

Chapter 7

Going On A Spree

It had been weeks, and Haemon had seen neither hide nor hair of Faustus. Word about town was that hard times had fallen on him. The medicine had eventually cleared his condition, but not before it had spread to his other foot, rendering him practically incapable of walking at all and necessitating the use of a cab to take him to and from his workplace. This had bankrupted him immediately. Upon running out of fare for cabs, he had ceased to go to work at all, and had been terminated, leaving him in even more dire straits than before. Haemon had recently taken to asking for him, concerned for his friend, and learned from his landlord that he had spent a few days in the city jail after stealing a chicken and had not been seen home since. Because he had not paid his rent the past month, there was a new tenant in his space.

Horrible scenarios began to play at the corners of Haemon's imagination, and then at its center, and he began to regret very much that his last encounter with Faustus had been so quarrelsome, and that he had spoken to him so brusquely, and had not at least escorted him out of the building himself. He pictured the man scrounging in a gutter, destitute and purple from sunburn, and the thought upset him so much that he started taking nervous detours on his way home in the evenings, past almshouses and churches, trying to "discreetly" stare into the faces of the poor in the hopes that he would recognize one of them as his companion.

"I would hope he would come to me if he were in trouble," he thought over and over, which only further advanced his fears that something sincerely dire had happened, and he reluctantly and with awful trepidation began to expand his searches to the Obituaries section.

You can imagine his emotion, then, when Faustus turned up outside his door, not only alive but cleaner and fresher-faced than anyone had seen him in recent memory, wearing tight-fitting little breeches and a brand new coat with violently flared lapels, and a hat that made his face look somehow tiny. Haemon immediately cried out with relief

and embraced him and kissed him, and Faustus laughed as if nothing had happened and happily indulged all of the fussing, though he was vague and sparse with details when asked where he'd been.

“And how did you get all of this?” Haemon exclaimed, indicating the outfit. Faustus waved a hand.

“Oh, I just sold some things, some personal belongings.” There was an air of finality in his voice that did not invite future questions. “But listen, do you remember, Hae, you promised me we'd go drinking together?”

Haemon remembered nothing of the sort, but nodded, thrilled to the point of dizziness that his friend was alive and well and before him.

“Tonight is the night,” said Faustus, and took him by the arm and led him outside, where a carriage was waiting. A wooden crate was seated by the driver, and another was crammed onto the floor, such that Haemon had to perch his feet upon it to fit.

He was filled with curiosity. “May I take a peek?”

“Peek.” Faustus even lifted the lid for him (once Haemon had maneuvered his legs out of the way), and revealed a heap of neatly-packed fruits, sweets, cheeses, bread, and a couple of pâtés. “There's champagne up front.”

Haemon boggled at him. “How—“

“You can steal an apple if you'd like,” Faustus cut him off, and offered one. “It's all from Brewer's. I've had good luck with their fruit.”

Haemon accepted without further interrogation. He felt himself slipping into a kind of a daze. He distantly noticed as he took the apple passed to him that although Faustus' hands were spotless and clean, there were grey bands of what appeared to be ash under his fingernails.

“I figured I would take you to Marsh's, anyways,” Faustus continued. “Tonight's a big night for me, you really should be there.” He had taken off his hat for the carriage and was self-consciously meddling with his hair, which was brushed back and shining. “And I'll tell my story then, Hae, I'll tell it then! I don't want to spoil it to you, and then have to tell it again and bore you to pieces! No, you'll learn with the rest of them. Tell me, how is our dear Izzy, how is our little fugitive? Did she miss me terribly? I've heard cats like that

can die from heartbreak— oh, you should have let me come in to see her, I hope she's well! I'll have to see her before— well, I'll have to see her.”

They presently made it to Lamplighter Street and pulled up beside Marsh's, and Faustus hopped out of the carriage and slipped the driver a token to offload the crates into the tavern. He seemed suddenly beset by nerves.

“You go in before me,” he told Haemon feverishly, and then, “no, I should go in before you, I think,” and then, finally, “maybe it would be best if we both went in together, at once.”

So they went in together, at once, and Faustus gave the door a shove so that it clattered behind them as they entered. The two crates were set on a long table at the back and opened, and the champagne was laid out. The sparse crowd watched with interest.

“I'm going on a spree,” Faustus announced to the proprietor. “This is for everyone. Where is Anya? Bring her out here, and bring out a few dancing girls, if you've got them!”

