

The Alpha King's Hated Slave

Chapter 241

Danika stood in front of the court. The ointment and herbs Baski gave her helped a lot to ease the ache in her body, but dread filled her belly. Her throat so closed up, she can only swallow tightly.

Memories of the second to the last time she was here threatened to overwhelm her.

Sally. Her poor Sally. These Kings had unleashed their animalistic lustful demands on her small body, they'd almost killed her Sally, thinking they had Cone's daughter.. By God's bones, she misses Sally so much.

The door opened and a guard marched out. She peered inside, it only increased her dread. Four Kings. Those four Kings she knows very well were there.

How many other Kings were there? What is happening today?

"You have to go inside, My Lady." A male voice said behind her.

She turned back to see the guard. "Do you have any idea what is happening today?"

The guard shook his head. "None, My Lady. But, you do have to be inside there before the King enters."

"The King isn't there?"

"He went out back with King Zeba few moments ago. But, he'll be in any minutes since the Court Lady already informed him that you're done getting ready."

Baski did? Of course, she did, the King will want feedback. "Thank you."

The guard bowed, "You're welcome, Princess."

Princess. She watched the guard enter through the door. It's been so long since she heard that word being addressed to her without malice or hatred lacing it. Without being address with mockery.

She opened the door and entered the court.

The noise and banter from noble men and women seized as she did. They all turned and stared at her. She couldn't look up because she hates their eyes on her.

Their calculating eyes. Hateful eyes. There were more than four Kings in court.

King Philip. King Noir. King Moreh. King George. King Zeba. King Pasih.

They sat watching observingly on their seats, watching her. They must be as surprised as Danika is, standing right there in the middle of the court. Or is it her pregnancy they're observing?

The door behind her opened. The whole court stood up when King Lucien entered...except the other Kings who attended.

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Her King Lucien. Her eyes drank him in. But, he wouldn't look at her. Her dread maximized.

She doesn't want to be here. This Royal Court, is a place she doesn't want to stand upon again. Because this place means one thing for her: Her humiliation.

King Lucien strode towards his throne and took his stand at the front of the courtroom. "I call upon Slave Danika."

Danika's heart skipped three beats. Doing her best to stay calm, she clouded her expression and walked out.

She stood in the middle of the court. She hated the eyes of people on her.

She would not raise her head to know how calculating, assessing and lustful their gazes are.

"We have gathered here today for an important event." King Lucien announced.

"It has to be important for us to be summoned all the way from our various kingdoms for it." King Moreh injected reasonably.

The other Kings nodded.

Danika folded her hands nervously to her front and tears brimmed her eyes. Not knowing why she is standing here threatens to overwhelm her with fear.

Then, King Lucien walked away from his position. The guards lifted the huge spears that separated the throne and the people, giving him passage to walk through.

He walked through the aisle and stood in front of her. His eyes finally looked at her.

She had so many urges at the same time. Run behind him and hide away from these barbarians. Hug him tight and let his arms hold her secure from these people. Ask him why she's here. Ask how much he enjoyed their night before.

She did none of them. Just watching him.

Then, he raised his hand to her neck and removed her collar. As he did so, he raised his voice;

“With the power vested in me as the King of Salem and Mombana, as the Master of this Slave standing before us all, I remove your collar. And from today onward you are no longer a slave! Not to me! Not to my people! As I hold this collar away, so as you have separated from it! You stand...A FREE WOMAN!”

Silence. Deafening silence.

All their mouths were gaping open in shock. Their eyes so wide that their eyebrows were touching their hairlines.

Danika stood without the collar, her head as blank as a new-born's. Her head was finding it difficult to comprehend that after a year and two months in slavery, she is suddenly a free person...suddenly without the collar.

Then, King Noir clapped once. Twice. Three times.

The other Kings joined one after another. In less than a minute, the whole court erupted with clappings.

But, King Lucien wasn't done.

A guard hurried forward with the Royal Pillow held out in front of him. On the pillow nestled a shiny gold crown she has never seen before but was almost sure that it isn't the crown of a princess because a princess's crown is way smaller and less shiny.

With both hands, King Lucien reached for the crown. He took it out with utmost respect, and as he did so, his voice raised again;

“With the power vested in me as the King who conquered the past King of Mombana...as the present King of Mombana..., I withdraw the royal feminine crown of Mombana and place it on your head,” he placed the gold crown on Danika's head, “and as I do this, I crown you the QUEEN OF MOMBANA.”

His voice rose higher, “From today henceforth, you cease being a slave to anybody and you become a Queen to everybody! From henceforth, you stop bowing to anybody and everybody will bow to you! From henceforth, you stop being Slave Danika but Queen Danika!”

He paused, everywhere in majestic silence. He finished in repeat, "I crown you, the new Queen of Mombana!"

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Chapter 242

The King paused, everywhere in majestic silence. He finished in repeat, "I crown you, the new Queen of Mombana!"

There were gasps everywhere. No one expected it. No one expects a King to ever give back a land he conquered. The other Kings were more dumbstruck.

Danika stood in a trance while the King's words replayed themselves in her head over and over again. A free woman...? A Queen...? There's a crown on her head.

Tears filled her eyes. By the gods...!

"Are you sure this is what you want to do, King Lucien? Give her back her family's throne?" King Phillip asked curiously.

King Moreh and King Pasih are not looking happy about this development at all.

King Lucien overlooked them and stared at King Phillip. "I already gave it." He replied smoothly, turned away from Danika and walked back to his throne. He settled down on it.

"But, she has been a Slave for more than a year. It will be hard for her to fall into the role of a Queen...especially in her condition." King Zeba stated.

"She has been a princess for twenty-two years. It wouldn't be so hard, not when it comes naturally." he paused, "I've been there."

The Kings seems to think about it, and then, they nodded their heads. Then, all of them turned and stared at the new Queen.

All of them are waiting for her to say something, anything at all.

Danika was overwhelmed with a lot of feelings. She stood there in the middle, staring at everyone in the face. King Lucien's words ringing in her ears overs and over again.

She's no longer a Slave. No more getting whipped. No more being treated like dirt.

