

## Chapter 164

By dusk, Daemonikai slumped against the doorframe, frustration simmering beneath his skin, his energy drained.

Spending the entire day in Vladya's residence, he had observed a lot. Feral was like a slow-acting disease, typically taking ten to fifteen years to fully manifest after the first symptoms appeared. But Vladya's case was different, because he wasn't fighting his.

It had been less than two years since the signs began, and already the affliction had progressed at a pace faster than a person in his eighth year of battling the madness.

The vacant stares, the uncontrollable shift from male to beast, the insatiable hunger, and so on. Vladya's madness was closing in... with terrifying speed.

Though they remained indoors all day, they'd tried to maintain a semblance of normalcy. Working together in Vladya's study, playing cards, they even shared meals.

Wegai kept the grand king informed, bringing him constant updates, but to Daemonikai, the world outside this residence was irrelevant.

His priority was Vladya's sanity.

All that mattered was Vladya.

Worst of all was seeing Vladya battle his instincts. Twice today, Daemonikai had watched as a wildness took over his friend's features. Growling and pacing the floor like a caged beast. Body coiled with tension. Battling. Resisting.

Like now, he was doing it again. Fist clenched as he stomped from one end to another.

Each time Daemonikai demanded to know what exactly Vladya was resisting so hard, he was met with a defiant glare and a stubborn set to Vladya's jaw.

Daemonikai understood stubbornness. That, iron control, and sheer force of will were traits he and Vladya shared. He should let it go, but curiosity wouldn't let him.

What was it that Vladya resisted so fiercely, and why did he look so utterly ravenous each time he fought back?

When they ate meals, Daemonikai had ordered extra food, assuming hunger might be the issue. It wasn't.

The wild hunger in Vladya's eyes remained.

Shifting away from the door, Daemonikai strode across the room and eased into the chair, propping his boots on the table's edge, casually crossing them at the ankles.

"If you drank from Marilyn just days ago, I assume bloodlust is not the problem," Daemonikai mused, his gaze following Vladya as he stalked across the study. "So... sexlust, then."

Vladya shot him a glare, huffing in irritation. His nose and cheek were bruised and slightly swollen from Daemonikai's blows, but it didn't seem like the male felt the pain, pacing restlessly.

Somehow, the wild look in Vladya's eyes grew stronger. As if he truly was having a hard time resisting.

Daemonikai was done with this.

Sighing he uncrossed his ankle, and straightened. "How many females do you want? Two? Ten?"

"I'm not battling sexlust," Vladya grunted.

"And I was born today. Just a fresh youngling suckling on my mama's bosom," Daemonikai shot back with a straight face.

Vladya inhaled deeply, ignoring him.

"Should I call the maids?" Daemonikai persisted. "Contact the whorehouse? A mistress?"

Vladya stopped in his tracks, his fists clenched. A muscle in his jaw ticked, his control visibly fraying at the edges. "It's not that simple."

"It is from where I'm standing."

Vladya's gaze dropped to the floor. "I want to hurt her," he finally admitted, his voice so low. Ashamed. "I want to unleash on her."

Daemonikai's brows shot up in surprise. He crossed his arms, intrigued. "So, I'm right. There is a female. Who is she? A lady, perhaps? Is she bonded? Is that why you're ashamed? Because I'll drag her here, bondmate or not."

"She's not bonded—wait. You would get me someone's bondmate?" Vladya's head snapped up, voice incredulous. "Have you lost your mind?"

"If that's who you want, yes," Daemonikai said without hesitation. His gaze was steady, resolute. "I'll bring the Oracle herself if I have to. I care nothing for consequences or propriety right now. So, stop stalling and tell me the truth."

Vladya shook his head, a rueful smile tugging at his lips. "You hide it so well behind your appearance as a just king, but sometimes I forget how morally twisted you truly are, Daemonikai Vipertheriov Naelzharoth."

Daemonikai waited him out, his brows lifting meaningfully.

"Fine," Vladya exhaled sharply. "You remember that night in the woods, I told you about a girl I fed from?"

Daemonikai's brows furrowed as he searched his memory. "I'm not sure I— Oh, the girl who almost quenched your thirst? The one who got 'really high?'"

"That's the one." Vladya looked... almost embarrassed.

"Mmm." Daemonikai's interest piqued, he reversed the cross of his legs and settled back into the chair. "So, who is this female?"

"No one."

"Do I know her?"

"No."

"Will you tell me anything useful, so I can find this girl and drag her here?"

"No."

Daemonikai sighed dramatically, rising from his seat. "Alright. If the desirable is not available, the available will have to substitute, do you not think?" He strode towards the door. "I'm coming back."

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In the maid quarters, chaos reigned. Gales of laughter mingled with the sharp snaps of cards, interspersed by the occasional clatter of objects tumbling to the floor and boisterous cheers.

Daemonikai walked in and stood framed in the doorway. His voice, clear and authoritative, sliced through the uproar. "Who among you desires the honor of lying with Grand Lord Vladya? Step forward now."

The quarters fell silent, as solemn as a tombstone. One by one, the females emerged, eyes wide, lips parted in excitement. Seventeen of them in total.

Vladya, with all his cold-heartedness and meanness to the females, was a sensation for them. They loved him a lot.

Daemonikai pointed to five after dismissing the rest. "Come with me."

When he reentered the royal residence, Daemonikai's instincts flared. Something was wrong.

"Wait here," he ordered the females, following Vladya's scent, his footsteps silent on the plush carpet. The air in the bedchamber crackled with danger. A second later, a hulking, half-shifted Vladya lunged at him.

This time, Daemonikai was ready.

Taking a half-shift as well, he met Vladya's feral rage with his own controlled savagery. Vladya's beast was in control, fighting to kill him and Daemonikai did not hold back.

He fought not just to subdue but to reach the man within. And when he finally did, forcing Vladya back to his human form, his own beast was almost harder to control—enjoying the violence, demanding a complete shift.

Vladya might have stopped attempting to rip his head off, but he still had a wild look on.

"Let us tackle your sexlust, shall we?" Daemonikai's voice was rough, barely controlled. "Come in."

The Ureka maids entered cautiously, eyeing the grand lord, now seated on the edge of the bed, muscles coiled tight like a cobra waiting to strike. Their eyes widened in unison, and they quickly bared their throats.

Vladya was upon them in an instant, scenting their necks.

Pupils dilated, claws flexing as he inhaled each one, moving from female to female with increasing agitation and frustration. By the time he'd reached the last one, he was snarling. Claws elongated, poised to strike.

His pheromones were so suffocatingly aggressive they had the females on their knees, a trembling, whimpering mess.

Hades, these ladies were not what he wanted. They weren't her.

Even in this near-feral state, Vladya's beast craved a specific female.

Daemonikai had no idea what to make of that. He quickly herded the terrified females before Vladya lost what little control he had left and spilled their blood.

Back inside the bedchamber, his puzzled eyes trailed Vladya. Whoever this girl was, she had her claws in him deeper than Daemonikai had thought. Who is she?

"Your Grace?" A cautious voice interrupted his thoughts.

Daemonikai turned to find Yaz standing in the doorway, his expression tight with worry. The male had lingered all day, hovering like a shadow, clearly concerned for his master's wellbeing.

Walking out, Daemonikai closed the door behind him.

"What is it, Yaz?" he asked, tiredly.

"I know the girl my master wants."