

## Chapter 16

"Amiera," I hear Adam shout. I can listen to the urgency in his voice, but I can't pay any attention to it. The burning sensation is growing with each passing second, and that's the only thing that my body is focused on. It's consuming me and swallowing me whole, unlike anything I've ever felt in my entire life. It's too much for my tiny body to handle, and I can't stop what happens next, even if I wanted to.

"Adam!" I scream. "My body feels like it's on fire!"

I don't know what to do to stop the pain, it hurts everywhere, and I just want it to stop. I need someone to make it all go away. I need it to leave now; I didn't want to feel this way; this was torture.

"Please," I cry through the pain. "Please stop the pain."

I blink a couple of times to see multiple emotions bombard Adam's face. I can't tell what he's thinking but it could just be because I'm distracted.

Why isn't he doing anything? Why isn't he trying to help me?

"ADAM!" I scream louder this time.

Something seems to snap in him before he grabs me and strolls with me in his arms out the door. I don't know where he's carrying me as he pushes open another door and then another. He stops somewhere, but I'm in too much pain to realize where.

My eyes widen when I hear a shower start, and they almost pop out of my head when he puts me down and throws his shirt over his head.

I'm in too much pain to ask him to stop, but I also don't know whether or not I want him to. It's a wonder that my mind could still think like this despite all of the pain it's in.

He grabs me by my waist and places me under the water with him. My hands are against his bare chest, and the water is clouding my eyes as it flows down my head and throughout my entire body.

I don't know what's happening between us, but I know that I never want it to stop, not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

The water flowing throughout my body helps cool the blazing fire inside me, but I don't think that's the real reason. Somehow I know that it's Adam's presence that's cooling the flames. I don't know how I know this, but I do.

I think that he does too. He somehow knows that I'll need him like this, the only way that I could feel any relief. How does he know this? Why do I feel like he understands me better than anyone else does?

I had so many questions and zero answers. I wanted the answers so severely, but more than that, I wanted this man in front of me.

My lips part when he grasps my face in his hands and slowly drags them down my neck. My body goes stiff when

he pulls his hand even lower until he reaches the sides of my breasts. I swear I hear him drag in a breath, but I don't think I heard him right. Adam hardly shows any emotion. I clench my thighs when he continues to lower his hands across my tummy and then to my hips.

Everywhere his hands' touch, the fire completely disappears. It's almost as though his hands are magic.

I'm breathing hard when he gets down to his knees in front of me and continues to drag his hands down. I feel my body jump when he reaches my thighs. I don't know what I want, but I definitely don't want him to stop. I'm craving something, and I don't know how to ask him for it.

I close my eyes when he grazes past my most sensitive spot. To my disappointment, he doesn't stop there; he continues to drag his hands down my legs until he reaches my feet.

That's what all of this is about; it's just him trying to stop the fire from burning. I don't understand what caused my body to malfunction like this. Was it just because I touched that golden candle? It couldn't be; a candle shouldn't be able to do something like that to me.

Does this have something to do with the fact that I couldn't create fire? Could my body finally be able to emit flames? I wasn't sure what had just happened, but I knew that I needed to get answers soon before this ever happened to me again.



Adam gets up from the ground and turns the shower off. He gets out while I stay in here, still in shock. I don't know if I'll ever be able to recover from tonight. So much happened in such little time.

I can't even mention this to my parents because they would literally turn to flames themselves. I shouldn't even be here, but yet here I am; not only was I in Adam's home, but I was also in his bathroom, soaking from head to toe and aching from the inside for so much more than he'd ever been willing to give to me.

He walks over to me and hands me a towel. Our gazes lock for a few seconds, and that's all it takes for the hiccups to start. Adam's jaw clenches, and he takes a few steps back from me, almost as though he does not trust himself around me . . . Or it could be that he doesn't trust me around him.

"I'll ask my sister to lend you some clothes."

That was another problem. What would I say when Abigail asked me why I was wearing something totally different from what I left the house with. Telling her wouldn't be as bad as telling my family, but I still wasn't sure that I wanted anyone to know about the details of this incident.

Adam takes one more look at me before bolting for the door. I take myself out of the bathroom and sit on the edge of his bed, placing the towel under me. The picture frames on the wall confirmed that this is, in fact, his room.