She allowed herself to glance at everyone through her blurry eyes. Then, her breath hitched as her brown-eyes finds the backseats. Familiar faces. All of them.

The people of Mombana. Her people. Her people were invited. Her people are here.

Memories flooded her of all those times she used to sneak away from the palace to the marketplaces and fun places. She knows this people and they know her.

They're smiling towards her. They are happy to have her as their Queen. She can still remember when she was first made a Slave.

She had sleepless nights always wondering how her people are? How are they coping? Are they Slaves? Are they eating right? She'd wondered.

Now, here they are. So many familiar faces that aren't looking at her with hatred in their eyes.

Finally, her throat worked and her mouth opened. She raised her hand palm-out in greeting;

"Hail servants, fellows, Lords and Kings!" She shouted in a slightly trembling voice, "My name is Danika! And I am the new Queen of Mombana!"

Cheerful shouts erupted in the court.

Sounds of so many hands clapping filled the air.

Noblemen, servants, slaves and Kings all rose from their seats;

"Long live the Queen! Long live the Queen!! Long live the Queen!!!" They all shouted.

Tears of joy. Danika was doing her very best to control her tears of happiness.

A free woman? A Queen? Of all the ways she thought this day will be good, she never thought of this.

"Our Queen is in plain clothes! It's unacceptable!" One happy voice shouted from the back.

"Yes! Change her clothes, she needs the Royal Garment!" Another voice.

So many voice chorused positively. So many heads nodding.

"Well, she does need a change of clothes." King George admitted in a congratulatory smile.

Other Kings smiled their approval. King Moreh and King Pasih grumbled begrudgingly, forcing their own smile.

They'd expected something else while coming to the Salem's Court. They NEVER expected that it will be the Uncollaring and Coronation of Cone's daughter. King Moreh was even eagerly expecting another Introduction.

He would have gone well to take pleasure from Cone's daughter again, she'd tasted greatly before. But, it's not an introduction. He hissed his regret under his breath.

"I hope you prepared a Coronation Gown, King Lucien? The new Queen needs to change." King Noir extended with a smile towards Danika.

She returned the smile with one of gratitude, her head still reeling. She's no longer a slave? She will not birth her child as a Slave?

"Of course." King Lucien stated, his face unreadable. "Baski." He called.

Baski walked out then, and took Danika's hand. She led her behind the barricade.

Few minutes later, they got out behind barricade. Danika was....transformed.

In a huge white and gold ball-gown that held her upperbody, complimenting her plump breasts and went loose below her breasts, covering but emphasizing at the same time, her pregnancy....she looks magnificent.

Like a queen. Like a beautiful pregnant queen.

Echoes of awe and cheerfulness erupted in the crowd.

"Long live the Queen! Long live the Queen!! Long live the Queen!!!" They all shouted.

"And now, let the coronation ceremony begin!!!" King Zeba shouted to the crowd.

Danika's eyes was still brimming with tears. Her head still in the clouds. All the facts and meanings hasn't dawned on her yet, just the basics.

She's no longer a Slave.

She's now a Queen to her people.

No more being whipped.

No more being treated like dirt.

She will not birth her child, bring her child into his wicked world, as a Slave.

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Chapter 243

Sally was sad. She stared at her husband who was making a fire in the kitchen, her heart felt heavy with burden.

Isn't it time she gets pregnant yet? This question bothers her greatly.

She has been in marriage with her husband for five months now. Shouldn't she be with his child now? Am I a barren woman?

Tears burned the back of her eyes and she sniffled.

Chad heard the familiar sound, he swiveled his head to her direction. The relaxation of his face was replaced by sadness immediately.

He left the woods and walked to her, "My dear wife. Don't."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry..." She rushed out, "I shouldn't be doing this. I just can't help myself."

He took her small hands into his, "I just want you to be happy, Dear Wife. Your increasing sadness everyday hurts me immensely. The days we spend together are the best days of my life...the happiest days. We will have a child when the time is right."

"We have been married for the past five months. It's a long time for a wife not to be carrying her husband's seed." She cried.

Pain flashed in Chad's eyes. He wants a child greatly, but he wants her happiness more greatly. Sally blames herself about this.

Their inability to make a child in the past few months has reawakened the traumas of her life she tried hard to forget.

She began, pain lacing her words. "What if the horrible things the Kings did to me—"

"There is nothing wrong with you, dearling. Please, stop blaming yourself. Even if something changed because of that...horrible evil they did to you, it still will NOT make me love you less, Sally. Never!"

His words made her tears overflow. "I can't give you a child..." She cried sorrowfully.

"I want you to be happy more than I ever want a child. Please, stop beating yourself up, Sally, please." He led his weeping wife out of the kitchen to the sitting room, lowered himself on the folding chair with her sitting on his thighs.

"I just can't help it..! I feel like such a failure..!" She sobbed.

"What if it's me?"

A pause. And then,

"W-What?"

Chad let his own fears out, "What if I'm the reason why we haven't been able to make a child?"

She faced him completely, wiping her tears to see him clearly.

He averted his eyes, "I was tortured as badly as the King was. I was never...roasted down there, but I still..." he swallowed tightly, "I had it very bad in Mombana, Sally. The things I was put through..? I wouldn't be surprised if all the healthy seeds inside me has finished."

"No. No, please, don't say something like that ever again! There's nothing wrong with you!" She whispered vehemently, her pain forgotten in the face of his.

"Would it have made a difference? If something is wrong with me...?" He voiced out another fear of his, "Would it have made a difference between us, if I can't give you a child?"

"No," she shook her head adamantly, sniffing. "I love you, my husband. I will keep being by your side and I will keep trying to make you so happy. I love you."

"And I love you, Sally. It's also the same for me. I will not stop loving you just because we're unable to make a child. I married you because I love you so much, dear wife. I did not marry a mare that bears children."

Her lips quivered, new tears filled her eyes. "Oh, dear, the things you say..."

He kissed her passionately. His wife has been so sad lately.

He wished something....anything...any news...will come and make her happy again.

The celebration was lively, but very tiring for the pregnant Queen. By the time she finished going round to greet all the Kings, her feet were aching.

