

## Captive Slave 360

Chapter

360

As the guards dragged the sobbing females inside. Daemonikai followed them, his hands clasped behind his back. The guards shoved them through the iron doors, and he entered after them.

He looked to one soldier. "Fetch the spiked whips." Then another. "Summon the slavemasters, I want scalding oil and ground chili peppers. Now."

The two handmaidens were pale as bone now. One had already wet herself, the stink of urine reaching his nose. Both fell to their knees, tears streaming down the faces they pressed to the ground.

"Please, have mercy! We beg you, Your Grace!" Nora wept.

"Your Highness, forgive our transgressions!"

"Silence." Daemonikai crouched before Nora, taking her chin in his hand, lifting her teary, blotched face until their eyes met. Her terror was absolute.

"I will ask you a question," his voice was soft. "You will answer. You will speak truthfully. You will leave out nothing. If I am displeased by your answer, I will walk away. These males will carry out my command in my absence, and I will return in the morning to ask you again." He blinked slowly. "And if I am still displeased then, you will be beheaded. Am I clear?"

The female trembled so violently he thought she might faint.

"Y-y-yes! Yes, Your Grace!" she sobbed.

"Tell me everything regarding your mistress's ties to Grand Lord Zaiper. Any conversations you overheard, any suspicions you might hold." His gaze bored into hers like a spike through wood. "Tell me if there was anything unusual about her departure the way she behaved, how she packed, anything that seemed amiss."

The words tumbled out of Nora so fast, not even diarrhea could catch up. Stumbling. Sobbing. Tripping over her words, but she gave him everything.

Some details were redundant. Some hysterical and unnecessary. But she was thorough. More thorough than he could have hoped.

Daemonikai listened without interrupting. At some point, he waved for a chair and seated himself, crossing his arms as the tale unwound before him.

Evening faded into midnight.

By the time the handmaiden finished speaking, Daemonikai's inside was a battlefield. He knew, now, that Sinai had spent far more time with Zaiper than she had ever admitted.

She had shared his bed. Often. There had even been a violent confrontation between her and Zaiper's favored concubine over their sordid entanglement. *W@®,n@vêllæRM.C(ø)m*

How when his bloodhost and the former Second Ruler spoke, there was always something concealed in their words. An undercurrent of secrets and glances exchanged that had meant far more than anyone realized.

And on the night Sinai had attacked Emeriel with poison-tipped arrows, she had spent the entire day in Zaiper's chambers.

She had packed heavily for her supposed trip. Had taken more gold than any noblewoman would ever need for a brief holiday.

Sinai had not gone for rest or recovery; her journey was not a pleasure trip or excursion. She had gone to join her partner in crime.

Laelsainai Gurtazivrk was Zaiper's accomplice.

"Wegai!" Daemonikai roared, thunderous.

Wegai appeared instantly. "Your Grace!"

"Send word to all Storm Riders, Hunting Beasts, and Tracking Sentinels," Daemonikai commanded, rising to his feet. "As of this moment, Laelsainai Gurtazivrk is declared a wanted fugitive of Urai. Search every abode, every cave, every border. Leave no stone unturned and no shadow untouched. Hunt her. Seize her. Drag her before me."

Wegai saluted. "As His Majesty commands!"

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Two Months Later

They returned to the kingdom at the first light of dawn.

Grand King Daemonikai dismounted in a single, fluid movement. Dust clung to his dark cloak, his armor streaked with the grime of long pursuit.

"See that the horses are tended," he ordered curtly to one of the sentinels. "Their tack inspected, their hooves checked and cleaned before they are stabled. Ensure they are well-fed and watered before nightfall."

The sentinel gave a sharp nod, and without delay, the mounts were collected and led away.

Daemonikai looked at the gathered sentinels who had formed up in disciplined silence. "We ride again at nightfall. Make ready. Sharpen your blades and string your bows." His voice cold as ice, his tone leaving no room for question. "We do not rest until his troops are razed to the ground. We hunt until he is found." *æwww.NøVêllæRM.čøM*

A chorus of firm salutes answered him before the sentinels dispersed, falling into formation as they cleared a path for their grand king. Daemonikai strode through their ranks as he made for the Citadel entrance.

"I'll send for Faiwick. Those bruises need tending, Daemon," Vladya said, falling into step beside him.

"There's no need. Let him tend to you. I'll manage."

His arm throbbed beneath his armor, blood seeped from wounds not yet treated, but such things were expected. Especially after riding through a forest overrun with ferals to cut hours off their pursuit.

"I won't be needing a healer because my bloodhost is ready and available. One feeding from her and these wounds are on the route to healing." Vladya said. "You, on the other hand, your bloodhost is a fugitive on the run and you've got a restless beast clawing at your insides because you haven't fed or fucked in months."

Daemonikai scowled. "Enough."

"No, not enough. Oh, fuck this," Vladya snarled, catching Daemonikai by the arm and dragging him into a shadowed alcove beyond the watchful eyes of the soldiers. "It's been two months, Daemon. Two months since your last proper bloodfeeding. Feeders don't count. Sipping from Emeriel to give her pleasure doesn't fucking count-not when you won't truly drink from her because you're worried about her condition."

Daemonikai's silence only made Vladya angrier.

"I'm worried about you, Daemonikai. You need to fuck. You need to feed.

Properly." Vladya punctuated the words. "It's been ages, your body is demanding

it."

Irritation flashed across Daemonikai's face. "Watch your tongue."

"I won't," Vladya shot back, stepping in close. "Because I'm not speaking to you as your Second. I'm speaking to you as a male who's watching his best friend lose control. A male who refuses to watch you destroy yourself. You can glare at me all you want. I see it already-you're slipping. I saw the way you fought the ferals tonight. It wasn't skill. It wasn't strategy. It was savage. You enjoyed it." His eyes searched Daemonikai's, unflinching. "I saw the smirk on your face as you bathed in their blood. You tore them apart even when they were already dead-limb from limb. Like a

mindless, bloodthirsty feral."

Daemonikai's nostrils flared.

"You're on the verge, and I will not stand by and watch you go feral again!" Vladya shouted, red-faced. "You want revenge; I do too. That's why I've ridden with you, every night, in pursuit. I want them dead just as much as you do. Especially that lying, two-faced bitch who was your bloodhost. It's past time another blood bond formed for you. But this... this endless hunt? It's wearing you down. We're always one step behind. By the time we reach each hideout, they're gone, and I understand your frustration. Truly, I do. But we will catch them." Vladya gripped Daemon's shoulders hard, giving him a sharp shake. "We. Will. Make. Them. Pay. But until we do, we survive. We thrive."

"Listen, Vladya-

"You will take care of that raging

beast inside you," Vladya stated. "I no longer care what your problems with Emeriel are, nor do I care about your reservations over fucking with another female. You're standing on

aedge of full-blown madness, and

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I will NOT stand by and watch it happen. If I must drug you, tie you down, and throw every willing female in the kingdom over you to satisfy sexlust, I fucking will." He leaned in closer, snarling Daemon's his face. "And I will have a line of fifty feeders waiting after them."

Daemonikai's jaw dropped open, stunned into silence.

"So you had better get your act together." Vladya's chest heaved as he glared at him, breathing hard. "Get a healer for your wounds, get more feeders to satisfy the taste, and have sex, Daemonikai. These are your priorities now, not another bloody ride at dawn." Finally, he stepped back. "Calm your damn beast or I will take matters into my own hands."

With that, Vladya turned on his heel and stalked off.

Daemonikai stood there, alone in the silence.

Tongue-tied. Motionless.

For once in a very long time, he had no idea what to say.

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