I was in Adam Ashford's room. I try not to do a girly

dance in my head after realizing this small fact. I slowly get up and walk towards a picture of himself at a younger age. He was always a breathtakingly handsome person. If I were to look back at any of my photos, I would cringe at how ugly I looked. Adam didn't have that problem; he has always been an eye-catcher.

My back stiffens when I feel his presence behind me. He's so close that I can feel his hot breath on my neck.

Why is he this close to me? Does he not know what that does to my body by now?

"How are you feeling?" He asks. "Is the pain gone?"

I nod my head without turning around to look at him. I'm still embarrassed from having his hands all over my body.

I have so many questions that I want to ask him, but I'm not sure if he will have the answers that I'm looking for.

"Hey," he says behind me. "Look at me."

I slowly do as he asks, and I inhale deeply the moment that his face fills my vision once more. Again, I can't think clearly. I'm mesmerized by how his hair falls over his forehead from being wet; how is it possible that he looks this good even while being soaked from head to toe? Water is dripping down his face, and the same is happening throughout the rest of his body, and all I can do is trace each droplet with my eyes; I wish that I could use my hands or even my mouth, but I somehow find the control that I didn't

have before.

"Are you sure that you are fine?"

He seems genuinely concerned about me, but I remind myself that I may want him to be that way; I may be allowing myself to see a side to him that doesn't even exist.

"I know that this may sound stupid to you, but somehow I think that you know something about what happened to my body just now. How did you know that your . ." I clear my throat as my cheeks turn redder. "Your hands on my body would help stop the pain."

His jaw clenches and his fist tightens to his sides, and I wonder if I'd somehow managed to anger him.

"You said that your skin felt like it was burning. On instinct, I took you to the shower. It's not me that helped you; it was the water."

I'm about to respond to him when he hands me the clothes. "I think that you should get dressed and leave. I know how strict your parents are. You don't want to stay out too late."

Suddenly, I want to tell him the truth; I want him to know that I risked everything to see him here tonight. I'm silly for thinking this way, but it's simply the way that he makes me feel.

I blush, "they don't know that I'm here."



Chapter 17

My words manage to surprise Adam. He's standing next to me with a very concerned yet impressed look on his face.

"How did you manage to leave the house without them knowing where you were going?" he asks with new interest.

"I am. . . I lied." I confess. "I told them that I was going to a friend's house."

"A friend's house?" he questions. "Which friend?"

I'm surprised that he even wants to know this small detail. Why should it matter which friend?

He's standing closer to me now as he waits for me to explain.

"Abigail. . ." I want to tell him more; I want to say to him that she's the only friend that I have now and that the two people closest to me betrayed me. But I don't need to say these things; everyone in school already knows, and even he asked me if I still loved Bryan. He already knows, I know this, but I still want to tell him more. I want to open up to him, and I want to hear his responses. I'm slightly crazy; I know that, and he may already know this as well.

He steps back after hearing my response. "I'll have the guard see you out after you get changed. Goodbye, Amiera."

I don't have a chance to protest before he bolts out of the room. It seems as though he's trying his best to get me to leave. I'm suddenly reminded of the last time he did this to

leave. I'm suddenly reminded of the last time he did this to me. The time I kissed his chest without his permission.

Today he was trying to get away from me once more. Why did he keep doing this? Why did he always seem interested in me, only to push me out a few minutes later?

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~ADAM~

I spin the dagger in my hand, over and over again. I'd finally found her; after years of searching, she was finally within my grasp.

But I don't feel the sense of accomplishment I was hoping to feel. My emotions manage to surprise me even more than she does.

Why did I feel the need to protect her today? My primary mission was to guide her towards the candle; it was a simple test. The burning sensation would have stopped on its own even without my interference, it would have taken a long time, but it still would have stopped.

So then why did I rush to help her?

Every time I close my eyes, I hear her screams; I've listened to cries before, but none has ever managed to flip my insides as hers did.

"Fuck." I slam the knife down onto the wooden table and mumble some more as I get up.

I thought that I was more prepared for her arrival than



this.

'They don't know that I'm here!'

