

Night and Day

Chapter 2 – Adventurers

Kiera

The crackling campfire spat tiny embers, sizzling and licking a metal pot resting atop it. Inside the pot, the remnants of a stew bubbled and boiled, sending a tiny column of steam into the air alongside the campfire's smoke. On a night like this – an almost-full moon shining brightly, stars twinkling like diamonds in the darkness – everything around could be seen with crystal clarity despite the late hour.

"Okay," one of the boys was saying between mouthfuls of stew, "answer me this. How come everyone in this world speaks English? If we were in some alternate dimension or parallel universe or whatever, they'd be speaking Gobbldygook or some shit."

"That's simple," the mage said, waving a dismissive hand. "Magic exists in this universe. There could easily be some spell or law of magic that allows for us to perceive and understand anything said or written."

"Bro, just accept it. We're in a video game!"

"We are *not* in a video game. The processing power required for this level of simulation alone is far beyond mankind's current capabilities. We simply don't have the technology to make this," he gestured around, "convincingly real."

"So we're in an *alien* video game. Got it!"

"For the love of God. We are *not* in a—"

Kiera tuned them out. After half a day of their endless bickering, she was half-tempted to incinerate them both and be done with it. No more need to investigate the Outlanders if she turned them into piles of smoking ash.

She glanced sidelong at the pretty little thing next to her.

Lily, caught staring, looked away quickly. Cheeks pink, body tense. An adorable morsel that Kiera wanted to gobble right up.

"Are they always like this?" She asked Lily in a hushed voice, forcing the petite girl to look at her again. "They've been at it for hours."

"It's..." Lily's face heated, tongue stumbling over her own words. "It's their thing. You get used to it."

"What about you?" Kiera asked, a slight purr in her voice. "What's *your* thing? I couldn't help but notice you're the only girl in the group."

Lily blushed, opened her mouth to answer.

"Alright everyone," a booming voice called, cutting off whatever the morsel had been about to say. Kiera's head swivelled to the armoured man, the group's self-declared leader. Her glare was quickly hidden behind feigned innocence and curiosity. "I think it's about time we call it a night. We should arrive at the cave tomorrow, so we'd all be best off well rested."

There were a few groans, a snicker, under-breath mocking of the man's attempt to take charge. But no-one argued.

"Tents are set up," he continued, nodding past the campfire to two tents right next to each other, a third a little way away from the others. "Anyone have any questions or issues with the sleeping arrangements?"

"Yeah," piped in Hal, the would-be bard. He glanced over the fire at Kiera, flashed a little wink. Her urge to start tossing fireballs reignited. "Pretty sure Gav wouldn't mind sleeping out in the open tonight—"

"Wait, what?" The archer, Gav said.

"And, since the tent we have for Lily is meant for one person, maybe it'd be better if Kiera bunked with me tonight."

She could taste his lust in the air. Feel the echoes of his fantasies. He was joking around – or at least feigning that it was all a joke. But he wanted it. Wanted her. Would take any opportunity presented to him.

“No,” Joe – the wannabe knight – said firmly. “Guys and girls sleep separately.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Hal muttered. “I know. I know.”

“Great,” Joe grunted. “If no-one else has any stupid questions, off to bed it is. I’ll clean up the cooking stuff and make sure everything’s secure.”

As he said the words, he glanced at Lily. Just for a moment, a single instant. It was a glance that told Kiera everything she needed to know about the man and his motivations. His acting like the group’s leader, the confident and reliable image he wanted to portray. His lack of staring at Kiera herself.

He had a crush on Lily.

Sure enough, as Kiera brushed the guy’s thoughts with her mind, she felt it. His desire for Lily to notice him, to see him as a ‘man’. Reliable, dependable, strong, kind; everything he was forcing himself to be. For her.

Fascinating.

She left him to his cookpot cleaning, trailed along after Lily as she walked to the tent set up away from the other two.

Reaching out with her mind, she brushed the girl’s thoughts.

Shyness. Embarrassment. Quiet, hidden eagerness. Pure dread at having to share a tiny tent with Kiera. Intimidation at how beautiful her sleeping partner was. Butterflies in her stomach, a racing heart, a giddiness that Lily couldn’t quite understand why she was feeling at all.

A smile curled Kiera’s lips.

This was going to be fun.

