

Chapter 202

Sinai had always known about Zaiper's depravities. Hell, there had been an entire century where she had indulged in countless affairs with him because of it. But either he had grown sicker over the years, or he was punishing her for her slip-up three days ago.

"Are you alright, Mistress Sinai?"

Sinai straightened her spine, masking her pain as much as possible. "Mistress Gaille. What brings you to this part of the fortress?"

"Oh, you know how it is with us ladies," Gaille simpered, approaching with a saccharine smile that made Sinai's teeth ache. "We like our fresh air anywhere we can get it."

"Is that so?" Sinai's tone was clipped.

"Indeed." Gaille's eyes raked over Sinai, her lips thinning. "Although, someone has been visiting my master's quarters more frequently than expected. How many days now?"

Sinai lifted her chin defiantly. "Your master and I have some business to take care of."

"Business, you say? Business it is then." Gaille's voice dripped with venom. "Do not poach around my master, Mistress Sinai. He is mine."

Sinai scoffed. "Yours and a few hundred others. Do not be delusional, Gaille. Your master belongs to no one and everyone."

Gaille's face reddened with anger, but she took a deep, measured breath.

Sinai watched, amused, as the other woman struggled to control her rage.

Finally, Gaille spoke through gritted teeth. "How would you like it if I perched around your master?"

Sinai's laughter rang out through the corridor, sharp and mocking. "We both know you have tried before. Numerous times, even. He rejected you like a sack of rotten potatoes."

Gaille's handmaidens gasped in unison, their faces a vision of shock and outrage. Their mistress herself turned a deep, furious crimson, her veins pulsing visibly beneath her skin. Sinai half-expected her to shift right then and there.

"My master is wanted by all, but unattainable to any," Sinai smiled. "Unlike your master, who mounts anything with a hole, male and female, anything with a pulse—or without one, for that matter."

Gaille's smile was a cruel slash across her face. "At least my master desires me," she retorted, crossing her arms. "My master may take many, but he still wants me. I get naked, climb into his bed at night, and he welcomes me. Unlike you."

Sinai's amusement died.

"You are the only mistress of your master, yet unwanted by him," Gaille pressed, smug. "Two millennia together, and he never chose you. He was Queen Evielyn's from the start. Even after her death, he does not look at you. And now? Now, he belongs solely to Emeriel."

Emeriel. The name hit Sinai like a punch to the gut.

Her blood boiled beneath her skin. "What did you just say to me?"

Gaille stepped closer, her eyes glittering. "You heard me. He would rather belong to a human than to his Urekai mistress. One year with her was all it took to win his heart, while you have had two thousand years and couldn't even make him glance your way." Gaille's laughter was a harsh, triumphant sound. "You, Mistress Sinai, are the joke of all jokes."

A scream tore from Sinai's throat as she shifted into her beast form, her muscles rippling and bones cracking.

Gaille mirrored her transformation, shifting as well.

With a roar, they lunged at each other, claws and fangs bared. Blood sprayed across the stone floor as claws raked through skin and fur, each trying to tear the other apart.

The handmaidens scattered, their screams distant.

In the back of her mind, Sinai knew the soldiers would soon arrive and punishment would follow. But in that moment, she could not give a rat's behind.

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PRINCESS EMERIEL

"It's beautiful at night, isn't it?"

Emeriel turned, startled by Prince Daviel's voice. Moonlight bathed the cliffside, glowing over the river below. "Your father will have my head if he sees you in this part of the palace, my prince," she said reluctantly.

The prince merely smiled, stepping closer until he stood beside her at the cliff edge. "My father threatens it, but will never carry it out. For some reason, you and your pretty sister are off-limits."

Emeriel returned her gaze to the stars.

A hand curled around her waist, and she flinched.

"The Urekai have my father's breeches in a twist all day," Daviel continued, oblivious to her discomfort. "I heard they are spending the night in town. Everyone vacated Home Merabis for them."

Home Merabis, the most popular and luxurious guesthouse in town, had always been bustling with visitors. But if the Urekai are there, it's no wonder no other human was. "I do not wish to talk about that."

The prince turned his head to study her. "Well, I am a concerned suitor. I do not wish for you to go with them." His grip on her waist tightened possessively. "I want you to stay here, with me."

He drew her closer, both arms now wrapped firmly around her waist. "I have been courting you for over six months, Emy. Give me a chance."

Emeriel's whole focus was on his arms around her, fighting the urge to pull away.

She had entertained suitors in the past. Had allowed them to court her, in an attempt to move on...to fill the emptiness inside her. Prince Daviel was the grandest of them all.

He genuinely seemed to care for her. For a male who had antagonized her on the battlefield when he thought she was a man, he had long since changed his attitude after her return.

Prince Daviel was exquisitely handsome, a sensation among the noble ladies. He did everything right, and all the maidens were jealous of Emeriel. Yet, she felt nothing for him.

His touch, like that of the others, made her uncomfortable. That was putting it mildly, it made her skin crawl.

"Give me a chance to show you my love, Emeriel," he pleaded. "I will never take yours for granted. I will cherish you forever."

He leaned in, his lips seeking hers.