

Chapter 171

Oh, my Vladya. Aekeira's heart tightened in her chest. His words might have been detached, clinical even, but she was learning to read the subtle nuances of this male.

He was hurting. More than he was willing to admit.

"What sort of person can't feel true happiness for their friend without these ugly feelings tainting it?" He exhaled, the warm air caressing her thigh. "I've changed, so much. Sometimes I look in the mirror, and I don't recognize the male staring back at me."

"You should cut yourself some slack." She patted his hair in a soothing manner, offering comfort. "You're suffering through the slow hands of a looming madness." It pained her to say the words, but she forced herself to continue. "I was reading about it the other day at the library. It helped me understand what you're going through. People lose everything they are, bit by bit. All the kindness, love, and memories are slowly stripped away, replaced by hate, cruelty, the need to hurt and destroy. The abyss of nothingness."

She paused, letting that sink in. "Not to mention your soullessness. How much goodness can a person feel when they have no soul?"

Lord Vladya shifted, turning his head to look up at her. His gaze moved slowly, taking her in.

Aekeira reddened as his eyes roamed her face, trailing down her neck and lingering on her breasts. Her nipples peaked under his stare. She made a small, shy sound, raising her hands to cover them.

But the grand lord's hands were quicker, encircling her wrists and holding them gently but firmly in place.

His eyes dropped downwards, and he stared between her parted thighs.

Aekeira felt utterly exposed, unable to hide.

At last, his wandering eyes came back to her flushed face. "How are you real?"

Before her lust-filled brain could process those words, he rose and crushed his lips on hers.

The kiss was slow, exploring. His lips moved against hers, and Aekeira sighed, her eyes slipping shut. She parted her lips, and his tongue thrust in, sending tingles down her spine.

Every nerve ending sparked to life. Lord Vladya deepened the kiss, growing more demanding, he rose until he hovered over her. One hand splayed across her neck, caressing, brushing the sensitive skin there, while the other found her nipple and tweaked it.

Aekeira jerked. He pinched and tugged, sending sharp pulses of pleasure through her. Fire ignited in her veins, liquid heat pooling deep in her feminine core. As he played with her breasts and kissed her thoroughly, Aekeira's body came fully alive.

By the time he pulled back, every part of her hummed with need. Eyes dark with lust, pupils blown wide, her breathing loud, lips slick and swollen.

"Little witch." Desire was clear in his eyes. He slammed his lips against hers once more, kissing her hungrily as if he couldn't get enough. When he pulled back, his voice dropped an octave. "Sexy little witch."

An urge filled Aekeira. Familiar and strong, like the night in the woods. Rising to her knees, with a moan of surrender, she flipped over, parted her thighs and gripped her butt cheeks. Utterly exposed.

She heard a low snarl, followed by a sound so soft, Aekeira still had a hard time believing it came from her grand lord. A drawn-out purr.

Aekeira soaked it in. She would never get tired of hearing it.

"My beast loves this. Your submission," Lord Vladya said huskily. "It does things to us."

The rustle of clothes caught her attention. Glancing over her shoulder, she saw his erection, hard and ready, a drop of precum at the tip.

Lord Vladya grabbed her hips, pulling her to the edge of the bed until her body hung on the cusp while he stood behind her, his manhood aimed at her entrance.

Aekeira swallowed, her nerves tingling with want and anxiety. The latter didn't stop her from parting her thighs wider.

But instead of the rough penetration she'd always come to expect, Lord Vladya leaned in, his lips brushing the skin of her back in soft, lingering kisses.

Her heart fluttered. Aekeira stared ahead, watching the curtains dance slowly in the breeze. Each kiss trailed lower, creating shivers and warmth in her.

Lord Vladya entered her with two fingers.

Aekeira cried out, pleasure slithering through her like lightning. His strong hand pressed into her lower back, holding her in a perfect arc as his fingers thrust in and out of her wet channel.

Oh...! Heat engulfed her, burning her alive from the inside out, yet instead of pain, there was bliss. Pleasure in its purest form. Untainted.

Moans filled the air. Small cries and desperate whimpers, all hers, as he drove her higher and higher. He paused, his breath hot against her skin, sliding a third finger inside.

The burn of the stretch tore a gasp from her lips. "Too much."

"Not enough, little bird." Lord Vladya groaned, flexing them. "Not nearly enough."

EMERIEL

Emeril walked the familiar path on the well-trodden trail leading to the fortress. The late afternoon golden sunlight filtered through the trees, casting shadows on the ground. The melodic songs of birds flitting from tree to tree were supposed to fill her with calmness, but she felt... unease.

A prickling sensation crept up the back of her neck. Like the faint brush of unseen eyes watching her every move.

She spun around abruptly, her eyes scanning the woods. Nothing but trees.

"Being away from civilization has me jumping at ghosts that aren't there," she.

A twig snapped behind her.

Her heart leaped into her throat. It was probably nothing. Yet, Emeriel quickened her pace, glancing behind her a few times, ears straining to catch any sound.

She heard it again. A faint rustling, just beyond the tree line.

Emeriel broke into a run.

She had barely taken more than a few steps when strong arms seized her from behind, lifting her off her feet. She thrashed wildly, catching a brief glimpse of figures clad in black masks. Before she could scream, a hand clamped a cloth over her face.

A sickly scent filled her nostrils, acrid and overpowering. She fought against the growing darkness.

"Got you at last, human," a male voice growled in her ear.