

Demon Queened

Chapter 53

Written by Princess Kay

Devilla

Lucy's lips were warm. Warm, soft, and sweet. It was all that I could think about as we flew back to the inn. My first kiss, discounting the time I'd brazenly stolen Abigail's lips during sex. That had been 'during sex,' though, so it didn't quite count. No... as far as my true first kiss went, I'd pledged it and my commitment both to Lucy. Told her that I would be here, next to her, for as long as she would have me.

That's what a kiss meant - at least to me. To demons in general, really, if the stories I'd read and the gossip I'd overhead was anything to go off of. It was a commitment. Not on the level of a wedding ring, by any means, but it was essentially the first step towards that path. If I had to quantify it... half a step before 'I love you'? A declaration that you were at least starting to fall for someone. That if things continued the way they were going, you'd be happy to stay with her forevermore.

That was why I'd been so nervous about giving Lucy my first... but seeing her so vulnerable, so in need... Well. It wasn't as if I'd ever intended to abandon

her. Rather, I'd always been convinced - was *still* convinced, really - that she'd be the one to tire of me, long before I'd even have the chance. Yet from now, until the day she left me, I wanted her to know that I'd be there for her. That I cared for her. That I *was* falling for her - and hard, at that.

It was a rather all-consuming thought. Which was why I could hardly focus on Lucy in the present - why my mind kept drifting back to that oh-so-sweet kiss, even as she read the church's response to her missive.

"They.... want to meet you?"

At least until she said *that*.

"They *what?*" I asked, aware I was gawking at her in surprise but hardly capable of doing more than gaping at her.

"I mean, they don't really say that," Lucy informed me, before handing the letter over. "But they make a point of mentioning rumors about me picking up a companion? And they want me to come to the holy capital personally to pick up the spell. They say it's because writing holy words on a plain letter would be sacrilegious, but... I'm pretty sure that's just an excuse to get us over there."

"You sound almost disillusioned with them," I remarked, blinking from surprise. "I thought you more the sort to take things at face value..."

“Well, I like to!” Lucy confirmed, with a smile. “I mean, I’d rather believe someone and be wrong than not believe someone when they really need my help... but that only lasts until I know for sure they’re lying to me, you know? And the church... I mean, I do think most people in the clergy mean well, but... a lot of the higher ups get involved in politics, and stuff. If someone sent them a letter about me being all close to you, then they’ll probably want to talk to me about it...”

I let out a noncommittal grunt, too focused on the letter to immediately respond. There was nothing particularly egregious written in it. A flowery greeting, followed by talk of her escapades reaching the church, and a ‘rumor’ about her ‘growing close’ to an ‘unknown highborn.’ Only the last paragraph actually mentioned her request for the depetrification spell, and even then it read almost as an afterthought. Clearly an attempt to bring her into their territory.

“What do you wish to do about it?” I inquired, arching an eyebrow.

“Well, I’d like to go,” Lucy confessed, frowning. “I mean, I have a lot of questions, and I think the holy capital might have answers! But what about you? I could probably get the spell even if you don’t come... I mean, it is sort of enemy territory for you, isn’t it?”

“And in what world would I let my girlfriend go into enemy territory undefended?” I demanded, giving her a frown of my own. “You might be on their side, for the moment, but I don’t want to imagine what sort of reaction they’d have if they somehow found out my identity...”

“I’m pretty good at protecting myself, Eena,” Lucy countered, actually sounding a little annoyed. Any trace of that annoyance disappeared a moment later, though, when she gave me a bright smile. “I’m really glad you care, though! And there’s a lot of places I’d love to show you!”

“Then it sounds like our next destination is set,” I declared, privately relieved that I hadn’t upset Lucy too much. I *was* likely being overprotective... but at the same time, if anything were to befall Lucy due to my own cowardice, my own unwillingness to step into that enemy territory - even knowing nobody there could harm me... The very thought of it sent chills down my spine. “It shouldn’t take us long at all to reach there, going at full speed...”

“About that,” Lucy murmured, curling a strand of red hair about her fingers. “I think you might actually be *too* fast. I mean, I can get anywhere pretty quickly, if I run at top speed, but your flying is a bit... no, *way* faster than anything I can manage! There’d definitely be questions if we went there at full speed!”

