

Demon Queened

Chapter 26

Written by Princess Kay
Proofread by FallingLeaf

Lucy

“Are you sure she’s coming?” Eff - or rather *Feyra*, since we were in public and all - asked.

She’d actually asked me that a few times already, but I really didn’t mind. She was speaking to me in public, after all! And I was about to introduce my friend to her! In public! I mean, sure, Feyra still didn’t want everyone to know we were friends, but we were being seen together! Publicly! Like friends! Or at least like guild mates who didn’t have to pretend to have never seen one another before!

“Heroine?”

“H-huh?” What did she ask again...? Right! “Yes, I’m sure! We didn’t really set a specific time, but she’ll definitely come! Eena would never stand me up!”

Feyra flinched. Maybe because I’d said Eena’s full name? But we were in public, so I was pretty sure it would stand out more if I didn’t.

“Lucy!” a familiar voice called out to me, causing my head to snap around so quickly that I think it might have even generated a breeze! My hair definitely went flying, anyway. But that didn’t matter, because I could see a familiar figure walking down the street towards me!

“Eena!” I called back, launching myself at her. Like before, I basically tackled her - and, like before, she absorbed the impact, only needing to take a

single step back. It was actually really impressive! I mean, I was wearing armor and everything! If anyone could handle me at full speed, though, it was Eena!

And maybe other demons, too? Something I'd have to consider... a different time! Right now, I was hugging Eena. Who actually relaxed into it, this time, and put her arms around me! It was so warm!

Not that I could really feel it, through the armor, but the sentiment definitely got through. The knowledge that she cared, and was making an effort for me, even though she wasn't used to this. Just knowing that my affection was getting through to her made me feel all warm and tingly inside!

"My apologies for the wait," she said. "There was... an unexpected obstacle."

The way she said that, there was totally something she didn't want to tell me. "That's fine! You're here now, aren't you? And I knew you would be!"

"Of course I am," she said, putting a hand on her chest. "I swore I'd return, did I not?"

I wondered if Eena knew how dramatic that sounded. Probably not? She seemed to have a pretty big blind spot with that stuff! "I never doubted it for an instant, I'm just excited to be reunited again! Even though it's only been a short while... I guess that's what happens when there's someone you like being with all the time?"

Was this what it felt like to fall for someone? Feyra called it a ‘crush,’ - not love, but something that sort of mimicked it - and she was probably right. I didn’t think that was a bad thing, though! Maybe it was just infatuation right now, but that didn’t mean it would stay that way! With the passage of time, and the nurturing nature of her caring presence, I was sure it would blossom into something wonderful!

“I think it’s a bit early to make comments like that,” Eena replied. “You do realize you’ve hardly spent any time with me at all, in the grand scheme of things?”

“I know. But that just means we need to spend more time together, right?”

No matter what my feelings were rightly called, I knew the feeling in my heart right then was happiness! I mean, I know she was sort of trying to shut me down, but that was definitely Eena’s way of worrying about me, right? Even though she needed something from me, she didn’t want to take advantage of me. And not just because she was worried about sinning against the Heroine, either!

Of course, it *did* hurt to think about how she probably thought my feelings would turn to hatred, but time would surely change that as well!

“Oh right! I went to the guild to look for quests while you were gone, and I think I found something? Something I really want to do, and which I hope you’ll do with me! It would help a lot of people, while also proving your strength to

everyone in the guild, and maybe even helping someone else find their place! But before I get into that, did you take care of everything you needed to do?”

“Did you seriously just present me with a crusade of justice and friendship as if it were a casual aside?” Eena asked me. She sounded exasperated, but I saw the little smile tugging at the corner of her lips! “You can’t possibly think it’s okay to simply turn the subject to my business after that, can you?”

“Of course it’s okay!” I replied, putting one hand on my hip and pointing a finger at her with the other. It was the same sort of thing Father Tuffel did when he wanted me to take something seriously. “Listen, Eena! The importance of my mission doesn’t take away from the importance of yours! I can’t ask you to listen to my requests without at least checking to see if you need more time for yours!”

“...I wish I could say that you’re overestimating the matters I had to deal with, but I suppose I’ll settle for a ‘thank you’ for the consideration. Still, if this request is so important to you, I’d rather discuss it in full. Especially if it has something to do with why that girl - Feyra, I believe? - has gone from staring at us with wide eyes to staring into the void with the deadened gaze of one who has lost her soul. I originally assumed she was simply shocked to realize I knew you, but the shift in her condition has given rise to some concern.”

“You know Feyra?” I asked, turning back to look at my not-technically-a-friend. She really did look kinda bad! Maybe she used her Magic

Sight to see how strong my adventuring companion was? I didn't know for *sure* how much magic power Eena had, but the simple fact that she'd spent three days unconscious after running through her capacity told me she had a *lot!* More than should be possible for a human, surely. If Feyra had already realized that Eena was probably a demon as a result, then I'd definitely need to have a discussion with her about keeping that to herself!

“She was the guide I mentioned to you when we were at Wilhoon's stall,” Eena explained. “The one I paid in saints.”

