

## Dark and Light

### Chapter 18 - Dark

#### Kiera

Lily's giggle instantly brought a smile to Kiera's lips.

It was a giddy, happy sound that sent tingles through her. When she looked sidelong at the petite girl, saw her clutching a little coin purse with a wide grin on her face and rosy cheeks, the urge to sweep her into a hug and smother her with kisses flared inside Kiera.

So excited at getting paid. So happy with herself that the joy flowed out of her like an invisible light.

Kiera opened her senses to it. Basked in that gentle glow.

Lily's joy.

It was the purest emotion the succubus had ever felt.

"Now that's done," she said, dragging her gaze away from Lily, "where should we head next?"

"I don't know!" Lily answered happily. "Where do *you* want to go? We always do what I want."

Kiera shrugged. "I don't mind."

"Come on!" Lily said, pocketing the bag of coins. "There's gotta be *something* you want to do. What about..." The girl looked up thoughtfully, tapped her cheek with a finger. "Dress shopping! I've seen your clothes. No way you didn't have 'em specially made. Or, how about we find a play or performance to watch?"

Kiera raised an eyebrow at her.

"I don't know!" Lily pouted. "I wanna do something *you* like. What'd you do in the hundreds of years before you met me?"

"Follow orders," Kiera answered. "Travelled. Listened."

"Listened?" Lily repeated, latching on to the word. "To what?"

Kiera considered for a moment. She glanced to Lily, saw the girl staring at her hopefully.

As fun as it'd be to tease the girl with half-answers and unanswered questions, she couldn't deny those big, round, innocent eyes. Unbidden, the corners of Kiera's lips quirked up.

"Come on," she said, leading the way through the Guildhall. "I'll show you. There's a nice spot not too far from here..."

In truth, the Guildhall was the 'spot'.

Or, more specifically, the Guildhall's roof was.

Rather than exiting the building, as Lily'd been expecting, Kiera took her through to a narrow stairway. Kiera headed up it first, Lily following close behind.

A minute later, they were climbing through a trapdoor onto the building's roof.

"Over here," Kiera said, taking Lily's hand.

The pair walked up to the edge of the large roof. As Kiera climbed onto the parapet, she sensed Lily's hesitation. Which Kiera quickly disarmed with a gentle smile. So long as Kiera was there, no harm would come to Lily. She wouldn't allow the girl to fall.

As soon as Lily joined her, standing on the edge of the building, Kiera sat herself down – feet kicking out into open air.

Nervously, Lily followed suit.

"When I first came to the surface," Kiera said, remembering back all those years ago. "I didn't know what to do or how to act. Not around people. All I knew about them," she waved her arm out, sweeping it over the city, "was what Mog and others had told me.

Conflicting things, too. Were humans mindless minions of the Light, or were they complex and beautiful creatures? Were they monsters I should destroy on sight, or things I should protect and care for?"

Lily, only slightly glancing at the ground several dozen feet below, turned her gaze to Kiera.

"It started off as me 'learning'. Studying the enemy. But, the more I learned, the more I wanted to know."

Closing her eyes, Kiera reached out with her senses. Sent her mind out into the city, touching people at random. The thoughts and feelings of a child chasing a cat, a woman repairing damaged clothes, a baker shovelling wheat out of a sack, a guard daydreaming about a girl.

"I'd travel from place to place," Kiera said, voice sounding distant to her own ears. "Cities and towns and tiny hamlets. Spend the days reading minds and feeling emotions, and the nights wandering the streets and roads and exploring. Imagining what it'd be like to be one of them..."

Kiera flinched in surprise when something touched her hand, only for her to realise it was Lily.

"For years, that's all I really did. Then, slowly, I started interacting with people. Doing odd jobs, pretending I was a travelling singer or wife or adventurer. I'd make up little stories, act like noble passing through or a widow searching for her parents or a hedge witch looking for a teacher. That last one got me burned at the stake once."

"Hold up," Lily squeaked. "*What?*"

"Not a big deal," Kiera smiled. "It was actually pretty fun. Seeing the looks on all their faces when they realised I wasn't actually burning."

"Why am I only hearing about this *now*?!"

"Plenty more you don't know," Kiera chuckled. "Like the cult that worships me. If they're still around – it's been a few decades. Or the time a king proposed to me, and then tried to have me executed for declining."

"As kings do," Lily said incredulously, shaking her head.

"Hmm..." Kiera hummed. "I guess... I just did whatever I felt like. Before meeting you. If I didn't have a task to complete, I just did whatever. Wandered around in search of a good time."

"In that case," Lily said, squeezing Kiera's hand. "Let's have a good time!"

If anyone heard them up on the Guildhall roof, none came to investigate.

Soft moans and little whimpers, music to Kiera's ears.

When they finally opened the trapdoor and climbed down the ladder, it was with smiles and giggles. Lily's face flushed, Kiera licking her lips. They left the Guildhall, headed off towards the city's market district.