“I suppose that is true,” I conceded, running a hand through my own hair. I was in a bit of a hurry to get the depetrification spell, what with Sylvanna’s time limit taking up space in the back of my mind, but... well, making the church suspicious of Lucy in any way would be akin to putting the cart before the horse. “It would seem we have little choice but to take things at a slower pace, then...”

“Well, actually...” Lucy hesitated. “I was thinking that maybe we could take a detour? There’s a place I really want to show you! And as long as we don’t raise too much of a ruckus, the church won’t send a letter to alert the holy city, so as far as they’ll know any time we spend there is just time we spent traveling!”

Her plan made sense - at least so long as she was right about the church only reporting her presence if she made a ruckus. Honestly, I wasn’t entirely confident in our ability to *not* cause a ruckus, but if Lucy thought it would help...

“Is it at least somewhat on the way to the church?”

“In the same general direction!” Lucy confirmed. “Though it’s not the most direct route, I guess... If you really want to hurry, we can? I do want to show you this place when we can, though!”

“What sort of place...” *is it*. Those were the words I meant to speak, and yet they never left my lips, for even as I began to say them I heard *it*. A *squeak*. My

eyes darted around, seeking out its source, but there was nothing. Yet I heard it again - another squeak, coming from the direction of the wall.

It could have been a chair, moved improperly. Or a mouse, for that matter, happily squealing over a bit of cheese. Neither would bother me, even if the latter did seem slightly unhygienic. Yet if it was what I feared... if it was what I *dreaded*...

Straining my ears, I could hear something suspiciously like *scurrying*.

“I have to get out of here,” I whispered.

“Eena? Is something wrong?”

I nodded, eyes flicking to Lucy. I couldn’t just leave her here, with that... that *thing*. Even if I knew it likely wouldn’t be able to hurt her. Its teeth probably couldn’t even pierce her flesh. Assuming it was even real, to begin with. Yet...

“*We* need to get out of here,” I corrected myself. “This place might have rats.”

“I mean... maybe?” Lucy agreed, frowning. “The inn probably has cats to deal with them, though!”

“You don’t understand, Lucy... If I see a rat, I... I’m not convinced of my ability to control myself. I might very well do something I’ll regret...” Like burn this place to cinders.

“Do you hate rats that much?” Lucy asked, her eyes wide with innocent curiosity - and perhaps a touch of worry.

More than a touch, actually. Which was fair, considering the fact that I was practically trembling. “Hate them? No. That, I could at least attempt to suppress... I *fear* them, Lucy. With a terror as deep as it is irrational. The last time I saw one... the mere *touch of it* across my foot... it caused me to black out. And that was likely one of the *better* resolutions that could have resulted from such a thing. I’m honestly just glad I didn’t blow up Lissera’s house...”

“It’s that bad?” Lucy asked, her eyes wide now as understanding began to dawn. As she began to realize the troubles I could bring upon this inn, should a rat appear within this room. “...I’ll tell the innkeeper that we’re checking out in the morning. And I’ll do a really thorough sweep of the room for rats! Maybe you should spend the night at the tower while I do that, though?”

I hesitated a moment, reluctant to let Lucy face this threat on her own - as unthreatening as it may have been to her. Another little *squeak* made up my mind

for me, though, as I soon nodded. “Just make sure not to move the teleportation circle, or put anything on it,” I warned her. “That’s all that it’ll take to keep me from teleporting straight back.”

“Got it!” she agreed, as I took the teleportation circle in question out from my Empty Bag and placed it in a corner of the room. Quickly feeding it with my holy magic, I closed my eyes and focused on the circle’s twin, safely located in my tower room.

When I opened my eyes again, I was there - in my nice, safe, rat-free tower room - faced with Abigail, who was currently holding a forkful of eggs and gawking at my sudden appearance.

The only thing I could think to say?

“...Isn’t it a little too late at night to be eating breakfast?”

Abigail

So, there I was, bored out of my skull after another day of doing nothing in Devilla's absence - seriously, I almost considered actually asking the other maids if they needed help cleaning anything - when suddenly Devilla was there. Judging my choice of late night snack.