They did not in fact have dancing girls, but they did have a couple of fiddlers, who were roused into a jig. The little tavern seemed to brighten. Serving plates were brought out for the fruits and sweets and cheeses and bread, and glasses for the champagne, and people began to become quite lively, filling the space with laughter and curious chatter about what the occasion was, and what business this new benefactor of theirs might have, and— particularly from those who already knew him— where he'd come about the funds for it all.

This last question had begun to weigh on Haemon's mind again, and he was about to try asking Faustus one more time when Faustus looked past him and cried out in rapture, “Anya!”

Yes, Anya was here, and Haemon could see at once why she had captured Faustus so hopelessly. She was plump and lovely, with chestnut-brown hair and comely dark eyes that shone out from behind long, coquettish lashes. Upon hearing Faustus call, she trotted over to him and the two kissed (Faustus putting a little more passion onto her cheek than she put onto his, Haemon noticed), and she looked him up and down.

“You’ve gone and made your fortune, haven’t you!” she exclaimed, smiling. “Is that what this is?”

“It’s something— to that effect, maybe,” Faustus said dumbly. He was grinning like a pup. “I’ll be telling my story about it later, ah, to everyone, to explain what I— what happened to me. Have you grown more beautiful since I last saw you? What’s gone on here? Did you always have that charming little freckle?”

“Yes, I’ve always had it,” Anya laughed politely, and then glanced at Haemon. “Is this your friend, Fau? I don’t think I’ve ever seen him before.”

Faustus turned towards Haemon, suddenly flushed with delight (“She remembered me from five years ago— but she doesn’t remember him!”), and made introductions. “Anya, this is *Doctor* Haemon Glass, a dear companion of mine.” He put such importance on the title that Haemon, too, blushed.

“It’s very nice to meet you,” Anya smiled, and offered her hand, which Haemon took and kissed. “Do you work at the hospital?”

“He’s a doctor of the mind,” Faustus spoke for him. Anya did not look away from Haemon. “He’s got his own office in there, practically a whole library! It’s bigger than some of the houses I’ve lived in!”

“It’s really quite small,” Haemon managed to get in, smiling apologetically, but Anya didn’t waver.

“I’ve always wanted to meet a doctor,” she said, and although Haemon could tell she was saying it quite on instinct and had not even understood what he was, there was a warmth and interest in her voice that flattered him greatly.

“Well, thank you,” he murmured.

Faustus was clearly pleased that the introduction (or re-introduction, as it were) had gone so smoothly, and ushered Anya over to the food and wine, making sure to offer her a tartlet while the selection was still good. Haemon gave up on ever getting any sort of answer out of his friend, and loaded up a plate.

“By the by.” Faustus clapped him on the shoulder as he was spreading pâté on bread. He spoke close to his ear, furtive. “By the by and by the way. Over there—” now

pointing a petit-four across the room at an average-looking young man of nineteen or twenty who was deep in a game of cards, “— my nemesis.”

It was a marked upgrade from ‘soppy little peasant’. “This is your Bil?”

“Yes. Keep an eye on him, would you? I can’t spend the whole night worrying about him.”

“I will.” Haemon didn’t see much to worry about.

“Good man.” Faustus squeezed him on the arm and returned to doting on Anya.

Chapter 8

What Faustus Did, or What Happened

As the night progressed more musicians were found, the tavern filled slightly, and dancing and singing broke out. Trays of sherry were bought on a whim, and Haemon found himself seated on a bench at the long table in the back with Faustus and a smattering of peasants and laborer types who were picking at the remains of the sweets platter.

“I’m ready to tell my story,” announced Faustus, having had sufficient sherry. “Get Anya over here, make sure she’s over here— Hae, can you wave her down? Is she dancing over there? She’s not dancing with someone, is she? Ah, thank God, Anya, there you are! Come, sit with us, I’m ready to tell my story...”

Anya sat down, across from Faustus and next to Haemon. She had taken part heartily in the champagne, and had become quite bold. Twice that evening she had asked Haemon to dance with her, and he had refused her on the first and very, very secretively obliged her on the second, “only because it’ll get her to stop asking”, and she had drawn him into a lengthy conversation afterwards, though not one with depth. Haemon picked up immediately on the “careless *naïveté*” Faustus had prescribed to her, and was not compelled by it. There was a lack of seriousness in her, and her questions were meaningless and repetitive. But it was true that her lips were soft and pink and her hands

were lily-white and plush, so Haemon let himself sheepishly enjoy her attentions, making sure they went unnoticed by the man of the hour, who, by the way, had been gently rebuffed by Anya at every opportunity, in ways that everyone but him seemed to understand. As Anya now sat down next to Haemon on the bench, she reached under the table and held his hand, and he froze. Not here— this was too much, too close to danger! But Faustus didn't notice, immediately leaping into his "story".

