CHAPTER 20: HEAT part 2

Adora walked briskly through the aisles of bookshelves to the desk they used as a base. The table was littered with half-opened books from earlier that morning, but there was no sign of Catra. She tilted her head confused. "I'd swear I saw her coming here…" Adora thought to herself.

"What the hell are you doing awake at this time? I think I told you to stay in your room at night, Adora," said a sharp voice from the darkness.

Adora turned her head so quickly she jerked her neck. She swore and raised her hand to massage the sore area as Catra's eyes pierced her like blades. Her pupils glowed in the dark like headlights. Adora got lost in those mismatched eyes for a moment as an invisible shiver ran down her spine. She crossed her arms, trying to protect herself from those eyes that seemed to strip her of everything and took a step back. She saw how Catra's mouth curled up on one side in a mocking smile.
 Shit.

"I…I couldn't sleep so I went for a walk." she stuttered defensively. "What about you? I don't think coming to the library in the middle of the night is specially normal." Adora said matter of factly.

Catra did not deign to answer. She just folded her arms over her chest, mimicking Adora, and raised an eyebrow in mute response. Her hip rested against a close desk and the soft curve it created caught Adora's attention for a moment. The silky fabric of Catra`s nightdress opened slightly on the side, revealing part of her upper thigh. Adora's fingertips itched to touch the warm skin, to put more fabric aside and… She caught herself just when she was about to reach out. Catra was still looking at her slightly amused. Adora cleared her throat uncomfortably before answering.

"Okay, yeah, I get it. My castle my rules," Adora muttered. She kept on talking, just so silence wouldn't fall between them again. It was too much for her to bear. "But you could be a little more flexible, you know? I'm used to being outdoors, and spending the day locked up between the four walls of my room or the library is driving me crazy" she said with a pout "At least you could show me the palace grounds, I've hardly seen anything outside of the building since I arrived here" she muttered under her breath, almost to herself.

She glanced at Catra to see her reaction. The vampire looked at her with a mocking expression before answering.
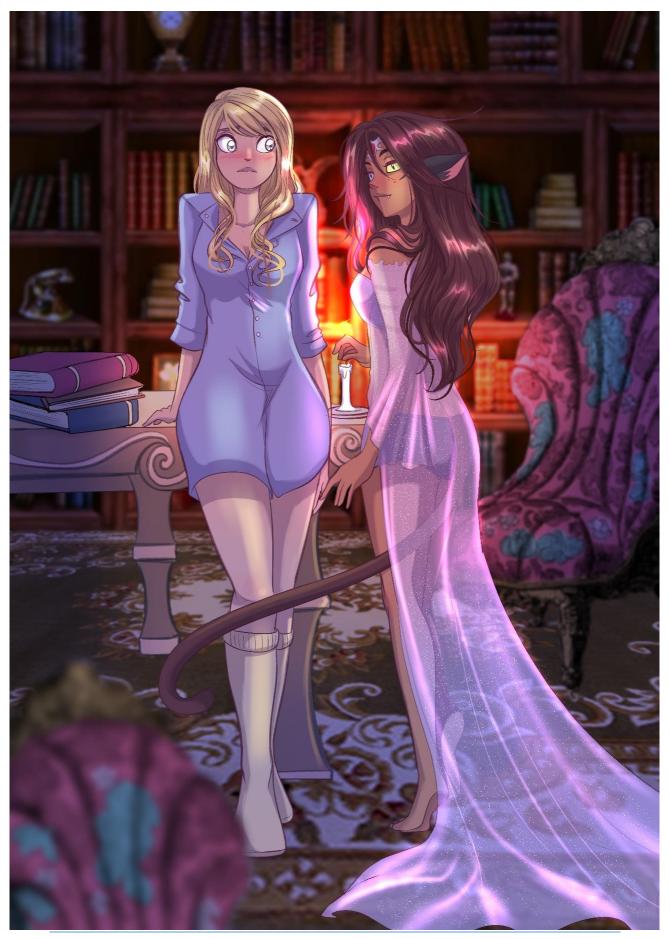
"May I remind you of that little trip into the woods that almost got us killed?" she asked sweetly.
 Ouch, that hurt.
Catra unfolded her arms and tilted her head slightly, looking at her with a small half smile.
 Adora's heart skipped a beat