The girl’s innocence was palpable. Her complete lack of naughtiness and experience. A deep longing for passion pushed down and suppressed, ignored for so long.

Kiera positively *trembled* in anticipation.

Right up until Lily awkwardly climbed into the small tent and Kiera made to follow her, her fingers brushing the thick fabric of the tent flap.

Light. Sharp, scalding Light.

Kiera’s fingers *ached* at the magic, the spells imbued in the tent’s fabric.

A spell to mute the sounds inside the tent from the outside world; a person could scream at the top of their lungs inside this tent, and anyone outside it wouldn’t hear so much as a sigh. And a spell to mask anything happening inside it, shadows and shapes and everything. Complete and total privacy. And, atop all that, a warding spell. Something to keep out Darkspawn, to burn and scorch them if they tried forcing their way inside.

It was weak. Nothing compared to the warding on the city walls. Enough to block most lesser Darkspawn, but not nearly enough to banish Kiera.

Still. This was going to *hurt*.

Fucking priests.

Ignoring the pain as best she could, she held the tent flap open, began crawling inside.

It was like crawling through a wall of fire. First her hands and head, then her torso, then her backside and legs and feet. She collapsed onto the tent floor, panted into the soft blankets and furs.

“Kiera?” A worried-sounding Lily said. “What’s wrong? Are you alright? Should I-”

She cut off.

Kiera fought the aching, throbbing pain, forced her head up to look at the girl. Saw wide, horrified eyes. She pushed herself onto her knees, looked down at herself, saw tiny plumes of black smoke rising from her skin.

Oh.

As Lily backed herself into a tent corner – the opposite side of the flap – Kiera focused on her power, the Dark spilling from her. With a deep, magical inhale, she sucked it all back inside herself.

The aches and pains vanished in an instant. The wisps of Dark pouring back into her body until she was whole again.

“Wh- what’s-”

“Relax,” Kiera sighed, pushing herself away from the girl to give Lily as much space as possible, sitting down on her butt and crossing her legs. “I’m not here to hurt you, I promise.”

It took a few seconds but, slowly, Lily seemed to calm herself. At least a little. The horror gradually faded, fear replaced with suspicion. Wide eyes narrowing slightly. She was still scared. Terrified even. But Kiera wasn’t attacking her, wasn’t threatening her.

After a long silence, most of which Kiera spent rolling her shoulders and cracking her neck and relaxing, getting comfortable, the girl finally spoke.

“You’re Darkspawn,” she whispered. Less an accusation and more a disbelieving question. Like she wanted Kiera to deny it, tell her it was all some misunderstanding.

“I am,” Kiera smiled. “Sorry about all that. The spells those priests put on this tent really did a number on me.”

Lily

What the frick.

What the *frick!*

A Darkspawn? Kiera was a *Darkspawn*?

Lily didn’t exactly know what that meant, or what a ‘Darkspawn’ even *was*, but it sounded *bad*. Like, monster about to murder her in the dark of night kinda bad.

What the frick!?

But... Kiera wasn’t attacking her or anything.

The priestess – no, the *Darkspawn* - was just sitting there on the tent floor, legs crossed and head tilted to one side. Not a hint of malice. Just plain, ordinary curiosity.

“You’re... You’re evil.”

Kiera rolled her eyes, an amused smile tugging at her plump, inviting lips.

“The priests... They said Darkspawn are evil. Monsters. They said you’re dangerous, that you...” Lily petered off.

Maybe calling Kiera an evil monster to her face *wasn’t* the best idea. Not that Kiera seemed to mind at all. The beautiful girl just kept staring at Kiera, curious and amused and maybe even a little sad...

“You’ve only been in this world a couple days,” Kiera said softly, eyes never leaving Lily’s. “And you’ve already bought into all that bullshit the priests pedal. ‘Light is good, Dark is evil, blah blah’. It’s not like that. Not really.”

Lily gulped, couldn’t meet those smouldering hazel eyes any longer. She looked away, looked down. Blushed at how embarrassed and flustered she was getting. Forced herself to meet Kiera’s stare, only to have embarrassment overwhelm her again. Eyes on the floor, face hot, she considered Kiera’s words.

“They... They said Light heals, but all Dark does is destroy... And that... that...”