I'm forgetting something... I'm forgetting something... Something Important...

The thought kept banging her head but for the life of her, she can't seem to place it; that which keeps skipping her mind. For the past few weeks now, she has been quite forgetful of some little details.

Baski said it's normal for some pregnant women, but she doesn't like it. It keeps nagging the back of her mind that she's forgetting something important.

It was early evening and King Lucien has retired to his bedroom an hour ago. The King has been acting very weirdly towards her, and for the life of her, Danika wasn't able to comprehend why.

Uyah came and rescued her. She led her out of Court through the backdoor to her bedroom where she was able to sneak in food and water for her.

"You're holding up greatly, My Queen." The young girl beamed at her as she took the empty plate of food.

"My feet hurts. You all are very mean. You should have at least gave me a hint in the morning." Danika complained tiredly.

"And ruin the surprise? That's not me, My Queen." She carried the plates towards the door, "Don't worry about your aching feet, very soon you'll be in your Kingdom. You'll be resting your sore feet then." The door closed behind Uyah.

Uyah is right. Very soon I'll be in my Ki—

Her thoughts cut off suddenly. That was when it dawned on her....the last piece she has been trying to reach today but it keeps skipping her mind.

Her Kingdom? Mombana?

She'll be going back to Mombana. She will be leaving Salem?

Dread filled her. Of course, she will be leaving Salem, she's no longer a slave, she's a Queen. A Queen of a different Kingdom.

"By heavens...!"

As one piece fell into place, the others followed. Suddenly, she was beginning to make sense. Everything.

The way the King has been for the past few days...

The night before...

His words...

"I fear that if I take you the way I crave to do all day... I will not be able to let you go."

He has been preparing to let her go since he made plans to free her from Slavery. His sour moods, the new look in his eyes, the new stiffness of his shoulders...his recoil from her touch.

It's all because of this.

Her heart became so heavy, like a wood has been placed inside her chest. She rose from the bed, tears filled her eyes.

She has to go and see him!

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Chapter 244

Sally rose from the bed, watching her husband still sleeping. She spent the next few minutes watching the rise and fall of his chest.

Her own chest constricted. He'd taken her to bed after her emotional breakdown and made sweet love to her, her body tingled in places, her heart swearing with her love for him.

If only she can give him a child. Heavens please, let me be able to have a child. We have suffered so much in this wicked world, don't we deserve a small reprieve?

Her eyes stung, but she was determined not to cry again because it will only change her husband's mood if he wakes up and see her this way.

She went to the bathroom and took her bath. Afterwards, she reached the cloth basket and picked out some clothes which she put on. Then, she made her way to the kitchen.

Time passed. She has finished cooking when Chad came out of the bedroom and stood in front of her door. He was smiling at her.

She returned his smile too. "I hope I didn't wake you?"

He shook his head. "I was coming from the backyard when I saw a messenger bird hanging on the tree. It has a letter on it."

"A letter?" She asked curiously as she walked over towards him and stared at the piece of scroll he outstretched towards her. "What's in it?"

"Why don't you see for yourself? It's almost unbelievable." He was still smiling.

Sally reached for the scroll and unwrapped it. It's Remeta's scribbling, she noticed immediately. The girl doesn't really know much about writing but she always tries to scribble down words and Sally always manages to read those words too.

She began reading. Shock blanketed her features. She dropped the piece of scroll and glanced at her husband.

"M-My princess is f-free again? A Queen? My princess is crowned?" Surely she must be dreaming. This must be a dream.

"Yes. I think that's what Remeta is trying to tell you in the scroll."

Sally can't wrap her head around it. She thought and thought and thought about it.

And when she eventually wrapped her head around it, a huge grin split her face. "Oh heavens, oh heavens, oh heaven....!" She stared at Chad expectantly.

Her husband doesn't need it voiced out. "I'll go dress up. Wait for me."

King Lucien stood in the middle of his Library with his arms crossed, he was staring at that particular book his sister was holding before she was killed.

He can't unsee it. Danika's happiness when she was made Queen. When she stared behind the crowd and saw her people.

His chest was heavy, and he wish he can unsee it, but he can't.

But, no matter how badly his chest hurts, he knows on a personal level that Danika did no wrong by being so happy about seeing her people healthy, and eager to have her again. It's the Princess in her. It's the heir in her.

He had the same feeling when he first led his people out of Slavery, when he became their King. It was like coming home.

So, because he understood very well in a personal level, it shouldn't hurt. And yet, it did.

That beautiful bright smile on her face...that joyful happiness that lit up her teary eyes as she raised her hand in the air and accepted her crown...

It's worth the pain. He did the right thing by freeing her and giving her over to her people. He did the right thing.

So, why is his chest burning so badly?

Danika, on the other hand, arrived in front of his Chambers. Two of his guards straightened to their heights and bowed down to her. "I'm so sorry, Your Majesty. But, the King does not wish to be disturbed."

"But, I really d-do want to see him." She pleaded.

They looked regretful, but wouldn't budge. "I'm really sorry, Your Highness."

She felt helpless, she really needs to see him now. As she turned to leave she remembered that she's no longer a Slave. She's a Queen.

Turning back, she faced them. "I need to see the King. Open the door." She commanded.

They know a command when they hear one. It was their turn to look helpless. "Please, Your Highness! The King will not be happy—"

"I will take responsibility for it." She vowed, "I do need to see him now. Please."

Finally, they nodded. One of them walked to the door and unlocked the bolt. He stepped aside and allowed her entry.

"Thank you." She walked past them inside the bedroom and closed the door behind her, shutting the world out.

His bedroom was empty and so quiet. Obviously, the noise and happy cheers from the Court wasn't reaching this part of the palace. It was so quiet.

She walked deeper into the room, and in more steps, she stood at the door of the Library. She turned the doorknob, the door opened and she stepped inside the inner room.

There he stood in the middle of the room, his back was to her, his arms crossed in front of him. He didn't turn back to see who entered his personal space because he already knows who it is.

"L-Lucien...?" Her voice was barely a whisper.

"Go back to your Coronation ceremony. Your absence shouldn't be noticed." He g****d.

