

Chapter 277

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

He lay beside his princess until she stirred. The sun dipped below the trees, painting the woods in shades of gold and crimson. He watched her eyelids flutter open. They lay so close, their noses nearly brushing.

"Hey..." he murmured, his fingers tracing a path through her hair. "Welcome back."

"Your Grace—"

"Daemon," he corrected softly.

"Daemon." A small, pleased smile curved her lips. "Was I out for long?"

He shook his head. "Come, let's get back. Night is falling."

Daemonikai rose first, then helped her to her feet. His eyes fell to her naked body, to the faint red marks on her hips.

She flushed, her hands darting up to cover her breasts as she glanced around at the shredded remnants of her clothing.

He slipped off his robe and draped it over her small shoulders. She slumped slightly under its weight.

"It's so heavy," she whispered in surprise.

Daemonikai chuckled lightly and retrieved the robe. He pulled off his shirt, guiding her arms into the soft linen. "Better?"

She nodded, wincing slightly as she took a step.

The primitive side of him felt satisfied, but he also felt remorse. He noticed the way she favored one leg in a limp.

"Why did you do that? You could have been hurt."

"But I wasn't." A shy smile touched her lips as she tested her weight, taking a small hop forward.

He caught her by the waist, pulling her into his arms and tilting her chin up to meet his gaze. "I understand the sexual desire that comes with the hunt, but this was different. Why would you provoke me like that, Riel?"

She averted her eyes, scuffing the ground with her foot. "You are always so guarded, and you wouldn't... uhm... touch me. And I... wanted you to, but I couldn't... uhm ask."

"So you thought provoking me that way was the answer?"

"Don't beat yourself up. I... loved it. I enjoyed what we did." Her cheeks reddened further. "I'm not as delicate as you think. I like... uhm... when you are not holding back so much."

His proper, reserved princess was becoming comfortable enough to communicate her wants with him. Daemonikai felt a swell of pride.

But he didn't like the hint of shame in her voice.

"Look at me," he ordered.

Emeriel slowly raised her eyes to his.

"Never be ashamed of what we have. It's completely natural to want this." He cupped her face in his hands, his thumbs softly stroking her cheeks. "You are my Soulbond, young princess. What we share is special, and I love knowing I'm not the only one who feels this way. You are like an addiction to me. If I took you every time I wanted you, you'd never leave my bed."

The blush on her cheeks deepened, spreading down to her neck, but the initial shame began to melt away, replaced by a genuine smile.

"So you see, dearling, what you feel is perfectly normal. And you're right—you're not fragile." He leaned closer, his breath warm against her ear. "Whenever you want it rough and hard, all you have to do is ask and I will give it to you exactly like that."

Emeriel buried her face in his chest, mumbling against his bare skin. "Okay."

"That's Galilea, my slutty little princess, right there."

She beamed up at him, her eyes sparkling. There was no hesitation in her voice as she whispered, "I love you."

"I want nothing more than to be able to return those words to you one day," he groaned, kissing the crown of her head.

It's alright." She traced the lines of his chest with her fingers. "Please don't say it until you truly feel it. I will be here as long as it takes."

Daemonikai tilted her chin up again, pressing a tender kiss to her nose. You already mean so much to me. I can't lose you, my sweet, stubborn princess.

"Let's head back. We're long overdue for a bath." He scooped her up effortlessly, cradling her against his chest.

She rested her head against him, a soft, contented smile curving her lips as he carried her out of the woods.

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MISTRESS SINAI

When Grand Lord Zaiper made the announcement, she expected the usual surge of anger and rage. And yes, they were there, burning very hot.

But so was something else.

Pain.

Raw, deep, intense pain. The kind that burrowed deep into the bones.

Tears filled her eyes, and Sinai didn't even try to hold them back. They streamed down her cheeks, hot and unchecked, like rivulets carving through a barren field.

"Wipe those tears." Zaiper waved a dismissive hand. "It's shameful to see such weakness from you, Sinai."

"Why does it not bother you? Shouldn't you be as miserable as I am?" She gripped the cold iron rails of her cell so hard her hands shook. "With every moment she's with my Daemon, he recovers more. Life flows back into him. She's no ordinary person—she was made for him. His Soulbond." Sinai spat the words.

"That means if he mates with her, their bond will be far stronger than what he had with Grand Queen Evielyn. He will be as healthy as a newborn, and you, Grand Lord Zaiper, will never overthrew him. You will be back to square zero and that grand throne will never be yours."

"That will never happen," Zaiper stated flatly. "They will never mate."

"And why is that?"

"I'm making plans to ensure it."

"Plans, plans, plans. That's all we ever have, plans!" Bitterness dripped from her tone. "And they never age well. One of your 'nonsense plans' is what landed me in this mess!"

"No, what got you here was your incompetence. You of all people should know never to bleed on a crime scene." Zaiper snapped.

Sinai squeezed her eyes shut, counting to ten. That drop of blood was one she regretted to this day.

"What is this plan you have?" she asked instead. "When is Emeriel going to become nothing but a forgotten story? I am truly sick and tired of her."

"You have learned nothing, have you?" Zaiper shook his head in disappointment. "One would think, after all this time locked away, you'd start thinking with your brain instead of letting your emotions rule you."

Sinai lowered her eyes, furiously wiping away her tears.

"Tsk." Zaiper clicked his tongue in disapproval. "Worry not. This time, I'm planning something grand—something that will utterly destroy them."