

## 1034 SIDE STORY (NERA): CAGED

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Nera stared at the window, she hummed a song, while staring at the blue sky from the windowsill, she was sitting at. She was an eight years old little girl, who spent her life in this huge room that had become her entire world. She was not allowed to go outside and only a handful of people that was allowed to talk with her, but Rei would be a constant person, who would always come to see her. He would come with a lot of things, toys and pretty dresses. Nera liked it when he came to see her, because it meant, she had someone to play with. She also loved to listen to his story about when he traveled outside. She learned about a few things through him.

" Rei?" Nera turned around when she heard someone opened the door and her eyes lit up when she saw it was Rei, she rushed toward him and hugged him.

" How are you, little one?" Rei asked, he carried the little girl in his arms. " You got heavier," he teased and Nera giggled. " Here I bring something for you."

" Candy!" Nera was excited when Rei gave her the candies. Rei then put her down on the sofa and gave her more of the candies.

" Where have you been? You have been away for two days," Nera said, chewing on her candy." Did you go to travel the world again?"

" Yes." Rei caressed her cheeks and ruffled her hair.

" Is there a story for me?"

" Of course, do you want to hear it?"

" Yes, please!" Nera was so excited to hear that. " Will you take me to travel the world one day?"

" Of course. I will take you out to see the world, if you were already strong enough." Rei kissed her forehead. "I will take you wherever you wanted and we will see the world together. Do you like it?"

Nera nodded her head excitedly.

" That's why, you need to work on your power quickly, okay?" With that, Nera trained with her power harder every day because she wanted to see the world that Rei had been telling her, but more importantly because she wanted to get out of this room. She wanted to see what was there beyond the mountain and the clear horizon. She wanted to know what was there behind the tall gates. She did whatever Rei told her to do to strengthen her power and finally one day, when she was fifteen years old, she could get out of this room. Nera grew up to be a beautiful girl, having the royal blood and the Serafim's blood ran in her veins, she was a powerful magic user and one could see that even when she was so young. She inherited the trait of the royal family. Where the woman was blessed with this unique ability to see spirit. Not all the woman would be born with this ability, but the one who had, was absolutely gifted.wWw.мOvE1w0m.©óm

" You have done a great job, Nera!" Rei said, he came to hug her and kissed her cheeks." You are so amazing!" Rei looked so proud of her when she managed to create a strong barrier around her and summoned the Sylph. The air spirit was very powerful and even so, Nera still had abundance of energy. She was very talented.

" Thank you," Nera said calmly.

" Why don't you hug me back?" Rei pretended to be hurt when he saw Nera didn't reciprocate his hug." You used to hug and kiss me when you were little." Nera smiled and hugged him. She was not little anymore. She was fifteen years old and she started getting uncomfortable with the physical touch. Though, Rei always did the same thing. Hugs and kisses from him started to make Nera a little bit uncomfortable. However, she tried not to show it because she knew that Rei would get upset.

"I have another good news, do you want to hear it?" Rei asked as they walked back to the house. It was only three years ago where he allowed Nera to go out of her bedroom, because of how powerful she became, she would destroy her room if she used her power there.

" What is it?"

"I have to visit Karam continent and I will take you with me, we will start traveling around the world. Do you like it?" Rei asked enthusiastically and he wished to see the same reaction from Nera.

However, she grew up to be so calm and only nodded while smiling. "

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" Don't you feel excited?" Rei asked because he didn't like how lukewarm her response was to the news.

" Yes, I love it." Rei still didn't like this reaction, but he didn't say anything. However, two days later, he canceled their trip. He came to see Nera and tell her directly about that. His reason was because she was not ready to see the world. Yet, Nera was not dumb to know the real reason why Rei canceled it. This must be because she didn't react the way he expected her to be.

" Let's go another time, okay?" He said with comforting tone, though Nera could see there was this flicker of excitement in his eyes when he saw the disappointed look in her eyes.

" Okay." Nera kept her expression neutral. She didn't know when it started, but she didn't feel the same excitement that she felt when she was little whenever she saw Rei, or maybe because she was not that young little girl anymore, who knew nothing about what Rei was doing whenever he was away. Yes. Nera knew it. She could see spirit, but not only that, she could communicate with them. Those spirits told her more stories than what Rei had told her. The story that she didn't want to believe, but spirits didn't have any hidden agenda. They told her what they saw... Probably around that time, she slowly changed her view on Rei. The spirits didn't like Rei too, they wouldn't come to see her when he was around and they asked Nera to not tell him about their meeting. They didn't want Rei to know that she had this ability and Nera listened to them.

" Let's go another day, okay?" Rei kissed her cheeks and then left. Nera walked back to her bed and lay down, while staring at the ceiling. She was so young, but there was a lot in her mind. And what Rei said about ' another day' turned into years. Nera was nineteen when she finally managed to see what laid behind the gates. It was a town, full of life, there were so many peoples. The streets were so crowded and Rei held her hand tightly, so she wouldn't get lost.wWw.N0v.!(w)rRm.CóM

" Stay close with me. Don't wonder around. Hold my hand."

" Okay." It was new thing for Nera to see so many people there. She had heard about it from Rei's story and what the spirits told her, but this was the first time she saw it with her own eyes and for the first time also, Nera was genuinely happy and Rei could see it. That night, they stayed in an inn, where Rei got them one room with a big bed for them and this made Nera was slightly uncomfortable.

" Why? You used to fall asleep with me, while I was telling you a story when you were little?" Rei chuckled to see her uncomfortable expression. " Come, I will tell you more story like you were little." However, Nera didn't want it and this upset Rei.

"I don't feel comfortable," Nera said truthfully, she hoped he would understand.

" You don't comfortable with me?" Nera could sense danger that came from him, she tried to deescalate the situation, but Rei was so hang up on the word she said.

" Why don't you feel comfortable with me?" Rei approached her and this forced Nera to step back, until her back was against the wall. Now, without anywhere to go, Rei pinned her against the wall with his body. " If you don't comfortable with me, who else, you were comfortable with? Is there someone else that you are comfortable with?" Rei had never been so scary like this and Nera was genuinely scared of him right now. He didn't raise his voice, but there was something feral about him, something dangerous and dark. She didn't know why she had never felt this darkness from him before. And later on, Nera learned that it was because Rei had been harvesting her divine power, which made him stronger and got some of her divine power as well, where to the point, he could summon the Sylph as well.

" Is there someone else?!" Rei asked her sternly, he looked at her dead in the eyes." Did you meet someone else behind my back when I was not around?!" Nera shook her head." No." Rei had been very careful to anyone that Nera was interacted with. He would monitor her every move.

" Good. Because you only could feel comfortable with me. Only me." And suddenly, Rei did something that Nera had never thought before. He leaned over and kissed her lips. This was the first time he did this and it happened very quick, Nera didn't have time to react. She didn't even move and stay like that for another few second, in which Rei took it as she was willing. He tried to pry open her mouth with his tongue, but finally Nera snapped and pushed him away from her. She immediately rushed out of the room. Her mind was a mess.