

## Chapter 21

MERILYN

Merilyn cast a pitying look at her master, her eyes full of pleading. "Oh, Vlad, you do not need to kill humans as well. I understand your pain more than anyone else—"

"She is not dead; she is merely asleep," Vladya interrupted.

Relief swept through her as she turned back to the motionless figure, studying it closely. It was then that she noticed the gentle rise and fall of the woman's chest. "Asleep. Good, that is a relief."

Vladya's eyes locked onto hers. "Let us get something straight, Merl. If I wanted to kill a human female, she would already be dead. And let me tell you, I would do it with a smile, and I would sleep peacefully—perhaps even better."

He paused briefly. "The only reason I have not killed her, or others, is because I have not felt like it. I simply have no desire to... yet."

He moved across the luxurious rug, his robes brushing against the polished marble floor. "It is not because of some foolish idea that I am a good male. I am not. I despise humans and do not see them as living beings anymore."

Silence descended, stretching taut in the air.

Merilyn wanted to argue—wanted to believe he was exaggerating, that there was still some good in him. She wanted to believe he cared, even if he would never say so.

But the truth was, she could not.

The look in his eyes... It was terrifying, like that of a stranger. Dangerous. Almost evil.

For centuries, whenever she saw that look, Merilyn wondered just how broken he truly was. At times, she feared he might be as lost, as feral, as his closest friend.

Slowly, Lord Vladya blinked, and the frightening look disappeared. "I needed to keep the human close. I cannot let her wander into the southern wing. That is why she is here."

Merilyn's worry deepened, replaced by a more pressing concern. Her eyes widened with fear. "Did the grand king's beast really escape? Was it not just a rumor? Will he attack?"

"It was no rumor, but he will not attack. I brought the female here to keep her from triggering the beast's aggression."

"I do not understand. How can a feral beast be loose and not attack? That is not possible." Merilyn's brow wrinkled in confusion. "How can you be so sure?"

Lord Vladya shrugged, sinking into the high-backed chair by the hearth, his fingers tapping the armrest. "I am not completely sure, which is why I skipped the festival. I am staying here to keep watch, just in case."

There was something he was not saying; Merilyn could see it in his eyes. But she knew better than to ask.

She had many questions, but she understood probing her master would lead nowhere.

He stood, removing his cloak. Without it, his muscular form was fully visible. Broad and undeniably attractive.

Though bonded to Henry and deeply in love with him, Merilyn still possessed excellent vision. Her sharp eyes had often been drawn to Vladya's sculpted physique over the past thousand years.

One would expect a male of nearly four thousand years to show signs of age, but Lord Vladya looked like a human in his early thirties.

"Feed me, Merilyn," he ordered softly.

"As you command, my lord." Merilyn did not know when he would summon her again, so she prepared herself to serve him in the old ways. That way, the nourishment would last longer inside of him.

She undressed completely, standing naked before him. Then, despite her pregnancy making it difficult, she knelt. Tilting her head, she offered her neck.

Vladya noticed her position and stopped. He stepped closer, pulling her to her feet. "You should not kneel in your condition," he said, guiding her to a nearby wall and pressing her against it.

The deep yellow in his eyes showed that his beast was close to the surface. Once again, Merilyn tilted her head, exposing her neck.

His lips parted, revealing long fangs. His tongue swept over the spot where he would bite, pushing his elixir into her. Then, with a swift motion, his fangs pierced her skin.

The elixir dulled any pain from the bite, replacing it with the familiar, natural pleasure Merilyn had come to know over the centuries.

Merilyn moaned as familiar sensations flooded her. Arousal was a natural side effect of bloodfeeding for Urekai. It varied in strength though, some more intense than others.

"Yes, my lord. Drink your fill," she whispered, cradling his head as distant screams echoed in the background.

Merilyn was lost in the waves of pleasure surging through her body. Vladya no longer filled her with pheromones—not since she bonded with Henry—but he gave just enough to ensure the feeding caused no pain.

Even so, the natural arousal still coursed through her.

"Yes, my lord, continue to feed from me. Just like that," she cried softly. Despite her efforts to keep control, her pregnancy hormones, combined with the overwhelming effects of feeding her master, made it nearly impossible.

The tickle of his strong fangs and the firm pulls as he suckled sent irresistible sensations to her feminine core and breasts.

Merilyn moaned again, giving in to her desires, shamelessly spreading her legs and pressing her swollen, aching womanhood against his hard, muscular leg.

Blood rushed through her body, pumping faster into her veins as he drank. She felt so full—she depended on him to drain her, or it would become really uncomfortable.

In the distance, another scream broke through the night. Then another. And another.

A deep, pleased growl rumbled from Lord Vladya as he drank greedily. Moisture dripped down her thigh, staining his breeches. The pressure inside her grew unbearable. She needed release.

"Please," she whimpered, her mind clouded, her senses overwhelmed.

Lord Vladya shook his head briefly and continued feeding.

"I need you inside me," she begged.

He drank until his hunger was satisfied, ignoring her pleas. Then he sealed the bite mark and stepped back.

When their eyes met, she saw the same arousal reflected in his gaze. Why would he deny us both?

"I ache so much, Vlad," she cried, pressing closer to him, a moan escaping her lips. "Please, give me the pleasure of your manhood. I need it so bad."