

Demon Queened

Chapter 44

Written by Princess Kay

Proofread by FallingLeaf

Devilla

“Lucy...” I whispered, my voice faint enough that I’m not sure even Bailey heard it, let alone Feyra who was laying a few feet from me. My eyes were locked upon the statue that had once been a living, breathing redhead. A statue with a smile on her face, and a thank you on her lips - though what she was thanking me for, I couldn’t fathom. For failing to protect her? For daring to give thought to hiding my abilities when people were in *real* danger? What had I *possibly* done that might have deserved thanks?

A cough from the side gave me my answer, no matter how little I wished to accept it. Lucy had thanked me for saving Feyra. For defeating the cockatrice that had threatened her friend. For doing what Lucy would not be able to... because even as she turned to stone, she’d thought of others before herself.

“Wha...” Feyra started, then stopped, staring wide eyed at the petrified Heroine beside me. “What did you do?”

“I hesitated,” I told her, my voice flat. Cold. “Something I won’t do again.”

Feyra shuddered when I spoke, though whether at my inflection or my words I did not know. Nor did I care. All that mattered to me was the splattered corpse that now decorated the wall. The corpse of the cockatrice that had turned Lucy to

stone. That I had *allowed* to reach Lucy through my hesitance. If it could petrify her, though, then surely it could *depetrify* as well.

At least, that's what I told myself as I grabbed a feather off the floor and popped it into my mouth, washing it down with a bit of water stolen from the air. Yet even as the genetic material of the monster passed into my gullet, I felt... nothing.

No. Not nothing. There was *something* - an imprint, similar to what I had with Bailey, but... weak. So much weaker than it should have been. Was it the difference between monster girls and monsters? No. Impossible. If that was the case, then nobody would ever be able to get *anything* out of plants, which were the weakest of the three.

Though, speaking of plants... Yes. I recalled something, from Amessa's impromptu lecture upon potion making. That there were certain parts of the plants that were stronger. That contained more magical power. That could be used *better*. I wasn't sure if monsters worked the same, but... it was *something*.

"Feyra."

"*What?!*" the green hair girl all but snarled at me, her face twisted by rage as she tore her eyes from Lucy to glare at me. "You want to kill me, now that

you've taken the Heroine out of the picture? For *good*, maybe, considering she's not even *dead*, just-

"I need you to use your powers," I interrupted. I had no time to listen to her tirade. As much as I might have deserved her anger - albeit not for the reasons she'd claim - I had no way of knowing what was going through Lucy's mind right now. Whether she was awake in there, screaming to move but unable to do so. Whether she was in pain, and suffering. Maybe she was merely asleep. Something to ask her when she was *back*. "I need you to find the parts of the monster that have the most magic."

"Why?" Feyra demanded. "So that you can destroy them? Make sure she'll never come back?"

"If I wanted to ensure she'd never come back, I would break her. Or maybe just take her, and burn this place to ash - it's not like you could stop me. I want to *bring her back*, but the damn chicken feather isn't doing me any good." Whether because monsters concentrated their magic more than monster girls, or because of the researcher's meddling with monsters, I had no way of knowing. Hopefully the former - if it was the latter, there was a chance they'd managed to breed something worthless for potions without even knowing.

“Like I’m going to believe that!” Feyra scoffed. “Even if you *do* want to bring her back, it’s probably just to fuck with her some more, right? Break her heart, then turn her to stone again? Bet you have another of those stupid chicken monsters just waiting somewhere!”

“If that was my goal, then why did I kill the one splattered on the wall?” I queried her before holding up a hand. “No. Stop. I don’t want to hear any more of your warped logic. We both know you can twist anything I say to make me the villain. To make me the one at fault. Maybe you’re even right to do so - it was my hesitation that cost her. My desire to keep my secret safe that allowed all this to happen. My *idiocy* that put us in this position. Yet that won’t stop me from bringing her back. So you can either point out which monster part I need to consume, or you can sit there and entertain yourself while I consume every damn bit of this bird until *something* changes.”

