

Demon Queened

Chapter 35

Written by Princess Kay

Proofread by FallingLeaf

Devilla

A day of travel passed with surprising speed in Lucy and Feyra's company. I could tell that Lucy remained bothered by Kalice's treatment of her, but the forced smile that had emerged during that encounter made no further appearances after our parting. In its place, I was granted a frankly ridiculous number of its more sincere cousins. I didn't even want to think about what sort of social isolation she must have lived through for our simple conversations to bring her so much joy... Though, perhaps the magnitude had more to do with her feelings for me than the communication itself.

Regardless, outside our bumpy start the day of travel ended without further incident, and before I knew it we were setting up our tents. Or rather, Lucy and Feyra set up said tents, while I observed from a slight distance and did my best to learn. To be honest, I much preferred the idea of creating a stone haven for myself over setting up something so complicated, but Lucy had gone to the trouble of securing a tent fit for two people and I was hardly going to invalidate her efforts.

"Well," I began once the tents had been secured, "now that that's taken care of, I'm afraid I have something that needs doing. In the woods. It won't take me longer than a moment."

“Because that’s not at all suspicious,” Feyra grumbled. “Why the hell didn’t you do it earlier? Instead of, say, standing around uselessly while we were putting up tents?”

“I think it’s sweet that Eena wants to learn how to help,” Lucy declared, giving me a bright smile. “Though you really could have done it then! I don’t mind putting it up by myself.”

“Nonsense,” I protested. “It’s *our* abode, if only for one night at a time. I should at least be able to contribute something to its construction...”

“Next time, then,” Lucy promised. “I’ll walk you through it step by step if I need to!”

Ignoring the fact that I could practically *hear* the eye rolling coming from Feyra’s direction, I gave Lucy a serious nod of my head to broadcast my dedication and turned towards the trees. “I’ll be back in a moment,” I promised.

Truthfully, Feyra was likely right about me wasting a better opportunity. Delivering my letter to Abigail while Feyra was busy with her tent might have worked to prevent her from paying too much attention to what I was up to. If something went wrong with my teleportation, and I ended up teleporting along with my missive... Well, it would be preferable to have her distracted. At the same

time, however, I stood by what I said - Lucy had secured a tent for us *both*, and pursuing my own interests while she set it up for us simply hadn't been an option.

Still, I had to admit that the sentiment had put me in something of a bind. I had little time for my task, if I wanted to preempt any potential shenanigans on Feyra's side. I suspected it would take more than a few minutes of absence for her to get ideas about revealing my true identity to Lucy, but considering the precarious nature of the current status quo... Well, the less time spent away from the duo, the better.

To that end, I reached into my pack, quickly withdrawing pen and paper from within the Empty Bag hidden within. Though I technically had some of the latter stashed in the pack proper - the better to pad it out - the paper I had hidden was wrinkle free. The pen, meanwhile, was best left within the confines of my holy artifact, where there was no chance of it breaking apart or leaking ink on my belongings, no matter how rough I got.

Considering the rush I was in, I chose to share relatively little in my initial missive. The fact that some humans had abilities akin to monster girls needed to be relayed, but I could - and did - choose to leave out the complexities of the so-called cursed and blessed bloodlines. Feyra's existence was similarly significant, paired with the fact that she had learned my identity, and of course the deal I had struck

with her. The same precarious deal that necessitated my use of letters for communication going forward. As such I asked that she write anything I needed to know down and place it on the teleport pad, so that I could try and transport it to myself before sending her further information from my end.

Once all of that was dealt with, I stored my pen once again and pulled out my teleportation circle in its place. A simple, if pretty, metal disk, with intersecting lines carved seemingly at random across its surface, and random dots sprinkled about its face. The design was all but meaningless - likely meant only to keep people from copying it too easily - but there was still a certain beauty to be found in the randomness, so far as I was concerned. Whoever had created it had done a masterful job.

In the tower, one could use a circle such as this to teleport by simply standing upon it and pouring magic into it. So long as you - or whoever was operating the thing - knew the *exact* location of its twin, you would instantly be teleported from one circle to the other within an instant. It was a process I had always taken for granted in the tower. It wasn't until recently that I had discovered what should have been obvious to me long ago - that such teleportation magic simply wasn't possible with the meager amounts of arcane magic that the circles

required. Indeed, the arcane magic worked as nothing more than a trigger, with the process itself being done through holy magic stored within the tower.

A startling discovery for me, yet it had only drawn a shrug from Abigail. She had gone on to inform me of the numerous ‘miracles’ the tower provided for its inhabitants - from garbage disposal sites that would simply and cleanly eliminate all waste, to floors where the sun shined down upon our crops despite us theoretically being indoors. And, of course, the lighting of the tower, including my own floor - something I’d never given much thought to, much to my chagrin. Though, in my defense, none of those things had ever applied to me directly! I’d never gone down to the crop growing floors, had never been required to throw out my own garbage, and could see in the dark so well that there was no real difference between night and day for me to begin with. Of course, looking at it another way, that only meant that I’d never taken much interest in how our people managed to stay fed, had never cleaned up any of my own messes, and hadn’t cared enough to wonder how people other than me managed to find their way around a tower that barely even bothered with torches, beyond what was needed for ambiance.