"...The kitchen was closed, alright? And eggs are really simple to make." Not that I couldn't have made anything more complex, but... come on, it was a late night snack! And I *liked* eggs!

"...Right," Devilla muttered, clearly judging me a little but too polite to say anything about it.

Which was just... "Ugh. You're worse than Mom. Can't a girl enjoy her choice of bedtime snacks in peace?"

"Sorry," Devilla replied, looking a little flustered. Then she paused. "Wait... why in the world are you having a late time snack in *my* room? Aren't you usually home by now?"

"Usually, yeah, but Mom's got company over tonight and that gets... loud. *Annoyingly* so. And a little icky? I mean, some of the lust always ends up wafting my way, and I *really* don't wanna get my Mom's leftovers."

Even if I was feeling more hungry for lust than regular food, anyways... I'd been spending way too much time in Devilla's room of late, and not nearly enough time soaking up some lust at the brothel. Devilla hadn't exactly been keeping up with her promise to feed me, either - not that I blamed her, with how busy she was... and besides, her lust never was *weird*. Tasty, but weird - it never seemed to fill me up the way it should. Not that I wouldn't feel full in the moment, but an hour later...? Yeah. The only exception had been when she was going at it with Mifa, but even then it was more like the harpy general was pulling her weight and then some... Maybe it had something to do with the whole 'angel' thing? Like even her lust was different than everyone else's.

"I see," Devilla murmured, blissfully unaware of everything going through my mind. "So you came here... Well, I won't say that you aren't welcome - but I *should* mention that I'm planning to spend the night."

"That mean you're actually going to feed me again?" I asked, arching an eyebrow. Mostly just to see her squirm, a little. It was kinda... cute. The way her cheeks flushed red.

"Right... I've been rather lackluster in terms of that responsibility, haven't I?"

“It’s fine,” I promised her. “I never intended to rely on you for all my lust, anyway.”

“Still,” Devilla pressed, “if you wish for me to fulfill my duties in bed-”

“Thanks, but no thanks,” I interrupted. “At least not if you’re going to refer to it as a *duty* anyhow. I prefer my bedmates to be a *bit* more appreciative, you know?”

“That’s... I didn’t mean to imply... I mean...”

A small smile tugged at my lips. It was sort of... fun to tease Devilla like this. For all her power, political, physical and magical alike, she was so quick to turn into a flustered mess when you pushed her buttons just right. “It’s fine, Devilla. Seriously. You’ve been busy.”

“Business is a poor excuse for ignoring someone so dear to my heart,” Devilla protested, and suddenly it was *my* turn to fight off a blush.

Where the hell did she get off spouting lines like that?

“Dear to your heart, huh?” I teased, determined to get the upper hand. “Bold words from someone who’s only known me for a couple weeks... I know we’re friends, and all, but are you sure you wouldn’t be saying this exact same thing if it had been another maid in my spot, after the coronation?”

“Perhaps,” Devilla confirmed - and to my surprise, the words sent a stinging pain through my heart. Then she continued. “But it wasn’t just any maid who appeared next to me, in that state. It was you. By fate or by fortune, it was you who stood by me, both physically and metaphorically as time went by. You who kept me from giving up on myself, and simply shoving this mess onto the shoulders of others. You, who made me believe it possible that I could make a difference... who made me think I could, perhaps, at least by some, be forgiven, no matter how little I deserve it. So while it’s certainly possible that another maid could have wormed her way into my heart, I must say all the same - I’m glad it was you.”

“Y-yeah, well... Sappy much?” I grumbled, shoving another bite of egg into my mouth and trying *really* hard not to blush. “What are you even here for, anyway? I thought Lucy was keeping your nights busy.”

“She was,” Devilla confirmed, with a nod. Again, there was that sharp pain in my chest, but I pushed it away. I had an unsettling suspicion as to what it might mean, but... well, now wasn’t really the time to delve into all that. “I... had to leave her for the night. The inn was... *possibly*... infested. With rats.”

“With rats?” I questioned, hardly able to believe my ears. I mean... rats...?
“As in the small rodent that squeaks?”

“Y-you know what they are?” Devilla asked, seemingly surprised. “You... we... the tower doesn’t have them, does it?”

