

DEMONS 921

Chapter 921 POWAAAAH

Two cracks sounded off one after the other. The first was a crack of thunder, louder than all the rest and setting off a ringing in Kat's ears. The second crack, not even half a second after the first was the clash of swords. Xiang had come in swinging, wreathed in golden fire and slashing down at the ice sect patriarch. The patriarch opened his mouth to trash talk Xiang again only to be interrupted by the sound of creaking as a thin crack ran up the length of Xiang's blade.

"Hahahaha, not only are you burning something precious without hope of matching me, your sword cannot withstand the strain. There is nothing you can do fool. Let your Lord Ozen school you!" scoffed the sect patriarch. *Finally we have an actual name for this guy! Still... can't let Xiang have all the fun.*

Kat dashed and summoned her two fans into her hands, trusting her wings to keep her afloat and swung her limbs around, aiming for Ozen's neck. He didn't even flinch, simply raising a shield of ice somehow tough enough to capture Kat's duel blows. What was even more insulting was that the shield was able to capture the second blow perfectly before cracking to pieces and leaving Kat hanging in the air.

Kat went in for a kick, mostly just so that she felt like she was actually doing something rather than floating in the air like a fool. Ozen decided to make an example of both of them. He yanked Kat from the air using the foot she'd sent towards him and slammed her into Xiang like a baseball bat, all the while keeping Xiang's sword latched in place until the moment of impact.

Xiang flew maybe fifty metres total before slamming into a rather thick tree, halting his momentum but seemingly doing no damage as he was already dashing back towards Ozen as soon as his feet had touched the ground again. Kat on the other hand was slammed further into the ground a few times before she was sent flying upwards.

Xiang came in for another swing, eyes blazing, sword alight. Ozen blocked the blade with a simple swipe, not even moving from his casual stance. Xiang's sword shattered, and Ozen grinned with a gaze that said it had been expected. Blocking at the weakest part of Xiang's blade made for such a wonderful display of shattered metal. Ozen's lips twitched into a frown for a fraction of a second, Xiang wasn't surprised. This strange cultivator wasn't surprised by his destroyed sword?

Ozen felt a pain in his stomach. Looking down, it was faint, but claws of some great beast sunk into his midsection. They weren't able to dig all that deeply in. Despite the power behind it all, Xiang had not suddenly matched Ozen at Rank 4. Still, the sight of that first drop of blood caused Ozen a great deal of anger. It was too fast for anyone in the clearing to see. A moment, Kat was flying, Xuena was hiding, Yang was feeling useless, and Xiang glared in triumph.

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Then it all went to hell. Yang was frozen solid. Her whole body encased in ice and buried into the ground. Her eyes still flickered and moved, proving the technique to be one of restraining and not death... but if that was a kinder fate who is to say. Xuena, was ripped from the snow where she was hiding and chained naked to a nearby tree. The chains of ice biting into her soft flesh, lacking in blood only due to the spiked chains freezing it inside the wounds causing her more issues.

Xiang did endure this abrupt attack well. He was pressed deeply into the ground, one arm bent and twisted backwards. The other looked to be dangling by a thread. His legs were frozen together and a large icicle pattern had been seared into his chest and what remained of his clothes were in tatters.

As a grand finale, Kat was punched down into the spot Ozen had just been, only for him to arrive first, sword at the ready to slip it straight through her back and into her heart. Kat coughed awkwardly. The moment of malice passed and Kat couldn't help but think. *A second time! Fuck, at least I know it's not enough to kill me but this shit fucking hurts!*

At some point though, it seemed Lily had managed to crack the code. She was able to watch through Kat's eyes. Lily could see Kat staring down at her chest, sword extending through her ribcage and keeping her in place. A sigil opened up above Kat, a fierce hiss accompanying it as a rain of sharp paper exploded around Ozen.

He didn't even blink. It simply washed over his skin bouncing off. The paper swarmed him though, constantly badgering the man, trying anything to cut him, to get a reaction. To do any sort of damage and it just... did nothing. *Lily. Lily it's fine. I'm not dying. Please don't give him a reason to go looking for you!*

The paper continued to swarm, doing about as much damage as a group of flies and Ozen was treating it with even less respect. He gave a sharp wave with his hand and the paper froze, all of them shattering into snowflakes and joining the natural snowfall a moment later. Apparently, this was actually a good distraction because in that moment Xiang managed to stand again.

His body was split into two neat halves. His left and right. One side was billowing shadows, his hair a collection of feathers with a single large feather acting as a flowing shadowy eyeball. His right side was covered in scales, his eye completely white and teeth sharpened to a point. Whatever injuries he might have had were completely healed by the time he stood. In a yell of defiance that sounded like the crowing of a thousand roosters and the roar of a great beast mixed together Xiang dashed.

Xiang struck at Ozen, who simply moved Kat, still impaled on his sword, into the way. Xiang didn't let up, raking his scaled arm across Kat anyway... and having it pass through easily, her body completely unharmed striking at Ozen on the other side scouring deep gashes. Ozen quickly dumped Kat off to the side and growled, freezing a patch of ice over his wounds.

"ACCURSED CHOSEN" screeched Ozen, summoning up a proper attack for the first time in this battle. "NOT ONLY DO YOU ATTEMPT TO WASTE YOUR GIFTS, BUT THEY WERE JUST HANDED TO YOU FOR NOTHING! IS THERE NO JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD!"

Around Xiang countless swords of ice appeared, spawning from the endless snowflakes in the world. Ozen dragged his raised arm down like he was calling forth some kind of diving judge and the swords charged. The first volley broke against Xiang's skin, or simply sunk vanishing into this shadow side. The second wave started to chip his scales, though other still vanished. The barrage doubled in speed, three waves, four waves, eight waves, sixteen. Xiang withstood it even as his scales started to crack and give way, his flowing shadowy skin started to be coated in a layer of ice. He stood through it all.

Kat tried for something as the waves kept coming, thirty two, sixty four, waves upon waves of sword strikes and Kat crept forward with her fans. She pushed as much power as she could into her aura and a recently resummoned set of fans. Her steps as fast as she dared make them, but silent all the same. She was nearly gliding over the ground and she was ready. Kat made sure to go for something Ozen wouldn't see.

There was no flash, the speed was beyond what Kat thought herself capable, a silent, instantaneous strike. One moment, Ozen had his leg and the next, it was gone. Ozen screamed as he summoned up enough ice to support him, plunging another six hundred waves into Xiang and turning to Kat. His eyes shone with frosty killing intent as he ripped forward, a clawed hand striking at Kat and going straight for her heart.

Kat didn't lose her grin even as she felt the air around her noticeably dropping in temperature. Her eyes BURNED as she saw the trails of ice spinning around those outstretched fingers. The moment they reached her skin Kat didn't think of dodging. She smiled back and pumped as much demonic energy into her chest as she could. There was a scream echoing through her mind, but it wasn't her own. It wasn't important. Her soul BLAZED. Power was at her fingertips, and the threat was just reaching out, asking to be burned.

Kat felt the moments her ribs shattered, pieces of bone exploded into her muscles and lungs. A grip beyond steel wrapped itself around her heart. Ozen was ready. He pulled. He didn't move. He was held in place.

Chapter 922 How Cold is Kat?

A thin purple hand of condensed fire extended out of Kat's chest, holding Ozen's own in place. Kat felt her vision shifting, shattering, something was going... sideways...

Ozen stared in horror as a figure of burning purple pulled itself from the no longer soon to be corpse. A burning visage of the woman he'd sort to kill stepped out casually as if she was just taking a stroll. Ozen could feel cold, a chill, for the first time since he had reached Rank 4 on his path. For the first time in decades, he felt a frost deeper than his own. He could see it clawing its way up his arm and he couldn't help it. He was afraid.

He let go and the body that should be Kat dropped, heart remaining where it was and the large hole rapidly closing even now. Her voice was a strange mixture of burning and popping as well as harsh whistling wind. It promised an eternity frozen alive while being boiled from the inside. It was like the spitting of liquid nitrogen as it boiled in the air, and no matter how cold you knew it to be, it WOULD burn. "What's wrong? Big bad ice cultivator doesn't appreciate the idea of freezing to death?" taunted... Kat...?

Nobody else was around. Yang could only stare in amazement, Xuena was unconscious and Xiang... well if he was still in control of himself at all he had so many ice swords sticking out of him that he wouldn't have been able to see anything anyway. Only Ozen could properly witness the figure before him.

To say it was anyone other than Kat would be demonstrably false. The face was unchanged, and the signature kimono rested over her shoulders. That's really where the similarities ended. The eyes were sharp, predatory things with a gaze that seemed focused on its next meal. The teeth were sharpened

points that made 'Kat' look like she'd swallowed a cavern of icicles. All of her features were backed by that ever present purple fire. It burned and twisted under an invisible layer that seemed to contain it all, limiting it to the shape. Though... to say the figure felt confined at all would be a mistake.

