to finish the chopping before saying, "Hi Gramps,"

Gramps clearly startled at the words, but held in his reactions. He was used to working with children and the default reaction of turning combatively towards the target was not an acceptable one when you worked in an orphanage. Especially not with knife in hands. The almost lazy way he turned to face Kat wouldn't have betrayed his surprise. The fact he jumped half a metre off the ground did that. Well, until he saw who it was.

Gramps let the knife clatter out of his hands before he stepped forward and wrapped Kat up in a big hug. Kat winced as her wings were pushed further out of their comfort zone straining against the muscles and ligaments in her back for more give. Only Gramps lack of desire for Kat's pain and his human strength prevented Kat's regeneration from needing to fix up major damage. Kat just grit her teeth and accepted the hug in good faith, before berating herself for keeping the damned jumper on after she got inside.

When the hug ended, something Kat still let Gramps dictate, she quickly chucked the jumper away as if she'd been burned before letting her wings snap outward to their full length. Most of her mind wanted to let them return to resting position afterwards but the rest rebelled against the command. Kat let a few moments tick away before just giving into the smaller more rabid part of her mind. It was a minor concession really. Even if she was taking up a fair bit of the kitchen.

Gramps winced as he realised what the issue was immediately but didn't apologise. He'd known Kat long enough to know it wasn't needed especially with it written all over his face. "What are you doing here Kat?" asked Gramps with a smile once he'd recovered.

"Can't I just come for a visit?" asked Kat cheerfully.

"Ah, but it's been so long since I've seen you Kat. An old man might think he's been forgotten," said Gramps with a chuckle.

Kat winced despite the light hearted nature of the critique. "Sorry... I didn't quite realise how long it'd been... and I don't normally need to visit you. I used to see you all the time so... yeah... I only recently noticed just how long it had been. Heck even the author didn't quite realise how long time passed in story. We haven't had a fourth wall break in actual years,"

"The what?" asked Gramps confused.

"The time. It's been months Gramps. I didn't notice," reiterated Kat.

“Right...” said Gramps as things got back on track in the background. Then Gramps noticed the bento box Kat had on hand and his eyes went wide again. “Did... did you bring me something to remind me of my wife?”

Kat smiled awkwardly and gave a tentative nod, “I think so? I mean... Callisto prepared it, she’s Vivian’s roommate. Um... it was intended that way by her though... but um... it did make me realise you never really served much foreign food to the kids at the orphanage so... I was also wondering about that,”

“I’ve got to feed a whole building of picky kids Kat, it’s just easier to pick something they might at least vaguely remember and only branch out occasionally or when we haven’t had a new arrival for a while. Still, if it’s good you can thank Callisto for me. Though... is she Vivian’s roommate or Vivian’s roommate?”

“I... I don’t get it?” said Kat confused.

Gramps scratched the side of his head, “Am I just being old fashioned? I feel like the implications in that statement transcend generations... hmm...” Gramps took a second look at Kat’s confused face before a number of memories got jogged. “Oh. Oh right. Don’t worry about it Kat, it’s not something that’s too important though... where does Callisto sleep?”

“Huh?” blurted out Kat confused, “Callisto doesn’t sleep.”

Gramps coughed to cover up the laughter Kat’s innocent seeming sentence conjured up. “Um... right. Right...”

#### Chapter 839 Catching up with Gramps Part

Gramps turned his head away from both Kat and the food, one for sanitary reasons and one to keep his reaction hidden for a few moments. Kat, not realising what she’d missed asked, “Gramps are you alright?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” said Gramps as he waved off Kat’s misplaced concern, “I’m not getting that old just yet,” he sucked in a few breaths of air to give himself time to think. “What did you want to talk about Kat? How have you been?”

“Well... I’ve been good. Quite good actually. Um... hmm... what do you want to hear first. Crazy adventures, my miniscule social life or Sylvie’s newfound role model?” asked Kat.

“While Sylvie finding a role model is an interesting and momentous occasion Sylvie isn’t here visiting me you are. Maybe you can convince her to tag along next time, but we can leave that too the side. Hmm... I guess I’d like to hear about your social life. I always worried you would struggle finding good friends when you left school, so hopefully you’ve mended that gap somewhat,” said Gramps.