She squeezed her fingers in front of her, tears blurring her visions. "I don't want the crown. I don't want to go to Mombana."

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Chapter 245

His eyes squeezed shut. "Yes, you do. I know you love your people, and I know you missed them badly. I know you're craving to know how they have been all these while. I know you want to be their leader, because Royalty cannot be denied. I know all that, and I respect you for it."

"You're not wrong, I do want to fulfill my duties and responsibilities, and fill the throne that has been in my generation for centuries." She sniffled, "I do want to fulfill them, but I want to be with you more. I don't want to part from you, I don't want to leave Salem. I want to be with you."

"You know you can't have both. You have been crowned. Your people will be so disappointed that you rejected them, not even a day after accepting them. I know you don't want to do that."

"I don't." She admitted firmly, "My father did a lot of bad to your people and also to our people. I have a lot to apologize to them for, to make up for. I will like to make things right so badly, everything my father ever ruined."

He knows that feeling too because he felt that way after he freed his people from Slavery all too late. Ten years of suffering he wanted to make up for.

"But, I don't want to do this... not when it means leaving you. I don't want to be away from you." She swiped the tears from her eyes and walked closed to him from behind.

He wanted to believe her so badly, he was almost shaking with it.

“Go back to your Kingdom, Danika. Go and fulfill your duties to your people.” Her status just changed hours ago. She is riding in euphoria.

“Do you know what my duties are? I will have to be with another man who’ll become the King and rule with me. I will have to get married! Do you think I want to be with another man!? I don’t want to!” She was almost shouting. So close to losing it.

“Danika—”

She took deep breaths. “I am carrying your child within me. Your child is growing inside of me, Lucien. Doesn’t that even matter?” She whispered, tearfully.

He faced her then. “Don’t say words like that ever again, you know I will die for my son. You know I will go through hell over and over again for my son.”

“Then, why are you pushing me away? Why?”

Silence.

Then he turned away from her. “Because I know I have to give you your freedom, Danika. You need to have your freedom and your status again, and that is when you can be able to have an opinion. A choice.” He swallowed tightly, “You do not know how it hurts me but I am giving you your freedom and your choice. You never had either of those before.” The last statement was said in a tone so low, she almost didn’t hear it.

But she did.

The pieces fell in together. Suddenly, it was making more sense to her. With the clarity, came more pain.

“You think I wouldn’t choose you, right? That you will make me Queen and I will disappear straight to my Kingdom without a backward glance? Is that what you think of me?” Pain laced her voice like living thongs.

“I made you a Slave. I took away your life and your status and made you a slave. I hated you so much and I tortured you because I wanted revenge for what your father did to me and my people.” A muscle ticked in his jaw, “You have every reason to hate me.”

“But, I don’t hate you!” She shouted, wishing that there’s a way to let this man SEE how she feels about him, “I did, at the beginning, but I got over it! I have no idea how it happened, but one day I woke up feeling so much love for you instead of the bone-deep hatred. I love you, Lucien!” She shouted, her breathing coming out harder.

“What is there to love, Danika? Do you even know what you feel?” He whirled around and faced her, “Are you even sure of what you feel? You have been in this walls for a

long time, having no choice but to survive. I understand that deeply ingrained push to do everything within your power to survive... including loving your captor. Or thinking you feel that way." He gave her his back again, "It's these walls. It was that collar on your neck. You had no choice."

"I love you. I love you. I love you." Tears spilled from her eyes, "Twisting my feelings for you in that damaged heart of yours does not change what I feel for you! Why is it so hard for you to believe that I love you!?"

She was too upset, which in turn troubled him more greatly than the squeezing in his chest did. Automatically, he turned towards her, "Calm down, Danika. You're too upset, don't forget your condition."

"You're the one hurting me, not my condition!" She screamed at him, unable to think clearly anymore. It hurts. It hurts badly.

"I wanted to give you your freedom. I wanted you to have a choice." He stated.

"All this time I worried myself to death thinking I've done something so grave, it worried you for the past few days. I didn't know that it's all because you wanted to push me away! Because you didn't trust me! Because you don't even love me! Did you ever care!?"

"Danika." He reached for her in an effort to calm her.

She pulled away from him so fast, she almost lost her footing. "Leave me alone! I don't want you to touch me!"

He reared back like she just slapped him. Maybe, she did.

Danika realized what she just did and her eyes widened in horror.

She was a mess, so hurt and confused, she isn't even thinking about his reasons or anything at all. She isn't thinking clearly anymore.

So, she did the only thing she can.

She turned and ran away from the room.

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Chapter 246

Sally was searching fanatically for her princess, as she ran into the palace with an ear-splitting smile on her face, she saw Danika hurrying away from the hallway that leads to the King's Chambers, and her princess was crying.

Her smile dried away to be replaced by worry. "My Princess!? My Princess!?"

At the familiar sound of Sally's voice, Danika hurried towards her and threw herself in her friend's arm. "Oh, Sally...? You're here...?"

"Of course, I'm here. I came immediately I heard that you were freed and crowned the new Queen of Mombana! By heavens, I was so happy!"

Danika held her tight, crying her heart out. It was hurting too much.

"Please, why are you crying, My Princess, you're scaring me! You know you can tell me anything!?" She whispered, leading Danika away from the hallway.

Chad came up behind her, his eyes asking her what the problem is, Sally shook her head to her husband, indicating that she has no idea.

A look passed between them, Sally nodded, and then, he continued towards the end of the hallway, his destination being the King's Chambers.

Alone with Danika, Sally pleaded with her princess to tell her why she's crying.

"He n-never cared about me, S-Sally. He does n-not even want me to stay. He d-does not t-t-trust me. It hurts, Sally, it hurts b-badly." Sobs racked her throat.

Quickly, Sally tried to understand what her Princess is crying about, and as she did, tears were already dropping from her own eyes. It has always been hard to her to hold it together whenever her Princess is crying.

"It's okay, My Princess. Please, stop crying., Please." They can talk about all these later, then, she can understand better. For now, her Princess needed to stop crying.

