

Captive Slave 348

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"I don't know, but she's in a bad condition. The beast tore her up badly."

The distant cry of gulls on the wind filled the silence.*w(w)ur.nOVELw©rm.©om*

The fourth ruler's ears twitched. "Vladya calls me." He turned on his heel. "Wait here."

Emeriel nodded faintly, watching him disappear, then she was alone.

She stared out at the horizon, watching the morning light stretch over the land. When will this end? How much more blood would be spilled before this nightmare ended?

What does it say about her that, despite the dire consequences, she felt relieved? Instead of worrying about the mistress, she could finally breathe easy knowing her Daemon would be alright?

"I'm a horrible person." Sniffing, she wiped her tears, staring down at her belly. "Your father is going through so much. Please, little one, let's be strong for him." Her fingers traced the swell. "Let's take comfort in knowing that if he finds out who is responsible for this, they will pay dearly."

....

A week later.

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

"So, the eyewitness finally identified the soldiers he saw that night," Grand King Daemonikai said as he walked. "It is confirmed the Second Ruler was involved in the kidnapping of young females in heat. Now, let us establish motive."

"Perhaps he seeks an heir," Vladya was in steps beside him. "It's the only reason I can fathom, no matter how absurd. The male has not shown interest in bondmates or offspring in millennia."

"A male who never ceases to boast of his love for variety, yet he did this. We may not know his motive, but when he is captured, he will damn well tell us." Daemonikai's tone was cold, and he did not break stride. "This eyewitness will need to stand before the court and repeat all of this. Many speak boldly in private, yet when summoned to court, their courage often fails... and their statements shift. We cannot risk that. Have the male prepared to meet me after the festival. I want him standing before me, looking into my eyes as he repeats every word of his testimony."

Vladya's dry chuckle followed him. "If he does not faint from terror. Or worse- retract his claim, thinking he's about to be punished for daring to speak. Best I handle it."*www.ur.nô(v)(e)I(w)or(m).Com*

Daemonikai arched a brow. "Quite bold of you to assume he would be more at ease with you."

"Hey! Have you not heard the tales?" Vladya chuckled. "Our people say I have 'mellowed out' since my life became perfect. And for once, they are not wrong. Look at this..." He grinned widely, flashing teeth.

Daemonikai regarded him flatly. "It's unsettling, don't do that."

But Vladya kept the wolfish grin even as they pivoted a corner.

"You look strange, stop doing that,"

Vladya tsked. "You're just an old grump, Your Grace."

"Ottai fares better than both of us. The people call him 'the sunshine amongst the rulers,' they consider him the most approachable of us all."

"You are simply bitter," Vladya quipped. "I am perfectly approachable."

"I'm not certain I approve Aekeira's handiwork in you." Daemonikai gave him a skeptical side glance. "Where has Vladya the mean scowler gone? The angry, bitter crow?"

Vladya's laughter rang through the empty hallway.

It did feel nice hearing him laugh like this, but it definitely still felt surreal.

Vladya was still chuckling as the great doors opened before them. Even the highlords wore their surprise on their faces as they saw him.

It was the Moonwise Festival. Tonight, they would make offerings to the half- moon, seeking its favor, that it might bless the full moons to come and strengthen their kind.

Every clan was present: the heads of the East, West, North, and South, united under one roof. One of the biggest event halls in Ravenshadow was filled to the brim.

*****www.Nove©woRm.com*

The healer was nervous and awkward. He was also testing Zaiper's patience beyond endurance.

"Tell me the verdict," Grand Lord Zaiper snapped by the doorway, Razarr at his shoulder, glaring on the trembling male before him.

"She is not... n-not with child either, Your Highness," the healer stammered, his face pale with fear.

Zaiper was so pissed, he stomped to the healer. "Or perhaps it's you who knows nothing of what you are doing!" he roared, claws slipping out. "I'll tear you apart with my bare hands."

Razarr moved instantly, blocking his path. "Stay calm, Your Highness. Remember, you still need him."

Zaiper struck Razarr hard across the face, the sound cracking like a whip in the hidden underground hut.

"How dare you stand in my way," he hissed.

Razarr did not flinch, blood welling where Zaiper's claws had raked his cheek.

Zaiper stared at him for a long, tense moment. Taking a deep breath—one that did little to calm him, before he stepped back.

"They are truly not pregnant, Your Highness. I was thorough," the healer said

again in a trembling voice. The acrid stench of urine filled the air.

None of those filthy, useless females was carrying my heir!

With a snarl, he turned to the nearest wall and drove his fist into the wood. The first strike cracked the plaster The second drove deep, splintering the wood beneath. Over and over, he punched, knuckles splitting open, stone dust flying. swnovel

The roar built louder in his throat. "Why is nothing going my way!"

Silence hung thick after his outburst. He stood there, chest heaving, claws dripping blood. Finally, he spun and stomped out into the deep woods.*(w)©ur.nôvre©worm.Com*

The few soldiers he had traveled with surrounded him immediately.

Kady approached at a run, dropping to one knee. "Your Highness! The spies we planted have sighted the Oracle."

"She is back in Urai?" Zapier's lips

peeled into something resembling a grin. "Finally, some good news." He turned to Razarr. "Disperse the team we have ready. If we are to succeed in killing her, we must follow the plan without flaw. Prepare the poison roots. Ready the weapons-where is the arsonist?" swnovel

Kady did not rise.

"There is more, Your Majesty," he said quickly, eyes flicking up. "I fear it's too late."

Zaiper's smile vanished. "What?"

"Our spies sighted her entering the citadel's gate."

"What in the hells does that mean?!"

"I have no idea. They were

meticulous in scouting out her haven thoroughly for days, but there

was no sign of her return to Urai. She was never spotted on the way to the fortress either, until she was there-at the gate." swnovel

"She used magic. Send the soldiers now!" Zaiper lunged into a dead run. "She must be stopped, by any means! She cannot be allowed to enter the event hall!"