Lily ate while Kiera watched. Kiera shopped while Lily took in sights and sounds and scents that were completely alien to her. Save for a few moments when Lily disappeared, leaving Kiera with a mild anxiety, the afternoon was magical.

"What're these?" Lily would ask, pointing a stand covered in medicinal herbs and funguses.

"No idea," Kiera would shrug.

"Look at that!" Lily would say, pointing at a street-performer casting colourful illusions. "Isn't it pretty?"

And, a smile on her face, Kiera would nod and follow along.

By the time the sun set, her petite companion was exhausted.

Kiera had to resist the urge to scoop her Flower up, carry her back to their inn room. Instead, she took Lily's hand and squeezed, took the lead and walked in the inn's direction.

"You have a cult," Lily whispered as they walked. Not a question or an accusation, more an amused statement.

"Technically, it's not *my* cult. I'm just the thing they worship, if they're still around."

"How'd *that* happen?"

"By accident," Kiera sighed. "One minute, I'm snooping in on a group of young nobles, listening to their thoughts. The next, they're performing some silly 'ritual' to summon a Demon. Not an actual ritual, mind. No real magic. It was just a stupid game for them. A way of being 'dark' and 'controversial'."

"Edgy teenagers," Lily said, nodding her head sagely.

"Well... I figured it'd be funny if I showed up, all horns and wings. Scared them shitless when I did."

"I can imagine," Lily grinned.

"Long story short, I went back a few years later. Not only had those nobles become 'secret worshipers' of mine, but they'd recruited a whole bunch more people."

"We should go check it out!"

Kiera rolled her eyes. Didn't respond.

When they arrived back at the inn, the pair went straight for their room. A cosy little room with a single, small cot. At a thought, Kiera banished the clothes off her body, stowed them away in her void place.

Lily huffed, closed her eyes, focused.

A faint light appeared around her, a pretty aura that glowed golden. Kiera took an instinctive step back as the light grew brighter. Then she noticed it wasn't Lily that was glowing, it was Lily's *clothes*.

There was a blinding flash.

Kiera blinked the stars from her vision.

To find Lily standing naked before her.

"Neat trick," Kiera said, raising an eyebrow.

Lily beamed.

"A bit flashy, though..." Kiera added.

The girl's smile became an adorable pout.

Kiera took the opportunity to appreciate Lily's petite, slender body. The subtle curves and soft, smooth skin. A slightly freckled chest, pretty little nipples.

She pushed down the wicked thoughts. Or, she tried to at least.

"Learned any other fun tricks?" Kiera asked, lacing her words with a sultry hunger.

Lily blushed, slowly shook her head.

"Would you like to?" Kiera took a step towards her.

Slowly, Lily nodded her head, cheeks reddening further.

"I'm sure I can teach you a thing or two..."

## Lily

As Kiera pretended to sleep beside her, Lily summoned her magical gemstone. The air above her open hand glowed, rippled, flashed. And there the gemstone appeared.

When Kiera had described her 'storage place' to Lily, she'd said it was like a void – a pocket in reality that she could reach into, put things in and pull them out of. But, for Lily, it was the complete opposite. She didn't reach into some unknown place elsewhere, she reached into *herself*.

Lily looked at the gemstone for a moment, then summoned up the lists and menus she was growing ever more familiar with.

There, in one corner, was the massive well of raw power she had at her disposal. 'Points' to spend on new powers and abilities. The priceless gift Kiera had given her.

Another corner held a new menu tab.

She reached out and tapped it, leaving a glowing spot in the air.

Inventory.

It opened up a list of everything she'd been wearing earlier. Dress and shawl and undergarments, even the things that'd been in her pockets and pouches. Including the gift she'd bought for Kiera.

After marvelling at the inventory menu, Lily opened up a list of spells. Browsed through it, searching for anything that'd be useful. Which was a *lot* of it.

Healing spells, abilities to empower her or others, weapons and armour she could summon from nowhere.

The list seemed almost endless.

Lily stared at it, browsed it, until her eyes began to protest. Struggling to keep her eyelids open, she curled her hand around the gemstone, stored it back in her inventory.

Light blossomed between her fingers as the gemstone flashed away.

When she closed her eyes, allowed herself to start drifting off to sleep, Kiera's arms tightened around her. Held her snugly.

Pretending to sleep to give Lily privacy, but always there to comfort and cuddle.

Lily smiled as darkness took her.

When her eyes opened, Lily found herself in a place of total blackness. An abyss so dark, she felt like she'd gone blind.

She opened her mouth, only to discover she didn't *have* one.

The panic that swelled inside her was only doubled when she realised she wasn't alone. That there were others in the blackness with her.

Three pairs of glowing red eyes.

"-Invading the Northern Wastes," a deep, booming voice said. "Lobo, investigate this Outlander 'Paladin' of theirs. Test it. Learn."

One of the sets of eyes bowed, fled. Wings flapping.

"Yasra," the booming voice commanded. "Find Kiera. Bring her back here for... questioning."

Lily trembled, ice in her veins.

"And if she refuses?" A female purred.

"Then she is a traitor," the powerful voice growled. "Destroy her, devour her. That shall be your boon."