Danika kept pouring her heart out in her lamentations. "He m-made me a Queen, it's what I w-want and I'm so h-happy, but he doesn't believe that I will s-still want to be with him when I h-have my freedom and my s-status restored. Why would he ever think that I will love him less!? I d-don't! I will n-never!"

"And now, I have to go back to Mombana...so f-far away from him...from Salem. How do I live w-without him? I was so mad, I t-told him not to t-touch me when he t-tried to, I told him that I d-don't want his h-hands on me!"

"Oh, my Princess...!" Sally gasped shocked and at the same time, feeling so much pity for her Princess and the situation at hand.

"I know, I know, I didn't m-mean it!" She cried, "I was just so mad and h-hurt and I wasn't t-thinking clearly. I was a m-mess! I am still a mess!"

"You are, my Princess, you are. So, stop crying. You need to rest and think clearly so we can know which way to go forward."

Danika was shaking her head so miserably, she opened her mouth to say something else but the door opened.

A maid stuck her head in, gasped in relief and pulled her head back. "The Queen is in here!"

At the sound of footsteps from outside, Sally helped wipe away the tears from Danika's face with her own clothes, and by the time the door opened again, they had a semblance of control.

Three guards and four maids entered the room. They bowed their heads. One of the guards spoke up;

"The Kings are waiting for you in Court, Your Highness. It's time for the last rites before you go home. Your people has also assembled outside the palace. They are waiting to take their Queen home."

Danika kept pouring her heart out in her lamentations. "He m-made me a Queen, it's what I w-want and I'm so h-happy, but he doesn't believe that I will s-still want to be with him when I h-have my freedom and my s-status restored. Why would he ever think that I will love him less!? I d-don't! I will n-never!"

Danika looked at Sally helplessly.

Sally nodded her encouragement.

The Queen lowered her head in pain for a few seconds. Then, she rose and allowed the guards to lead her out.

Vetta cannot believe what she was hearing.

At the sound of choas and cheers behind the walls she was enclosed in, she'd called a guard and demanded to know what is going on.

"The King freed the former princess from Slavery." The guard had enunciated.

About damn time. Maybe now, she'll know herself for the green snake from a green monster she is. She'd thought satisfyingly.

“She was crowned the new Queen of Mombana. The privileged people of the Kingdom and the Kings of so many Kingdoms witnessed her crowning, and now, her coronation ceremony is going—”

“What!?” She’d g*****d as she rose from the ground. Surely, her ears were deceiving her.

But, the guard repeated everything he said, before he inclined his head and walked away from the dungeon.

Vetta wanted to keep disbelieving this development. Surely, he didn’t crown her Queen!

She’d said to free her NOT to crown her QUEEN! Danika is now in the highest status any woman would ever be in the Kingdom. Now, she will have to BOW to Danika at sight!?

Over her dead body!

Why did the King do this!? Angry tears filled her eyes.

Why would he free her!? She should have known that he will never do anything so predictable, of course, he wouldn’t! But to crown her QUEEN!?

She began crying. Angry, raging and bitter tears.

For the first time in her life, she felt resentment for King Lucien.

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Chapter 247

Queen Danika rose the next morning in an unfamiliar bed, but a very much familiar room.

Memories of the day before filled her head. She’s in her bedroom again. Her childhood bedroom in Mombana.

Before she’d arrived the new guards and the new maids had put everything in order for her. When Mombana was merged with Salem, most of the new maids and guards had been working at the palace.

Now that it's separated again to two different Kingdoms, King Lucien had hand-picked the Mombana guards and maids, according to the Head Guard, Rogan.

They'd wanted to move her things to the King's Chambers, which is her father's former bedroom but she'd declined. Instead, she asked them for the favor to clean out the Princess's Quarters which is her old bedroom and they'd obliged. She wanted familiar ground.

As she rose from the bed to start the day, she was feeling weak and tired. She'd cried herself to sleep the night before. It was even a miracle that she was able to sleep at all because thoughts of King Lucien laid with her on the bed.

A kick to her belly made her wince. She sat up and stared around at the bedroom she never forgot. It felt like ages since she was last here...like it was another world all the same, but being here brought in memories of her life as a princess.

For the first time since she was thrown from a dreamland, to a nightmareland, a smile ghosted her swollen face as she stared at routines she and Sally made, which she pasted on the wall. That was two years ago.

The sound of door opening pulled her eyes from the piece of parchment hanging in the wall. Sally entered the bedroom looking so drawn and tired too.

"How are you, My Princ— My Queen?" she corrected herself softly, still unable to come to terms that her Princess is finally a Queen.

Queen Danika pushed aside all her pains and problems and allowed herself to look at her former personal maid. Really look at her.

Sally looked...older. She was still her beautiful, young and sweet Sally, but she has new faint lines on her face that could have only developed by worry and sadness.

"No," she shook her head and made space for Sally to come sit beside her, "How are you, Sally? By the gods, I have been so selfish that I didn't stop to think of how you have been doing these past few months.

"I missed you so much and yet I wasn't able to come and visit because the King made sure I wouldn't leave the Palace." Her hand caressed her swollen belly in emphasis, "I'm so sorry, Sally."

"No, I should be the one apologizing to you, My Queen for breaking my promise." Sally whispered guiltily, "I left your side after I got married. I promised that I will settle in to marital life and come back to your side, but I failed to do that. It has been five months."

“No!” Queen Danika shook her head adamantly, “I know you’ll never leave my side. When you didn’t return, I know it’s because you haven’t been quite settled.” she paused, “You look so...unlike Sally. Tell me what the matter is? Please.”

Sally twisted her fingers in front of her and tears blinded her eyes. She has ways been able to tell her Princess everything. Maybe, this one will hurt less if she speaks it out to her Princess.

“I am a barren woman, My Princess! I don’t think I can ever give my husband a child!” She burst out crying.

Her tears woke Queen Danika’s protective feelings and love for her Sally, and she reached for her, pulling her into her arms. She hugged her in consolation as Sally bawled her eyes out.

Several minutes later, when Sally’s emotions subsided, Queen Danika pulled away slightly and looked her in the eyes.

