

## Chapter 282

Author's Note:

Dearest Reader,

If you have made it to this chapter of the series, I assume you have a strong stomach and an even stronger heart. You may not need this warning, but still.

If you are a sensitive reader, you can skip these parts and resume with book 4. However, if you wish to read on, please consider this a reminder to proceed with caution.

PRINCESS EMERIEL

"Come, Em, let's get out of here!" Aekeira urged, tugging her toward the window.

Emeriel was trying to force herself to move. But even though fear was shaking her body, she couldn't bear to leave her Beloved in this state.

"We cannot hold him for long!" Lord Ottai shouted. "We need to decide what to do before he shifts!"

"Shit! His fist caught my eye!" Lord Zaiper growled from behind. "We really need to decide fast."

"It's either knock him out or the forbidden chambers," Lord Vladya said, his voice deeper and distorted in his half-shifted form.

Knock him out? The forbidden chambers?

"No! Don't!" Emeriel tried to run toward the door, but Aekeira held her back. "Don't lock him up! Don't hurt him!"

"We might not have a choice, Princess. We're trying to save you!" Lord Ottai's hand fisted into the grand king's hair as Daemonikai struggled harder at the sound of her voice.

"What happens to him if he doesn't satisfy the instinct pulling at him right now?" she demanded, her voice trembling.

"It could truly drive him mad," Lord Zaiper was the one who answered.

"We can keep knocking him out until we get healers or go to the shrine...or anyone at all who can examine him and tell us what the fuck is going on," Lord Vladya said.

Emeriel did not like that. "You can't keep knocking him out, he is not an animal!"

"He is acting feral, we are flying blind here! If we don't act, not just you, but everyone in this fortress is in danger!" Lord Ottai shot back.

"Now go, Emeriel." Lord Vladya added firmly. "It's bad enough he can smell you—your voice is only fueling him. Go!"

She knew they were right, but seeing the way they restrained Daemonikai, the way he thrashed and fought against them, hurt her soul. Her entire body was quaking.

"Ffffuck! He got my damn nose!" Lord Zaiper roared, and angrily headbutted Daemonikai from behind.

The grand king retaliated immediately, slamming his head into Zaiper's so hard the impact echoed around them.

Lord Ottai and Lord Vladya winced while Lord Zaiper clutched his head and roared again in pain.

"That's going to hurt like a bitch," Lord Ottai grimaced.

Emeriel snapped her hand out of her sister's grasp and rushed to them, ignoring their shouts to stay back.

"Let him go!" she cried, shoving at Lord Vladya blindly. "Let him go, all of you!"

Her instincts screamed at her to protect him. Rationally, she knew it was the others who needed protection from the mindless, powerful king. But her brain didn't care.

"Stop hurting him! Let him go!" she screamed, forcing herself between Lord Vladya and Daemonikai.

The grand lord had no choice but to release Daemonikai to avoid hurting her.

"Whatever you're thinking, it's a very bad idea," Lord Ottai warned.

Daemonikai's arms went around her immediately, holding her in a fierce, possessive embrace as he began walking her backward into the room.

Seeing the opportunity, Aekeira slipped past them and bolted for the door. Lord Vladya lunged, catching her as she reached the doorway and holding her securely to him.

Then he turned, his gaze locking onto Emeriel. "Don't do this, Emeriel. Don't."

Emeriel tried to peer around his wide arm. "I'm the one he wants, isn't it? There's no need for everyone else to get hurt."

Her Beloved's grip tightened possessively on her butt, digging his claws into her skin in a way that was both painfully sexual and raw.

She bit her lip hard against the sting.

"Don't make him do this, Emeriel," Lord Vladya implored, shaking his head. "He will never forgive himself for it."

She blinked back tears, managing a faint, pained smile. "Just like he would never forgive himself for hurting you... or you..." Her eyes flicked between Vladya and Lord Ottai. Even toward Lord Zaiper, whose face was already swollen. "You once told me no one who values their life gets between a Urekai predator and his prey."

"Yes, but then I was unwilling to risk anything. I barely cared about anything." Vladya's voice was strained, filled with urgency. "Now I'm willing to risk it all. Just say the word, and I will come in there and get you, no matter the cost."

The sound of her garment tearing was loud in the chamber. A tear rolled down her cheek.

"Emeriel, please." Lord Ottai added fastly. "He will really hurt you."

"I can't let him suffer. I don't want him imprisoned again." Emeriel glanced at unfocused eyes as another tear escaped. "He is mine, and I'm not forsaking him in a time like this. Never again. Now close the door!"

"You don't understand—he may kill you, Emeriel!" Vladya shouted.

Behind him, Aekeira was sobbing. "Please, listen to them, Em!"

"I took him before when he was like this—"

"It's not the same!" Lord Ottai interjected sharply. "You were in heat then. His beast still recognized you. This isn't recognition, it's pure instinct: to fuck, feed, and kill!"

"Please, Em, listen to them!" Aekeira cried desperately. "You remember how it was in the beginning? It's not going to be pleasant—you may not survive!"

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GRAND LORD VLADYA

He was frustrated and desperate.

His heart ached, his mind reeled.

What was happening to his friend was beyond comprehension. It was insane, inexplicable.

But worse still was his female's choice to satisfy his basic instincts in this state.

The girl was visibly terrified. Her body trembled like a leaf and her wide blue eyes brimmed with fear. Yet, she clung to Daemonikai, refusing to let him go.

Vladya could smell the blood already.

Daemonikai was hurting her, and he hadn't even mounted her yet.

Her clothes were torn, leaving her naked, though his huge frame shielded her from view.

Ottai was still arguing, trying to reason with her. "This is madness! You have to—"

But Vladya could see the truth in her eyes.

Alongside the fear was an unshakable determination.

She wasn't going to leave Daemonikai in this state, wasn't going to risk true madness...no matter what it cost her. Even if it meant going through unimaginable pain at his hands.

"I have never met a woman as stubborn as you!" Ottai roared, throwing his hands up.

Then, his face crumpled, revealing the misery underneath. "Please, Emeriel, don't do this. Let us take you out of there!"

Fresh tears streamed down the princess's cheeks, but she smiled through them, shaking her head. "I'm not leaving him."