

Chapter 127

EMERIEL

Emeriel lay on the creaky wooden table, feeling a chill seep into her back and stomach, her intimate areas tingling uncomfortably from the invasive checks. Orin regarded her with an inscrutable expression.

"You may re-enter, My Lord," the healer called out, her voice echoing slightly in the quaint, though well-kept, room.

Lord Herod entered, the door groaning on its hinges. His presence filled the small but homely space.

"She has erratic heats," Orin said, confirming Emeriel's deepest fears. "We cannot pinpoint the exact day it will come, but it is imminent. We are speaking a matter of days."

"Days?" Emeriel's voice rose an octave, horrified.

The healer nodded gravely. "Not only are your heats erratic, but they also display unusual patterns, indicating irregularity. The four mini-heats confirmed this. Typically, heats stabilize after successfully bonding with a male. However, until you are bonded, your body will keep lashing out, desperately seeking a union with your male in the only manner it knows."

Emeriel swallowed, her gaze fixed on the worn wooden planks beneath her.

"The good news is," Orin continued, "your male is here with you, correct? Hence, the preparation need not be extensive for he is always by your side."

Lord Herod stepped forward, his expression pained. "I must be honest, Orin. I am not her male. In fact, her true mate is... unavailable."

"Oh. That complicates matters." A frown marred Orin's brow. "With such an intense build-up, I doubt another male could satisfy her needs. As a Syren, her body is attuned to a specific soul, either her Soulbond or a compatible soul who could be her bondmate. Should he be unavailable, her body may reject a substitute on that day. Her heat will not be merciful."

All the blood has drained from Emeriel's face.

Orin pressed on, her voice urgent and filled with concern. "This situation is delicate. Most Syrens require time to identify their mate. Should there be any male she genuinely cares for, he must be present during her heat. Otherwise, it could be disastrous."

They discuss her as if she were not there. Emeriel wet her parched lips. "Can... can the arrival of full heat be delayed?"

"Some believe avoiding all sort of contact with your male might delay the onset," Orin explained. "No sight, no touch, no communication. Your body and soul may interpret his absence as unavailability and delay its course. It explains why many females enter their heat cycle upon first contact or proximity to their males. Their bodies were already primed for the heat, merely holding back. Awaiting a trigger."

Emeriel's heart sank. She had gone into heat the very day she arrived at Ravenshadow, her soul recognizing her Beloved's presence. Every stolen moment with the king had fueled the flames, further cementing their connection. Convincing her body that he was available.

Just last night, you had sex with him, and now, your full heat is upon you.

"So, if I keep my distance, cease all interaction," Emeriel's voice trembled, "could I delay it?"

"Why would you want to?" Orin looked puzzled. "It is already close at hand. Too close. Avoiding all contact might buy you a few days, but there is no guarantee."

Leaving the healer's home, a troubled silence settled between Emeriel and Lord Herod. "Would you cease all contact with him?"

"Yes, I... I have to." Emeriel could not imagine the thought of not seeing or touching her male. Yet, her impending full heat terrified her.

As they rejoined the crowds, the vibrant energy of the festival felt muted. They reached another square, this one was filled with the Urekai elite.

Lords, high lords, ladies, and mistresses mingled under the soft glow of lanterns, their laughter and conversations laced with the air of privilege. Wealth, and power.

Lord Herod's peers called out to him, beckoning him over. "I must attend to them," he said to Emeriel. "Please wait here for a moment."

Emeriel gladly obliged, grateful for the solitude. She retreated to a shadowed corner by the edge of the square, watching Lord Herod mingle with the nobles, their curious gazes darting towards her.

Her heat was near, just matter of days away.

Emeriel's heart leaped at the thought. Enjoy the festivities for tonight, she told herself. Do not think about it.

"Galilea."

She froze.

No. By the heavens, please no. Whoever is up there, do not tempt me this way.

Shivers ran down her spine at the familiar presence behind her. King Daemonikai stood close, and Emeriel only had to turn to behold him once more. Butterflies took flight in her belly, and her heart raced.

"Galilea, is it not?" His deep voice, like velvet and steel, caressed her like a lover's arms.

Thump. Thump. Thump. The sound of her own heart pounding was loud to her own ears.

"Your Grace," she whispered.

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GRAND LORD ZAIPER

Grand Lord Zaiper lounged in bed, his body languid from satisfaction, an arm draped carelessly over his eyes.

"Should I dispose of her body, My Lord?" Razarr's voice cut through the silence. "Or would you have need of it later?"

Zaiper gave a go-ahead wave of his hand. No, he did not have the urge to use that body again.

It had been what—twenty years? Fifty? since he last felt that appetite. Time was meaningless when one lived as long as he did, with no intention of dying anytime soon.

Yet, these past two months had felt like forever to him.

Zaiper wished he could claim he had recovered from the shock of Daemonikai's resurrection, from the anguish of that night. But the truth was a bitter pill.

That night's event still distressed him. A lot. A festering wound that refused to heal.

A mere glimpse of Daemonikai stirred a cocktail of pain and anger within him. A rage that threatened to boil over.

But he held it in. Kept it bottled up inside like a boiling cauldron beneath a carefully constructed facade. After all, he hadn't been lying when he vowed not to die anytime soon.

Life was too sweet, too precious to waste on a useless attempt to challenge a being as powerful as Daemonikai.