

Chapter 187

He took a deep breath, trying to release the tight feeling constricting his chest. "Aekeira deserves to be with her sister. I can't keep her here when there's nothing for her."

"Since everything with Gali—Emeriel—came to light, it's got me thinking." His friend moved closer, green eyes searching Vladya's face. "Have you stopped to think that maybe—just maybe—Aekeira might be yours? Maybe your lost soul cannot recognize her, so there's no trigger for her Syren traits. It might be why they are dormant. Have you ever thought of that?"

A bitter smile twisted Vladya's lips. "I have."

"And?"

"And it's just wishful thinking. Nonsensical assumptions," he deadpanned. "What are the chances of two Soulbonds appearing at the same time when there hasn't been one in millennia? Two sisters for two best friends?" Vladya let out another empty chuckle. "None, Daemon. Absolutely none."

Daemonikai looked away, his expression tightening. "She might still be a compatible soul. A bondmate."

"I've gone through countless failed bondings," Vladya said. "In all of them, I was sure the female was mine. I loved them, cherished them, and some, my beast completely adored. Yet, they all failed. With Aekeira... it's different. It's not cheesy, or fluffy like the others. It's dark, all-consuming."

"I do not understand."

"I want to possess her." Vladya's eyes darkened. "I want to kill any male who has ever seen her smile, Urekai or human, because I want her to smile for me and only me. To tie her up in my room so she exists for me alone. To bury my cock so deep in her for days on end she becomes useless to society, functioning only for me. I want to bury my fangs in her neck and mark her thoroughly so all she sees, all she hears, and all she knows, is me."

"That's... a bit too much information," Daemonikai winced, scrunching his face.

"There's nothing 'love-y' about my feelings for Aekeira, trust me," Vladya grumbled, looking away.

"That was intense. Even your voice changed... your whole demeanor." Wonder lit in Daemonikai's eyes, and he cocked his head to study Vladya better. "There's definitely something there. I'd like to believe it's your lost soul and you teetering on madness, feeding you those thoughts."

"And how long are we supposed to milk that cow?" Vladya snapped, frustrated. "Not everything is caused by my deteriorating mind or soullessness. Aekeira is not Syren, Daemon. I have been intimate with her more than once. There is not the slightest sign of it." His jaw tightened. "My semen burns her."

Daemonikai grimaced. "Okay, you might have a point."

"I know I do." He let out a breath. "Do you know how I survived countless failed bondings and still manage to hold out for centuries?" Vladya smiled. It felt strained, too heavy on his face. "I learned to stop hoping. Stop living in delusions and face the reality. It's the expectation that kills you, not the outcome."

Daemonikai's hand came to rest on Vladya's shoulder. "So you will simply let Aekeira go then?"

Vladya shrugged.

Daemonikai's lips thinned. "You think I do not see how much this girl helps you keep it together? She fills a need, Vladya. And as obsessed as I am with your recovery, do not think for a second that I wouldn't make sure she remains here."

Vladya arched an eyebrow and snorted. "Oh, look who it is! The hypocrite himself."

"You little shit."

"Don't think I do not see it either. Emeriel calms you. She soothes your soul and takes away your pain and grief," Vladya retorted bluntly. "I watched the two of you for months while you were still feral. Don't act like I don't know what she does for you. If you had all your memories, you would understand exactly what I mean."

Vladya paused, his eyes narrowing slightly. "And as obsessed as I am with your recovery, do not think I wouldn't fight to make sure she stays for you."

Daemonikai's glared at him, hearing his own words parroted back.

"Either they both go, or they both stay," Vladya clucked his tongue. "Besides, it's cruel to separate them. You have never seen them together, so you wouldn't understand, but I have. It would break their hearts."

"Fine. Aekeira goes with her." Daemonikai let out a long, deep breath, resigned. He took a step back. "I hope you do not regret this."

Vladya rolled his eyes, exaggeratedly. "Look who it is, Pot. It's your dear friend, Kettle, again."

"Save your snark for the likes of Zaiper, not me," Daemonikai shot back, slapping the back of his head.

"You're just old, ancient one." Vladya smiled broadly, revealing all his teeth. "Humor goes right over your head my friend."

Daemonikai only shook his head as Vladya turned and whistled a cheerful tune leaving the room.

Only once outside did Vladya allow himself to deflate.

His smile vanished, and the cold crept in.

It's for the best.

GRAND LORD ZAIPER

"It is not enough the girl is going scot-free after deceiving the entire council; now she gets to be released from captivity?" Zaiper slammed the goblet down after gulping the ale. The burn down his throat soothed him, if only slightly.

Four of them were seated at a round table in the dimly lit tavern, three high lords and Zaiper himself. His flagon was nearly empty again. His third one of the night, yet, to his annoyance, it didn't seem like he would be getting intoxicated any time soon.

Belzebob sighed, his hand lazily swirling the drink in his own goblet before taking a long sip. "Well, I understand the grand king. All of this must not have been easy for him."

"Losing his family, losing his mind, then waking up to realize there's a human Soulbond waiting to replace everything you lost." Gaff poured more ale into his goblet. "He's a good male. I will kill her myself and be done with it."

"You can't do it, she's a Soulbond," Jakal chimed in. "It's like killing the one person in the entire universe who was created for you and you alone," he sighed wistfully. "I wonder what that feels like."