

Chapter 316

Lady Marilyn had been on edge all day. The moment she heard both human princesses had gone into heat at the same time—while their males were in the mountains—she had prayed fervently for them.

Then came the news that the rulers had finally returned and the maximum relief that came with it.

But now, as she hurried through Ravenshadow's courtyard, her heart raced with a new kind of fear. Why had the grand king summoned her?

Was everything not well? Was her master suffering a feral episode in the middle of rut? That fear unsettled her most of all.

A female in heat deserved a mate whose mind was intact, someone who could be fully present to meet their body's demands. And this was Princess Aekeira's first heat. The thought of her enduring it without proper care...

Marilyn quickened her steps.

By the time she reached the door, she was breathless, her nerves stretched thin. Lord Vladya's chambers were fortified, so she could hear nothing from the outside.

She knocked, anxious. "Your Highness, it is I—Lady Marilyn. You requested my presence."

The door swung open instantly.

A disheveled, sweaty, and utterly distressed King Daemonikai stood on the other side. His eyes wild, chest heaving, body vibrating with tension.

"Get in here." His voice was deep, rough with rut and frustration.

Marilyn stepped in. The scent of heat and pheromones was so heavy, so potent in the air, her head spun. Desire rose, lust stirred. She fought to keep herself in check.

Her first glance landed on her master. Dressed in loose pants, his powerful frame relaxed but alert, standing by the mattress where Princess Aekeira lay asleep beneath the sheets.

Relief flooded Marilyn when she saw he was whole. Sated. In control. Aekeira was getting care. Good.

But when King Daemonikai led her into the adjoining bedchamber, all relief vanished. Princess Emeriel was a wreck.

She lay curled into herself, shaking violently, as if gripped by the coldest winter. Teeth chattering, twitching with spasms, arms marked with angry red scratches, skin slick with sweat and tears. Soft, incoherent cries spilling from her lips.

She had retreated into her own mind, completely unaware of her surroundings.

Marilyn's stomach twisted.

"What is happening to her?" The grand king's guttural growl came as he paced the room like a caged animal. "I tried to mount her, and it would not..." He ran a restless hand through his damp hair. "And I could not... I hate seeing her like this! Every part of me wants to end her suffering, yet I can't!"

Marilyn flinched. His rage, frustration, and helplessness filled the room like a brewing storm.

"Why will she not let me in?" His sounded pained, anxious. "Why can I do nothing for her?"

Marilyn moved closer, forcing herself to focus. Sitting beside Emeriel, she examined her closely.

"Where is... my Beloved?" Her voice was so weak with clear pain. "Make it stop..."

Marilyn's beast whined in sympathy for the princess. She had a sense of what might be happening....and it wasn't good.

"It's bad," Lady Merily told the princess's distraught male. "Very bad."

The Grand King came to a halt. "What is the matter? What can I do for her?"

Lady Marilyn looked down at the trembling princess. "Princess, can you hear me?"

The faintest whimper was the only response she got.

"She is suffering," she looked at the grand king. "We must put her to sleep first."

"I have a sleeping potion in the drawer," Lord Vladya's voice came from the doorway. He leaned against the frame, arms crossed, his brows pinched with worry. "It does not work on me, but Faiwick swears by its strength."

Marilyn was already reaching for it, pulling open the drawer and retrieving the small glass vial. Uncorking it, she shifted to the head of the bed, lifting the princess's head onto her lap.

Tilting the vial carefully, she poured a small measure of the potion between the princess's parted lips, watching as it trickled down.

"She is in heat," Marilyn murmured, watching for a reaction. "The sleep will not last long."

Across the chamber, King Daemonikai resumed pacing, agitation rolling off him in waves. Marilyn had never seen him look so helpless.

The potion worked quickly. Within moments, Emeriel's lashes fluttered, and her head lolled to the side, her breath softening as she slipped into sleep.

A pained cry echoed from the adjacent chamber.

Lord Vladya stiffened, snapping to attention before he disappeared through the doorway, leaving only Marilyn, the grand king, and the sleeping princess behind.

King Daemonikai halted. His gaze was fierce when it settled upon her. "Tell me what is wrong, Merry."

"I will, Your Grace," Marilyn hesitated. "But first if you do not mind, I would ask that you sit down for this."

Frustration flashed across his face, and for a second, Marilyn was certain he was about to snap. She quickly added, "For Emeriel. Try to stay calm... for her."

His nostrils flared, but the words had struck their mark. Running a hand over his face, he forced himself to steady his breathing, chest rising and falling in deep, open-mouthed exhales.

Finally, after a long moment, he lowered himself into the chair beside her.

"First, there's the heat suppressants," Marilyn began cautiously.

"I already gathered that much." He snapped, cursing unfiltered under his breath. "Morina should never have given them to her in the first place, damn it."

"Second, her body is waiting for her Beloved to soothe her heat, yet... it does not recognize you."

The grand king's face paled as the words sank in. "Our severed bond?"

Marilyn nodded, her expression sympathetic. "The princess isn't just a syren; she's a Soulbond. One who has already been claimed through heat-sex by her destined mate in the past. Now, her body expects that same connection, yet the bond is missing."

Daemonikai stared into space, absorbing the words.

"It would not be a problem in a different circumstance. All you would need to do is mount her again, and her body would recognize you. But because of the suppressants, her body is in survival mode, desperate to ward off anything it perceives as an intruder. And..." she struggled to find the right words. "I—I don't know how to ask this, Your Grace..."

He sat with his elbow propped on the armrest, his fingers rubbing his forehead as if trying to ward off a headache. Marilyn could only imagine the toll the situation—and his unsatisfied rut—was taking on him.

"Ask," he growled.

She cleared her throat. There was no delicate way to address this.

"That night your mind was... unclear when you mounted her," she threaded carefully "The experience was not... pleasant for her, was it?"

The only sound that filled the room was the distant, pleased cries of Princess Aekeira from the adjoining chamber.

Daemonikai's nod was shallow, barely more than a twitch, but Marilyn caught it.

"Was that your last... um, intimacy with her?"

His head turned slightly, and he regarded her from beneath his hand. "How could I possibly touch her again after that? It hasn't even been a month. I'm not a monster, Marilyn."

Marilyn nodded, pushing forward. "That night being your last intimacy with the princess has contributed to this, Your Grace. Her body now associates your touch with that memory."

"So what you're saying is, her body isn't just trying to protect her from any intruder, but from the very one who hurt her... all while still waiting for her Beloved?"