Why did those words impress me so much? I should not care that her parents didn't know that she was in my home. I also shouldn't care that she didn't leave here tonight with me.

Did she even get home safely? Should I have followed her out?

"Why do you look so stressed out?"

I look up, and Lizzie is standing a few feet away from me. Was I so bottled up in my thoughts that I didn't realize her presence?

"I'm not." I'm afraid I have to disagree with her. "What brings you here?"

She crosses her arms over her chest and frowns at me.

"When do I ever need a reason to visit you?"

I shrug my shoulders. "It's just late; that's all."

"So, did you get any closer to the girl that you suspect? Is she the flaming whisperer?"

I should have known that Lizzie would be restless the moment she learned that I suspected someone.

"No."

I'm surprised that I didn't even have to think twice about lying to her.

"No?" she asks.

"No," I confirm.

I wasn't ready to tell anyone about her. . . At least, not now.

"So tell me then, Adam, what was that girl doing here today?"

Her question throws me off-guard. How did she know that I invited Amiera here tonight?

"What are you talking about?" I ask, waiting for the confirmation that she was indeed speaking about Amiera.

"Brenda sent me this picture of the two of you during movie night. How was I not even invited?"

f\*\*\*\*\*g Brenda. Of course, it had to be that irritating woman.

"I'm just trying to screw with Bryan. That's all. I'm doing it as a favor to Ashton, nothing else."

I know she won't believe the lie, but it was still better than telling her what happened today.

I couldn't let anyone find out about Amiera, not now.

I would reveal the truth when the time was right.

.....

~AMIERA~

"I don't mean to pry," Abigail says the moment I step into the vehicle. "But what's up with your hair, and where is the outfit you went in there with? Did rain manage to fall inside the house? Is it as spooky in there as everyone says?"

I shake my head, "it's a lot nicer than I expected. The rumors are all lies. And my hair is soaking wet because of a little incident. It's a long story."

"We have the whole night before your driver comes for you in the morning. I mean, is sleep that important?"

What will Abigail think of me after I tell her this? Aria would judge me, call me crazy, along with other words. But Abigail was nothing like Aria.

"I don't know where to start. Everything was fine until he walked me to the library."

"I thought you went there to watch a movie?" she asks. "Why were you in the library?"

I sigh, "it was a horror movie, and I hate those kinds. So Adam noticed and walked with me to the library. Their library is beautiful, by the way. It's enormous, and there are many statues amongst other cool things. One of them happened to be a gold candle. I've never seen anything like it before. But when I touched it, something strange happened. My body felt like it was on fire. My entire body, not just the part I touched it with. Adam saw that I was in discomfort, and he carried me to his shower. And he soaked me from head to toe. . . To help with the pain."

Abigail stops the car immediately and turns to me with wide eyes.

"So let me get this straight, you were not only in Adam's room but also in his shower?"



I nod and look around to ensure that no one heard us even though we were alone in her car.

"Can we never speak of this again after tonight?" I ask her for fear of anyone finding out and reporting back to my parents.

She nods, "I don't understand. How can a gold candle do that to you? Did you ask Adam what was in that thing? It doesn't make any sense. What if the candle was poisoned."

"I think I would have died if it was." I point out. "I'm just as lost as you, and according to Adam, he doesn't know either."

Though I'm not sure if he was telling the truth, he seems to know more than he's telling me.

He claimed that the water healed me, but I knew that it was him. It's his touch that stopped the pain; I'm not sure what the water did. I just knew that the water would have no effect without him there.

Abigail doesn't ask any more questions when we reach her home, and I'm grateful for that. I didn't want to talk about it anymore. I was tired and needed rest. Even though the pain was gone, the memory of it was still there. What if that had happened when Adam was not around? Who would have helped me?

And was it even the candle that caused that reaction? Would it happen again?

There were so many questions that I wished I had the

There were so many questions that I wished I had the answers to.

I jump onto the bed Abigail had spread some covers on for me earlier and slowly drift away into a deep sleep with the memories of Adam close to me.

The next day, the driver is already waiting for me when I wake up. I say a quick goodbye to Abigail and am already home before I know it.

I can't stop the feeling of guilt from lying to my parents. I'm also scared that they somehow found out the truth of where I was last night. Still, I put on a brave face and walked into the palace.

