

Chapter 109

After a very long day of surrendering the hostages to the police and making reports, submitting a public statement for the media to circulate throughout the kingdom, empire and human territory in case someone did something to cover-up the truth, everyone dragged their exhausted selves back home.

In the diplomatic residence, Sush was in sweatpants and one of Greg's shirts as they lay in bed. She lay on her side facing him, head resting on his arm, hand on his bare torso as Greg's fingers fiddled with her hair, relishing in the tiny sparks that dotted his fingers when he touched the strands. When he wanted to feel a higher charge, his fingers went to her shoulder, pulling up the sleeve to feel her bare skin, leaving goosebumps that his fingertips continued stroking through.

"Hey," she began in a whisper.

"Hm?" his face turned to her, lips touching her forehead, breathing her in from the crown of her head.

"About... marking."

His fingers stopped. "What about it?" He prayed she wasn't going to negotiate out of this. Marking was one of the few things he would never think of compromising. In fact, it would raise suspicions if she didn't want to be marked.

"How does it work? When does it normally happen?" she asked.

The stiffness in his chest loosened, relief washing over him as he explained, "Our canines sink into each other's necks. If the books are right, there isn't a need to really think through the process. Our animal instincts just know."

"I'm not an animal," she murmured pointedly.

"Hunters and humans don't shift like us, yes. But after being marked, you're supposed to develop some animal senses and anatomy overnight, canines included."

Her brows furrowed. "Why do you say 'supposed to' like it isn't certain?"

"Well, no human I know, heard, or read about could fashion weapons out of leaves and branches, and I doubt their eyes strayed from their original color when they wielded any weapon."

Sush scoffed lightly, snuggling deeper into him, and Greg felt her lips on his chest curl into a smile which in turn tipped the edges of his mouth that was at her forehead. He held her closer, and whispered, "As for when it normally happens, it's up to the pair. Some wait until they tie the knot. Some do it prior to that."

After a few quiet moments, she asked in a hushed tone, "So when are we doing it?"

"That's up to you," he said simply, pressing a light kiss to her head.

Her eyes narrowed. "Are you forgetting you're part of the equation that makes up a pair?"

"If I had it my way, I would've marked you on the first night I ate out of you."

His admission made her eyes grow wide and her shoulders stiffened in surprise.

Greg's tone took a teasing edge when he said, "Why are you so shocked? Didn't I tell you you're the most delicious thing that ever touched my tastebuds?"

She smirked, matching his tone, "So that was the determining factor." Her left hand stood on the tips of its index and middle finger, walking along his chest like it was seducing him, leaving a tiny trail of sparks

behind.

Flipping them over so she was on her back as he hovered above her, his eyes locked with hers when he brought her dominant hand to his lips for a kiss, making it go limp as it swooned over the gesture when he declared, "You know it isn't. It's one of the factors, I admit, but not the determining one." His fingers threaded through her hair. "I'm not certain what the determining factor was or is, to be honest. Whether it was your wits, your brains, your temper, the way you use your hands and index finger more often than anyone I know, the way you handle things, or the way you immerse yourself into the things you love... maybe it's all of those things. Maybe it isn't one thing about you that's distracted me all these weeks. Maybe it's all of those things combined that has been pulling me back to you, no matter how far I go, because I've fallen for every piece that makes you who you are."

Saying that every word pulled at her heartstrings would be saying that her heart was held by strings. But it wasn't. She didn't know when, but she knew it had been sometime that her heart had been held by him. And it had never felt better in the hands of anyone else. It had never felt safer and more protected with anyone else. For the first time in so long, it felt sheltered, happy, and loved - a combination of emotions that she thought only existed in someone else's life, never her own.

His face came close. Their breaths mingled. His lips stayed inches away from hers like he was challenging her to keep that distance, tempting her to give in. And Sush knew that - for this particular temptation - she'd willingly give in, pulling his mouth in with hers, letting him take the lead in pressing her head into the pillow as she savored his taste, taking pleasure in the way his hand trailed down to grip her ass then squeeze the flesh at her thighs, her waist before giving her breast a rough kneading. She felt him smile as she moaned, and smiled to herself when he moaned.

When he had to release her for her to replenish her lungs, her hands clasped both sides of his face, refusing to let him move down her throat the way he usually did, having their eyes stay on each other as her chest rose and fell, and she ultimately said, "I love you, Greg."

The broad stretch of his lips lit him up the way the moon shone in the night sky, his eyes held the stars that flickered as a layer of moisture formed over them when his forehead met hers. "I love you too, Sush. That's something that's never going to change."

"Then mark me," she whispered, eyes radiating nothing but certainty when she added, "Tonight."

He didn't think it was possible but her request just made him ten times happier. Leaving a quick kiss on her lips, he uttered, "With pleasure."

Sush didn't know what to expect, and simply surrendered to the moment, feeling his lips leave a trail of kisses down her throat, then moving to the side of her neck. His warm tongue stroked her skin there seductively slowly, teasingly leisurely. She released a gasp and a drawn out moan which got louder when he began sucking on her skin and biting it gently, tenderizing the area. As his canines extended, he warned, "It'll hurt for a moment."

"Mm-hm."

After his nose gingerly nudged her earlobe one more time, his teeth sunk into her neck and Sush yelped at the pain, her fingers dug into the flesh of his back, nails piercing into his skin. Greg arched into her fingers, encouraging her to use him to cope with the anguish.

If she were to describe the marking, she'd say that it was like having two metal rods being impaled into her neck, though she'd never had metal impaled into any part of her body. But the pain began receding as quickly as it came. She felt his canines leaving her flesh, and as he lapped up the excess blood, something warm spread from the area

where his mark now was, a feeling of closeness - one that felt like it was binding her soul to his, bringing them together in a way that could never be physically achieved.

What she wasn't ready for was the cyclone of emotions that followed: the intensified yearning, unassailable devotion, and aggressive love. He'd always been so controlled and composed. She knew he loved her, but she may have underestimated the depth and intensity of his love.

Greg sealed his work with a deep kiss on the red smear, drawing a moan out of Sush when sparks erupted from the area and shot throughout her body right down to her toes. Bringing their faces together once more, his smile grew wide with excessive pride as his possessive baritone reverberated through her ears when he declared, "Mine."

Sush chuckled with watery eyes as she cupped his cheek, and Greg stole another kiss from her lips before saying, "If the books are right, you're supposed to feel what I feel now. I'm not sure if you d—"

His words were cut short by her capturing his mouth and he released a brief chuckle between their kisses. When Sush was forced to pull away for air, his lips stayed at the corner of her lips when he muttered, "I'll take that as a yes."

Pressing a kiss to her forehead and turning them over so that they lay in their original position - with her glued to his side, his fingers teased her with trail after trail of sparks as they glided up and down her upper arm, and the tingles were stimulating at first, but as it prolonged, it also submerged her into a deep state of relaxation, and the heaviness from the years of fatigue guided her into deep slumber, but not before her last bit of her consciousness caught Greg's crisp whisper echoing, "Sweet dreams, my octopus."