“Light is order and Dark is chaos?” Kiera chuckled. “They never go with ‘Light is control and Dark is freedom’. Funny that, don’t ‘cha think?”

Lily’s brow furrowed. She looked up at Kiera again, saw soft compassion on the beautiful woman’s face. Kindness.

Butterflies fluttered in Lily’s chest.

“You’re new to this world,” Kiera said softly. “You don’t know about all the Light and

Dark bullshit, the unending conflict, any of it. And I'm not about to sit here and preach about priests and their lies and hypocrisy. All I need you to know is that I'm not here to hurt you or your friends."

Which begged the question...

"Then why *are* you here?" Lily asked before she could stop herself.

Kiera didn't get offended by the question though. If anything, it made her smile. Made her look deeper at Lily with those piecing, heart-stopping eyes. Lily's chest tightened. Unbidden, a bubbling excitement tickled her insides.

"Hmm," Kiera hummed, considering the question. If she should answer it. "I was sent here to learn about you. Who you are, where you're from, why the priests summoned you here, what's so special about you that they'd risk so much to recruit you."

"So you're a spy?" Lily asked, unable to keep a hint of accusation from her voice.

"If I am," Kiera laughed, "I'm not a very good one."

That laugh was intoxicating. Musical. It sent a warm glow to places Lily had never felt it before. Concerning places.

"You have questions," Kiera said. "It's understandable. Ask them. I'll answer everything I can, as best I can. And, when you're done asking your questions, if you're okay with it, I'll ask a few questions of my own. Sound like a fair deal to you?"

Lily considered for a moment. Nodded her head.

"Then go ahead," Kiera smiled, sending those same warm tingles to those same, secret parts of Lily. "Ask me whatever you want. I'm all yours."

Lily gulped, mouth suddenly dry.

Too embarrassed to meet Kiera's gaze, too enamoured to look away. It was a hell Lily had never experienced before. A hot, tingly, wonderful hell.

"What..." Lily gulped again. "What are you, exactly?"

"A succubus," Kiera answered with a sly smile.

Lily's heart hiccupped. Her butterfly-filled stomach did a summersault. That *smile*. It was too much to handle.

"That... That explains a lot," Lily breathed.

"Oh?" Kiera said, eyes twinkling. "It does? I haven't used any of my seductive powers on you or your friends, so I'm not quite sure what you mean."

Lily's face heated.

"What does me being a succubus 'explain', Lily?"

Her heart raced. Face hotter than an oven. She gasped, clutched at straws. Tried thinking up an answer. *Any* answer. Anything but the truth. Her brain slowed to a stop, betraying her in this crucial moment.

"N- Nothing!" Lily managed to squeak out, voice high-pitched. "Just... You look good, is all! Nothing else! Just explains why you look so..."

Hott. Sexy. So fucking beautiful.

The heat from Lily's embarrassment almost had her passing out right there and then. A fact not helped by the bright, musical laughter that Kiera let out a moment later. The only thing that kept Lily from swooning was the *thought* of it – the embarrassment of fainting. Her sheer willpower to avoid that shame.

"This isn't even my actual appearance," Kiera told her, voice filled with life and energy. "It's just my human form."

Human form? She had another?

Lily shook her head, pushing aside that thought as another occurred to her. A memory.

"You were the one I felt with Divine Perception. At the cathedral. You were eavesdropping on us!"

"Yes," Kiera admitted. "That was me. Like I said, not a very good spy. In my defence, how was I supposed to know you were going to do *that*. Whatever 'that' was."

Lily stared at her. Remembered the strange, not unpleasant sensation of her. The stranger behind the door. The spicy, hot, titillating presence she'd touched then. It was Kiera. And, somehow, she felt like a puzzle piece had fallen into place. Like she knew Kiera. Really *knew* her.

For the first time since seeing the black smoke had leaked from Kiera's body, Lily felt herself relax fully. The last echoes of panic and fear and doubt evaporating away.

Kiera wasn't going to hurt her. She just *knew* it.

After a few seconds, Lily had her next question ready.

"Where do you come from?" She asked. "Are Darkspawn born or made? How does all that work?"

And, smiling, Kiera began answering.

Kiera

"We all grew up pretty close to each other," Lily said as they walked. "Same street, pretty much. I can't even remember exactly how we all started being friends, we were so young. We went to the same schools, hung out during breaks. We grew up together."

