

Chapter 136

LORD HEROD

High Lord Herodis' heart ached with a profound sorrow he hadn't felt in decades. Emeriel's screams pierced the night's air like a banshee's wail, filled with unbearable pain, each one a shard of ice twisting in his gut.

He wanted nothing more than to rush to her, to mount the female in heat, especially with those screams of agony. The sound of her suffering was nearly unbearable.

Despite the cottage being far away, her cries reached him clearly. As Urekai aged, their senses grew sharper, and their strength increased. Herod was no exception.

His heightened senses were even sharper, capturing every tortured sound, and it broke him. He could even hear the desperate whimpers punctuating her screams.

Herod's knuckles whitened as he gripped the arms of his study chair. His erection was hard and angry, straining through his pants. His muscles tensed in an effort to maintain control.

While she struggled to ride out her torturous heatwaves, Herod rose and began to pace his study like a caged beast.

Emeriel had made him promise no stranger would touch her during her heat, and he understood her disgust at the thought of enduring another male's touch.

But now, hearing her pain, he questioned the wisdom of that promise. Was anything worth her going through this unbearable agony?

He could spare her this torment by taking her heat or sending in one of his most trusted soldiers.

Or you could send for her male. The thought whispered in his mind.

Herod understood the grand king's predicament more intimately than most. Having lost his beloved Vera to the cruel clutches of illness three decades past, he knew what it felt like to live with the pain of a severed bond.

The anguish of losing a bondmate was excruciating, the grief unbearable.

Thirty years had passed, yet the gaping void still remained. Some nights, Herod woke from sleep, missing his Vera so much he wept until dawn.

The misery of a severed bond was like losing a limb. Or a dozen.

Vera's death had not been his fault, but Herod had spent countless nights blaming himself, hating himself for his failure to protect her.

Queen Evielyn had not been sick for years; she was so vibrant and had so much life yet to live. And then, suddenly, she was gone. It was a burden no one should bear.

This understanding had fueled his support for Emeriel's decision to conceal her identity from the grand king. Herod knew the risks, the potential consequences of their deception.

But he also knew the depth of Daemonikai's grief, the raw wound that time had yet to heal. That time might never heal.

Another scream tore through the night, raw and agonizing. Followed by another, each more gut-wrenching than the last. Then, an eerie silence.

Emeriel had lost consciousness.

Herod sagged against the wall, relief washing over him. He did not know how much longer he could have endured the sound of her suffering without taking action.

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

Daemonikai prowled Vladya's study, restless. Agitated.

The court proceedings earlier that evening had been a blur, his focus shattered. He was worried about Vladya, of course. But there was something else.

A deeper disquiet he could not ignore. Yet he simply could not put his finger on what it was.

Paused at the window, he gazed out at the moonlit courtyard below. His mind filled with conflicting thoughts as he waited for his friend to return.

Daemonikai wanted to summon Emeriel, and at the same time, he wanted to see Galilea. A boy devoid of scent and a female betrothed to another. Both humans.

It was ironic and confusing. Even perpetually annoying.

For millennia, Daemonikai had desired only his bondmate. Now, he found himself wanting not one, but two people. Two humans. And he did not want to want anyone else.

Daemonikai exhaled deeply, troubled, knowing more than anyone that he was broken inside. Shattered, like pieces of glass, bleeding profusely.

His wounds existed where no one could see. They did not know how infected it had become. How slowly he was dying on the inside.

Galilea's scent somehow offered comfort, and a momentary reprieve from the pain. Her captivating beauty, soothing voice, and soft, expressive eyes calmed him in ways he would never admit aloud. And the boy; his presence was soothing. Strangely, everything about him felt...familiar.

I have had him before.

Those thoughts had filled Daemonikai's head as he'd devoured those pretty soft lips a week ago. And the sweet rush that had filled Daemonikai at the taste of his blood was so intoxicating, he had climaxed hard.

Daemonikai wasn't sure if he'd had the boy sexually, but he knew for certain he'd drunk from him in the past. He was sure of it.

The taste of his blood was exceptional, almost addictive, instead of the usual bland when one drank without verbal permission. Which could only mean he had been given permission before.

But how? Why? The boy had...willingly offered his blood to a feral beast? None of it made sense.

His beast banged inside him, raging and snarling. Daemonikai fought back, his jaw clenching as he resisted the urge to give in to the shift the beast so demanded.

A headache split his skull. He groaned, pulling away from the window.

The urge to shift had been building for weeks, but the beast was particularly determined today. Since morning, it had tortured him, biting and crawling at the edge of his mind, wanting out. Only adding to the nagging feeling of unease...as strong as hurricane gnawing at him all day.

Daemonikai suppressed the feeling, determined to not let it rise. Resisting his beast's call. What if he never got to revert to his human form again?

If not for his people and his promise to Vlad, Daemonikai would let the beast do whatever the hell it desired.

The guards snapped to attention as Daemonikai emerged from Vladya's bedchambers approaching Yaz.

"He ordered you not to follow?" Daemonikai asked, knowing that was the only possible reason this male would be here when Vladya was not.

Yaz nodded, his eyes downcast. "Yes, Your Grace. He's been gone since yesterday."

Daemonikai gave a curt nod. He had waited long enough, it was time to hunt.

He had a scent to track.

That nagging feeling rose again, but Daemonikai suppressed it as he left the fortress.
