

## Captive Slave 380

Chapter 380www.w@eL@orm.(c)om

"For all eternity," he said without hesitation.

The Oracle looked back at Emeriel. "Your birth was set in motion a long time ago.

It was written in the stars." She made a dry, crackling sound that left her clutching at her ribs, clearly in pain.

"You should rest," Lord Vladya urged softly. "Don't speak more than you must."

The Oracle looked at him. "The one who was not written... not fated in the stars... but had to happen..." Her gaze shifted to Aekeira. "Come closer, child."

Aekeira stepped forward slowly, standing beside her sister.

"You see her, do you not?" the Oracle asked.

Emeriel's brow creased in confusion. Who?WWW(w)N(c)@elwOrM.com

To her surprise, Aekeira nodded. "Three times. In my dreams. I don't know what it means..."

Lord Vladya's brows furrowed. "Who do you see?"

"She sees herself," the Oracle answered before Aekeira could speak. "A memory no soul should retain... but which now returns."

Vladya moved in front of Aekeira, cupping her face with both hands, locking eyes with her. "Who do you see, Aekeira?"

"Tiara."

The room went still.

Breathless silence.

"I've seen her in my dreams three times now," Aekeira went on. "At first, I didn't understand what I was seeing. When I woke, it was always vague and blurry, so I waved it off. But it kept returning. The same dream. The same words."

Lord Vladya's hands dropped, taking a step back as though struck. "I..... I don't believe that."

"I see you with her. By the river," Aekeira whispered. "You were lying together on the grass..."

"I. Do. Not. Believe. That," he repeated, more firmly-though his voice wavered.

"Promise me... that if our bonding ritual does not work, you will not fall apart," Aekeira mimicked the soft and melodic voice.

Gasps echoed through the room.

Lord Ottai. Morina. Even the Grand King himself.

Vladya paled, his lips parting in stunned disbelief.

A faint, sad smile brushed Aekeira's lips. "And you shook your head and said, I can't promise that, Tiara."

"Holy lands of the bewildered..." Lady Morina breathed.

"And before the bonding ritual," Aekeira continued. "She said It will destroy me if our bond fails, but what will kill me more is knowing it will annihilate you. I want to become one with you more than anything... but sometimes I wish we wouldn't try. It's better not to know. It's-"

"It's better not to try..." Lord Vladya finished in a whisper.

Aekeira nodded, blinking rapidly. "I didn't see much else, but I've had the dream again and again. I should have told you sooner. I'm sorry, my Beloved."

Emeriel could only stare, stunned. Aekeira... my sister... a reincarnation of Vladya's bondmate?

"How is this..." Vladya was struggling to breathe evenly, his eyes jumping from Aekeira's face to her swollen abdomen and back again. "How is this possible?" "You made it possible," the Oracle said at last. "When you made the exchange." Vladya turned toward her slowly, eyes wide. "Hav'zie de Baah?"

"Hav'zie de Baah," she repeated. "The spell worked, Great Lord Vladya. The chosen human female, Pandora, was meant to bear only one blessed child. That was her destiny. But your dark spell-woven from the ruins of a heart so broken even the gods averted their eyes-rewrote that fate. It brought about... her."

Soft gasps flared through the room again.

Vladya's hand reached out, almost trembling, drawing Aekeira into his arms. He pressed a kiss to her forehead as if anchoring himself in the reality of her presence.

"Holy grails..." His powerful frame was visibly shaken.

"So perhaps." The Oracle's eyes twinkled through her frailty. "The next time you rail against the gods, you might be a little gentler with your words."

Vladya gave a breathy, stunned laugh. "Perhaps." Then he turned his full attention to the woman in his arms. "Have I told you how much I love you?"

Aekeira's eyes brimmed as she gave him a wobbly smile. "Three times."

"Not nearly enough. I love you," he stated, voice ringing true. "I love you so much, Aekeira Maranthine Evenstone. Thank you... thank you for finding your way back to me."

Emeriel slipped quietly into Daemonikai's embrace, tears in her eyes as she smiled so hard her cheeks ached. Her heart full-overflowing-with wonder.

A love that defied time.

A soul that found its way home.

"Via zie eisiz, hé'xozad lah lah..."

The words came in a soft, ancient, dreadful way, like something pulled from a dream.(w)@w.nDVèlw@rM.C@M

Sinai's eyes opened to darkness. The smell of scorched ash. The crackle of fire.

The incantation continued.

"Please don't," her voice was barely audible, helpless tears pooling in her eyes. "Don't do this."

More words. More fire. The runic circle already complete.

She didn't have much time.

"I have gold," she said quickly, hoarsely. "A whole sack. I'll pay... every coin I own."

The chanting paused.

"I'm afraid that won't work," the mage replied without emotion. "I do not replace a sacrifice with another. And I do not make deals with the dead."

"I'm not dead yet," she croaked. "And if you do this... you'll be complicit in something he orchestrated. He's using you, too. You know that, don't you?"

The mage's head turned slightly, not speaking.

"Even when he was Grand Ruler, Zaiper would always offer blood over gold, Sinai's voice gained strength, fueled by the sheer will to survive "You know why? Because gold is the one thing dark magic can't replicate-not without immense risk. He's been stringing you along for centuries, offering favors, debts, secrets. But never coin. Because as long as you lack, he owns you."

She took a shaky breath. "He knows your secret that you're in hiding. That you can't openly practice. That your dream is to escape-use your power to shed the markings, the signs, and disappear into another life. To live freely, without fear of your people hunting you down."

The dark mage appeared... thoughtful? Sinai wasn't sure, due to that damn cloak.

Still, she pressed on. "Yet he never gives you what you want because he needs you desperate. He needs you

bound. What he did to me-what&

he's doing now-should tell everything. He sold me out. Threw me away like scrap. He'll do the same to you when the day comes that you're no longer useful." Her voice shook, but she lifted her chin. "I have a fortune. Gold I've saved for

over a thousand years. It's everything I have-my life's work. I'll give it to you."

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The words tasted like ash, her stomach turning.

"My entire hoard, in exchange for my life."

It shattered her soul to say it. That gold represented more than currency. It was her ambition. Her power. Her future. She'd fought to claim@very coin-clawed her way through courts, lands, and shadows for it. She'd dreamed of owning the Crystal Waters and building far greater things with those coins.

Now she was bartering it all away, because Zaiper betrayed her.

You will regret this. I swear it on the gods.

She wiped her tears with the back of her hand. "What do you say?" she asked at

last. "Your freedom... for my life."