

The Alpha King's Hated Slave

Chapter 21

When Sally ran out of the dungeon, Vetta can only laugh as she watched Danika shake on her knees.

The slave can't do a thing. The king gave her permission to torture Danika, and there's nothing anybody can do about it.

She gave the guards sign-order for them to stop whipping her. They bowed their heads. She stared at Danika.

"See....even your slave you charmed has left you." She drawled as she walked close to the slave in front of her.

Danika could barely hear the woman. Everywhere hurts. Her back is on fire. Her body no longer feels like her own.

Tears fell from her eyes in waves, her body trembling while the Mistress laughed and made talks in front of her.

"I will enjoy doing this to you on a daily basis. Torturing you is a special fun on it's own. The king has been way too kind on you, I'd have said you charmed him but I know the king is not some whim of a man your witchery will work on." Vetta said.

The coppery taste of b***d inside Danika's mouth overwhelmed her senses. She'd bitten the insides of her mouth a lot to keep from crying out.

She felt relief when she started drifting in and out of consciousness. Who knows, it just might be death finally knocking....



Sally ran away from the dungeon in the hope of finding help for her princess! Even if she has to ask the King himself.

Just the thought of it, had her throat tightening. The king is not the kind of person just anybody meets....talk more of laying direct complaints or seeking help.

As she ram through another corner, she saw Baski. "Madam, Baski! Madam Baski!", she cried, tears in her eyes.

Baski took one look at her and felt concerned. "What's the problem, dear? You'll lose all your breath. Heavens, you're running so fast...!"

Sally's knees hit the ground and she grabbed hold of Baski's garment desperately. "Please! Please, y-you've got to help m-m-me, please!" She was sobbing so badly, it's hard to make out her words.

"Help you with what, dear? And calm down, so you don't faint?"

"My princess...m-my princess! The mistress wants to kill her! They're in the dungeon and s-she...oh, madam Baski, she's in so much pain!" She sobbed uncontrollably, tears swimming down her eyes.

Mistress Vetta is torturing the king's slave? "Oh, dear. I'm sure she has the king's permission if she's doing that. There's nothing I can do to help you...."

Sally only cried the more, she grabbed hold of the end of Baski's robe. "P-Please! Oh, please! She's w-whipping her and her back....her back is all bruised! Please!"

Baski was torn. She doesn't have the power to intervene in the businesses of the king's mistress. This girl is crying so hard, she doesn't know what to do.

"The king is the only one that can intervene, my dear, I don't have such powers. And you know...how the king feels about Danika..." Baski pointed out falteringly, "...he would never intervene, especially if he's the one that gave permission for it."

"I know...! I know, Madam Baski...! I just wanna try! I have to try...! Please, help me!"

"And the worst part of it all is that the king said he doesn't want to be disturbed now. He didn't sleep well last night, I made him some herbs to help him sleep this morning..."

Sally shook her head tearfully, "She'll die, she'll die! The princess will die! They are whipping her so badly and the mistress is p-playing with her collar...!"

"Oh, dear..." Baski breathed helplessly.

"You just have to help me, madam Baski, please! I know you're a good woman, please, help me!"

In the end, Baski agreed even though she knows this will be a big problem. Not only is it the king's mistress, but the slave involved is one the king has no liking for, and not to mention that the king said he shouldn't be disturbed.

Baski can smell the problem from a mile long.

But she still took Sally, because just like every once-enslaved person of Salem kingdom, she knows the good things this girl did to help them when they were still in captivity.

“Make sure not to refer to the slave as a princess in front of the king.” She cautioned Sally on the way.

Sally nodded vigorously as they walked from the slave quarters to the Royal quarters and into the hallway that leads to the King’s chambers.

She walked past the guards. “Can I come in, Your Highness?” She raised her voice and called out.

Silence. The silence stretched for very long seconds....stretched into minutes.

Baski held her breath and waited. Sally held her own breath and prayed all kinds of prayer in her mind.

They were beginning to give up when they heard the gruff voice. “Enter.”

They released the breath they were holding and Baski pushed the big door open. They entered the room.

The King still wore his royal garment which he went to court with and he was coming out of the library room. “I gave orders not to be disturbed, Baski.”

Baski lowered her head, “I’m so sorry, My King.”

King Lucien’s eyes left Baski and drew on the familiar face of the girl besides her. Sally’s knees hit the ground and she started crying earnestly.

“Oh, please, My King! I seek for your help! I know I’m just a slave...but p-please you have to h-help me, to h-help her....please my king!” She cried, her head bowed.

King Lucien’s brow furrowed as he watched how hard the girl is crying, how massive her small body was trembling. “What is the matter?”

“It’s about my—your slave, Your highness.” Sally swiped the tears from her eyes, staring at the king.

“What about her?” He asked in that flat tone of his.

Sally swallowed tightly, not knowing how to say this to him. “The mistress is t-torturing her in the dungeon...!”

His expression didn’t change. He was silent for a few long seconds.

"I gave her permission to do so." He turned away from Sally, dismissing her effectively.

"Oh, please, your highness, please! The mistress is going to kill her! She's whipping her b-badly and her back is a-all bloodied up! Please, your highness, she's going to die, please!" She wept bitterly.

The king turned to face her. Saying nothing, he just stared at her.

Sally straightened her legs and laid down on the floor, she stretched her arms out rubbing them together in a gesture of plea. She cried uncontrollably as she repeatedly, "Please, please, please...."

The sight was heartbroken for Baski and for the first time today, tears filled her eyes.

She lowered her knees to the ground beside Sally, her head lowered. "Please, my king." She whispered.

Silence.

"Why would I want to do that, Baski?" He g*****d, his face expressionless. But fire banked in his eyes.

Baski could think of a few reasons, but she knows that all of them won't be appreciated by the king who wants to wear coldness as an overall undergarment.

Baski stared up at him. "This girl, Sally... You asked me one day why most people in Salem likes her so much..."

Lucien nodded, his eyes on the both of them.

"She fed us all when we were still enslaved, my lord. All the good food we ate there came from her." She smiled through her tears, "She'll steal from the kitchen, and bring it to the slave dungeons and share...."

Baski stared at the girl crying on the floor beside her. "Sometimes, she'll get caught by the guards and she'll be flogged. They give out a lot of punishments to people caught stealing, but she never stopped bringing us food... All those meals like feasts we ate, she stole all of them from the Royal kitchen and brought them to us."

King Lucien's eyes focused on Sally, not saying a word. But his face was no longer as cold.

Baski decided to tell the most important. "Sometimes, when a few guards catches her, she'll..." She swallowed tightly, "...she'll allow them take s*****l pleasures from her body so they'll let her go and not report her."

Her eyes met and held the King's. "She brings all those foods to us. All of them."

Sally was suddenly crying louder on the ground, sobs after sobs racked her throat. She didn't know how madam Baski found out about all these....she didn't know anybody knows.

Every slave of Mombana knows she fed them as much as she can, because the King Cone always tries to starve them.

What they don't know is the things she had to go through to make sure she gets food to them. She doesn't know that Baski knows.... She didn't know that anybody knows.

Lucien moved from his position at last. He walked closer to Sally, held her arm and urged her from the ground to stand up.

"Is it true? What Baski said now, is it true?" He g****d, staring at her teary face and red eyes.

Sally nodded gingerly. They're all true even though there's still more to the story. So much more.

She wasn't the only person that helped the people of Salem. Princess Danika did.

She kept stealing the princess's food until the princess found out one day. The princess didn't punish her.

Instead, she helped her steal foods. Ordered a lot of food in her own chambers just for her to pack them and go give to the slaves.

Sometimes, the princess would sneak to the kitchen with her and when they're caught she'll order the guards away and threaten them. Sometimes, it works. Sometimes, it doesn't.

The princess's father had once punished her with House-Arrest for one whole week because the guards reported seeing them in the kitchen. One week of not coming outside or seeing daylight.

The king had wanted to whip her, but the princess had refused adamantly and cried to her father saying that they should whip them both if he truly wants to whip Sally.

Those were just a little bit of the story, Sally thought.

Now, why won't she help her princess when her princess is being tortured? She'd rather die than not do a thing about it!

The king was staring at her face so carefully, and he hasn't said a thing. Sally got to look at his face closely, the thick scar on his cheeks that gave him a savage look.

At last, he pushed away from her and started out of the room. "Come and show me the dungeon, Sally."

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Chapter 22

Sally led the King and Baski to the particular dungeon where Vetta held Danika.

When Sally entered the cave, Vetta was ready to laugh at her for her incompetence and stupidity, and she was ready to tell her to get out because no amount of pleading will save her princess from her hand.

She opened her mouth, but the words were immediately cut off when Lucien strode right behind the little slave.

The shock on Vetta's face was massive.

"M-My King!" She stuttered out in shock, bowing her head.

But none of them were staring at her. The king, Baski and Sally's eyes were on a very unconscious Danika who's back was so bloody, the strokes of whip visible....some of it tearing her skin open.

"Oh, Creator...!" Sally started crying again so openingly, but she didn't reach for her princess. The king is there and he hasn't ordered this.

"My king, I—"

"Save it, Vetta." He g*****d in a low voice.

Vetta snapped her mouth shut, her heart in her throat. She expected the king to compliment her for making that daughter of a monster hurt.

But, it's almost obvious that the king doesn't share her sentiment.

Lucien's eyes took in the sight in front of him. He didn't say anything...but he didn't have to. His cold eyes got colder, his face hard as if carved out of granite.

"Sally, go and call Chad." He g*****d at last.

Sally didn't need to be told twice, she ran as if her whole life depended on it. She found Chad in the servant's quarters and gave the king's message breathlessly and sorrowfully.

Chad took off in a run with her and together, they arrived back at the dungeon. "Yes, my king." Chad bowed his head, awaiting command.

"Get her from the ground. Be careful not to make her wounds hurt, and take her to her room."

Chad went to action immediately, hating the sight before him. How can the mistress do something like this

Carefully, he lifted Danika in a caveman's manner, her midriff on his shoulder, her back in the air.

He started out of the room in a hurry and Sally followed him, still sobbing her eyes out. Baski turned to follow them but the king called her name.

"Yes, my king?" She answered, so much sorrow unmasked on her face.

King Lucien didn't say anything for a full minute, that usual unreadable expression on his face.

His eyes finally held her. "Use all the herbs you can find. Take some maids into the woods and gather the best of them, even the rare ones. Use Ankola if you have to, but heal her wounds and..." He paused.

Baski waited for him to finish. Telling her to gather all these can only mean that—

".....try your best to make sure she doesn't bear the physical marks of this day on her skin." He finished.

In other words, do everything possible to wipe the scars from her body. "Your wish is my command, my lord."

With that, she turned and hastily followed Chad and Sally. Vetta was finally left alone with Lucien. The king turned and stared at her.

"M-My king, I wanted to m-make her suffer for all t-the things they did to us! Baski shouldn't use herbs on her, let her feel the pain and carry the scars like we do!" She stated vehemently.

Silence. He just stared at her.

Finally, he walked past her. "Wait for me in my chambers, Vetta."

What?

She watched him as he followed behind Baski. Vetta doesn't need anyone telling her that the king is following them. That had Vetta sheathing in anger, her chest burning with jealousy.

Most of all, her heart is in her throat. She's scared of what the king has to say because of all that happened.

But she didn't let it get to her. She did nothing wrong. Nothing.

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Chad carried Danika into the room, Sally ran ahead, getting the bed ready. He laid her facedown on the bed.

There's no clothing covering her back, only b***d and bruises. Her eyes were closed, the streaks of her dried tears on her cheeks.

"Open the window for fresh air." Baski ordered as she entered the room a few moments later with some herb leaves on her hands. She must have made a stop to her room before coming over.

Sally ran to do what she said, opening the window for fresh air and a little bit of sunlight. Baski set her herbs on the table and began mixing them.

"Sally, use water to wipe the b***d away, let's see how much bruises we're facing. This herbs here will disinfect them and heal them a little bit. You'll follow me to the woods once we're done to get a whole lot of healing herbs we'll need."

"Alright, Madam Baski." She answered eagerly and went right ahead to get water.

While Baski mixed her herbs, Sally ran around and came back with a bowl of water and clean rag. She proceeded to clean the wounds even as she cried silently.

How can this mistress do this to the princess? The princess never did anything wrong! Nothing! Sally thought, her heart aching.

King Lucien stood at the door with Chad beside him. The king said nothing, his eyes watching the activities in front of him.

His face revealed nothing, but whenever Sally peeked a look at him, she would have sworn that there's banked-up anger there. It made her scared.

Is he angry at the princess? Or at the Mistress?

With the king, you'll never know. Or maybe, she's just imagining things, Sally thought.

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Chapter 23

Long minutes dragged by. Baski finished mixing her herbs and already, she's applying them to the princess's wounds.

Sally helps her to squeeze out the water from each scoop of wet grinded leaves, and she applies them to the wounds.

Sally was happy that the princess is unconscious. This hurts like the very hell, and her princess already suffered enough in one day.

The king was still leaning against the door, even though he'd long sent Chad away. He hasn't said anything else. His eyes just took everything in.

Finally, Baski said... "All done."

Sally breathed a sigh of relief as she took it all the wounds they covered. Tears folled her eyes again because her princess's back looks like a map of green leaves.

Baski faced the king. "I'll give her some concoctions to sleep really long and hard, because she needs all the rest and these herbs doesn't need the restlessness that will come from her awareness. Then, Sally and I would go into the woods in search of the rare herbs."

He nodded once, his eyes on the woman lying down on the bed.

Baski hesitated.

"What is it?" He spoke at last, looking at her.

"Uhm... She needs to stay in a quiet place, My King. Not noisy or disturbing place. I was hoping if you could have any other palace maid to come stay here with her." But she looked doubtful as she made the request and they all knows why.

They all hates her, and no one can be sure of being friend or foe when it comes to Danika. Sally stared helplessly at her princess.

Sally swallowed tightly and began. "M-Maybe I-I can stay with h-her. Madam Baski can get a-another—"

The king cut her off. "Baski, you aren't done here, am I right?"

Her head lowered. "Yes, you are, My king."

"When you're done here and go in search of herbs, have Chad bring her to my room."

He turned and walked away, leaving Baski and Sally's eyes widened and their mouths hanging open.



Vetta was so worriedly restless by the time the king entered his chambers after so much time has passed.

"My King....I know w-what it looks like, but I wasn't going to kill her or anything of that sort at all. It's just torture!" She said immediately as he strode past him.

Lucien turned and stared at her with fire in his eyes. "Why?"

She blinked, confused. "W-What?"

"Apart from the torture sessions that comes from the king to a slave, there should be reasons for any other torture session unless authorized by the king. Why did you torture her?"

"I-I-I" she was at loss of word. She swallowed. "But you gave me permission f-for it, my king. That night....five noonday after she became a slave, you gave me permission."

Silence. His cold angry unreadable eyes held hers

And then, "What did you promise to me during your request, Vetta?"

Shit, shit, shit! She knew he wasn't going to forget that...she'd hoped!

"I asked you for permission to hold a torture session for her and I p-promised no heavy stuffs."

"What did I say to you, Vetta?"

"You nodded and said to keep t-things at a m-minimal." She whispered shamefully.

“Whipping a slave within an inch of her life while shock-collaring her, is that what you call a ‘no heavy stuff’?”

“My king—“

“Is that what is called minimal, Vetta?”

“But, I didn’t really do anything so wrong! It’s just some minor whippings! No heavy strokes or hard strokes and—“

“Shut up.”

One single word that clamped her mouth shut.

He didn’t say anything again. The silence was so heavy, it made Vetta restless.

He walked closer to her and tilted her cheek to see his hard scarred face clearly. “What is going on with you lately?”

She swallowed tightly, trying to hide the angry she’s feeling. She didn’t expect thee questioning at all!

“These days, I look upon you with a new eyes.” He grated out angrily. “You have no right to do that to the King’s Slave, not unless I authorized it and I didn’t.”

Vetta could no longer control her anger. “But, she’s a slave, Lucien! I have right over all of them! She’s a slave and I’m your mistress! What about what her father did to us! To you! To me! To Chad! To the others!? What about that!?”

He let a few seconds of silence descend after that outburst.

And then, he fixed her with an intense stare. “She’s the King’s Slave. I own her. I decide what happens to her. I torture her. I hurt her. She’s my slave. She’s my property. My possession. Mine.” His voice was a deep intoned granite.

Vetta stood stunned, even as he turned away from her, giving her his back.

Those words were laced with so much anger and hate....but Vetta can’t help thinking that there’s a deeper undertone...

“Chad.” He called.

The door opened and he entered. “Yes, My King.”

“Escort the mistress to her quarters. She’s worked up and needs for rest for at least 72 hours.” He commanded.

“What!? You’re putting me under house arrest for t-three days!?” She was angry and astonished.

“Yes, Your Highness!” Chad replied, turned and took hold of her arm.

“Don’t touch me! I’ll walk on my own!” Vetta knew better than to struggle again him. It’ll be a thing of disgrace for servants to see her being manhandled out of the King’s Chambers.

She bit her lips so much. She wanted to screams words to the king. She wanted to say so many things, but she chose to be wise. She clamped her mouth shut.

“Your wish is my command, Your Highness.” She g*****d at last and started matching her way out.

“Vetta?” He called her when she reached the door.

“Yes, my king?”

He didn’t turn around when he spoke. “I freed my people because I want my people to experience being free again. Cone made me a monster, but it is my duty to protect my people. Let me carry all the burden alone. It is my responsibility. My duty as a king. As my father’s son.”

“There shouldn’t be two monsters together, or the vicinity will be in danger. Two monsters cannot stay in the same place.”

Finally, he turned and stared at her. There was sadness in his eyes, but there was conviction too. “We have been through so much together, Vetta, but the day I look upon you and see a monster is the day I let you go. Completely.”

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Chapter 24

Baski finished mixing the concoction and forced it down Danika’s throat. She was still unconscious and the concoction is to make her sleep well.

Chad was already waiting by the door when she was done. She nodded her head, signalling that he can take her now.

He bent down and lifted Danika up the same way he carried her into her room. Her midriff on his shoulder, her back in the air.

When they got to the king's room, he was sitting down behind his desk, writing. He didn't look up when they entered.

"Make a bed for her down there." He pointed besides his own bed.

"Already on it, my king." Baski replied.

Within minutes, she and Sally had another high big bed on the floor, besides the King's bed. They spread a fresh new bedsheet on it and built a tent around it.

Chad laid her facedown on it and gently turned her head to the side. They watched her even breathing for a few seconds before they turned away.

Sally was so uncomfortable with this development. The king hates the princess and now he wants her to sleep in his room? What if he kills her at night?

"You can all leave." He said.

They bowed to the king and the three of them left.

Sally came out of the door, her heart in her throat. She kept looking back at the door of his chambers as she walked, filled with uncertainty.

"She'll be fine. Trust me." Baski's voice drew her attention to the older woman's face.

Sally nodded. "Thank you so much, madam Baski."

Her lips curved into a little smile. "You don't have to thank me, my dear." She said simply before she walked ahead of her. Sally followed her obediently.

Lucien raised his head from his scroll and allowed himself to stare at the woman who's asleep in his room.

The bed she laid in belongs to Melia. Ugly memories of the day of Melia's death rose in his mind, he closed his eyes tight to stave off the memories. But they wouldn't go.

Eighteen-year-old Melia who just got married and heavy with her first child, happy that her husband allowed her to see her family for the first time since she got married.

Lucien can still remember the look of horror on her face when Cone's men stunned into the library where the both of them was.

He can still remember the look of terror on her face when she was cut open with a sword and he was taken away as he watched his sister bleed to death.

He stopped writing, closing his eyes so tight in an effort to shut the memories away. The beginning of hell.

Vetta sat in the wooden chair in her room, restless. The king gave her house arrest. The more she think about it, the more is hard for her to believe.