Feyra didn’t respond, at first. She just stared at me, eyes wide, like she’d never seen me before. It wasn’t until Bailey growled in her general direction that she finally replied. “You need to drop your magic first, or I’ll go blind trying to find it.”

“...Right. Of course...” I’d honestly forgotten I was still spreading my magic out. It certainly hadn’t done me any good when it mattered most. Great for holding back annoyances, and yet when a true threat came along... I sighed, shaking my head and allowing my power to disperse. “Done.”

Feyra nodded, and as I watched her eyes began to shift, the pupils elongating like a cat’s as she eyed the room around us. Eventually, she pointed to two distinct parts in the wall - one that looked vaguely like the snake’s head, and another that looked like some sort of... goop. Studying it closely, I thought there was a chance that it was what remained of one of the creature’s eyes. “There and there. Those are the two places I’m getting the strongest energy from.”

I hesitated a moment, between them, before settling on the eye. It was the less tasteful of the two, but if the snake’s poison was what petrified then perhaps the chicken’s eyes were the key to undoing the petrification. Another portion of water was pulled from the moisture in the air, encapsulating the goop and freezing around it to form a perfectly smooth pill.

“Thank you,” I said, popping it into my mouth and swallowing it quickly.

“Not like you gave me much choice,” Feyra muttered, crossing her arms.

“I’m surprised you didn’t outright threaten me, though.”

“As if I would have been able to face Lucy if I had,” I replied, eyeing her stone form. “...I’m going to tell her everything after this.”

“What?” Feyra asked, blinking at me in surprise. Even Bailey looked shocked, or as shocked as she could manage in her lupine form, at least.

“I’m going to tell her everything,” I repeated. “Who I am. What I want. What I can do. Trying to keep secrets almost got her killed today. I won’t let that happen again.”

“You... actually mean that, don’t you?” Feyra whispered. I could hear the incredulity in her voice. “You’re actually worried about her.”

“Of course I am,” I replied, reaching out to touch Lucy’s stone cheek. Her skin was cold to the touch. I tried my best not to compare it to that of a corpse. “I... don’t know if I can claim to love her. I don’t think I’m deserving of such a thing, in any case. But I do care about her, quite a bit. Maybe... more than almost anything else.” The only one who could come close would perhaps be Abigail, who’d been with me since the start of all this.

Closing my eyes, I looked again for that which did not belong inside me - for the imprint of powers that were mine to borrow, if not own. This time I found them. Three, in fact - though two of them were much dimmer than the last, like...

distant stars, compared to the ever present sun. Just as powerful, but much harder to access in a meaningful way. Not that it mattered to me right now. Not when the power I could most easily access was one of softening, one of restoration, from flesh to stone.

I opened my eyes again, aware of a faint glow building behind my irises. Instinctively, I knew that I could focus my gaze on a particular part of Lucy - that I could choose to restore parts of her, rather than the whole. The better to consume her, I assumed, considering the creature that had held this power.

Of course, I was far greedier than that stupid chicken. I wanted *all* of her, and all of her I would have. Already, I could see the coloration returning to her flesh, the pink of her skin and even the red and gold of her armor as flesh, bone, and metal were all restored to their proper states. A deep breath filled her lungs, her smile widened even further, and at last the words I'd read upon her lips spilled out audibly for me to hear-

“Thank you! I knew you could turn me back!”

“Well, that makes one of us.” Though my words came out a grumble, my lips were spread into a smile as I stood before Lucy. A smile at seeing her restored. Knowing she was okay.

Now I could only hope she'd be okay with *me*.

“Lucy,” I whispered. “There’s something I need... no. *Want* to tell you.” I took a deep breath, closing my eyes for another moment to prepare myself, before forcing them open so that I could look Lucy in hers. She deserved my full attention. “I-”

“Lucy already knows the Demon Queen killed her mom!” Feyra blurted out, freezing me in my tracks.

