

Chapter 263

“Lord Jakal is correct,” Lord Belzebob added, rising to his feet, his chair scraping harshly against the stone floor. “We understand she is your destined mate, Your Grace, but this will truly be difficult for our people to accept. Humans are our sworn enemies. Their treachery has cost us dearly. Should we not be focused on eradicating their kind rather than elevating one to a position of power over us?” He bowed deeply, his head nearly touching the table before him. “Please reconsider, Your Grace.”

“Please reconsider, Your Grace!” came the shouted chorus from others in the room, their collective voices tinged with desperation and unease as they bowed.

An oppressive silence followed.

“I have served as the Grand King of Urai for five millennia,” Daemonikai began, his voice resonating authority and sorrow. “I have always placed my people first—above myself, above all else. There are none here who can claim otherwise. I love my people dearly.”

Heads nodded around the room. Some murmured in agreement.

“During the Eclipse Moon, I fought to save countless lives. Even as my strength drained and my sanity teetered on the verge of collapse, I fought tirelessly for your families. I gave everything I had to protect my people.” His voice dipped into a somber cadence. “And in doing so, I lost my family. The ones who meant more to me than anything in this world. While I protected your loved ones, I failed to save mine.”

Guilt and pain flickered in their eyes.

Slowly, heads lowered, their gazes cast down, including Belzebob’s.

“I never blamed any of you for what I lost. Instead, I bore my pain alone, even after the loss drove me mad. Even in my darkest hours...” Daemonikai’s voice held an ache that could be felt in every corner of the room. “However, for the first time in five thousand years, I am choosing something for myself. I am taking something that brings me happiness, something that reminds me of what it feels like to live rather than merely exist.”

His tone grew firmer. “Many may not like the idea of me courting Princess Emeriel because she is human. But that is something you will simply have to learn to accept. She is my Soulbond. The one woman in the entire universe made for me.” His eyes burned with fire as they swept across the room. “I will not forsake her. Not for anyone or anything. If accepting her as my woman is too much for you, then so be it. But make no mistake. I would sooner relinquish the grand throne than let her go again.”

Shocked exclamations rose, jaws dropping in collective disbelief.

A few pairs of eyes were on the verge of popping out of their skulls in sheer astonishment.

Daemonikai almost allowed himself a smile at their stunned faces. Almost.

They hadn’t expected him to go this far, but his mind was made up. His decision had been cemented long before this moment.

“I have given everything for this kingdom. My strength, my family, my sanity. Today, I am claiming something in return. If my people cannot stand by me in this, then perhaps they do not deserve me as their king.”

“But, Your Grace, it has not gotten to that,” Jakal said in sheer horror.

“I would rather give up the grand throne than throw away this second chance. A rare opportunity for happiness the gods themselves have gifted me.”

No one said a word.

A pang of pity rose within Daemonikai at the look on their faces. They hadn’t asked for this.

“I understand this is not what you expected. I know this is difficult for you. My people did not ask for these circumstances, nor did I.” He took a breath, his tone shifting to one of earnest plea. “I will not impose this as law, nor will I force any of you to accept Princess Emeriel. All I ask is that you give her a chance. Do not see her as a human; see her as mine. My Syren, my woman, my Soulbond.”

His voice deepened with emotion. “She has proven herself worthy time and time again. There is no one more befitting to stand as Grand Queen. All I ask is that you give her a chance.”

He turned to Emeriel, his gaze locking onto her tear-streaked face, her muffled sobs threatening to break the fragile quiet of the court.

Warmth filled his chest, a fierce protectiveness rising in him.

“Join me, Beloved,” he said gently, extending his hand toward her once more.

Emeriel's steps were tentative, but each footfall echoed, her silken gown rustling softly. Her hand found his, and Daemonikai pulled her onto the podium beside him.

Turning, he faced her, looking deep into her eyes. “I know I have apologized to you in private, but I want to formally apologize to you here, in front of everyone.”

“Daemon—”

“I am sorry for hurting you.” His voice soft easily carried through the room. “For making you endure the excruciating pain of a severed bond. For every moment of suffering I caused. I apologize for it all.”

“Shhh, it’s okay.” Emeriel’s hand covered his mouth, her watery smile lighting her tearful face. “How many times will you apologize, Daemon? Please stop. I’ve heard everything, and...” She swallowed hard. “I don’t deserve you.”

She turned her gaze to the court, her voice wavering. “I don’t deserve any of this.”

Her eyes returned to him, glistening with new tears. “But I hope one day I will. I hope one day I can stand proudly by your side, my head held high, confident that I deserve to be there.” She smiled.

“To the court, I wish to offer my deepest apologies.” She faced the council fully, drawing a deep breath. “I deceived all of you in the past, disguising myself as a male when I was, in fact, a female. I did what I felt I had to, to survive. I know that may not excuse my actions, but it is the only explanation I can give.”

Placing both hands gracefully against her belly, Emeriel stood tall before them, keeping her voice steady. “I love the grand king deeply. I have for a long time, even when he was only a mindless feral. Please, grant me a chance. Teach me how to be better. I wish to learn from the noble lords of this court how to properly serve Urai.”

Her eyes looked around the hall, unwavering yet soft. “I know it will take time for the people to accept me, but I will wait. I will work tirelessly for it. So that one day, the people will look beyond my species and see just me... Emeriel Evenstone, the Syren. The Soulbond of Grand King Daemonikai.”

With that, she bowed. A deep, full-belly bow of humility and respect.