

Captive Slave 374

Chapter

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Emeriel found her beloved in Blackstone, in Lord Vladya's study.

She heard the laughter before she reached the door-deep chuckles and the easy camaraderie of longtime friends. She entered as Daemonikai was rising to meet her, already on his feet as though he scented her. He crossed the room in long strides, pulling her into his arms, kissing her thoroughly.

His public displays of affection never failed to leave her flustered. It was something she was still getting used to. Yet, deep inside, she loved it. Loved how unapologetically he claimed her, how naturally he made her feel wanted. How he never hesitated to put his hands on her, even in the presence of others.

The way his lips devoured hers now, one might have thought they'd been apart for weeks.

"Hell," Lord Vladya groaned. "Give the girl a breath, Daemon."

Emeriel broke the kiss with a gasp, heat rising to her face. Her Daemon took his time letting go, his hands lasting on her waist before finally stepping back. She was feeling warm, her belly fluttering.

"You came to see Aekeira?" Daemonikai asked, still watching her with that smoldering intensity. "I believe she's sleeping."

"No." She caught her breath. "I'm actually here to see you. I need to tell you something."

She recounted everything—what she saw with the colors, how they had reacted when Lord Herod and Amie were near each other. How they merged.

There was a pause.

"A bond seer...?" Lord Vladya spoke as he walked forward, looking stunned and bewildered.

"You've just said exactly what crossed my mind," Daemonikai said, glancing at the Grand Lord.

"Are you certain about everything you described?" Lord Vladya asked. "It happened exactly that way?"

"Yes." Emeriel nodded, worry settling in her stomach. "Is it... is that bad? What does bond seer mean?"

"The Oracle did say you were born with a dormant power." Daemonikai shook his head slowly, something dawning in his eyes. "You're a bond seer, Emeriel."

"I'm not sure," she said, bewildered. "I only started seeing colors—"

Her beloved pulled her into his arms with such urgency she nearly gasped.

"Oh, the heavens..." he breathed, holding her close.

Still confused, Emeriel wrapped her arms around him on instinct. When he pulled back, his face had softened, his voice awed.

"A bond seer is a blessing among our kind. Rare. Incredibly rare," he said. "For a species bound by a rigid mating system like the bonding ritual, bond seers are the ones who guide fate. Why do you think there are as many successful bonds as there are, despite how rare they are meant to be?"

She shook her head slowly.

"It's because of seers like you," he said. "You were born with supernatural sight. The ability to perceive the compatibility between souls. You see it through color. The more overlapping hues a pair shares, the higher the chance their bond will hold. That their ritual will succeed."

Emeriel opened her mouth, but no words came. She wanted to refute him, to question how something so significant-so valuable-could happen to her.

But the more she thought about it, the more it all made sense.

Every color she had ever seen hovering near people was always different. Unique. Separate. Except with Amie and Lord Herod.

"If what you're saying is true... does that mean Lord Herod and Amie are—" She hesitated. "That they are compatible? But Amie is human."

"For the swirling colors to intertwine so completely," Lord Vladya answered, "she must have Syren traits. Ones that haven't manifested yet but will in time." He paused thoughtful. "Only Soulbonds go into heat at first contact with their destined mate, not bondmates. And you said all the colors merged-not some, but every hue-intertwined into one?"

Emeriel nodded slowly.

"That is full compatibility," Vladya said with certainty. "When she becomes Syren and they attempt the bonding ritual, it will succeed."

Emeriel tried to absorb it all. "But if this kind of ability exists, how come..." She didn't know how to say it delicately.

"You're asking why bond seers haven't been used to guide mating, to help Urekai avoid failed bonds and prevent heartbreak?" Lord Vladya finished.

Emeriel gave a small nod.

"You may have already noticed-bond colors don't appear for everyone," Daemonikai explained. "That alone makes it impossible to force it. You can't ask a bond seer to match you with someone if your colors don't appear at all."

That was true.

"I was one of those people the colors never appeared for," Vladya said with a shrug. "Ottai's grandmother-our last known bond seer was revered across Urai hoped, prayed, that one day she'd see colors for me. But she never did, until the day she died." His smile had a tinge of sadness.

"Some people

are just unlucky. Or as I used to think... cursed."

Emeriel understood, reeling.

Beside her, Daemonikai looked at her like she was some kind of miracle. A rare, sacred wonder. She didn't understand how this could be her.

"But... why me?" she wondered aloud. "I'm just... Emeriel."

"You've never been just anything," Vladya snorted. "You were handmade for the Grand King of the Urekai. Touched by the gods while still in the womb. You've never been ordinary."

Emeriel's throat tightened.

"Do you know what this means?" Daemonikai ran a hand through his hair, clearly overwhelmed. "Our people will rejoice. There's hope again for those who are scared of the bonding ritual because of the risk of failure. You're the key to guiding them."

"I still can't believe this is happening," Vladya said, shaking his head, looking at her with new eyes.

The more she processed it, the more a slow, powerful wave of joy began to rise in her chest.

Relief.

Her vision wasn't failing, it wasn't some strange pregnancy symptom. It was something good. Something amazing.

The idea that she could help people find their true companions through bonding in the future was humbling. Knowing that no one would have to endure the suffering Lord Vladya experienced, nor become what he once was, shaped by loss and bitterness... filled her with a joy beyond words.