

## Chapter 75: Renewed Pledge

After the conversation with Leonn, Mirae wanted to get their Essence coefficient measured, and while they did, Lysette took a few more minutes in the small office to recover her stamina before leaving. It was about an hour before noon when they finally departed, and about a half hour's journey back to the Academy.

The bulk of the time, of course, was spent waiting on the next carriage to arrive to head back to the floating city. If Nightshade were back, and if Lysette weren't with Mirae, she could have just flown back with her familiar in shadow form, something which was becoming increasingly more tempting every time the demigoddess had to suffer the fee and inconvenience of the ride up to the city.

And to make the inconvenience of waiting so many unnecessary minutes worse, Lysette was growing increasingly convinced that the operators of the service were subtly adjusting the size and shape of the carriages to ensure that the passengers had to be crammed as packed as physically possible, no matter the number that were boarding on any given trip. Unfortunately, private carriage rides started in the five to ten gold range, and that much money was definitely better spent procuring the resources to propel Mirae on their path to godhood.

“Have you thought about what you're going to do the rest of the day?” Mirae said. “I know you want us to leave early tomorrow morning, but we still have all afternoon and evening, and I suppose you have the night as well.”

“Well, the night will be spent cuddling with you while I Cultivate and start working on bolstering my followers. I took a lot from them to defeat the inquisitors during the blood moon, and I owe it to them to repay that gift. But before that, I have some custards with my name on them.”

Mirae laughed. “Going on a dangerous mission and you still have time to think about getting a couple of your custards before we leave. I’m glad to see you feeling better, love.”

“Thanks, Mirae. And also, I want to be seen around on campus a little bit.”

“Says the woman who loves lurking in the shadows.”

Lysette wrapped an arm around Mirae’s waist. “I do, yes. But I also need to be seen as at least a little approachable in public. Good for building my number of believers. Pretty important for a young demigoddess to defy the current gods in power, after all.”

“As if you have anything to worry about on that end. You must have hundreds by now.”

“I do, yes. But that’s hardly enough to sate the Ambition that lurks within me.”

“I feel that Ambition too. And more strongly than before. But it is a little difficult for me to wrap my puny mortal mind around it all. A month ago, I was just an ordinary Cultivator starting their second year at the Academy. Nondescript, no real accomplishments or repute for good or ill. I would have likely joined the Royal Army and gone off to fight in some war or another. Maybe even the one that seems like it just started, if it dragged out for the next two years.

“But now I’ve got a goddess’s arm wrapped around me and I’m instead getting involved not in a war between the nations of mortals, but the war of the gods themselves. And it’s all happening so fast.”

Lysette gave Mirae a quick peck on the cheek. “I’ve seen that beautiful mind of yours, Mirae. And I don’t think it’s anywhere near so puny as you say it is. Or that you’re as mortal as you think you are. You already have two seeds of divinity within you. We only need you to get strong enough to germinate them.”

“You make it sound so simple.”

“Simple, yes. But simple doesn’t always mean easy. It’s simple to declare vengeance against a primordial god. That doesn’t mean it’s easy to carry that out.”

Mirae laughed again as the two walked into the cafeteria. In contrast to the rest of campus, which was still quiet and covered in a shroud of grief and mourning, the cafeteria was filled more than Lysette had ever seen. Nearly six hundred students by her quick count, and nary an empty table or booth in sight. Some students were standing up waiting for an available table. Others were cramming seats in or even conjuring their own out of stone or ice. And others, not content to wait, simply sat on the floor. *I’ll definitely be seen plenty here.*

Lysette and Mirae split up for a brief moment while each gathered their respective food. With her aura flared out, Lysette watched as Mirae gathered a heaping portion of chicken and tomato salad, along with a sweet roll and a bowl of pineapple chunks. Meanwhile, Lysette gathered a rich array of meats, cheeses, and a few of the garlic-infused mushrooms that she was also growing fond of. Along with two lemon custards— one advantage of being a Godslayer was that she could eat as she liked or didn’t without it affecting her figure.

*Just how malleable is my physical body, anyway?* She recalled a month ago during her first Cultivation session that she had managed to manipulate her appearance while modifying the foundation of her Divine Tree. Her body had grown lighter, taller, and more slender, better conforming to the heightened dexterity she had chosen as part of her Cultivation path. And despite sometimes devouring like kudzu and sometimes not eating at all, it hadn’t changed at all since. And thoughts followed of how she’d like her body to look. As well as what Mirae would think and like.

Lysette scanned around for a table in the crowded dining hall, but before she could find a spare table or even enough space for her and Mirae to sit together, someone called out to her.

*“Lyse, is that you?”*

It was Kristil’s voice being projected into her mind. Lysette nodded and smiled as she looked around for its source. She was happy to hear a friendly voice, especially because she’d not had the opportunity to thank her and her brother properly after the events of the blood moon. A subtle wave in her direction among the cacophony of gestures and voices pulled her attention, and Lysette nodded as she approached.