The most important thing to a slave is freedom, the king knows that. Giving her house arrest for three whole days shows just how angry he is at her.

Vetta got up from the chair, restless. She didn't want things to be like this. She thought about going to the King's room. Who knows, a good blowjob might work well on her favor.

But, the king is too angry and it's too early. She has stayed just five hours in her room and already, she needs freedom. How does she survive a 72 hours house arrest!?

A knock came on the door. "Mistress, your food has arrived."

"Come in." She ordered, going towards her bed, she lowered herself on it.

The maid entered and served her food silently on the table. Vetta was curious to know what's happening outside her room.

"The king's slave, what's going on with her?" She asked.

"Oh, I heard that madam Baski and Sally just finished applying herbs on her. They went into the woods hours ago to get the Albolko and other rare herbs too."

"And what about her? Is she conscious yet?"

"I dont think so, mistress."

Pleasure washed over Vetta. She hopes the woman would even die from there.

No, on second thought, she shouldn't die now because the king will only hate her more for making his slave die.

No, there are other times for death. How is just a time to make her suffer.

The maid finished, came closer and lowered her voice. "There's a rumor going around among the maids, servants and slaves, Mistress."

That piqued Vetta's interest. "What is that?"

The maid look around carefully and whispered, "There's a rumor that the slave princess was taken to the King's room. That's where she is."

“What!?” Hot lash of anger washed through Vetta. “What did you just say!?”

The intensity of her anger surprised the maid and made her scared, she drew back and began backpedaling. “Well, I-It’s just a rumor Mistress.”

“But, is the slave still in her room?”

“The slave princess?”

Vetta hated that name. She doesn’t like hearing the word ‘princess’ attached to Danika, it makes her really angry. She’s a slave now and a slave will always remain a slave.

“Yes, Danika.” She spat the name with so much venom.

The maid shook her head. “No, she’s not in her room, Mistress.”

Could it be that the rumors are true? She can’t imagine the king giving such decree but could it be truth!?

She dismissed the maid, still seething in rage. She’d punished Danika because she had the effrontery to sleep in the King’s bed.

Could it truly be that her punishment had led the bitch even closer to the King’s bed?

Vetta hoped this isn’t true. She just hopes it isn’t!

Hours later, Lucien was sleeping when he heard whimpering and cries. He took sleeping pills but sleep is always far to come. And when it comes, it doesn’t stay.

He knows it’s the middle of the night when he woke. He stared down at his bed to see where the cries were coming from. It’s Danika.

Her eyes were still closed, but it’s obvious she’s having a terrible nightmare.

Not being a stranger to nightmares, Lucien knows that it must be because of the events of the day knocking on her subconscious.

When Baski and the slave, Sally, came back from herb-hunting, they’d taken Danika back to her room and applied the herbs. She was supposed to stay in her room, but noises are always too much in the other sides of the palace.

Baski had implored him to let Danika sleep in his chambers, and she’d promised to stay a room away so that she’ll be available if she’s needed in the middle of the night.

Lucien didn’t call her though. Instead he got out from bed and got from drinking water from his table.

He climbed Danika's bed and raised her head up. He pushed the cup to her mouth but she whimpered, clamping her mouth shut.

"Open up, Danika." He ordered roughly.

Her eyes slowly open and she gazed at him through dazed eyes. "My King..."

He stiffened. He's her master, not her king. Since the first day he corrected her in the dungeon, she hasn't called him the name again.

"My King..." She whispered again, her dazed eyes staring at his features.

"Drink up." He only said, pushing the cup towards her mouth.

"It's not...poisoned?" She whispered, sweat forming on her forehead.

His brows furrowed. "Why would it be?"

"Because...you...h-hate...me..so much."

"I'll never try to kill you through poisoning."

Her head rolled to one side and suddenly she was lying in his arm, "I'll take it...because your...word...is..gold."

Her mouth found the water and she drank in large gulps, her hand tightening on his robe. Lucien doesn't like the physical contact but he allowed it.

He knows that she won't remember any of this in the morning.

When she was done, he withdrew the cup and tried to get up but she clung to him, her dazed eyes staring at his. "What is wrong with me?"

"You're heavily induced on pills and portions."

"So cold..."

"You're cold?" He asked with a furrowed brow, knowing that the room is not cold at all.

She raised her hand and palmed his scarred cheek.

"Your...eyes....they're so cold...." She whispered drowsily.

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Chapter 25

When she was done, Lucien withdrew the cup and tried to get up but she clung to him, her dazed eyes staring at his. "So cold..."

"You're cold?" He asked with a furrowed brow, knowing that the room is not cold at all.

"Your...eyes....they're so cold..." She whispered.

Lucien said nothing, knowing that the woman isn't herself. She was heavily induced on pills and potions, and they have side effects.

He knows that she won't remember any of these in the morning. And so, he just stared at her.

It's the first time he allowed himself to stare at her so upclose. The first time he allowed himself to really look at her.

To see Danika....not Cone's Daughter.

She's beautiful. The knowledge went to his cold heart and whispered on it. Beautiful and so pure-looking.

Like a woman who never saw the rough side of their world. Like a princess.

She has a bow mouth, sharp pointed nose that took in sharp breaths, and deep blue eyes that stared up at him in a daze. Her beauty rivaled many.

For the first time, his raging demons saw her as Danika, not Cone's daughter. He saw her as princess Danika, instead of Slave Danika.

It is a bad idea looking upon her like that. But this is midnight. And she's not herself.

And he's not himself too.

"Why....do....you..have eyes so...cold?" She whispered, blinking sleepily.

He didn't say anything for so long, just letting his eyes take in her features. And then, "They have seen more than any human should ever see."

She took shallow breaths, her eyes dilated. "Can they....ever be...warm again?"

“No.”

“Why...?”

“They’ve been cold for so long.” he looked away, “They’ve forgotten what it’s like to be warm.”

“That’s....very....sad....” She raised a trembling hand and ran it down the scar, her hand tracing it.

“Where does....it end? The scar...?” She asked, seeing the way the line went past his neck and disappeared into his robe.

“It goes far.” He said simply.

“They...must...have...hurt....”

“They did.”

“Do they...still...hurt?”

“Sometimes.”

She took a ragged breath. “When....she...tortured me...she....said she...wants to roast...my p-privates. Said...after all, my f-father did it...to the king. Is it true?” She whispered drowsily.

He froze there. Why would Vetta tell her that? She knows how sensitive that subject is for him.

The pain of that very day came back to him. The most excruciating feeling of them all, he was sure he’d almost died. Cone had looked upon him, laughing in excitement.

Roasting her privates?

He would feel so much aversion for her, he would hate her, he would keep hurting her. But, he can never do that to her. He doesn’t know why but the thought is not one he entertains.

He allowed his eyes to caress her face examiningly. She would die under such torture. No two ways about it.

“Is...it...true?” She whispered again.

Lucien doesn’t want her knowing any of his weakness at all. But he also knows that she won’t remember this tomorrow.

“Yes.”

“Must have...hurt...like hell...”

“It hurt worst than hell.”

“I’m so...sorry....”

“I don’t need your pity.”

“My back....hurts...” She cried out, her head pounding.

“Your back will heal. Faster too.” He looked away from her, “You’re lucky for that.”

“Yours....they didn’t...heal s-so fast?”

“No. Never had that luxury.”

“I can still remember....that day....” She whispered, her face sad. “Your torture s-session.”

He tried to close his mind to it, but one thing about all the memories and pains he’s been through is that none of them can be pushed away as if they never happened.

He remembered that day vividly. “It’s the first day I saw you. Cone’s daughter. Even held in chains, I wanted to tear you apart and make you bleed.”

“First time...I saw you too.... Prince Lucien...the enslaved prince I’ve heard about all my life, but has....never seen. I saw the...rage in your eyes...when I looked into them....when you stared at...me.”

She’d overseen his torture session that day. She stood at the corner like a regal proud princess, while the guards whipped him with all their power.

She stood staring when they tied him up and forced him to eat like a dog. On his knees. She’d been watching when they cut him open with a knife on his shoulder, while he bled.

That day was the first time he was tortured and he didn’t feel the pain of the torture.

He channeled all the pain into hate as he stared at the Princess of Mombana. He’d hated her so much and he fed that hatred for four solid excruciating years.

That was the day he vowed that he’ll have the princess as his slave one day.

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Chapter 26

That was the day he vowed that he'll have the princess as his slave one day.

"Oh....Colder...." She sounded sad and sleepy. Her voice dragged him out of the bitter memory.

"Are you cold?" He g*****d in a hard voice.

"Your eyes....they got colder...." She swallowed, "...filled with so much hate."

He can't bear to stare at her face for long because no matter how he tries....he must still see her. Cone's daughter. "I hate you, Danika."

Her lips twitched and she blinked ever so slowly. "I know....My King."

He looked away.

She placed a hand to his chest. "There are scars here too... Internal scars. Here....they seem bigger there...in your heart."

"They are."

"Can they....ever heal?"

"No."

"That's sad..."

He laid her back on the bed and pulled away. He got up. "Go back to sleep." he said curtly, "You'll be fine on the morrow."

Through her dazed eyes, she watched him leave.

She watched him walk like a panther as he went to the table and dropped the water back. A huge wounded panther.

She watched him climb the bed and lay down on it. She felt a burn to her chest all of a sudden. Why does her heart hurts to watch him?

As she drifted back to sleep, she wondered if she is bruised there too.

Danika woke up the next morning, disoriented. Her body heavy, her surroundings completely unfamiliar.

She opened her eyes and can't recognize where she is. This wealthy luxurious place can only mean one place....

No...no way.

She sat up and her eyes widened. She is really in the King's Chambers! She slept here!

"Oh heavens, oh heavens, oh heavens, oh heavens! What did I do!?" She whispered to herself in sheer horror.

She peeked up...up...up...to the top of the bed and let out a deep breath of relief. He isn't there. The king isn't here.

As she got off from the bed, the event of yesterday came crashing into her head. Being taken from her room....being flogged...she fainted...

With the return of the memory came the recognition of the dull pain coming from her back. The pain wasn't as much as it was yesterday....as much as she expected it to be.

She tiptoed to the nearest mirror and stared at her back. A map of green leaves and whitish concoctions.

She's been treated. Treated thoroughly.

She felt better. So much better for someone who almost died.

The memory of the rest of yesterday was a blur. Sally had saved her, Danika was very sure. She knew she was at the blink of death, yesterday and the mistress was ready to kill her.

She stared at the tent she'd laid in, and she still can't believe that she'd slept in the King's chambers. THE KING'S CHAMBERS!

"You're awake."

The deep familiar baritone, had her turning towards the library just in time to see him getting out of it.

Her knees lowered on their own accord to the floor, her head lowered too. "Master." She whispered.

King Lucien stood at the door of the library, leaning back against it. "Rise."

She stood, her head lowered. When she heard footsteps of him walking towards his writing desk, she allowed herself to stare at him. How exactly she get here yesterday?

“I’m really sorry about s-sleeping here and—“

“You wouldn’t sleep here if I wasn’t aware of it, Danika.” He interrupted curtly without staring at her.

“Oh...” She was at loss of word.

“How are you feeling?”

“I feel...better.” She answered truthfully.

“Good. Because you’re going back to your normal activities today. That includes working the mines, doing laundries, cutting grasses and all the external works.”

“Yes, master.” She whispered without hesitation, pushing the dread and hurt from her mind.

You’re a slave, Danika. You’re no longer a princess.

He finally looked up and their eyes met.

Immediately, bits and pieces of the memories of last night came rushing full force to Danika. She remembered a bit.

Being in his arms....running her hands on his face....on his chest....talking openly to him...

She can’t remember what they talked about. But he’d allowed her.

He’d allowed her. He’d taken her into his arms and he allowed her. He even answered her questions. For the first time, she’d really looked him in the face up close....and he allowed her.

He’d allowed it because he thought she wouldn’t remember, after all, she’d been heavily doused in pills and portions.

She wiped the expression of knowledge from her eyes. He doesn’t need to know that she has the knowledge of their private moment in her head. She’ll try her best too to remember their conversation.

Their eyes held for so long, before he lowered his eyes to the sealed scroll in front of him. “Get out. Tell Baski that I summon her presence here.”

“Yes, master.” She turned and walked out of his chambers.

With each step she took, she couldn't help but remember the night before. The memories...

She'd had always thought that whenever she looks him up close in the face, she would see the monster he is. The monster that has tortured her, and inflicted a lot of pain on her body.

She didn't see a monster last night. She saw a heavily scarred wounded man.

Baski entered the King's chambers and found him being dressed in his royal court garment.

“My king. You summoned me...” She said immediately, her head lowered.

King Lucien said nothing while two royal seamstresses dressed him up. Baski kept quiet, already used to her King's nature and talklessness.

The king is very sensitive to the scars in his body, and because of that, just these twin seamstresses....Mora and Dora, always dressed him.

Not the royal dressers or the maids or the servants. Just them, or Chad or Vetta or even her Baski.

“You can go.” He g*****d.

The seamstresses bowed and scurried out of the room. His royal garments hasn't been done properly. Some buttons hasn't been closed.

He stared at Baski.

The older woman walked closer and started working the buttons in silent. After the buttons followed the cape of his garment.

When he spoke, his words were curt and straight to the point.

“Make sure she doesn't work for so many days to come, Baski. Send out orders to the maids, slaves, servants and slave trainers both in the palace and in the mine sights, that all of them should stay out of her way. I find out she worked, the person responsible will be punished.”

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Chapter 27

When King Lucien spoke, his words were curt and straight to the point.

“Make sure she doesn’t work for so many days to come, Baski. Send out orders to the maids, slaves, servants and slave trainers both in the palace and in the mine sights, that all of them should stay out of her way. I find out she worked, the person responsible will be punished.”

“Yes, my king.” Baski wasn’t really surprised. It’s just like night he’d visited the girl in her bedroom. He’d given orders just like this...only lesser.

“That girl.... Sally....” he paused, “...these orders extends to her too. At least for today.”

“I understand, My King.”

Just like that day, he pinned her with a glare. “I don’t need feedbacks, Baski. I don’t care. Make sure you don’t bring them.”

“Of course, My Lord.”

He nodded once. “You’re dismissed.”

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Danika did her best to remember the events of Last night clearly as she walked to her room, but it was all blurry, the conversation.

She was really curious about them and she doesn’t know why. Maybe because she could never believe that the ice king would ever talk with her, talk more of answering her questions...repeatedly.

But what questions did she ask? She couldn’t remember.

When she got to her room, Sally was already rushing towards her. One look at her face had relieve coursing down Sally’s body.

“Oh, thank the Creator! I was so scared all through the night. I thought maybe the king will kill you during the night! I’m so relieved that you’re alright, my princess!”

“I’m glad, I’m alright too, Sally.” She surprised Sally when she filled the distance between them and wrapped her arm around her.

Tears filled Sally's eyes and she hugged her princess so tight. A lot of things had scared her yesterday. She can still remember the terror that coursed through her body when she saw her princess become unconscious.

"My princess... I'm so glad you're alright." She sniffled.

Danika knew she would have died yesterday. She was almost sure that she felt the life leaving her body. Sally had saved her life.

"Thank you for saving my life, Sally. I know you're the one that saved me." Danika patted her back reassuringly.

Sally shook her head miserably. "I was almost too late...! I thought no one would help....I was so scared that the wicked mistress would kill you!"

Danika pulled away from her. Using her index finger, she collected the tears that ran down Sally's cheeks. "Tell me what happened.... Afterwards..."

Together, they walked to the bed and settled down on it. Sally told her everything that happened. How she pleaded with Madam Baski and how Madam Baski helped her to go plead with the king.

"You went to the king alone?" Danika asked wide-eyed.

Sally nodded vigorously. "I was so desperate, my princess. I didn't really stop to think it through."

She told her how they pleaded with the king. How scared she was when the king dismissed her. How madam Baski knelt down and begged with her too.

"Baski? She pleaded f-for me?" Danika was so surprised.

Sally nodded again. "Yes, my princess." She went ahead to tell her that madam Baski told the king about how she brought them food when they were enslaved and all the difficulties she had to go through.

"But, how did she know that? You didn't tell any of them about it."

"No, I didn't, my princess. I was surprised too, but I was most happy and grateful when the king finally agreed to help me....to help you."

It was still shocking to Danika that the king came by himself to stop the mistress from whipping her. The king hates her. It's something she would have never expected at all.

Then, Sally bit her lip uncertainly. She stared up at her princess hesitantly.

“What happened?” She asked Sally.

“Uhm...that is, I....I was ready to tell the king how you also helped to bring them food and—“

“Oh, Sally... I hope you didn’t say those to him?” Danika palmed her head, suddenly developing a headache.

“No, no, no, no, I almost told him but I didn’t. I know how much you don’t like to talk about yourself, my princess, but I was so desperate, I almost told him how you helped to feed them too and provide so much supplement too.”

“The people of Salem hates me so much for being my father’s daughter. It wouldn’t have made any difference, Sally.” She stated matter-of-factly.

“But, my princess....”

“Don’t ever talk about it, Sally. Not to anyone.” Danika looked away sadly, “It doesn’t matter.”

Sally doesn’t like seeing the sadness in her eyes. Her princess already has a lot of things to be sad about without having to add this one to it too.

Her princess has clothings on, so she couldn’t see her back.

“Your back....” Sally whispered worriedly. “How is it?”

“It’s so much better than I expected it to be.” She said truthfully. “It hurts, but it’s so much better.”

Sally grinned in happiness and relief. “That’s because we used lots and lots of herbs and rare herbs. Madam Baski said that the king gave orders that the wound be treated thoroughly so they wouldn’t scar.”

“Really?” Danika’s brows knitted in thought.

Why would the king give orders for her not to bear scars? Her father physically scarred him severally, so why would he want her not to bear scars?

Danika can never understand the king. He’s so unpredictable....so confusing. Her mind prickled and she tried her best to remember the conversations they had the night before....

She couldn’t. The knowledge lurked just inside her mind...just a little out of reach...

“Yes, my princess...” Sally continued, “I was surprised too, but that was the orders he gave. Madam Baski and I had to go so very deep into the woods in search of rare herbs. They have complicated names but let me try to remember their names, my princess...”

Sally’s eyes shot up, her brows knitted together in thought as she tried to remember.

A small smile trickled Danika’s cheeks at the familiar Sally she was so used to when she was still a real princess in her own kingdom. The familiar sight of Sally trying to remember things and pronounce difficult words was...relaxing.

“Erm....we got Oxalis and Tansies, even panacea vegetables! Oh, my princess...they were so hard to find!” She revealed incredulously.

Danika’s lips twitched again. “That’s why they’re called rare herbs, Sally.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

She nodded in understanding. “I’m so glad they worked. The wicked mistress whipped you so bad, that wicked witch!”

Danika was quick to cover her mouth with the palm of her hand. “Shh, keep it quiet, Sally. I don’t want you to get hurt or punished at all.”

Sally nodded her head in understanding. When Danika removed her hand, Sally looked around carefully and then, she leaned closer...

“There are rumors that the King punished the wicked mistress Vetta for whipping you ” Sally whispered.

That was....shocking. The most shocking she’s heard. “What?”

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Chapter 28

“There are rumors that the King punished the wicked mistress Vetta for whipping you ” Sally whispered.

That was....shocking. The most shocking she's heard. "What?"

Sally pulled back and continued in a whisper. "There's a rumor that the king placed her under house arrest for three noon days."

A thrill of pleasure shot through Danika's body at the knowledge. She must be a bad person for being happy but she couldn't help it.

Three days without having to see Mistress Vetta are days to look ahead to, even though, her back hurts and she still has to work, she's still happy.

"I was so happy when I heard it, my princess! I'm really happy about it." Sally enthused excitedly.

"I'm happy to hear it too, Sally." Danika finally admitted.