“What...?” I asked, my voice a hoarse whisper. She knew I did *what?*

“Feyra!” Lucy exclaimed, a frown upon her lips, before she turned to me. “Don’t worry, Eena. I already know you’re a high ranking demon, but I’m sure you didn’t have anything to do with that!” She paused, her smile suddenly fragile as she tentatively asked. “You... didn’t, did you?”

“I... No... of course not...” My voice was stiff. Unconvincing, even to my own ears, and yet the look of relief on Lucy’s face spoke volumes. She believed me. She believed me because I said it, and she knew I would not lie. And I *hadn’t* lied. I really had nothing to do with her mother’s death.

That wasn't the point, though. At least, not the point I needed to be focused on. The important bit was... "What do you mean you know I'm a high ranking demon?"

"Well, there's lots of signs," Lucy replied. "Like, you wanting to know about holy magic could only be for the sake of the Demon Queen testing it or something, right? And you're obviously getting food from a demon encampment, somewhere, too! And it would explain why you keep talking about a dark history - she probably gave all sorts of terrible orders, didn't she? But you're trying to make up for it now!"

"I... That's..." Not untrue. I could say that. I could tell her that she was missing details, and leave it at that. I could let things continue as they had been. Let her believe that I was just a high ranking demon. Not forever, of course. Just until I got to the bottom of this whole 'who killed her mother and blamed me' business.

It was *so tempting* to do just that. To let things lie.

Yet how could *I* lie in the same bed as her, knowing she thought I'd killed her mother? How could I face her, knowing that she was only okay with me because she had a misconception about who - if not what - I was?

If I didn't tell her now, then when would I?

"Lucy," I whispered, forcing myself to look her in the eyes. "The Demon Queen didn't kill your mother."

"What...? What do you mean?" Lucy asked. "She was killed by a demon assassin!"

"A demon? Perhaps," I admitted, as much as I didn't want to. "The Demon Queen doesn't have total reign over them, so I can't rule that out. Especially when these... *people* succeeded in home brewing their own monster girls. Bailey's proof enough of that." Lucy's eyes widened at the revelation, but I didn't stop talking. I couldn't stop. "The truth is, I don't know enough to say what really happened to your mother. I don't know who killed her, or why. But I can tell you here and now that it wasn't the Demon Queen."

"How do you know?" Lucy asked, obviously bewildered.

I managed a weak smile. "Because she's me."

Silence followed as Lucy stared at me, eyes wide. I was distantly aware of Feyra groaning and putting her hands on her face. Of Bailey's head swiveling between the two of us. My focus was only on Lucy, though. On Lucy's eyes, as they stared into mine. I took a step towards her -

Her hand went towards her sword.

Lucy

The moment I reached for my sword, I knew I'd made a mistake. I mean, yes, Eena had just told me she was the Demon Queen... the embodiment of all sin I was born to fight. The one I'd always believed to be my mother's killer. The ultimate force of evil in this world!

But she was also still *Eena*. Still the girl who kept doing good, despite refusing to believe that she could *be* good. Who'd paid Feyra three saints just to show her around town, so that she could get out of debt. Who'd helped a town just for potatoes - though maybe that one wasn't entirely selfless, since she really did seem to love potatoes? But still! She was *Eena*. The girl who fed foxes and said weirdly ominous lines without realizing it! Who needed to be hugged and

convinced she was a good girl, because she never seemed to believe it. The girl I was falling for.

What really drove it home, though, were her tears. That, and the look of self-hatred and *rejection* in her eyes when my hand touched my sword. The sword which... was sort of taken from her, if the church was to be believed? Except that didn't make sense. Eena was around my age! Or at least she seemed to be? I mean, the church said she was basically just reborn continuously every time the Demon Queen died, but she'd talked about having a childhood friend, and she'd mentioned her mother, and...

...Oh. The sword... was her mother's? I was threatening her with her mother's sword?

"I'm sorry Eena!" I cried out, snatching my hand away from the blade. "I shouldn't have reached for my... for the sword like that. I was scared, but that's not a good excuse! I mean, you could have hurt me any time if you really wanted to... But you never did. Because you never wanted to! Because you're trying to do better, right? Even if... even if you have done a lot of terrible things..."

