

## Chapter 270

Daemonikai reached out, taking her hand, bringing it to his lips. He placed a gentle kiss on it.

“How do you feel?” Emeriel asked quietly.

“Better. Exhausted, but better.” His eyes flicked to hers. “How do you feel? All this must not have been easy for you. I cannot even imagine...”

“That day in the woods, you told me it took losing the best part of you to crawl out of your grave.” His eyes dropped to their joined hands. “I didn’t realize this was what you meant. No wonder you couldn’t forgive me. No wonder you couldn’t find it within yourself to give us a second chance. If I had known the extent of what you went through...” he shook his head. “I would never have pestered you so much. Never have tried to force it.”

“Then I’m glad you did not know,” Emeriel stated coolly. “The truth is, I never wanted you to find out. I knew what it would do to you, so it became a burden I was prepared to carry alone to my grave.”

“That’s too much for anyone to bear alone. I’m grateful I know now. Even though it breaks my heart, I wouldn’t have it any other way. Now, I can share this burden with you.”

Emeriel wouldn’t say she was happy he knew—not entirely. But she couldn’t deny the relief she felt. Sharing it with him was liberating.

A lot had happened tonight.

She’d finally faced the loss she had always run from. For so long, she believed speaking of it would reopen wounds too deep to heal, which was why she shoved it deep within herself, into darkness.

But she had been wrong. Talking about it had brought relief.

“Another will come.” Emeriel wrapped her other hand around their already intertwined fingers, squeezing gently. “We will have a child in the future.”

“If only it worked that way,” he said wistfully, his voice a soft ache. “This one was a miracle.”

“Have a little faith, Beloved.” As she reassured him, she also reassured herself, clinging to hope. We would have another... right?

“When is your next heat?”

“I don’t know,” she confessed.

“You don’t keep track?” There was no judgment in his tone, only curiosity wrapped in a thread of concern.

Emeriel shook her head. “A healer once told me it was erratic.”

His brows pinched. “Even so, you should have noticed some pattern over time. There’s no predictable timeframe at all?”

Her eyes fell to their intertwined hands, and she didn’t respond.

“Riel, there’s something you are not telling me.” Daemonikai’s voice was calm. “No more secrets. I ask because I don’t want you to suffer during your next heat. I need to make sure I’m here when it happens.”

Emeriel wet her lips nervously. “I have been on suppressants for years. Heat suppressants.”

The crackling fireplace behind them suddenly sounded too loud.

“Emeriel...”

“It was the first thing I did when I left Urai,” she said in a quiet confession. “I was mad at you, heartbroken... but even as the years stretched on, I never once regretted taking the suppressants. They terrified me, yes. Some days, the side effects made me outright panic. But I never regretted it. Do you know why?”

He remained silent, but Emeriel could see in his eyes that he already knew.

“Because I didn’t want another man’s touch. I couldn’t bear it, not even outside of heat. When I tried to move on, I allowed suitors. They courted me, but even a kiss on the back of my hand took everything in me to bear.”

A faint smile touched her lips. “You ruined me for other men, Your Grace.”

“I apologize,” he sounded serious, but there was nothing remotely apologetic in his expression. “Actually... no. You know what? I don’t think I am.”

A small laugh bubbled from Emeriel’s chest. “I know. You don’t look sorry at all. In fact, you look... almost happy.”

“There’s no ‘almost’ about it.” Daemonikai’s lips curved into a possessive smile, his free hand sliding to her waist. “You are my woman, and I’m glad none of those human idiots laid a hand on you. Now they get to keep their lives.”

“You sound like a caveman,” she admonished, though her words lacked bite as a rush of love spread through her chest.

“My kind are cavepeople.” He was proud. “We are less evolved than humans.”

But as the lightness faded from his face, concern replaced it. “What you did was dangerous, Riel. You put your life at risk.”

Emeriel nodded slightly, acknowledging the truth in his words.

“It’s bothered me for years, you know. Your heats, and how you spent them. I always wanted to ask, but I had no right. So I tried to suppress that part of me. The primitive part that wants you all to myself. But the rational side... I hoped to hell your heats had gotten easier.”

Daemonikai caressed her, moving his hand rhythmically from her hip to her shoulder. “I hoped they no longer hurt you the way they used to. That you found someone kind who took care of you. Someone who put your needs first and made sure you never suffered.”

Knowing he worried about her this way, struck a chord in her.

“But having blocked your heat for years, your next mini-heat might be even worse than a full one. It might even be...”

“Life-threatening?”

“I will not let anything happen to you,” he vowed. “I will be here, and I will take good care of you.”

“It scares me, you know,” she admitted, her gaze dropping as fear shone in her eyes. “Especially now that I’ve stopped taking the pills. I forgot them in Navia and haven’t tried to get new ones. Coupled with what we did the night before... it will be here any moment.”

“And we will be ready for it.” Turning her around, he enveloped her in a spooning hug from behind. “It won’t be like last time.”

She sighed deeply. Body melted into his, eyes closed.