

## Captive Slave 353

Chapter 353

Emeriel dipped her fingers into the clay bowl again, coating them with the warmed oil, and began smoothing them over his shoulders once more.

"At least that answers the question of why he was not broken like the rest of us. I always cut him some slack because he lost his beloved brother. I never would have thought him involved." Daemonikai shook his head. "I watched those two grow. They were brothers every step of the way-loved and cared for each other. I cannot believe Zaiper killed Kristoff."

"As if that were not enough, he wove dark magic into my mind. Had the Oracle not dragged the truth into light... how much longer would he have gone on without being caught?"

Emeriel had her own regrets.

She had suspected him. In the past, Emeriel had repeatedly pondered how humans had executed such complex plans without aid. The plan had been too successful. But then her personal problems had gotten in the way and overtaken her focus.

I should have told you. Even without evidence or knowing the magnitude of the accusation, I should have told you anyway. Would it have made a difference?

"I want answers," Daemonikai stated in a hard voice. "No matter what I do to him, the answers must come first. I deserve them. Our people deserve them."

The massage wasn't working; he was too rigid. Body tight as iron gates.

His chair abruptly turned sideways. "Come here," he said, hands reaching for her, guiding her to stand between his spread legs.

Unexpectedly, he began to work the small buttons of her nightdress. One by one they came undone, and he eased the loose clothing down her shoulders until it slipped to the floor, leaving her naked before him.

Emeriel's heart raced. Her skin warmed, suddenly overcome with nerves.

But he simply... looked. Really, really looked. He didn't take his eyes off her swollen belly as if staring past the skin. ©W.novélw©R.M.c.©

Then he reached out, resting his palm upon the curve of their child.

"The only reason I'm trying so hard to keep it together," he said roughly. "Our young one. The unbelievable life we created together."

Emeriel shivered.

"I am struggling, Emeriel," he admitted at last, his green eyes lifting to meet hers. "The darkness calls to me again. For the first time since I returned from the realm of the dead, the urge to succumb is... strong." He exhaled deeply. "But then I see your face in my mind, I see our young one, and that's how I have kept my head above the fire that cooks me." Www.(n)OvefW(o)Rmm.com

He lowered his gaze back to her belly. "Little one, how do I hold it together long enough to face my greatest enemy? The voices are strong, and they're winning." His thumb brushed slowly over her skin. "How do I find that bastard and make him pay? How do I rid the world of him, so you won't be born into a world where he still walks? You, my little sunshine, deserve better. Better than to breathe the same air that despicable Urekai defiles."

He pressed a kiss to her navel. "I will cleanse this world of him, and to do so, I must find the strength to hold myself together during these trying times, even if I have to bare your mother every single day to look at you this closely for strength."

The waterworks came, muddling her vision. She cupped his face with both hands, lifting it to look at her. "What can I do?" she whispered. "Please, tell me."

He closed his eyes briefly at her touch, then opened them again, searching hers. "I feel... really numb inside. Our little treasure helps, but...I really need you, Emeriel."

Her belly knotted inside. "Do you want to mount me?"

"I always want to make love to you, yes," he murmured. "But no... not even to dispel the cold will I take what you're not ready to give again. No way." He kissed the palms of her hands, lingering there. "I can wait as long as it takes-months, centuries, millennia. You are worth waiting for, my radiant star. And I love you."

The world stood still.

Emeriel wiped at her eyes to be sure she had heard him right. Needing to see him. Be sure it was real. "You just said..." ww©.n(o)vefWOrmm.c(o)m

"I love you, I have for a long time," he said softly, pressing kiss after kiss along her arm. "I know I'm not very good with words, Emeriel. I only wish to show you what you mean to me." A shadow crossed his eyes. "I haven't done the best job of that, but what I feel for you... I hope there will come a time when I show you so much you live and breathe it."

"Oh, Daemon." She sniffled, her lips quivering.

"I love you, please, don't ever leave me." he repeated, baring himself to her. "I know I'm not the easiest male to love, but I'm begging you. I'll wait until the sun forgets to rise and the great mountains crumble, and I'll love you longer still. Just... stay with me."

Her tears fell and he caught them, brushing them away with a tenderness that made her chest ache. Emeriel trembled where she stood. Www.moVefLw(o)Rm.cóm

"I love you too, and I'm not going anywhere." She hugged his head to her belly, threading her fingers through the locks she had grown so used to. He was terrified to lose them too.

A lower tone, hopeful. "Promise?"

"I promise."

With a shaky breath, he pulled her down onto his lap before wrapping her in his arms again. His head found its place against her chest.

As she held him close, she stared ahead at the shelves. A small smile formed as she took in the endless stacks of books and scrolls. Her chest felt light, and her stomach fluttered with butterflies.

Hearing those words from him had set right something deep inside her. It had steadied the slight slope in their world. She felt whole.

I still wish there was something I could do for him.

A thought came to her.