

Chapter 298

She walked into court gracefully. Fully dressed in her formal princess attire, she looked radiant. There were no visible marks on her skin, no signs of bruises. Or pain.

Her eyes shone brightly, filled with life, and on her lips was a wide, unshaken smile.

Not a single person stirred as she paused to bow gracefully to the assembled court, before she crossed the floor and ascended the dais, coming to a stop beside the grand king.

Then...kissed him.

Not a peck nor even a heavy indecent display, the kiss was light. Yet screamed intimate.

Free of tongue or theatrics, but every bit as charged with passion as if they were alone.

It lingered just long enough to stun the court into an even deeper silence.

Pulling back, the human princess turned to Zaiper, looking thoughtful. "Do you have evidence to back up such ridiculous claims, my lord? Since when is it wrong for a woman to scream out her pleasure when her male is rocking her world?" She grinned. "What do you have against screams of ecstasy, Second Ruler?"

"That is untrue!" The words ripped from his throat. So angry his vision turned red. "HOW DARE YOU stand before this council and lie to us?!"

"Oh," Emeriel gasped, covering her mouth in sheer exasperation. "How dare you make such ridiculous claims against your grand king?"

Zaiper could only stare for a few seconds. Too dumbfounded to form words.

"Pardon me, and I say this with the utmost respect, grand lord, but unless you were present in the room with us, you have no right to make such accusations," Emeriel told him.

Zaiper could not believe this.

"What are you doing here, Princess?" the Minister of Military Affairs spoke up then, his brow furrowed in disapproval. "No disrespect to you or our king, but you should not be here."

Emeriel turned to the minister, bowing low in apology. A full, deep bow.

"Forgive me for intruding upon the court, my lords." She straightened gracefully. "I merely came to deliver a message to my king, one I forgot to give him before I overheard the topic of conversation. I could not stay silent and allow the Second Ruler to make such false and unfounded accusations."

"Humans and their lies!" Zaiper sneered with venom. "Everyone in this kingdom heard it. Call in every maid in the castle—they will all say the same! Why should we believe anything from the mouth of a human? You are the same girl who fooled this court for an entire year, dressing as a boy while hiding your true identity!"

Emeriel's expression didn't falter.

But Daemonikai growled. "Mind your tongue, Grand Lord Zaiper. Do not speak to my woman like that."

Zaiper lifted his chin, defiant. "I am still the Second Ruler of this kingdom, and until she is officially mated to you, I retain my authority over her. I will speak in any manner I see fit."

Vladya leaned forward from his throne. "The lady you claim is a victim is standing before this court, telling you herself that she is not. That she enjoyed her time with her male." His voice was almost an amused drawl. "Unless you have compelling evidence or credible witnesses to back your claims, hurling insults at her will not make your accusations any less baseless."

"And any further accusations against her are an insult to her, her mate, and this court." Grand Lord Ottai added from his seat. "As Second Grand Ruler, you are well aware of this kingdom's laws."

Of course I am! That is how I have gotten away with all my crimes, you fools!

Still... This. Is. Not. Fair.

Zaiper tried to breathe through his rage. He knew better than to push this any further—the court was clearly not on his side. Not as long as the so-called victim refuses to admit to anything.

He glared at the king and his human woman, his teeth grinding so hard it was a wonder they didn't crack.

He could escalate this further by getting witnesses who may have heard the screams, but he couldn't trust any soldier or servant to speak against Daemonikai.

Where did I go wrong?

The plan was foolproof. It worked. Daemonikai's mind had fractured again—he hurt her, nearly killed her!

So why is she standing here, smiling and protecting him instead of laying in one of those tombs in the southern graveyard!?

This should have been his moment of victory. Or at least the beginning of it.

Instead, it felt like he was right back where he started—square one.

"While we understand your concern for stability of the throne, Grand Lord Zaiper, there does not seem to be any need for it anymore," High Lord Belzebob said as he rose from his seat. "Our Grand King is hale and hearty, and his female looks healthy and happy. If there is nothing else, we would like to proceed with the agenda for the day."

Murmurs of agreement rippled across the chamber.

Turning to Emeriel, Belzebob addressed her politely. "Princess, have you delivered your message to His Majesty?"

"Not yet, my lord," Emeriel offered him a gracious smile. "But I will do so now, if no one objects. Thank you."

Turning to Daemonikai, she leaned into him and whispered something in his ear. Her lips forming words too soft for anyone else to hear.

But Zaiper caught the shape of her mouth, reading the words clearly. I love you.

Daemonikai relaxed. And smiled.

Zaiper's stomach twisted violently.

He should be broken. Wallowing in despair. Not smiling.

Zaiper was so enraged he wanted to kill something. To sprint to the nearest cliff and scream into the endless void, about the sheer unfairness of it all.

Stepping back, Emeriel's face was glowing as she bowed to court again. "My lords."

She directed to Zaiper a smug grin as she gathered the edges of her gown, sweeping from the hall with the same dignified poise she had entered with.

Zaiper could not form words.

This is so unfair.

So. Unfair.