“You can never be a barren woman, Sally....never! Do not say any word like that ever again!” She chided the younger woman fiercely.

“It’s been five months!” Sally cried.

“My thoughts exactly. Five months, Sally! Not even five years! You are NOT a barren woman, and you will birth your own child.”

“I am scared... You know what the Kings did to me...”

Queen Danika’s heart squeezed. Of course, she remembered what the Kings did to Sally, how can she ever forget? And it was all because of her.

Guilt lashed her, but she forced herself to push it behind her. Instead, she held Sally’s hand to hers and squeezed reassuringly. “Have a little faith, My dear Sally. Did you forget what happened to King Lucien? You know his own story. He had it worse, and yet, look at me?”

“Look at me, I’m carrying his child. It is a miracle that is so unexpected. Have a little faith, My dear Sally.” She repeated.

Suddenly, Sally was feeling so much better. She wiped her eyes, “You’re right, you’re right. I need to have a little faith. If you can carry the King’s child, I can carry my own child right?”

“I missed you so much and yet I wasn’t able to come and visit because the King made sure I wouldn’t leave the Palace.” Her hand caressed her swollen belly in emphasis, “I’m so sorry, Sally.”

Queen Danika reassured her with a smile. "Right."

Sally hugged her tight, "Thank you so much, My Princ— My Queen."

"Everything will be alright, Sally. Everything will be alright." She crooned softly.

"I want you to take your own words now too, My Queen. Everything will be alright... Everything." Sally whispered on her shoulder, patting her back too.

Queen Danika paused, her words coming back to hunt her.

"Indeed everything will be alright, My Queen, you are not wrong. Being crowned Queen is not the end of the world but the beginning of a very beautiful world. Now, you have so much strength and power. Now you can fight for yourself....for what you want." Sally continued.

"You needn't bite your tongue, you needn't pull your punches. As a Queen, you can fight for what you really really really really want."

For the first time since the past day's evening, Queen Danika felt better. Sally is right.

Being a Queen isn't the end of the world but the beginning of a better world. Everything will be alright. It has to be.

"Thank you, Sally." She said wholeheartedly.

Just then, the door opened. Baski entered the bedroom.

Danika's face lit up as she saw the older woman she has come to love and rely on for the past fourteen months.

"Baski!" She gasped as she pulled away from Sally and rose to her feet.

Baski was already hurrying towards her. They met halfway, then they were wrapped in a hug.

"Oh, Baski! I thought I will not be seeing you for a long time!" She cried excitedly.

The older woman snorted as she pulled away from her. She had tears in her eyes too but a huge smile splitting her lips.

"No way, Swollen-belly. Do you think you can get rid of me so easily? Who will be giving you Chicken broth, if not me?" She beamed, "I already made you broth as we speak!"

Coza was so angry, he was seething. From his cave, his anger can start a fire in the mountains if anger was a living being.

He glared at the maid, "He made her a Queen!? She's now in Mombana!?" He raged, "This has ruined my plans, dammit to hell!"

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Chapter 248

Coza was so angry, he was seething. From his cave, his anger can start a fire in the mountains if anger was a living being.

He glared at the maid, "He made her a Queen!? She's now in Mombana!?" He raged, "This has ruined my plans, dammit to hell!"

"It's not really so bad, we can still—"

"Still do what!? Salem and Mombana are separated, no longer a joined Kingdom! I want to conquer that man Lucien and rule both Kingdoms, dammit! Now that it's no longer a joint Kingdom, I won't have two Kingdoms when I conquer Salem!" He was raging.

The maid bristled. He was right. "Also, I'll have to go back to Mombana."

"Not for now. Find a way to delay your going. I need you here in Salem. Blazes, I shouldn't have waited to conquer Salem! I should have done it a long time ago."

"You have to calm down, Master. When you do, we can think of another better plan." His anger always scared her.

"You're right, you're right." Taking deep breaths, he walked to the wooden chair and lowered himself on it. "We can make another plan, but on this, I need a weapon. My King's former weapon."

"Weapon?" Her brows knitted in confusion.

"Yes." Now that he's calm, he'll agree that thinking is getting better. "Oh yeah. My King made the perfect weapon years ago in Mombana. To wield a weapon, you have to know all its weaknesses, so you can exploit it well."

"If it's the Mistress, you don't really need a weakness, Master. All you need to do is threaten her with her secrets. She has a lot of them."

Coza laughed. It wasn't a nice laugh. "So, because you're her personal maid, you think you know her well, Talia? Is it Talia or Kaya now? Which one do they know you as?"

"The palace knows me as Kaya, my new name. But, the Mistress knows me as both names because I made a mistake and let Talia slip one faithful day. Forgive me, Master."

He waved her off, "She'll forget, you're the least things in her mind. As I was saying, her secrets holds no salt to her weaknesses. She can let her secrets out and damn it all to hell, she isn't afraid of death." he paused, "But her weaknesses? She has three, my former Master made sure of that."

"Three?" Talia was curious.

He nodded. "Her acquired obsession for power. Her bone-deep hatred for my former Master and his daughter. The last that will never be the least has always been the most important... Her pathetic love for that man."

"Ah..." Talia nodded in thought. "Yes, the Mistress does hate Danika a lot. We don't really need to go too far to get her in, all we need is to explore her hatred for the new Queen."

"I'm not so sure, Talia." He rubbed his beards in thought, his eyes narrowed. "I'm not so sure, because if there's one person that vixen hates more than my former Master and his daughter, that person will be me."

"Oh, Baski! I thought I will not be seeing you for a long time!" She cried excitedly.

The older woman snorted as she pulled away from her. She had tears in her eyes too but a huge smile splitting her lips.

"No way, Swollen-belly to. Do you think you can get rid of me so easily? Who will be giving you Chicken broth, if not me?" She beamed, "I already made you broth as we speak!"

Queen Danika let out a burst of startled laughter. "I see you didn't just arrive." She pulled back and glanced at the woman.

"Actually, that was why I came in here to see you, My Princ— My Queen," Sally admitted, "I wanted to tell you that Madam Baski and My husband is here. I got carried away."

