

Chapter 231

Emeriel was led to the grand king's study, where her presence was formally announced.

"Come in," came the deep voice from inside.

Emeriel entered, closing the door behind her with a quiet click. Taking a deep, steadying breath, she braced herself before finally turning, her eyes settling on him.

Like frost over a windowpane, a shiver of awareness spread through her.

Her traitorous body reacted instantly, sending a clear message: Hey look, it's our sexy-as-hell beloved.

Needless to say, her every nerve ending was in a state of disarray.

Her legs wanted to move toward him.

Her hand itched to reach out and touch his neatly styled black hair, then trail over the white strands.

Her lips longed to move closer to his, to brush against them in the guise of an accident.

Her tongue wished to go on an adventure inside his mouth.

And her behind shamelessly wanted to sit on those strong thighs again.

Yeah, she was pathetic like that.

Even 'bad bad' didn't begin to cover how bad she had it for this male.

"You summoned me, Your Grace." Special thanks to her voice for remaining strong in this hard times, where every other part of her quaked.

"I did," he gave her a tired smile. "How do you fare, prettiest beloved?"

No one had yet answered her question of "what alternate universe did I fall into?"

Not that Emeriel planned to stop asking until she received a reasonable answer.

"Marvelous, Your Majesty." She said coolly. "To what do I owe this summon?"

"I heard you are quite skilled with numbers," he gestured towards a stack of scrolls piled high on his desk. "I was hoping you could assist me with these. There's so much to catch up on, and it's expected after such a long break, but... heavens, I could use the help."

He was asking her for help? Wanted to work with her?

Emeriel absolutely hated the way her damn heart somersaulted.

Nor did she appreciate the way her wandering eyes noted every trace of exhaustion on his striking face, every line of fatigue.

"But surely there are others who could assist you with this?" Her voice might just be her best trait yet. It amazed her how neutral it remained. "I don't think you need me for this."

Sadness flashed in his eyes.

Not the new kind he gave whenever she turned down his offers., but the old kind. That one she had rarely seen since her return, but had been his constant companion two years ago.

"My late bondmate, she used to help when the workload became too much," he admitted quietly. "Or my first son."

A small smile touched his lips. "You could never get my youngest to sit still for this sort of work."

Console him.

It took considerable effort to keep her legs rooted to the spot. They wanted so badly to close the distance between them.

Her instincts, just like her traitorous body, were her greatest enemy.

"Alvin would sit with a quill for one minute," His gaze turned distant, "and the next, he'd be in his chambers, napping. Or chasing the nearest skirt."

Comfort him.

King Daemonikai's eyes refocused. "So, Princess Emeriel," he said gently. "Do you think you could help me get some of this work done?"

He was letting her in.

First, he spoke of his loss—the same one he'd once told her was too painful to even speak of. Now, he was inviting her to share his burden, to work alongside him.

Emeriel's racing heart soared. The need to soothe him clawed at her, leaving red, angry marks all over her skin.

With a deep breath, she surrendered.

Her body moved before her mind could catch up. Eating up the gap between them, pulling her to him.

She found herself standing behind his desk, and he swiveled in his chair to face her.

Emeriel spread her arms, whispering, "May I?"

"Please."

Stepping between his legs, she wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders, pulling his head against her bosom.

"It would be my pleasure to help, Your Grace," she murmured against him, stroking his hair with the gentlest touch.

•

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

The pain in Grand King Daemonikai's chest softened as Emeriel held him close.

His cheek rested against her blossom, her hand moving in a calming, soothing rhythm over his head.

Never did he imagine a day would come when he would willingly revisit their memories. The pain of remembering was too great, so ever since recovering from his feral state, Daemonikai had spent years suppressing those memories as best as he could.

But if he wanted Emeriel to give them a chance, he needed to do the same...no matter how much it hurts.

The guilt no longer had a stronghold on his heart, but every now and then, the grief returned.

Now, though, instead of drowning in despair, he allowed the emotions to flow through him. Acknowledging their presence without giving them the power to consume him.

Perhaps one day, I will go to the hills and roar to the sky.

Perhaps one day, I will be able to speak of them without feeling like I'm burning from the inside out.

But for now, he was content to be held. Comforted, right here, in her arms.

Her presence alone made everything almost bearable. Her scent, her touch, the sound of her steady breath—all of it eased the ache in his soul.

"You have the most beautiful hair, Your Grace," she murmured, threading her hand gently through his locks.

He inhaled her deeply, hungrily filling his lungs with her scent. Lemongrass after rain. A low groan left him, its ambrosia seeping into his senses.

"You smell incredible," he purred. I have missed this.

"Thank you." Fingers continued to caress his face, drifting down to trace along his neck. Featherlight, yet sparks went through him.

Mine.

She's mine.

Daemonikai's arms tightened possessively around her waist, pulling her closer.