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Danika just finished taking her bath, getting ready to go to the mines. Her body really hurts badly and she'll give anything not to have to work today.

But then again, she doesn't want to allow herself to dwell on thing she can't change. Sally had taken her clothes out and got them ironed.

By the time she was out of the bathroom, her clothes were ironed and her sandals cleaned out. She thanked Sally gratefully.

Just then, the door opened and Baski entered. "Time for your morning treatment, young lady."

"Good morning, Madam Baski." Sally said. She and Danika bowed their heads in greeting.

Baski, always taking hurried steps, waved them away and entered deeper into the small room towards the table. She set down all her herbs.

"I'm glad you're done with your bath. Lie on the bed and give me your back." She said distractedly, sorting through her herbs.

Danika did as she said while Sally helped Baski just like they did yesterday.

Several minutes later, the herbs are ready and they went ahead to apply them on her back. Baski was happy about the results of yesterday's treatment.

"Your wounds are looking so much better already, Danika. I believe that it won't scar and there will be no sign of it in a few weeks to come." She expressed as she applied another grinded green leaves.

"Thank you so much." She whispered, trying to breath through the searing pain coming from her back.

An hour has passed already before they were done. After the herbs, they gave her potions and then the pills too.

"All done." Baski announced.

Danika was hurting horribly, tears streaming down her face from the pain of it, while Sally patted her arm in consolation.

"Thank you, Madam Baski." Sally said tearfully afterwards, her princess's pain getting to her.

Baski nodded and patted Danika's shoulders, "You're a strong woman. You'll be fine."

"Thank you." She whispered hoarsely.

Sally huddled closer to her. "You just lie down here, my princess, while I get everything ready for working the mines. You don't have to stress yourself and—"

"There will be no working mines or any kind of work for you, Danika, for this whole week. No kind of work. Nothing. You just concentrate on getting well and better." Baski ordered then, getting up from the bed.

Shocked silence met her got curt words. Sally's eyes widened as she stared at Madam Baski.

Danika was sure her ears wasn't hearing right. She was scared to hope.

She swiveled her head to see the woman clearly. "Really? But the king—"

"Forget what the king said and take my word for it, young lady. And you, Sally, you can take this day off too. Take care of the King's sick slave." Her herbs-bag packed, she faced the door, "I'll come back in the night for your night treatment."

After Baski left, Sally got from the bed and started dancing to no music. "I'm so happy! I'm so happy! I'm so happy!"

She danced and smiled and hummed music using her throat.

Being very horrible in dancing, her dance steps were really funny and at a point, Danika found herself chuckling tearfully while watching her.

Danika was so happy and relieved that more tears only left her eyes even as her lips kept smiling. "I'm happy too..."

Sally saw it and gave a mock pout. "Admit it, my princess. You want to laugh at Sally's poor dancing!"

"No...it's not poor..." She lied in a hoarse voice, distracted from the pain on her back.

Sally only danced harder and more worse, and before Danika knew it, she was giggling like a child as she watched.

At last, she turned and smiled so hard at her princess. "The day is suddenly looking so bright, my princess!"

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Danika slept the rest of the day off and Sally took care of her. It was evening before she was able to get up and get out of the room.

"Let's get some fresh air." She told Sally in the evening.

As they got out of the palace, Sally grinned up at her. "Where do you want to go, my princess?"

"Library. Let's find any library in town." She replied as they walked out of the gate of the palace.

The evening wind brew, making clothings sway around, hairs fans the fans of their owners as everywhere was filled with people who walked to their various destination.

The breath of fresh air was refreshing for Danika. The only time she gets out of the palace is when they go to the mining site.

It's refreshing and beautiful to be going out of the palace for another reason.

She walked in her usual unhurried steps, her heads and shoulders high, her hands held together in her midriff beneath her clothes. Her clothes all ironed out, and her long blond hair nested styled and braided, she stood out as she walked....the regalia of her being clinging to her like a second skin.

While she walked behind, Sally skiddered her way ahead, laughing and talking and greeting anyone and everyone.

"Wow! Look at this!" She'd indicate to a flower, stopping to pluck a little bit of it's leaves. She showed it to Danika with a huge smile on her face.

"It's called a Rose Flower." Danika supplied with a small smile as she walked.

Sally started ahead too, even as she stilled talked. "That's the Rose?"

"That's the Rose."

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Chapter 29

Sally started ahead too, even as she stilled talked. "That's the Rose?"

"That's the Rose."

"Oh, it's so beautiful, my princess!" She skidded aside and gently plucked the flowers out. Two long beautiful and fresh looking Rose flowers.

She perforated her hair with the piece of flower and clicked up at Danika with a smile. "How do I look, my princess!?"

With the flower stuck in one side of her black hair, Sally looked more beautiful...more child-like. "You look beautiful, Sally."

She flushed under the compliment. Then, she started closer to Danika and placed the remaining flower on her hair. "There. You look so beautiful."

"Thank you." Danika said to her with a smile.

Then, they continued their journey to the village. They went in search of a library.

The people frowned and murmured whenever they see Danika, but they smile and wave at Sally who smiles and waves right back.

Used to the antagonism, Danika just bows her head slightly to any elder she passes and continues her journey anyway.

It took so much time before they were able to locate an old library downtown. They entered and walked to the counter.

Sally talked with the library worker, got a card and paid some coins. Then, they went through the shelves.

Danika went through each pages of books with so much happiness on her face. Tears prickled her eyes because these books reminded her of a life that once was hers.

Sally doesn't understand a thing and wasn't really a lover of books but it doesn't matter. She's so used to making her princess's happy. Being happy from her princess's happiness.

Danika read to her and tried to teach her new words and how to write. They spent so much time in the library.

By the time they got out, sun was almost down. They heard about a festival at the other side of town and Sally dragged her to it.

They watched people dance and celebrate. Happiness everywhere. The loud shout of children singing and dancing. It was a very beautiful night.

Danika slept with a smile on her face.

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On the third day after her torture session, she was feeling way better. The pain in her back reduced too.

While she took her bath, Sally prepared to go to the mines. Sally already complained that the slave trainer keeps asking her about her princess.

"I don't understand his interest in you, my princess and it makes me so scared. He is so dangerous!." She'd confided on her.

It scared Danika too, but she didn't allow herself to dwell on it. If there's one thing she has learnt to do since she became a slave, it is to live one day at a time.

She was done bathing and dressing up, when Baski entered and redressed her wound.

Danika noticed that the woman was more on edge than usual. After she redressed her wound, she asked her what the problem is.

When she went so long without saying anything, Danika gave up that she'll answer. But then, she did.

"It's Remeta. She's refused eating for days now. She does it some times but these days just gets worse.... It's been three days." Her voice cracked in the end.

A wave of guilt filled Danika. The same fifteen year old girl her father brutalized. "I'm sorry."

Baski got up, "It doesn't matter. She'll get over it, she always does. Make sure to take your pills after eating."

"Alright, ma'am.

"The king is going to the Royal Court but he will request for your presence in seven round turns of the long pointer. I would have come get you, but I'll be staying home with Remeta today. I already informed the king."

Seven round turns of the long pointer means in seven hours.

Danika could almost swear that the woman looked sad as she informed her of this. Almost too sad. Why?

She nodded again anyway. "Alright, Madam Baski."

Baski nodded and walked of the door. Danika was surprised when the older woman came back again through the door. "Danika?"

"Yes, ma'am?"

She hesitated. "There are some things...even the king has no control over."

"What?" Danika asked curiously, bewildered.

"N-Nevermind." She turned and walked out again.

Danika cocked her head to the side in thought of the woman's strange words and behavior.

She shrugged when it wasn't making sense and decided to go for a walk.

One of these days, she will go to Baski's home and see Remeta. She doesn't know how it'll be to see the little girl but she felt a sense of responsibility to do so. The guilt riding her is too much.

You're not your father. You're Danika. She tried to tell herself in her heart to lessen the guilt she feels.

It doesn't work.

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Baski stood in front of the King who has finished dressing in his formal garments.

"I redressed her wounds and applied new herbs on her. Her back looks better and her wounds are not infected. "She recounted.

The king said nothing. Baski doesn't know the meaning of 'no feedbacks'. The woman purposely chooses not to understand that particular command, and Lucien doesn't know why.

"I already relayed your order to see her later, your Highness. I hope there is nothing else you want me to do before I go?"

He walked to the desk and started rolling the scrolls one after the other until they were all folded on the desk. He didn't look at her when he asked, "How is Remeta?"

Baski's heart broke a little at the sad question. "She's n-not doing so well, your Majesty."

He didn't say anything for so long.

"Be strong, Baski." He g*****d at last.

Baski knows what that means. She should prepare herself....she might never get her sweet lovely little girl again. A time might come when Remeta might be alive, but Remeta is dead.

Tears filled the woman's eyes but she blinked it back. "I'm trying to be, My King." She said hoarsely.

"Bring her to the palace one of these days."

"Thank you, your highness. I will."

Silence descended between them. Again.

"Does she know? The reason why she's being summoned in seven round turns of the long pointer?" He asked at last.

"I-I'm so sorry, my king. I tried telling her...but no matter how much I try—"

"You couldn't." He finished for her.

She lowered her head miserably. "How do I tell her that she'll be having another introduction and this time around she's summoned by four kingdoms her father made enemies with when he was still alive.....four kingdoms and still counting? How do I tell her that it's either she's introduced or our kingdom will go to war with these kingdoms?"

The king said nothing. He lifted his scrolls and started walking towards her....towards the door.

Then, he stopped in front of her. His face devoid of emotions, he held her eyes. "You shouldn't have to tell her all those, Baski. You should have just informed her that the maids are coming in the evening to get her ready for another introduction."

Then, he walked past her and out of the door.

When Baski allowed the tears to run freely down her face, she didn't know how she was crying for.

Is it Remeta or Danika? Or both?

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Chapter 30

Sally has gone to the mines too. Left alone, Danika needed some fresh air outdoor.

She got up and slipped her legs into her sandals. She looked around. Her room looks beautiful because of the way Sally decorated it.

She smiled taking in the new features. The fresh flowers. The lightbulbs. The new floor carpets. Already, she was counting the minutes before Sally comes back again.

She walked out of the palace and took a first visit to the library where she spent a good number of time.

It was afternoon by the time she got back into the palace and strode towards the garden of the palace. She was staring at them with fascination when her back prickled.

Someone is watching her.

She look behind her and stared up. There she stood at the window, staring at her with eyes filled with so much loathing. Vetta, the king's mistress.

The woman was still holed up in her room and from the look on her face, Danika could see that the woman is not happy about that at all.

In fact, the woman looked like she's half-way out of her mind in the captivity. Danika bowed her head slightly in greeting.

Vetta only glared harder at her. Her hate for Danika only grew in her state of confinement.

After staying in this place for so many hours, she was so agitated and she felt so caged. She hated—HATED—seeing the bitch responsible for her predicament.

How can something like this happen to her? Just because of a stupid slave!?

Vetta tried to calm herself. She's already well-rested and her head is working best. She will deal with Danika so much!

Only this time around....she'll deal with her in a much better way. She just has to come up with a much better plan that'll get rid of the bitch one way or another.

Danika saw the way Vetta was staring at her. She stared right back at the woman without ducking her head like a coward. This wicked woman that almost killed her.

Danila didn't come this far to be killed by anybody. She already got this far. And one day, she will have her freedom again. One day, she will pick up the pieces of her life.

She would never be a princess again, but she can be a scholar. She is far more educated than even the most educated privileged women in these kingdoms.

Finally, she ignored the look of loathing the woman was sending her way, with her head held high, she walked away from the garden.

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Baski didn't know how long she cried. She finished crying and wiped her eyes clean. It doesn't matter who she cried for. Some things just can't be helped or changed.

She turned to walk out of the door when it opened again, and the king strode in. If he was surprised that she's still there, he didn't let it show.

He walked towards his wardrobe, withdrew his belt of gold and fixed it around his waist. He saw her teary face and his lips thinned.

She hesitated, "Can I ask if a-another kingdom sent their messenger already?"

"Four kingdoms sent their messengers. I got news that there's a fifth kingdom, but there's no messenger yet."

"Oh." She lowered her head. She felt sad. There is no getting out of it this time. Even king Lucien can't stop it

He looked her in the eyes then. "I am working to abolish the tradition of introduction of the king's slaves. I want to abolish a lot of traditions too, but they are not easy. Not at all. And they will take a lot of time but I won't give up." he palmed his head like he has some terrible headache, "Some traditions has to go."

It dawned on Baski then that he isn't as unaffected as she thought. He's just doing the greatest job at hiding it.

She nodded, "I know, my king. I know you never give up! And even if you fail in your mission for a better life for all of us low-borns, we all know it's not because of lack of trying, my king." She said passionately.

His Adam's apple worked as he swallowed. "You give so much credit to a king that no longer has a heart, Baski. A king that can't feel." I turned his back to her, "It is only duty and my sense of responsibility for my people guiding me."

Baski wanted to tell him that he still has a heart because of all the good he's been doing and all his battles for them.

Just a sense of responsibility would never have won all the battle king Lucien has fought for them....the battles he fights for them everyday.

Most of these scrolls he writes day and night are petitions to all the twelve kingdoms all over England. He is trying to right so many wrongs in this dark world....

It's difficult. Because the people who are supposed to be the ones to come together and grant those petitions are the people who are enjoying the 'wrongs' too much.

Baski took in his face thoroughly, and her chest hurts for him. He is fighting for others, but who will fight for him?

His demons remained unslain and yet, he tries to slay the demons of others. To fight for helpless people like Remeta.

Tears prickled the older woman's eyes. "We will follow you to hell and back!...just like we did before, my king." She stated firmly.

"You give so much credit to a king that can't father an heir to his throne, Baski." His cold eyes met hers, but Baski could see the underlying pain behind them.

He still has a heart...even though it's rusty from unuse. What affects Baski the most is that she hopes the king won't lose what's left from that heart after today.

Would it tear him out to have to watch the other kings introduce his slave?

Forced-s*x happen all the time in the world of slavery and it's one of the most natural thing in their world. But even at the time of their captivity, King Lucien has always found it hard to watch it happen.

He fights tooth and nail to stop it from happening, even in chains. He hated watching it happen. Watching an introduction. Loathed it immensely.

Maybe that was why King Cone made sure he always watched. Why he made sure that king Lucien was always there.....staring...hearing the screams...but unable to do a thing about it.

Would it have felt good if the wicked king was alive to hear his own daughter's screams of excruciating pain today?

He would probably roll around in the grave hearing it.

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Chapter 31

She was walking through the back of the palace when a hand suddenly shot out and pulled at her.

It startled her so much, her mouth opened to scream but a deep voice cut her off.

“Don’t make a sound or you’ll regret it.” Karandy snapped at her.

Danika snapped her mouth shut. The man was holding her tight from behind and he was hurting her wounded back. She bit her lips hard.

He dragged her to an isolated part of the palace, entered a small store and locked the door.

“You’ve been a very bad bitch, haven’t you? What did you keep doing for the chief maid that makes her give you days off repeatedly?” He snarled at her.

Danika swallowed the fear she was feeling at being alone with him. Instead, she stared the slave trainer square in the face, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You think me stupid? You stupid cunt.”,

He started stalking closer to her, backing her to the wall and closing the distance between them, he wrapped his hand into her hair and yanked it back sharply.

“I’ve come to take what you’ve been denying me, you bitch.” He snapped roughly, “You’re a slave now and a slave’s dirty body belongs to all.”

“Let me go, you’re hurting me.” She said and started to push against him in a panicked state.

“That dumbhead of yours that works the mines is as stupid as they come. She doesn’t understand a damn thing to save her life!” He g*****d angrily, referring to Sally.

Having worked mines and trained slaves all his life, he easily overpowered her. He threw her to the ground and caged her with his big, dirty and sweaty body.

“I’ll tell the king about this if you ever do anything to me!” She threatened.

He laughed. “As if he’ll ever believe a useless bitch like you over fifty slaves in the mine who’ll swear that I’ve been there all day.”

Danika opened her mouth to scream but he tightened his hand in her hair and pulled her hard, she yelped at the burning pain of strands of hair pulling from her scalp.

“Just make one noise, I dare you. I’ll beat you black and blue, do what I want and still kill you here and bury you.” He smirked wickedly, “No one will know and no one will miss you!”

Danika snapped her mouth shut while he tore at her clothes. He squeezed her breasts so roughly even as he struggled to tear her petticoat so he’ll bare her to him.

“Stop touching me! Leave me alone!” Her back hurts where he laid her on the hard ground.

“Shut up, bitch!” He stuck her hard on the face.

No, she didn’t come out today to be treated this way. She quickly thought of every fight defenses she learnt while reading ‘The Adventures of Xena’.

She targeted between his legs. She channeled all her energy to come leg and kicked him so hard in between his legs.

He howled like a dog, jerking away from her immediately.

Danika took the opening, shooting up from the ground, she took the big wooden plank there, raised it high above her head and hit him on the head.

She didn’t give him time to recover, she hit him again and again and again.

“You...do NOT...put your filthy hands on me!” she screamed tearfully and angrily as she hit him badly.

She made sure he laid motionless on the ground before she threw the weapon away and ran as fast as she could.

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In the evening, Danika was in her room when the maids knocked and extracted her. They said it’s the King’s orders that she should be taken to the royal dressing room.

While they bathed her and clothed her, she wondered what was happening. The only time this has happened was the night she bedded the king for the first time.

Why is she having a Royal Bath?

But, when the outer clothing she'll wear was brought out, Danika swallowed tightly because she already has an idea.

The wear is a former wear for slaves in a particular occasion. The Mask Festival.

The Mask Festival is a festival that's done every year in all the kingdoms where people that attends the festival wears a mask on their faces. They do it to honour the traditional god no one sees.

If The Mask Festival is being done here on Salem, that can only mean that a lot of kings will be coming. She swallowed again.

The gathering of kings is never a good thing for slaves. Especially unwilling slaves.

They dressed her in the petticoat and long corset gown. In front of the mirror, they styled her hair and clipped her nails.

They put makeup on and it concealed the red mark from the slap Karandy gave her.

Finally, they were done. She stared at the mirror and saw traces of the princess she used to be staring right back at her.

"The king is waiting." One of the older maids said to her.

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Chapter 32

"The king is waiting." One of the older maids said to her.

Her eyes found her bangle on the nightstand. The gold glistening bangle screamed royalty and it was priceless. She had the urge to wear it.

You're no longer a princess, Danika.

She looked away from the jewel, got up and walked out of the dressing room towards the King's Chambers.

When she got to his bedroom, a guard out there informed her that the king is not in his bedroom at the moment. He's in the bedroom at the end of the hallway.

She thanked the guard and started down the hallway.

On the door, her heart was already beating out of her chest. She knocked once and waited.

“Come in.” The deep voice she hasn’t heard in three noon days came through.

She opened the door and entered the unfamiliar room. She took a brief look around.

A big bed in the center of the room, an old flower in a flower pot at the window, a wooden lantern at the nightstand.

The room screamed royalty, but it also screamed barrenness. Obviously, someone hasn’t been in this room in ages.

The king stood in front of the wall beside the big bed, his hands behind his back, he stared up at the wall. He was dressed in his formal wear.

The more Danika walked into bedroom, she saw that it wasn’t just a wall. It was a painting of a man sitting on a throne.

The King’s father, her mind whispered the knowledge to her as she stared at the painting.

Danika’s mouth went ajar in awe. The painting was that of a man older than king Lucien but the resemblance was very striking.

She walked up behind him and stood several feet behind him. He hasn’t acknowledged her presence in anyway, so she waited him out, saying nothing.

“He fought for a lot when he was still alive.” He spoke at last, surprising her.

“When the fight for the end of slavery proved difficult, he focused on abolish some animalisitic laws in England.”

She bit her lips and said nothing. This topic is so uncomfortable and she suddenly wished she was somewhere else, instead of this place.

