

Chapter 22

He pressed a tender kiss upon her forehead. "It is the delirium speaking, Merl. You love your bondmate, and you do not wish to hurt him that way."

"No, no, I want you. Henry knows that I am your bloodhost. He understands and accepts what it means," she protested.

"But you will hate yourself after the hunger is sated. It is not acceptable, my dear," his voice was strained, but he pulled away. "We need to resist the pull. But I will help you."

Merilyn cried out, tortured. The need to satiate her burning arousal was so intense that tears welled in her eyes.

She humped against his thighs, hard and desperate, rubbing her throbbing clitoris against his leg, gasping with pleasure, her head thrown back in ecstasy.

"That is it, darling. Ride it out. Allow it to pass through you," he murmured, cradling her waist, gently supporting her swollen belly.

Merilyn cried out as her orgasm cascaded through her, like the sweet, gentle waves of a serene ocean. Her body gradually stilled, eventually leaning against him.

Lord Vladya embraced her, offering her stability and solace.

"Feeling better?" he asked after some time.

Merilyn blinked hard, and winced, "A little. Thank you for maintaining control."

"As if I would allow you do something you would regret."

No, he would not. This was the male she used to have feelings for—she loved him for so long. If only fate was not too cruel to them.

A soft smile graced her lips. "I must now return to my Beloved, lest we both succumb to this desire."

Lord Vladya reciprocated her smile. "Indeed, that seems wise." He released her gently. "As you depart, please summon a maid for me. It matters not which one."

That would not be difficult. Every female vied for the slightest bit of attention from Lord Vladya. They competed ardently for a chance to gain his favor, even to the point of fighting among themselves for a place in his bed.

As Merilyn departed from his chambers, the echoing screams continued to pierce the air. Relentless. Agonizing.

Her heart welled with pity. For whoever it was to scream this way for hours on end, the sexual act must not have been too pleasurable for her. Poor child.

Grand Lord Zaiper is at it once again, isn't he?

Or, is it the feral king?

THE FORBIDDEN CHAMBERS

In the early hours of the morning, the king beast lay curled in its favorite corner. Deep, contented purrs filled the air as it slept.

Then, the beast stirred. Its powerful limbs twitched, and a low growl rumbled from its chest. One paw jerked violently, rippling and twisting.

All at once, its fur melted away, revealing pale human-like skin.

Fingers—rugged, strong, and clearly male—twitched where sharp claws had been just moments earlier.

The transformation stopped.

As quickly as it had started, the shift reversed.

The male hand clenched, skin hardening, and nails grew back into long, black talons once again.

AEKEIRA

Aekeira awoke the next morning in an unfamiliar environment, her eyes taking in the luxurious surroundings—the expensive bed, and the highly decorated bedchamber.

Confusion clouded her mind as she tried to piece together the events of the previous night. Where am I? How did I end up here?

And then, the memories came crashing back.

Aekeira threw off the blankets and hastily rose from the bed, her wild blonde hair tumbling messily over her face, obstructing her view.

With a sense of urgency, she gathered her hair into a bun as she made her way out of the golden chambers and towards the southern wing of the citadel.

What happened last night? Is Em alive? Oh, please, let her be alright!

As she pushed open the door to the southern wing, a wave of relief washed over her when she saw no sign of the beast.

But her relief was short-lived as she beheld the sight of Emeriel lying unconscious on the floor. She was naked, marred by bruises and red marks.

Tears welled in Aekeira's eyes, her hands flying to cover her mouth as she let out a sob. Her heart shattered in her chest.

She had failed Em. She had failed her little sister.

"Oh, Light," Aekeira whispered, sinking down beside Em and sobbing sorrowfully. Her fingers moved gently, offering soothing touches to her sister's arm. "I am so sorry, Em. I failed you."

The door opened and Aekeira quickly rose, ready to shield her sister's body with her own if necessary.

Madam Livia entered, carrying a bag of herbs. "Is she awake yet?"

"No," Aekeira found solace in the rhythmic rise and fall of Emeriel's chest. "I fell asleep, Madam Livia. I do not know how I managed to sleep through the night while Em suffered."

"You were put to sleep, Aekeira, so stop blaming yourself," Madam Livia interjected. "Come, help me lift her onto the bed."

As they carefully moved Emeriel, Madam Livia continued, "Lord Vladya did not want you to do anything that might put your sister's life in danger, so he made sure you were asleep."

My sister? Aekeira's thoughts raced. It suddenly dawned on her that Madam Livia seemed unfazed by the fact that Emeriel was a girl. "You knew?"

Madam Livia nodded. "I know."

Aekeira watched her closely, waiting for her to say more.

Madam Livia finally spared her a glance. "I have known for some days now. You do not see me rushing to report her, so you might want to stop worrying."

Over the following hours, they painstakingly tended to Em's wounds, cleaning her and applying potions to her injuries. Aekeira eventually stopped crying, wiping her tears. She had let down her little sister.

Why did the beast target Em specifically? She couldn't understand why it broke free to harm her sister?

"Where is the beast now?" Aekeira asked as Madam Livia tended to Em's intimate areas, relieved to discover no injuries or serious wounds, only a few bruises in that area.

"It returned to its confinement in the early hours of the morning. Lord Vladya had the locks changed and reinforced," Madam Livia replied.

"Lord Vladya? Does he know about Em's secret?" Aekeira's heart raced as she began to panic.

"No. The beast left on its own, so the grand Lord had no reason to come here," Madam Livia explained.

"Wait. If the beast could escape the forbidden chambers so easily, shouldn't they find a more secure confinement for it?"

Madam Livia snorted as she gently cleaned and applied ointment to Em's wounds. "The forbidden chambers is the most secure confinement you will find in Urai. It is well fortified, with impenetrable metal gates and chains."

"But that beast—"

"That beast, my dear, is one of the strongest Urekai beings to have ever existed. One of the oldest. The grand king himself. That beast has fought and conquered numerous kingdoms and forces throughout the world. One of the few males in existence who could resist the pull of the eclipse moon."

Madam Livia shook her head. "No one familiar with Grand King Daemonikai would be surprised to discover that the great forbidden chambers of the Abyss land in Ravenshadow Citadel fortress cannot contain him. A place renowned for confining the mightiest of males—Urekai, werewolves, faes, elves, vampires, and orcs."

Aekeira was...astounded. Speechless.

The name Daemonikai had been linked with countless legends concerning the Urekai, and now it seemed those legends were true.

His strength, power, and ferocity were legendary.

It was unfathomable that the beast she had met was none other than the grand king himself. Who had lived for five thousand years. It was beyond surreal.

Aekeira had countless questions.

But the most pressing one...the one that consumed her thoughts, was why a male of such caliber—a beast like that—would take an interest in her twenty-one-year-old sister.

Why Emeriel?