"It's…it's not the same and you know it" Adora mumbled.
It wasn't as if she was asking her out on a date or something, and they hadn't left the castle ever since the temple disaster. It was just that being locked up all day overwhelmed her, SPECIALLY if they were alone in the same room.

"Wow, we are quite demanding today, aren't we?" the vampire purred tilting her head "I already fulfilled what you asked of me, you are already paying the price for it" she approached her with elegance and began to walk around her.

Adora couldn't look away; she gulped. The vampire's scent was everywhere, engulfing her. She couldn't think straight. Catra's hair brushed her cheek slightly when she walkeded beside her and Adora could smell her perfume. It almost was her undoing.
"If you ask me for another favor, you're going to have to give me something in return. It's only fair, don't you think? " Catra stopped right in front of her and leaned in slightly. Adora bent slightly backwards, as if they were on a mirror.
"What will you give me, Adora? " the vampire whispered with a slight smile on her lips, catching her gaze. Her fangs gleamed like blades in the moonlight, and Adora could almost felt them piercing her, the same way her eyes reached to her very core.

"Your call, it's up to you to decide what you want in return, I guess" she stammered nervously.

Her ears burned and she felt warm even at the back of her cheeks and across her neck. It was soft, spreading over random parts of her body. She shifted uncomfortably against her own weight. She damn well knew the vampire had noticed.

Her smile widened even more, if that was possible, and a mischievous gleam lit up her eyes. She stood on tiptoe to speak directly into her ear. Adora let out a chocked gasp, surprised by her closeness. She could feel the heat of Catra's body through her evening dress; it filtered to the slight fabric into her own skin, setting her on fire.

Catra's lips were almost brushing her earlobe, her breath caressing the strands of golden hair that had escaped from the ponytail she had hastily improvised before leaving her room. Her heart raced, she could hear it in her eardrums, pumping blood to every inch of her skin, activating every nerve ending. She was about to burst into flames.

"You look adorable when you try to flirt with me, did you know that?" she whispered in her ear.
Adora yelped, surprised. She blushed furiously, she didn't know whether from anger or embarrassment.
"S ... stop teasing me!" Adora exclaimed as she turned away from her. She couldn't believe she had felt for it.

Catra chuckled, amused by her reaction. She looked at her condescendingly as she rested a hand on her hip.

"If you wanted me to show you the gardens you could have asked me from the beginning without taking so many detours." she told her.

"You're always busy and I didn't want to bother you either," Adora said a little more calmed now. She didn't know how she managed, but the vampire always ended up making her lose her composure. She tried to calm down. "I have stayed here to help you, not to do tourism."

Catra's smile faded away slightly. She looked away and sighed.

"You're helping me Adora. I'd say that sometimes you try too hard" she said with a troubled smile.

Adora watched her for a moment. Through comments like this she realized that Catra seemed to feel guilty about keeping her there, as if she was helping her against her will.

"I'm here because I want to, Catra, that was the condition and I intend to stay. Until the very end, no matter what it is." she said firmly.

Catra looked up and gave her a half smile.

"Thank you," she said. Adora didn't hesitate to smile back.

"But I don't want you roaming the castle at night, it can be dangerous," she answered without giving her time to retort.

Catra then stepped away heading for the desk, and Adora felt the light brush of her tail on her leg as she walked beside her, a hidden caress. Adora followed her with her eyes admiring the way she moved. Catra took each step with the grace of a trapeze artist; she was a natural, matching the sinuous undulations of her tail with the movement of her hips as she walked.

