

Chapter 34: Her Release

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ELIRA

His mouth found mine again as I continued to move against him, chasing friction, pressure—anything to ease the ache between my legs and deep in my stomach.

And he moved with me, meeting every grind.

His kisses were rougher this time. Deeper.

There was no hesitation now, only need and recklessness, like something had finally snapped inside him.

Our teeth clashed briefly, lips bruising, but I didn't care. I needed him like air. Like salvation.

His scent tangled with mine, thick in the air. We were drenched in it. It coated the cave walls. It filled my lungs.

His tongue slid against mine, and I moaned, unable to stop myself. He swallowed the sound greedily.

His hands were everywhere, trailing over my thighs, gripping my hips, pulling me tighter against him as if we could merge right there, flesh to flesh, soul to soul.

He met every desperate grind with a roll of his hips as if he were losing control, too.

As if something inside him had shattered, too.

"F*ck, Elira," he breathed against my mouth. "You're driving me insane."

"I c-can't—" My voice cracked as the heat flared again, sharp and unforgiving. "I need..."

"I know," he growled. "I know."

His mouth left mine, trailing kisses down my jaw and throat and back to the hollow of my neck. My head tilted on instinct, baring myself like prey—but his teeth never sank.

He kissed the spot instead, almost reverently, like he hated himself for even thinking about it.

Then his mouth was on my chest again.

Hot. Starving. Pulling sounds from me, I didn't know I could make.

Every roll of my hips dragged over the hard press of him between my thighs, the friction unbearable—and perfect.

I felt his breath hitch, his hands digging into my hips as if he were fighting the instinct to flip me beneath him and take what we were both seconds away from begging for.

Our scents clashed in the air like a storm.

It was dizzying. Overwhelming.

Sacred and sinful.

Something started to build inside me. Low and deep.

A tightening in my belly. A pulse in my spine.

Hot. Relentless. Ready to snap.

"Darius—" I gasped, voice trembling. "Something—something's—"

He pulled me tighter against him, his forehead pressing to my shoulder, his voice a ragged whisper.

"Let it go, Elira."

My body locked.

Every breath caught somewhere between a sob and a gasp.

That tightening—

That pulsing, desperate ache in my stomach—

It snapped.

And I shattered.

A sharp cry tore from my lips as the release hit me, sudden and violent, tearing through every inch of me. My nails dug into Darius's shoulders. My legs trembled where they straddled him. The heat peaked and spilled over.

Blinding. Searing. Relieving.

It was as if my body had been yearning for so long and finally reached it.

"Darius—!" His name broke from my throat, ragged and real.

He held me tighter, one hand gripping my back, the other still locked on my hip. His forehead pressed into the crook of my neck, his breath uneven.

I felt the low rumble of his growl against my chest, vibrating through me as I trembled in his lap.

"That's it," he murmured, voice wrecked. "Let it out."

I couldn't stop shaking.

The waves came hard and fast, leaving me gasping, my head buried in his shoulder.

My scent filled the cave—thick, sweet, and sated, but I could still feel his scent flare around me like a cage.

Protective. Possessive. Unclaimed.

I sank into him.

Weak. Spent. Still pulsing from the inside out. I couldn't tell if the tears slipping down my cheeks were from pain or release or from the quiet way he held me like I was something fragile that needed shielding.

"It's okay now," he whispered hoarsely, his lips brushing my temple. "I've got you."

Is this a dream?

Or another hallucination?

Why is he being gentle with me?

Darius... don't be like this with me ...

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Warmth.

That was the first thing I felt.

Not the heat from Darius's body.

Not the fire in the cave.

But something soft. Familiar.

My fingers curled instinctively around the edge of a blanket—clean, dry, and warm.

I opened my eyes slowly, blinking against the soft light.

The cave ceiling was gone.

So was the fire.

The rain.

Darius.

Everything.

I was back in my room.

The pale curtains moved gently with the breeze. A faint golden glow from the morning sun poured through the window. I couldn't hear the storm anymore.

Just the distant rustle of leaves, birds, and the stillness of a new day.

Had it all been a dream?

I sat up, my heartbeat quickening as I looked around.

Then I saw it—the familiar duffel bag beside Darius's coat.

No... it wasn't a dream.

It really happened.

I was in the forest, lost, and Darius found me.

We were in a cave, and...

I swallowed hard, unable to finish the thought even in my own mind.

My cheeks flushed as the final memory surfaced.

Now that I was no longer lost in the haze of heat, shame began crawling up my skin at the thought of what I'd done—on top of him.

I pressed a hand to my chest, breathing shallow.

Then I noticed it.

My hands, now bandaged with care, ached faintly, but the pain had dulled. Even my ankle was wrapped neatly.

I snapped out of my thoughts when a knock came at the door.

Before I could respond, it creaked open, and Dianne burst inside.

