

Chapter 279

"Wait." Emeriel's eyes reached her hairline. "Coffin-bed?"

"There's so much you do not know about my kind, Emeriel. Our knowledge is vast and deep, as long as our age, as old as time itself."

"But I thought only vampires used coffins," she said, embarrassed.

Daemonikai's smile widened. "You may not have noticed, Riel, but we also drink blood."

"Oh... I almost forgot that for a minute," she admitted sheepishly.

"Vampires are disgusting. Their coffins are literal, while ours are beds designed to resemble coffins."

"Ah." Emeriel nodded, understanding dawning on her. "So, how long has the Oracle been asleep?"

"Seven hundred. She sleeps longer than most." A shadow of sadness crossed his face. "If she were awake, the eclipse moon night may not have ended the way it did. The Oracle doesn't interfere, but she sees all. The past, present, and future... she may have given hints."

"But deep sleep is vital for the old," he continued with a sigh. "It keeps them sane, relaxed... whole. The only thing one can control is when they enter the slumber. How long they remain there is beyond their will."

"I understand." And she did.

"I miss her, you know," Daemonikai confessed, his gaze drifting towards the embers in the hearth. "She's like a mother figure to me... to many of us. We are all her children."

Emeriel was captivated. "I hope one day I get to meet her. She sounds like a force to be reckoned with."

"She is," Daemonikai agreed. "The only force the entire Urai respects more than the grand throne."

A thought crossed Emeriel's mind. "Have you ever considered deep sleep?"

Daemonikai shook his head. "I've never had a reason to. I had a fulfilling life before that dreadful night. Afterward, I lost myself and only just my sanity."

He paused, thinking about it. "I suppose if you weren't here, if I didn't have this... now would be the time I might have started considering it."

Emeriel's heart swelled with love. "I'm glad I'm here," she whispered, reaching out to take his hand in hers. "I'm glad you did not go to sleep."

His smile softened, the lines of worry on his forehead easing. "Me too, Emeriel." he squeezed her hand. "Me too."

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IN A CAVE, LOST TO TIME AND MEMORY.

GRAND LORD ZAIPER

They always looked as normal as the rest of their kind, but they were not. That was the thing about dark mages—their appearance was utterly deceiving.

"Repeat your request, ruler," the dark mage rasped, his voice echoing in the cavern.

"I want you to sever the consciousness from someone's mind," Zaiper stated, leaning casually against the rough wall. "Completely."

The mage turned slightly, a subtle shift in the folds of his black cloak. "Who is this person?"

"Daemonikai Vipetheriov Naelzharoth."

"And your name?"

"Zaiper Thoryk Dragaxlov."

"What you request is a dangerous, forbidden magic," the mage said. "Do you understand the price?"

Zaiper scoffed. "I would not seek out a dark mage if I didn't."

"Mmm." The mage remained in the shadow, his back still turned.

Even after centuries of working with him, Zaiper had never seen his face. The black swirling cloak concealed everything.

"Nevertheless," the mage continued, "I must explain the consequences. A life must be given in exchange... one you hold dear."

"Razarr, bring the girl."

His head guard entered the cave, followed by two others. They dragged a young woman between them, a sack roughly thrown over her head.

She whimpered and pleaded for mercy as they hauled her to the center of the cave, positioning her between the mage and the ruler.

"Here is a life," Zaiper told him

"Who is she to you?"

"One of my best whores," Zaiper sucked teeth. "I will have you know I enjoy this girl very much. You are taking something of value, I assure you."

The mage turned, his face hidden within his cloak. He extended a hand, a black mirror materializing in his grasp.

He held it before the girl's face, its surface sparkling before turning red.

The mage withdrew it, tucking into the folds of his cloak.

"One of which you hold dear," the figure repeated in a flat monotone.

Fucking zombie. "I do not hold people dear, I'm afraid."

"Then we are done here." The mage turned towards the cave entrance, his shadowy form beginning to melt into the darkness.

"What about the girl? And..." Zaiper paused, thinking. "I'm calling in that favor you owe me."

The dark mage stopped in his tracks.

His head turned slowly. "You wish to collect now? Is this truly worth it?"

"Let's see... The only obstacle between me and my dreams will lose control of his mind again, with no choice than to satisfy his basic instinct. Going berserk, he will kill everyone that gets in his way... hopefully, Vladya will. Then, he will end up brutalizing his Soulbond and draining her to death." Zaiper grinned bigger, malice in his eyes. "I will be hitting so many birds with one stone. Trust me, it's very worth it."

The more he thought about it, the more excited he became. "It will look so natural. Everyone knows his mind is fragile; no one will ever suspect dark magic."

The mage regarded him in silence for a long moment. "You saved me when my people were going to burn me alive for practicing dark magic. And for that, I have helped you for centuries."

Zaiper gave a firm nod.

"I helped you plant the false memory in the drunk child's mind, making him believe he gave away the secret of your people to the humans which led to the attack. I helped you bring down your own kingdom." The mage paused, his unseen eyes boring into Zaiper. "And now you request mind disintegration for Urai's First Ruler?"

"Yes," Zaiper hissed, impatient.

"The girl's life and my arm should suffice," the mage said. "My arm will be paralyzed for a month if the magic succeeds. But after this, we are even. If you desire any further spells, you must meet the requirements."

"Deal!" Zaiper crowed, practically bouncing on his feet, almost unhinged in his delight.

"Alright," the mage's voice was an ominous echo. "If the magic succeeds, in a few days, His Majesty the First, the mighty and supreme sovereign ruler of Urai, His Grace, Grand King Daemonikai, will lose his mind."