"First," he said loudly, sitting up straight and putting both hands on the table with an utmost importance, "you would agree with me, compeers, that the Huntsmen in this city do not always have your best interests at heart?"

There was a murmur of vague assent. Haemon found himself quite involuntarily nodding.

"I've never really cared for them," Faustus continued drily, and those at the table who had already heard about his arrest (the one over the theft of a chicken) laughed, which seemed to bolster him. "They kept throwing me in the poorhouse, and then the penitentiary, all the while telling me it was for my own good, as if being surrounded by consumption and plague was some sort of curative measure!" And he explained the sequence of events which had led to his eviction and poverty, including the important parts which we have already heard, and some frivolous and fabricated parts which I will not mention.

"After I had spent those all those nights in jail— sleeping on the ground, mind you, they make you sleep on the ground with the rats— I vowed to get away from it all, and I took myself to the outskirts of town. I put myself under a bridge, and I said to myself, 'I will just live here, and live on rabbits and birds' eggs, and stare at the moon until I go crazy, and become a holy fool!' Yes, that was my plan. And there were rabbits— I don't know if you've been to that part of the border, up in the north bit of it, where it begins to turn into forest there are rabbits."

Haemon was listening with a growing sense of upset, aided by the sherry, which had all of a sudden turned on him and started to fill him with anxious and frankly angry thoughts. So Faustus had not even thought of coming to him! Better to live under a

bridge and kill rabbits than to— to what? He didn't understand what the hangup was. He hoped Faustus would not describe how he killed the rabbits.

Faustus began to describe how he killed the rabbits. "I had my knife on me, thank God— my last possession on earth!— and so I would fall upon them and grab them like this—" he demonstrated on his own neck, grasping it from behind, "—and I would slice them right here. This is called the 'jugular vein', write that down, I learned it in a class once! Now, once I'd done that— have you ever had to skin your own food? Well, it's quite a process, and I was coming at it for the first time, so of course it took me a few tries to—"

"Stop!" cried Anya, who had watched Haemon's face turn white and weak. "You're killing him! Oh, you dear..." she leaned against Haemon's arm as if to prop him up, and pressed a fresh glass of sherry at him. "Revive, revive! You must love little animals so, Doctor Glass, I've never seen a man go white like that. Well, I love little animals, too." She fixed Faustus with a stern look. "Please spare us the details!"

"Fine, fine!" Faustus waved a hand and acquiesced, a little put out by the rebuke. "There was a point to it, the rabbits come in later, but fine. I sustained myself for several days like this, though I was horribly thirsty. The water under the bridge was stinking, so I didn't touch it, and I had to suck the dew off of the grass. I do think I could have suffered on like that for a while, but this is where I experienced a miraculous turn of luck— this was two days ago now, only two days ago. Do you remember, compeers, what the weather was like two days ago?"

Haemon recalled. Dark clouds had marched through but never shed any rain, and he had heard rolling bouts of thunder all afternoon. The air had been heavy and still.

"I was under my bridge," continued Faustus. "Now, I feel I have to paint the scene for you— this was a sparse little road I was under, passing quite close to the edge of the forest. The only dwellings were many yards away. People very rarely came by, and when they did I would simply hide beneath the boards and wait for them to pass. On this day, two days ago, I was, well, 'preparing' a rabbit when I was interrupted by loud footsteps on the bridge, and I poked my head out as the traveler passed to the other side, to see who had disturbed me. I recognized at once the Huntsman's uniform, and I shrunk back!

