

## Chapter 53

GRAND LORD VLADYA

Grand Lord Vladya strode toward the gardens of Blackstone accompanied by Yaz, who provided a detailed account of the farming conditions in Brookwood—a sizable village in Urai renowned for its fertile lands.

Despite the efforts of their best farmers, this season's crop production was significantly lower compared to the previous one.

As they walked, Vladya observed the toiling slaves and the soldiers training on the opposite side of the field.

"My dear lord, Vladya?" a familiar voice called out.

Vladya turned to see Mistress Sinai approaching. He took her outstretched hand and placed a respectful kiss upon it. "To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit today?"

"I apologize for interrupting you, but there are matters I wish to discuss," she said.

Vladya exchanged a meaningful look with Yaz, signaling for the head soldier to depart. Left alone with Sinai, he turned his attention to her. "What seems to be the matter?"

"I wish to punish one of your slaves severely. I thought it appropriate to inform you, considering he was specially acquired. After all, you undertook the journey yourself to buy him."

Vladya furrowed his brow. "Whom exactly are we referring to?"

"The young prince."

Grand Lord Vladya tilted his head in thought. "What has he done?"

"I simply do not like him. He grates on my nerves."

"I don't recall you spending much time with the boy for him to have such an effect on you. Or am I mistaken?" Lord Vladya questioned.

"You are correct," she admitted. Her eyes darkening with anger. "However, he is a slave—a human slave. I don't need a reason to hate him enough to want to kill him."

"True. But, as you mentioned, they are specially acquired slaves—the prince and the princess. You would need a more substantial justification when it comes to killing them. Grand Lord Ottai and I did not forsake our duties in Urai and journey to the human world for four days, only for them to die without cause."

Sinai fell into a silence, breathing heavily. Her eyes narrowed, nose flaring in anger.

Grand Lord Vladya scrutinized her closely. "What is this truly about? I find it difficult to believe that you simply woke up this morning with an unprovoked desire to kill a slave."

"I heard that he has been feeding Daemon," she finally spoke.

When Vladya did not react to the news, her eyes snapped up to meet his. "You were aware?"

"I am."

"And you do not see anything wrong with that? He is a slave! He has no right to approach the grand king!"

"I believe you are overreacting, Sinai. The boy merely fed the beast; he did nothing wrong. Besides, Daemonikai doesn't need you to fight his battles. If he detested the boy, he would no longer be alive."

Sinai took a step back, looking betrayed. "How could you say that? Daemon cannot make that decision in his current state of mind. And the boy is human! He has no right whatsoever! How dare he!"

"Calm yourself, Sinai. I fail to understand your anger. Yes, the boy is human, and yes, he is a slave. However, you, of all people, should be pleased that something like this happened. For some reason, the boy managed to make the feral eat."

"What if he bewitched the beast? Enchanted him in some way."

Vladya rolled his eyes. "The boy is human, not a witch. Humans are woefully devoid of such powers or magic." He knew he sounded hypocritical, considering he had accused the princess of the same thing just three nights ago. But he refused to dwell on that.

Sinai averted her eyes. "I want Daemonikai to feed; you know that. I simply dislike that a human slave believed it was acceptable to approach him. They do not deserve to walk the same ground as the grand king, feral or not."

Lord Vladya remained silent.

"I shall attend the Harvest Ceremony tomorrow night. I wish to witness his introduction as a slave," she declared, her eyes narrowing to slits. "After the lords have their fun with him, I will personally punish him."

Yeah, Vladya nearly forgot about the upcoming ceremony. The rest of the slaves would be introduced.

"What about you, Lord Vladya? Will you be mounting the little prince at the ceremony?" Excitement crossed her pretty face. "I would love that."

"Unfortunately, I have no interest in such matters. I will only attend the Harvest Ceremony. The introduction of slaves holds no appeal for me."

"That's a pity. Though I could persuade Lord Zaiper to have a piece of the boy. He enjoys inflicting pain." With that, she turned to leave but paused. "What about that land?"

Vladya shook his head. "We have discussed this several times."

She gave him pleading eyes. "I truly desire that land. Can you not simply grant it to me?"

Out of all the unused lands possessed by Daemonikai, Crystal Waters had the finest soil, abundant waterways for trade, majestic mountains, rivers, miners, and timber.

Daemonikai highly valued those lands, and Vladya had no intention of giving them to Sinai. Or sharing any of Daemonikai's possessions while his beast was still alive, for that matter.

"I am his bloodhost. I believe he would want me to possess at least one piece of that land," Sinai persisted.

"One step at a time, Sinai. The time for such decisions has not yet arrived."

"Fine." She sulked. "But we will revisit this discussion later. I must go now. I need to bloodfeed my master."

Vladya halted. "His last feeding can still sustain him. It is not yet time for another."

"Must I wait for the appointed time?" Sinai shrugged. "I want to feed him now."

Vladya watched her depart.

He wondered if this sudden need to bloodfeed Daemonikai was due to the human prince.

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By evening, Grand Lord Vladya exited the court, followed by his army of soldiers.

Zaiper intended to announce his plan to eliminate Daemonikai's beast at the Harvest Ceremony, claiming that the people were suffering without a grand king.