

## 122 Burnt child dreads fire.

When Aiden laid Arwen on the bed, her eyes fluttered open, and she looked up at him. Her arms were still wrapped around his neck, because of which the proximity they shared was intimate, making her feel his warmth. 1

"You are awake?" Aiden asked, feigning surprise, though it was clear that he had known all along that she had been pretending to be asleep.

Arwen narrowed her eyes at him grudgefully. "Were you really only planning to tuck me in? That all?" she asked.

And Aiden stared at her with a clear interest in his eyes. "Do you want me to do something else?" he asked, his voice soft full of intent.

Arwen almost facepalmed herself. She had pretended to be asleep in the car, thinking that she was testing and teasing him — his self-control, but now she realized all she had done was challenge her own patience. If she had known that it would leave her heart racing like this, she might have reconsidered.

"I just never thought you would be such a saint. Carrying your wife in your arms all so delicately,



just to tuck her in," she murmured with a pout as she slowly began unwinding her arms from his neck.

But before it could pull back, Aiden gently caught her wrist, pressing it against his chest. "How can you be sure that I am a saint?" he whispered.

Arwen opened her mouth to answer, but just when she would have spoken, his lips pressed against hers, pulling her into a kiss that was soft yet firm. Her eyes widened momentarily before they closed, and just like that she melted into him. Her arms slid back around his neck, pulling him closer.

The kiss deepened —slow and unhurried, yet filled with intensity that made her heart race. When he finally pulled back, his face hovered over hers, while his gaze remained tender yet smoldering. "I am not a saint, Moon. Don't mistake thinking me that. Not at least around you. You don't know how difficult it is to keep myself restrained around you."

"Then why?" Arwen asked, still catching her breath.

Aiden's gaze softened, but the intensity remained in his eyes. Tracing his thumb across



her cheek, he spoke slowly, "Because, Moon, I want you to know I am here for more than just this." His fingers trailed over her lips, lingering there for a second. "I want you to know I am here for every part of you, not just for the moments that leave us breathless."

Arwen's cheeks warmed, slowly turning a shade deeper of red. But beneath her blush, she couldn't deny the longing he stirred within her, the way her heart quickened whenever he looked at her with that unguarded tenderness.

As they stared at each other, Arwen remembered something and couldn't hold herself back from asking, "If you are here for every part of me, then shouldn't that mean that I should also be there for every part of you?"

Aiden stared at her as she slowly wriggled out from under him to sit up. "Why were you acting grumpy earlier?" she asked, watching him look away, clearly reluctant to answer.

But Arwen leaned in and held his face, turning it back to her. "Tell me, husband. Let me be there for a part of you. Come on."

Aiden looked at her as if silently asking her if she really wanted to know. "I wasn't grumpy," he said,

but Arwen shook her head, refusing to accept his answer.

"You were," she insisted, before asking with a frown now laced with concern. "Was it because of me? Because I met Ryan at the hospital? I really didn't think I would run into him. I was just ..."

She was ready to explain it all over again if it could help him believe her, but her words were shushed off when Aiden took hold of her arm, pulling her closer, "This might feel possessive," he said, his tone carrying a warning—a warning that promised the worst, "but Moon, you are not allowed to let any man touch you. No one."

But at that moment, it wasn't the warning that made Arwen pause, but his words. *Not allowed to let any man touch her?* But she hadn't allowed Ryan to touch her. He might have held her hand briefly, but it had been for mere seconds, and she had pulled away before anyone even noticed.

Her brows drew in a frown as she realized he was not talking about Ryan at all. When Ryan held her hand, Aiden hadn't yet arrived at the hospital; it was only when she walked out that she saw his Rolls Royce driving up. Then, who





was he talking about?

Thinking back of their conversation in the car, a sudden realization upon her. Her eyes widened slightly, and her gaze snapped back at him, "Are you talking about Dr. Clark?"

Aiden didn't answer, but she knew she was guessing it right. She couldn't hold back her lips from curling. "He meant nothing as such, and you know that better than I do. Yet you are getting jealous. Why?"

"Because I can't stand seeing you in anyone's arms. You are my woman, my wife. No one touches you, except me. You are mine, only mine," he said, and though it felt like a possessive, she still couldn't feel anything wrong with it.

It was as if she had long accepted his claim on her, even before he had voiced it aloud.

Reaching up to cup his cheeks, she smiled, nodding. "I am yours. Only yours." She then leaned in and pressed her lips softly against his. Kissing him slowly, she took her time, making him believe her words weren't just for show—she meant them truly.

When she finally pulled away, she smiled at him,

"Though you do look quite cute when you are jealous, I still think you don't need to be. Your charms are too captivating. With you around, I can hardly look away."

Aiden stared at her, a little uncertain. Not because he didn't believe her —he did. But as a burnt child dreads the fire, he dreaded thinking that she might one day look away again, erasing all of his existence from her life.

He might have survived it once, but he wasn't sure he could survive it for the second time.

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