...In any case, now that I knew that the tower had holy magic, I was far less concerned with the teleportation disk requesting some of my own to function. As such, I placed the letter upon its surface, pressed my finger down upon it, allowed

it to pull holy magic from my body, and immediately found myself standing atop its twin in my bedroom.

“Well, that didn’t work as I planned...”

“Devilla?!” Abigail called, leaping off my bed so fast that you’d think it a hot stove, rather than an extravagantly plush mattress. She ran towards me just as fast, and for a moment I thought I would get a repeat of Lucy’s tackling hug. Instead, she slowed a step or two away from me, with a look that relayed not excitement, but relief. “Thank the Fallen... I wasn’t sure you’d be coming back today.”

“I wasn’t planning on it,” I admitted, glancing down at the letter by my feet. A quick bit of magic had it floating up to my hand, the better to be snatched from the air and handed off to a confused Abigail. “The letter should explain everything. I’ll be back soon, alright?”

“Not alright!” Abigail cried out, an instant before I teleported.

Which, of course, meant I had to teleport right back again.

“What do you mean it’s not alright?” I questioned her upon returning. “Did something happen?”

Abigail let out a breath I hadn’t seen her take, no doubt relieved that I’d returned. The circumstances must truly have been dire.

“Yeah, something happened,” she confirmed. “I met with Nivera and Chloe.”

“Not Sallina?” I questioned, arching an eyebrow.

“...I wasn’t exactly looking to meet another General after what happened last time,” Abigail admitted with a shrug. “And it was fine. Nivera even apologized. Sorta.”

“If it went fine, then why are you so relieved to see me?” I questioned her. “And where’s Bailey?”

“Because what didn’t go so fine was us crashing Araina’s meeting with a member of the uh... Alees... sand... Whatever Alira’s family is called. And Bailey’s sleeping by your feet. It’s been a *long* day.”

I paused, taking a moment to glance down at the floor. I didn’t see her at first - not until I craned my head around, and saw her curled up in the corner behind me, her chest rising and falling smoothly.

“The Aleesendra family?” I asked, lowering my voice in deference to the horned wolf’s rest, even as I smiled down at her sleeping form. It seemed she’d gained the ability to stay a wolf in her sleep at some point. Perhaps because she was no longer weak from malnourishment? “Why would Araina be meeting with her?”

“Because she got into your head that you were firing her. And because Alira’s granddaughter, Mellany, lied about being able to help with her image. Which is why we need you to meet with Araina, to calm her down. And maybe with Mellany, if you want to hear her out? Which Chloe seems to think would be a good idea, at least.”

“Just Chloe?” I queried, arching an eyebrow. “Not Nivera?”

“Nivera doesn’t want to go near anyone in Alira’s family with a ten foot pole. She’s pissed at what they did to you, and also about what was done to you to begin with. Also also, she doesn’t hate you. Hell, I think you might be one of the only people in the tower she actually *cares about*.”

“That doesn’t even make sense!” I protested, unintentionally raising my voice in the process. My breath caught a moment after, and I spared a glance at Bailey, whose ear twitched as she kicked out a leg in her sleep. She didn’t wake, though.

“Well, why don’t *you* tell her that?” Abigail asked. “By which I mean *literally tell her that*. You guys haven’t talked in, like, fifteen years, right? I think you’re overdue for a conversation.”

“I can’t,” I protested. “I... well, the letter explains it more thoroughly, but... I cannot afford to leave Lucy alone. Things might fall apart if I do.”

“Well, things might fall apart *here* if you *don't*,” Abigail countered. “Or at least Araina will. I’m pretty sure Mellany has *some* way of spiting us planned out if we don’t meet with her, though - she just seems like the type. And let’s not forget the whole debacle that came up with my *last* attempt to meet a General. I’m still not sold on Nivera’s plan of acting like she’s bribing me for info on you... Don’t get me wrong, I’d love to take a few troubles off your plate, but I’m out of my depth here.”

“As am I...” I sighed. “In fact, the only ones who seem to know what they’re doing at the moment are Chloe and Nivera...”

“Who seem to think they need *you* to settle everything down,” Abigail reminded me, letting out a sigh of her own as she shook her head. “Maybe I can ask them to buy us time? How long is this whole ‘can’t leave Lucy alone’ thing going to last, anyways?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. “I suppose I’ll have to ask how long our journey will last, and get back to you.”

“You never asked...?” Abigail shook her head and sighed. “Whatever. Just... get back to me as soon as you can, alright? I’ll try to work something out.”

“Thank you... Abby,” I said, trying not to flush with embarrassment at my daring use of a friendly nickname, even as I attempted to reassure her with a firm

nod of my own head. Then, with another application of arcane and holy magic, I was back in the woods.

As was a certain sleeping wolf, whose tail had landed upon the disk without my noticing.