

“My love, you work too hard.”

Imreign didn't respond with their shared joke. Exhaustion plagued him, and he wore it well, but there was something saddening about someone who could wear so much stress without appearing as such.

The first of the cascade of initial reports from research and development were coming in and it did not look good. He hadn't been able to process it fully and articulate much to Alloy yet. All he could muster was a stern “I'm working on it” and move on to the more immediate tasks that needed doing, and endless parade.

He did not, however, refuse Alloy's advances, craving the touch of his hands and the strength of his hugs. Everybody processed the fracture of Skire differently, and in the quiet moments of the evening, Imreign wondered what he would have been like if he didn't have such a demanding job to occupy his hands. If he didn't have an endless font of ballpoint pens to nibble on while taking notes.

“I could say the same of you,” Imreign said finally.

“Oh, now I know something is wrong,” Alloy replied, running his hands through Imreign's beautiful lavender hair.

“I'm afraid this is not something you can fix,” Imreign said, still not refusing Alloy's advances. “My body is acknowledging the things I put off until later. At quite the inconvenient time, might I add.”

“Maybe,” Alloy started “and this is just a suggestion, you should take a day off.”

“Preposterous.”

“It would do you good.”

“And let the work pile up?” Imreign huffed. “Can't let that happen.”

“Imreign, there is going to be a pile of work to get to for a long time. Go on, take a day.”

“Is that an order?”

Alloy raised a brow. “If it will get you to take a day off and relax, then yes, it is an order.”

Well, and order was an order.