

Chapter 13

PRINCE EMERIEL

Emeriel carefully wiped the stained glass with a washcloth. He had been assigned to clean the fourth layer of the southern wing this morning and had been at it for the past hour.

Last night, Emeriel had dreamed of the king's beast. It was strange.

He had never seen the beast before, yet somehow, for reasons he could not explain, it occupied his thoughts. To the point of entering his dreams.

But why?

It was a question he had asked himself over and over, without finding an answer.

As he scrubbed the glass diligently, he hummed softly, running the cloth over the surface until the dirt was gone. Just as he reached for his rinsing water, he heard voices growing louder.

"What about the land beyond Crystal Waters?" a woman asked.

"It is not within my power to grant you that land, and you know it," Grand Lord Vladya replied.

His tone was surprisingly gentle, lacking the sharpness Emeriel had come to associate with him.

"But you are also a grand lord. Surely you can make this happen without all those unnecessary stresses and lengthy processes," the woman whined, her tone edged with frustration.

"It is not as simple as that. Everything that belonged to Daemonikai still belongs to him. Until he is officially declared dead, no one can touch his possessions or his will," Lord Vladya explained.

Emeriel struggled to believe that the calm, patient voice he was hearing belonged to Grand Lord Vladya. This side of him was entirely new—one Emeriel had never thought existed.

Who is that woman?

Just then, the pair came into view.

Emeriel pretended to focus on his cleaning, though he could feel their eyes on him. Casually, he lifted his head and bowed silently in acknowledgment before resuming his work.

"Who is that slave? I have not seen that face before," the woman said, her footsteps echoing as she moved toward Emeriel. "Who are you?"

"He is a new slave I purchased some days ago. He belongs to the grand king," Grand Lord Vladya answered in a neutral tone.

"My Daemon?" The woman's perfect brows furrowed.

Emeriel felt a prickle of...something under his skin.

Not 'your' Daemon, he almost shouted.

Wait. What in the lights was wrong with him? Emeriel didn't care about these things.

"Oh, is he the sex slave you mentioned? The one you bought for my Daemon's pleasure? To fulfill his beast's lust?" She paused, tilting her head as she surveyed Emeriel. "I thought you would get a female for that purpose."

A sex slave? Emeriel resented being labeled as such.

He took a thorough look at the female. She possessed the haughty demeanor of an aristocrat, adorned in an expensive and sophisticated gown with unique, beautiful designs unfamiliar to Emeriel.

The woman carried herself with an air of importance, striding as if she owned the place. Reluctantly, Emeriel had to admit she was also breathtakingly beautiful.

Lord Vladya waved his hand dismissively. "I did acquire a female. He is the female's brother."

"Stupid humans," the woman muttered. Then, she pinned Emeriel with a disdainful look. "I do not like your kind, so you would do well to stay out of my way. If you dare even breathe the wrong way in my presence, I will kill you with my bare hands. And I will take pleasure in doing so." With those words, she turned and marched out of the hallway.

Emeriel found himself suddenly alone with Grand Lord Vladya, and the silence that followed was heavy.

He cleared his throat, asking. "Is she the bondmate of Grand King Daemonikai?"

Emeriel recalled the grand king had a bondmate and even children. It made sense.

If he remembered correctly, it was one of Daemonikai's sons who had drunkenly revealed the kingdom's secret, which had led to the human invasion.

"That is Mistress Sinai. She is not his bondmate, she is his bloodhost," Lord Vladya stated in a tone which suggested that should explain everything.

In a way, Emeriel supposed it did.

The bond between a Urekai and his bloodhost was said to be incredibly strong. Some argued it might even surpass a mating bond.

Then a thought struck Emeriel. "Is she on her way to bloodfeed the beast?" His eyes widened, his voice filled with astonishment.

"Yes," came the curt reply. Lord Vladya turned abruptly, clearly finished with the conversation, walking away.

"Wait! I need to know about my sister!" Emeriel cried, following after him. "What has happened to Aekeira?"

Lord Vladya continued walking without stopping. "I am under no obligation to provide you with that answer."

"Please, Lord Vladya!" Emeriel dropped to his knees desperately. "I just want to know if she is still alive, that is all! I promise not to disturb you further. I don't even need to see her. I simply want to know if she is safe or not. I will do anything, my lord! I just want to know that Aekeira is alive!"

The male turned, pinning Emeriel with inscrutable eyes. He remained silent, leaving Emeriel on the edge of despair.

Emeriel could feel the tears welling up, burning in his eyes. "Even if she is... d-dead, please tell me. I need to know. And I will leave you in peace, I swear!"

"Your sister is alive. For now," Lord Vladya finally responded before turning away and walking off.

A flood of relief washed over Emeriel, and tears streamed down his face. Aekeira had survived. My strong sister had survived!

"Oh, thank the Light! All glory be to the sky," he whispered.

For the first time in days, he could breathe freely. An immense weight lifted from his shoulders as he walked back to resume his duties.

THE FORBIDDEN CHAMBERS.

MISTRESS SINAI

Mistress Sinai cautiously stepped into the dark room, her senses already picking up the scent of her male.

Despite her confidence, a sliver of apprehension lingered within her. Her Daemon's feral beast was very unpredictable.

In an instant, the beast closed in on her, pressing her firmly against the cold wall.

Holding herself perfectly still, Sinai tilted her neck. "Come on, my dear. I am here now."

The beast sniffed her neck, twice. A low growl escaped its throat. Then, it sniffed her once more.

Sinai's brows furrowed. Did it recognize Lord Vladya's scent? Was that the cause of its fixation?