

Demon Queened

Chapter 45

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Lucy

I couldn't really fall asleep that night. Usually I was out like a light, safe in Eena's... *Devilla's* arms, but this time... I just kept going over all the information she'd given me. It was a lot!

Like, apparently she'd been taught about the war very differently than I had. The church told me that it was a holy war instigated by the goddess, so that humanity could overcome their sins and in the process expand to cover the land, and while I'd never *fully* believed that... Well, Eena's... *Devilla's*... I was just going to have to ask for permission to keep calling her Eena, wasn't I? Either way, her version was very different!

Apparently the demons said that the angels had started the war without the Goddess's permission, while she was away doing... something. Except Eena couldn't really fill in what that something was, or what could possibly make the Goddess leave heaven. Supposedly, though, the angels were just siding with the humans of their own accord, except for one particular angel named Luci - like my name, but with an i - that came down from the heavens to lead the demons... and defeat the Heroine.

Also, apparently Demon Queens are actually fallen angels? Which did sort of make sense - I mean, she showed me her angel wings, and all! They were super pretty! Though I guess the black color *could* potentially fit with the Church's explanation, which was that they were a 'mockery of the angels.' There was also the fact that she could cast holy magic, though! Not a perverted version of holy magic, but *actual* holy magic! I heard her say the words of a healing spell, and I felt the flow of it. I *knew* that magic better than anyone else alive did. Anyone except her.

Which meant an angel definitely did come down to lead the demons. Which meant the church version had to be at least partially wrong, but did that really mean the demons were right? Just because one angel thought that other angels shouldn't interfere with mortal things didn't mean that the other angels were working against the Goddess's will. It could just be one rebellious angel, instead of a whole bunch! I mean, why would *all* the angels *but one* go renegade to begin with...?

Eena didn't have any answers. She said that she might have been able to tell me more if she'd completed the 'Rite of Insight' - which I guess was a really big deal for Demon Queens? It was supposed to give them knowledge from their ancestors, but she kinda messed it up somehow, and got memories of a past life

instead. Which might actually be for the best, since it helped her to realize that she'd been behaving really badly and had to clean up her act!

Though I was kind of confused about what she did that was so bad? Like, she was apparently a really bad boss, and I understood that she made some people's lives miserable by pushing them into things? She made a really terrible bluff about not turning slime girls back to flesh, too - that's why she needed the depetrification spell, actually. She thought she might be able to free the slimes by mimicking the magic of the cockatrice, but she wasn't sure.

There were also a bunch of other details I didn't really understand- something about vid-ee-oh games that held knowledge of our future? Which is why she knew that she could trust me from the moment she met me... She still struggled a bunch, though, because apparently I did something really horrible in the game and enslaved her with a magic collar. There was no way I could imagine myself doing that in real life, though!

...I mean, maybe if she wanted to do something special for a night we could pretend, but I really wasn't into the idea of making her kiss my feet or anything like the video game version of me seemed to be! Which meant either something really strange happened to twist my personality, or else the game itself was

suspicious... I was leaning towards the latter. No matter how bad Devilla was as a ruler, could I really have convinced *all* of her generals to turn against her? And by sleeping with them?!

There were enough questions to keep anyone up at night... and that wasn't even getting into all the little things we'd discussed! Like her mother's sword. I tried to give it back to her, but she said she'd rather I wield it. She said she knew I'd use it to bring peace to both our people... and she didn't know how to wield it, anyway. Which was just like her!

The dramatic speeches where she did really nice things and cared about everyone around her, I mean. Not her lack of skill with a sword... Though I guess that's also like her, since she didn't really *need one*, being the Demon Queen and all. A foe so powerful only the Heroine could defeat her. A being so incredibly strong it was said no Heroine ever survived facing her in battle - not even when they won.

Yet here she was just... sleeping. In my arms. Totally innocent, totally defenseless! Because she knew I wouldn't hurt her... That was also pretty like her. Trusting me, despite all the history between past Demon Queens and past Heroines.

Then again, she always said she didn't trust me because of my Heroine status, didn't she? If anything, I bet she trusted me despite it! Because of the game she'd played, she said, but... she'd admitted it was more than that, too. That every minute we spent together had reinforced her idea of me, made her believe in me. I mean, the fictional version of me apparently enslaved her, and yet here she was laying in my arms, head against my breasts, silky hair under my fingers as I gently stroked her head...

She was really pretty when she slept. And when she first woke up. And when she walked and talked. And when she just... existed. She was always so amazingly beautiful to me. From the moment I met her, I thought that... and then she'd offered to have sex with me! Which... maybe she wasn't entirely serious about it at the time, looking back at it? But she did it anyway! We slept together, and I started to think about her all the time, and... at some point, I just started to fall for her. A crush, I guess? But I wasn't sure it really qualified as one, anymore. I mean, it felt so much more solid now than it once had. I knew so much more about her! I knew she was the *Demon Queen*. The one who'd supposedly had Mom killed - even if I no longer really believed that - and yet... I still loved her...

I still wanted to hold her.

To kiss her.

I *really* wanted to kiss her... Maybe I could ask for permission when she woke up? Who knew how long that would be, though? I didn't want to wait... which meant there was only one choice for me.

I had to go to sleep, so that she'd wake up first, and I could ask her the moment I got up!

