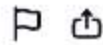




Chapter 71



[POV Neferet]

His words – *I would sacrifice anything for you* – hung between us heavier than gold, more sacred than any vow ever uttered before the altar or god.

For the first time in endless days, the fog receded.

The cold touch of Seth, the whispering hunger gnawing at the edges of my soul, retreated to the furthest, darkest corners of my mind, like a snake withdrawing from fire.

For this brief, precious moment, I was fully, completely *myself*.

I gasped as the realization struck, tears spilling over my lashes unchecked. They trailed down my cheeks, hot and pure, carving paths across my skin as easily as blades.

I could feel everything.

Every heartbeat. Every breath. Every trembling note of emotion that twined through my body like newly blossomed vines seeking the sun.

I was finally Neferet. *Only Neferet*.

"Take me into your bed, Amen," I whispered, the words forming against his mouth, my voice shaking with urgency, with need. "While I'm still myself. While I can still feel everything without the shadow between us."

Amen leaned back slightly, enough to see my face.

His eyes searched mine with a fierce, consuming focus – not the hungry gaze of a man driven by simple desire, but the piercing scrutiny of a soul

desperate to find the truth in another.

Whatever he sought, he must have found it. Because the next moment, he gathered me gently into his arms.

He laid me carefully upon the vast bed, the fine linens cool against my fevered skin, the familiar scent of lotus blossoms and cedar rising up around us.

For a heartbeat, neither of us moved. We simply looked at one another, the space between us vibrating with something too vast, too fragile to be named.

I rose on trembling arms, reaching for the fastenings of his cloak, his sash, the polished ornaments at his throat. My hands were clumsy with urgency, but he caught them on his own, steadying them with a smile so tender it broke something inside me.

Together, slowly, we undressed each other, shedding every barrier between us with careful, deliberate touches.

When he was finally bare before me, I let my fingers explore the hard planes of his chest, the strong line of his shoulders.

Amen's arms encircle me, strong yet gentle, as he lowers himself above me. His long hair forms a curtain around our faces, creating a world that contains only us.

His kiss left my lips bruised and aching, but I chased after him the moment he pulled back, capturing his mouth again with a hunger that shocked even me.

I couldn't get close enough. I couldn't feel enough.

His touch ignited trails of fire under my skin, and the need coiled in me

sharp and immediate, no longer the tender ache of longing but a fierce, consuming hunger.

I tugged at his shoulders with shaking hands, with an urgency that made both of us gasp when our skin collided, slick with heat and the ache of withheld need.

His muscles flexed beneath my palms, solid and strong, his body answering mine without hesitation.

"Amen," I gasped against his throat, kissing the racing pulse I found there.

His hands fisted in my hair, tipping my head back so he could devour my mouth again, slower this time, deeper. His tongue claiming me, worshipping me, promising me things no god could undo.

"You will always find your way back to me," he promised against my lips, his voice thick with emotion.

Then, without hesitation, he bowed his head and pressed his lips to the mark that marred my chest – the twisted symbol of Seth that should have repulsed him.

But there was no revulsion in his kiss. Only love. Only acceptance.

My breath hitched, my fingers knotting in the fine lincns beneath us, anchoring me to the world before I floated away entirely.

He kissed the mark again, slower, lingering longer, his mouth soft and sure, as if sealing a vow with the warmth of his very soul.

"This is part of you now," he murmured against my skin. "And I love and worship *every* part of you."

Tears blurred my vision once more.

"I want to remember this," I whispered, my fingers trembling where they tangled in his hair. "Give me memories bright enough to find my way back when he pulls me into darkness."

Amen's breath hitched against my skin, but when he lifted his gaze to mine, it was steady – burning with a fierce tenderness that melted every fear rooted in my heart.

He did not answer with words.

Instead, he kissed me again and not with the frantic urgency of moments before, but with slow, deliberate reverence. His lips brushed mine lightly at first, coaxing, tempting, tasting, until I whimpered and arched into him, desperate for more.

He obliged with agonizing patience, deepening the kiss until my whole body ached, a slow burn unfurling through my veins like molten gold.

His fingers traced the hollow of my throat with maddening patience, lingered to tease the peaks of my breasts until my nipples tightened painfully under his touch, then mapped the soft curve of my waist with reverence that made me tremble.

"Mine," he murmured against my skin, his voice low and rough. "Every inch of you."

Amen kissed me deeply again, devouring me slowly, his mouth demanding and giving all at once.

When he finally let me breathe, it was only to trail his lips lower – kissing the underside of my jaw, tasting the soft hollow of my throat, each slow pass of his tongue making my pulse stutter wildly.

I whimpered as his mouth descended further, and he caught the sound with a soft growl.

"Tell me what you need, sweet lotus," he whispered, his breath ghosting over my breastbone. "Tell me, and I'll give it to you. I'll give you everything."

"You," I gasped, my hands fisting in the sheets beneath me. "Only you."

Right then he reached my breasts. He cupped them, worshipped them with slow sweeps of his thumbs without any rush, his touch setting my skin ablaze.

When his lips closed around the aching peak, I cried out, arching against him shamelessly, offering myself to the slow, exquisite torment he wove with his mouth.

Yet Amen didn't stop there.

His tongue flicked over the cursed mark of Seth on my skin – a touch that should have shamed me, but instead set off a fierce, wild need deep in my belly. I gasped, my fingers fisting in the linens as my back bowed beneath the fire he coaxed from me.

I sobbed his name again, and he murmured, "No darkness can claim you from me."

His mouth burned a slow, devastating path lower, tracing every trembling inch of my stomach, his hands gripping my hips with a possessiveness that thrilled and soothed all at once.

"You are still mine," he whispered against my skin, his words sinking deep. "You always will be."

Amen kissed lower, dragging his mouth down the trembling plane of my stomach, each slow inch an act of devotion. His hands slid over my hips, squeezing firmly, possessively, anchoring me in place when my body

squeezing firmly, possessively, anchoring me in place when my body jerked against him in helpless invitation.

I was burning, aching, so desperate for him I could barely breathe.

I writhed under him, the need building in me almost unbearable. When his breath skimmed the place I ached for him most, a desperate whimper tore from my throat, and my hands scrambled to pull him closer.

"Amen, please..." I begged, unable to keep the words in.

He laughed softly and pressed a kiss just above my aching core, savoring my helplessness.

"Anything you ask, my love," he whispered, before finally leaving me trembling, gasping and utterly undone.

End *of* *The* **Chapter**

Chapter 71



Comments

1



Gifts

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