"What happened to your clothes, Amiera?" My mother asks me, she looks highly suspicious, and I can't blame her. It wasn't like I went to a pool party . . . More like a shower party inside Adam's bathroom. She also doesn't know that I changed outfits three times after I left the house.

Oh lord, can't I forget about that incident?

You can never forget about that; you know that. It's something that would scar you for the rest of your life. Adam's touch was everything a woman would want from a man. He was everything a woman would wish for; I now saw why women threw themselves at him like that. If I'm honest, I always knew why women wanted him; I didn't need last night to show that to me.

"I wasn't paying attention while eating, and some food

spilled all over my clothes this morning, so I took a shower. I left it by Abigail. She will return it to me in school. She was kind enough to lend me this dress." I lie. "She insisted that I had to change."

My mother narrows her eyes, "I've never heard of this Abigail before. You only ever had Bryan and Aria as friends. I don't know if it was a good idea for me to let you leave last night. Something feels off about you. I know my child, and I feel like you're lying to me about something."

I sigh, "mother, you have nothing to worry about. Abigail is a sweetheart; so far, she is nothing like Bryan and Aria. They are the ones you should be worried about me spending time with. Those two almost destroyed my life. I trusted them with all my heart; I gave them both my trust, and they broke it without a care in the world about my feelings. I understand that you have a duty towards your kingdom, but sometimes I wish you could be a mother to me for once. For once, can't you think about my feelings and not that of the kingdom?"

Her eyes look both surprised and sad at my question. I didn't want ever to ask my mother to choose between me and our kingdom. I understood how being a royal meant that my life would be different from any ordinary person's.

I've just been having a crazy month; things were happening that I never thought it would have ever happened to me. First I lost both my best friend and boyfriend. Then I



embarrassed myself in front of a crowd because of them; not only that, I also embarrassed myself in front of Adam more than once. Now, this happened last night, something that I have no idea how to explain. All I knew was that this was not normal at all. My body should not have heated up the way that it did; that has never happened to me once in my life before. Even though it may sound crazy, that candle had something to do with it.

And how is it possible that Adam has the power to heal my pain? That should not be possible; I've never heard of anything like that before.

There is also the way that Adam looked at me before I left. It was almost as though he was looking at a different person. I feel as though he knew something that I didn't.

But that was insane. What could he know about me that even I didn't know?

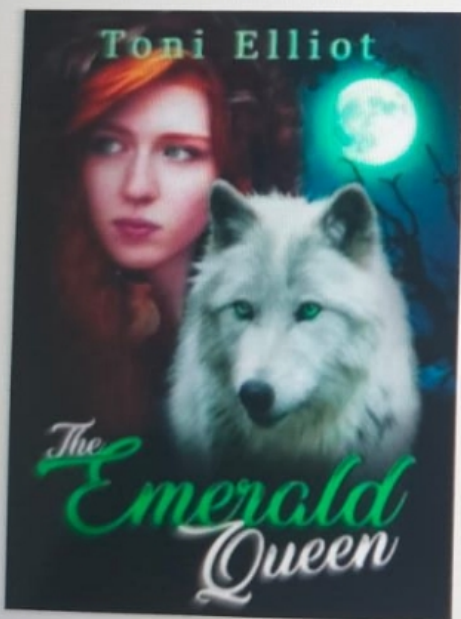
"Go to your room and get some rest," my mother whispers. "We will continue this conversation another time."

I nod and walk away with all of these questions still on my mind. I drop myself onto the bed the moment that I enter my room. My cheeks are burning with the memory of Adam's hands sliding down my body. I've had moments with Bryan, but nothing ever felt like that before. I have no idea why it has to be Adam to both set me on fire and cool me down all at the same time.

I want to ask him so many questions, but I'm scared. He

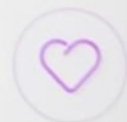
I want to ask him so many questions, but I'm scared. He turned me down earlier when I tried asking just one question. Maybe I saw things that were not even there. It's possible; I tend to overthink things.

Maybe there is nothing to worry about. Only time will tell.



## The Emerald Queen

**\*\*COMPLETED\*\***Nora has lived her life as a Maid. As an orphan she knows li...



Toni Elliot

10/11