Her father killed this king. Danika was very sure that did conversation wouldn’t be ending well for her

“King Sebah sided with him in court and a few other kings, he was almost near to achieving that mission, but then, King Sebah died..”

Danika closed her eyes tight before releasing it. King Sebah is her grandfather. She never knew him because she was still a child when he died.

“And then, King Cone took over. He hated the cause and always disputed it in court. My father kept fighting for it, no matter how much Cone hated it. And then...” He paused a bit, “...Cone killed him and his family, took his throne, took his son and his people into slavery.”

He finally turned and stared at her, his face expressionless. Danika said nothing, just stared at the floor.

She wanted desperately to say she's sorry, but somehow, she knew that he wouldn't appreciate that. A memory tugged in her mind about that night.... .

She remember saying she's sorry.

He remembered him telling her in curt words that he doesn't need her pity.

“Today is The Mask Festival, but it's also an Introduction day. You're getting introduced again, Danika.” He announced curtly.

All the b***d drained from Danika's face and she went as pale as a ghost.

Tears of anger and hurt and shame and dread, pulled in her eyes.

Did he arrange another introduction for her? Does he hate her that much? Why would he want her to go through something so painful degrading and shameful?

She squeezed her hands tight in front of her and bit her lips hard. The floor was blurry, because the tears was too much.

She'd always prepared herself for the worse. Always. But, hearing this made her realize that she isn't prepared for this.

“Y-Yes, Master.” She whispered at last, her voice hoarse.

The king was watching her carefully. He read all her facial reaction to the news, but he said nothing more to her, did nothing. It's okay for her to think anything she likes.

Then, his eyes zeroed in on the faint red bruise on her cheek. “Who stuck you across the face?” He asked.

The question, so unexpectedly, threw her off balance. She raised a hand and caressed that stinging part of her cheek.

The question reminded her of that slave trainer, and now, her heart became heavy. She'd told herself not to think about him all afternoon. Did she kill him?

But the king was waiting for her to answer his question. Her throat worked tightly as she swallowed. "K-Karandy, the slave trainer."

"Why?"

Danika shifted uncomfortably at her feet. The king doesn't know that Baski gave orders for her to stop working. Or does he?

She knows that he won't do anything about it, but she decided to tell him the whole truth anyway. She has nothing to lose. Karandy would still hurt her badly if he'd survived what she did to him.

"He's b-been making advances at me for some time. He wants to have s€x with me and he threatens that the k-king doesn't have to find out." She stole a peek at him before she lowered her head.

He said nothing, but she would've sworn that his eyes darkened.

"So, today he cornered me at the back of the palace and wanted to f-force his advances. He stuck me on the cheek and he tore my clothes too, but I was able to kick him hard in his unmentionables and escaped."

Silence. The silence stretched.

Danika felt compelled to add, "I did hit him really hard with some wooden plank before I was able to escape."

Lucien stared at her for so long that Danika wished she could read minds. She needed to know what is going through the mind of this man.

"Kneel."

One word that had Danika's knees hitting the ground and her heart beating faster.

He took measured steps and stood in front of her. His hand palmed her jaw and he forced her head up, for her to stare into the bottomless pit of his cold eyes.

"Is it true. All of it?" He asked curly.

"Yes, master."

"Why should I believe whatever you say?"

"Y-You have no reason to, My King."

"But you say it anyway."

“Yes, master.”

His callous hand caressed her collar and panic seized her. “If I find out you lied to me, I will punish you severely, Danika.”

Danika doesn't think there's another punishment worse than another introduction in the midst of mighty vipers that just wants to devour her, but she kept her opinion to herself anyway.

“Y-Yes, master.”

He released her and stepped back. “Guards!?” He called, without taking his eyes away from her.

“Yes, your majesty!” The door opened and two guards entered.

“Check on the slave trainer, Karandy, and get back to me about him when I come back from court.”

“Yes, your Majesty.” They bowed their head and ran out.

“Rise.”

Danika rose from the floor, her heart in her throat.

He walked closer to her. “Look at me.”

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Chapter 33

He walked closer to her. “Look at me.”

She forced her eyes away from the floor and she stared at his eyes. Someone can easily get lost in the blue troubled cold sea that is his eyes.

He allowed the silence to stretch for so long. They stared at each other and for a moment, the world fell away.

There was no pain. No introduction. No slave. There was no impending pain and humiliation.

Just Danika and Lucien alone in the world, staring at each other in the eyes. Suddenly, she remembered everything they talked about on that night in his room. Those questions he answered.

His scars run so deep. His eyes has been cold for so long, he is sure it would never be warm again. His torture session she oversaw.

Her father roasted his privates. The knowledge made her cling inside and made her chest burn. That is something she can never imagine.

While their eyes still held, Danika know she wanted this world better. She wanted this connection more.

But the king broke it at last, he looked away. When he spoke, his words were curt.

“No matter what happens inside that courtroom today, don’t forget who you are. That in itself will make you push for survival even in the darkest hour of your life. Do not forget who you are.”

“King Cone’s daughter?” She asked, her voice laced with bitterness.

A pause.

“A slave?” She added.

“Royalty.” He stated.

Then, he walked past her towards the door. “Let’s go. It’s time.”

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Sally just got back from the mines. She entered the slave quarters, she hasn’t gotten to their bedroom when she started hearing rumors.

First, today’s the Mask Festival, and not only that, this year’s festival will be celebrated in the Royal Court of Salem.

Why choose Salem out of the twelve kingdoms?

As she walked, she heard more rumors. Maids formed little circles to gossip. Sally doesn't mind at all, but when she heard 'Slave Princess' she stopped so suddenly and faced the group of three maids.

"What's happening? What happened to the Slave Princess?" She asked, already scared that something might have happened.

One of the maids turned to her, she leaned closer and lowered her voice. "Nothing is confirmed or anything, but we heard that the Mask Festival is also an introduction for the Slave Princess."

Sally's heart raced right out of her chest. "I-Introduction? Another one?"

"Yes. Apparently, the kingdoms her father hurt one way or another also wants a piece of her. They want to hurt her real bad." The maid giggled.

Sally felt anger and disgust at the maid's happiness, but the maid was the least of her problem.

She ran to their bedroom and when she couldn't see the princess, she knew that everything they're saying is true!

"Oh Creator! Oh Creator!" She exclaimed as she ran as much as she could to the dressing room.

Two maids were there cleaning out everywhere. "Please, w-where's the Slave Princess?" She asked breathlessly.

"She's been dressed. I think she'll be in court with the king now." One of them replied.

But Sally was barely listening. Her eyes are at the priceless bangle of her princess sitting there at the nightstand.

Tears filled Sally's eyes. She blinked them back, still staring at the glistening diamond.

The Mask Festival.

Sally has witnessed how introduction and that festival works. She knows the methods, starting from the unmasking.

Those kings want to kill her princess. They want to destroy her princess.

She turned to one of the maids. "Which costume w-was she putting on?"

The maid cocked her head to the side in thought, "It's elegant and unique. It's just two here in the kingdom."

Sally hurried to the young girl, she stared at her freckled face. "What's your name?"

"I'm Uyah." She answered.

"Do you know me? From the time in Mombana?"

The girl would be her exact age. She nodded her head vigorously. "Oh yes, Sally. You brought us food one time that saved my mother. She has b-been starving for three days and then you brought us a feast! Oh, thank you so much, I've always wanted to thank you and—"

"Can you help me please?" Sally pleaded.

"Of course, I'll do anything." The girl agreed readily.

Sally turned with teary eyes and stared at that glistening diamond bangle again.

Once upon a time, that bangle was always on the wrist of Princess Danika. She can't even wear them anymore, because she's no longer a princess.

And now... No! She'll never allow it! Never!

Sally turned to Uyah. "Can you help me get changed?"

Everyone was in their mask except the kings. They were eating and drinking. Danika's eyes took in the five kingdoms that attended.

Behind her mask, she checked them out blatantly. The big hall is divided to six different parts. The five kingdoms got each part, and then the people of Salem got one.

Each division consists of the king and his slaves. Three families from the privileged people.

The hall was filled up.

Every other person's mask was padlocked behind their head except hers. The king had told her not to put the padlock, until after the unmasking. She didn't understand what he meant by that.

Dread and fear wrapped around Danika like a cloak. Sitting at the ground beside the King's throne, she had the great urge to clutch his big garment and hide herself from the world.

It's an urge she resisted. She recognized two kings already and she wasn't surprised that they were here.

King Moreh, the king of Ijpt and King Philip, the king of Gordon. Her two tormentors from her past introduction. She swallowed dreadfully.

King Moreh was the first to get up and start addressing. "I, King Moreh of Ijpt welcome us all to this Royal Court and also, to this year's Mask Festival."

The people nodded, even while some ate and some privileged people played with their slaves.

The standing king said more words to address the festival and to address other issues concerning the other kings.

Finally, his eyes found Danika from across the room. "Come out here and remove your mask. While King Phillip and I have seen your beautiful face before, king Pasih, king Noir and king Zeba is yet to see."

Danika's legs trembled underneath her but she got up again. Don't forget who you are. The words came back to her.

Heads high, shoulders squared, she walked to the center of the room. Quietly, she removed her mask.

A chorus of 'ooooh' and 'aaaah' rang out, their voices laced with approval, lust and excitement.

"She does look like that mastiff, Cone." One of the kings she'd come to know as king Noir snarled.

"Yes, she does. An extremely beautiful version of him. She takes more after Queen Meetia, her mother." King Zeba drank his wine before he supplied, "she was one of the most beautiful queen among all the kingdoms when she was alive."

They speak about her like she's not standing right here, Danika thought. Her fear only mounted when she saw the anger and evil anticipation in their eyes. Anger for her father and evil anticipation of what they plan to do to her.

She gripped her corset by the sides, sneezing the fabric in nerves. Don't forget who you're. Don't forget who you're.

Now, she understands what the king meant by the unmasking, she thought as she recited the words.

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Chapter 34

Now, she understands what the king meant by the unmasking, she thought as she recited the words.

With their permission, she put back her mask on and finally padlocked it.

King Moreh continued his speech and the more he talked, the more agitated she is. From everything he said, she got to understand a few things.

While the Mask Festival is going on in this Royal Court, she'll be taken to the inner room where she'll be, and the kings will visit her one after the other.

She swallowed tightly. Suddenly, she wanted to use the bathroom. This horrible impending torture was seriously upsetting her bladder.

"You can go back now, slave." King Moreh said to her in the middle of his speech.

She breathed a deep sigh of relief as she walked back to King Lucien's side and lowered herself to the ground in her usual position.

At least she isn't the center of attention for now, that's all that matters.

Tears were starting to prickle her eyes and no matter how she tried to blink them back, they seem determined to want to meet her cheeks.

No matter how she wants to be strong, she doesn't think she can survive this. They look upon her with so much hate in their eyes, these kings.

Why does she have to do through this?

Once upon a time, none of these kings would ever look upon her with nothing other than respect.

Once upon a time, she'll be sitting on a gold chair instead of the cold hard ground.

One upon a time, these privileged people bow in her presence, and none of them can look her in the eyes blatantly.

Once upon a time, she had a crown on her head...instead of a collar to her neck.



Baski rushed into the dressing room and stared at Sally. A different Sally.

One look at the girl, Baski already know what she plans to do, and her heart broke.

“No....no, Sally, you can’t.” She said as she took steps deeper into the dressing room.

But, Sally’s mind is already made up. “I can. I will.”

“You want to take her place.” Baski whispered dreadfully.

Sally was dressed in the same exact clothings as Danika. She had a blong wig on her head...just like Danika’s hair. The two women are almost the same height and build, and in a mask, no one would know the difference.

“Oh Creator, you really want to take her place!” Baski gasped.

Sally nodded, staring at herself at the mirror. She looks...different. Wearing such elegant clothes, she looks so sophisticated.

“If they find out, you’ll be in a very big trouble, Sally. You can be executed for this!”

Sally stared at the older woman with a sad smile on her face. “That’s why I sent for you, Madam Baski. I know you can help me...they’ll never find out if you help me.”

“God, Sally it’s too dangerous!” Baski shook her head, “And I don’t want you to do this, do you hear me!? No, I won’t allow this!”

Sally wiped the tears from her cheek. She walked closer and took Baski’s hand into hers. She squeezed it in reassurance even as her own hands trembled badly.

“My princess can’t live like that, Madam Baski. Those kings hate her, she’ll never survive what they’ll do to her. She wasn’t born like us.... She’s no slave, she’s my princess! They’ll break her to pieces, she can never survive that.” Tears pooled down her makeup face.

“And you, will you survive that?” Baski countered softly.

The answer she got was....more tears.

It made Baski’s eyes water. She squeezed Sally’s hands. “You won’t, Sally. You think jult because of the....things you had to do to get us food that you can survive being the object of hateful violence of five hefty powerful kings?”

“You can’t survive that! I’m Remeta’s mother, and I know this with every bone in my body. You can’t do this, Sally, do you hear me!?” Baski said heatedly, shaking her arms.

Silence. Sally could only weep even as a little smile touched the corners of her mouth.

“Please answer this question for me, Madam Baski. If it’s king Lucien in there....and you have the power to save him...would you save him or not?” She whispered.

Baski allowed the question to wash over her. Then, she lowered her head, her heart heavy. The both of them knows the answer to that question.

“And what about sir, Chad?” Sally continued in a whisper, “if it’s king Lucien in such trouble,wouldn’t he do everything within his power to save him?....including dying for him?”

“Oh..Sally....”

“And what about sir Declan?” She whispered tearfully.

Baski clutched her heavy heart at the mention of him.

“He died in Mombana....for his king.” Sally supplied. “And all of you would still do it over and over and over again for him. With a smile on your face, because that’s how much you love and want to protect King Lucien.”

Baski wiped the tears that kept coming from her eyes. She studied Sally’s face carefully. This girl who has her heart...and the heart of every other person in Salem.

“King Lucien was worth it, Sally. He is still worth it” She said softly at last, “Your princess....is she worth this sacrifice?”

“Oh yes, Madam Baski. She’s worth it and so much more.”

“If she finds out about this, it will break her, Sally. What is worse than going through torture is watching someone you care about go through it...for you. You can ask King Lucien about it, he knows it more than anybody. She will never forgive herself.”

Sally stared at the royal bangle again. “Better me than her. This will destroy her dignity. Her very being. She’ll never walk with her heads high again. She’ll look at herself and see dirt...garbage. She’s see a true slave. That is being broken for royalties, madam Baski.”

Silence met her words.

Finally, Baski stepped back, trying to regain her composure. “Then, I’ll help you. I’ll get Danika out, and I’ll keep her out so you can go in.”

“Thank you so much, Madam Baski.” She whispered sincerely. “You have to take her far away from the courtroom... I don’t want her to see or hear.... It’ll hurt her a lot and she might try to stop everything.”

Baski shook her head in sadness, but at the same time, she felt new respect for this young woman.

“You, Sally...you’re the bravest and most loyal young woman I’ve ever seen. You’re not meant to be a slave. Your heart is too pure to have been in this dark world of ours.”

Baski has been curious about this for so long. And so, she asked, “How did you make it this far...? All these light...and happiness...and brightness of yours...how did you have them for so long?”

Sally swiveled her head to the door. “It’s all because of that woman inside that den of lions, Madam Baski.”

“The princess?”

She nodded. “It’s all because of her.”

Baski looked away. “Has she been unmasked?”

“Yes. I heard the shouts from here.” Sally answered.

“Then, now is your chance.” Baski walked closer and helped her put on the mask and padlocked it behind her head.

Sally walked to the table and lifted that bangle. She slid it into her left wrist.

“You walk almost like her.” Baski’s voice held reverence.

Sally beamed at her through the tears. “I’ve been with her for so long, Madam Baski... I know her. My Princess.”

Baski bit her lips worriedly, “A lot of slaves has died behind the front doors of the Royal Court. You might never walk out of that door alive, Sally.”

Sally smiled through her tears. “I know, madam Baski. It doesn’t matter, because I’ve been living on borrowed time, anyway.”

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Chapter 35

Danika was so pressed, she knew she'll urinate on herself if she's here any longer.

She knelt down in front of King Lucien. "I w-want to use the bathroom, m-master." Her voice trembled.

"Five minutes." Was all he said.

"T-Thank you, master." She got up and walked towards the door, the guards opened the door for her and she walked out.

Outside the door of the courtroom, Danika had the insane urge to run away. To run as fast as her legs could carry her.

And she did.

Only, she could run to the bathroom. There is no escape from this place...from Salem...from the palace...from the introduction.

In the bathroom, she was breathing heavily and tears was running down her cheeks. She closed the door, leaned against the wall and started sobbing.

It's like her world is crashing down. Like she's breaking down even before she's supposed to. But she couldn't help herself.

Don't forget who you're. Don't forget who you're.

As she used the bathroom, she cried as much as her heavy heart could allow. Her heavy heart filled is filled with fear.

"You can do this, Danika. You can do it." She whispered to herself hoarsely.

Afterwards, she stared at her reflection in the mirror of the bathroom. She wiped her tears, grateful that her eyes isn't all swollen...just a little red behind the mask.

Don't forget who are you're, Danika. Keep your head high. You can do this.

She opened the door and got out. As she walked towards the door of the courtroom, she was surprised to see Baski walking towards her.

There was visible relief in the older woman's eyes. "Danika, there you are, I was looking for you."

“I took permission from the king to use the bathr—” she tried to explain.

But, Baski hurried towards her and took her hand. “There’s some work I need you to do.”

“But the king—“

“I already told the king about it, and he gave his consent. Now, quit being a troublehead and follow me.” She commanded.

Danika snapped her mouth shut. Baski was already walking in those hurried steps of hers, and Danika followed her. She didn’t understand why the woman is calling her away.

What can Baski possibly need from her that can’t wait until after the introduction?

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From his throne, King Lucien stared at all the kings. He tried not to think of what is going to happen here.

He tried not to, but it went into his cold heart and stamped itself there. He closed his heart to it and swore again, that he would fight for the greater future.

He would never give up and he would die trying if he has to. For his people. For the lowborns. For him. For his father.

He wanted this introduction to be the last in his reign. And it will happen because his kingdom can’t afford to go to war now for so many reasons, it’s not even an option.

But before the day is over, he’s hoping to get King Noir and King Zeba to be on his side for the fight for abolish some traditions.

He knows for sure that Moreh and Phillip are a lost cause, they would never agree to it. He doesn’t know the stand of Pesih yet, but he intends to find out.

But as for Noir and Zeba, Lucien heard that both kings has never attended introductions in any kingdoms before and according to his findings, the slaves of these two kingdoms are being treated as good as slaves should be.

These kings are only here, not because they find fun from the Introduction of King's Slaves, but because it's the late King Cone's daughter.

"But the king—"

"I already told the king about it, and he gave his consent. Now, quit being a troublehead and follow me." She commanded.

It's about anger, hate and revenge. It is not about the introduction, it is about the introduced.

He knows that he can persuade them to join his side in the fight for the abolition of some inhumane laws.

When the door opened and Danika entered the courtroom, King Lucien knew almost immediately that she isn't Danika. The woman behind the mask isn't Danika.

He sat up on his throne and surveyed her carefully. Same clothes. Same hair. Same mask. She isn't Danika.

How did he know this? The woman behind the mask walked towards him and lowered herself to the ground beside him.

Maybe it's because his slave is a little taller than the person behind the mask? Or because of the difference in regality. Danika's poise always emphasized her previous status, and even though this person almost has the poise, it isn't the same.

Then, he saw the way the girl's hands were trembling at her sides, even as she curled them into fists to stop the movements.

Sally. This girl behind the mask is Danika's former personal maid, Sally.

How did this happen? And where is Danika?

Before he could say something about it, King Phillip got up and commanded Danika slave to go to the inner room.

The girl didn't hesitate, she got up. And that was when King Lucien looked into her eyes.

