

Chapter 313

"We did it," Amie panted, releasing her grip and wiping sweat from her brow.

Livia exhaled, steadying herself. Rising, she patted Amie's shoulder. "You did well."

The girl beamed at the praise.

Crossing the room to where Aekeira lay crumpled on the floor, they looked at her.

The cries coming from her was small and pitiful, body shaking uncontrollably. Near her, a dark stain marred the floor where she had retched. The girl had gone into a heatstroke.

"Oh... poor Princess Aekeira," Amie said with sorrow. "I wish we could help her too."

"We cannot." The regret in Livia's voice was heavy. "She is in full heat, her body is rejecting touch."

She crouched beside the trembling princess, voice gentle. "Little one, can you hear me?"

Aekeira barely stirred.

Livia reached out, brushing the lightest touch against her leg.

The reaction was immediate—Aekeira flinched violently, letting out a sharp whine of pain as she recoiled from the contact.

Livia shook her head. "We can do nothing for her."

The door swung open and Lord Ottai stepped in, looking tensed.

"How are things in here?" His gaze fell to Emeriel's motionless form on the floor. "I stopped hearing her voice. Is she alright?"

Livia nodded. "For now, she is stable. Lost consciousness after a strong release. And out there?"

"Not pretty." Lord Ottai rubbed a hand over his face. "Everyone except the bonded males has been affected by their scent—including my own head guard, who was supposed to help me hold the others back. Now, I rely on my bonded soldiers immuned, but they are few."

"Do you think Lord Vladya and the King are near? Aekeira has gone into heatstroke. Emeriel's mini-heat is far worse than her previous ones. I am concerned."

Ottai's jaw tautened, saying nothing.

At last, he released a quiet, weary sigh. "What I do know is, wherever they are... they must be doing everything within their power to get here. That's what I count on."

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Voices drifted through the haze of Emeriel's mind as she stirred.

Daemon?

Her heart leapt, but as she listened more closely, she realized it was Lord Ottai and Madam Livia speaking in hushed tones nearby.

Bracing herself for the pain, she slowly pushed upright. But thankfully the agony had receded to a dull, throbbing ache.

"The princess is awake, Madame!" Amie's voice rang out as Emeriel blinked hard, clearing her vision.

Madam Livia was suddenly before her, cupping her face to check her temperature. "How do you feel?"

"Aekeira..." Croaking through her parched throat, Emeriel struggled to her feet, swaying as the room spun.

Madam Livia was there to steady her.

"How is Aekeira...?" Emeriel asked. "I need to know she's alright."

The headmaid looked at her with regret. "She is not doing well. Just got out of yet another heatstroke."

A sharp stab of pain shot through Emeriel's lower belly as she tried to straighten to her full height. Giving up, she stooped over, gritting her teeth, as she moved with determination to reach her sister.

Aekeira lay trembling on the floor, wracked with silent sobs. Slick with sweat, her taut nipples red and raw from her own desperate attempts to find relief.

Hell, even this position hurts.

Sinking to her knees, Emeriel crawled the rest of the way. "Keira..."

"Her body is rejecting all contact, Emeriel, be careful." Madam Livia said.

Paying her no heed, Emeriel brushed her fingers over her sister's arm. "Keira, honey... I'm here. I'm right here."

With a strangled moan, Aekeira turned her head, leaning into Emeriel like a touch-starved kitten.

"Em?" Her voice was the faintest whisper.

Tears spilled freely down Emeriel's cheeks as she pulled Aekeira into the crook of her arm. "Yes, it is me."

Spreading her legs, Emeriel making space for Aekeira's trembling body to rest comfortably as she cradled her.

Weeping, clutching tightly to Emeriel's arm, her sister cried. "I don't know h-how you survived this, Em." Wincing in between heavy breaths. "I hurt everywhere. There is this fire... in my privates... that will not go out. And the more I touch it... the worse it burns."

Emeriel swallowed against the lump in her throat. "That's the way it is, my dearest sister. But you will get through this, I promise."

Out of the corner of her eye, Emeriel saw Lord Ottai, Madam Livia, and Amie watching them with worry.

She should probably be concerned about modesty, being naked in a room with a male, yet Emeriel could not care less. Bending, she pressed a gentle kiss to Aekeira's damp forehead. "You will get through this."

Aekeira shook her head. "I don't know how much longer... I can bear this. I don't think I can..."

"Think about the positives, Keira," Emeriel soothed, her own tears falling onto her sister's hair. "Now, you can bond with the love of your life. You always told me nothing good comes easily, right? See this agony as a new, shining light it is. We will get through this together."

Aekeira's body went stiff, panic creeping into her voice. "Em... oh my gods, Em..."

Another wave was coming.

More tears fell from Emeriel's eyes. "They will be here soon," she whispered firmly, not just to convince her sister but herself too. "We have to stay strong."

A wretched cry of sheer anguish tore from Aekeira as another contraction ripped her a new one.

"Oh, gods—Em!" she screamed so loud, tangling her fingers into her own hair and pulling fiercely.

Emeriel seized her hands to stop her from hurting herself, holding her tight while crying helplessly. Watching her sister break apart right in her arms, yet there was nothing she could do to ease her suffering. To end this pain devouring her whole.

And then, like a raging tempest, the flames rose in Emeriel's own body.

Oh, the lights...!

Her vision blurred as the heat flowed through her in a consuming fire, dragging her under. Emeriel's own screams joined Aekeira's in a chorus of pure, unfiltered misery.

Somewhere, in the distant haze of her suffering, she heard shouting. "Lord Ottai! Hurry! We are losing control of the situation!"

Then the sound of hurried footsteps as Lord Ottai rushed out.

And the world disappeared into the fire.

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Livia was not the kind to long for things.

Born into slavery, shaped by battle and survival, fought her way from the lowest to the position she held now, she had never allowed herself to yearn.

Not for love. Not for warmth. Certainly not for something as unreal as a family.

Yet as she stood there, watching Emeriel clutch Aekeira tightly, whispering soft reassurances even as heat waves ripped them both apart from the inside, something unfamiliar stirred inside Livia.

What would it be like to experience such deeply passionate, devoted love as the two share? To have someone to hold onto in the worst moments of suffering—someone who would never let go?

They were in excruciating pain, almost impossible for a human body to bear, yet still cling to each other. Found strength in each other. Their bond was unbreakable, utterly beautiful... yet painful to watch.

Aekeira gripped her sister's arm, while Emeriel curled around her protectively, as though her own agony did not matter as long as her sister was in her arms. Both wailing in pain.

A new sound shattered Livia's thoughts.

A commotion outside. Loud. Growing wilder.

"Get out of the way!" Grand King Daemonikai's voice was a roar of thunder. "Out! All of you!"

The scuffling of males scrambling to obey.

Another roar. "In the next ten seconds I will be tearing heads from shoulders! DISAPPEAR, RIGHT NOW!"

The pounding of footsteps running shook the ground.

"Where is she!?" Grand Lord Vladya's commanding tone came. "Where is Aekeira!?"

A heartbeat later, the door burst open, and they stormed in. Two towering figures filling the doorway, their very presence sucking the air from the room.

Clothes torn, bodies smeared with blood, eyes wild and savage, they looked like they walked through the depths of hell to get here.

But they were here.

Finally.