He waved her off, "She'll forget, you're the least things in her mind. As I was saying, her secrets holds no salt to her weaknesses. She can let her secrets out and damn it all to

hell, she isn't afraid of death." he paused, "But her weaknesses? She has three, my former Master made sure of that."

"It's no problem dear," Baski reassured her.

Queen Danika was baffled, "How are you two here? Not that I don't want you both here but... It's surprising."

Baski smiled sadly, "The King sent us here."

"The King?" Her heart twisted in her chest. Her baby kicked inside her.

Baski nodded, her head suddenly crowded with the memories of the huge stoic figure of King Lucien as he stood with his hands behind his back in his bedroom, his back to them, and his brows creased with sadness and worry.

**"Go to Mombana. You and Chad. Go and take good care of her, Baski. I am entrusting her to your care." His monotone sounded so pained, so alone. And yet, his voice was firm in its command.

"And you? Who will take care of you?" She'd asked with tears in her eyes. She really wants to go, but she is finding it hard to leave him.

"I will be fine." Firm, "She needs you more." In a whisper.

"As you wish, My King." Who will take care of him?

"Chad?" Firmly, his deep voice held.

"Your Highness."

"Go to Mombana and protect her." A pause, "I'm going to ask a favor I haven't asked from you since Slavery."

"You can always ask me anything." He will do anything and everything for this King standing in front of him.

Another pause. "Protect her well, Chad. Be her Head Security. Her head Guard. You're the only one I can trust around them. Protect them for me with everything in you."

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Chapter 249

“You can always count on me. I will protect her with my life.”

He nodded once. “Thank you. It’s early night now. If you both set out, you can be in Mombana around early morning. The night journey is always the fastest with a better carriage. Go with one of the palace carriage, not the horse.”

“Your wish is our command, Your Majesty.” They’d bowed their heads and left his bedroom.**

“Yes. He sent us to come and take care of you. We don’t know how long we’re staying yet, but he requested that Chad be made your Head Guard because no one can protect you better.” Baski explained.

Danika’s mind reeled. He sent the two people so close to him...so important to him, to come stay with her and take care of her. “Who will take care of him?” She whispered.

Baski smiled and patted her shoulders, “He will be fine.” She wished, “He’s the strongest man I know.”

“And Remeta?” She forced herself to say. She misses her Remeta.

Baski’s smile dimmed, replaced by a sad look. “She misses you so so so so much, but you know this place... It holds so much nightmare for her. She wanted to see you, but...”

“But here is Mombana.” Queen Danika completed for her, “It’s alright, Baski, I understand. I miss her so much but I know we’ll see again.”

I miss him too...so much. Will we see again?

As the morning progressed, Sally and the maids were putting her bedroom in better order, two other maids ran a bath for her, and by the time she was done, Baski was in her bedroom with the herbal sauce of hot Chicken broth.

“I had to reheat it again to make it hot.” The older woman g*****d satisfyingly.

“These days, I have the feeling that you’re purposefully torturing me with this damned sauce from hell.” She grumbled.

“It’s no torture if it makes you and my wee one healthier inside there. How is my Prince holding up?”

“He has been kicking the hell out of me all morning.”

“A strong one, my boy. Come on, Swollen-belly. This drink can’t get cold again.”

Queen Danika begrudgingly walked towards her, took the drink from her, and downed the content in one swing of her hand. She gave her back the empty cup.

“Now, you’re talking.” Baski patted her in approval.

“Who’s taking care of him, Baski?” She whispered again, unable to keep the worry away. How can she stop worrying about him when he’s all she lives and breathes in her mind?

Baski shrugged, turned away from her to the table, and began mixing another herb. The Queen’s concerns are also her concerns too, so she doesn’t know what to say.

Then, a thought entered Queen Danika’s mind. “Of course, he has the mistress. He told me two nights ago that he has reached a decision about her.”

She did her best not to feel the pain and jealousy, but it was hard. It was in her voice.

He will be back in the arms of his mistress. Two nights ago is a night she will never forget...

“No, actually.” Baski drew her away from her thoughts.

“Huh?”

“I mean... No, he is not with the Mistress either.”

“What do you mean?”

Vetta was tired. Both physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Memories assailed her and threatened to eat her alive. These memories she’s been running from.

All those nights she screamed right here in this dungeon, it was her running away from those memories.

And now, she can no longer run. They filled her head.

Rape after rape. Beatings after beatings. The killings... Her legs were so shredded and bruised she was a huge limp for months. Guards making fun of her...

“The Whóre Slave! It’s her, it’s the whóre again.” Laughter. “Whóre, whóre, whóre.”

She closed her ears with trembling hands. Why can’t she stop hearing their voices?

“You will kill him off! I command you.” Cone’s voice split her ear. Coza was there smiling like a mated goat.

“Over my déad body!” The sound of her own whimper made her body cringe. His disgusting release smeared her thighs and only kept dripping out of her body. She wants to cut out her own body.

“Your dead body can be arranged, you know.” He smirked. “But then, you don’t fear death, do you Whóre? Not your own death.”

She already has an idea where all the monster’s rant was head to. Where it always goes to.

“You have already killed him. You have already killed Declan.” She was crying, her voice pleading, “please, you have already killed him. Don’t make me do it too.”

That will be the turning point if she does that. No going back.

Killing Lucien’s cousin... A man he has protected with his own life over and over again. A man he loves more than anything in the world. His only living relative!?

That will be her own abyss. Her soul’s damnation. She knows this. King Cone knows this too because he smirked at her.

“Oh, but I’m already making you do it, isn’t it?” That smirk haunted her ever since. “That’s one great thing about having power, whóre. You can do anything you want. You can have anything you want. You can take anything you want.”

“Power, whóre, is everything in this world. It’s also the one thing which a thing like you can never have.” He was still smirking as he gave the command that sealed her soul to darkness.

“You’re right, he’s already dead, but you will still deliver the final blow. Kill him off, or I will send Coza to go and poison your Lucien. He will die slowly and very painfully.”

Vetta’s eyes squeezed so shut she would have burst her eyeballs if she can squeeze them further. “Go away!” She screamed at the memories.