Glee filled the female's glowing eyes.

A moment later, she was gone. Flying into the infinite darkness.

The Prince rumbled, vibrations of power rocking Lily to her core. When she felt a hand on her shoulder, she tried to scream. Yet, as before, no sound came.

She stumbled, blinked.

And found herself someplace new. A marble-white cavern with glowing mineral veins on all sides. No entrance or exit that Lily could see, only a cosy cavern room with a white stone table and chair.

A chair that was occupied by a creature Lily had met once before.

"Pieces are moving," Kiera's 'mother' said, smiling across her stone table at Lily. "The inevitable drawers ever nearer."

"What-" Lily froze, touched her face.

Her mouth was back.

She let out a sigh of relief.

"What," she said again, standing straight, "do you want?"

"A peaceful, harmonious world," the beautiful woman said. "Whose gods work together to build, instead of tearing apart. Something I know I'll never see."

"That's not an answer," Lily stated.

"My," the woman chuckled. "What's got you so snippy today?"

"You just sent a Demon to kill Kiera!"

But the woman's eyes didn't glow red. They were black as the blackest onyx. Windows into eternity.

Lily clenched her fists all the same.

"My firstborns," the woman shook her head sadly. "Misguided in their desire to please me. The succubus my son sent after your beloved is not something I want. Alas, I'm powerless to stop it."

Lily narrowed her eyes at the woman.

"Warn Kiera. She and Yasra have history. And..."

The woman paused, contemplative.

"The war that's brewing," she said. "Nothing can stop it. Not now. One way or another, this world is going to end. *He* would rather destroy it all than share it with another. But just because this world is doomed, doesn't mean that *you* are."

The white walls around them shimmered, began to fade.

"Out of time already," the woman's eyes sharpened.

Lily felt something tugging inside her. A forceful *pull* on her soul. Trying to drag her away from the inhuman woman.

"Your Anchor," the Dark Lady said urgently, holding out a black hand. "Quickly!"

Lily hesitated.

"Please," the woman said, more than a little impatient. "Trust me. There's a way home. You can take Kiera with you - *should* take her with you. It's the only way. But you must *trust* me."

Reluctantly, Lily reached her hand out. Unsurprised to find her gemstone snug in her palm.

She dropped it into the Goddess' palm.

The moment it touched the woman's hand, Lily's world went black.

## Kiera

The moment Lily woke, Kiera knew something was wrong.

Thundering heartbeat and suddenly tense muscles. The girl flinched against Kiera's gentle hold, recoiled against something unseen.

A sharp scream ripped past Lily's lips.

Kiera held her. Not too tight, but enough to keep Lily's wild flailing under control. It lasted only a few moments, just a couple of seconds, but it felt like an eternity.

"It's okay," Kiera cooed. "I'm here. Everything's okay..."

Slowly, as Kiera's words began to reach her, Lily calmed.

Panting, drenched in a cold sweat, the girl shuddered.

"It's okay..." Kiera repeated softly. "You're okay..."

"Nightmare," Lily groaned between pants, "I had... Dream..."

It was a while longer before Lily calmed fully. Was able to speak without shuddering or twitching.

Summoning a warm, sweet drink from her void place for her, Kiera had Lily sit up on the cot. Waited until she was ready to speak. All the while, she spoke softly. Reassuringly.

"There," she whispered, a forced smile on her lips. "See? Everything's okay. Everything is perfectly fine."

Lily took a sip of the drink, visibly relaxed.

Then she shook her head.

"Yasra," Lily croaked, looking straight into Kiera's eyes. "Do you know- Is there a succubus called Yasra?"

The name was like a slap in the face.  
How in the world did Lily know about...

"Yes," Kiera answered tightly.

"And a demon called Lobo?"

Kiera nodded her head.

"In my dream..." Lily began.

And Kiera listened.

First confused. Then annoyed. Then awed.

"It's impossible," she said when Lily finished recounting her dream. "You can't have spoken to *Her*. The Pact. It's... Not *possible*. It has to be some kind of trick or-"

"It was her," Lily said with certainty.

Mother. *The* Mother. Of *everything*.

The Eternal Light and the Infinite Dark.

Kiera shook her head firmly.

"Whatever's going on," she said, "it's not our problem. Let *Them* play their games. Me 'n' you have better things to do."

"Better things?"

Kiera winked at her.

And, just like that, Lily was blushing.

The ambitions of Gods were far beyond Kiera's understanding. But *this* - making Lily happy - was something she *could* understand. This she could *do*.

"It's still early," Kiera smiled wickedly. "And I know a place not too far from here. It's got a lovely view..."

There was no place. She'd improvise. The only view she wanted to see was of Lily.

"And," she added, with a flourish. "It'll give you a chance to practice flying some more."

Best to get out of the inn now, too. Lily's scream was bound to have woken people up, and Kiera had no intention of dealing with that sort of drama.

"Fine," Lily said, a quivering smile forming on her lips. "But no more kissing me when we're in the air!"

"No promises," Kiera grinned.