

## Chapter 213

Daemonikai absorbed her words, letting them wash over him. A profound silence settled between them, broken only by the rhythmic crash of the waves.

"Do you know why your soul is dying, beloved?" Evie asked.

Yes, he did.

Daemonikai had always told himself it was because of his grief. That was the story he had clung to when the symptoms first showed.

But deep down inside, where the sun never touched, barricaded by walls and locked with an iron key, he knew the truth. Of course, he did.

It was because of Emeriel.

She was his greatest loss.

And that, had sent his guilt into overdrive.

Evie nodded, his silence confirmation enough. "Now, will you go to your Soulbond and reconcile with her? I hope you make things right with her. When the time is right, your spirit will return here, not because your soul is dying, but to say goodbye. And then, your sons will be ready."

Daemonikai came to a stop, turning to look at her once more. It had always been easy to talk to Evie.

While others saw him as the grand king, Evie had always seen beyond the crown, past the title, to the male beneath. The mortal, with his own feelings, fears, imperfections, and insecurities.

"I fear I don't know where to begin," Daemonikai admitted, letting his worry show. "I yearn to try again with her, but I might fail. What if my heart is too damaged? I care for Emeriel, I miss her terribly, but what if I can't love her the way we were meant to? What if I'm too empty?"

"Daemon—"

"I hurt her so badly that night after her secrets came out, and in the days that followed. What if I have burned the bridge between us forever and we can't find our footing? What if we can't find our way back to each other?"

"Too many what ifs, my dearling." Evie sighed, smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. "Even in spirit, you overthink."

Then, her expression turned serious. "Don't. The best you can do is give it a chance, dearest. Open yourself to the possibility, take it one step at a time, and give each step your best effort. You two will figure it out. You are both hurting, and you can heal each other," she looked around, and added. "The first step is to find your way back home. This is not the place for you."

"Thank you—"

"Shh," Evie pressed a finger to his lips. "None of that. Thank you, for being the best bondmate any woman could ask for. You made my life fulfilling. Now, go back and live your own."

"I don't know the way back," Daemonikai confessed.

Evie's smile grew softer as she stepped away. "Follow her voice, and it will lead you through the deathmines, to the boundary between worlds. It might take time, but you will find your way."

Her presence became lighter, almost ethereal. "Be strong, my unbeatable dearest. And be careful. The crossing is perilous. Not many make it through the Cold Sea. I hope you do."

Daemonikai stood there, watching her form dissolve into the soft glow of the otherworld.

Her words remained, echoing through him. He would follow Emeriel's voice. He would find his way back.

No matter the obstacles. No matter how long it took.

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MISTRESS SINAI.

"There is not much I can do."

Sinai stopped pacing, turning to glare at Zaiper. "What in the burning fires of hell does that mean? Do something about this!"

The Emeriel she faced this morning was a far cry from the timid male slave she had encountered two years ago. The change...everything was different. Sinai hated to admit how much it unnerved her.

Now, Zaiper was saying this nonsense? "Do something to send them away! They do not belong here!" Sinai raged.

"I said there is not much I can do!" Zaiper roared, his voice so forceful that Sinai's legs froze.

"Ottai is not budging an inch on this. First, he released my prisoners awaiting execution for stealing grain, and now this! If I'd known beforehand that he planned to bring those girls back, I would have put a stop to it before they were brought here. But now, even the people are aware."

Sinai forced herself to tamp down her own anger. Zaiper was already on edge, and she needed him calm.

"Since when do the people care about Emeriel, anyway?" She hissed. "Last I checked, they were placing bets on who got to kill her first."

"Since they wanted their grand king back." Zaiper spat. "Those minions are so devoted to him, it's sickening." He stopped in front of Sinai, his face flushed red. "What does he have that I don't?"

Sinai could think of plenty.

She could count on both hands and still need extra fingers.

Not that she was foolish enough to say that out loud.

"I could lead them! I could be the grand king! Why are they so hung up on a male who doesn't even want to be here anymore?" His eyes burned the colours of his beast.

"First feral, then a dying soul? If war came to us now, he cannot help. What do they see in a male who would rather join his dead family than rule?" He resumed pacing again. "They have me. I could do so much better."

Sinai bit the inside of her lip, suppressing the urge to roll her eyes.

When it came to leadership, Zaiper was worse than a failure. Ten strong Zaipers are no match for one half-dead Daemonikai.

Aloud, she said, "The people don't know what they have, passing up on you. You are a much better male than Daemonikai ever was."

Zaiper paused again, his eyes narrowing. "You're just saying that to placate me. Everyone knows how you feel about your master."

"And how has he treated me all this time? I grow weary of loving a male who barely sees me." The lie tasted bitter in her mouth.

Her Daemon sees her. He can't live without her blood, so yes he was hers. But Sinai needed to be on the winning side for now.

Zaiper turned away, walked to the window, and stared out into the distance. "The people cling to Daemonikai because he still has life in him. If he were fully dead, they would be forced to see reason, wouldn't they?"

His voice turned contemplative. "Hmm... perhaps it's time I go for Daemonikai's life. With the right planning, the right method, I can get him now when he can't defend himself." A calculative smile spread. "Poetic, don't you think? I will be the male who wiped out the entire Naelzharoth lineage."