

Chapter 335

Vladya threw an arm around her waist and effortlessly guided her away. "Another time, Princess. They need a moment to themselves."

The door clicked shut, leaving them in silence.

Emeriel's hands fidgeted in her lap. A charming blush coloring her cheeks. She was glowing.

"I must have ruined the festival for everyone," she said at last.

"The festival deserved to be ruined." He walked toward her. "You, my favorite star, have earned the right to ruin any celebration in this kingdom and beyond."

"I am pregnant." She whispered it like she could not believe it.

You and me both, dearling. "You are."

"I knew I was not feeling well all day, and I just—"

Daemonikai knelt down.

She drew in a sharp breath, sitting up straighter. "What are you doing?"

He was a grand king, and he knelt for no one. Not in battle. Not in diplomacy. Not for any reason.

The last time his knees met the ground was under the sorrowful half-moon with a shattered heart and a crippled soul as he wept for the third child he lost, and never got to meet. And before that, was in a battlefield, centuries ago, to celebrate victory.

But tonight... on this night... he knelt with a grateful heart and a vulnerable soul.

"Thank you," he said hoarsely. "Thank you so much, Emeriel."

She bestowed him that radiant smile again.

He did not return it. Instead, he took her hand and brought it to his lips, kissing each and every finger.

"Emeriel, you are the most incredible female I have ever come across in my entire five thousand years of existence."

Those bright eyes turned shiny. "Oh, my king..."

"You have no idea the blessing you just give me. You cannot begin to fathom the joy I feel within me."

"I feel truly happy as well," her voice was a breathless laughter as she glanced down at herself. "I cannot believe it...oh, the gods. I truly cannot believe it, Daemon."

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"It is difficult for me as well," he confessed. "I cannot scent it on you yet, and it makes me—makes us—restless."

He turned her hand over and pressed a tender kiss to her palm.

"But I can feel it, Emeriel. Deep in my heart, I know that just beneath yours lies the greatest gift of all."

Her lower lip wobbled. "I am elated. My heart is filled to the brim."

"You need to see my own," he murmured. "If only our bond were active now, I would bare it to you, so you could feel all I feel."

"Daemon, your words make me feel so..."

"Thank you for being born," he swiped the tear away with a finger. "Thank you for surviving despite everything. Thank you for living as a male all your life—for enduring, for standing strong every day."

He held her by the waist and pulled her to the edge until she was seated before him, legs spread on either side of his kneeling form.

Then, he dropped his forehead to her stomach. "Thank you for being stubborn enough to get yourself sold with your sister."

He could not recognize his own voice. Shaky. Not at all like the confident tone he was attempting to use.

But it was okay. Let her see it all.

"Thank you for serving my beast. For satisfying our sexlust, for offering us your blood. Thank you for not giving up on me."

"Daemon, please stop," she cried, patting his hair.

"Thank you for coming close to me as Galilea. For loving me even when it seemed impossible," he raised his head, his green eyes holding her blue ones, "For drawing close to me, knowing I may very well break your heart to pieces."

Those cute bow lips wobbled again.

"And thank you for granting me another chance even after I shattered that heart. You still returned to Urai and helped my soul heal—"

Her arms were surroundly around his neck as she hugged him really fierce. "It's okay. Say no more."

"No, I need to express this—"

She kissed him.

It was a bold claim, made without an ounce of shyness or finesse. She gripped his neck firmly and claimed his lips, sucking on them as though they were nectar.

He growled, the words left to say dissolving into mist as he returned the kiss ravenously. With all the joy in his heart.

At last, she tore her lips away, pressing their foreheads together as she tried to catch her breath. "No more, none of that. Thank you for giving my life purpose and meaning." She took his hand and placed it on her belly. "We did this, my king. I have your seed growing inside me, and knowing that fills me with unending excitement. Thank you for breathing this new life into me."

This female...

She was so special.

"I have something final to say," he told her quietly. "I am your servant, Emeriel. Anything you want, name it, and it's yours. If you wish for me to kill anyone, speak their name, and I will do so without hesitation—no questions asked. Lands. Coins. If you want me to conquer kingdoms, I will bring them to your feet. Anything. Wish it, and it is yours."

"The worst part is... I know you're not joking."

"I do not jest about serving or killing, my love."

"What am I going to do with you?" she said, the words coming out on a rush of love. Then, softer, she whispered, "All I want is you."

"No," he said firmly, brushing a kiss to her nose. "Give it some more thought." She is such a sunshine. His radiant star. "Your twinkling light heals me, Emeriel Galilea Evenstone."

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GRAND LORD ZAIPER

Grand Lord Zaiper stood in the highest tower of Greyrock, staring down at the celebrations below with a heart so heavy it might split apart in his chest.

Tears stung his eyes.

After those deafening roars from Daemonikai, the Urekai had stayed in anticipation to hear the joyous news that had elicited such unhinged childlike emotion from their Grand King. Now, that news had spread like fire through dry fields.

The human princess was with child.

As if that were not enough heartbreak and devastation to bear, Vladya followed soon after—announcing his own female's pregnancy as well.

Urai was in an uproar.

The Lantern Festival turned hotter with added celebration. Countless lanterns were in the sky, like stars descending to dance over the city. Gallons of ale flowed endlessly, filling goblets, spilling over tables.

The people danced without stopping. Cattle were slaughtered. The woods rang with the sounds of hunting and feasting.

It was almost dawn, and yet Urai did not sleep.

Zaiper stood watching it all, the wound in his chest deeper. This was pain.

No. Pain was an understatement.

Even devastation was too insignificant a word.

Never in all his years, had he believed an alpha's heart could shatter like this.

His legs stiff from standing too long in isolation. Throbbing, from holding himself together up here while he processed the news tonight.

And at last, he turned away. Walking slowly as he made his way to the royal residence.

I refuse to weep over this, damn it! He blinked with anger, forcing back the persistent wetness.

Too many impossibilities had happened these days. Too many legends were being rewritten. They were too old for the world to be changing this much.

Because in what realm, what time, what magic, does a female get pregnant from a mini heat?

In what world does a Urekai sire a child outside of a mating bond?

Is this dark magic?

Was it Urekai spell, or was a mage involved?

What manner of enchantment was this?

And Vladya, the king of failures, master of disappointments... the male who had spent millennia swimming in the endless sea of defeat not only secured a soulbond but also impregnated her? What in the name of the gods is this?

And if they could do it, why couldn't he?

His hands shook as he entered his chamber.

What kind of witches are these human princesses?

What manner of sorceresses were they, to bend fate and twist impossibility into reality?

To pick up two dead males whose stories had nearly reached their end and breathe life into them?

He lost the battle with tears. They fell.

Zaiper cursing under his breath, sniffing.

Some days, it felt as if the gods stood beside him, other days, he felt their hatred more deeply than anything else. Because what is this?

How had the world shifted beneath his feet without warning, without mercy?

He gnashed his teeth, but it was useless. The tears kept falling. And falling.

This pain is worse than even the day Daemonikai returned from soul-death.

He did not know how long he sat there, nor when the exhaustion finally took him.

At some point, sleep claimed him.

However, it did not bring peace.