He saw fear, and sadness. Above them all he saw determination.

She practically wore her intentions in her eyes. It says.....,

'I wasn't forced to be here. I want to protect my princess. I will do anything to protect her.'

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Chapter 36

Danika followed Baski to the backyard where the woman ordered her to carry some woods to the store and arrange it properly.

She'd wanted to question Baski but already, the older woman dismissed her by turning and on doing another thing altogether.

How would Baski bring her out from something as important as 'Introduction' according to the kings, just for her to carry log of woods?

Something is definitely off.

Time dragged by. The more Danika carried the wood, the more her back prickled. Her chest became heavy. She was feeling uncomfortable.

Something is off. Something is definitely wrong. Whatever it is, is very bad to be affecting her this way.

She forgot all about a slave never questioning orders and she dropped the next log of wood she carried.

"B-Baski...?" She called. It surprised her that her voice was trembling.

"What is the matter?" Baski dropped the broom and stared at her.

But, Danika found out that Baski couldn't look her in the eyes....or at her face.

"What's g-going on, B-Baski? Why am I here i-instead of the Royal Court?" She asked hoarsely.

Her eyes still couldn't meet hers when she said, "Do you have to question orders? You just do what you're asked to and leave the rest until you're asked to."

But her words didn't come out as harsh and hard as she wanted it to because her voice trembled in the end.

Danika's heard suddenly caught on her throat. Something has gone so wrong, her mind whispered dreadfully.

Danika whimpered and shook her head repeatedly. She took two steps back, turned and started running towards the direction that leads to the Royal Court.

“Danika! You can’t go there!” Baski’s shout followed behind her.

What’s happening!? Danika’s mind was in turmoil. This isn’t just Baski saving her or anything, something is terribly wrong.

King Cone’s daughter can’t just disappear from the Royal Court and everywhere is still so peaceful. What’s going on!?

No one can be a fast runner in a big long extravagant corset gown, and so she can only run in a minimal pace, which made it easy for Baski to catch up with her several feet before the door.

Baski grabbed her by the arm and whirled her forcefully around. “What’s wrong with you!?” She demanded, but there were tears in her eyes.

Danika’s heart flew out of her chest at the sight of those tears. “W-What’s going o-on? What’s h-happening?”

“She wouldn’t want you here, Danika. Come on, let’s go. Now....!” Baski dragged her hand.

Danika dug her feet to the floor, not moving an inch. “She...? Who’s she....?”

Music started playing inside the courtroom. They heard laughter and shouts and cheerful words. The celebration was going well.

“Who’s she, Baski?” Danika asked again, her throat suddenly dry.

“If you go in there, you’ll ruin everything and all her efforts will be in vain, do you hear me!? You wouldn’t achieve anything going in there except putting the both of you and Sally into more trouble! They will execute her! All her efforts will be in vain!” Baski whispered heatedly.

Danika froze. Her throat suddenly went so dry like sandpaper and she gulped. “S-Sally?”

“Oh, Creator.” Baski m****d when she found out what she said. She’s been so agitated, she’d made a mistake.

But it’s already made. She’ll tell her the truth.

Baski held her hand tight even as she raised her chin. “Sally is in there. She’s taking your place.”

All the b***d drained from Danika’s face. She suddenly felt faint. She would have fallen if Baski’s hands didn’t catch her.

She went into a trance right in front of Baski’s eyes.

“No...no...no...no...” She can only whisper as tears filled her eyes. “...no...it can’t be...”

“Danik—”

“...no...oh Creator, no...” She raised eyes filled with unshed tears to Baski’s face and whispered so pleadingly, “...please, tell me...it’s not true...no, no...oh, no...please...”

A scream rose above the music and resonated the whole place.

A scream so loud from a voice so familiar, something died inside her at the very sound of it.

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When Danika heard Sally’s scream, she reacted on impulse. Her eyes widening, she turned and started running the remaining distance to the door.

Danika’s heart flew out of her chest at the sight of those tears. “W-What’s going o-on? What’s h-happening?”

She wasn’t thinking, she could only cry and wish to stop this nightmare. “No...oh please...no...”

Baski caught her just at the door and grabbed her with all the strength she’d gathered with years of hardwork....living as a slave.

“Stop! Think, Danika! Stop!” Baski forced her to a stop,whirling her around to face her.

Danika started crying outrightly. “I can’t take this.... I can’t take this... Baski, this can’t be...”

Tears overflowed from Baski's eyes and she wrapped her arms around Danika, pulling the younger woman to her arms. "She wanted to do this for you, Danika. You can't stop it now..."

Danika was so much taller than Baski but in that moment, it doesn't matter. She wrapped her arms tightly around the plump woman, her head burrowed to her chest as she sobbed.

Another scream rose above the music, and Danika started struggling against Baski, but the older woman held her tight.

"W-What are...they doing...to her? S-Sally wouldn't...s-scream that loud if...it d-d-doesn't hurt..." She sobbed.

Another scream came. And again. And again.

The sound of laughter and clattering of conversations coming out from the Royal Court was like a stab to Danika's chest, the music was like a thorn running down her body.

They laugh and dance in celebration, oblivious to the Sally's screams like it doesn't matter. Like it's a spice to their festival.

"Aaah.... She feels good! Been wanting to do this for so long! " King Moreh's breathy voice was heard above the music, "Your turn, Pesih, you're the fourth!"

Danika burrowed deeper into Baski and cried sorrowfully, "Oh Creator....please...help... No, no...Sally, no...."

"Heavens, so King Pesih is here...?" Baski whispered under her breath.

Danika nodded, sniffing. "Yes. What do you...know...about h-him?"

Baski hesitated, new tears burning her eyes. "I heard that he challenged King Cone in court and in revenge, your father abducted his niece." she paused, "Words are that the girl went through hell before she was found by her family again. Heard she was like my baby Remeta for years. She's dead now."

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Chapter 37

Danika renewed her struggles. “Holy h-heavens...! No, he’ll k-kill Sally...Baski, he’ll kill h-her! I can’t let that happen! I’ll n-never be able to bear it!”

As she struggled and cried and struggled the more. Sally started screaming again, and this time it sounded....more agonizing.

With each scream, Danika cried louder and struggled against Baski until the woman finally freed her or risk getting seriously hurt.

“Danika! No!” She cried.

Danika was beyond hearing, her heart was breaking in her chest. With each scream coming from the Royal Court, a little piece of her heart dies a little more inside.

She dragged the doorknob and swung the door as open as she could get it, which isn’t much but it’ll do because she can pass through the narrow way.

She took a first step in, only to collide into a hard wall.

No. Not a wall. A man. A man who suddenly filled the doorway.

Danika raised her red teary eyes to stare into the hard face of King Lucien. His eyes wasn’t so cold. It was filled with rage...and underlying pain and sadness.

It’s that same look on his face when he remembers his dead family....or his time in slavery.

Baski’s eyes widened in shock and she lowered her head to the ground. There’s trouble, she thought deep within herself.

Danika didn’t care that the king just found her out. Found out the atrocity she’s committed, swapping roles with Sally. It wasn’t what she was thinking about at all.

Instead, her face crumbled and sobs after sobs racked her throat. “He’s g-going to...kill her... I need to g-get to her....!”

He didn’t leave the doorway. Instead, he stared down at her red wet face and swollen eyes.

When he spoke, his voice was hard. “You can’t go in there, Danika. All her sacrifices will be in vain. She will be executed and you will go through the same thing she tried to prevent.”

Tears spewed down her eyes in waves and she lowered her head in defeat and bone-deep fear. Sally screamed in loud excruciating voice and she jerked like she’s been slapped.

Her body trembled visibly, she shook her head miserably.

Music, Talking. laughing and cheering. Screams. More scream. Danika cried earnestly.

When the next scream came, it rose to a pitch and then, suddenly it cut off.

Danika's heart summersaulted in her chest and her head snapped up. Wide red teary eyes filled with horror met the King's own.

"What happened!? What h-happened....!?" She cried.

The only answer she got was an answer she'd never have expected to get from him. Even Baski never expected it, because even though his eyes were raging, his face was the same unreadable mask.

He used one hand to coax her into his body and he wrapped both hands around her. His long kingly cloak-like garment wrapped around her smaller form, shielding her completely from human eyes....from the evil that's happening behind him.

Shock quickly worked it's way past fear and horror at his gesture, Danika's head cushioned on his chest, the scent of his garment surrounding her, she stood stunned. Only for a second.

The shock started wearing off replaced by panic and mind-numbing pain. They've killed her.

For the king to react this way...for her scream to cut off like that...they've killed her.

"Sally...! Sally....! Don't leave m-me, please! Sally.....you can't l-leave me...!" She cried and screamed but it was muffled against his chest.

Hard calloused hand rhythmically patted her head as sobs after sobs racked her throat.

Danika had always wondered what it'll feel like to be in the King's arm like this... Him, just holding her tenderly against his big body. She never expected it to be this way. She never wanted it to be this way.

And yet, she clutched his garment tight in her arm as she cried miserably. She never stopped clutching him tight. Never raised her head from the cushion of his body.

Baski's head was lowered, her shoulders shook as she wept bitterly.

King Lucien was the only one who wasn't visibly reacting. Instead, he patted Danika's head rhythmically while she cried and shook against him.

Music, Talking. laughing and cheering. Screams. More scream. Danika cried earnestly.

Only music, cheers, laughter and clattering remained. There were no more screams. No matter how Danika listened, she couldn't hear more.

What seem like an eternity later, King Noir's voice was heard. "Blazes! I knew I should have gone before Pesih, now I get a corpse? No thanks, I ain't interested."

More laughter.

"Do you think that mastiff Cone rolled over in his grave?" King Phillip's voice.

Another round of laughter and cheers. "He must have, I'd bet. He really did favor that girl of his...and then, he treats other people's girls to hell on goddamn earth."

"I'd bet he thought he'll live forever."

"Yeah. Didn't know the Conald's son is one bad son-of-an-elf who'll have his head someday."

More laughter. More cheers.

"Lucien really dealt him a big number. And now, we get to deal with him in a much better way."

"His daughter. Damn, the girl was fun. Too bad she's so weak."

"Naah, I'd say she's strong. But Pesih is one angry son-of-an-elf. He carved her up like a chicken."

More laughter. More music. More cheers.

"Where's King Lucien? His messenger did say something about a petition. Now that one business is down, let's go over to another." That was King Zeba.

King Lucien finally pulled a crying Danika in shock, away from his body. "Baski, take her away. Call Chad to go in there..."

He left it unsaid, but he didn't have to say it. They all knew what he was going to say. Call Chad to take her corpse away.

Even as tears ran freely down Danika's cheeks, she'd gone into shock. When Baski held her, Danika walked mindlessly away with her.

King Lucien entered back into the Courtroom and closed the door shut.

It's supposed to be an introduction, not a slaughter. But then again, they are kings. There's never been any rule in court.

It's just like every other day in any Royal Court. A slave is down and it's as normal as a change in weather.

The slave being Cone's daughter, makes it all seem like the best change in weather.

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Read Chapter 38

Chapter 38

"Snap out of it, Danika! Sally would never want you this way at all! You have to be strong for her!" Baski said as she walked out of the passage that divided the palace from the Royal Court.

As she talked, they saw Chad. Baski left Danika and ran towards him, she relayed the King's message.

Chad's eyes darkened and his hand fisted tightly at his side as Baski quickly ran through everything that happened.

He walked past them and started towards the route of the Royal Court. That was the only thing that snapped Danika out of her trance.

She turned and started running after him, determined to go with him. She has to see Sally, she just has to!

Baski didn't waste time trying to stop her. Instead, they all followed Chad.

There's another way that leads to the inner room without having to go through the hall of the court.

Chad led them through that way, withdrawing a huge bunch of key from the key chain at his side, he sorted through the keys and singled out one small key, he used it to open the door.

They rushed inside, and there Sally laid on the table.

She was naked and laid spread out at the table, in the pool of her own b***d. They were cuts and bruises on some parts of her body, her face was wet, her eyes closed.

Danika stuck her hand into her mouth and let out a muffled scream at the horrible sight of Sally.

Chad walked closer and gently lifted her into his arms. He turned towards the door and stopped short when her weak arms suddenly tightened around his neck.

Sally's eyes opened ever so slightly and found her princess. And then, it closed again.

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"She opened her eyes!" Danika gasped, a rare hint of hope rearing it's head in her hurting heart.

She turned teary eyes at Baski who's wide eyes indicated that she saw it too. Baski rushed towards Chad and gently took Sally's hand into her, she pressed her finger on her wrist.

"She's alive...barely, but she's alive!" She gasped.

Chad started carrying her away in hurried steps but he was careful not to jarr her, Baski grabbed Danika's hand and they followed him.

Danika swiped the tears from her eyes with her free hand, even as more fell. She willed herself to be strong. She has to be strong for Sally! She has to!

Why would Sally do something like this? Why did she have to do this!? It hurts her immensely.

Chad held Sally with so much care even at a point when he was almost running. Her b***d coated his body and she's floating on that little bridge that separated life and death.

“Take her to the underground room, I’ll get three trusted maids to run some errands to start some treatments on her. I’ll rush to Danika’s room, there must be a little piece of Orchiz Seed there. We need to stop those bleedings first and hope to the heavens that she hasn’t lost so much.” Baski said, already walking away.

Danika followed Chad to the underground room, one of the secret places of the palace only a few people know about, and fewer are allowed to go.

Danika took the keys from him and sorted through them following his instructions, she singled out a key and opened the door.

Chad carried Sally to the bed, which surprisingly isn’t dusty from unused. The room though almost empty and barren, looks clean and kept.

Danika rushed to the table and took the cloth she saw lying around, she tore it to several pieces and rushed back to Sally. She used each piece to tie her cuts in an effort to stop the bleedings first.

“S-Sally...you can’t I-leave me do you hear me?” She cried as she worked. Her hands trembled badly but she managed to get things done.

Chad walked to the wardrobe and sorted through it. He dragged out a big bedsheets he used to cover Sally’s naked body.

Baski came back with two maids behind her. They turned pale when they saw Sally, one of them teared up immediately.

Baski had some stems in her hands which she started grinding immediately she entered. “I already sent out Uyah to the house of the Royal Medicine Man. He’ll be here in a little while.”

Danika raised teary eyes to her face. “Wouldn’t the king mind? We do all t-these without his permission or order.” She sniffled.

“Let’s hope to heavens he doesn’t mind and if he does, we get punished but it doesn’t matter...” her eyes went to Sally, “...we would have saved her already....if we’re able to.”

Danika nodded, staring at her Sally who’s eyes were closed, her face pale and swollen. She leaned closer and kissed Sally’s forehead, her tears splashing on her.

Why would Sally do something like this? Why did she have to do this!? It hurts her immensely.

“You have to stay a-alive, Sally. You have to tell me why you did this... Just why did you make a d-decision like this without telling your princess about it? Why... Why... Why would you do this to me?” Danika wept.

The maids watched her with surprise in their eyes. But, she’s oblivious of the world around her. Just her and Sally.

She sniffled softly and kissed her forehead again. “I can’t bear it if you leave....Sally, please d-don’t leave.”

She wondered how she’ll bear it if anything happens to anything happens to the only bright thing in this world she found herself in?

She placed her forehead to Sally’s and her shoulders shook with the force of her weeping.

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Vetta stayed in her bedroom, boiling over in anger. It’s been hell staying here for three noon days. She counted the time until she’s able to get out.

It’s like being in jail, the things she knows are only the things the maids that bring food tell her. Her anger calmed a bit and a smile spread over her face.

Today is the Mask Festival, and according to the maid, there was another introduction for Danika.

How she wished that she had her freedom....she never wanted to miss all the excitement of watching Danika’s humiliation and degradation.

It pained her on a different level that she wasn’t able to witness it at all. Instead, she was holed up in her room like some dog!

Calm down, Vetta. You’ll be out tomorrow.

The reminder from her mind made her feel a little better. She needed to know all the gory details of everything that happened today.

She stared out of her window, unable to sleep. She wished the king would visit her...even if it’s for s****l pleasure. Hell, especially for s****l pleasure.

She'd missed it. She'd missed him. She'd missed everything.

He didn't visit, not even once. And she wondered who's been warming his bed?

She gritted her teeth at the thought of Danika in his bed...or on his table. Just the thought of that slave anywhere around him is enough to boil her anger.

Aaargh! She hated being in the dark! Hated it badly!

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Chapter 39

King Lucien stared at the scroll in front of him. He was seated behind his desk, his head nursed a huge headache.

The open window overseed the night sky. It's almost the middle of the night. The meeting in court had taken so much longer.

The scroll held two signed signatures on it.

King Zeba and King Noir had signed the petition. King Pesih wants to sleep over it. King Moreh and Phillip had outrightly refused.

"Why would we want to eradicate the law of introduction? Why would we enforce a law for unjust killing of slaves?" Moreh had been angry, "There is no unjust killing when it comes to slaves. They are dirt. Garbage. There is no unjust way of getting rid of garbage."

King Lucien rubbed his aching head, his eyes darkening in anger and hurtful memories. Moreh has always been an animal.

He can never forget....what that man did to him when he was still Cone's Slave.

Fortunately, Zeba and Noir had disagreed with him and signed the petition.

The door opened and Baski entered the room with a long wooden cup of hot liquid. "I brought Noda tea, your Majesty."

"It wouldn't help me sleep well, Baski. Not even if I'm as exhausted as a maiden who just brought a lad into the world." He said without raising his head.

It pains Baski deeply whenever laudanum doesn't work on the king. "It'll help with the killing headache, My King. And it might work this time around for sleep."

"I doubt that, Baski."

She took a deep breath and still carried the tea to his direction anyway. She has made all kinds of laudanum and sleeping portions for him but it doesn't work.

"We just have to keep trying, My King." If any man deserves a good sleep in this world, it's the king.

Unfortunately, he hasn't been able to sleep well in fifteen years.

She reached the table and offered him the drink. He stretched out his hand and took the liquid, he downed it on one swing of his arm.

She cleared her throat. "Uhm...My King?"

"How is Danika holding up?" He dropped the empty wooden cup on the desk, he stared at the folded scroll on the desk.

Baski noted distinctively that he has been referring to her as 'Danika' instead of his slave.

"About that..., My King...." She cleared her throat, "Sally lives."

Slowly, he raises his head and stared at Baski. "What?"

Baski's eyes watered. She sniffled and nodded her head, "She's alive....barely, but she is. You were in court all day or I would have told you about her sooner."

He got up and turned to her. "Where is she?"

Baski bit her lips and lowered her head. "Please, forgive me, your highness."

He cocked his head to the side in thought, "What did you do, Baski?"

"I-I told Chad to take her to one of the underground rooms. That's where she is." she hesitated, "I also called the Royal medicine man and he's been here all afternoon, but he left some little time ago. I had him believe that his presence was an order from you."

He said nothing. Instead, he started for the door. "Come and take me to that girl, Baski."

"Oh....yes! Yes, Your Majesty!" She led the way and they walked out of the room.

The two bodyguards attempted to follow but he shook his head once. They backed away immediately, their heads bowed.

She led him through the long hallway, into the door of the secret room that holds the stairs for going to the underground.

On the way, she hurriedly filled him in, in all the activities of the afternoon and everything about the visit from the medicine man.

It was a long walk but eventually, she lead him to the particular bedroom and opened the door.

Sally laid on the bed, her cuts cleaned, her bruises treated. Her wounds have been dressed and she slept.

Beside her, Danika laid with her eyes closed, her breathing laboured as she slept. One hand held Sally's own.

Baski saw who the King's eyes rested on and felt the need to provide, "She was completely exhausted. She's been here all this while... Refused to live all this while."

His eyes took in the way Danika's body curved protectively on her former personal maid, the way her hand was intertwined loosely with the girl's own. The both girls looked so vulnerable lying that way.

