

## Chapter 76: Night on the Rooftops

Lysette stood beside Mirae as they gazed at the midnight sky from the roof of the dorm building. The evening air was crisp and pleasant as it always was, and Mirae was similarly enjoying the light breeze that flew over campus as they grasped each other's hands.

It was quiet so late in the evening. Not unnaturally so, as was the case shortly before the attack three days ago, but the comforting sort of quiet found away from the hustle and bustle of the city and its taint of iniquity.

The sky above would have been nearly perfect in its majestic beauty if not for the waning gibbous moon marring the celestial zenith. It was a too painful reminder that, though the first two attacks had been repelled, her enemy still lived. Still lay in wait high above in the celestial realm. Still threatening everything and everyone she cared about. Still growing stronger, seeking the power to mold reality at his whim. She gripped Mirae's hand a bit tighter, letting her love's touch temporarily abate her anger boiling just underneath the surface.

"Kiss me, Mirae." It was as much question as request.

Before Mirae could ask further, Lysette wrapped her arms around their waist and pulled them in, partially dissolving her own body into the darkness to ensure the two were wrapped as tightly around each other as possible. And as they stared into each other's eyes, Lysette pulled her aura inward, concentrating the full extent of her godly consciousnesses on observing her love's wondrous figure as she leaned in and kissed her love over and over and over. First on the neck before working her way to Mirae's cheeks and then finishing with a series of increasingly deeper, longer, and more passionate kisses on the lips before finally pulling back and enjoying her love as they caught their breath.

"Did you like it?" Lysette asked.

“I always do, Lyse. Though, I am a little confused as to why here and now.”

Lysette pointed up at the moon. “Because of that. Asterion took nearly everything from me. My home, my family, my former friends, everything I’d ever known. He even took from me my humanity. And yet, thanks to Zarielle, he wasn’t able to take my life. With this new power, this new lease on life I’ve been granted, I’ve been able to repel his further attempts to take from me and others what no one should.

“His followers sometimes refer to him as the All-Seeing Eye of the Moon, looking down upon those of us on Aimarion. And if that *is* the case, I want to rub his failure in his face. I want him to know that, despite taking nearly everything from me, I’m slowly picking up the pieces and rebuilding. Forging new friendships, new alliances. Finding new love, all the while building my strength to one day deliver my Reciprocity back upon him.”

“So, I’m something you can show off to your enemy?”

“That’s not what I meant, Mirae love.”

Mirae giggled. “I know. But I can’t let you be the only one who gets to tease your partner. Where’s the Reciprocity in that?”

Lysette stood in stunned silence for a minute, trying and utterly failing to contest her love’s impeccable logic. And in the daze of processing the situation, Mirae had leaned in and left a soft and gentle kiss upon her own lips.

“I like getting to kiss you too, Lysette. You are beautiful, after all. And all mine.” Mirae tapped Lysette’s shoulder. “I hope it doesn’t offend you if I claim you all for myself and desire not to share you with anyone else.”

“I’m the Demigoddess of Reciprocity, not Fairness. As long as you give me the same in return, everyone else will just have to accept that I am yours and yours alone. At least, when it comes to romantic affections.”

“Oh, there you two are!” Danitha’s voice called out from the access door. “When I didn’t see Lyse back in her room, I got worried something had happened to her.”

Lysette and Mirae quickly pulled themselves apart as Danitha walked up to greet them.

“Anyway, I admit that I was a little surprised to see Lyse not still sulking in her bed. Glad as well— I was wondering how long she was going to coop herself in her room like that, with the whole ‘not needing to eat or sleep or drink or anything else’ thing she has going for her.”

“You can thank Mirae for that, Dani. They practically dragged me out of there and down to the surface. Said it would be good for me. And it was. Feeling a lot better now.

“Changing the subject, though. Mirae and I are going to be leaving for a few days. Serrena is still out on some assignments with the Hunter’s Guild, so I guess it’s just going to be you here on campus until she or we get back.”

“So, no different than usual, Miss ‘Holes up in Her Room and Doesn’t Come to Class’. And given Serrena’s room is way nicer than ours, I’m not sure I’d even want to come back and sleep in my bed anyway.”

Lysette chuckled. “I would like to see that sometime. Although, I don’t think she’d care much for me inviting myself to her room unannounced.”

“Don’t you two have a mutual pact in place?”

“We do, but our relationship is less ‘friends’ and more ‘amicable rival demigoddesses each seeking to push ourselves and each other to still further heights’. At least, that’s how I perceive it coming off Serrena and, as a result, how I project back to her.”

“Wait,” Danitha said. “Does that mean that your Reciprocity causes you to reflect how others feel about you and feel the same way about them?”