The kimono on its shoulders hung loosely revealing a good helping of cleavage. At her back, a slit cutting down the middle starting just above the figure's tail allowed for a glance at a prize behind. Not to say that outfit continued all that long. The figures full legs were on display, the kimono looking like it was sliced off at the upper thigh as if a mere step would reveal a hidden jewel.

The figure floated slightly, stepping not on the ice but a good half foot above it as if the ground was too good for 'her'. Wings as well, extended not from the back but a small distance behind that. Unlike the rest of the body that was contained, the wings flowed and dripped fire as they flapped, leaving long afterimages of their passage. The shoes were entirely absent.

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Ozen tugged again, desperately trying to free his hand from this ice witch's grasp but he couldn't seem to get it to budge properly. All he managed was to crack some of the ice, taking off a few layers of skin as he did so, wincing at the sounds. "Aw... too scared to answer me little Ozzy?"

"I no not what manner of monster you are but you shall NOT TAKE ME!" screamed Ozen with genuine fear.

"Oh Ozzy... I don't believe that's really up to you any more... is... it? What was it you said... that it left you in a bad position? That it made you weak? To consider letting Xuena return that is. Well... I have to say... right now I'm the one who looks STRONG. I feel like that gives me a good deal of leverage right here," 'Kat' twisted Ozen arm and he hissed, forced to go along with the movement. "See... you've been rather mean haven't you? Playing with your food... naughty boy,"

'Kat' licked her lips with a grin showing far too many teeth... if they could even be called that anymore. "One dear forced to watch, her eyes protected by the light that allows her to see the devastation of her friends. Another, hiding and so forced to bear it all to the world. And the last... well... he you took out a lot of anger on. Nothing poetic about it. Frankly it was a little BRUTISH"

As 'Kat' finished her sentence she clamped down hard shattering Ozen's wrist and the muscles frozen beneath her grasp. She let out a sigh as he screamed, "What a shame I didn't quite get down to bone. Just a little bit of breakage... I'm quite impressed actually. I could play with you for some time..."

Ozen's eyes widened in horror, only for the sound of crunching snow to ring across the clearing, something was running nearby. 'Kat' turned lazily to see what it is only for her to go wide at the sight of Lily charging through the snow. That moment of hesitation was all Ozen needed to make his own attempt. He brought his sword down and straight through 'Kat's' neck... to literally no effect.

As 'Kat' lazily turned around to reprimand him for the attempt he instead sliced off his own arm, and then a moment later he was gone. 'Kat' stood there dumbfounded. Just standing there in the middle of the snow with bodies of half dead people surrounding her. "Huh... bit of a coward I guess..."

Lily slid to a stop nearby and looked between the Kat on the floor and the fire Kat standing up. She didn't know what to do so... she transformed and glared at Kat, her gaze hardening. "What are you?"

'Kat' turned to Lily and pouted, "Oh Lily I'm hurt, why obviously I'm Kat aren't I?"

Lily felt a spike in her own heart. As horrifying as 'Kat' sounded, as much as her eyes said that she was ready to eat this little kitty... there was also genuine pain in that gaze. As if what had just been said really did cause her pain. It was a subtle thing, and so much of her expression was trying to say that she was just playing with her food...

But Lily was an expert in Kat. She'd studied her face longer than any textbook. More frequently than all her random tangents put together. Every subtle nuance had been catalogued, if not understood and burned into her exceptional mind. Lily stared back... and said, "I'd never want to hurt Kat. I of course, never said you were not her. So I ask again, not WHO are you... but WHAT?"

'Kat' walked languidly towards Lily, even as Yang tried to open her mouth and scream at Lily's foolishness. Xiang was finally having some of the ice pushed out of his body, though he did collapse. Lily... well Lily just locked eyes with 'Kat' and dared her to try something.

Then all of a sudden 'Kat' was kissing her, sticking an overly long tongue down Lily's throat much further than it should go. Lily couldn't help but moan at the attempt, and didn't react when a flaming tail pulled her closer. Lily's mind was burning, slowly being enveloped by pleasure, and even if it was very forward... there was still a touch of Kat in the movements. The fact that she was being hugged high up, the fact that yes there was a long tongue in her mouth but it didn't do anything but sit there.

Then 'Kat's' tail started to sneak towards something Lily was in no way ready for. She pushed hard to separate the two of them and 'Kat' went stumbling back. "Naw, does the cutey no longer want to play? I could just eat you up..."

Lily shook the blush from her face and said, "No. I'm not ready for that and frankly neither are you,"

'Kat' pouted, "Are you sure? I can guarantee that it'd be... exceptional. You'd be screaming in pleasure in mere moments. I am certain you'll never forget it..."

Lily stood firm, "No. I don't think you really want that either. You've also been avoiding the question, WHAT are you?"

"I believe I already said I was Kat did I not?" said 'Kat'

"No, you strongly implied that you were Kat, but you still turned it into a question. You have not confirmed much of anything truth be told, and while I did let you kiss me, and I stand by that decision, I need more a little bit more from you now," said Lily firmly.

"Oh playing hard to get?" asked 'Kat' with a coy look, leaning forward to make sure her breasts were exposed. Lily's eyes couldn't help but follow those fiery curves that seemed to shift and draw the eye in.

Eventually she wrenched her eyes away. "No. I want a clear answer. The type of answer KAT would give me,"

Chapter 923 KatE

Yang's mouth dropped open as 'Kat' folded like a poorly stacked pyramid of cards. Sweeping Lily up into a big hug and pouting, "Fine, I'll tell you. Why do you have to be so cute... it's entirely unfair..." grumbled 'Kat'.

"I suspect it's because I'm your girlfriend," said Lily.

Yang had no idea what was going on anymore. Lily however... she had a pretty good idea already, and 'Kat'... well... she wasn't really able to stand up to Lily at the best of times. "Fine... I AM Kat and I'm also NotKat. Why, it's Me and I. Am I Me or is She Me?" 'Kat' flicked over at the body off to the side.

"I suppose you already know though don't you? Kat told you about what happened when she got to Rank 1 didn't she? Well... I'm just an extension of that process. We're Rank 3 now. Whooo!" 'Kat' pretended to be enthused by this prospect.

"You should really treat your body with a bit more respect," said Lily easily.

'Kat' sighed. "Fine... it's all a bit complicated anyway. Back then... I was demonic energy that looked and acted a little like Kat. I wasn't really Kat back then, or well... hmm... how do I explain this. If before I was a mess of Demonic Energy trying it's best to pretend to be Kat... now I'm a bunch of Demonic Energy that is ALSO Kat. Which... well it has some interesting effects..."

"Such as?" asked Lily when it was clear 'Kat' was dragging things out.

'Kat' pouted "You're a bit impatient you know..."

"Well yeah I've apparently got two girlfriends to take care of and at the moment one of them is unconscious on the floor, so while I'd LOVE to just hear you talk I need information now," hissed Lily.

'Kat' nodded, more seriously this time. "Ok right... well... the main reason other Kat isn't quite awake yet is because I'm basically all of her demonic energy but NOT yours. That's currently healing her up but as you already knowing getting stabbed in the heart isn't at all fun. She's recovered from it once, and stronger for it so probably no trip to the hospital this time... but it's going to take a bit more than a few seconds. That good? Can we go back to me now?"

Lily nodded in somewhat reluctant approval, getting the sense that 'Kat' wouldn't be willing to go out of her way to help free Yang or Xuena just yet. "So... what I am is... I'm sort of an imprint of Kat on her demonic energy. As she gains in strength I'll be a lot more like her, eventually we'll be the same person. I already have all of her memories, and when I disappear this time, she'll get all of my memories.

"Of course, the thing that... well I'm sure some people would insist it's an issue, even if I don't really consider it as much is that I don't quite share all of her priorities. You, of course are at the very top of them still Lily," murmured 'Kat' with a light kiss.

"Ah yes, my girlfriend's alter ego, first thing she does is save everyone's life and then try to seduce me. Truly, you are the epitome of evil," said Lily sarcastically.

"You wound me dearest Lily!" swooned 'Kat' "I'm not so much evil... as I am struggling to understand a lot the hang ups that Kat... hmm... shall we call her KatH and myself KatE?"

"Wait... you can do that weird thing where you... like I can't say Kat H like you can as one word... um... Kat doesn't know how to do that though... and... um sure?"

KatE shrugged, "Yeah it's a matter of abusing the translation system a little bit. I think I can do it and not KatH because I'm not even really using words at the moment at all, that is, sure you hear me speaking in

English but that is also just the translation process. I don't think like KatH at all. This is just further proof of that,"

"Wait... so like... you don't think like Kat at all?" asked Lily hesitantly.

"Eh... think of it like someone trying to convert a computer from Linux to Windows except instead of just wiping it, they have to do it line by line. I'm the Linux and Kat's the Windows. To most people, I look like Kat, I act close enough... but very different under the hood so to speak. The thing is though, it'll get harder to tell us apart as time goes on. I get the most important things first,

"I do mean that by the way. Not sure when it happened, or how I become like this but right at the top of my priorities is everything involving you. Keep Lily safe, beat up people who insult you, make sure you're happy, all those sorts of things. Of course... I'm lacking a bit of context, I don't really know how to do all of those things. I mean, I can guess but earlier you pushed me away right?"

