

Chapter 237

GRAND KIND DAEMONIKAI

"You're saying his wife was found dead in the dungeon?" King Daemonikai's lips pressed into a frown as he strode through the corridors, Ottai and Wegai trailing behind him.

"Yes, Your Grace," Lord Ottai confirmed with a heavy sigh. "No obvious cause of death, either. They were slaves; it could easily be attributed to overexertion."

"Overexertion didn't kill her before her husband's attempt on my life, only after, hmm," Daemonikai entered his private residence and settled into one of the high-backed chairs in the living room. "And what about the others?"

Ottai took the seat beside him. "Sadly, nothing concrete."

"Well, I'm recovered now." Daemonikai shrugged off his outer robe, folding the heavy fabric beside him. "If someone else is responsible, I hope they're reckless enough to try again soon. This time, they will not be so lucky."

"It's time to put an end to the crimes happening here in Ravenshadow. In the past, no one would dare bring a crime close to this fortress."

"They know our defenses were weak. I was sick, Vladya was away, you were too busy taking care of me, and Zaiper was too busy being a tyrant." Daemonikai leaned back into his seat, his fingers tapping against the armrest. "Not anymore. Not a single crime will go uncaught...unpunished. I will make sure of that."

"How are those?" Ottai gestured across his exposed forearms, drawing Daemonikai's attention to the trails of blackened blood. "I actually think they're healing," Ottai leaned closer to inspect them. "They're not as dark as they used to be."

"No, they're not," Daemonikai agreed. He truly was healing. "Who would have thought I could recover from this as well?"

"I never doubted it," he said, leaning back with a sigh of relief. "I told myself, if you could come through feral, you could beat the damned soul death."

Daemonikai looked at him, his eyes softened. "Thank you for everything you did for me, Ottai. I wouldn't be here if it were not for you."

"No need to thank me, Your Grace. I'm just...relieved to see you back." Ottai's voice wavered slightly. "You have no idea how worried I was..."

His voice broke, and he glanced away, clearing his throat. "I was terrified."

Daemonikai recognized the telltale signs. "You are about to cry all over me, aren't you?"

Ottai barked out a laugh. "You know it!"

Then, the grand lord launched himself forward, throwing his arms around Daemonikai, hugging him tightly.

It's a good thing I was seated for this.

Daemonikai adjusted his position, but Ottai clung to him like an octopus. "I only meant to adjust myself so I could breathe here, Ottai, not shove you off."

The fourth ruler eased his grip a little.

"You really are shameless, Tee." Daemonikai chuckled, shifting so Ottai could sit comfortably beside him, still clinging to his arm.

"I thought I would lose you this time," Ottai said, his voice muffled against Daemonikai's shoulder. "Every time I checked for signs of breathing and could barely detect it, it killed me inside. I could hardly sleep, thinking I'd wake to find you—"

The humor faded from Daemonikai's face.

Tenderly, he brushed a hand over Ottai's hair. "I'm sorry, Tee, for putting you through that. It was...beyond my control."

"I know. And I'm not blaming you, not really," Ottai finally pulled back, giving Daemonikai a stern look. "But don't ever do that again. Don't even think of leaving us."

"Tee—"

"When I lost Uriel, I thought my life was over. But I had Morina. We grieved together." Ottai lowered his eyes. "We still do. Having my bondmate made it just a little bit easier to face another day without my beloved son."

It was the first time Ottai had spoken about Uriel to him.

MISTRESS SINAI

The arrows made impact. Sinai had heard the telltale gasp.

Tucking the bow and arrows securely away, she was almost giddy with excitement as she slipped through the dark garden, searching for her fallen prey. Almost.

She could feel the trickle of blood staining her chin.

Ukrai in hell, how did that little human know how to throw an arrow with such precision, in the dead of night, without a bow, and still strike true?

"I vastly underestimated her," Sinai grumbled as she prowled between rows of plants, scanning the shadows. "Good thing I shot three at once. At least one was bound to hit her."

Sinai would be the first to admit she was a bit hot-tempered and maybe just a little impulsive, but when it came to committing crimes, she was nothing short of highly careful. Highly, painstakingly meticulous.

At over two thousand years old, this was far from her first offense. Or her tenth, really.

When it comes to murder, she always made sure to leave no trace. No link whatsoever back to her.

But as time dragged on and Sinai failed to locate Emeriel's body, her initial thrill began to fade. Where is she?

She wanted to see the human princess sprawled across the ground, vulnerable and defeated.

She needed to stand over her and gloat over her victory. To deliver a final blow before leaving her to die shamefully, like the slut she was. Where the hell was she, damn it?

Just then, she caught sight of faint footprints. Ah, there you are.

"Yes!" Following the trail through patches of soil and broken leaves, Sinai came up to the point where it turned to crawling marks.

"You really wanted to escape that badly, didn't you? Too bad." she laughed, enjoying the show.

"Why didn't I do this sooner?" she mused aloud. "Now you aren't so smug, are you? All that bravado, and yet here we are."

Sinai followed the blood trail now, walking unhurried. As she turned the final corner, voice lifted into a sing-song mockery.

"And... there... she... is..."

She faltered mid-note.

Her smug expression vanished.

There was no body.

Just blood smeared across the grass and stone, and an empty stretch of garden.

Sinai growled, her eyes darting around wildly. She must have overlooked something.

But no, there was nothing.

No collapsed figure. No unconscious form. No lifeless body to claim her victory over. Just silence.

Not this nonsense again! Where the hell is—

"The human princess was shot!" a frantic voice shouted from beyond the garden walls, louder than an alarm bell.

Shit, shit.

Gasps followed, panicked voices and hasty footsteps, all coming in her direction.

Cursing repeatedly under her breath, Sinai adjusted her cloak, pulling the fabric tightly around her face to obscure her identity. Her time was up.

Turning quickly, she melted into the shadows, her cloak billowing behind her as she fled the scene.