"What did Argie say? He asked.

"The medicine man emphasized that her condition is very bad because of e-everytging she went through. He said it is something of a miracle that she's still hanging in there."

"Yes. A miracle." His mind hs traveled back to Mombana. Back to that very day Declan died.

He fisted his hands tight on his garment and closed his eyes to the memories. They didn't go away. They lurked in his mind. His headache compounded, instead of decimating.

His eyes was on them for so long. His mind fought war within himself.

Baski doesn't know what's in his mind at all, but her heart was in her throat. She waited for him to ask how Sally was about to switch roles with Danika? Who and who assisted her in doing so?

Baski knows the laws of the land, and the law they broke today...if sanctioned, is punishable by death.

Would he call them to it? When?

He said nothing about it. About anything. He didn't ask. He didn't question.

Instead he stood for very long minutes just watching the two women on the bed. Then, he turned and walked away.

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Chapter 40

In the comfort of his room, King Lucien wrote notes the financial status of the lower market of Salem and it's improvements.

Naturally, it should be the Royal Accountant writing about it, but he'd instructed the accountant to leave it. Not because of anything else, but it's a good way to exhause the body.

Who knows, he might sleep relatively well tonight.

He considered going to Vetta's room. Then, he'd put out the consideration, the financial books do need updating.

As he wrote, the girl's screams came banging at the back of his head. With each scribble, her agonizing scream rose in his head. And then, he'd seen Danika.

Today, he saw a different Danika. He saw the princess, and he saw the slave. He didn't see Cone's daughter.

As he wrote, her face stood at the back of his mind. Her pain as her former personal maid screamed behind the door.

Why did the sight of it affect him so much?

Maybe, it's because he looked at her and saw himself. Each pain on her face mirrored his on that very day Declan died. The helplessness...

He never expected to see her that way. Maybe because he underestimated the love between those two young women.

The girl, Sally, who gave up freedom to come and stay here as a slave...just to stay close to Danika. The girl, Sally, who was filled with fear and terror, but she determinedly took her place in court.

He could still remember the determination in her eyes. It mirrored the familiar look on Declan's face. On Chad's face.

But, when her scream came, and the reactions from Danika followed, it had taken everything in him not to go in there and declare war.

But, even at the face of such painful circumstances, his brain reminded him about the condition of his people.

The people of Salem are still vulnerable. Five years is a small time to have freedom that's been taken away for ten long years. Everyone is still trying to pick up the pieces of their battered lives.

He's fail himself, his people, his father, and everything he fought for in the past fifteen years if he'd declared war against five kingdoms.

Even if Salem was at its strongest, war against five kingdoms is impossible. Needless to say that Salem will lose and slavery will be theirs again.

And, if miraculously, there was no war, there will never be a chance for a better life for the lowborns.

The kingdoms think he solicited reluctantly and unaffectedly, they needn't know that it's personal to him. They needn't know it's a passionate drive for him, because if they do they'll see it as a weakness and they'll use it against him.

He withdrew his writing feather and stuck it into the ink bottle, his head pounding.

Even in captivity, he'd had to make a lot of choices for freedom. Those choices are among the demons that lie on that bed with him when he sleeps....those demons that hover around him every long hour of wakefulness.

He dropped the feather and stared at the sleeping tea Baski kept on the desk. He took it and drank it.

When Declan died, the pain almost broke him. Now, he wondered how Danika is coping under such suffocating pain?

Danika woke at the first scream she heard. Sally was twisting and struggling beside her, screaming her lungs out.

“Sally...! Sally, it’s me!” She tried to wake her, but she wouldn’t stir. Her eyes were locked tight as she twisted her body on the bed.

Danika remembered what Baski told her about making sure Sally’s stitches doesn’t pull. She tried to get Sally to still, but sally started crying.

Tears filled Danika’s hurting eyes immediately and she ran out of that bed in search of Baski. The woman had told her that she won’t be going home tonight, and Danika hoped to the heavens that she’s still at the palace.

When she checked her bedroom at the maid’s quarters and saw her, she started sobbing with relief.

“It’s Sally! It’s S-Sally! She’s restless! She—” she could barely get the words out.

“It’s okay, Danika, it’s okay.” Baski got up and slipped her legs into her slippers.

As they hurried away, she stuck her head to one bedroom of the maids. “Uyah!” She called.

The girl woke immediately. “Madam Baski.” She rubbed her eyes to clear the sleep.

“Run to the medicine man’s house and get him!”

“Yes, Madam Baski.”

They ran to the underground room and they heard her screams as they got closer. She still laid on the bed, twisting and struggling.

Baski climbed the bed and started talking to her. As she talked, she held Sally’s hands and asked Danika to hold her legs to still her before she opens her wounds.

But as they held her body captive, it seems to be worse. Sally’s body was so hurt, she was running a high fever. The captivity made her run mad even while she still wasn’t conscious.

She cried louder and started pleading as she struggled. “Please, stop...please....stop!” She cried.

The agonizing cry tore Danika’s heart open. “Baski stop, please let her go! Holding her captive is making it worse!” She cried.

She let go of her legs and Baski let go of her hands. She was still twisting and crying when Danika slid up her body and laid beside her.

“Sally, it’s Danika... Sally, please listen to my voice and stop...!” She cried, but Sally was unable to hear.

Her sobs grew louder, her cries so painful to hear.

“She doesn’t know Danika. She doesn’t know you as Danika.” Baski said to her.

Danika processed her words in her chaotic mind. Then, she leaned closer and caressed Sally’s cheek. “Sally? It’s your princess.... Please, stop... It’s Princess Danika.”

She stilled immediately. “M-My Princess?” Her voice was tiny and filled with fear.

“Yes! Yes, Sally it’s me.” Danika patted her burning cheeks, kissing her forehead.

Sally relaxed on the bed and released a deep breath. “My princess....” She trailed off as her body went lax and her breathing laboured out.

Danika allowed the strength to leave her own body. The strength left....but the tears remained.

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Chapter 41

The medicine man came several minutes afterwards and forced down more sleeping portions down her throat. He also gave her portions her fever and headache too.

“How is she?” Baski asked.

The old man hesitated. “She’s holding out barely. Her body is healing and I hope to heavens, her mind is too. It still isn’t assured if she will get through this... You all have to be prepared for the wors—“

Danika snapped her head up so fiercely, “She’ll survive! Don’t say that, doctor! She’ll be fine! S-Sally is a fighter.... My Sally is a fighter.... s-she will be fine! She will be....!” She cried so hard.

Baski grabbed her and hugged her to her chest impulsively.

Danika is breaking apart right in front of her eyes. Sobs after sobs racked her throat as she burrowed deeper into Baski.

Time passed. The medicine man finally left after giving out instructions. He'd said that the portions will keep Sally deeply asleep until morning or even on the noon.

Baski finally said goodnight again, and it's only Danika now in the room.

She sat there on the floor, staring at Sally and her chest hurt badly. Sally is this way because of her. The knowledge is like a stab to her chest all the time.

She closed her eyes and she remembered Sally's pained screams back there in the courtroom. Her screams stayed in her head.

She opens her eyes and she can only remember the way they found her broken body bleeding profusely as she laid on the table.

Earlier in the day, Baski had mixed some kind of portion from a leaf she hasn't seen before, and opened Sally's legs to apply them.

There'd been visible bruises there, but Baski was able to carefully pour the portion into her body.

She'd explained that the portions will kill the ejaculations from the kings to prevent conception, and it will also push all of it right out of her and fight any disease she might have incurred.

She was right because it didn't take long before the whitish fluids started pushing out of her body, mixed with the portion.

Afterwards, Baski had carefully used water to insert her two fingers inside and wash her as carefully as she could manage without poking her bruises or making her hurt more.

Then, she'd brought out a pill from her med-bag and carefully inserted into Sally's body. This will help...uhm...tighten those muscles, heal the bruises inside and have her body back together in no time, she'd explained.

Danika remembered thanking her so much. She can't thank Baski enough.

Now, she sat down on the cold ground, her back leaning on the wall and her heart hurting badly.

Staring at Sally now, looking so small on that bed, and remembering everything...her chest was almost suffocating her. She closed her eyes and hears Sally's screams.

This pain... It hurts too much. Nothing ever hurts more than this...not even being whipped by that wicked mistress. Not even being the one in Sally's place now.

What Baski told her in the afternoon came back to her...

“You shouldn’t be there because the only thing that would hurt more than being on that table for the kings, is watching and hearing your loved one doing it for you...and you’re helpless to stop it.” she’d added, “You can ask King Lucien. He knows how that feels more than anybody.”

Her eyes closed, tears swam down. She didn’t know how long passed.

Her heart was so heavy. The pain inside her was so heart wrenching, she needed a distraction from this pain or it’ll be the death of her.

She raised trembling hands to her collared throat and squeezed. The different kind of pain feels better.

This internal pain will be the death of her, she needed a different kind of pain. Any pain whatsoever would feel better than this one tearing her apart from the inside out.

She got up from the floor and wiped her tears.

She doesn’t know where the courage came from, and she wasn’t thinking about it. Her brain had shut down and she could only feel this pain.

She locked the door for Sally’s safety. With each step she took, her legs carried her to the king’s chambers.

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Lucien laid down on the bed and his subconscious took him back to that very day in Mombana. He was in chains after being whipped that morning.

His back was bleeding. His legs were bleeding where Cone made him step on shattered glasses and laughed while he was dragged in chains to walk on them.

Back in chains, he was barely awake. It's one of those hundred times he came face to face with death. Cone was still angry at him for killing his guard and saving a girl the guards were raping. She was one of his subjects.

He'd been punished him severally. He laid on the cold hard ground of his cage, bleeding and without strength.

He hasn't eaten anything in three days, and being tortured too got him on the verge of death.

Vetta was in the cage next to him and even though they were instructed to stay away from him, Vetta crawled from her cage to his own. That was where she is when the guards came. They got angry and dragged her by the hair away.

There was this guard named Coza. He's the most horrible, the worst of all the guards. He was the chief rapist who molests both women and little children.

Coza always hated him too much, he'd always hinted that he wants to kill him because of the way he always tries to stop him from doing a lot of awful things.

It was Coza's buddy that he killed and it only made Coza's anger for him boil harder. The man lived to see him die.

Coza had watched his buddy drag Vetta away, he brought out his whip, ready to start hitting his already battered body.

But Declan ran from his cage and blocked their part.

"No! Please, he's bleeding too much already! He's almost dying!" He'd pleaded. Declan shielded him with his own body.

Coza had laughed and pushed Declan aside. He'd fallen because he hasn't eaten in days.

"I've always wanted to kill him, your prince!" Coza snarled, "He's freshly tortured and already at the blink of death. I can kill him and King Cone would never know better!"

Coza started whipping his bloody back again.

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Chapter 42

Coza started whipping his bloody back again.

He gave no reaction, but he could feel his own skin at his back ripping open with each stroke of the whip at the bleeding wound.

Then, he felt a weight on top of him. Declan had fallen on him, shielding his body with his. Declan is twenty two, when he was twenty-nine.

Declan, who's always been 'the pretty boy' as the guards like to call him. They like to pick on him, but Lucien always shielded and protected him. No matter what he had to do to protect him.

Lucien had a lot of weaknesses back in captivity because he cared about all his people, but Declan was his greatest weakness.

Coza was furious, he started whipping Declan instead.

Declan's hoarse shouts filled the air with each stroke of the whip but he never got up.

Lucien had tried to move...to protect Declan, but he couldn't move his body. Lucien always tries to protect Declan just as much as Declan always tries to protect him.

Declan is no slave, he can't take intense torture. Lucien always tries to protect him, but that day...he was unable to.

They whipped him so badly, Declan was almost unconscious when suddenly, King Cone's arrival was announced.

Lucien wasn't at the right frame of mind but he heard Cone asking what was happening. When Coza told him, he'd laughed at 'Declan's stupidity.'

Then, he'd ordered Coza to whip Declan some more and to f**k him.

"Let's see how the tough prince can take it." He'd added, laughing maniacally.

It was the last straw Lucien. His mind was shouting the words 'NOOO!!' but his mouth couldn't talk. His body wouldn't move from the ground no matter how he tried to move it.

Coza, who swings both ways, was all too happy with the command.

It gave him greater happiness because he knows that it's a great way to hurt Lucien...to mess with Lucien. Hurting Declan.

Lucien could remember pleading with Cone for the first time in years. He begged Cone. It was a mistake, because it only gave Cone joy.

Cone had laughed at him, walked closer and dragged him by the hair, forcing his neck so back it almost crack, the metal from his collar bruising the back of his neck.

“Why don’t you watch?” He’d leaned closer to his ears and whispered, “Hear his screams and know that he’s being tortured right in front of you and you can do nothing to stop it.”

And his words had been right.

He’d laid there on the ground, his eyes watching it happen but he could do nothing to stop it. It had torn him apart.

It’s the first time he was unable to protect Declan. And that was the day they took the boy from him. The day, they bathed in his b***d.

Declan’s howls of pain was one he never forgot. Not only did Coza rape his body, the bloody monster used his knife to shred his already-bloody back open.

Coza had used his knife to design Declan’s back just to see how much b***d can follow the trail of his knife...

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Lucien shot up from the bed, his breathing erratic. Sweat poured down from his body.

The bad dream and memory had his black heart so tight in his chest, he gripped his chest with his hand just to stop the pain. It doesn’t work.

It was all fresh in his mind like it happened yesterday....like it happened earlier in the day at the courtroom.

All the pain he felt with each howl Declan let out as life was sucked right out of him, came right back to Lucien’s mind threatening to suffocate him.

All the pain he felt as he watched the life sucked out of Declan wrapped their invisible hand around his neck like the collar he wore for ten years, and choked him, cutting off his breath.

It was too much. It's always been too much.

He closed his eyes and he remembered how they'd taken away Declan lifeless body afterwards, and they'd taken a crying Vetta too.

Vetta was brought back three days later. Declan never came back.

Lucien closed his eyes against the pain, but there's no escaping a pain of that magnitude. Six years hasn't wiped that pain away.

And the events of the day...wiped away the years. It left the pain naked and raw, they clawed at his mind.

He hurt. And rage filled him too. Coza was the first he'd killed when he had the chance...but Declan is still gone.

It hurts especially the events of his death. The shouts. The pain. The struggle. The fact that he died because of him.

The door handle clicked and his door opened. Lucien's hand was on his head, he stared at the door from behind his hand.

Danika stood there. Her eyes swollen, her face wet with tears. There was fear in her eyes, but there was also pain. The same pain that mirrored in his eyes.

She came to him.

Lucien knew almost immediately why she took the courage to come to his room. She is obviously breaking apart. She wants to use one pain to substitute another.

It's called trying to escape—survive—by feeling 'a different kind of pain.'

He knows this because this is him.

She closed the door behind her and stood against it, her breathing erratic, her eyes swollen.

Silence filled the air. Only erratic breathings of two people who breathed the pain from a horror that rubs the soul.

"What are you doing here, Danika?" He asked after all.

She shook her head, her legs trembling. She doesn't know how to say it...how to talk about it. She doesn't know what she wants, but her body knows what it wants.

Shaky hands rose and went to her clothes, she started taking them off. One after another, she peeled off her clothing until she wore just skin.

She rose to her full height and stared at him. He said nothing, but his eyes held hers. Eyes that mirrored the same pain on hers held her.

Then, she lowered herself to her knee. "Master..." She called tearfully.

He got up from the bed and walked in measured steps towards her. He reached closer and stopped without touching her.

His eyes watched her carefully, taking in her visual aspect. The silence was tense.

"Why are you trying to mess with my head, Danika?" He g*****d at last, his voice hard.

Danika's teary eyes searched his face. She doesn't understand what he means. Her face spoke volume about her cluelessness.

His hand went to her jaw and he tilted her face up, to stare at her perfectly. "Your father already messed with my head to the extent all the right brain cells has been fried by torture. I have the same head as an insane man."

Her lashes fluttered shut and tears slipped from the sides, following the trail of the dried tears on her cheek, but his hand on her jaw shook her slightly, forcing her eyes open.

He lowered his head to become eye level with her, "Now, I ask you again, why do you want to mess with my head?"

He pulled back then and took some steps back, his face unreadable. "Because, I wonder how a monster like Cone can birth the woman you're showing the world? The woman you're trying to make me see?"

She shook her head, at the loss of word. The question floated in their midst. On the air.

He averted his eyes, staring away from her. The silence stretched, he said nothing.

Even as his body reacted to the sight of her beautiful lush naked body...so white it's almost pale...so flawless like a porcelain, he said nothing.

Finally, his eyes bored into hers.

"If I touch you, I won't hold back." His voice was low like gravel and grated like sandpaper, it caused her shiver to work down her spine.

Her eyes met his, "I don't want you...to hold back."

Silence.

Then, he stepped back again. "Get on the bed, Danika."

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Chapter 43

Danika climbed the bed and laid down on it. She gave him her back as usual, her elbows on the bed, she rested her head in between them.

She tried not to think about what's about to happen. She tried not to think about what has happened. She tried not to think about the Royal Court. She tried not to think about Sally's condition.

Instead, she squeezed her eyes tight, hearing the ruffle of clothings behind her.

He'd said he wouldn't hold back. And while that warning scared the living daylight out of her, she wanted it. She needed it.

The bed digged and King Lucien came up behind her. The tip of his swollen phallus nudged her opening. She spread her thighs wider, as wide as she could, readying herself to take the full length and girth of him.

But he withdrew, instead, he pressed his hand on her womanhood, she jerked when she felt the wetness of the warm liquid he was pressing in her. He was preparing her.

He worked a finger into a tight channel, she gritted her teeth and took the invading digit. Tears dropped from her eyes and splashed on the bed.

She'd cried for long hours, her head and her eyes hurt. Her eyes all red and swollen, and yet, the tears wouldn't stop coming.

She wanted him to hurt her. She wanted the pain, and when he worked another wet finger into her causing a little burn to spread through her, she pushed back at him impatiently, whimpering softly.

He leaned down, his body blanketing her and pushing her deeper to the bed. "What do you want?" His breath was hot against her ear.

“I want you t-to take me...hard and fast. I want you to h-hurt me....” She whispered, her voice hoarse.

Silence. His fingers worked inside her, pushing and pulling.

“I don’t think you know what you’re asking for, Danika.” He g*****d at last.

Maybe she doesn’t. Maybe she really doesn’t...but she still needed it. She pushed back against him.

“Do you know why I’m going to do what you want?”

She shook her head against the mattress.

“Because it is what I want too.” Then, he took his weight off her, pulling back completely.

Before she could process his words, one hand grabbed a fistful of hair, jerking her neck back...jerking her upper body up from the bed while another secured her h*p, pinning her in place.

His e*****n rocked against her outer flesh, hot, hard and heavy. No matter how ready her mind is, her body was scared to death.

Fear lit up her chest but she shut her mind to it.

Then, he pulled back and thrust violently, coldly, viciously into her. Her elbows gave way and she fell headfirst into the pillow. Her hands couldn’t support her.

Everything burned. Everything hurt.

She gripped the pillow, gasping for breath, sucking in material as the searing, frightening pain of being taken violently made her cry out. Hot tears were absorbed instantly by the pillow as the king rammed into her again.

He lost himself, turning inhuman as he rode her...just like she’s asked. Her scalp screamed where he held her captive by the hair.

Then, he took her harder.

His hard e*****n plunged deep inside her, filling her, distorting her. The wetness he’d stuffed inside her prevented searing pain, but the fierceness of every thrust made her ache instantly with bruises.

She yelped with each stroke, his h**s slapping her butt. He grunted and rutted like a beast behind her, unleashing himself on her.

Fingers digging deep into her h**s, jerking her back relentlessly to meet his every surge.

Forgotten was the internal searing pain; the burning ripping of her heart. All she felt was what he was doing to her. All she felt was being used thoroughly.