Kat gave a few dry laughs, “ha ha ha yeah... I guess I have. I can start with Minor. She’s... honestly she’s only technically a friend due to the distance between us. She’s more of another little sister like Sylvie, if not one quite so young... but she also has even less experience. It’s a mess... Minor and her twin sister had an accident when they were young that ended with them both in the one body... and Minor didn’t really do anything for over a decade.

“Now Minor is finding that she doesn’t really know what to do. She doesn’t want a full life, I think the idea of having that kind of agency again is terrifying to her. At the same time... she doesn’t want to just

watch her sister without saying anything either. So... yeah the exact amount of involvement she's going to have on the real world is still being debated.

"She sort of latched on to me when we met. I'm not sure if it's because I didn't really know her sister or if it's just that I was there at the time. Urgh... I don't want to be around when her mother gets involved. Just the with Grandmother it's already a mess of conflicting wants and desires. The current best solution they have at the moment is teaching Shizuka, or Shizuru... Minor's sister, how to create fox clones and give Minor some control over them occasionally,"

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Gramps sighed, "I think she'll need to get used to it. She sounds like a shy girl but she can't just live in her sisters head forever..."

"Eh..." Kat gave a 'so-so' gesture waving her hand from side to side, "Maybe? It's complicated because the ritual that saved Shizuka should have killed Minor in the process. It was the only way at the time and she was basically already gone... but Shizuka saved Minor accidentally at the time. It unclear exactly how much of her own person Minor is or can be. One of the stranger things is that she doesn't really WANT to be a full person. It might be an instinctual thing, knowing that she cannot be a full person again, I don't really know,"

Gramps shrugged, "I may not know much about magic but I know that's liable to cause issues eventually. Even if Minor really is ok with it all things will inevitably get awkward as the pair get older,"

Kat nodded, "I suppose when Shizuka wants to live her own life away from Minor it could be an issue, if it happens,"

Gramps gave a slightly pitying nod to Kat, not wanting to correct her line of thought. It was... close enough anyway. "Right... well... who else have you met?"

"Hmm... well there's the tournament group. I'm not sure that I'm really friends with any of them though. Green tends to nap a bit too much for me to really get to know her and Gareth's time is monopolised by her. Kress is certainly an annoyance and he doesn't like me at all... but Nixilei is really in an odd position.

"I've spent by far the most time talking to her and it's always been pleasant... but she's a spy. She's been upfront about the fact that she's a spy... but she's still a spy. So it makes it somewhat hard to know just how close we're getting you know? I know she'd do pretty much whatever she was ordered be that spying on me and trying to get answers about something perhaps even all the way up to attempting to kill me. The only reason she might not agree to that sort of mission would be I don't think she could actually take me out... but that's more of a practical thing,"

Gramps nodded, "That sort of thing can be hard. There is something I'd like you to keep in mind though. I was friends with a spy some time ago. Still would be if he didn't pass away," Gramps let out a long sigh, "that's not important for this part of the story though. See we grew up together. He wasn't one of my closer friends, just someone I hung around with occasionally at school. As everyone grew up, I was one of the few people that stayed in our hometown. So whenever he was off deployment I'd invite him out for a night of drinks.

“Neither of us particularly liked alcohol, so a lot of the time it was just soft drink and the atmosphere... but there was one particular day, when I was thirty five that I’ll never forget. He called me up and asked not for a night out, but he wanted me to come and visit so I did... and... the poor man just broke down.

“He spilled more than a few military secrets that day. Stuff I’d never thought about, and more than one thing he was extremely ashamed of. He started crying earlier on as well and he just kept rambling. At the end... I’ll never forget the face he had when he looked me in the eye and asked if he was a good person, if he’d done the right thing,”

“And I stand by my answer. I said ‘I don’t know’ because I didn’t know. Even with all the information he’d told me there was no way to know if what he’d done was the right thing. Before it got too far though I added, ‘I do respect what you’ve done though,’ and there was more tears, a few drinks that were actually alcoholic along with a recommendation that he consider quitting. Not because he was wrong per say but because it was causing him so many issues,”

Gramps shook his head, “I guess what I’m trying to say is that you can’t be forever guessing how much of a friend this spy is to you. If it comes down to it, it comes down to it... but they really appreciate a good friend. I know this, not because of anything he said when he was alive, but because I was left nearly everything in his will. I had to listen to some of the most heartfelt words I’ve ever heard coming not from him, but from the dry voice of a lawyer,”

