

Chapter 184

The floodgate of tears spilled over, bathing her red cheeks.

"It grew stronger, and stronger, what were you thinking!?" His fists clenched at his sides as he paced the room. "If I had known who you were, we would have never gotten together. I would have avoided this by all means. I would damn well never have touched you during your heat."

Emeriel recoiled as if he had slapped her.

But all Daemonikai saw was the reality of their situation. It crashed into him like an avalanche.

He would have to mate again. The wide hole in his heart where his family used to be still gaped open, growing wider with every passing day. And now, he would have to do it all over again?

Despair turned his stomach. "I cannot do this." The very idea of risking his heart once again sickened him. "I will not do this."

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EMERIEL

One would think that after hurting so much, for so long, over the same reason, Emeriel would have developed some kind of immunity to this pain in particular. But one would be wrong.

Nothing could have prepared Emeriel for the depth of the agony that came with her beloved's words, no matter how much she had expected them.

She had expected his rejection, expected him to push her away. But what she had not expected was the sheer passion behind every syllable. The raw, abject sincerity, the coiled rage, as he told her, in no uncertain terms, that he did not want her.

Emeriel shattered.

The words sliced her to pieces, cutting deeper than she thought words ever could. She had prepared herself for this moment, or at least she thought she had. But seeing the conviction, the determination, watching the flickers of yellow come and go in his eyes as his beast hovered just beneath the surface, mad as hell just like the man himself—it was too much. Stop. Please stop.

His restless feet came to a stop and he faced her once more. "I lost everything, Galilea. Everything that ever mattered to me is gone. For millennia, my family were my light, they were everything I knew, and I lost them. They took my life, my heart and soul."

To be loved like this, what would it feel like? Emeriel would never know.

She grabbed at her chest, trying to physically hold herself together. As if clutching her heart could somehow soothe the river of pain flowing from it. It did not help. Nothing could.

The ache was too great, it was simply too much. And it wasn't just hers—it was his.

From the moment Emeriel rose from sleep, she had felt his anguish. Even when he tried to be calm, when he battled to keep it contained, she had felt every misery, every anger and sorrow he carried. Speaking of his family, had her nearly suffocating, as though she, too, were being buried under it. Crushing and merciless, until Emeriel could no longer tell where his pain ended and hers began.

Please, stop, I beg of you.

"All that is left is this... this rage. Bitterness. All that is left is this need to destroy, and gods, do I wish to massacre every single human and Bathe. In. Their. Blood." His eyes turned bloodshot as he began to pace again. "I will not take a mate, and I certainly will not take a human mate. I will kill us both before I let that happen. Put me out of my misery and send you back to whatever creator thought it would be fun to do this! Be it Ukrae, the Fates, or the damn Moon Goddess!"

"Daemon—" Emeriel took a step closer. My heart. Heavens, my heart...

"Do not come near me!" he barked, his deadly glare stopping her in her tracks. "I am NOT feeding that bond any more than it's already been fed. Stay the hell away from me!"

The storm swallowed her. "I had no choice!" Emeriel screamed.

It came from deep within her. From every part of her shattered being. "I have never had a choice in any of this! Since the day I was born, every part of my life has been dictated for me. My own identity—chosen for me by my parents! I had no choice when I was sold into slavery. I was brought here, my freedom ripped away, and as if that was not enough, my own body turned against me!"

King Daemonikai frozen mid-step, watching her, as Emeriel's mind screamed at her to stop. To rein in the torrent, but Emeriel could not. She simply could... not.

"My own body betrayed me, changing, going into heats... I never wanted any of this! Ever!" she cried, raw and frenzied. "I just wanted to be a normal female. But I can't because I was suddenly a Syren, and worse than that, I belonged to someone. I had no choice in becoming a Syren, just like I had no choice in who I belonged to!" Every scream was a loaded rifle, shooting pain for bullets. She was sobbing again, unable to help it. "My whole life, every choice, has been taken from me..."

Closing the distance between them, Emeriel beat at his solid chest with her fists. "You are not the only one who has been forced into this! I never had a choice either! S-stop treating me like I tried to trap you, like I wanted this! I didn't ask them—" She pointed upward, her words cut off by her own sobs "—to do this to us! I never asked for any of this!"

Her fists pounded against his chest again, and again, her strength draining with each blow. "I am sorry for the lies; I am sorry for the deceit. But it was the only way I knew to survive. You and your people would have killed me! I needed to survive too!"

The last of her strength left her, and Emeriel collapsed to the floor in front of him, her body folding in on itself, as she wept, body shaking uncontrollably, drained and exhausted.

"I was a victim too," she whispered, her voice barely audible through the tears. "I was a victim too..."