"I can only understand that in a vague sort of way. I have memories of you saying you weren't ready for that but as little as Kat understands about sex, I understand even less... but at the same time a lot more. I am after all the demonic energy of a succubus. It's rather instinctive to try and seduce things... but I am also Kat, as is clear. So like KatH I'd never go and have sex with someone else. Even if I as KatE don't quite understand why that would matter yet."

Lily slowly rubbed her fingers over her temples. This was making sense yes, but she wasn't entirely pleased with how this was going. "Right so... can we back up and make things a bit broader? Like... what would a normal demon get in this situation?"

"Oh right! So Kat, both of us I guess, are Rank 3 now! That means normally you'd get a weapon or item made out of demonic fire. It will be rather draining to use, but exceptionally deadly. I am of course... not a weapon or item but an imprint of Kat herself. Though... I'm not entirely sure how long I can stick around either... hmm..."

"Certainly not forever if you weren't bound to us. KatH's body would start to die without any demonic energy in it... and I'm pretty sure that we don't regenerate any while we're like this... hmm... should I really be staying out here? No, it's dangerous for the moment. Not safe to dismiss myself..." mumbled KatE

"Wait... and you're just ok dismissing yourself?" asked Lily suspiciously.

KatE gave Lily a confused look. "I don't understand... why wouldn't I be? I'm still Kat, even if only partially and dying isn't really ideal for anybody. Plus I'm not quite Kat enough to be Kat properly. As accommodating as you've been Lily, it's quite clear that I'm not YOUR Kat yet. Even if you were nice enough to let me kiss you. One day KatH and I will be quite literally the same entity, simply with two bodies. One of flesh and one of fire. Then it'll be more proper to exist in two places at once.

"As it is... and as fun as it's been messing about a bit... I'm starting to feel a bit... hollow. When I attacked Ozen I was... practically burning. I was ready, I had a cause. Then I was distracted by you, and got to pet you and hug you... but now... I feel like something is missing. I mean, of course it is, I'm not fully myself at the moment because my body is over there," KatE sharply tilted her head to the body in question, "which... yeah. We are sort of separate, sort of the same.

"I suppose... for me... hmm... I wonder if this is something else I don't understand yet or if it's part of KatH's demonic abilities but it doesn't feel right to just hang around while KatH is on the floor. Fun as it is to tease you and mess with people... I think... hmm... now that I'm really thinking of it I might be a closer analogue to Minor with KatH being Major. Different again of course... but... might be a better explanation. Except the goal for them might be separation, the goal for KatH and I is definitely merger. Or wait... no... that implies her becoming more like me... I just want to be more like her..."

"Right..." said Lily, not entirely believe this sudden shift in outlook. "Well... how about you take that chance to be a bit more like Kat and help me free the others? We can break the ice around Yang, the chains of Xuena, and Xiang... well..." Lily looked over at the hedgehog that was slowly losing its 'spines' "yeah maybe we should um... help him with that first..."

Chapter 924 Just Following Orders

KatE didn't have any problems freeing Yang once prompted. She had much greater control over her physical form than Kat did. Simply turning her arm into a blade and slicing Yang out of the ice with a few swift strikes was enough. Yang dropped to the ground and coughed, inhaled, and coughed again. This pattern repeated a few times as she struggled to take in the air she was sorely lacking. KatE didn't even spare her a second glance.

Xuena was cut down next. Dropped straight into the snow completely naked and then ignored by KatE. At this point she wasn't even trying to act normal. Lily had given her a command vaguely disguised as a suggestion, at least in 'her' mind and was carrying it out. Little things like dignity and respect were far from her thought process at the moment. The idea of leaving a naked girl in the snow was no more concerning to her than letting a piece of trash blow away.

Xiang was a little more difficult to 'free' if only because KatE was unsure of how best to go about it. After a bit of poking though, and Xiang's lack of reaction to said poking, KatE simply ripped the swords from him bundles at a time, giving very little thought as to the blood loss that should be occurring at the moment. Xiang... well he seemed somewhat fine? Especially his shadowy side. That was healing up quickly as soon as the spears were removed. The other half... less so.

While the swords were being removed Yang rushed over to Xuena and rushed to get her friend into some decent clothes, thankful that Xuena had bothered to bring spares at all. Once Xuena was properly Yang carried her friend over to a stump and got to work fixing her up properly and examining her injuries. Once again, the dragon half of Xiang was... just sort of ignored.

Once all the swords were free, Xiang collapsed unconscious and he returned to a more human form. The half that had been covered in dragon scales was one big bruise but seemingly lacked any major complications. Though... despite it simply looking like bruises the chance Xiang's cultivation and meridians were unaffected was miniscule. KatE didn't know, and didn't care. Xiang's other half was fine enough looking otherwise. He had a large tattoo now, a wing shape over his entire torso. That was no concern of KatE though.

Lily watched KatE starting to just walk away from a collapsed Xiang before ordering, "No, take him over to Yang. Don't just leave him in the snow!"

KatE froze mid step and looked over Lily for a moment before nodding and delivering Xiang over to Yang. She just dropped him on the log awkwardly with a thud before turning around and rushing up to Lily like an overeager puppy. Eyes screaming 'did I do good?' with hints of lewder thoughts as well of course.

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Lily just groaned and gave KatE a quick kiss on the cheek, a sort of half reward. The carrot and the stick. She'd done the task, but not to anyone's satisfaction. Perhaps Lily's 'teaching' method would work, perhaps not. That was something to worry about in the future. Instead, Lily moved over to Yang to see how everyone was. "So Yang... how is... everybody?" asked Lily hesitantly.

Yang growled, "I want to know what the hell Kat was thinking! If she could take the fucker so easily why let us get so close to death? Some sort of sick amusement? Because it wasn't 'stated in the contract'? I don't know what you think you're doing with this 'how is everybody' shit. My meridians are freezing and I can't deal with that properly for now. Xuena is unconscious with massive holes in her body that have partially frozen over, and Xiang... fuck I don't even know how he's still alive!"

Lily hissed back like the angry cat she was, but KatE was happy to answer, unconcerned by Yang's anger. To her mind, it made perfect sense... and wasn't something to worry over either. "I completed an upgrade mid-fight much like Xiang in truth. Well... it is more accurate to say the process started with the snake I think. I was pushed to my limits and then events kept building up after that.

"My control was weaker, flames were leaking more often. There were a few attacks that I launched at about double the intended power and just played off. Xiang may have received some sudden enlightenment or just a desperate move for a powerup but my transformation was going to happen soon regardless. Then again... a fight to the death is a wonderful motivator isn't it?" KatE cheered with a big smile on her face that Yang couldn't help but find creepy.

It did blunt much of her anger though... "Right so... what the fuck is this new creepy ass form? I couldn't exactly see you in the ice though I'm still kinda pissed at you for making out with your girlfriend first," grumbled Yang as she pulled out some bandages and started to work on... shoring up the wounds Xuena had sustained.

"Well... I'm not actually Kat. Or I am... and I'm not... think of me like Kat's cultivation deciding to go walkabouts? I don't really understand. I mean, I have Kat's, or KatH's perspective so I can make guesses... but... I just don't have the same priorities. I had no issue leaving you all trapped until Lily requested I free you all. Then it became a top priority!" explained Kat with a pleased expression, as she turned her gaze to Lily, begging for another kiss. 'I did good right? Explaining to the minions?' screamed the look on her face.

Lily rolled her eyes and gave KatE a kiss on the nose. Closer, but... yeah not quite. Yang just stared at the bi-play for a few moments before returning to the bandage work. "Right... um... huh... I can't say I've ever thought about the idea of sentient cultivation... is that... normal for demons?"

"Nope. Never happened before I think. Wait D.E.M.O.N.S?"

**User... Error... U-.... Uss... E-e-rrror. Error. Valid Question Invalid U-u-. Error. Question: Has demonic energy manifested before similar to User Kat? Answer: Yes. Files revolving individual in question are locked to higher clearance.

“Booo... I thought I was super special! I guess not... maybe just pretty special?” grumbled KatE.

Lily sighed and left KatE to her rambling. She carefully took in Yang and asked. “Right... um... so I don’t know how you’d want me to politely phrase this but... I do still want to know if the others are alright...?”

Yang cast a slow glance over Lily searching for some sincerity... and apparently finding it. “Yes...” said Yang slowly. “Or... actually... Xuena... she should be fine... I think. This place is flush with ice qi and I’m sure once we’re not running for our lives we can find some great alchemy materials. It might be tough to turn them into something exceptional, but for healing ice inflicted wounds on an ice cultivator? Xuena could probably manage that in her sleep. As an ice cultivator freezing a wound shut is standard practice... normally you’d do that to yourself but well... needs must...”