Gramps sniffed and wiped away the tears starting to congregate, “Sorry. Sometimes I get a little lost. I keep saying I’m not that old, and maybe I’m not... but I’ve lost a good few people along the way. It’s strange. Now I have all these questions... like where are they now? Is heaven real? I don’t suppose you can indulge an old man here,”

“Um... well... souls are real?” offered Kat, “I don’t really know about heaven... and hell might be real but it’s not where all the demons live anyway. I’d ask my system... but it doesn’t like telling me anything about angels so... I wouldn’t be able to get an answer. I do know reincarnation is a thing... but I’m not sure if it’s a common thing, an optional thing or what,”

“Guess I’ll just have to have a little faith then. Just knowing souls are real is enough for me I think. To know that when we die there’s something else. Good or bad... I think the idea of nothing is much more frightening. I’ve never understood the atheists because of it. Why would you WANT nothing to be what you experience when you die?” asked Gramps.

“I don’t know Gramps. I don’t really think you should be looking for religious advice from a demon,”

“Ah but I can always ponder these sorts of question with my daughter right?” asked Gramps.

“Of course,” said Kat, not minding the tears starting to leak slowly from her eyes, “Questions of all sorts are always welcome when it comes to family,” Gramps paused in his preparations as Kat leaned into him. The silence stretched on. The early morning giving everything a sense of peace, and something neither were interested in breaking.

#### Chapter 840 Catching up with Gramps Part

The moment lasted for a while, likely longer than they had time for considering much of the work for breakfast still needed to be done. So eventually they had to break apart, Kat picking up a spare knife and



starting to help out. The food for herself and Gramps pushed to the side. A nice gesture, and something to enjoy but not before the children's food was ready. It was something they both knew. Both understood.

"So, are those two the only friends you gained?" asked Gramps while scrapping the chopped ingredients into the first of many trays.

"Um... no the next friend I made was Kamiko. I met her while being punished for a mistake that was a bit of a mix up. I can't say I'm terribly annoyed with it because Kamiko really needed a friend and I'm glad I was able to be there for her,"

"Oh? Tell me about her," said Gramps.

"Hmm... I want you to imagine an odd mix of myself and Lily but with even less positive social interaction especially outside of her family with multiple older sisters that she feels outshine her, most decades older than she is except for one who until recently didn't really respect her as anything more than a dress up doll that occasionally has feelings," said Kat.

"I... I see why you ended up friends with her..." said Gramps with a wince. "I take it she's doing better now?"

"It was entirely chance we ended up friends, she just happened to be next to me... but as for doing better... I like to think so. She made up somewhat with her sister and we even made another friend with the two of us. Her name is Sue... and... well the best way to explain her is to picture the stereotypical Succubus... and add in a bit of restraint in the form of a desire for consent... but... well I imagine she's the type of person who'd think saying 'yes' while drunk is still perfectly valid consent..." explained Kat.

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"She must have a filthy mouth... constantly flirting as well?" suggested Gramps.

"Aah... yeah... how did you know?" asked Kat.

Gramps shrugged, "I've been alive a long time Kat. It's not a common personality type... but I've known a few people like that vaguely. None were best friends of course... though... my wife did know one girl that she grew up with and kept in contact that was like apparently. She was Japanese and stayed there her whole life..."

"Hmm... that makes it sound like she's dead... well she might be... I didn't really keep up with her after my wife passed, mostly because my Japanese was... well I tried, and my wife found it humorous... but I wouldn't really want to subject anyone else to my botched attempts. Anyway... my point is does she also have parental issues?"

"No actually," said Kat.

"No? That's actually a bit surprising..." said Gramps, "that tends to be a prerequisite for people who end up like that..."

"Isn't that stereotyping a bit Gramps?" asked Kat.

Gramps just shrugged, "I'm old. I need to have at least a few bad ideas about stereotypes. If not then how can I fit the stereotype of the old an ignorant?"

"Right..." said Kat slowly.

"Still, her parents have to be a bit weird right?" asked Gramps, more out of genuine curiosity than a belief in the question.