Catra smiled to herself as she walked next to Adora. The last weeks had been weird; she knew she had spent too much time holed up alone, keeping her distance from Adora, but she had been afraid to look at her. She was terrified to dive into that blue gaze, the color of a spring day, and see rejection. Catra knew she was a monster; and Adora had seen it with her own eyes that day at the temple. But she had never felt more like one as when she had fed on Adora's blood. She clenched her fists. The monster had left her with no options; she couldn't lose control, not again; not when Adora was so close, when Catra was so aware of her. She knew the monster inside her had somewhat imprinted on her. If Catra lost control again, the first thing the beast would do would be hunt her down, and that simple thought froze her blood.

The sudden memory of fangs piercing Adora's soft skin sent a bolt to the pit of her stomach. Catra stopped abruptly, her body stiff. She felt it again, the emptiness in her stomach, a ravenous hunger that clouded every sane thought in her mind.

It couldn't be happening again, not so soon.

Adora bumped into Catra when she stopped all of a sudden. Her body was tense. An almost imperceptible tremor began to spread from her clenched fists throughout the rest of her body. Something was wrong.

"Hey, are you okay?" She approached her and placed a hand on her shoulder. Catra winced and pulled away from her as if her touch was scorching. Adora took a step back, a precaution. There was definitely something off.

Catra put as much distance as she could between herself and Adora, her proximity was not helping right now. She clenched and unclenched her fists in an attempt to control herself. It took her a few minutes to regain control. She took in a deep breath, holding the air for a moment in her lungs and then exhaling it slowly. Bit by bit she noticed the tremor subsiding, until it became a slight shiver in her hands. Thank goodness, it seemed this attack hadn't been as intense as the last few she'd had, but she didn't want to risk it. She had gotten used to the absence of the constant tension, the lack of uncertainty as to when the beast would try to take over her body again. Adora's blood had worked its magic, that was clear, but she was sure that it would bring long-term consequences speeding up the transition process. She didn't want to think about that now.

"I thought they had stopped."

Catra turned around. Adora was looking at her with eyes wide open, scared. Catra's heart sank. She deserved to know.
"It's not something that can be stopped, Golden Girl," Catra replied with a sad smile. Adora didn't seem to be listening to her. She started pacing from side to side, wringing her hands nervously and speaking to herself.
"But…. Isn't human blood supposed to slow down the process? They had stopped, the attacks had stopped and you were much better. I… .I thought that at least we had bought some time." she said confused.

Catra sighed and leaned against the edge of the table.
"It doesn't work like that, Adora. The curse is still here, it won't go away until it's broken" she hesitated for a moment. She didn't know if she should tell Adora, she didn't want to make her feel guilty. But Adora had the right to know.
"Drinking blood… human blood, it helps me control the beast, but it speeds up the process." Adora stopped her pacing to look at her. Catra didn't look at her, she wasn't ready to see the hurt in her eyes. She kept on speaking "I stopped feeding because of that; I wanted a little more time to try to find a way."she sighed, and stopped for a moment before continuing "The final result was going to be the same if I don't break the curse. At least that way people wouldn't have to get hurt because of me. Maybe it's better off this way" she mumbled.

Adora stayed silent for a few seconds, trying to process the information.

"So...it was useless," she whispered "Going to that temple, everything…it won't work" her voice broke with those words.

Catra finally gathered the courage to look at her. Adora's eyes were impossibly large; the pupils had shrunk until they almost disappeared into the blue of her iris. Her chest rose in a frenzy as she tried to take air into her lungs. Catra couldn't bear seeing her so disheartened. She wasn't going to give up, not yet at least, but the only thing that was clear to her is that she didn't want to risk Adora's life again.
She'd kill herself if she had to.

Adora wasn't one to give up at the first bump in the road, but in this case…it was different. She closed her eyes tried to shut the part of her brain that screamed to her to give up; the little bastard didn't do anything to help. She pondered the new information and analyzed every possibility. She stayed lost in her own thoughts for a few minutes, and then she nodded.

There was no other way.