“Um... Xiang though...” Yang looked over at Xiang’s awkwardly placed form but made no move to stop wrapping Xuena up properly. She was nearly finished but Xiang was a... secondary concern. “As for Xiang... I really have no idea. I’m not trained to diagnose... well much of anything really. Plus... I... I don’t understand half of what happened to him. He seems to possess two bloodlines that worked in harmony? Or perhaps reluctant co-existence? I didn’t really get a good look...”

“I just... I have no idea if what he did was good for himself or bad or... I just don’t know. They were... I’m surprised you couldn’t feel it but both of those bloodlines were oppressive. Xiang may have been weaker than Ozen but... for a few moments Xiang seemed like the scariest thing in the world. He just... he shouldn’t HAVE that sort of thing right now. Dragons and whatever the fuck his other half was... dragons are all born at least Rank 5...”

“I don’t know if that means he was crippled... or if to do that he was burning precious heart blood from his bloodline, or if he didn’t do that he’d have just exploded at some point... I... I’m really at a loss here. That’s... that’s not even getting into the extent of the wounds he suffered. Half of him looks fine but... that sort of damage would have killed literally anyone else, even Ozen... so... I just... no. No look, fuck it I don’t know. Xuena will... she’ll live but fuck I don’t know what’s going on with Xiang and frankly I’m not sure I really want to.”

Yang finishes up Xuena wounds and lets out a pained sigh as she looks over Xiang. “Do I wrap his side? Probably not? Bandages don’t help with that sort of bruising right...?”

Chapter 925 Can’t Beat the Original

Some more light coercion from Lily later and KatE was quickly building up a shelter for everyone. It wasn’t all that hard, just a bit time consuming. KatE could shape her hands into shovels and dig up the ground quickly. Combine that with a packed ice roof and a mechanical eye for perfection alongside the inability to get bored with mundane tasks? It was over in two hours. Nothing fancy of course, just two rooms with a ceiling just barely high enough to fit Kat standing tall and spread her wings out, but that was enough.

Xiang and Xuena were laid out in one room with Yang watching over them from the corner while Lily and KatE watched over KatH. For all of thirty seconds. Lily wasn’t sure if KatE had been holding the process

back, or if the timing was truly coincidental but as soon as KatH was laid down on the packed dirt KatE shuddered and vanished back into KatH. Kat stood up groggily looking around until she met Lily's eyes and pounced.

Lily was finding herself experiencing the most remarkable sense of déjà vu as Kat's tongue made its way into her mouth. Not that she was complaining, not at all. Kat didn't push too far though, simply letting Lily fall back slightly when she could feel Lily struggling for air a bit over the link. Lily let herself melt into Kat's arms, breathing heavily... from lack of oxygen of course. Nothing else... nope. Her nose was not sensitive enough to smell anything noteworthy. Not at all. "Ah... I... I've got the original back right?"

Hmm... should I be a bit mean?

"Maaayybeee" said Kat, letting her voice drop to something husky. Letting the air from her voice slowly pass over Lily's ears. The poor Memphis felt herself shiver at that, the experience shockingly close to the intensity she experienced. A large part of her mind was shouting 'who cares me likey' but the logical part of Lily was being rather pointed about the fact Kat had let her teasing ideas filter through the link. Something that Lily was just now realising had been rather muted during KatE's antics.

"Is now really the best time for this?" whispered Lily. If her voice was also a bit throaty... well... she'd just pretend she was copying Kat. It did not, of course, have anything to do with how heavy she was breathing or just how much fire there was in the lower half of her body. Nope, she was probably low on demonic energy, a thing Lily herself could never really notice. Yup, had to be that.

"Hmm..." Kat let the hum rumble through her throat causing Lily to shiver again.

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"Ok, I want to tack on, why are you being so teasing right now as well?!" grumbled Lily through her own round of purrs. Stupid body betraying her like that.

"To answer your question a bit more seriously..." said Kat as she tightened her hold on Lily, "I think it's the perfect time. My memories... I can tell which are mine and which are... well KatE I suppose it was established. I also seem to be able to say KatE because of those memories. Um... anyway my point is... they're a bit disconnected but the last thing I remember as fully me is being a moment away from having my heart ripped out and then watching you try to attack someone not even I could stop.

"I wasn't scared that I would die in that moment, I was much more worried about the fact Ozen now knew you were hanging around someone. So from my perspective it went right from 'oh shit what's going to happen to Lily' to 'OMG LILY IS SAFE' and that's a hell of a transition. So, yes I did want to kiss you just for that. Though..." Kat trailed off mysteriously until Lily gave Kat a light nip with her sharpened fangs.

Kat let out a small giggle at the attempt and continued, "Alright, alright I'll keep going. See, I also have all of KatE's memories, just like... she? I? They? Looks, let's go with KatE, just like KatE assumed it would work. They have much less running commentary but KatE managed to bundle up a bunch of plans for teasing you and getting enjoyable reactions before disappearing for now,"

Lily let out what sounded like a pained groan all the while the mental connection was broadcasting nothing but joy. Well, that and a hint of confusion, but really that second one wasn't a surprise or

concern. So in the end Lily just sighed and nodded. "So... are you planning on bringing KatE out at some point?"

Kat frowned and let a hand rise to her chest. She let it rest there for a moment as she took in a few careful breaths, her lips twitching into a slight frown. "No... not regularly at least. I don't know the full extent of it but I can feel what KatE meant when she said things are hollow. I can... I can feel sort of... a gap? My demonic energy is full yet I feel like I'm still missing something. It's... almost like hunger? It's a sort of hunger adjacent feeling I guess... hmm..."

Kat tried to come up with the words to properly convey the feeling... before remember she could just send Lily the details across the link. Lily shivered when she received the feeling. It was... an odd sort of haunting hollowness. It was like a gnawing void that was trying to convince everyone it wasn't something to worry about, and that only made the whole thing more off-putting. "I see... it seems that having KatE around is... not a great idea..."

Kat nodded, "I suspect for most people it's a final trump card. You pull out... not your soul but... maybe your spirit? You pull out something that is fundamentally part of yourself and use it for combat. It seems a lot more like... a useful glitch that has stuck around rather than an intended feature... if that makes sense? Powerful, certainly. Useful... hmm... likely not so much.

"I've got no idea what sort of timeframe I'll be looking at before I'll feel safe using KatE for... well anything at all really. I don't... necessarily mind her actions... but this odd feeling... it doesn't seem like a good idea to worsening it. I wish I knew if it was related to how long KatE was out, or if it was more dependent on the fact she was out at all. It's something I'd want to test, and probably show off to everyone back at home... but I'm not sure that it's really the 'testing' kind of ability. More do or die certainly,"

Lily let out a long puff of air as she let her fingers trail against Kat's back. "I'm not sure... though another thing you might have... remembered? Sure let's go with that. Another thing you might have remembered is that with KatE out you can't regenerate demonic energy, most, if not all, of it goes to KatE and apparently only my connection feeding you demonic energy allowed her to stick around so long,"

Kat nodded, "Yes... I suspect that would be a more major issue for most demons... hmm... damn. So much of this really needs proper testing but I just don't see it being safe. I almost wish I could hear her properly in my head like you. Not always... probably... just... maybe a few questions? Bits of advice?"

Lily shrugged "Can't say how nice that would be. Did you want to check on the others though?"

Kat nodded and they moved as one to the other room, as soon as Kat stepped a foot in, Yang grumbled from the corner, "Yes I heard everything, even the passionate make-out session," Lily squeaked and buried her face into Kat's back. "Oh? Feeling shy? Well too bad, you were the one making out, just a room over... WITH NO DOOR. Seriously, I don't know how private you thought that conversation was, but I'll tell you now the answer is that it wasn't.

"Your damned lucky that I'm the only person conscious enough to know and I've got no plans to spread that sort of thing around... but you have to be more aware of stuff like this in the future,"

“Whoops?” said Kat with a shrug, rather uncaring about the whole thing. Lily was mostly in agreement... just a bit embarrassed.

Yang however sighed and shook her head, “No. Not ‘whoops’. This is serious business Kat. Regardless of if I WANT to know this sort of thing I DO now. I can’t unhear it. People would KILL for a bit of information on unique humans with strange bloodlines. A DEMON with something strange about her? Kat I’d be chased to the ends of the Earth if there was so much as a whisper I knew something.

“Now, Ozen almost certainly doesn’t know enough to tell it was strange, and with his injuries I doubt he’s coming back any time soon... but just... be careful please?”

Chapter 926 Not that Worm

It was a day later, and the two girlfriends had returned from a successful hunt. It was mostly a chance for Kat to get used to the fact her strength had taken a major jump up again. It wasn’t going all that smoothly though. Her body always seemed to have too much energy. Limiting herself to about human was fine... but pushing upwards meant less a gradual rise and more of a large jump. Kat was starting to see why stronger demons were also given more difficult missions. It was really hard to regulate your strength, especially with no practice. The difference between punching a giant fluffy worm in the face and doing no damage, and punching it’s head completely to much was so unbearably thin at the moment.