Of course he was right but Kat wasn't entirely sure she should admit as much... but at the same time Kat wasn't sure why it would be better to hide the information anyway. Sue didn't care, it wasn't some big secret, "Her parents are apparently just as bad as her if not worse... and one of the big mysteries is how they are so satisfied with each other..."

Gramps paused mid knife swing, "I don't know what I was expecting as an answer... but it wasn't that. I'm not entirely sure I want to know more in truth... is she a good girl though?"

Kat paused, a little Sue in her mind going 'Oh I'm a very good girl' seductively was quickly pushed to the side. Despite the mental interruption though... "Yes... yes I think she is. She... she somewhat fell into that crowd because of her parents. Everyone at school knew and while she was never ashamed of it... it did dictate who her friends were.

"Despite that she can be surprisingly responsible at times. She waited till she was sure that she really wanted the lifestyle she has. Her parents made it clear that whatever she chose she would be supported... and she sort of managed to have her cake and eat it too. She's able to explore her... wide range of preferences without turning into a horrible person. It's not a contest in her eyes. It's simply her favourite hobby..."

"If the details weren't so... graphic and off-putting to me... I think it would actually be really cute. Sex is her hobby, her passion and she loves it," Kat couldn't help but giggle, "she's actually a lot like a kid with a model trainset. She takes great care of her hobby. She knows what she likes but she's very understanding. She offers people a glimpse into her world if they want, and many do, but she also understands that it really isn't to everyone's taste.

"Sue takes... I think more care then might be immediately obvious around Kamiko and me. She does like to push us both... but it's clearly good natured. It makes us think. She's a little harder on Kamiko than she is on me... I think because Kamiko still needs to figure out what she wants in a partner and Sue's trying to help her with that while building up her confidence and making her much harder to fluster..."

"And maybe... maybe I'm reading too much into it. Maybe Sue's doing the bare minimum to be friends with people who she doesn't mind spending time with... but I think there's real effort there. She didn't leave the greatest first impression... and I think her mouth is going to get her in trouble one day... but... now that I know her... especially after the meet-up we had, where we just got to chat and have a good time in Kamiko's room... she's really grown on me,"

"Hmmm" said Gramps as he resumed his work, "Yes well that's good to hear. I'd suggest thinking the best of your friends when you can, though don't be blind to there faults. Still... I'm glad you have such a good opinion of her. It sounds like she's a good friend for you to know... especially because well... hmm..."

Gramps was clearly uncomfortable explaining the last few words. Kat was a bit confused for a moment, trying to think of what exactly Gramps could be thinking about that would make Sue an especially good friend... until it clicked, "because I'm asexual?" Kat asked.

Gramps let the knife cut into the onion with a harsh chop, "Indeed... I... I didn't want to say it in case you didn't know... or I was wrong... but... well... it was hard to miss. No boy band posters... no pinups of female actors... no talk about how cute this or that boy is or passive aggressive not-quite sexual advances with some girl at school. I... I didn't want to necessarily push you into that box if you weren't certain yourself. How did you figure it out?"

Kat let out a long puff of air, "Honestly Gramps? I don't know how I didn't figure it out if I'm entirely honest... but at the same time... god it was a whole thing... I..."

\*How do I explain that Sue's needling combined with my growing feelings for Lily were what tipped me off and the confession from Lily really hammered it in home especially when I was literally incapable of saying 'I wish you can find someone else better than me' because I never wanted that apparently. How am I supposed to get into this?

I mean really. How do you tell your father figure you're an asexual lesbian in a relationship with your best friend? Wait do I count as a lesbian? Hmm... add that to the pile of issues I don't really want to deal with right now. I mean I should. I should just tell Gramps. What am I scared of?\*

Kat of course knew the answer to that instantly. She wasn't twelve. \*I want his approval. I'm scared he won't accept it. I... I think it'll be fine...\* "I'm dating Lily" mumbled Kat.

"What?" asked Gramps confused.

"No, it's fine. Nothing. Don't worry about it," said Kat slight fear in her voice.

This caused Gramps to look up at her oddly. He wasn't making any statement about Kat's relationship status at all. She spoke too fast and too quietly for his old ears to make sense of. He genuinely had not heard what Kat had said... and was just confused. So he said as much. "Kat... I'm willing to leave it be if you want... but you don't have to be afraid. I'm an old man and I couldn't hear you properly. I don't know why my confusion scares you but it's FINE. Kat."