Kiera was only half-listening. She heard the words, registered what Lily was saying. But her attention – her focus – was on the girl herself. The pretty, petite, joy-filled girl whose smile could light up the blackest of nights.

She'd kept Kiera's secret. Had accepted her for what she was without fear.

They'd spent so much of last night talking. Question after question from Lily to begin with, then just simple conversation. Kiera had told Lily all about the Dark and Light, the origins of the world, the Darkspawn realm and the Dark Princes. She'd told Lily about this world; all the magical, beautiful, wonderful places she'd seen. And, in return, Lily had spoken of 'computers' and 'phones' and a world where conflict between Light and Dark didn't exist, where *magic* didn't exist.

By the time they'd decided to call it a night, that Lily should sleep and rest, it'd been almost morning.

Darkspawn like Kiera didn't need sleep. Couldn't sleep.

How the girl was so animated now, after only a few hours of shut-eye, Kiera had no idea.

"So," Lily was saying, drawing Kiera's attention back to her. "I guess you could say I had a very boyish childhood. Less dolls and dresses and more action figures and shorts with bruised knees. But it was fun, being part of the gang."

"You don't feel like that anymore?" Kiera guessed.

Lily shook her head, smile wavering a little. "When puberty came knocking, things definitely shifted. Conversations went from which super-hero was coolest, to which girls in our classes had the biggest boobs and roundest butts. The guys started getting awkward around me, and I began wanting to be more feminine. Grew my hair out, started wearing dresses..."

Kiera glanced forward, to the four guys. There was a little bit of distance between the girls and them, enough that they could talk and not be overheard too well. But the guys – Joe the knight, in particular – kept glancing back, checking to see if they were still there. Still safe.

If they knew what Kiera was, would they worry less about Lily's safety, or would it make them worry a whole lot more?

"Don't get me wrong," Lily said, smile brightening again. "We're all still friends. We still hang out a lot. It's just a little different nowadays, you know?"

Lily looked over at her, and Kiera flashed her a half-smile.

Immediately, the petite girl was blushing and stammering.

"A- Anyway," Lily said, cheeks pink. "That- That's basically how me and the guys-"

"Cave's up ahead!" A booming voice called.

Kiera's gaze flicked to Joe, eyes narrowed at his stern expression. That guy seemed way too serious and cold. What was his deal, anyway?

"Huddle up," Joe commanded, voice loud and annoying. "We'll check our gear and go over the mission-"

"Quest," the bowman piped in.

"-again. This should be simple enough, from everything we've been told. But it could still be dangerous. If anyone wants to sit it out," he looked pointedly at Lily and Kiera, the two girls in clerical robes, "no-one will think any less of you."

"See," Lily muttered under her breath.

Kiera grinned.

"Priestess," Joe grunted, eyes hard. "Back at the cathedral, the head priests were vague on what we'd be facing. They just said it'd be an easy task for us to complete, a way to test of our abilities. Can you provide any more information?"

She was tempted to deny him, tell him she knew nothing. But one quick glance at Lily, the tiny hints of fear in her eyes, made Kiera reconsider. She reached out with her senses, pushed her mind past the boys and into the nearby cave. It took a moment or two for her to even sense the Darkspawn inside, they were so weak.

"Runties," Kiera said. "Real weaklings. 'Bottom rung of the ladder' kind of weak. Literally. They're Dark given form, but without any actual intelligence to go along with it. Probably about a dozen of them total. Nothing worth worrying about."

"What do they look like?" Joe demanded. "What are their strengths and weaknesses? Is there anything we should know before going in there?"

"They look like regular animals," Kiera said, rolling her eyes. "They copy the actions and behaviours of the animals they're in the shape of. They have no strengths and are all weakness. And no, there's nothing more you need to know."

The knight glared at her. Only for an instant. He hid his dislike almost immediately, nodding his head in feigned thoughtfulness. But the glare had been there, as true as bats could fly.

"If there's anything else I can help with," Kiera smiled. "Do let me know."

She turned to Lily, saw big, round eyes staring back at her. Eyes filled with curiosity and compassion and something else that Kiera had never encountered before. Something bright and beautiful. Something that sent hot tingles coursing through Kiera's body.

"You don't look nervous or scared," Kiera noted.

Lily flashed her a wide, radiant smile.

"I'm not."