He was a mean-looking fellow on top of a gryph. I watched carefully as he continued on, and prayed that he did not turn around—and he did seem to be searching for something, perhaps I imagined it, but I had the distinct feeling that I was being pursued! So I waited and prayed, and then the miraculous thing happened.” Faustus paused for a moment to take a drink, and came back with renewed force, and even agitation. “There was a great flash and a horrible clap, and I saw lightning arc to the ground not half a mile down the road! It was so close that I *felt* it, have you ever felt a lightning bolt? Every hair on my body stood up, and I fell back as though struck! But I didn’t suffer nearly as much as the officer’s gryph, which spooked badly and shot into the air in a type of spasm. She spread out her wings in panic, and her man was flung to the ground from a great height, as if thrown from a building. He dashed his head on the road and was still. Immediately I rushed to him, and put my hands on his chest to see if he was still alive. He was not. I had no notion of what to do, and seeing his gryph starting to descend again, I dove back under my bridge and hid under my coat. I was shaking all over, violently shaking! But presently I came to my senses, and ventured a look up at the road again. He was still there, and his gryph was standing by him, trying to nudge him awake. It was a sad scene, really, I keep thinking about it. She spotted me, though, and started to bristle, so thinking quickly, I retrieved the rabbit I had left under the bridge, and I offered it to her, letting her eat it from my hand. She had no issue with me after that, and it was at this moment that a plan revealed itself.” Faustus finished his sherry, and one could see a slight nervous tremor in his hand as he set the glass down. “Friends, I ask that you do not judge me. You must remember that I was quite beside myself still, and half-mad from thirst.” He quickly glanced around the tavern before continuing, more hushed than before. “I decided to take the gryph. I took off all of her tack except for her harness and left it with the dead officer, and I led her down the road on foot.”

The table had been falling increasingly quiet since the lightning strike, and at this reveal Anya gasped and squeezed Haemon’s hand. To take an officer’s gryphon...!

“I had a long time to think as we walked. I began to be frightened and unsure. Even without the tack, she would be highly recognizable. I haven’t mentioned— she was white all over from head to tail and very smooth, a dove type. I couldn’t think of any

others in town like her. I was sure someone would recognize her at once, and I would be found out. So I..." Something seemed to be loosening in Faustus now that he had confessed; an odd eagerness had entered his voice, and he had to stop himself from laughing. "... I took her to the dump, the ash dump on the northeast side, and I took the ash and shoved my hands into it and rubbed it all over her until she was entirely grey. And then I got rid of her harness, and tied a rope on her for a lead, and took her to market!"

"Lunatic!" one of the peasants exclaimed, not disapprovingly, and Faustus' shoulders quivered.

"It gets better!" he breathed. "Everybody—I want you to guess who I sold this gryph to! No, I'll tell you! I sold her *back to the Huntsmen!*"

The table exploded with scandal.

"One of them came up to me, this oaf of a dog-man, and made me an offer! I told him she was a pigeon!" He switched into the tongue of humans for the next part, wheezing with laughter: "*They're so stupid! Even the smart ones are so stupid!*"

Anya was beside herself at the punchline, and suddenly clambered across Haemon's lap so that she could sprawl almost all the way over the table at Faustus. It occurred to Haemon that she was quite drunk. "You sold her back!" she shouted, slapping the table with delight. "You naughty, naughty boy!"

Faustus turned a pleased shade of pink. "Anya, dear, you don't hate me for my sins?"

"I don't hate anyone!" Anya clumsily scooted backwards and slid back down onto Haemon's lap. "I love everyone."

"How much did you— hello," Haemon stuttered, caught between his friend's tale and the sudden presence on top of him. His head was swimming. There was something about the story that felt ominous to him, but he couldn't form the correct thoughts to put it together. "How much did you get for her?"

"I got enough," said Faustus. His smile was slowly dimming as he watched Anya fondly wrap her arm around Haemon's neck. A new struggle seemed to be happening

within him. “She was in excellent condition, so— certainly enough.” Then he said, weakly, “Could you get off of him?” and neither Haemon nor Anya heard him.

“But he didn’t get enough for pants that fit!” Anya said loudly to Haemon, and the rest of the table overheard and laughed. Anya reached for a slice of cheese and held it up to Haemon, her face turned towards his and very close. Haemon noticed that whenever she smiled, a dear little double chin would form under her petal-like lips, and this charmed him greatly.

“Well,” he found himself thinking at a distance, as though through thick-paned glass, “if he got enough, then I’m happy for him.” And he took the cheese with his mouth.

Faustus was increasingly sullen after this incident, and the party soon forgot about him. Anya continued to sit in Haemon’s lap and feed him morsels, particularly cheese, which she would make him (he recalled later with deep shame) “squeak like a mouse” for. This he did with utmost earnestness, putting a full performance into it. The sherry had become good to him again, and the warmth that Anya’s sturdy body radiated into him caused a lifting of his spirits, and indeed a certain excitement. It had quite slipped his mind that not half an hour ago he had been horrified by the brazenness of the girl holding his hand under the table, and that he had committed himself to indulging her affections “in secret”. When she asked him to have another dance with her, he eagerly obliged, and they whirled around to a reel, very near together, until Haemon was suddenly struck by a wave of dizziness and had to excuse himself to sit down. Anya fussed over him for a moment before the peasant boy Bil came up to her and shyly asked if she would like to take the next dance with him, and she agreed happily and without hesitation, letting him hold her closely and sending a stab of jealousy through Haemon’s chest. His good mood evaporated.