Assuming I could even sleep with all the things bouncing through my head... but I was going to try! I was just going to close my eyes, and drift off to... slee...

Feyra

I glared at the journal in my hands. If looks could burn, this thing would be ashes by now. Better yet, if looks could wish things out of existence, then... Well, I guess I wouldn't even be here, because I'd have banished Devilla out of Lucy and I's lives already. Not that I was entirely convinced that was a good thing

anymore... I mean, she *was* the Demon Queen, but she *did* care about Lucy. ...And *maybe* the church got a couple things wrong?

Maybe... Maybe they didn't know as much as they claimed to. Maybe they weren't the be-all and end-all source of knowledge on what was right and wrong like I thought they were... Maybe they could make mistakes. About who the Demon Queen was.

About who *I* was...

Devilla had told me her theory- that I had a demon - or a monster girl, I guess? - in my family tree at some point. It did make some sense. It kinda fit in with the whole 'cursed bloodline' thing, even if it wasn't exactly what the church taught, but she was pretty sure the 'blessed bloodlines' came from the same type of source, and as much as I wanted to call her a liar... I mean, I was friends with *Amessa*. Amessa wasn't exactly what I'd call a bastion of blessings. There was nothing particularly angelic about her. Nothing that made her good or me bad. Nothing I could name, except our blood, and if Devilla wasn't bad... If Devilla was even maybe by some stretch of the imagination *good*... Then didn't that mean my blood wasn't bad, either?

Blasphemous thoughts. Hersey. They could get me killed if I said them to the wrong person, and that... that wasn't even the worst of what I was thinking. The *worst* of what I was thinking was about the journal in my hands... Well, it was found in something that at least claimed to be a monastery, and was clearly written by a religious fanatic who seemed to think he was doing the Goddess's will.

Of course, Lucy had pointed out that there wasn't any proof the church as an organization was behind all this. Rightfully, too - anyone could put up a plaque, but as cover stories went, wasn't it a bit flimsy? Couldn't someone just... check with the church as to whether such a monastery existed? Unless they got permission to set it up, but lied about the purpose...? Hopefully it was just that. I definitely preferred to believe someone fucked up whatever oversight procedures were in place over... over the church being *involved* with this...

Lucy clearly didn't know what to think. She kept saying she wanted to gather all the facts, to check in with the head of the church and figure out what was what for herself... She was always big on thinking for herself, but she also had a bit of a blindspot - she didn't want to believe that the church was *bad*. That the people who'd helped raise her might have purposefully lied about who killed her Mom. That the church might be up to dubious things...

Not that I believed any of that, per se. I mean, I didn't know any more than Lucy did - not enough to reach any conclusions. Not even about the journal in my hand...

The one written by religious fanatics. Found in a monastery, in a monster infested woods that *church guards* helped to keep people out of... Supposedly just out of worry of an early Monster Movement going off and causing issues for everyone, but... was that really it?

Maybe I was overthinking things... At least we'd solved the fucking Monster Movement mystery. We found some paperwork on the final floor about monster behaviors, and apparently cockatrices were *super* territorial during their mating period. Not that there was anything for this particular cockatrice to mate with, they apparently needed at least a normal chicken to manage that, but the dumb clucker didn't seem to know that there was nothing around to fuck her. Or maybe it just didn't care when mating season came...

Guess we were just lucky a cockatrice's mating period was an every-few-years type of thing, or the Monster Movement could have been so much worse. Much, *much* worse. As it was, the fucking thing started stoning and eating

everything that it came across when it was like this... and the amount it could eat was *insane*.

Insane... like me, for trying to keep Devilla from telling Lucy the truth? Or insane like me for thinking the church might not be involved...

Fuck it. The life-ruining questions could wait until morning. I was going to bed.

Bailey

I stared at the skies. Stars bright. Moon bright. World bright above, but dark here. Everyone in tents. Everyone believes in Heroine's alarms if bad things come. I keep ear out, too. Listen. Keep listening. Make sure nothing comes back, now that cockatrice gone.

Not sure why anything want to come here though. Bad place. Not that I know much about it... but Mother... Before dying, Mother used to talk about Bad Place. Bad Place, with iron bars. Kept in cage, force fed strange meat... Not that she say in words. She not know words. Only impressions. Iron bars were hardness and containment. Strange meat was odd taste and flesh. Forced was *feeling*. Unpleasant feeling.

Concepts I can only put together because now know full truth. Now know where Bad Place is.... Don't like it. Don't want to stay. Don't want to be here. But will stay, anyway. Will stay for Queen. Will protect Queen. Will help Queen.

Because Queen good. Queen help me, when not need to. Fed me. Washed me. I know just felt pity... but she gave warmth. Care. Things not felt since Mother's death. Things never thought feel again...

Queen deserve those things, too. Deserves warmth. Love. Holding. Being told she is good girl.

That's why I will protect Queen and Queen's love. Protect Heroine. Protect Maid.

...Also protect bitchy green girl, since Heroine sad otherwise... and probably put self in danger again to protect her.

Failure on my part. Letting her be hurt, instead of me. Letting her be bit,
instead of me... even if Queen fix.

Won't let happen again.

Won't let anyone be hurt again.

Will protect.

Not dumb enough to think can do on no sleep. Have to sleep.

Just... not too deeply.