What sort of terrible things, though? Was it really on the level that the church taught? If she wasn't really reborn again and again, that would mean it was

her mom, and her mom's mom, and her mom's mom's mom, and so on that did all those things I was thinking about. I mean, there hadn't even really been any fighting between humans and demons for as long as I'd been alive, what with all the demons living in a tower within the wastelands...

Also, was it just me, or was Eena kind of silent? Or... no. Not silent, just sort of muttering to herself? Muttering some really concerning things!

"Of course it ended up like this," she muttered. "Of course it did. How else could it have ended? There's no way you'd believe me. Not when I'd spent so long telling you how terrible I am. Not when you *know* how terrible I am. Because you do know, even if it's for the wrong reasons... even if the church's stories are wrong, for example, it doesn't change the fact that I messed up. The fact that I let you be hurt. The fact that I kept you in the dark... slept with you, all while you thought I was your mother's killer..."

"Um... Eena?"

"I should go," she said, looking up at me. "I should... I should give you some alone time. Or... I can stick around long enough to keep the monsters off you, if you'd like, and then go? Or maybe I should just have you wait an hour or

two while I kill everything dangerous in the woods, so that nothing can harm you, and then you can leave without me.”

Okay, that last bit was *really* concerning! More importantly, though... “I don’t want you to go!”

She blinked. “Why not? I’m... I...”

“Because you’re my friend, who I like a whole lot! And maybe am falling for more than a bit? Though some part of me worries we might need to take a break from sleeping together for a little while until I sort some things out... like. Are you really the embodiment of sin? And do you... have tentacles I don’t know about? Or was that just a rumor?”

“...No, I do not have tentacles,” Eena said. “Of course I don’t have tentacles. What is with humans and thinking I have tentacles?! And I’m not the embodiment of sin, either! I’m just a twenty-one year old girl. Born to a mother who loved me, just like you. Except mine was taken at birth, by...” She trailed off, looking away from me, but I already knew what she was going to say.

Her mom was taken away by the Heroine before me.

“Eena-”

“My name is *Devilla*. Not Eena. Devilla Satanne. Demon Queen extraordinaire. Your sworn enemy, according to the church - and yet, I thought that I could somehow change that... That I could make you my *friend*. An ally. That we could bring peace between us...”

“We can!” I protested. “I mean, I think we can? We can try, anyway! I actually really love that idea!”

“...But you think I killed your mother,” she whispered, seeming confused. “You... you reached for your sword...”

“I got scared! And I’m really sorry for it, but... I was always told the Demon Queen was evil! But you’re *not* evil!”

“How can you be so sure?” Eena - Devilla? - demanded. “How do you know I’m not just... fucking with you, as Feyra put it? Playing with your heart?”

“Because you wouldn’t have said so if you were!” I declared. “And because Feyra’s kinda been mumbling ‘just kiss her already’ for a bit, now. I think we might have broken her?”

“K-kiss?!” Devilla stuttered. Her cheeks turned bright red. “That’s... I mean... it’s a bit early in our... I mean, we’re not even officially dating yet, so...”

“See?” I grinned. “There’s no way you’re evil! Even if you are the Demon Queen. Evil wouldn’t blush so cutely!”

“I’m... pretty sure that’s not... I mean...” She blushed even more. “Why do you always call me cute?”

“Because you are?” I grinned, stepping forward to wrap my arms around her. “Very cute. My really, really cute... friend? Or, well, not girlfriend, but...”

“I mean... I... Guess I could be your... I mean, if you wanted me, even now that you... know, then...”

Less than a minute ago, I’d been thinking we might need a break to sort things out, but now... “...My girlfriend is so cute when she blushes!”

There was no response from Devilla. It was instead Feyra who muttered, “I think you might just become the first Heroine to kill a Demon Queen through *blushing*.”

I wanted to disagree... but... maybe it was best to lay off for a little? Just until Devilla came back to her senses!