

Chapter 330

For a long while, he simply stayed there, forehead resting lightly against hers.

Slowly, her breathing evened. The rigidity in her limbs eased. The fingers grabbing the sheets loosened.

When she finally opened her eyes, he was met with deep blue eyes wet with unshed tears.

A dagger slashed his chest. His beast made a broken sound and retreated, and his hunger... dulled.

"I am ready," she breathed.

"Let's not—"

"Please, let's try..."

Daemonikai searched her eyes. What he saw there broke his damn heart.

Still he gave into her, capturing her lips in a kiss.

It was gentle. Soft. Patient.

After a moment, she kissed him back, hands tentatively sliding up his arms. A quiet, needy sound left her.

Only then did he move again. He began to push inside her, inch by inch.

Her heat enveloped his cock, welcoming him. Soft. Yielding. Molding against him in ways that sent pleasure curling up his spine.

But then, she wrenched her mouth from his, and started to thrash. Shoving at his shoulders, striking blindly, fingers clawing at his skin.

"Stop, stop! No, no, please—!" She fought as her cries rose in raw panic.

Daemonikai jerked away at once.

Free, she bolted. Scrambling across the bed so quickly she lost her footing and tumbled off the edge with a thud. But even as she hit the ground, she did not stop.

She kept crawling, scrambling backward on hands and knees until her back met the far wall. Then, she pressed herself into the corner as though she could disappear into the stone.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" She cried as her knees came up to her chest and she wrapped her arms around them in a tight grip. "Please stop hurting me, I'm really sorry...! So sorry, so sorry..."

Those words came in a repeat like a broken litany as she rocked herself back and forth, trembling like a leaf.

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Something just died inside of me.

Daemonikai was a frozen statue as his female ran from him in the worst way one should run from another.

Watching her rock back and forth, press herself further against the wall to get away from him, he could not breathe. Chest as heavy as stone.

That terrible morning, he had stood before her bed, gazed at her wounds and saw the damage he caused. Never did he think not having the memory took anything away, but now he saw it did.

Those bruises, which had covered every part of her body, detailed only a fraction of her suffering...and even those had faded. But the ones inside were concealed. The scar on her soul.

Her soft heart forgave him. During the heat, her body forgave him too. But the deepest part of her mind, which had finally trusted him as her protector—the part he battered the night he became an abuser—did not. Perhaps it never would. Perhaps it never could.

"I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry," she still whispered, even in her deep fear that he would ignore her "no" and pounce on her.

Devastated was too small a word to describe how he felt. He was dying inside.

Daemonikai pulled up his pants, slid to the bed's edge and buried his face in his hands.

Time stretched. He had no idea how long he sat there, swallowed by the storm that had pulled him under. How does one drown on dry land? Yet he had sunk. Deeply submerged. The way he struggled to draw breath proved it.

A hesitant hand touched him.

Tentative fingers threaded softly through his hair.

Daemonikai lifted his head.

Emeriel stood before him, reddened eyes pumped with remorse. "What have I done? The seven gods... Please forgive me, my king."

"What have you done? Forgive you?" Emeriel Galilea Evenstone, how is any of this your fault?" he growled, self-reproachfully.

"I pushed for us to try, then—"

He encircled her waist, drawing her closer, and pressed his face against her belly. "I am the one who will forever beg for your forgiveness. Perhaps I should relinquish my throne, head for the Dark Woods, and join the ferals there. Pretending to be alright when one is anything but, is—"

"You will not do such a thing," she whispered. "If I am not permitted to feel wretched, neither are you, my king."

"Riel..."

"We will overcome this... together." Her fingers ran through his hair in a soothing caress. "We will emerge victorious on the other side."

He breathed shakily. "To this day, I still know not what went wrong. It has been three years. Three years, and not once did I see any sign of feral. Why now?"

"I have given it much thought," she confessed.

"I have too. Gone over it again and again in my mind, but there is nothing. One moment, I was instructing the new recruits, and the next, I felt strange. And then... blankness."

"It is unnatural..." her words were starting to slur. "Perhaps dark magic?"

"Thought of it. Could be an explanation, for dark magic is potent," he adjusted his hold on her as she swayed. "I have searched through every known magical text of our people, and not one of them speaks of a spell capable of inducing mindlessness in another. On oneself, yes, but not externally."

She hummed, voice growing heavier. "So... if it were dark magic, it would not be Urekai magic...?"

"No," he glanced up at her, expression dark. "It would have required a hefty ritual, perhaps even a blood sacrifice. A dark mage."

Emeriel's eyes fluttered as she nodded sluggishly.

"I have already sent word to the mage king. It will take time to get a response, but I must know his thoughts on this."

"A wise decision. We... uhhh... we must know..." Her thoughts were drifting now, her body going boneless against him.

Daemonikai caught her as she collapsed, scooping her effortlessly into his thigh.

She sighed, resting her head on his shoulder, nuzzling her face into his neck. "Oh... I feel weird."

"You are blood drunk," He huffed, amused despite himself. "It is alright. I have you."

"My beloved," she whispered dreamily. "My amazing, powerful Beloved."

Daemonikai only stared at that beautiful face.

She clung to him, voice growing hazier, but words stayed achingly clear. "I wish I could take away some of your burdens. I will bury them somewhere far from the face of the earth... Or bear them as my own."

She still thought this way? Even after everything?

That part of him that died just some moments ago shuddered awake, and took its first breath.

"I wish you could see my heart..." A soft exhale. Her head lolling slightly.

His own soul burned. His mind rebelled against her words, against the comfort they brought. He did not deserve this. He did not deserve her.

She should not have to soothe him. She should not have to reassure him. He was the one who harmed her. This burden—what he had done—was his to carry.

Perhaps in five hundred years, when he had spent every moment making it up to her, then he could allow himself to believe in the absolution she so freely gave. But not now. Not yet.

She fell asleep. Pliant, trusting, clinging to him as if he were safe.

He traced her delicate features, memorizing every inch of her. Who knows when she would come to her senses and finally make the right decision to leave the monster?

But until that dreadful day, he would hold this radiant star as his own. Until the day his darkness became too strong for her light, he would hold on tight—like the drowning man he was, like the lifeline she had become.

"I hope that one day, I—Daemonikai Vipetheriov Naelzharoth—will deserve your love," he stated, brushing his lips lightly against her hair. "Truly... blessed is the womb that birthed a female such as you."