Danika bit her l*p, cutting off the scream that rose to her throat as he withdrew and slammed into her again. Her back bowed as he thrust deeper and deeper.

He was groaning in pleasure, she realized. And even in the midst of that pain, a trill of power shot through her. She made him this way. She the one giving him this pleasure.

She doesn't understand the thought or the feeling, but it was there.

His fingers gripped her h**s, holding her in place as he savagely thrust. Every pound sent shockwaves of agony through her, she whimpered and yelped. His hipbones dug into her a*s, adding more bruises with each thrust.

King Lucien thrust harder and harder, driving her deeper and deeper into the pillow. He filled her to the brink until Danika thought she'll split in two.

"I told you. I warned you." He g*****d, driving into her like a monster.

He was big. Too big. The feel of him moving inside her was overwhelming.

She didn't know she started screaming into the pillow until he bumped suddenly, cutting out her air and the scream short-circuited.

His h**s thrust harder and she knew she had to put an end to it, or he'll really split her in two.

She remembered all the scrolls and parchments she'd read and knew that she had to make him release faster because that's the only way for it to end.

And so, instead of trying to get away, she pushed back, deliberately impaling him harder.

He grunted. "Oh....yeah."

The grunt of approval encouraged that feminine part of her that wanted to please. She squeezed her inner muscles around him, rocking back, giving him everything she had left.

His breath came faster, harsher as he thrust again and again.

He was violent and cruel, every stroke measured for pain rather than pleasure. He bumped against the top of her v@gina, hurting her with urgency.

Curling over her, his back smothered hers as he snaked his hand around to pinch her nipple hard and at the same time, he sunk teeth into her neck and nibbled her.

Danika raised her head and screamed as he thrust again, filling her completely. Then, he froze and released.

Hot, wet streams spurt deep inside her. On and on and on.

His hands on her h**s clenched hard and teeth bit down on the sinew between her neck and collarbone.

He g*****d and m****d against her, his hard thighs shivering against her.

The second the last pulse of his release filled her, he pulled out and stepped back with his knees.

With a ragged gasp, Danika flopped to her side and curled into a tight ball.

The stickiness of his release smeared her inner thighs, and the collar dug into her neck, but she couldn't bring herself to move.

To her greatest surprise and fright, he suddenly pulled her up, and wrapped a blindfold around her eyes.

She cried out at the sudden movement and the darkness that suddenly surrounded her, she began struggling impulsively.

"Relax." It was a ragged command.

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Chapter 44

She stilled instantly, her breathing erratic, her heart in her throat. She couldn't see a thing.

When he flipped her over with her back on the bed, she cried out frightened. But, he merely laid atop her and pushed inside her hurting warm body again.

Danika was overwhelmed, she doesn't know this position. He came down on top of her, she felt his clothed body blanketing her.

No, his body wasn't clothed anymore, Danika noted instantly as her finger met his naked skin. He has removed his clothing and her searching finger met the hard rough surface of his stomach.

Scars. With that three seconds flex of her finger, she felt them. So many scars.

Then, his hands took hers and raised it high above her head. He resumes thrusting into her body, his body large and heavy on top of hers.

She whimpered with each thrust. She was surrounded by him. Tears filled her eyes, it is too much for her.

Her weak body trembled. All she could feel is him: the things he was doing to her. The back-and-forth movement of his thick phallus inside her body, the heat emanating from his skin.

Using his thighs, he nudged her leg more open, forcing one trembling leg up to his shoulder. He held both her hands in one hand and used the other to hold her leg in that position, he resumed slamming into her.

In that position, he goes deep, even deeper than usual, and she couldn't help the pained screams that escape her throat as the head of his e*****n bumps against her cervix with each thrust of his h**s.

Yet, the discomfort doesn't seem to prevent the unfamiliar pressure that started growing deep inside her.

With each thrust of his h**s, the pressure intensified until she recognized it for the pleasure it was turning out to be.

She tried to fight it, to twist her body away from the intense brutality of his thrusts because she wasn't here for the pleasure...a pleasure she doesn't deserve.

But, he won't let her. His hands and body easily held her down, he has the strength of so many men.

"No....!" She gasped.

"Don't fight it." he g*****d sharply, angling his thrust even deeper and harder.

She screamed hoarsely as her body raptured to tiny million pieces, her inner muscles clenching helplessly around his shaft.

He g****s harshly, and then she felt him releasing again, his shaft pulsing and jerking within her. She could feel his hot wet liquid in her womb, his pelvis grinding into my womanhood.

It enhanced her own release, much to her shame and helplessness, draws out her pleasure-pain.

It's like they're linked together, because her violent contractions didn't stop until his were fully over.

He collapsed ontop of her, his breathing as ragged as hers. She felt him everywhere. He surrounded her. She saw darkness. She breathed him.

Finally, he rolled to the side. Danika heard some ruffle of clothes, and some moments later, he pulled the blindfold from her eyes.

It took a few seconds before her eyes adjusted to the dim darkness.

She swiveled her face and stared at him, he was dressed again in a flimsy nightcloth and lying beside her.

She managed to curl her body into a tight ball, her body throbbing. Her heart was in her throat because he would order her to get out. She wasn't sure she can move.

His eyes was watching hers, and hers watched his face in return. Her eyes dazed and filled with overwhelming exhaustion for the first time.

She realized that he looked tired too...even as sleepy as she is.

She swallowed tightly, thinking about how to plead for him not to order her out.
"Please—"

"Just for tonight." He rasped, cutting her off. Then, he closed his eyes.

Relief coursed through her, but sleep was fast taking over. But even in her half-gone mind, she needed warmth.

Her body needed it...craved it. She doesn't understand.

Then, she found herself snaking a hand around to his chest...up to his shoulder.

He stiffened and growled low on his throat, but her mind was too sluggish to process the warning, so, she didn't take her hand back.

But he didn't throw her arm away, even as his body remained taut.

As she fell deep into slumber, she felt her body being drew closer to the hard wall of his and she heard him g***n, "Just for tonight."

Or maybe she imagined it.

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It's midday and Vetta was finally tired of waiting for the king to wake. She has checked on him countless time, she had knocked several times in the morning and there has been no response.

She was glad that her house arrest was over. These past three days has been hell but she's prepared to apologize. She'll apologize to the king that she went overboard by whipping his slave.

She just needed to clear any doubt on the King's mind. She wants there relationship to remain solid as usual, without any sort of doubt.

Then, she'll deal with Cone's daughter. On her own time. In a different way that'll never point fingers at her.

With those thoughts and decision in mind, she'd come to the King's chambers and knocked several times but there'd been no answer.

The door was locked from the inside and Vetta knew for a fact that he's sleeping...which surprised the hell out of her.

The king never sleeps, talk more of oversleeping.

She'd come again at late morning, and Chad was standing at the closed door. He'd confirmed that the king was sleeping and shouldn't be disturbed. Chad's face mirrored his own surprise too.

At midday, she was done waiting. She walked back to the door of the King's Chambers and began knocking again, this time louder and more persistent.

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Chapter 45

King Lucien woke first at the persistent knocking at the door. He noted a lot of things at the same time.

Another body pressed against his. The brightness of the day glared hard through the windows.

That was when the events of last night floated through his mind.

He stared at Danika. She sleeps soundly beside him, oblivious of the every other thing. He eyes lowered to her naked body.

At the privacy of his own mind, and even with a little bit of anger at himself for noticing, he admitted to himself that she has the most beautiful body he'd ever seen. He'd seen a lot.

Red marks that weren't there last night, marred the beautiful skin in several places. It reminded him of the way he'd had her.

A crease of frown knitted his eyebrow. He'd released twice.

That was a first for him....since Cone destroyed his body. He had remained hard even after released the first time, and he'd taken her again.

When the knock came again at the door, a much more glaring realization stuck him like a bucket of cold water.

He stared at the windows. His eyes found the hourglass at his desk, it's almost in half. Followed by the old wall clock hanging behind his desk. It's midday.

He'd slept until midday. No nightmares. No sudden awakening with a clear eyes.

He'd slept until midday...while holding her close. And he'd overslept.

Lucien didn't know what to make of such realization, his brow remained knitted together in a frown. He stared at Danika again, her breathing laboured, but she hasn't stirred.

The knock came again.

He got up from the bed and through the cover on Danika, which effectively covered her up. Instead of the door, he went to his wardrobe and began sorting through his clothes.

"Who is there?" He asked calmly.

At the sound of his voice, Danika stirred for the first time.

"It's Vetta, My King."

He took his time, withdrawing the piece of parchment he was looking for. Then, he walked to the door and opened it.

“My King, I—” Vetta stopped short when she took the first step inside his chambers.

Danika laid on the bed, and she was only stirring awake. The smile disappeared from her face, and she suddenly felt faint.

That bitch had slept here! That bitch SHARED HIS BED AND ALSO SLEPT HERE!!!

Vetta’s eyes darkened, her breath turned erratic. She fisted her hands to her side as she glared at a waking Danika.

She stared at the King who seem to be getting ready to run a bath for himself. That’s king Lucien...sometimes, he has no need for calling the servants.

She stared at his back and wondered how the hell this is possible!? This is just not possible! How is this possible!?

“What is it, Vetta?” He asked when the silence stretched. He stopped sorting through his wardrobe and stared at her.

Vetta forced herself to remain calm. It took everything in her for her to maintain calmness and wipe the aggressive expression from her face.

She forced a smile, “I wanted to see you, My King. I have something to say to you.”

Danika was noticing that she’d slept until midday. Her eyes hurt badly from crying so hard the day before, and they were swollen, she could feel it.

The king had let her sleep here, she realized at the feel of the soft mattress. She’d slept her all night and morning. Oh no, what about Sally!?

Her eyes found the king standing on his wardrobe.....and the wicked mistress standing at the door. Danika could practically see the hostility the mistress was trying to hide.

She bowed her head slightly in greeting to the mistress, before she forced her legs to move. She started coming down from the bed, her body hurt badly with every movement she made.

She stood on her feet, the hurting muscles of her legs threatened to give out from under her, but she bit the inside of her lips and forced her legs to stand.

She’ll never give this mistress the satisfaction of seeing her all weak, hurting and woobly. She held the bedsheets tight around herself as she walked to the place her clothes are and picked them up.

Every part of her body hurts.

The silence of the room was deafening as she put on her clothes. She could practically feel the mistress glaring holes into her back, but she chose not to notice.

Done dressing, she faced the king whose brows were knitted as he read a scroll he brought out from his wardrobe. She bowed her head, "Good day, Master."

"Get out, Danika." He said without sparing her a glance.

She bowed again and turned towards the door.

The mistress was opening, stabbing her with her eyes filled with so much rage and hatred because the king wasn't watching.

Danika didn't lower her eyes, instead, her eyes held hers.

This woman that almost killed her. This woman that hates her so much and so openly. This woman who was just coming out from her three days house arrest.

She knows that the rage the mistress feels is because she was waking up from the King's bed and she doesn't know why. But, she'll never cower for her.

Then, her head high, her shoulders squared, she walked past her and out of the room. She was so sore, she would have fallen if she wasn't so determined to walk past this mistress with her dignity around her.

She got out and closed the door. She walked all the way out of the king's quarters, rounded a hidden corner and then...

"Ouch! Ouch!..." She cried as her legs gave out from under her. She fell, wincing on the ground.

The soreness of her body reminded her of all the intense details of last night, and her cheeks flushed red. In the light of the day, she couldn't believe that she'd gone to him. She'd gone to the king!

She couldn't believe she'd told him not to hold back. He really didn't hold back, she said to herself, staring at the red marks on her arms.

He'd cuddled her....

The whisper came to her mind and settled on it. He'd cuddled her...he'd let her cuddle him...

No, she wouldn't think of this now. Sally.

Fear gripped her throat, followed by a huge wave of intense pain and guilt. Her chest tightened so painfully, she grabbed it and tried to soothe the burns. It wasn't working.

Sally. Oh, Creator, how is Sally?

She forced herself to get up from the ground. She started walking gingerly towards the underground rooms.

With each step she took, the stickiness of the release between her inner thighs reminded her that she'd spend the night in the King's bed. In the King's arm.

She made a mental note to tell Baski to make her portions that prevents a baby.

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Chapter 46

While the king was in the bathroom, Vetta called the maids to take out the bedsheets. She wanted every trace of that bitch out!

The two maids that remained cleaned out the room to her satisfaction. By the time the king came out of the bathroom, the room was clean and arranged, aired and scented.

She sat there on the bed while the King took off his clothes and changed into new ones. She tried to keep being calm, it was a struggle.

How can Danika spent the night in the King's bed and he allowed her!? He'd never...NEVER...let her lay on the bed, but he took s****l pleasures from his slave on this bed, and he also let her sleep on it. How is that even possible!?

He'd found satisfaction with her too, she knows this. Chad was never in here and she wasn't too. It was that bitch!

Vetta's head was pounding really hard, her hands fisted beside her in rage, but when the king clothed himself fully and stared at her, she beamed at him like she was a bright and happy mistress.

"I see you had a very good night, Your Highness?" She asked brightly.

He nodded once, not saying anything. His face was the usual expressionless mask as he walked to his desk and got behind it.

The air of authority that clung to him like a cloak to a body, made it hard for her to ask direct questions or even demand answers. That would be a huge mistake where King Lucien is concern.

“You must have slept really well, My King. I’ve knocked several times before but you’ve been sleeping.” She said, fishing.

He sorted through the scrolls on his desk calmly. Finally, he raised his eyes and bored down on her carefully.

“How have you been, Vetta?” He asked.

A trill of pleasure shot through her at the question. “I’m doing so good, my king.”

He nodded once and focused on his scrolls again. Vetta knows without being told that he probably has a lot to do today and he wants to get on with them, because he already has a late start.

Suddenly, she wanted some contact with him. Even if it’s a little bit of it.

She walked close to him and dropped to her knees. She placed a hand on his clothed-hard thighs.

He stiffened, the way he does whenever someone puts their hands on him. He lifted his eyes from the scroll, and stared at her hand on his body. His eyes lifted to her face.

“I want to apologize for what I did three nights ago. I should never have done something like that... I didn’t know what got into me...” She allowed her eyes to water as she stared at him.

“I never wanted to go that far. But... I just couldn’t stop remembering everything her father did to us. I remembered the way I lost my baby... The way Declan died....and it drove me mad.” She lied smoothly, knowing the right buttons to push.

At the mention of Declan, he flinched like he’d been punched and his eyes darkened.

Happiness spread through her at the sight, but she hid it well. She got him on that one, she never wants him to forget.

She blinked hard to make sure the tears run down her cheeks. “But, now I know that I was wrong. I almost killed her. I should never had let my pains get the best of me.....”

Silence. The silence stretched.

Finally, King Lucien finally cupped her cheek. "It's alright, Vetta. I'm glad you finally understand that you did wrong. I punished you because I don't want you to become a monster because of everything we went through."

"Let me bear those burden alone, it is my cross to bear. I gave you freedom and I want you to enjoy it. To bask in it. Do not become like me. I don't want to see you become a monster."

"Yes, my king." She whispered, rubbing her cheek on his rough palm.

He pulled back then, severing all contacts. He picked up a brand new scroll and unwrapped it. "You can go now. I need to get some things done."

"Uhm.... I can come in later? I promise to make you feel so good..." She trailed off huskily.

He shook his head dismissively. "I will call you when I need you."

Anger, hot and swift slashes through her. But, she nodded and got up from the floor. She bowed to him before she walked out of the room.

Outside his room, she gritted her teeth angrily. This is all because of that bitch!

She wanted the king to herself, dammit! Now, he wouldn't even let her come to him today, all because of that bitch!

What and what happened in her absence that she doesn't know? Not knowing is driving her really mad!

The memory of seeing Danika lying down on his bed coursed another round of swift rage went to course through her. Her day was officially ruined. A lot of things are going out of place!

Which charm did she use on him to make him sleep? Sleep for that long!?

She would have to do something about Danika. She would do something and fast. She can't let this....whatever this is...to continue!

Because deep within herself, she knows that something has done wrong. She doesn't know what, but she could feel it.

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Karandy stayed in his bedroom nursing his wounds. That bitch, Danika, almost beat him to death. That bitch.

Rage filled Karandy. If not that a servant found him and took him back to his house and called a medicine man for him, he would have died.

He took deep breaths and forced himself to calm down. Raging won't help him now at all.

The King's guards had come earlier in the day. They'd paid him a visit. Apparently, Danika told the king everything.

"That bitch!!" He cussed angrily as he got up from his bed.

He never knew she had it in her at all. He never knew she'll tell! Also, he doesn't know that the king would ever believe her.

He'd underestimated that bitch.

"Shit." He g*****d.

The worst part of it all is that the guards came back again and summoned him to the palace.

"The king wants to see him." One of them had said to him.

The king will surely punish him if he admits that Danika's allegations are true. Hell, the king might order his execution...other kings do that.

As Karandy prepared to be confronted by the king, he was raging. That bitch doesn't know him at all.

There's no way he'll admit that her allegations are true. He would also make sure that the king ends up feeling betrayed by even trusting her a little bit and believing her.

He would make sure that Danika is the one that gets punished....publicly.

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Chapter 47

Danika reached the underground bedroom to see Baski walking out of the door with a bowl of water and closing the door behind her.

Baski saw her coming, taking on the fear on her face, her swollen eyes, the tentative way she walks and the red mark on her arm.

“Please, how is Sally?” Danika asked, her heart in her throat.

She was most surprised when Baski’s eyes teared up.

“Oh, Danika...” She dropped the bowl of water to the ground and walked to her. Danika was shocked when Baski wrapped her arms around her.

“You made him sleep.... He slept because of you.... You don’t know how happy you made me...!” Baski cried in a whisper.

Stunned, Danika remained still until the older woman pulled away from her.

She had a smile on her face as she looked up at her, “I checked on him twice and he was still sleeping...” Baski said with awe.

“Uhm...does it mean that the king doesn’t sleep so well?” Danika asked, confused, “I know he’s awake most of the time but I thought it was his choice.”

Baski shook her head. “It was never. The king hasn’t slept well in fifteen years.”

“Oh No!” Danika’s eyes widened. That’s a long time for a person not to sleep well. Guilt joined when she knew that it’s because of her father. She didn’t bother to ask.

Baski nodded her head sadly. “He’s able to sleep last night, I’m so happy about that. I’ve made so much portions...” she took a deep breath, and stared up at her, “Don’t worry, I’ll give you portions for the aches and sore muscles.”

Danika nodded gratefully. “Thanks, Baski.”

Baski wiped her eyes and composed herself. “I bet you must be famished. Uyah brought in your food and Sally’s food early. Come on, let’s go in. We wouldn’t want more people to know that we’re here and why.”

Danika dug into her heels, forcing her to stop. “What a-about Sally, Madam Baski?” She asked again, her voice fearful.

“She’s holding out fine. Opened her eyes hours ago and looked for her princess. Then, she closed it right back again.”

“What?” Danika’s heart squeezed guiltily in her chest, “She looked for me and I wasn’t h-here...”

“Don’t go about beating yourself up, she’ll be awake again.” Baski consoled, “But, until she is, you have to eat, take your bath and freshen up.”

Danika agreed but she still needed to see Sally. She followed Baski inside the room and stood at the door. She watched Sally there on the bed.

Sally’s sleeping position has changed and now, she laid on her side. There’s a towel to her head, her eyes still closed.

Danika watched her labored breathing to satisfy herself that she’s still alive, before she took the food from the table and ate. Then, she entered the bathroom.

She bathed and came out of the bathroom to see new clean clothes of hers folded on the bed. Uyah brought them in. Baski finished mixing another concoction which she forced down Sally’s throat.

The concoction reminded Danika of something important. She waited until Uyah went out on the errand Baski sent her to.

She walked closer and sat down on the bed beside Sally. She took Sally’s hand into hers, squeezing lightly.