"Elira!" she gasped, rushing toward me like she hadn't breathed since yesterday. Her arms wrapped around me, tight but careful.

Her scent, which felt like home, safety, and wildflowers, was almost

enough to make me cry.

Behind her came Damon, and Sera—Darius's sister, trailed in last, arms crossed as she leaned casually against the doorframe.

"You scared me again!" Dianne scolded, pulling back enough to look me over, her brows furrowed with worry and frustration. "What were you thinking? You should've listened. You shouldn't have pushed through with that training—that test!"

"Dianne..." I breathed as she sat beside me, wrapping her arms carefully around me again.

It felt like déjà vu.

Just days ago, I'd woken up in this same room. Sick. Disoriented.

"I'm sorry," I whispered. "I didn't mean to—"

"No," she interrupted, sitting more firmly on the edge of the bed. "Next time, I really won't let you leave without me."

Her voice trembled slightly.

I looked at her for a moment, and something tugged at my chest.

Dianne truly cared.

Then, my gaze shifted to Damon.

He hadn't moved from his place near the door, but there was something in the way he looked at Dianne...

His expression had softened as he watched her.

Was there something going on between the two of them?

But the moment his eyes met mine, the softness vanished.

His shoulders straightened, and he cleared his throat, composure snapping back into place like a well-worn mask.

"Are you feeling better?" he asked, his voice neutral, though his eyes briefly flickered back to Dianne, who had suddenly fallen silent.

I nodded. "A little sore... but yes."

He gave a slight nod and stepped farther inside, giving me a quick once-over and checking me with a professional eye.

Sera finally uncrossed her arms and moved closer, her boots barely making a sound on the floor.

"You always wake up like this?" she asked with a faint smirk. "Injured and making people panic?"

"Sera..." Damon warned, his tone low.

Dianne glanced between the two of them before standing up abruptly.

"I—I'll go get your food, Elira."

Before I could say a word, she was already gone.

Damon's eyes followed her.

Sera chuckled softly. "If you want her, go get her before someone else claims her."

"Shut up," Damon muttered, his voice low—almost a growl.

Sera laughed, then turned her gaze to me. Before I could even thank her for visiting, though I still didn't understand why, she took a step forward.

Then another.

And before I could fully process what was happening, Sera knelt in front of me.

"What are you doing, Miss Sera?"

She didn't answer.

Instead, she gently took both of my hands in hers.

I tensed, breath catching, but her touch was steady.

Strangely warm.

Her eyes closed.

And then... light.

A soft, glowing pulse emerged from her palms, faint at first, then gradually brightening like a quiet ember. It wasn't blinding but shimmered with a subtle golden hue between our joined hands.

"Just stay still," she whispered.

The warmth spread from her fingers into mine, like liquid sunlight slipping beneath my skin. The pain in my palms dulled... then faded completely.

Then, as if guided by some silent rhythm, she shifted lower and gently

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placed her hands over my bandaged ankle.

Again, there's light softly glowing beneath her touch.

"You're... a healer?" I asked softly.

Sera let out a quiet breath. "Something like that."

She pulled her hands back slowly, the glow dimming to nothing.

"Better?" she asked.

I nodded. "Y-yeah. Thank you."

She stood with a soft stretch but suddenly swayed, one hand flying to her forehead as if dizziness overtook her.

"Tch, I told you not to push yourself too much, you brat," Damon muttered, stepping forward to catch her and guide her to the couch. "Your first healing already helped her a lot, and you did something with Darius too. I don't want to deal with another patient, Sera."

Darius?

"Ugh, my head's f*cking aching," Sera groaned, collapsing onto the cushions. "If my brother and Elira keep this up, do you think I'll die before I even get my full healing ability back?"

Her words echoed in my mind.

Was she talking about... Darius?

Was he... sick too?

Because of me?

I opened my mouth, ready to ask, but the door opened again.

Dianne entered, carrying a tray of food. Sorin followed her, his expression unreadable.

He didn't say anything at first, he just walked straight toward me and reached out, pressing a hand to my forehead.

I flinched.

His hand was cool, lingering a second too long before he finally pulled back.

"She's not burning anymore," he said with a nod, glancing toward Sera.

Sera frowned and held her forehead again, clearly still dizzy.

"What happened? Did she push herself too hard?" Sorin asked, clearly referring to Sera this time.

Damon, standing beside her, didn't look at him. Instead, his gaze shifted to Dianne, his jaw tight.

There was definitely something going on between these four, but that wasn't my concern now.

Darius.

"You need to eat, Eilira—" Dianne began, stepping forward.

But I cut her off. "W-Where's Darius, Dianne? W-What happened? How did we get back here?"

Dianne opened her mouth to answer, but someone else beat her to it.

Sera.

"He's sleeping like a log because of some dumb omega who lost her medicine."



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