Kristil and her brother Nicholas were seated together in a small booth along with another two students Lysette didn’t recognize. If she had to guess, they were both part of the group the two siblings had started, looking to devise a plan of action to get the noble scions to stop mistreating the commoner students. Lysette herself had been formally invited to the group a couple weeks ago, but declined to formally associate, instead offering to help foster their progression as Cultivators with her godly abilities.

After the events of the blood moon though, she was contemplating what to do regarding the rift between the nobles and the commoners. She still wasn’t nearly strong enough to face the heads of the noble houses in open warfare. But that day would come, and not soon enough.

“It’s good to see you again!” Kristil said. “Here, we’ll scoot over and make some space.”

“Can one of you all move to the other side?” Lysette asked the two students she didn’t recognize. “I’m going to have one more person joining me as soon as they finish getting their food.”

“Sure thing,” the one closer to Lysette said. “Lexi, by the way. And this is my boyfriend, Sal. Oh, and you don’t need to worry about introducing yourself, Lyse. We all know about you and your heroism.”

“Heroism? I wouldn’t really say I’m a hero. Just someone who’s willing to use the strength I’ve been given to defend the people I care about. And make sure those who try to hurt them don’t have another chance to repeat the folly of their ways.”

The five of them shuffled around, with Kristil eventually deciding to switch sides and sit by Lexi, who was sandwiched in tightly between her and Sal. That left Nicolas sitting next to the wall on the other side of the booth, and as soon as Lysette was preparing to sit down, Mirae arrived, and the six tried to make themselves comfortable at the table made for four.

“I suppose I should introduce Mirae. They are a second-year here, an Ice-Cultivator, and, most importantly, my partner.” *And many other things as well.*

“I didn’t realize you had time to be seeing someone,” Kristil said. “I hope you two are happy together.”

Mirae leaned in and kissed Lysette’s cheek. “We are.”

“Anyway,” Lysette said. “Nicholas, Kristil, I wanted to thank the two of you. And everyone else who came to our aid during the blood moon. As far as I’m concerned, you’re the real heroes who saved all our lives.”

“Us... saving you?” Nicholas asked. “I must’ve hit my head the other day. Because I distinctly remember you were the one going around and slaughtering all the soldiers attacking the Academy.”

Lysette shook her head. “Not me. All of us. If not for you two, Mirae, Serrena, and everyone else there, we collectively would have all perished that night. We all did our part to win that battle.”

“Now then,” Kristil said. “I don’t suppose you’d be willing to change your earlier answer to what we’d talked about at our meeting a couple weeks ago?”

“My direct answer is the same as it was, but I’m increasingly agreeing with you about the end results you seek. However, I still don’t think that any direct action is wise at this point.”

Lysette paused for a moment and lowered her voice to a whisper. “I had the displeasure of running into Marquess Dozel himself the day after I met the two of you, and I can tell you right now that if the two of us came to blows, I would be dead before the fight even began.”

“Even as you are?” Lexi said.

Lysette nodded. “Also—” She trailed off, turning to Kristil and tapping her finger against her forehead.

*“Something you don’t want to say out loud?”*

*“How is your progress coming along as a Cultivator?”*

*“That’s an odd question to ask. It seems fine. Why do you ask?”*

*“No major improvements in the last couple of weeks?”*

*“It’s been an improvement for sure, but not anything substantial. Why do you ask?”*

*“I did say I would help you all with your Cultivation did I not? That if you believed I could help you, that I’d do what I could.”*

*“I mean, I can’t help but believe that you have wild powers I could never understand. Especially after seeing just some of what you’re capable of.”*

*“And I want to help you all as well. But we’ll all have to operate in the shadows, continue to advance as Cultivators and bear the maltreatment of society in the interim.”*

*“And if it will help convince you of both my sincerity and my ability to fulfill my promise, my love has already made significant strides in their Cultivation just in the past two weeks. In fact, earlier today, they just had their Essence coefficient remeasured. At slightly more than six hundred and fifty.”*

*“Six hundred fifty for an underclassman? Even some graduates test lower than that.”*

Lysette smirked as she wrapped her arm around Mirae’s waist. *“Believe it. And if you sincerely want to help me upend this twisted society, I would gladly lend my support to you as well.”*

*“Upend this society?”*

*“Gods who feast upon mortals like wild hogs trampling the land underfoot. Kings and nobles content to enjoy great power, longevity, convenience, and opulence, all while robbing the rest of society of those same gifts. Arrogant young masters who treat us like dirt, demanding we kowtow and worship the ground upon which they stand. These things and more, I wish to cast down, and in its place, a new society based upon Reciprocity and common cause build.”*

*“Such lofty ambitions.”*

*“That and no less is my Ambition. Will you help guide Aimarion down that path?”*

*“If you truly think you can accomplish that task, then yes, I will gladly support you in this endeavor. We all will.”*