“No,” I said, shaking my head. “But we *do* have rat girls.”

“Rat *girls* I can deal with,” Devilla announced, letting out a sigh of relief.

“But *rats*... *actual* rats.... They terrify me, to be honest...”

“Wait,” I said, holding up a hand. “Wait, wait, wait.... You’re afraid.... Of *rats*? You? The most powerful person on the planet?”

“Laugh if you must,” she grumbled, “but it’s a relic of my past life that I can’t seem to shake. Perhaps because I never had any strong feelings about rats, one way or another, in this world... or indeed, any interactions with them. That lack of feeling was vulnerable to being overwritten.”

“Right... I’ll just pretend that makes sense to me, then,” I declared, with a shrug, before popping another bite of egg in my mouth. “Well, this place is rat-free, at least. Your room *especially*, probably, seeing as how it’s got all those fancy protections on it. You know, like the whole being ‘*spy proof*’ thing?”

“Ah...” And we were back to flustered Devilla! Which was just the way things should be - me, calm and delivered with my nearly-emptied plate of eggs, and her shifting from foot to foot with a very red face. “I suppose I still need to

properly apologize for that... I swear, I wasn't aware the room had such a feature. Much of what the tower can do has caught me off guard, actually... it makes me wonder how the whole thing is powered."

"By magic?" I suggested, rolling my eyes. "I mean, it seems pretty obvious to *me* anyways."

"Well, yes, but... how?" Devilla asked. "How does the tower have such a supply of holy magic? How have things kept running for two thousand years? Just how much power is packed into these stone walls? And how much of it is *left*?"

"You'd have to ask your ancestor," I pointed out, with a shrug. Honestly, I didn't really want to think about the tower running *out*. I didn't think it would be a good day for anyone if that sorta thing happened. But it hadn't happened so far, and it wasn't like there was anything I could do to change things if it did, so...

"I think I missed my chance for that when I messed up the Rite," Devilla sighed, settling down on the bed beside me. "Not that I'm terribly upset about how that all ended up... it most certainly saved my life, and hopefully helped to better the lives of others as well. But at the same time..."

“Yeah. It sucks to imagine - two thousand years of history coming to a halt because we ran out of *power*... But there’s not exactly much point in worrying about what you can’t change, you know?”

“I suppose...” Devilla murmured, sighing again.

I shifted a little, bumping my shoulder against hers. “Come on. It’s lasted two thousand years without anything going wrong. It’ll be fine for another year or two, while you resolve things with Lucy.”

“And if it isn’t?” Devilla questioned me, turning to look at me with eyes full of... something. Yearning, maybe? For comfort, specifically. For someone to tell her that it would be okay.

Lately that had been Lucy’s job. Lucy wasn’t here, though, so... I put an arm around her.

“Then we’ll face it together,” I said, with more confidence than I felt. “Now come on. Let’s get some sleep.”

“Together?” Devilla asked, a teasing smirk on her lips. “I thought you were opposed to us bedding one another tonight.”

“Not opposed,” I corrected, putting my plate on the nightstand. “Just not that interested. Maybe in the morning...”

“In the morning,” Devilla confirmed, clearly deciding not to give it any more thought as she began to shuck her clothing, starting with the heels and moving onto her shirt, skirt, and underwear.

She really *was* gorgeous, underneath it all. With her white hair cascading down her back, a few strands falling against her breasts, as if trying to draw attention to the pert little nipples - one of which was currently peeking between two strands.

Before I knew what I was doing, I’d already leaned down to place a kiss on it.

“Goodnight,” I murmured, turning my face away from Devilla so she wouldn’t see that my cheeks were aflame.

“...Goodnight,” she repeated, apparently deciding to shrug the action off as she laid down. Maybe she just thought it was a succubus thing... either way, it didn’t seem to bug her for long, since she was asleep just half a moment later.

Me? I was up for a while longer than that. Just thinking about those pangs of pain in my heart, and what they might mean...

It was best not to worry about things one couldn't do anything about, though. Devilla was already with Lucy, and while she might have been willing to share... I wasn't sure if I was... Not with the *Heroine*, of all people.

Maybe... Maybe me and her could have a talk about it at some point, though.

Maybe.