This is what Remeta meant when she said that her nemesis will come to her in form of a person.

The child. It was all because of the child of that bástard Karandy, that is why all this is happening. If she never got pregnant with that child, she will never be in this place.

The sound of locks opening tore her mind away from the vicious claws of memories. Hands-on her ear, she stared at the metal door, watching it open.

King Lucien entered the dungeon. Suddenly, he was dominating the small confinement. The empty room no longer seemed so empty...so cold.

Their eyes met and held. Guilt filled his own. Remorse.

Resentment filled hers. And anger. And bitterness. And happiness. And that feeling she has always had for him for as long as she can remember.

“Zariel?” His calm voice betrayed the storm in his eyes.

The door opened and the guard entered. “Your Majesty.”

“Get the Mistress out.”

It was everything she wanted to hear and more. This place was driving her insane. This place holds everything she’s been running away from. The knowledge that the daughter of Cone is now the Queen of Mombana isn’t helping.

Why is the world so unfair to her?

He walked out, and she followed him. He was giving instructions to the maids to bathe her and give her as much food as she wants. He’ll be seeing her again after she’d freshened up, he’d said.

The resentment she felt for him disappeared like the wind and new thoughts resided in her damned mind. He’d forgiven her!

Suddenly, she was seeing Danika’s leaving as a great thing. It doesn’t matter if she’s Queen, it is not a problem of hers because Lucien will be hers again.

Now, it will be just the both of them again.

But, two hours later...

“I am stripping you from being my mistress, Vetta. And from today onwards, I’m setting you free.”

Vetta stood there staring up at King Lucien. She was finding it hard to understand those words he spoke.

“W-What?” Surely, she didn’t hear him correctly. It’s those memories again tormenting her and blocking her hearings, she concluded.

But his eyes... That guilt was still there. That Remorse. And a new look too.

“Henceforth, you will no longer be a mistress to me, Vetta. I am letting you go.”

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Chapter 250

“I am stripping you from being my mistress, Vetta. And from today onwards, I’m setting you free.”

Vetta stood there staring up at King Lucien, hours later. She was finding it hard understanding those words he spoke.

“W-What?” Surely, she didn’t hear him correctly. It’s those memories again tormenting her and blocking her hearings, she concluded.

But his eyes... That guilt was still there. That Remorse. And a new look too.

“Henceforth, you will no longer be a mistress to me, Vetta. I am letting you go.”

“Y-You’re throwing me away?” It was hard for her to believe. She can barely hear above the clamours in her head.

“No. No, I’m not throwing you away. I will never throw you away.” He stated firmly.

“But, you’re stripping me from being your mistress... That’s throwing me away.” She couldn’t shout or even scream. It was too much for her to think that Lucien is actually throwing her away. The sense of betrayal she’s feeling was too much.

He raised his hand and took hers into his. “I have been very selfish, Vetta. Please, forgive me for that. I realized all too late that I made a huge mistake placing the heavy burden of being a mistress on your shoulder fresh out of slavery. I should have never done that.”

Vetta can only look at his hand holding hers. At the back of her mind, her depraved body registered that it’s actually the first time he’s reaching for her on his own in a very long time.

“If I didn’t do that, I would have given you time to heal.” he continued, “You were always strong. Even bruised and battered, you have always been so strong, I must have selfishly relied so much on that strength, I didn’t stop to think that you’re still human and you have just been through hell.”

"I'm still strong. Nothing is wrong with me. P-Please, don't let me go. I wouldn't know what to do. I wouldn't know how to go forward." She pleaded, her world crumbling around her.

For a moment, she allowed herself to imagine her life without him in it. She wouldn't know how to live that life. How can he throw her away like this?

"Vetta, I'm not letting you go or throwing you away, stop that train of thought." he squeezed her hand gently, "I have a house outside the palace, just in the outskirt of the palace. In the last two weeks, I had Zariel and Dargak clean it out and put it in other."

"The big house? Built with expensive bricks and bamboo? With tiled roof and chimney?" She murmured, her heart too heavy.

"The exact one. It belongs to my father. A place he goes whenever he wants to get away for a little bit, sometimes, he goes with his Queen, my mother. You own that house now, Vetta, I am giving it to you."

"It has all the luxuries you will need. You need to go away from all this...to heal... The palace is not the best place for that."

Tears blurred her eyes. Why is he suddenly being so tender towards her after five years? This is the Lucien she had before Danika's father took him from her.

And even when he was a monster battling demons, she still wanted him that way—mostly that way because that's how she is—but Danika had to come along and take him from her too.

"I don't want to go. Please, don't send me away."

He led her to the leather cushion behind her and urged her to seat down. She did, looking up at him with blurry eyes of a shattered person. He walked out of her bedroom, and came in few minutes later with a bowl of water and a soft cloth.

Then, he hunched down in front of her. Vetta stared wide-eyed at the King as he took her leg into his hand and unclothed it from the expensive silk and leather it was clad in.

He stared at her bare leg. If scars has another name, that would be her legs. But, he was holding it so gently like a person would hold porcelain.

And, when he dipped the soft cloth in warm water and pressed it to her leg gently, tears left her eyes in massive drops.

Indeed, he is letting her go. That is why an almighty, powerful King like Lucien will be hunched in front of her...after all these years.

“Do you remember when I did this before?” He g*****d.

“How can I e-ever forget?” Three times, he cleaned her legs like this at Mombana. The difference is that her legs were filled with fresh wounds then—wounds that has turned to scars.

In the silence that followed, he washed her legs gently, and repeatedly, while she sniffled uncontrollably unable to control her tears.

Then, he stared up at her. “I’m sending you out of the palace, Vetta, not because I want to let you go completely, but because I want to hold on to you the best way I can. Go out there and experience a different kind of life than the one you’ve always known.”

“You have lived as a slave, you have lived as a mistress, but you have never lived as a free woman. I want you to go out there and live like that. Have new experiences serving no man. Be your own woman. Rediscover yourself. Rediscover Anarieveta.”

“Please, don’t say that name.” She shook her head miserably. “You’re sending me away, the best thing you can do for me is not to mention that name to me...” It hurts so much.

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