So there Kat was, dragging a headless worm corpse. Well... that is in so far as worms could be said to have heads at all. It was more like the first few sections of the worm’s body which presumably contained the brain. It certainly wasn’t moving anymore but that might have been the massive amount of blood loss, or just the shock of it all. Kat didn’t know, and didn’t think it was important either.

Kat was a little scared of her power at the moment. She didn’t even want to figure out what her new ability was. Just getting her mind around her physical strength was enough of a problem right now. She hadn’t even been trying to punch the worm that hard. Kat wasn’t totally sure... but punching out that giant snake was looking scarily possible right now. If she thought a demon’s strength progression was bullshit before now she was actually somewhat concerned of what it meant for her at Rank 4 and Rank 5.

Kat let the worm drop with a thud as she ducked into the bunker they’d made up. Yang was fussing around Xuena like a worried mother while Xuena herself was carefully rubbing some paste over her wounds. Xiang was still out of it sadly. Yang glared at the two as they entered, but Xuena just gave a slight nod of acknowledgement, recognising that they’d entered but not all that interested in any conversation at the moment.

“So... got this weird worm thing. It’s all fluffy and I sort of destroyed the front section of it... but maybe you guys want it for something?” Kat said uncertainly. The fact that Lily had sniffed the meat and been repulsed heavily implied that there was something wrong with it, but what did Kat really know about qi nonsense.

“Let me see it!” shouted Xuena dropping the bowl she’d been using to hold the paste and rushing passed Kat straight outside. Yang growled, holding the bowl she’d narrowly managed to prevent hitting the floor. They weren’t in civilisation and didn’t have the luxury of wasting medical stuff like that, even if

Xuena could make some more. She couldn't get all the ingredients easily here. Yang scowled again, glaring at Kat as if challenging the demon to say something as she stormed passed them after Xuena.

When Kat got back outside Xuena was zipping around the corpse, making full use of her cultivation to make sure she was covering the whole thing. Xuena ran her hands over the fur, poked the broken and bloody top sections, sliced into a few other places along the worm's body and cut of a slice of bone to sniff it. All while ignoring the slowly leaking blood coming from her own wounds. "Dammit... sometimes I wonder why I fucking bother..." growled Yang as she walked over there at a completely human speed, waited for about half a second then somehow managed to catch Xuena mid dash by the neck. "STOP OPENING YOUR WOUNDS"

Xuena froze in Yang's arms and quickly checked herself over all the while confirming that yes, she had indeed been opening them. "Oh... well it's not so bad. I mean... this is a fascinating specimen and it's not even dead yet!" cheered Xuena.

"Wait what do you mean it's not dead yet?" asked 'Lily'. The Memphis in question was using Kat to translate again, not really wanting to leave the warmth of Kat's arms just to ask. Yang of course shot a 'Don't you dare encourage her' look straight at Kat, who flicked her eyes downward, revealing the true culprit. Yang gave Lily the same look, and even pushed a bit of sunlight into her eyes to make them glow. Lily just looked at Xuena like she didn't notice the angry woman looming in the background.

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Xuena, unaware of the anger building in the friend standing behind her, was happy to explain before she saw to her own injuries. Apparently the sharing of knowledge was more important. "So this here it's what's no as a nascent frost worm. It's not actually the baby form of a frost worm, but I guess because they're Rank 2 and someone else found these big frost worm before they had to go with a different name. Not to be confused with a frost WRYM, much scarier.

"ANYWAY. These guys are known for being the hardest of Rank 2 spirit beasts because of their insane regeneration. The speed isn't all that great, for that you need to go looking for heartroot vine plants, or some equivalent, but these guys can survive nearly anything as long as they're body is mostly intact. They are somewhat rare but I guess this is a good environment for them. Oh and they NEED ice qi for some reason. Nobody really figured that one out yet. At least, from what I've read. *novelInExt.cOm*

"ANYWAY... AGAIN... they can grow back from nearly nothing and if the cut is too clean down the middle or something they can grow into two separate worms. Which... might sound good for like... food and stuff but they take a lot of frost qi in to do so and they don't actually grow larger, just... one gains a tail and one gets a control centre. Which... that's another thing. They don't TECHNICALLY have brains, not like a lot of other things do. They have a control centre.

"It's why the worm is just sitting there at the moment. It doesn't know how to do anything else at the moment except cultivate to fix itself. Oh, that and it has three hearts. Um... hmm..." Xuena examined the gory sight behind her, "that one might only have two... depends on if you clipped the third heart or not... but it does look old enough for three... hmm... no I'm getting distracted again.

"My point being is that I should be able to cobble something together to heal all my wounds, boost my cultivation... maybe all the way up to Rank 2 actually... and maybe heal Xiang? I'm not sure how

compatible he is with ice qi or what the damage is exactly... but those hearts are GREAT ingredients. I mean sure it'll also cause some minor malnutrition and I have the potential to explode if I make the qi absorption too efficient but really that's nothing to worry about," babbled Xuena.

Yang glared at her friend. "Xuena. What's the FIRST rule of cultivation?"

"Don't insult someone stronger than you without proper backing?" returned Xuena.

Yang slapped her friend over the head. "NO! It's 'Don't absorb an energy field bigger than your own for quick power!'"

Xuena glanced carefully at the worm. "I don't really think that's a thing is it? Sure that worm is more powerful than me, by a considerable margin of course... but despite having shockingly impure qi for a Rank 2 creature that's actually a benefit in my case. Makes it less likely I'll explode... and I should have time to work it slowly into my foundation..."

Yang sighed. "Xuena... you haven't cultivated in months and you want to boost all the way up to Rank 2?"

"But the materials are RIGHT THERE Yang. Sure everyone says it's a bad idea but they just aren't as good at alchemy. I mean do you know how much money I'd have to spend just to get a heart from one of these things? Let alone the extra costs of an ice qi area to cultivate in that was safe and that's not adding in the other ingredients I might need. Having the still living corpse here, letting me use the beating heart of it will help so much!" Xuena said excitedly.

"Why are you suddenly rushing your cultivation?" groaned Yang.

"Well you might not be able to sense it but you're on the cusp of Rank 2 yourself Yang, have been for a while. I'm not sure what sort of push you're waiting for. Probably me... actually yeah that makes sense. A heart demon revolving around my capture? That'd do it. Also, I was just kidnapped so I need to power up right?" Xuena explained.

"Why do I feel like you're just coming up with that argument after the fact, and not because you actually care about the fact you were kidnapped..." sighed Yang.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," said Xuena and Kat felt her eye twitch, hard.

Chapter 927 Yang talks Xuena

When Xuena started to use scalpels made of ice to cut into the worm, Yang took this as a cue her friend was sufficiently distracted. She lightly grabbed Kat's sleeve and pulled the two girls off into the stone trees until Xuena was just barely in eyeshot. "I've got no gentle way to ask this... but when are you leaving? And if the answer is soon... it might be best you just head off before Xiang wakes up," said Yang firmly.

Um... system?

User Kat requires either verbal confirmation of task completion from Summoner Xiang, another 24 hours of guard duties, or the system will recall User Kat after a further, 72 hours unless User Kat uses this as a chance to have an extended non-interference vacation in this dimension.

What's a non-interference vacation?

User Kat has spent over a month in this dimension. As such, User Kat is entitled to spending time until the next Contract wandering the world. The non-interference aspect prevents speaking to or assisting the previous Contract holder, the intentional killing or maiming of anyone, even those who attack you first, and of course no technological uplifting.

Hmm... Lily? What do you think?

[In truth I'd love to stay... but at the same time we'd have to admit to our families that we chose to stay here longer... after being away for over a month... and I don't think I could face down my parents and you... well can you imagine the look on Sylvie's face?]

I can and it's awful. We'll leave.

"So... after checking with my boss," Yang jumped a bit at that, and Kat cackled internally, as she'd been a bit worried about if 'boss' would count as the truth, "I have to stay for at least another twenty-four hours unless Xiang verbally dismisses me. After that I've got... well actually I'm not quite sure if I have 72 hours starting now or 72 starting tomorrow when I could dismiss myself... but I'm allowed one of the two. After that, I pretty much have to be gone," explained Kat.

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Yang bit her lip and let out a hiss of air, "That's really not what I was hoping for. I... would I be able to verbally dismiss you?"

"I was told it had to be Xiang," said Kat with a shrug, not really sure why it mattered.

Yang sighed and said, "Right I guess we'll just have to work through this then. Xuena is going to start doing crazy shit and I'd really rather she wasn't distracted by a demon. This will be what she sees as her only chance to talk to you... though with Xiang around I give it even odds that we see you again despite what conventional wisdom would dictate. Xiang has already summoned you twice, a one in a billion chance, for each. Probably higher.