Baski was stirring the small pistol vigorously, mixing her herbs. She threw her a glance, “I’m making the portions. I also added herbs that tighten up those overused muscles too. I’ll be done in a little bit.”

Danika cleared her throat. “Uhm...Ma’am Baski, can you make me portions that will prevent a baby....? You know....the one you made me before...?”

Baski’s hand paused, her face paling. For a few seconds, anger and resentment crossed the older woman’s face as she stared at Danika. Then, she looked away.

The question hung in the air, tense and uncomfortable.

Danika didn’t know what she said wrong to emit such reaction from Baski. She has no idea why Baski suddenly withdrew from her.

“Do you hate him so much that you can’t even bear the thought of having his child?” Baski asked at last, her voice low and resentful.

Danika's eyes widened in surprise. She didn't expect such a question.

Baski abandoned her herbs and turned fully to face her. She crossed her arms, "Do you hate him that much? Does the thought of having his child sicken you?"

Danika opened her mouth....closed it. She opened it again....snapped it shut. The question rubbed her of speech.

Baski turned and faced her herbs again, her shoulders tensed, her pose screamed anger and resentment. She picked up the small wooden pistol and started mixing her herbs again.

"It's actually the other way around, Baski." Danika whispered at last, her voice small.

Baski turned and watched her warily.

She lifted a shoulder and allowed it to fall. "It's the other way around. The king hates me too much. He hates me too much for me to bear his child." her eyes pinned Baski's own, "I am Cone's daughter. Cone's daughter can't bear a child for the king Lucien, he hates me too much to ever take that well."

Before Baski could say anything, Danika added, "Let's not forget what happens to any slave that allows herself to carry the child of her master. It's not law, but most masters find it an offense punishable by death. They kill the slave for that."

Danika looked away then, shaking her head. "I'm barely surviving here, Baski...I don't want to get killed for committing such offense."

Her words settled between them and the silence stretched.

Finally, Baski took a deep breath, her shoulders relaxing. "The king is not like other men, Danika." She said calmly. "He hates you, yes, but he's not like other slave masters. You should already know that by now."

"Yes. Yes, I know." Danika admitted.

Baski nodded and started stirring her potions again. "You don't have to worry about carrying his child. You can be with him as much as he wants you to, and you don't have to worry about bearing him a child."

"Oh...." Danika thought about that, trying to understand. Then, her eyes cleared in understanding, "Is it because of the herbs you gave me before? Are they still working and effective? For how long?"

"For months to come." Baski answered reluctantly.

“Okay.” Danika took a deep breath.

Finally done with her herbs, she offered the portion to Danika. She took the wooden cup from the older woman and drank the bitter liquid.

“You’ll feel better in no time.” She reassured, taking the empty cup from her.

“Thank you so much, Baski.”

“You’re welcome.”

Danika bit her lips. “Can I ask you something?”

“What is it?” Baski started packing her med-bag.

She doesn’t know how to ask that. But she pushed the words out nonetheless... “Who’s Declan?”

Baski’s head whipped up, she whirled around so fast she was spinning as she faced Danika. “How did you hear that name?”

She worried her lower lip, “When the King’s mistress tortured me, she kept hitting my back with the whip, saying that I deserve to go through everything Declan went through—“

“No one deserves that.” Baski inserted flatly, her lips pursed in disapproval.

“—and then, last night the king spoke his name before I entered his room. He was having a nightmare...” she paused, “he told Declan that he’s sorry. I heard him say that.”

Baski’s eyes watered. She blinked rapidly to clear her eyes, she turned back towards the table and continued packing her bag.

“Who’s Declan...?” Danika repeated softly.

Baski didn’t answer. The question hanged in the air for so long, Danika knew she wouldn’t answer.

“M-My... P-Princess....”

She stilled at the hoarse sound of Sally’s voice. Her head whipped around and she stared at Sally, who’s eyes fluttered open.

“Sally...! Oh Creator...Sally!” She climbed onto the bed, crawling towards Sally.

Sally's eyes found her princess. "M-My... P-Princess...."

"How do you feel, Sally...? How are you doing...?"

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Chapter 48

Sally tried to sit up and Danika saw the move, she helped Sally to sit up on the bed, the both of them wincing at the same time.

Sally heard her wince and she lifted concerned eyes towards Danika, "Are you...alright, my p-princess?"

The question so softly asked...so brokenly asked...caused tears to fill Danika's hurting eyes immediately. She pushed closer and wrapped her arms around Sally's body, burying her face on her neck.

"Oh, Sally.... How can you ask about me when you're the person that's hurt!? Why did you do it!? Why!? Why did you have to do that to me Sally...?" She cried.

Sally doesn't like seeing her cry. She has never liked it. Hearing her princess's cries, feeling the way her body was shaking against hers, was hurting her badly.

"My princess.... Please, don't cry." She whispered, raising her bandaged hand, she patted her back in reassurance. "Please, don't cry.... I don't like that you cry..."

Those words only made Danika cry harder, even as she tried to control herself, she couldn't help it. Her body shook with the force of the pain and relief coursing through her.

Sally's here. Sally's alive. Sally will be fine.

Every other thing doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how yesterday's event affected Sally. It doesn't matter that her Sally might probably never recover from it.

What matters is that she's here. She's alive. She survived.

As Danika cried, she admitted to herself that she must be a selfish person for being relieved that Sally's alive...even though it's obvious she's in deep pains. At that moment, it doesn't matter.

She vowed then, that she'll protect Sally as best as she can. She also vowed that she'll do everything within her power to help Sally heal. Everything.

"I'll leave you two to talk. I'll be back very soon, Sally needs her wounds cleaned and redressed." Baski's voice came.

Danika pulled back and stared at her. "Thank you so much, Madam Baski. Thank you so much for everything."

"You're welcome. I'll be back." She turned to leave....

Then she stopped and turned back. "He was his cousin." She said suddenly.

"Huh?" Danika stared at her with teary eyes, clearly lost.

Baski's lashes fluttered, her eyes lowering. When she raised it again, the sadness in her eyes was stark and blatant.

"You asked who Declan is." She said finally, "Declan is the King's young cousin brother."

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"You....must...have been so worried. I'm so....sorry, My Princess." Sally whispered as she gazed at her princess when Baski left the room.

Danika only pulled her close, wrapping her arms around her again, tears blurring her eyes.

"Please, don't ever do something like this to me again, Sally. You don't know how h-heartbreaking it is. Oh Sally, I'm so so sorry. I'm s-so sorry for what they did to you....!"

Sally pulled back. Staring into her face, she palmed her cheeks with shaky bandaged hands. "What those k-kings did...to me hurt so much, my princess. I almost died...from the pain..."

"Oh Sally...." Danika's heart broke a little more inside.

“...it hurt, my princess but I was able to endure it...I wanted to. I had to. I did it for you, because I know you...can never take s-such treatment from them.” her lips curved into a small smile, “You’re my princess...you aren’t a slave.”

“Sally, you don’t know how hard it was...seeing you that way because of me. You should have given me a choice, I would have been on that table instead of you. Because of me...me! I’m not sure I would have been able to bear it if anything happened to you, you scared me so badly.” Danika explained, wiping her tears.

Sally smiled slowly, “But I can’t...just leave my princess here. Someone has to be here to protect you... Who would that be, if not Sally?” She asked slowly.

Danika took her hands into hers, “No. From now on, I’ll protect you. You just focus on getting better. Please...be alive for me, Sally. Just try to stay alive and I’ll do my best to help you heal...”

Sally stared down at her bandaged self. Sitting down there on the bed, she shifted a little, flexing her muscles and a sharp bite of pain slammed through her body from all directions.

She bit the inside of her lips tight to make sure her princess doesn’t see her pain. She stared at her princess’s face, noting how swollen her eyes were from crying. Her red they were.

“If I promise...to fight so hard to survive, My Princess, I want you to make me a promise...” Her voice hoarse like gravel.

“Anything at all.” She responded at once.

“Never b-blame yourself for what happened. Never carry that guilt...inside you. Stop h-hurting from it. Don’t let it change you, my princess. Don’t let it break you. You have to promise me.” Her eyes searched Danika’s.

Danika only felt like crying more. “Oh...Sally....”

“Please, you have to p-promise me that you’ll let go. I don’t want you ever living with such burden, it will kill me... Please, promise me that you’ll do everything p-possible to let go, My Princess, and I promise to do everything possible to fight so hard and get better...” Sally was breathing hard by the time she was done talking so slowly.

Danika let her words wash over her. Taking in the expectant look on Sally’s face, she closed her eyes.

“I promise.” She whispered at last.

She said those words: promising to let go, promising to try and stop blaming herself, promising to deal with the pain of what happened yesterday, promising not to let it change her...break her.

As she said those words, her heart lifted in her chest. Her shoulders felt light, like some burden was lifted from it. Her heart felt better. She felt better.

She might never forget what happened to Sally in the courtroom, she might never forget hearing it happen, she might never forget that Sally did it for her, but she was determined to deal with the pain and the guilt.

If Sally with all the cuts and bruises on her body, can still smile and plead with her to make such promise, then by all mean, she'll make sure to keep this promise.

"I promise, Sally." She repeated, stronger this time.

Sally smiled again then. "I'm so glad, my princess."

Just then, the door opened and Baski entered again. Chad and two maids including Uyah followed behind her.

Danika helped take Sally to the bathroom, and helped her bath. No matter how much Sally protested, Danika won't have it.

Afterwards, she helped Sally dress too before she walked her gingerly back to the bed. The maids, they watched wide-eyed in shock and disbelief. But Chad and Baski just watched them expressionlessly.

Danika and Sally didn't notice.

While Baski redressed Sally's wounds, Danika brought out a book and started reading to her just to try and take her mind off the pain. Even as tears pulled from Sally's eyes, she did her best to listen attentively to her princess's as she read to her.

"All done." Baski said at last, putting away the bloody used bondage. "You've already drank the your portions and taken your pills while you were still drifting through consciousness."

"Thank you so much, Madam Baski." Sally g*****d, her face tight with pain.

"You gave us quite the big scare yesterday. Even big Chad here was scared out of his mind too. We're just glad you're fighting it out, Sally." Baski said.

Sally's eyes found the big personal guard of the king, he bowed his head a bit in greeting. Her cheeks heated up and she returned the greeting with a bow of her own head.

Sally tried to temper down the shame that rose inside her. This great man always looks at her with respect before.

She wondered if he'll keep seeing her as a respectable girl, or he'll start seeing her like trash because of what happened?

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Chapter 49

She wondered if he'll keep seeing her as a respectable girl, or he'll start seeing her like trash because of what happened?

"You need to exercise those muscles," Baski went ahead saying, "You need to walk around for some time, everyday. You'll heal faster."

"I do want to get some fresh air..." Sally admitted.

"I'll take you. We'll go together. But I'm so scared about what will happen..." Danika trailed off in a whisper, saving the rest unsaid.

Baski knew what she was trying to say. She's scared of what will happen if people find out that Sally was the one that got introduced instead of her.

Baski sent the other maid to go get her a big bowl and the maid left.

"Uyah?' Baski called.

"Yes, Madam Baski?" The girl said eagerly.

"You care for Sally, right?" Baski asked the girl quietly.

Uyah nodded the blond mass of her head. "So much! Oh, I'm so glad Sally's alive! I cried myself to sleep last night thinking that she'll never make it and my conscience was killing me because I helped her dress in the same costume the slave princess wore. I feel so better now that she's awake! I never want anything to happen to Sally!"

Tears pulled in Uyah's eyes as she talked passionately, it's obvious the girl was genuinely upset.

All through yesterday and this morning, Uyah was always so eager to help and they all believe her when she said she doesn't want any harm on Sally.

"Thank you so much, Uyah. For helping me...." Sally whispered sincerely.

Uyah smiled. "You're welcome, Sally."

Baski swivered her head back to Uyah. "I want you to go out and spread the rumor of the introduction, Uyah. Danika was getting introduced by the kings and Sally couldn't watch anymore, she tried to interfere and the kings got really angry at her, took pleasures from her body and beat her up. They would have killed her for interfering but they decided to have mercy on her."

She paused and took a deep breath. "The palace workers are all curious about what happened yesterday. I want you to go around and spread this rumor."

Uyah nodded her head vigorously. "Consider it done, Madam Baski."

"That's the only way Sally will be saved." Baski added to Uyah.

"I'll make sure everyone hears it, and it'll trend in the palace. You trust me, Madam Baski. I can spread rumors." Uyah vowed.

"You can go now, Uyah." Baski said with a smile.

The girl bowed to them and left.

Tears of gratitude prickled Danika's eyes. She blinked it back. "We can't thank you enough, Madam Baski...."

"You can't. So, maybe you should quit trying." Baski said reluctantly as she got up with her medicine bag.

She explained that she needed to get home because the nurse she's paying to take care of Remeta will soon be going back to her home. She needs to go be with her daughter.

They thanked her again and she left.

Chad on the other hand, hasn't said anything at all. But he seemed satisfying with just watching Sally....seeing for himself that she's alright.

Finally, he bowed his head slightly at the before he turned and left too.

Sally's eyes trailed after him worriedly.

Alone again, Danika started feeding Sally. She helped Sally eat and she read more to her as they waited for Uyah to spread the rumor before they can go out.

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Hours later. They were still waiting when the King's guards came to the bedroom and took her. They king requests her presence.

Danika's heart was in her throat as she followed them. She told Sally that she'll be back and Sally nodded wholeheartedly.

As they walked Danika wondered why the king might be calling her,her heart in her throat. But as they rounded a corner at the King's quarters, the sight in front explained why.

Karandy was kneeling in front of the king. King Lucien stood tall several feet away with his hands behind his back, two guards standing behind him.

They got closer and stopped. Danika's body was shaking inside but she remained cool and collected on the outside. She went down on her knees.

"You called me, Master." She whispered.

His eyes bored into her. "This slave trainer here is saying that he has never made any s****l moves on you. He went ahead to say that you've been throwing yourself at him at every turn. You have been trying to lure him into your bed."

He let the words hang around them. Danika's chest was beating faster than usual.

"Is that true?" He asked at last.

"No, Master." She gulped out. She can practically feel Karandy's deadly glare on her body.

"How can you defend yourself?"

It was on Danika's lips to tell him that Sally was there with her on some days the slave trainer made advances at her. But, she couldn't bring herself to call Sally's name. She would never to anything that'll further endanger Sally.

“No, My King. I have no defense.”

Silence ensued. Danika bit the inside of her cheek, worry clawed at her.

“Look at me, Danika.” The command was curt.

She raised her eyes from the ground and her eyes met the king's. She dropped all her guard to the ground and let him see the stark truth in her eyes.

Karandy will really deal with her after this, especially if he goes unpunished.

The king's face was unreadable and it only made Danika restless and nervous. She can't read him. She doesn't know what's going through that head of his.

King Lucien cocked his head to the side, “The red handprint on your face yesterday was given by him, am I wrong?”

“You aren't, my king.” Hope flared inside her.

Shit. Karandy felt like kicking himself.

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Chapter 50

Shit. Karandy felt like kicking himself.

He knew he should have never slapped her where it was so damn visible yesterday, but he'd wanted her so much, he was unable to control himself.

While he was lying so effectively, he'd told the king baldly that he never laid a hand on her. He forgot about the goddamn slap. Fear gripped him.

Slowly, King Lucien walked closer to Danika. He got so close to her that only a few inch seperated them. Then, he bent down to become eye level with her.

Memories rose inside her of last night where he did the same thing. And then, the memories of what happened afterwards....

Her cheeks flushed as he still stared at her, his eyes scrutinizing her. So close, Danika breathed him in.

King Lucien has a unique scent to him that she is beginning to feel familiarized with. The same scent that surrounded her last night...that clung to her body even after she left his bed.

She cut off the gasp that rose to her throat when he raised his hand and run it across her cheek.

“The mark isn’t all faded though. I can still see traces of it.” He g*****d as he ran his fingers up and down her cheek.

A shiver worked down her body, and she would have sworn that she saw his eyes flare with desire for a minute. He blinked and it was gone.

“Karandy?” King Lucien didn’t take his eyes off her when he spoke so calmly.

“Yes, M-My King.” His voice wasn’t so confident anymore.

“Did you hit her last noon day?”

Silence. No answer.

King Lucien pulled back then, stepping back too. Danika suddenly felt bereft. She blinked several times to clear the strange feeling.

“Guards?” He didn’t raise his voice. He never has to.

“Yes, Your Majesty!?” Both of them answered at the same time.

“Take him to the dungeon. Send for Doseh, the Master Of Justice. This slave trainer here will be given twenty strokes of the whip for assaulting the King’s Slave, twenty more strokes for trespassing on the King’s property and ten strokes for lying to the king.”

What!? Fear, horror and panic became one inside Karandy.

The shock of the sentence was like a thunder strike to him. He laid on the ground and started pleading his course to the king.

He never expected that much punishment especially since the slave in question is Cone’s daughter. King Cone’s daughter, dammit. He never expected his king to punish him this much for touching the whore!

He pleaded and pleaded, but the guards came and took him away. King Lucien told Danika to rise before he turned and started walking back to his chambers.

Danika was so shocked, she was speechless. She never expected that big punishment for her case.

As she rose, happiness coursed through her.

The slave trainer glared at her while they dragged him away. She lifted her chin and walked back him in her usual regal way of movement.

When she walked out of there, she saw Sally sitting in a corner waiting for her to come take them for a walk.

Danika stopped and watched her with a smile on her face. There were bandages in most part of her body that the long slave wear wasn't covering but it doesn't seem to matter to Sally.

She waved at every palace guard and maid that waves at her. She smiled back at them.

Just then, Sally's eyes found hers. She beamed at her.

"My Princess..." Her voice is hoarse from all the screaming yesterday.

Danika pushed the guilt down, instead she let the smile remain on her face as she walked closer to Sally who asked her what the summon was all about.

She told Sally how everything went and it made Sally very happy. At least that lustful slave trainer will be punished.

"Wait here for me. Let me hurry to our room and get the book we'll read when we take a stroll." Danika said as she started walking away.

Sally called out to her.

She turned, "Yes, Sally?"

Sally's gray eyes looked into hers.

Then, a wild smile split her lips in two. "The day is suddenly looking so bright, My Princess."

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One week passed. Sally was doing better. Danika helped her did everything, no matter how much Sally protested that she shouldn't.

Danika became Sally's arms and legs....mostly legs. She walked Sally everywhere with Sally leaning into her as they walked, Danika's arms around her waist to support her fully while her legs healed properly, and the wounds those kings inflicted sexually heals too.

Uyah spread the rumor really well. Everyone in the palace knows that Danika was introduced, but Sally got more hurt because she tried to interfere to save her princess.

What surprised both maids, slaves and servants is the bond between Danika and Sally. The love Danika has for her former personal maid who has become her best friend. They never expected it.

They never expected the slave princess to take care of a low peasant like Sally, and the sight of them taking a walk with Danika supporting her fully...the sight of Danika reading to her and brushing Sally's hair, always rubbed them of speech.

Not only in the palace. They've gone to the library three days in the last one week and the people of Salem find it hard to believe what they see. They stare at Danika and Sally too much.

Danika never seems to notice all that. Her focus was always in Sally. Making sure she doesn't fall and she heals right. Danika had taken her to the medicine man's house twice in the week.

Now, a week later, Sally is doing so much better. She can walk properly and most of her wounds has healed, the bruises has faded. Just a few scars remained which madam Baski was doing everything she can to make them go like the scars that would've formed in Danika's back.

She was doing better in the day, she's almost back into her old self. But at night....most nights...her subconscious replays the Royal Court to her and she screams in her sleep, crying and pleading.

Danika had fallen into the habit of waking her and soothing her while doing her best to keep the guilt at bay. She wanted to keep the hope that Sally would be alright again...even in her mind...even while she sleeps.

Danika has heard less from the king in the past one week.

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