

Chapter 174

GRAND LORD VLADYA

Grand Lord Vladya stood in the doorway of his chambers, his mind clearer, his body refreshed. A court proceeding was ongoing, yet he found it difficult to leave. His body still hummed with satisfaction, as he watched Aekeira curled beneath the sheets, sleeping peacefully in his bed.

The sight of her there, in his territory, vulnerable and unguarded, did things to him.

He felt possessive. Protective.

His instincts buzzed and thrummed with pleasure and lightness, instead of the darkness and void he had come to know.

Vladya should have already been in court, attending to his duties, ones he had left neglected for a while now. Yet here he was, lingering at the threshold.

Yaz stood beside him, surprisingly making no attempt to hurry him along even as they ran late, because Vladya couldn't tear his gaze away from the sleeping figure on the bed.

He let out a deep breath. When it came to his episodes, the memories were always... vague at best. Some he remembered, others elusive. Vladya still could not believe he had utterly disrespected Daemonikai. And as if that weren't enough, Vladya had attacked him twice. Attacked with the intent to kill.

Then, he had gone ahead and reject every female brought in to satisfy him. That, at least, did not surprise him. Vladya had known for some time who his body truly desired, even before his symptoms began to worsen.

Aekeira sighed softly, murmuring something incoherent before shifting and settling back into sleep.

She was disgustingly pretty.

Annoyingly stunning.

I could watch her sleep all day.

This thought, like many others Vladya was starting to have about her, alarmed him. But she had listened to him. Had offered comfort without judgment.

Her words, so unexpectedly kind, so sickeningly sweet, had soothed a part of him he thought long dead. They had no reason to make him feel as good as they did.

And Vladya had wanted to share more.

Never in as long as he could remember had he effortlessly wanted to share anything with someone outside his too-small inner circle of friends.

Who would have thought he, Grand Lord Vladya, Master of the Western Clans and Hater of humans, would have a human female in his bed and, instead of slitting her throat and watching her bleed out, he would be standing at his door, late for court and obsessively watching her sleep? Memorizing every feature and branding her beautiful naked form into his mind.

Vladya huffed under his breath. To think he had taken Aekeira with the intention of ridding this lust for her out of his system. There was no such thing. Every moment he spent near her, every time he buried his dick deep inside her, his feelings worsened. They deepened.

Aekeira was like the most lethal drug, sweet and addictive. One without a cure.

A smile in his direction, and he wanted to shove her onto the bed, and pound her into the mattress. She spoke in that soft tone with that expressive face, and he was fantasizing about bending her over, and rutting in her, until she couldn't walk without a limp for weeks. Everything about Aekeira turned him on. Everything about her got under his skin.

Dangerous, dangerous grounds.

This was a heartbreak coupled with incredible pain waiting to happen, for her. Perhaps, even for him.

"I wish to stay. Take what you need from me," her voice echoed in his memory, soothing him all over again.

The girl is terrible at reining in this wild horse of feelings growing between us. And it seems I'm just as bad at it too.

GRAND LORD OTTAI

Grand Lord Ottai stood near the court's scribes, listening to the proceedings with only half of his attention. His stare occasionally drifted toward Vladya, carefully observing him without drawing attention.

Was Vladya alright, now? Was his state of mind in a better place?

These days, with Vladya, one could never be too sure.

Ottai still could not shake the shock he had felt at Blackstone earlier, the memory still fresh as the time it'd happened. Never in all his days had he imagined Vladya would be attracted to the pretty little princess. The same human girl he had hated.

What Ottai had witnessed went beyond mere attraction. He knew a strong fixation when he saw one.

"I might as well satisfy my desires with that girl and be done with it. I am done fighting my urges." Ottai remembered Vladya snarling these words to him, on the night of the new slaves' introduction.

It was clear the desire was far from "done with." Very much alive, that one. Even seems stronger now.

The noise of chair creaking pulled Ottai out of his thoughts.

"I think Lord Belzebob is right," Lord Gaff said, rising "In the kingdom of mages, their strategic position, akin to our own, provides them with similar challenges and opportunities. An alliance with them could deter aggression from common enemies."

Grand King Daemonikai was seated upon his throne, listening intently, his quill moving across the parchment before him. Due to his recent absence, he had a lot of work to do. Seeing him behind the small oak table focused, methodical, and in control, made Ottai emotional.

Just like the old days.

"It says here..." the grand king's fingers traced the lines of text "...that a summit could serve as the initial step." He looked up from the parchment. "Is that the course of action you are proposing for introducing this strengthened bond, Diplomatic Affairs?"

Lord Belzebob rose, nodding with confidence. "Yes, Your Highness. A summit would—"

Daemonikai roared.

It was so sudden, so unexpected. They gasped, some lords nearly toppling from their chairs, while others looked like trapped deers.

The grand king sprang from his throne with such force that the table rattled, parchment fluttering to the floor. His second roar was even louder, shaking the very walls.

"What is going on...!?" someone shouted.

"Your Grace!?" another voice called out, filled with concern.

"Are you alright, Your Grace!?" a third chimed in.

More voices joined. But their words were drowned out by the growing agitation, murmurs filled with wariness, fear, and confusion.

Vladya moved fast to stand beside Daemonikai. "What is it, Daemon? Are you alright?"

Ottai, too, hurried closer, his eyes darting between the grand king and Vladya, more than a little worried. What the hell is going on?

King Daemonikai shifted.

The change was so rapid it nearly gave Ottai whiplash. One moment, the grand king stood before them, and the next, his beast had taken his place.

Massive, lethal, and as usual, not happy.

The court froze. Their concerns turned to flat-out terror. Every soul present went stiff, very much afraid.

There was nothing normal about this.

"Your Grace?" Vladya was more worried than Ottai had ever seen him. "What is—"

The beast turned to him, letting out an ear-splitting roar once more.

Vladya bared his throat.

What the— Ottai quickly followed suit.

The other lords did the same. All heads tilted, necks bared, hoping to calm the beast's rage.

What in Ukra's sacred butt is happening here? Who had provoked their grand king?

Ottai was too confused, too worried, as he braced himself for the inevitable burst of pheromones.

But it did not come.

Instead, the beast turned and fled the court.

It was not his usual, calculated stride of a predator, but a full-out sprint. Faster than Ottai had ever seen the beast move before. Desperate to be somewhere else. As if nothing else mattered but getting there.