"Now, normally I'd let Xuena just ask you whatever she might want, it really isn't my problem... but she's also going to be attempting to cultivate, or make that stupid regeneration pill for herself. The chance of that blowing up and killing her is way too high for my liking. The only reason I'm not stopping her is she'd just wait till I was asleep and try without supervision.

"The issue though... is with two 'once in a lifetime' opportunities in front of her Xuena won't be able to resist trying to capitalise on both at the same time so just... if she asks you a question can you try not to make the answer overly shocking or just... wait till she seems to be at a lull in the process?"

"Yes... but is it really such an issue?" asked Kat with some confusion.

Yang ran a hand over her face, letting it pull and twist the skin as she went before it snapped back into place, in a glare of course. "Look... Xuena is brilliant, she has an instinct for alchemy that most grandmasters would LITERALLY kill for. Not just one person either, hundreds, probably thousands. Some in fact HAVE done that. I'd trust Xuena to make a restorative out of two blades of grass, a bit of pocket lint and dried spit. The problem...

“Well the problem is that she isn’t ‘desperate’ she’s INSPIRED which is soooo much worse. She’s going to be pushing the limits of what should be possible to end up with the best potential result... in the middle of nowhere. She has no tools, no lab, no safeties set up. She’ll be using my cooking supplies probably and that’s only because if I didn’t hand them over she’d start carving shit out of the trees to roughly match what she needs which would be even worse.

“Alchemy is dangerous. The line between a magical pill to solve your problems and a poison so deadly nothing can cure it is exceptionally thin. The other thing is if she fails halfway through the backlash... well it’d probably be enough frost qi to freeze even Xuena solid, let alone the rest of us. Of course, if you’re bad at it ash or useless gunk is a common result but that’s not really something Xuena will ever end up with.

“That just means though, all those chances of failing weakly and innocently get used up to push things even further into... what’s the saying ‘go big or go boom’? Anyway... just... just be careful. If Xuena misses a step and she doesn’t notice it might explode right away or it might kill her so just... be careful please!”

[You know... for all her professed interest in Xiang I can’t help but wonder if Yang is at least bisexual.]

Why is that?

[I guess I just see a lot of myself in her right now. Not most of the time of course... but this seems like the sort of thing I’d do if you were more like Xuena. It’s an interesting mirror and I’m a little surprised by it. Then again... with the way Yang acts maybe if she was gay she’d already be with Xuena... or she’s in deep denial and is trying to hook herself and Xuena up with Xiang because being in a harem is more socially acceptable? That last part is more a guess. Nobody we’ve met has had a problem with the fact we’re gay... but that might just be because of how strong you are.]

Can’t they just be good friends?

[Oh, no question. This could all be completely platonic for both of them, or for just one of them but not the other. No way to tell without asking and even then they could be lying to themselves just as much as us. As for culturally... well we really haven’t seen enough to say. I... I just think it’s very similar to my own thoughts about you a lot of the time. I’m probably not great at spotting this kind of thing seeing as I feel for both of my best friends rather quickly.]

Quickly? Really?

[Yes. Quickly. For... her... it was as soon as puberty hit me. For you... I already knew I liked girls and you just had to be so sweet and noble. Why, there was no chance my heart could escape your clutches. If you weren’t so asexual I’d make a joke about how you were seducing me first but well... I’m not sure if that would be considered in good taste.]

Why wouldn’t it be? I don’t really get sexual jokes... but I also don’t see why you can’t joke about me seducing you first.

[Eh... I guess. It’s just not all that funny for anyone who knows you. Or at least... that’s what I think.]

Well I think you’re adorable.

“We’ll both try and be careful,” said Kat as Lily’s thoughts exploded into waves of pink. Kat found the fact that her girlfriend was still weak to genuine compliments, especially when they were unexpected to be fabulous. It was a trait she really hoped Lily never lost. She probably would, and Kat knew she’d have to keep escalating for a reaction... but that could be its own kind of fun.

Yang, oblivious to Lily’s lack of attention nodded slowly and said, “Thank you for accepting that. We should probably return now to make sure Xuena hasn’t collapsed from blood loss or something silly like that. Maybe if we work together she’ll finish dressing her wounds before starting her new project... actually, say you’ll only answer her questions if she can promise not to bleed out that should work,”

The group trudged back through the snow following what remained of the path they’d made to get there. The intense snowfall doing a good job at covering their tracks already. Kat and Lily couldn’t help but deadpan when they saw Xuena though. She’d removed her clothes to avoid all the blood... and it was a LOT of blood. She was coated from head to toe with worm blood and guts. There was a large meaty cube that kept beating off to the side and she was making her way through the rest of it. Yang and Lily both had to fight down a bit of nausea at the sight. Kat just rolled her eyes.

Chapter 928 Is it Still Science if it’s In Another World?

“Can I have some of your blood?”

Kat jumped in place, dropping the snow she’d been relocating with Lily. Well... saying ‘relocating’ was more of a technical truth. It’d been a few hours since Yang had spoken her mind. Kat and Lily had hang around doing nothing for a bit... and then decided to make snowmen. Currently they were trying to make a whole snowman family. They’d failed twice to make anything good, but succeeded once in a Lily sized snowman, and were now working on a larger second one.

Kat slowly turned to the source of the sound that startled her, Xuena. Kat had been rather focused on having fun with Lily in the snow and well... *That’s a weird ass question isn’t it?*

[Yeah no complaints from me. I... I think it makes sense but... weird...]

Agreed. That being said... system is there a reason I shouldn’t?

User Kat is being requested to provide Entity Xuena with blood for use in Alchemy. This course of action is not considered advisable. Any ability derived from User Kat’s blood will require taking in sufficient Demonic Energy to power it resulting in horrific mutations and loss of sanity.

That’s not a big surprise. “Just double checking... but what do you want it for?” asked Kat despite her confidence in Xuena’s answer.

“You have a really powerful regeneration factor and if I can have some of your blood, freely given of course, that should drastically increase the power of the pill I’m working on. I don’t need tooo much. Especially for someone that can regenerate. Though... I wouldn’t be opposed to more. I’m sure I could figure something else useful with it!” explained Xuena.

Kat nodded but tried to play up the absurdity. “Right... right... so... on the one hand, I understand the desire for potent regeneration, it is very nice... counterpoint. It relies on heavily corrupting demonic energy that WILL horrible mutate your flesh and mind into a twisted version of yourself with no sense of self.”

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"Hmmm..." *Oh God. Xuena is actually still thinking about it.* "So... when you say heavily corrupting..." Kat glanced over at Yang with a 'Yang help, your science gremlin is doing mad science things'. Now, despite the relative lack of familiarity between Yang and Kat, they did know each other decently well. Perhaps more important, Yang knew Xuena REALLY well. So the message managed to make it across. Yang stopped her partial cultivation and started walking over. "Is that something you think could be mitigated with sanity inducers?"

"Xuena..." started Kat before trailing off... *Right so... I admit I was being a little silly before, and Yang told me not to surprise Xuena... but I felt like I started with a fairly blatant warning and a dash of humour. If that isn't taking care... I don't know what is!*

[You were just trying to mess with her though.]

Well yes, but I did also warn her of the dangers. Just because she is trying to warn that part doesn't mean my warning was any less explicit.

[You made it sound like something that potentially isn't so bad. Perhaps even insinuated that you're already effected by it. I don't really know why you're surprised it turned out like this. She was covered in worm guts naked in the snow just a few hours back. Well, I don't know when she changed. Wait actually...] Lily looked up from where she was compacting some snow to see... Xuena. Naked and covered in blood. [Never mind she's still naked and covered in worm guts. Makes MY point even more blatant. Maybe try and calm her down a bit?]

"... Xuena it's a permanent change that destroys your humanity in the process. Sanity inducers are not going to help soul deep corruption," insisted Kat.

Xuena just got a gleam in her eye. "I don't see how that changes anything. Cultivation helps improve our souls after all and I know that demonic cultivators exist. Sure it's probably not using actual demon blood, but that just means I can figure out my own special techniques!" *nOveLnext.cOm*

"Do you really want to be a demonic cultivator?" asked Kat hoping that alone would be enough. She should have known better.

"Not particularly but I have a real demon in front of me who seems willing to donate blood. The reason you're hesitating isn't because you don't want to give blood, just that you're afraid of the consequences if you do. Well, I'll just have to do some testing to figure some things out," said Xuena with a gleam in her eye.

"I'd really rather you didn't Xuena," said Yang firmly. "This is dangerous, and I know it excites you but it just isn't safe,"

Xuena just waved off her friend's concerns. "You think everything is unsafe Yang. This really could be my one and only chance for a big break," Yang couldn't help but scoff at that, "well it COULD. I mean, how many demons have been summoned in the last hundred years since all the demon summoning sects were wiped out?"

Yang grumbled under her breath, none of it was proper words, so Xuena pouted and gave the best puppy dog eyes she could, aimed directly at Yang. "What were you saying,"

Yang groaned and answered, "Fine. As far as I know the answer is one, or two. Depending on how you count things. Kat is, as far as I know, the only demon to have been summoned but she's been summoned twice, both by Xiang."