He got up from his chair (this took several attempts) and located Faustus, who was sitting at a table by himself, sulkily whittling the ash from beneath his fingernails with his small knife. Haemon sat down across from him. He felt queasy and uncomfortably full.

“Are you enjoying yourself?” Faustus said, not looking up.

“She’s not serious,” Haemon grumbled.

“Why, were you planning on proposing?” Faustus did look up now, and there was a spiteful glitter in his eyes that stung and frustrated Haemon.

“Were *you?*” Haemon retorted.

“Perhaps I was! Perhaps I was planning on taking her away! Perhaps I thought that she would— *aiie!*” Faustus suddenly cried out in pain. He had been digging more and more ferociously into his fingernails as he spoke, and had drawn blood. Haemon quickly turned away and covered his eyes like a child.

“Damn it all,” Faustus continued under his breath, pulling out a handkerchief and dabbing at his finger. One could see the energy deflating out of him. “You’re right, she was never serious. Everyone knew it. I was a fool. You know, I really thought it was my age that was the barrier, ha!” His laugh was mirthless. “It had nothing to do with it. Well, I suppose I’m grateful you’ve disenchanting me, but it really does scuttle my plans.”

“What were your plans?” Haemon said, still fully facing away.

“I can’t stay in town,” Faustus said. “It was a mistake to sell that gryph to the officer. I was so eager to make a deal that I stopped thinking. As soon as she gets properly brushed— and I’m sure she already has been— the ash will fly right off, and they’ll recognize her as one of their own. They’ll remember me from two days ago, they’ll seek me out, and I’ll be destroyed. Not to mention they’ll find the dead man, and they’ll make some sort of connection, and I’ll be branded a murderer.” He sighed painfully. “It would be very easy to do. I didn’t mention, when I went to the market... I didn’t have a way to clean my clothes beforehand. I was stained all over with rabbit blood. It would be very, very easy to do.”

Haemon lowered his hand from his face and looked at Faustus, despondent. This had put into words the vague fears that had troubled him while listening to the long recounting earlier.

“I had planned on asking Anya to come with me,” said Faustus. “Not really to propose, merely to just ask her if she wanted to come with, to start a new life with me. Oh, Hae, I don’t know what I was thinking!” He suddenly struck the table with his fist. “I don’t even have the funds to start anything! He barely paid me for that gryph, Hae,

pigeons don't fetch a great sum. I had enough for a new suit and this going-away party and a room at an inn, and I've saved a little bit for a carriage out of town, but other than that—!" He sat back in his chair, his face pale and strained. "Anya was my hope. I thought, even if I have nothing, maybe I'll have Anya. Maybe we'll suffer, and suffer greatly, but suffer together."

"Why didn't you come to me?" Haemon suddenly blurted.

Faustus winced.

"None of it was necessary!" Haemon continued with uncontrollable emotion in his voice. "If only you had told me you were in trouble at the start, I could have helped you—I could have lent you a place to stay, or— or at least bought you a meal! Why didn't you come?"

"I thought that you might grow to hate me," said Faustus softly.

Haemon wanted to shake him. "Why? When have I ever?"

"I knew I'd offended you at the hospital, and with everything happening so soon after, I thought, 'I can't burden him any further, he'll resent me, he won't turn me away but he'll resent me!' And that was a greater fear than anything." Faustus was quiet for a moment, his gaze cast downwards and away. "I think this will be the last time we see each other, old man. Tomorrow I'm either leaving town or killing myself, it's one or the other. I can't afford another night at the inn."

"For God's sake." Haemon reached across the table and grabbed Faustus' arm. "For God's sake, I'm right in front of you, stop talking like that. I'm not going to let you deny my help again. Come back with me to my place tonight. You can stay with me until we make a better plan."

"And what if the Huntsmen come knocking at your door?"

"Then we'll hide you under the mattress!" Haemon exclaimed with such sincere passion that Faustus smiled.

And so it was that the apartment on Windrose Street acquired another fugitive.