

55 55- Fool Me Once

Phoenix: 1

My body had gone stiff in his arms. It had been such a long time since anyone hugged me. Except, of course, Jai and Maria.

Last time, it was my mom whom I tried to hug, but she pushed me back. Why? Because I was impure to touch.

"Hey," he said softly near my ear, "you are still trembling, love!"

Emerald.

Love.

Why was he using such endearments for me?

Couldn't he smell the pungent scent from my face?

"Are you alright?" his hand started rubbing over my arm.

No. I'm not alright, Sebastian. You know why?

Because you're standing so close to me. The last time you stood this close was at our wedding. But no. You were quite close when you invited me on a date.

Do you want to know why I'm not alright?

Because you're not supposed to look at me like this.

Because I hated you for so long, and now I'm not able to hate you anymore, because I never knew this side of you.

This version of you was kept hidden from me.

"I... I'm alright," I tried to convince him in a shaky voice, and looked for my glass that was placed close by on a coffee table.

I tried to tuck my hair behind my ear when he held my wrist, "Easy," his voice seemed to be dripping in velvet, "You don't need to be afraid of anyone. Not here in my presence."

But when your Granma and your fiancée tortured me, where were you? I felt bitterness slowly taking over my senses.

I placed my hands on his chest to push him back, realizing later that there was no cloth but only taut skin and that tattoo.

"Umm..." I tried to control my ragged breathing, "You said you needed healing," I brushed my fingers through my hair, "Where does it hurt?"

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I asked him without meeting that golden gaze. Raising my hand, I inspected the white glow around it, "Where do you need healing, my king?"

When he didn't respond, I thought to leave the room, but suddenly his hand held my wrist and guided it slowly near his chest.

He placed my palm right above his heart and covered my hand with his, "Here," he whispered. 1

I forced down a lump in my throat. Now I regret coming here. He was trying to play with my senses. With my heart. Again!

At last, I met his amber eyes and found him already looking at me. I didn't know what he was trying to say through them.

There was silent pleading, desperation, and something else that I couldn't figure out.

I drew in a shaky breath and moved my hand a bit over his chest, "Okay," I nodded at him, but he didn't remove his hand. It stayed there over mine.

I swiped my tongue over my dry lips nervously. Within minutes, there was a flicker of feral emotion in his eyes that vanished instantly as soon as it appeared.

He leaned in slightly, enough for me to feel the warmth of his breath brushing my cheek. My eyelids fluttered closed.

"D-don't do that, y-your highness," I stuttered, not able to take it anymore.



"You shouldn't do that either, Emerald," he murmured, his voice was low and husky.

My fingers twitched under his, "Where else..." I gulped my saliva to get rid of the dryness, "I mean, is it the only part you need healing?" 1

His gaze lingered on my mask before rising to meet my eyes, "Yeah. There is one more place," I blinked at him, asking him silently to guide my hand there.

Without breaking eye contact, his hand guided me down, letting me feel every curve on his body.

He leaned a little more, and I felt his lips on my head, "It hurts here too," his hand took mine, down to his boxers, over that unmistakable swell. 1

I gasped and tried to free my hand in panic, but his hand pressed it there over the bulge. I tried harder to push his hand away.

This time I succeeded. I didn't know what got into me. As soon as my hand was free, I slapped hard on his cheek.

As a warrior, I had a fair share of giving slaps on several cheeks, and every time, I easily turned the head sideways. Be it a male warrior or a female one.

But tonight!

He was not shocked; rather, he kept looking into my eyes. My heart dropped when I realized what I had done.

I gasped, quickly covering my mouth with my trembling palm, and took a step back, stunned by my own action.

"Y... you shouldn't have invited me here, you dog!" I was trembling in rage, "See, what you made me do."

Without giving a second thought, I turned on my heels, but then stopped dead in my tracks. There, on a wall shelf, different bowls were placed. Each had some candies and lollipops in it. One of them had Belgian chocolate.

The same one I used to eat in the royal palace.

I dipped my hand in it and scooped as many as I could manage in my fist, "Don't you dare call me for any kind of healing!" I warned him, and my anger flared even more when I saw a big grin spreading across his face. 1

I didn't stay to ask the reason. I just turned and left the room.

I shouldn't have come here. Trusting him was a mistake. He didn't call me because he needed healing. It was just lust that made him do it.

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That was all it was.

Men like him can't be trusted. They are never sincere.

Jai was the only one who stood by me without asking for anything. But Sebastian King? He was bad news. He was nothing but trouble.

The man who couldn't even protect his wife shouldn't be trusted again.

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

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