"See, see. That's pretty rare right? Demons don't just grow on trees you know!" insisted Xuena.

Lily? Ideas?

[I'd just point out she can't research anything else if she goes insane. Maybe point out how much knowledge she'd lose in the transition even if it did work?]

Yeah that sounds promising. I'll go with that. "Xuena," Kat said sharply to return the ice cultivator's attention to her. "I want you to think about what you're really asking. You are risking your mind with these sorts of thoughts. Even if you succeed, what if you start to think you're fine. Don't bother with the sanity inducers at all or take more demon blood just because it seemed like a good idea at the time? You'd slowly lose yourself..."

Kat raised herself up slightly, so that she could properly look down on Xuena, "Think of it. All that knowledge, all that intellect... slowly slipping through your fingers and draining away because you wanted a bit of extra power. Can you imagine? Think of just how dumb it might make you..."

"Yeah, it could make you dumber than Xiang!" chipped in Yang. Kat rolled her eyes at that as soon as Xuena turned around to look at Yang in surprise. Xuena started to look between Yang and Kat rapidly as she took in the statement before pouting.

"So... no super demon pills?" asked Xuena slowly.

"No super demon pills," said Yang softly.

Question... just how toxic is my blood exactly?

User Kat's blood isn't inherently toxic as the Demonic Energy likes to bond itself to a demon's body. What Demonic Energy is in blood tends not to leak out even if it's splattered somewhere or ingested making it relatively safe. However, use of it as a crafting reagent strips those protections.

Good. I'd hate to think I'm a paper cut away from hurting Sylvie or someone else I like.

Xuena sighed. "I guess I'll just have to settle for healing my wounds, upgrading my cultivation rank... and growing a second heart. A shame really..."

"Wait hold up... what was that third thing" snapped Yang.

"Growing a second heart?" repeated Xuena innocently.

"Xuena... what did we agree about extra organs..." complained Yang.

"Not to add anything with even the slightest chance of causing complications?" offered Xuena as what she saw as an acceptable answer.

"No it wasn't! We agreed to no additional organs until Rank 5 and you know how to properly fuse them with the body," said Yang.

“That doesn’t seem like something I’d agree to...” mumbled Xuena.

“You had no choice. You’d just managed to destroy your eye in an explosion and in exchange for helping you mix everything to heal it up properly and not telling your parents you agreed not to add any additional organs till Rank 5,” said Yang.

“Wait... no... wasn’t that just extra eyes?” asked Xuena slowly.

“Nope, I specified ORGANS” said Yang firmly.

“Huh... I kinda feel like that has to be cheating...” grumbled Xuena.

You know Lily... I’m getting the strange feeling that Xuena didn’t use that rare ingredient to heal Xiang out of the goodness of her heart so much as she healed Xiang as an EXCUSE to use that rare ingredient and only get a mild punishment from her parents.

[You know Kat... I’m starting to think exactly the same thing. Funny coincidence that.]

Do you think Yang knows?

[I think she probably knows or at the very least suspects that to be the case. Xiang... I doubt he has any idea. Probably hasn’t spent enough time around Xuena yet...]

I’m wonder if she really was better off kidnapped. Safer certainly...

[Perhaps...]

Chapter 929 Cultivating an Ending

Kat and Lily both stared out at the blank snowstorm ahead of them. It was a day later and they were alone now. They’d both said their goodbyes to... well just Yang really. Xiang was still unconscious and Xuena had taken over the second room as a lab, kicking Yang out essentially. When the 24 hour timer had passed Yang had politely told them to fuck off in essence.

Oh Yang was polite about it. Checking in every so often and making sure ‘Kat wasn’t wasting her time’ or ‘Lily would finally be able to go home and snuggle’ she was downright diplomatic about it considering how Yang normally acted. It was certainly still a little insulting... but at the same time Xuena had tried to acquire several other pieces of Kat’s anatomy for study and use in her alchemy. All just as dangerous as the blood. Some skin, a bit of hair, leather from Kat’s wings... even a bit of Kat’s tail. At that last one Kat hadn’t been able to prevent the small eruption of fire, though it was redirected to a nearby tree. Yang was on edge after that.

So when they said goodbye... Yang was still happy to have had them yes. Yang was glad it was Kat and not any other demon. That all being said... Yang also didn’t think it’d be good to get used to having Kat around. They were in a dangerous place and expecting Kat to scare off her kill everything was not a healthy mindset to get into. It also seemed that Kat was just too tempting for Xuena to avoid making awkward requests. Perhaps it would not have been so bad if Kat couldn’t regenerate, and had shown greater concern for personal damage. As it was... Kat was essentially a supply of unlimited rare and unique materials to examine.

Lily was barely helping matters. Other than the tail request, where Lily did actually see genuine anger in Kat, she just found the whole thing amusing. Lily was finding she saw a lot of herself in both Yang and Xuena. An idle thought of 'if those pair had a kid, they'd probably end up exactly like me' kept both Kat and Lily amused for far too long. Of course now... now they were both looking out into the snowstorm, not another living being in sight.

"It's finally over..." said Kat with a sigh, letting the air stream out of her mouth, some of it freezing along the way. Kat let out another puff of deliberately hotter air and just watched it swirl around in the wind for a few moments.

"Yes... it's... it's strange. It's been a long month all told and while part of my wants to go home... there was quite a lot of downtime. All the travel... while not the best of course... was quite nice. Even with things getting a bit samey, the fact that we could just talk to each other whenever we wanted. No real responsibilities besides making sure Yang and Xiang didn't kill themselves... even the cookouts with Ron and his gang. It's... been a lot yes," said Lily leaning into Kat.

The pair shifted around so that Lily was now mostly on top of Kat instead of just sitting beside her. Really, why they bothered to sit separately in the first place was a mystery to both of them. "We shouldn't really stay too long. Have to make sure you can honestly answer that we left once the job was complete..." mumbled Lily.

Kat could feel through the link that it was a grudging request though. The snow here was nice, and for Lily though it was noticeably chill it wasn't even to the point of feeling like she should put on a jacket. Kat didn't feel it at all of course. The sharpened hail was no longer present either. That seemed to be an effect that Ozen was inducing in the blizzard. A rather harrowing though all things considered. He had a lot of power and really hadn't bothered to use most of it till the end there when KatE had him well and truly beaten.

"Are you alright Lily?" asked Kat softly, seemingly from nowhere but in truth following the darker thoughts Lily's mind was turning towards.

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"I'm not the one that had my heart nearly ripped out?" said Lily, though the question was rather obvious in the tone of voice.

Kat decided to go full cheese, "Ah, but everything I have is yours, thus despite the fact the heart in question beats within my chest it belongs to you. By that logic, your heart was particularly close to destruction,"

Lily couldn't help but laugh at the mental gymnastics. Just to solidify things, Kat also pulled Lily in for a searing kiss, letting go only when her poor mortal companion needed some air. It took a few moments for Lily to calm down... and calm up with a coherent comeback. "Well, if it really is MY heart, perhaps you should be taking care of it better?" suggested Lily trying to sound smug. Her voice only cracked once so Lily was calling it a win. The tears were of course, just a bit of snow melting on her face. "This is the second time this has happened you know? Same world as well!"

Kat tried to shrug lazily without moving Lily and ruining the comfortable position her girlfriend found. This turned out to take a good deal of mental effort and only LOOKED lazy. The bond ensured Lily knew

just how false the attempt was, unable to suppress a chuckle at the action herself. Especially considering Lily wasn't even in position to see the attempt at all, merely feel it. "I do not know what to tell you. I trust that I won't die from it at the very least. I'm also much less concerned with injury in general... I mean... how scary is a broken bone when it is not the work of months to heal but minutes at most?"

Lily sighed as well, "I'm pretty sure that you were specifically told you can't regrow organs..."

"That was all the way back when I was Rank 1 though... and it wasn't organs I believe it was limbs. Though... if I couldn't regrow limbs I'm not sure how I'd do if someone tried to remove one of my lungs or something... hmm... it's somewhat awkward. I really should know that sort of thing and I bet the system will just 'Unable to calculate based on growth. Testing required' or something like that. It's not really something I should test either in case it fails but..."

"I also can't really find myself all that worked up about it either. If I do take damage, I... I don't know if it's something I've accidentally trained myself in or if part of having regeneration just removes my concern for damage. It feels... more like a minor inconvenience. Like knowing you have to bend over to pick something up off the floor. The idea of bruises is really that inconsequential for me now. Bones and muscle damage don't rate much higher either..."

"I suspect that you might've always had that issue..." grumbled Lily.

"Really?" asked Kat confused.

"Kat... you've taken water balloons to the face, stepped into punches, there was at least one kick you caught, though I think you actually caught that one rather than just letting it hit you... the idea of trading a bit of pain for an advantage is not something you've ever shied away from and now it really is just pain. No risk of longer term issues, at least, as far as we've been able to tell," said Lily.

