

## Chapter 239

Ottai led them to Frostfall's royal residence. They entered the quiet chamber where Emeriel lay on the bed, face pale and eyes closed. Her breathing too faint.

Grand King Daemonikai sat beside her, his hand clasped around hers. He didn't react when Ottai announced their arrival or when they entered the room.

"Em?" Aekeira ran to her sister's side, taking her other hand. "Em, please, open your eyes," she sobbed. "Please... it's me, Aekeira."

"We're waiting on Faiwick. He's searching for the antidote," Ottai's voice was low as he explained. "The poison used is quite rare and difficult to obtain. So far, every healer we've checked don't have the kaizan root needed for the antidote."

"Kaizan roots?" Vladya's brows drew together. "Those are almost impossible to come by."

Ottai nodded grimly. "It's not a Urekai poison, it's mage poison." His voice was tense, uneasy. "If someone sold it here, it's likely they sold the antidote too. Faiwick is checking with the remaining herbalists and the black market."

Vladya's brows creased further. "And if it's not found?"

Ottai hesitated, eyes dropping to the floor. "We wait for Faiwick."

Throughout, Daemonikai said nothing. His face was stone, eyes never leaving Emeriel.

Vladya moved closer, standing behind the grand king. "And the person responsible—have they been found?" he spoke quietly but with steel in his voice.

"No trace, no trail, nothing," Ottai couldn't hide his frustration. "All our men are out there searching—"

The door opened, and a guard's head poked in. "The healer has returned."

The grand king was on his feet instantly. Faiwick entered, flanked by soldiers.

"How did it go?" Daemonikai demanded. "Where's the antidote?"

The healer's face crumpled. "We found nothing, Your Grace. We scoured every abode, every herb stand by the rivers." He shook his head, in visible despair. "We questioned every herbalist, every vendor. There is no kaizan root here."

Aekeira burst into tears, her shoulders shaking as she clutched Emeriel's other hand.

"What do you mean you couldn't find anything?" Daemonika snarled, his back going ramrod straight.

Faiwick's shoulders slumped, his face ashen. "I am s-sorry, Your Grace. W-we searched everywhere."

A tense silence filled the room.

The grand king, he looked...absolutely murderous.

Shit.

"We can still send a team to the mages." Ottai was quick to add, desperate to curb whatever storm clouds were building in him. "They might have the roots."

"That's a week's journey at best." Vladya countered, staring at Emeriel's pale, still body.

Daemonikai's hands balled into tight fists, speaking through gritted teeth. "How long does she have?"

Ottai shifted, uncomfortable.

"Two days, Your Grace," Faiwick answered for him. "Three at most."

They all looked at him.

"The p-poison destroys from the inside, little by little," The healer explained, nervously. "Every passing moment... it eats away at her organs. By the third day... there will be nothing left."

Grand King Daemonikai threw his head back and ROARED.

A thunderous bellow that echoed through the walls, the building, the entire fortress...shaking the very stone beneath their feet. And, as if that wasn't enough, he pumped out heavy bursts of pheromones.

Spreading like wildfire, the compulsion's strength dropped every common male to their knees. Heads bowed, hands behind their back.

The pressure so strong, Ottai went rigid...just like Vladya. Unable to fight the strength of his pheromones, they bared their throat too, submitting to his dominance.

"Calm down, D-Daemon, please..." Vladya said in a raspy voice

Another roar ripped from the grand king's throat, even louder and more intense than the first.

The stench of urine rose in the air. Soldiers fell to the floor rolling on their bellies.

"I will destroy whoever is responsible for this," Daemonikai's eyes blazed, green and yellow. "I will find them, and I will make them pay."

Vladya, with visible effort, forced his legs to move. He was struggling, and Ottai could only imagine the turmoil those pheromones were wreaking on his half-mad beast.

"Your Grace," Vladya's voice was strained, "please control it. Don't lose control in here. Please think of Emeriel."

Ottai, breathing through the pulsing pain in his skull, forced himself closer as well. "I'll prepare the men for the journey to Mysticaria, Your Grace. We will ride all night and day, without stopping, without resting, until we reach the mages. We will return with the antidote."

"By then, her grave will be cold." Daemonikai glared at him, sneering.

Everywhere went as quiet as a tomb.

"Get out, all of you!" he barked, his body practically vibrating with rage.

Rising to their feet, the healer and soldiers scrambled out, leaving only the grand rulers and a sobbing Aekeira in the room.

Daemonikai gripped his head, face hardened, stomping from one end to another like a caged bull.

It had been so long since Ottai saw him lose his ever-present control like this. The sight was jarring. And botherline terrifying. What if he went feral again?

Daemonikai stopped, and glared at the bed. Some of the wildness left his eyes.

Walking to her, he bent over, unwrapping the dressing around Emeriel's wound.

"It's turning green." He said gravely, examining the infected flesh, "It's spreading fast. she doesn't have a week."

"Daemon—" Ottai began.

"This poison needs to be removed." His tone demanded no argument.

"Too dangerous," Vladya cut in. "Please, think this through."

Daemonikai looked at him, his eyes narrowed. "I haven't said anything yet."

"I know what you're thinking," Vladya insisted. "Don't do it."

The yellow in his eyes receded completely, and even his stance relaxed. All the tension drained from him in a second.

What was going on?

Daemonikai straightened, and for the first time that evening, he faced his oldest friend.

Vladya's lips curved into a faint smile. "Hey, old man. How have you been?"

The hard lines on the grand king's face eased. Stepping away from the bed, he walked to Vladya, eyes sweeping over him, taking in every detail. He paused at his friend's paw-like hand.

Vladya self-consciously flexed his clawed hand. "Yeah, it's—" His eyes fell on Daemonikai's own arm, where the trails of blackened blood were still visible.

"Daemon..." Vladya's tone held a hint of concern.

Daemonikai pulled him into a bone-crushing hug. Vladya returned it, squeezing back with equal force.

"You've come so far," the grand king stated. "Thank you for fighting so hard."

Vladya let out a rough chuckle. "I could say the same for you," he muttered. "Who else but you would journey to the spirit world and come back?"

"A few have," Daemonikai grunted.

"You live a dangerous life, old man," Vladya cleared his throat, pulling back slightly. "It gladdens me more than you know to see you here."

Daemonikai smirked, arching a brow. "Who's the sap now?"

"I know why you're suddenly being all chatty," Vladya's tone sobered. "You're planning to use that solution on Emeriel, aren't you?"

A beat of silence passed, charged and heavy.

Vladya scowled. "Don't do it."

The grand king cocked his head to the side. "You have a better idea?"

"I don't," Vladya's mouth tightened. "But I don't want to watch you suffer through that."

His brows shot up. "You're kidding, right?"

"Then let me do it."

"She's my woman," Daemonikai growled possessively. "Mine. I do it."

"Daemon, would you—"

"Don't 'Daemon' me. I will do this." He stated, "And after this, I will confront Zaiper. And after that, I will go back to the scene of the crime to investigate myself. No one, ABSOLUTELY NO ONE, rests tonight until I've found the culprit behind this."

Does he mean his usual confrontation? Cause that was bad. Ottai winced. Now, I pity Zaiper.