

Chapter 111

"Some days, I wish I had never returned. I wish I had died that night. Being a survivor is not a blessing when one has lost everything that matters. I am a mess inside, little princess. There is a dark void within me," he stated, placing a hand over his heart. "A void that was created the night they took everything from me in the Vortex Hall. Just one night of weakness every five hundred years. Just one night broke my kingdom, my people, my rulers."

He turned away, casually resuming his walk with that same sophisticated stride. "I suppose I must give credit to the humans," he mused thoughtfully. "They managed to accomplish what countless other species have attempted and failed to do for over five thousand years. They succeeded in breaking me."

Emeriel blinked back tears, her heart shattering into a thousand pieces.

Unlike Lord Vladya, who seethed with anger when discussing the tragedy, King Daemonikai spoke of his loss with an unsettling lack of emotion. Her Beloved is in far greater pain than she could have ever imagined.

She clenched her fists, fighting the urge to reach out and offer comfort. She could feel his agony in her chest. Like a thousand daggers piercing her heart.

He paused, his gaze drifting towards a vibrant row of flowers. "However, I am a leader. Do you know what that means, young princess? It means I must bury my pain, for my people will always come first. I cannot succumb to the vengeance that gnaws at me—not because I lack the power, but because it is not what my people need right now. They need to rebuild, to find solace and a semblance of normalcy. My duty as their king is to guide and show them how to move forward, even when I am lost."

His gaze returned to her like green flames in a darkened forest. "Do I hate humans? With every fiber of my being, and every ounce of my soul. I never want to have anything to do with any of them. Ever."

Emeriel saw now, with a clarity she had lacked before, the wisdom behind Lord Vladya's actions. His insistence on scent suppressants and distance.

She had seen it mostly as punishment and an act of cruelty. But he had actually protected her, shielded her from the wrath of a broken king. Lord Vladya was right; he had done her a favor.

"Why are you telling me this?" She swallowed hard, her eyes searching his for answers.

"I have no idea," he admitted with a shrug. "Perhaps it is easier to overlook you as you are betrothed to one of my lords, and if he has accepted you, as his ruler, I am trying to do the same?"

His head tilted slightly, in thought. "Perhaps, because I do not feel that usual agitation in your presence, even though you are human? Is it because you are a Syren? Or is it your scent? Perhaps it's because I have no personal ties to you, no connection whatsoever. I cannot say for certain, young princess."

That means if we had any connection, his attitude toward me would have been entirely different.

Wait. "My scent?"

Emeriel paled. She didn't use the scent suppressants this morning!

"Yes. Your scent... I cannot even begin to describe it. I feel as though I have caught that scent before, but I cannot recall where or when. All I know is that it calls to me."

In the blink of an eye, he closed the distance between them, his eyes blazing. He was looking at her with that penetrating gaze again, his presence overwhelming her senses.

"Can I scent you?"

"Huh?" Emeriel gasped, breathless. His fragrance, a potent blend of masculine power, surrounded her, filling her nostrils, making her head spin. He was a towering figure, filling her vision and senses. At that moment, her entire world narrowed down to this one man.

And heavens help her, she was already baring her neck for him, offering it to him, her breath quickening.

"I wish to scent you," King Daemonikai admitted, his eyes burning into hers. "You are betrothed, and I should not do this. But I want to, young princess. Your scent calls to me, and it is both distracting and intoxicating. I need to scent you. May I?"

This is a bad idea, Emeriel. A very bad idea.

But her body had already made the decision. "Y-yes," she whispered, "Okay."

In an instant, he buried his nose in the crook of her neck, inhaling deeply.

An embarrassingly loud moan escaped Emeriel's lips. Her eyes fluttered closed, head tilting to offer him better access.

He inhaled again and again, each breath a deep, hungry pull. As if he wanted to absorb every molecule of her scent. A low rumble vibrated in his chest, a sound so familiar that her eyes watered.

He's mine. My Beloved.

She whimpered, pressing herself closer to him, her body molding against his hard, muscled frame as she simply held on, losing herself to the sensation of his nose and lips against her neck.

Finally, he pulled away, and Emeriel forced her heavy eyelids open. There was a subtle easing of tension in his demeanor that wasn't there before.

"B-Better?" she asked, her voice husky with desire. Her body tingled everywhere, filled with warmth. Her breasts felt heavy, and her nipples taut.

He gave a nod. "I appreciate that," he replied, his voice regaining its polite tone. "I feel much better now."

That makes one of us.

She had never imagined a simple scenting could ignite such a potent response inside her. I hope to heaven I don't become aroused, because he would smell it.

.....

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

Moments later, they entered the garden's shed. A small, cozy enclosure filled with gardening tools and various supplies.

Daemonikai had spoken the truth when he said he felt better. In fact, he felt more at ease than he had in weeks.

Yet, the craving for her scent lingered, a persistent ache in his senses. He wanted to bury his nose there once more. For hours on end.

His own thoughts surprised him. He had never been particularly obsessed with scenting. It was a natural act for his people, an everyday occurrence.

As the grand king, he offered comfort by scenting the hands of his subjects or allowing them to scent his. It was a simple gesture, nothing more. Until now.

Of course, he had loved Evie's scent, and his sons' as well. But as he searched his memories, he couldn't recall ever feeling such a burning desire to scent someone for hours. Except perhaps during Evie's heats, which didn't count. Heat and rut amplified their animal instincts, driving them to irrational actions.

However, with this young princess, he wanted. Needed to stuff his nose right there for days and fill his lungs with her scent.

"This place was recently rebuilt," her voice echoed softly as she explained, her back to him. "Although the roof isn't finished yet—oh!" she gasped as he spun her around and buried his face in her neck.

This time, he did not ask, he took.