

Chapter 332

They had begun appearing four days ago. Strange, unnameable hues that shimmered around certain people.

Blends of elements she could not identify, shifting and warping in a way no natural color ever did. It did not happen to everyone, only a few. And yet, she saw them.

What colors were those? What did it mean? Emeriel had no idea.

A Urekai female laughed, darting through the crowd as a male chased after her, and the strange blend of colors pulsed around them, two different yet intertwining hues.

Emeriel tore her eyes away. I refuse to believe I am having vision problems at such a young age. I would need to confide in someone.

"Can you believe it has been eight months since we returned here?" Aekeira asked, breathing slightly heavier than before. "So much has changed..."

"Indeed." Emeriel mused. "I wonder if I will see Lord Herod tonight."

Aekeira glanced at her. "I'm sure he will be in the arena with the lords and nobility."

"I hope so," Emeriel glimpsed the towering archways that marked the entrance to their destination. "Since his title was taken, he rarely associates with the rest of them."

"When do you plan to speak with the grand king about him?" Aekeira asked as they turned a corner. "Who knows? You may be able to convince your male to lift the ban and restore his position."

"It has been on my mind," Emeriel admitted. "I do intend to speak with Daemon, but... he has so much on his plate right now. It's been holding me back. I'm simply waiting for the right moment."

"Em? Do you need to stop and rest?" Aekeira asked abruptly, looking at her closely. "You seem quite exhausted. And you are breathing heavily."

Shit, she was. So tired.

"I am truly fine, Keira. You worry needlessly." Emeriel forced a smile.

Before Aekeira could argue, Emeriel used her kerchief to dabbed away the sweat on her sister's brow. "But if you are the one who needs to stop, then let us rest for your sake."

Aekeira flushed, but there was no mistaking the fatigue in her posture.

Emeriel felt warm inside for her. "Oh Keira, it's nothing to be ashamed of. I have been reading about pregnancy, and Urekai child is highly demanding on the body."

"I know, thanks Em," she smiled, blowing out air from her mouth. "But we are nearly at the arena, we may as well finish the journey."

So, Emeriel intertwined their hands, leading her.

As stepped into the secluded arena reserved for the high-borns, the air here felt different. Refined. Exclusive.

The lanterns in this part of the festival were grander, their delicate frames made with gold and silver linings, their glow lighting up the night like scattered stars. Noble lords twirled their ladies across the smooth marble floor, their silk gowns flowing with each movement.

Others gathered in small circles, drinking, cheering, laughter spilling between them. Some stood apart, discussing official matters, their wives and consorts by their sides, murmuring in low voices.

It was their first time among such a crowd of Urekai. Sensing Aekeira's nervousness alongside her own, she squeezed her sister's hand in reassurance and led her further in, their gazes sweeping over the grand gathering.

And at the center of it all stood the grand rulers.

Grand King Daemonikai and Grand Lord Vladya stood tall, addressing a group of high lords with serious faces. In their rich, regal red attire, embroidered with gold thread that shimmered under the lantern glow, they looked magnificent.

In unison, their noses flared, and they inhaled deeply. Then turned, eyes settling upon Emeriel and Aekeira.

The hard lines on their faces smoothed simultaneously as if a button had been pressed.

Butterflies fluttered in Emeriel's belly.

She and Aekeira drew near and curtsied gracefully.

Both Grand Rulers offered their hands, and in turn, Emeriel and Aekeira placed their hands upon theirs, allowing their males bring their offered hands to their lips, kissing them.

"You look stunning, my radiant star," Daemonikai said in a deep voice as he looked down at her.

Heat rushed to Emeriel's cheeks. She beamed, lowering her gaze. "Thank you, Your Grace."

Beside her, Lord Vladya addressed Aekeira. "You look incredibly enchanting, my soaring dove."

Now, Aekeira mirrored her sister's blush.

Daemonikai led her away to a corner, leaning down, his breath brushed her ear. "I have been waiting to dance with you."

"Dance...?"

"Oh yes. You know that dance you practiced with your sister a week ago? Now is the time to show me."

"Your Grace," Emeriel looked around. The thought of dancing for him before all these people made her incredibly shy.

"Come now," he coaxed, chuckling freely. "Show me that swirling move."

Emeriel was enchanted by his laughter. She loved seeing him this way. After all they had been through, and were going through, she wished to bottle his laughter and store it away.

"But people will see—"

"Of course they will," he said, unapologetic, brushing his thumb against her knuckles. "And I will be proud to show you to them. Here—go on. Show me."

Emeriel could not refuse that expectant green eyes. So she stilled her nerves and stepped back.

He crossed his arms over his chest, amused as he waited.

If I did it quickly, perhaps it would not draw too much attention, right?

Emeriel raised one hand above her head, the other resting just below her belly, mimicking the position as if being held by an unseen partner. Then, taking a deep breath, she spun.

The silk of her gown flared around her, catching the glow of the lanterns as she moved in a perfect, practiced twirl.

The thing was, Emeriel was quite certain she had come to a stop. But it did not seem that way, for her world continued to spin and spin.

Her stomach churned violently as if turned upside down, and her vision narrowed, darkness creeping in at the edges.

Then, she was falling.

She heard the gasps of the onlookers, strong arms catching her before she hit the ground.

"Emeriel Emeriel—hey—dearling, can you hear me?" His frantic voice sounded distant.

She struggled to keep her eyes open, but in the end, her world faded to black.