

Captive Slave 382

Chapter 382

Kelvin trembled, then spat on the ground. "Let's go." He turned on his heel and took off at a run.

Zaiper followed, smirking.

But the humor was fading. The streets were littered with bodies-many vampire bodies and a few werewolves, but not a single Urekai. How had my plan fallen apart so severely? Someone betrayed me.

They turned a corner, ducking into a narrow corridor, half-collapsed from skirmish.

"We'll go through the North quarter," Zaiper muttered. "There's a tunnel entrance beyond the archives-"

"No," Kelvin snapped. "This way. It's clear. I just passed through."

Zaiper narrowed his eyes. "And how exactly do you know it's—"

"Trust me, or find your own damn way," Kelvin snarled.

Zaiper bit down his response. I'm killing him the second I have my strength back.

He followed. The corridor narrowed.

Dead silence. Too much silence.

Then, a shadow detached from the wall.**W**_{W(w)}.*ntóV*Elw©**Rm.COM**

A tall, dark figure stepped into view, cloaked in shadow. Zaiper's stomach dropped.

Azrael.

Fuck. Fuck.

Zaiper bolted.

Azrael didn't chase.

Zaiper took off to the wooded path, heart hammering, feet hammering harder. Ahead, Yaz appeared from behind a tree, sword drawn. Zaiper deviated sharply, cursing, veering in the other direction. He was running blind but he knew these woods like the back of his hands. He'd grown up in them.

Damn that vampire. He'd led him straight to slaughter. He should never have come tonight-not in his weakened state, not under an eclipse moon leeching the strength from his bones. But he just needed to stay hidden until morning. Then, he'd find a way to regroup and rise again.

He reached one of his old hiding spots, a small overhang in the forest, its hollow concealed by roots and stones. It was familiar and safe.

But the hairs on his arms lifted. His beast stirred-in fear. The feeling of prey. You are being hunted.

Zaiper went rigid. "Who the fuck is there?!" he barked, voice rising. "I'm an Alpha! How dare you hunt me?!" His fangs bared. "Come out! Face me right now!"

Nothing. Just wind and birds. The rustle of trees.

That was the worst part of being prey: not seeing what hunts you. Not hearing it.

"Stop hiding, you coward!" he roared, spinning. "Face me!"

The woods fell silent. Even the crickets stopped.

Run! his instincts screamed. Run, right now!

He took off again, ducking, zig-zagging through the trees. He moved like a shadow, calling on every survival tactic he knew-ducking behind trunks, doubling back, crawling through roots. It didn't help. That prickling sensation didn't fade.

The presence behind him didn't lessen, no matter what he did. In fact... it grew closer.**Ww***Ŵ.ñóvë***Lwo**Γm.C*ε(η)*

Daemonikai.

Only he could hunt him like this. As if Zaiper was filth. As if he didn't even deserve

to be captured honorably. Anger boiled-but fear won. Daemonikai would kill him. He's going to kill me.

So, Zaiper ran. And ran.

His chest burned. Muscles shook. His body screamed in protest, but still, he ran.

He found another hollow, a dense thicket of brush and dove in.

Seconds passed. Then a minute. Then three.

Unease returned.

Zaiper's lungs seized.

He crawled out and bolted again, unable to resist. He didn't know how long the chase lasted. It felt infinite. By the time he reached the clearing, sweat dripped into his eyes. His limbs felt like stone and he stumbled.

A hand clamped around his neck.

He was yanked back. Slammed against a tree. Hard.

His vision spun. There, inches from his face-calm as the stars, deadly as a god -stood Daemonikai.

"There you are," the Grand King said softly. "My prey." He tilted his head slightly. "Did you enjoy the hunt? I did. But now I get to take home my prize. The best one yet."

Zaiper gasped, trying to focus. "Werewolves... on Urekai land? I never thought you'd stoop-"

"When it comes to protecting our people from you and your bloodsucking allies," Daemonikai said, circling him like a panther, "I'd have opened the gates to the witches of the Eastern Wilds if it meant keeping my people safe." He clasped his hands behind his back. "In fact, inviting the werewolves was one of my finest decisions."

"It sure was," Azrael growled behind him.**Www**.*Ño*©**eLw***Γm.com

"W-how?" Zaiper's eyes widened.

"You see, I received the most detailed letter from Sinai-"

Zaiper's eyes flared. "That's not possible."

Daemonikai smiled. "As I was saying, I received the most detailed letter from your accomplice. She told me to deliver you a message, Consider this revenge, for thinking it was acceptable to stab me in the back after I protected yours for so long."

Zaiper staggered where he stood, punched in the gut.

"And she was very thorough, too." Daemonikai gave a soft tsk. "Three parchments. Three different messenger birds. Sent from three different outposts. I wonder if that number was symbolic."

"I can't..." Zaiper croaked. "You mean to tell me... she... Sinai?" "Yes." Daemonikai nodded calmly. "And I'm grateful to her. Because now-finally I have you within my grasp. By the time I'm done with you, Zaiper... you'll wish I had killed you in court. You'll wish your life had ended before today ever began."

"Why don't we start now?" Behind him, Azrael's voice was low and hungry. "I wouldn't mind catching in on the fun."

"No. Not yet." Daemonikai nodded toward the sky. "Not under that." The eclipse moon hung like a blazing wound-beautiful, cursed, and cruel.*ww**Ŵ.nove***LW**©Γm.c*0*Π

"I want him alive," Daemonikai said. "The toxins in his blood tonight make him fragile. I don't want him dropping dead just yet. That's not part of my plans." Daemonikai looked at him. Unblinking. Then swung.

The punch cracked against Zaiper's face with such force, the echo snapped through the trees. His head jerked to the side, and the crack of bone-his nose- rang clear. He choked, blood flooding his throat. He gagged, swallowing it by reflex, then slumped down the bark of the tree.

The taste of iron filled his mouth. He tried to move, but couldn't.

Daemonikai's voice came again-distant, fading, like thunder behind a storm cloud. "Wegai. Take him away."

Boots approached.

Zaiper's vision blurred, and all he saw was the moon, glowing like an eye that had watched every sin he'd committed... now bearing witness to his fall.