

Captive Slave 383

Chapter 383

As the soldiers dragged Zaiper away, Daemonikai turned toward the werewolf king and extended his hand. "Thank you, Azrael."

The werewolf king clasped it with a firm nod. "Anything for a friend. When I fought those bloodsuckers and you came to my aid, it changed everything. We may be even now-but call on me again, and I will come."

"You too, my friend. The lands of Urekai are always open to you."

"As is werewolf soil," Azrael replied.

Daemonikai watched him walk away into the shadows, armor gleaming under the strange light of the eclipse moon.

His mind pulled back to a few weeks ago-he'd been working in the study with Emeriel when the letter came. He had initially asked for it to be discarded.

"She sent three birds, Beloved," Emeriel had said softly. "That's no ordinary message. Let's at least see the context before we burn it."

So he had opened it. And in reading it, learned everything. The extent of Zaiper's past sins. The terrifying intricacy of his current plans. It had been enraging. But it had also given him an edge.

All thanks to his radiant star, who had urged him to call in his favor with the werewolves, even when he had resisted with stubborn defiance. Calm and rational, she had made him see the wisdom in it, drawing his eyes to the hope, to the brighter possibilities of their aid on a night like this. And now, he was glad he had listened. Glad he had made the call.

"Hey, Ancient One," Vladya's voice came behind him.

Daemonikai turned. His brow arched at the state of him. "You do remember you weren't supposed to fight tonight?"

Vladya snorted, blood spattered across his tunic, grin wide. "Says the male who just spent the night hunting."

Daemonikai exhaled a faint chuckle.

"I saw our newest prisoner," Vladya said. "I must say, this night is turning out to be very pretty."

"It is," Daemonikai agreed, folding his hands behind his back as they walked side by side. "How are things with the bloodsuckers?"

"They never reached the inner halls. Our people are safe. Well..." he glanced skyward. "Mostly thanks to the werewolves. They tore through the vamps before half of them knew what hit them. The rest ran."

Daemonikai gave him a side-eye. "You're awfully chirpy tonight for a Urekai going through the eclipse moon."

Vladya laughed. "Good things are happening, my friend. My third ritual passed yesterday. Tonight, we captured Zaiper. I beat the fangs out of a few bloodsuckers. What more can a male ask for?"

Hurried footsteps reached Daemonikai before the figure came into view—a young girl sprinting toward them.

The familiar slave girl bowed, eyes wide. "Your Highness... Your Majesties," she said breathlessly.

Daemonikai stilled as Vladya tensed.

"My name is Amie," she continued quickly, "and I've been sent with a message from the healers."

"Speak," Vladya ordered.

"The princesses are in labor," Amie burst out. "Princess Emeriel was the first to break her water, but she said not to worry you, Your Grace, that you had more important things to handle and she'd be fine-but Princess Aekeira started panicking, and now her water has broken too, and she's crying for Lord Vladya, so -so the healers finally agreed you should both be informed!" She gasped, panting. "They're both delivering. Right now."

Tension rippled down Daemonikai's back. The moment the words delivering sank in, he and Vladya locked eyes, then bolted into a full-blown run.

Daemonikai prowled one corner of the hallway while Vladya paced the other. From behind the heavy doors came the raw, wrenching sounds of labor-the cries, the screams, the urging voices of the healers. Each one sliced through Daemonikai's composure like knives. **Ŵŵw.Nóv(ε)LŴc℞@.cOℳ**

He caught Vladya's eye across the room. No words needed. They were both hanging on a thread.

The entire fortress of Ravenshadow held its breath. Whispers ran like wind through the stone halls-Both princesses in labor, on the eclipse moon night.

What were the odds? The night that had stolen everything from Daemonikai-his family, his sanity, his soul-would now be the night that gave it all back?**@(w)ŵ.nOℴℓIŴorm.c0m**

Another scream ripped through the air. "Vladya!"

His friend snarled, already lunging toward the door, fist raised to shatter it for the fifth time.**www.n0Veℓℴorm.C0ℳ**

Daemonikai caught him yet again. "You can't."

Vladya's voice was hoarse, his beast so close to the surface his eyes flickered gold. "They're in pain, Daemon. Serious pain. I can feel her through the bond, even with her shields."

"They are," Daemonikai said softly. "But this... this is their battle, Vladya. The only thing we can do is be here when they come out of it—"

Emeriel screamed and something in him broke.

He swallowed hard and pressed on, voice trembling. "-to hold them. To tell them we're proud."

"Princess Emeriel, push!" came the urgent voice of a midwife.

"I can't..." Emeriel's voice cracked.

"You must. You're almost there!"

"I'm so tired..."

"You're the one who's growling now," Vladya said. "So tell me, are we going in or not?"

Daemonikai grabbed the handle, Vladya joined him, and together, they shoved open the doors-ripping them off their hinges, handles clattering to the floor.

A healer rushed toward them. "Your Majesties, you cannot-!"

But they were already inside.

The bedchambers were lit low, awash in firelight. Emeriel and Aekeira lay side by side, legs braced, faces flushed with effort and pain. Sweat ran down their brows. Tears pooled in their lashes. And when their gazes found their males, both women's expressions cracked open with relief.

Daemonikai moved to Emeriel's side, dropping to his knees. He caught her outstretched hand in both of his.

"Daemon..." she whispered, her voice shaky and wet.

"Yes, my darling." He kissed her fingers, then her temple, brushing the damp hair

from her face. "I'm here."

"It hurts," she cried.

"I know," he murmured. "My brightest star, I know."

"I'm so tired."

"I know, my Beloved." He kissed her again. "But you are doing beautifully."

Aekeira's voice came beside them, breathless and teary-"They didn't tell me it would hurt this much-"

"I'm sorry, my dearest," Vladya whispered, kissing her forehead, then her nose. Daemonikai looked into Emeriel's eyes. "Riel," he said softly, "I wish I could bear the pain for you."

"I don't want you to," she whispered with a faint, exhausted smile.

He smiled back, aching with love. "Of course you don't. But we must not keep our

little one waiting. He's eager to meet his strong, beautiful mother."

"And his legendary father," Emeriel added, breath heaving.

He nodded. "And his legendary father."

"Hold my hand through it," Aekeira begged.

"Always," Vladya vowed.

"It's coming, get ready!" Emeriel's midwife warned—just as Aekeira's midwife

shouted, "Push!"**ŵw(ω).N0V(ε)ℓŵôℓ.m.c0ℳ**