

## Chapter 249

PRINCESS AEKERIA

She stepped into her chamber and paused; her gaze drawn to the male standing by the window.

Bathed in the moonlight, he was a vision of power and authority, dressed in full regalia with his hands clasped behind his back, staring into the night.

Aekeira's stomach fluttered. He was so devastatingly handsome it made her chest ache. The scar across his cheek only adding to his rugged appeal.

Seeing him now, he didn't look like the simple Vladya from the caves who had smiled so easily and let his walls down enough to let her in. With the heavy cloaks, he looked like Grand Lord Vladya.

The ruler with immense authority. The one whose scowls and sharp tone could cut through steel.

What do I do? Where do I stand with him now?

Uncertain, Aekeira fidgeted, shifting her weight from one foot to the other.

"You know I can smell you, right?"

Her eyes snapped up, startled. His head turned slightly, glancing at her over his shoulder.

"I can never sneak up on you, Your Highness, can I?" Aekeira asked, remembering two years ago when he'd said those very words to her.

His lips curved into a subtle smile, and just like that, her tension eased. His amusement, no matter how faint, undid her every time.

"Good evening, Your Highness," she greeted with a curtsy.

"A nice evening indeed." He sighed. "Lose the formalities and come here, Aekeira."

Her feet moved at the gentle order before her mind could catch up. Crossing the room, she walked to him.

He reached for her, pulling her forward while stepping back to make room for her until she was wrapped securely in the cocoon of his arms.

The night breeze floated through the open window, cool and soothing against her flushed skin, but it was his warmth—his breath on her cheek, his presence surrounding her—that made her shiver.

"You seem tense," his tone was a lazy drawl.

"I don't know what to expect," Aekeira admitted.

"Relax, young princess. I don't bite." His tone dipped, a guttural growl. "Unless you want me to."

Flushing red, she tilted her neck to the side, his nose brushing against her skin, nuzzling her lightly.

"How did the ritual go?" she asked, her voice unsteady.

"It went well. Long and exhausting, as always. We can only hope it yields fruit." He exhaled deeply, his breath warm against her skin. "Hades, you smell incredible," he murmured under his breath. "It's like coming home."

Aekeira's heart skipped. This male... Does he know how effortlessly he says all the right things? Everything a woman dreams of hearing?

"Is the night sky as beautiful in the human world as it is here?" he asked, eyes drifting back to the stars.

"Y-yes," she managed, her voice raspier than intended.

She was so aware of him. Every nerve heightened and alive, it felt as though the rest of the world ceased to exist.

Forcing herself to stay present, she cleared her throat. "Sometimes, I go out just to gaze at the stars."

"It's calming. Freeing," he said, his eyes tracing the constellations. "And when you free your mind, letting go of idle thoughts, and simply follow the stars with your eyes, you get lost in their beauty. It's mesmerizing."

I could never do that, Your Highness. Because whenever I stargaze, all I can think about is you. I worry about you, about your well-being. In my imagination, I wake to find you at the door, waiting to take me back with you.

"Let's have a bonding ritual, Aekeira."

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GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

He would like to say when Emeriel dropped her clothes, he got more concerned.

That his worry tripled at her very unexpected behavior, and he immediately demanded to know what was wrong.

But his mind went blank.

Bathed in the soft glow of moonlight filtering through the curtains, Daemonikai got a clear view of his woman's body without the cloud of a rut... and almost swallowed his damn tongue.

She was exquisite. A goddess incarnate.

He stared, he gawked... completely transfixed.

Every shred of rational thought took their leave, waving goodbye, and lust—heavy, blatant lust—came barreling in. His cock hardened painfully, pulsing against the confines of his sleep-pants.

"Fuck," he swore, head spinning with desire.

"Your Grace..." Her soft voice drew his focus to her face. She looked visibly nervous. "I..."

Daemonikai rose from his bed and moved towards her. Slow and stalking, like a predator.

Emeriel's eyes flickered downward, landing on the unmistakable bulge in his pants and went wide. They darted back to his face, her cheeks tinting a deep, captivating red.

"You came here for something," he murmured in a low voice. "What is it you want, my beauty?"

Moving closer, so close that the air between them disappeared and she had to tilt her head back to meet his eyes. A vulnerable look on her face.

Not even a week ago, she'd made it abundantly clear this wouldn't be happening between them anytime soon. So what had changed?

Seeing her so fragile made him want to protect and devour her all at once.

"Tell me what's wrong," Daemonikai coaxed, attempting to curb his predatory instincts.

"I..." She wavered for a heartbeat. "I could not sleep, and I missed your touch." She leaned in, and kissed him.

A growl rose from his chest, the part of him waiting for this moment awakening.

His hands moved immediately, one curving around the back of her neck, the other gripping her waist as he pulled her flush against him. Their bodies collided, her softness molding perfectly to his erection pressed firmly against her belly.

The tentative kiss she'd offered—he took it over entirely, deepening the kiss. Devouring her lips without finesse, just the way his hunger demanded. He was starved for her, and held nothing back.

She tried to pull away, to catch her breath, but he didn't let her. Instead, he breathed into her mouth as he lavished it, giving her the air she needed while claiming her very soul.

At last, when he pulled back, she was gasping, clutching at his shirt. Her lips pink, swollen, and glistening as she dragged air into her lungs.

"The things I will do to you tonight..." His own breathing was heavy as he looked down at her, letting her see his hunger in every line of his face.