Really!?! I totally wanted to tell Eena she was also the one who introduced me to Wilhoon's stand, in the first place! Too bad I still wasn't supposed to tell anyone how well me and Feyra knew each other. Also, she liked to keep her connection to Wilhoon quiet. Since her cousin's bloodline curse hadn't manifested like hers had, he was able to live a pretty normal life as long as she stayed away. Which was pretty messed up, actually, but this wasn't the time to be thinking about that!

“Feyra?” I called out. “Are you okay? Do you need some water? I can conjure some!”

“I-I'm fine,” Feyra said, shaking her head from side to side so fast I was actually sort of worried her neck might snap! “S-so this is the one you want to g-go off into the woods with? *Alone?*”

“Well, I did want to bring you for the first mission,” I reminded her. Though traveling alone with Eena, knowing there was nobody around for miles to hear us, did sound pretty nice. There was no way I could do this mission without Feyra, though! And helping people came before sexy times!

Also, Feyra already knew we were sleeping together, so I’d just need to make sure I found a tent big enough for two people to fit in it!

“Right... Me... And her... In close proximity...”

“Do you perhaps have issues with highborn?” Eena asked, frowning. “I’m told my appearance and choice of words gives off a certain impression that some might find... off-putting.” She smiled at that, but it wasn’t a *nice* smile. It was weak, and sad, and full of pain. A smile that said that things were wrong and that the wrongness was *okay*. Probably because she thought it was only wrong for her.

“Let me have a quick talk with her,” I said, instead of answering, before reaching out to grab Eena’s hand. “Whatever issues she has, I’ll go over them with her. And if she doesn’t want to come with us at the end of it, then we’ll figure out a way to do this without her, okay?”

“I wouldn’t want you to-”

“I *do* want to, though!” I interrupted. It was rude, but I didn’t want her to say more terrible things about herself. “You’re important to me, Eena. So please, don’t tell me that I shouldn’t do things for the sake of being with you!”

She nodded, slowly, like she wasn't convinced but was going along with what I wanted anyway. I was actually pretty used to things like that, though most people did better at hiding it. Usually it was upsetting, but I knew that this was about Eena not trusting herself, rather than just wanting to please me. Which was *still* upsetting, but in a different way. Again, this wasn't the time for that, though!

"Can we talk, Feyra? In private?" I let go of Eena's hand, and held mine out to her instead. She knew about my privacy spell, of course, so I was sure she was smart enough to figure out what I wanted! And, sure enough, she did reach for my hand after a moment of hesitation.

I was holding hands with Feyra! In public!

Oh, but I still needed to cast the privacy spell! "*Veroon, Belloosa mador!*"

"Can she hear us?" Feyra whispered, glancing at Eena.

"Nobody can!" I promised her. "Not unless I'm touching them. Though I don't think you really need to worry about it in Eena's case."

"Don't need to - of course I need to worry!" Feyra protested. "Look, I know you like her, but there's something you need to know! She's-"

"I know!" I interrupted, before Feyra could finish. I doubted she knew more than me, but I didn't want to hear anything from anyone who wasn't Eena herself!

"Or at least I think I do? I've seen how powerful she is first hand, and she's definitely way stronger than me! Physically, probably, and magically for sure. I'm

pretty sure we both know what she is...or at least what she isn't... but that doesn't matter to me!"

"You wouldn't say that if you could see what I do! She's-"

"A good person!" I interrupted, again. "Someone who saved a village for root vegetables, and drove herself to collapse in the process. Someone who saw a girl in need, and helped her, without asking anything in return. Someone I've chosen to trust!"

"Because she bedded you?!" Feyra demanded.

"Because she deserves it! Because *everyone* deserves a chance! Don't you wish people would give you one, rather than just judging you based on your bloodline?"

"That's..." Feyra opened her mouth, then closed it, and stared at me in silence. After a moment or two, she all but deflated. "Don't blame me if you end up dead to that monster."

"She's not a monster," I replied. "And neither are you. "

"Fuck! I should be saying screw you, you know?" Feyra muttered, closing her eyes. "I should tell you to go do this damn mission on your own if you want to throw your life away."

"But?" I prompted, hope rising in my chest. Was she going to say what I thought she'd say?

“But there’s no way in hell I’d be able to live a normal life in this city if I just sent you off with that monster and you never made it back. You do realize people have seen us together, right? They’re totally going to assume I had something to do with it if word gets out!”

I couldn’t help myself: I hugged her! “I’m pretty sure they wouldn’t! But I’m also pretty sure that’s just an excuse for saying you want to come along!”

“Want has nothing to do with it!” Feyra protested, squirming a little in my grip. “I just don’t need any sleepless nights wondering what the fuck is going on with you and that girl!”

“Also, please don’t tell Eena I know about her probably not being human, okay? I want her to tell me on her own when she’s ready!” I gave Feyra one last squeeze before parting, a bright smile on my face.

Although Feyra didn’t seem that happy about my request, she still gave me a nod. She obviously didn’t trust Eena at all... But that was fine! The trip to Daroom Woods would likely take us a few days, after all, and there’d be plenty of time to bond during the trials of blood that would comprise our crusade!

Or at least that’s how *Eena* would put it. Personally, I just hoped the blood would be limited to monsters!