

Chapter 54

Even Ottai appeared resigned. They had evaded the issue for centuries, but now they both knew Zaiper might succeed.

He could persuade the court to make an active effort to slay the feral, rather than waiting for the night of the eclipse moon. And once the people rallied behind it, the grand lords's hands would be forced.

Moreover, once the public was in support, the Elders would undoubtedly agree to the decision—even pressure the rulers if they continued to delay.

Vladya's mind was in turmoil. The truth was, there was no rational reason not to proceed with killing Daemonikai's beast. He just simply wasn't ready.

That beast was all that remained of his crumbling sanity. The tether that assured him he hadn't lost everything that fateful night. As long as Daemonikai lived, Vladya found it easier to resist the losing battle that was his sanity.

Daemonikai, the strongest male he knew, had succumbed to madness to escape the horrors they had faced. And Vladya was barely holding on by a thread.

And as long as that beast lived, that thread held tight. No matter how thin it had become, it held tight.

And, when he finally lost his oldest friend, his companion whom he should have mourned with, Vladya feared his last semblance of sanity would go alongside the beast.

Perhaps Zaiper knew that too. Maybe, that was one of the reasons he was so eager to eliminate the feral.

The sound of laughter drew Vladya's attention back to the present.

He stared ahead to discover its source. The slave princess sat by a well, watching her brother draw water.

She laughed at the displeased expression on his face as he worked.

The little prince certainly possessed strength. The boy effortlessly drew water, pouring it into a larger bucket and sending the smaller one back down.

Aekeira reached up to remove the strand of hair that obscured the prince's eyes. With a gentle push, she joined it with the rest, her eyes filled with happiness and laughter.

The sight stirred memories within him. Reminded him of Daemonikai and their early days of friendship. A sharp pang of pain gripped Vladya's heart.

He halted and observed the siblings. Daemonikai was a thousand years older than him and already a king when they first met.

Vladya, on the other hand, was a stubborn, mouthy, and bothersome prince back then. He had never wanted to become a grand lord, but his father had insisted.

And, after his father passed, he had no choice but to assume the mantle at barely three hundred years old.

Their bloodline was pure, their strength extraordinary, even at their young age. Vladya had expected Daemonikai to be harsh with him during those times when he deliberately provoked and undermined others.

But not Daemonikai. He had been different.

Their friendship had blossomed and endured for over three thousand years. And now, suddenly, there was no Daemonikai. Only his beast.

Only his beast which Vladya would soon be forced to kill.

The girl's gaze wandered, and she caught him staring.

She paled. Her smile vanished, replaced by fear.

Vladya disliked being caught off guard, but he refused to behave childishly about it. He maintained his gaze, and she quickly averted her eyes, nudging her brother, who also looked up and spotted Vladya.

The boy appeared more angry than scared, but he dutifully lowered his eyes. They both bowed.

"Return to your tasks," he said to them.

They obeyed. Their actions now carrying tension, devoid of their previous ease.

Both stood out among humans not only for the regal air that always surrounded them, but also because of their exceptional beauty.

The boy possessed an unusual level of beauty that no boy should rightfully possess, and his long, jet-black hair only added to it.

An attractiveness that was uncommon. Almost ethereal.

Yet, it was the girl who consistently captured Vladya's attention. Even now, his gaze remained fixed on her.

It was simply unfair for a human female to be so breathtakingly beautiful.

"My lord?" Yaz's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"What is it, Yaz?"

"You were growling," Yaz pointed out.

Was he? Vladya noticed the rumbling in his throat and promptly ceased.

Curse the gods, the girl had the uncanny ability to get under his skin like no other human ever had. The desire to mount her surged within him once more.

The thoughts he entertained regarding the young princess were... disturbing.

He wanted to put his hands on her. To make it hurt. To make her scream. To consume her.

He wanted to unleash on her and watch how she would handle him in his most animalistic state. Above all, her blood called out to him.

He craved to sink his fangs into her pale neck and drink from her until she was writhing in his arms.

"My lord?" Yaz's voice broke through his thoughts again.

"What is it now, Yaz?" he asked, slightly irritated.

"Your fangs, my lord. They are out."

Blast it all! Vladya retracted them, spun around, and began walking away. That damned human.

"Summon Lady Marilyn. Instruct her to meet me in my chambers," Vladya commanded as he strode off.

For some reason, that girl awakened his dark side. A reason among many why he despised her. He would be damned before he succumbed to his desires for her again.

He would not.

He would NOT!

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EMERIEL

Emeriel hesitated, then rapped at the door. Moments later, the door swung open and a maid emerged. "How may I be of service?"

"I am Emeriel. Could you kindly inform your lord that Emeriel is here to pay him a visit?" Emeriel requested.

"Of course. Please wait here for a moment." The maid disappeared inside. After a few minutes, she returned and guided him inside, stating that Lord Herod was ready to receive him.

Emeriel felt a rush of nerves and desperation, leaving him unable to do anything more than a nod.

The maid left him in a corridor, where he patiently waited. He knew it was impolite to visit a lord at such a late hour, but his desperation had overridden his concern.

Finally, the door creaked open, and Lord Herod came out, clad in a nightshirt and robe.

"Emeriel?" His voice was groggy, as if awoken from slumber.