Kat nodded and said, "Possibly. I haven't thought too hard about it myself. I think I'm really cheating with having Succubus regeneration instead of the normal one. Powerful as it might be... if normal people with regeneration end up with a bunch of scar tissue all over the place eventually that would be a problem. I seriously doubt normal regenerators can stand up to having their heart stabbed repeatedly,"

Lily winced. "Yeah... smooth unblemished skin is one thing but scarred organs and muscles? I think you might be on to something..."

"I'd guess it's not really talked about all that much," offered Kat.

"Why would you think that?" asked Lily confused.

"I think... I think it's because Lust can claim it as one of their focus abilities, or whatever it's actually called. They probably play up how nice it keeps their skin, how it prevents all sorts of little nicks and damage from scarring and ruining their appearance... while at the same time abusing the fact they can take near fatal damage with literally no consequences except a bit of energy and time," explained Kat.

"Do... do you think Lust runs assassinations or something?" queried Lily.

"Oh I doubt it's their main trade. Probably 'too niche' but at the same time... if 90% of the demonic assassins don't end up in Lust I'd eat my hat," said Kat firmly.

Lily groaned and asked, "But that's the faction you want to join now you're Rank 3?"

Kat nodded slowly, "Yes... yes I think it still is. I don't necessarily fit the bill for them... but I feel like I fit everywhere else a lot less,"

Chapter 930 Planning Party

The flames swirled around them as the world faded away. Kat let out a long puff of air she didn't realise she'd been holding and pulled Lily closer to her chest. Lily purred happily at the contact, finding the fire to be much less captivating than her girlfriend. Kat, to the dismay of someone in particular, could not help but be captivated by the fire instead. It was a truly novel experience that never got old. Sure hugging Lily was just as good, if not better, but it was a much more common occurrence. Especially after the month they'd just had. Point of fact, Kat knew that Lily had spent more time in her arms than on the ground.

When the fire eventually retreated, Kat flopped down onto her head easily, letting her arms drop from around Lily. That was too little contact for the Memphis who slid up and buried herself against Kat's neck. The pair just smiled and held that position for a while. Time lost quite a bit of meaning like that... until Callisto raised the call for lunch.

Kat was rather content to just lay there. Sure the snow was somewhat relaxing, but here, back on Earth in her room with Lily? That was the best place to really unwind. Sadly, Lily's stomach roared a battle cry and Kat moved into action. Lily was just thankful she couldn't be seen blushing at the moment.

When they made it downstairs, Callisto was already seated and Sylvie was sliding into a chair. They both paused and turned when they heard footsteps. Callisto's mouth twitched the slightest bit downwards, but Sylvie's entire body lit up in joy. "Big sis Kat! Lily! You're back! That means you'll be here for my birthday!"

Kat abused the HECK out of her powers to slow down time to take in that statement. *Oh shit. It's that late in the year? Wait that means I missed Lily's birthday. WHY DIDN'T SHE MENTION IT?!* "Indeed it does. I'm pretty sure I even have time off!" smiled Kat with as much cheer as she could muster. *Lily! Why didn't you warn me about your birthday!*

[Meh, I got a whole new body so arguably that's now my birthday. Plus I've never been one for parties. I spent the whole day with you so what more could I want?]

I dunno... maybe an actual present?

[Bah, I got immortality, the best girlfriend ever, and an adorable sister-in-law. And that's all just in the last few months. Anything anyone tried to get me for my birthday would've been a massive disappointment comparatively. Plus, I'm pretty sure you'd spend way too much money if I didn't just ask for something specific.]

I resemble that remark.

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Kat slid into one of the other chairs as Callisto spoke, "Are you hungry Kat? I am afraid I did not prepare all that much food. Vivian is out at work and I did not expect you and Lily to return. While feeding Lily is a small ask while she remains in her Memphis form, feeding you is not so different to a normal human. When you can be bothered,"

“Ah, I don’t require any food for lunch. Just thought I’d come down and spend some time with whoever was around, while Lily ate,” said Kat as she silently thanked the fact that it was technically the truth. She didn’t REQUIRE food for lunch. It would be nice, and Kat herself was actually a little hungry after everything. The last time she’d eaten was during Ron’s little cookout but that didn’t really matter. Kat knew Callisto would want leftovers for her own snacking, and Lily needed the food more. Yang had luckily still had a bit of raw meat in her storage ring, but Lily’s last meal was late yesterday.

Of course, the sharp glare that Callisto levelled at Kat implied that her little ruse wasn’t missed by all. Lily was, thankfully in Kat’s mind, too focused on her own hunger that the much more subtle call for food coming from Kat’s end of the link went unnoticed. Sylvie had already dug in, probably in an attempt to eat quickly and chat as soon as she finished, and hadn’t been paying quite as much attention.

Still, Callisto didn’t call Kat out on it, she simply stood up and grabbed a small bowl for Lily and made up something a bit fancy using only the meatier sections of the lunch. Callisto had done up a small, well relatively speaking small, pot of Coq Au Vin, a chicken stew dish that smelled rather nice to Kat’s nose. Callisto grabbed a heaping of source, and an unbalanced amount of meat to spoon out for Lily.

Callisto offset this by taking extra vegetables into her own bowl, though considering what Kat had seen the maid eat on the regular that was no hardship at all. Simply a minor matter of practicality. Kat glanced at the pot trying and failing to do the mental calculation and realise that there probably was still enough for two meals, maybe three, in the pot even after Lily’s portion had been handed over. Still, Kat didn’t let that leak into her thoughts lest Lily catch on she was avoiding lunch in what was now clearly a misguided attempt at being helpful.

“I will admit to some surprise at your timely arrival. Your last message seemed to indicate that you might yet still be a few days away from returning,” intoned Callisto after finishing a few good bites of her food.

Kat smiled, happy to have an easy answer for that one, “The end to the most recent Contract was a little... unclear. See, we needed to make sure that everyone was safe and we’d definitely escaped from that sect right?” Callisto nodded in understanding. Kat had informed everyone of the Contract she was under, “Well I beat him up... but Xiang and Xuena were injured, as I believe I mentioned. In the end though, they decided to hole up for a while and recover.

“It came down to the idea of... ‘safe’ from pursuers. There might also be an argument revolving around the idea that the ice qi filled area we were in was technically part of the ice sect. One of the two. Anyway, it was unclear exactly how long we’d be forced to stay and with Xiang out of commission we couldn’t simply get verbal confirmation of Contract completion,” explained Kat.

Callisto nodded between bites to assure Kat she was listening. Something that was probably necessary with people who didn’t know Callisto all that well. She was remarkably good at keeping her face blank. The only reason she reacted at all was because some idiots assumed she wasn’t paying attention. They are referenced as idiots though, specifically because Callisto is ALWAYS listening.

“I see. It is good to have you home early. Even if you still had a few days to return in time for Sylvie’s birthday, I thank you for making it in time to help with the preparations if you so desire,” said Callisto.

I feel kind of bad. I mean, I didn't forget Sylvie's birthday... but I had no idea what day it was. Indeed I still don't know the date right now. So... not ideal but I mean... did you know Lily?

[Nope. I'm afraid I'm in the same boat as you. Sylvie's birthday, never forgotten. The current date... eh, we were in another world for so long it didn't exactly stay relevant.]

"Does Sylvie have an idea about who she'd like over?" asked Kat.

Sylvie took a few moments to look completely innocent, all the while Callisto stared the younger girl down using just the corner of her eyes. "Sadly she does not. Despite informing her she should acquire some friends, or at least, friendly acquaintances at school so as to avoid any social issues like I did when I was younger, she has soundly ignored my advice. In fact, if Lily counts as a friend, she is the closest in age to Sylvie among the category"

Kat sighed, and made to say something but caught Sylvie pouting. Kat waited for the explanation and was hardly surprised. "I just think that too many people at school are idiots. I mean... I get it, most kids aren't all that smart, or maybe just do not have patience but... it is trying to deal with people who cannot converse with me on an intellectual level,"

"Sylvie you are continually attempting to emulate my speech patterns and already regularly talk like a college-level English major. Why you believe it will gain you allies or friends is beyond me," said Callisto with a hint of sadness.

Sylvie just huffed at that, "I do not need a bunch of boring friends that aren't smart enough to get along with. I want to find that ONE friend. You have Vivian, and Kat has Lily, or perhaps it's the one the way around? Never the less, I want something like that. I'll never find my one friend if I am pretending to be someone else,"

"You do realise that Lily and Kat are dating correct? Are you looking for a marriage candidate like them or a friend like Vivian and I?" asked Callisto, just to double check.

"You do realise that if you and Vivian were any emotionally closer to each other you'd be married right? Are you sure you are just friends?" retorted Sylvie.

"I do not sleep with her," said Callisto as answer.

"You do not sleep," shot back Sylvie.

Wait so are they dating or not?

[Frankly Kat... I don't think anyone knows the answer to that question. Least of all themselves.]