Lysette furrowed her brows, having never considered the question. “Maybe?” she said after a moment of thinking. “But I don’t think that’s a manifestation of my domain. I think it’s just how people are. We enjoy the company of those who treat us with kindness, and desire to treat them kind in return as thanks for the same. And to those who treat us with disdain, it is only natural to harbor hostility. It’s not like you think fondly of, say, Kiarra Dozel.”

Danitha pantomimed the action of vomiting.

Lysette continued. “Anyway, the two of us are going to the border with Elithria. Going to do some reconnaissance as part of a guild mission. On paper, it’s on behalf of the crown, though, these days, I can’t say I give two figs about the crown or the kingdom as a whole. But, it’s an opportunity to finally take the fight to Asterion, and I’m not going to turn down this chance.”

“You’re not going to raze the entire Kingdom of Elithria to the ground, are you?” Danitha asked. “Right?”

“I doubt I could do such a thing in my present state. Besides, if Elithria is anything like Domaria, there are plenty of people suffering there under the current system. Even if I did have the power to upend the kingdom, I’d only want to use that power on the Church of Asterion, its supporters, and the power structure that keeps it in place. The people themselves, those who suffer under the current world order. I want to uplift them just the same as I’m doing for the followers I already have.”

“So, you’re going to go in and try to steal Asterion’s followers away from him, one by one?” Mirae asked.

“Not a terrible idea at all, love. Show them a demigoddess who will actually treat mortals with the respect they deserve. Who will work with them, instead of just using them.”

“It certainly seems like your mood has improved, Lyse,” Danitha said. “Along with your ego.”

“Am I not allowed to speak the truth, even if it is a little self-aggrandizing? Besides, you and Mirae are probably the strongest underclassman Cultivators here, at least among the humans at the Academy. And I will take credit for a portion of that.”

“I suppose you two will be leaving soon?”

“Tomorrow morning. At least, that’s the plan.”

Danitha turned to Mirae. “Alright, Mirae. You have to promise me that you’ll take care of her while you two are gone.”

“I will, Dani. I won’t let anything happen to Lyse while we’re gone.”

“That’s not what I mean, but I appreciate it.”

Lysette shook her head, not appreciating the slight from her disciple, but shrugging it off nonetheless.

“Do you have any plans in the meantime?” Lysette asked. “Still three more days until classes start back up.”

“I think I should stay on campus. Feels like at least one of us should be keeping an eye and an ear on the goings on around here as well. Just in case some trouble does arise while you all are gone.”

“Sounds like a plan. And if you do find yourself needing any help, look for Kristil and Nicholas. They’re a sibling pair who have been organizing a sort of resistance group against the actions of the noble children and their families. We’ve not really done anything of note, but I am

using my goddess Cultivation technique to work on bolstering their progression as well. If anything does go south, simply mention that you're my roommate and I'm sure they'll provide some aid for you."

"Sounds like you have all this stuff figured out in there," Danitha said. "I'm a little envious."

Lysette sighed. "I wish I did. In truth, I know only what my goals are. I still need to figure out the methods I want to use and how to get strong enough to bring those plans to fruition. But I'm sure as we press forward, we'll find the answers to those questions as well."

Mirae yawned. "I'm getting a bit tired. See you in bed here in a bit?"

"Of course, love."

Mirae wandered off, leaving Danitha and Lysette to stare out at the campus commons as a brisk breeze blew from the west. Neither said anything for a few minutes, Lysette content to enjoy her friend's company as she pondered her plans, and Danitha seeming unwilling to break the silence.

"It's amazing, isn't it?" Danitha said after around twenty minutes. "I used to look up at the moon with great reverence. It's beautiful, when you don't know what its creator has been doing to so many innocent lives. And now we're training to kill that creator. It's a little hard to take it all in stride."

"Mirae was telling me the same thing earlier today. And honestly, it's only been... thirty-two days since my rebirth? Sometimes it feels like it's been months since that night, but it has been fast for me as well. If not for the changes to my mind to help me carry out my mission, I think I'd be in the same state of mind as you two."

"Take care of Mirae for me, alright? Keep my friend safe."

Lysette laughed. "Weren't you just telling them to look after me before they left?"

“You both need to be looking after each other. You yourself just said that you don’t know what lies ahead. Just, please, try and avoid taking any unnecessary risks while you’re gone. I don’t want this conversation between us to be my final memory of you two.”

“It won’t be, Dani. Mark my words, I will not die, and I will not let Mirae come to harm. There are too many people depending on me, on us. Depending on this Godslayer strength I have, and which I am also Cultivating in the two of you.”

Lysette paused. “I’m realizing something. Back when I went to Zarielle’s temple, the priestesses there were chanting. Chanting a prayer about how Zarielle is seen as a beacon of darkness to shield and provide succor for those blinded by the lights of the world. And if she won’t, or she can’t, then I will do so in her stead. To lift those living in the shadows up, and to give them the same chance that I was granted. That is the Reciprocity I wish to bring to Aimarion.”