

## Chapter 309

“What!?” Madam Livia’s eyes widened in astonishment.

In a flurry of movement, she was rushing out the door, shouting for the nearest soldier.

Emeriel heard her bark orders: “Go to Mabblewood and tell Grand Lord Ottai to send a messenger bird to Grand Lord Vladya immediately! And fetch Amie at once!”

Emeriel turned back to her sister with a pounding heart.

“Heat?” Aekeira panted, struggling to sit up. “N-no, that can’t be right.”

Slipping an arm around her, Emeriel steadied her to support her weight. “Your eyes are red, Keira. You are sweating up a storm.”

“But that’s only for Syrens, and I—” A sharp gasp left Aekeira as she twisted uncomfortably, her flushed skin growing slicker with sweat. “Em... I don’t feel good.”

“I know,” Emeriel murmured, holding her even closer. “I know, dear sister.”

“I r-really don’t feel good.” Aekeira squirmed, pressing a hand to her stomach. “There’s this fire... burning inside me, and I—I really want take off my clothes.”

“You can’t. Not yet.” Emeriel’s thoughts was racing. Her heart wanted to hammer its way out of her chest.

It was a long journey to the Oracle’s Haven. The grand rulers had left early this morning, which meant they could still be on the road. How much longer would it take for Lord Vladya to return? Could Aekeira hold out that long?

Madam Livia returned, carrying a wooden cup in one hand and a tankard of water in the other. Setting the tankard down by the bedside, she handed the cup to Emeriel. “She must stay hydrated.”

Taking it, she held it to Aekeira’s lips, guiding her as she took small sips.

Her sister’s hands shook, and some of the water spilled down her chin, but she managed to drink a little.

As Emeriel pulled the cup away, a prickling sensation crawled over her arm, and she scratched it absentmindedly.

“This must definitely be the sign the Oracle told Lord Vladya to watch for,” Madam Livia whispered, half to herself, half in wonder. “Aekeira is a Syren. She has been one all along, but because of His Highness’s lost soul, her traits lay dormant.”

“You think so too?” Those were Emeriel’s exact thoughts, but she had never voiced them to avoid giving her sister false hope. Aekeira would be in so much pain if she were wrong.

“Think about it.” Madam Livia said, thoughtful. “How did it happen for you? You went into heat your first day in the Citadel because you were in close proximity to King Daemonikai’s beast. Aekeira’s traits remained dormant because there was no soul to trigger them. I had suspected this before but dismissed it because it seemed too good to be true. But now...” She shook her head, and her aged eyes gleamed with unshed tears.

“Their greatest challenge has just been taken care of. Aekeira is a Syren—compatible with him.” The older woman exhaled a shaky breath. “Oh, Emeriel... there is a chance their bonding ritual might actually work.”

Warmth spread through Emeriel’s chest, expanding until she thought it might burst.

Everything they had prayed for, everything they had hoped for. Something that had seemed so impossible.

Tears stung her vision. She looked down at Aekeira, whose half-lidded eyes were unfocused, whimpers falling from her parted lips.

Her sister was lost in her own suffering.

“Keira...” Emeriel brushed a hand over her cheek. “We need to move you to the bed. Do you think you can manage?”

Aekeira blinked sluggishly, and whispered, “Okay...”

With Madam Livia’s help, they carefully moved Aekeira from the floor and eased her back onto the mattress.

Groaning Aekeira tugged desperately at her garments. “I want them off!” fists clenching into the fabric wherever she could grasp. “I need them off!”

“Alright, alright,” Emeriel helped her strip away the layers of damp clothing, working as quickly as she could.

Within moments, Aekeira lay naked beneath the sheets, her skin flushed, her breath uneven.

Emeriel bit her lips. Despite her excitement over this breakthrough for her sister, she was worried out of her mind.

Trying hard not to dwell on the fact that, very soon, the painful waves of full heat would begin—and Aekeira’s male was still halfway across the world.

Pulling away from her sister, who had curled into herself, Emeriel motioned for Madam Livia to follow her outside, far enough to be out of earshot.

“Why not a mini heat?” The hushed whisper held a great deal of Emeriel’s worry. “Why shove her straight into a full heat?” Her gaze flicked back to the room. “She’s not ready for this, Madam Livia.”

The head maid appeared just as worried, even as she said. “Every person’s heat is different, Princess. We can only hope hers is not as intense as yours.”

Scratching at her neck, Emeriel shook her head. “I’m sick with unease. Do you think Lord Ottai has already sent the bird?”

“Are you alright?” Madam Livia’s brows pinched as she studied Emeriel closely. “You seem restless, too.”

“Of course, I am restless! I do not know my sister’s fate right now.” Emeriel began to pace the short corridor, wringing her hands together. “Her fever is burning so intensely; I swear I can almost feel the heat myself—”

“What I am hearing, is it true?” Grand Lord Ottai’s deep voice boomed down the hall, and a moment later he appeared with his soldiers. “Is Aekeira truly going into heat?”

Madam Livia bowed deeply. “Yes, Your Majesty. It’s really true.”

“Oh, by the gods! Oh, Ukrea!” A wide smile split the Grand Lord’s face. “She’s a Syren! She’s really in heat—hell, I can smell her all the way from over here. Her scent is too strong.”

Turning to Emeriel with excitement, he pulled her into a bear hug, lifting her off her feet. “You and your sister are compatible with my kind!”

Emeriel let out a startled laugh, swallowing a wince as her skin prickled and burned in response to his touch.