

Chapter 59

EMERIEL

"Stop right there," Grand Lord Zaiper commanded as Emeriel reached the center of the room.

Emeriel halted in place, the weight of everyone's attention on him as he awaited the next command. His heart pounded in his chest.

Mistress Sinai smirked, watching with excitement. What was her problem? Why did she hate him so much?

"Your sister was quite eager to undress for me last time. Tonight, I want you to do the same." Lord Zaiper reclined back on his throne. "Strip and present for me."

Yes, he was definitely doomed.

Emeriel swallowed tightly and glanced around. Some gazed at him with interest. His eyes briefly met Aekeira's, and his sister's face had turned pale.

Various scenarios of how this could unfold played out in his mind, and none of them boded well for him. They all ended badly for him.

Heavens, help me. Please, I need your help. Now would be a good moment to send a thunderbolt or something. Emeriel silently pleaded within himself.

"Did you not hear the grand lord!? Are you hard of hearing!?" Mistress Sinai hissed.

She sprang from her seat, approached Emeriel closely, and delivered a resounding slap to his cheek.

The crack reverberated through him, causing his head to whip to the side, blinding him with pain.

"Perhaps that will reset your hearing," the mistress snapped before returning to her seat, an air of satisfaction surrounding her.

Grand Lord Zaiper refocused his attention on Emeriel. "I repeat, remove your clothes and present for me. Right. Now."

Tears blurred Emeriel's vision as distress and panic washed over him in waves.

Then, a profound need, unlike anything he had ever experienced, surged within him. It was like nothing he'd ever felt before. As if a compelling force was urging him to do something. To speak.

Emeriel didn't resist, surrendering to it.

The words tumbled out in a low whisper. "My Beloved, I need your help. My Beloved, please help me."

Wait, what was he even saying? Where did those words come from?

And who the hell was His Beloved?

"Did you not hear me!?" Lord Zaiper roared, his anger clear as the veins on his forehead bulged. He rose from his throne, his eyes ablaze. "I said, strip—"

A deafening roar pierced the air. So loud and deep it echoed throughout the entire fortress. Emeriel would have sworn the very walls trembled.

The sound of metal locks breaking filled the air, followed by a resounding crash as a door splintered open.

Most people froze, as all activity came to a stop. The remaining grand lords rose from their thrones, and every gaze turned toward the grand entrance.

"What is that?" someone in the crowd exclaimed.

"What's happening?" another voice questioned.

"It sounded distant yet close!"

"Something has broken free!"

"Oh, Urai, what's going on!? We must flee!"

The grand lords exchanged glances.

Lord Ottai approached Grand Lord Vladya. "Most of our people are here tonight. It would be a massacre!" Desperation etched his face. "What should we do?"

"I don't know," Grand Lord Vladya replied. "But we must not run or attempt to escape."

Grand Lord Vladya stepped forward, addressing everyone. "King Daemonikai's beast has broken free from the forbidden chambers. We—"

Gasps filled the air, the scent of fear becoming so overpowering it was almost tangible.

"Listen to me!" Grand Lord Vladya barked, and instantly, silence fell. "The beast is already loose, and if you try to flee, it will kill anything in its path. You are Urekai; you understand how our beasts operate. You know what not to do. Do NOT provoke the predator."

Heads nodded quickly, eyes wide with fear.

Grand Lord Vladya continued, "Do not run. No one moves from their position, do you hear me!?" He gave a pointed look to Aekeira, who was already hurrying toward the center of the Court where Emeriel stood.

Aekeira let out a distressed cry but returned to her previous position, casting her brother a helpless glance.

Another thunderous roar filled the air, this time closer. The beast seemed to be moving with alarming speed, and its destination...

"It's coming here. And it's approaching fast," Lord Ottai stated, exchanging a look of understanding with Lord Vladya.

Lord Zaiper stood tall. "I could try to stop him. Move to the door and—"

Lord Ottai gave a dismissive snort. "This is not the time to play hero, Zaiper. Facing that beast on a night like this. Under a half-moon, you would not stand a chance. And all you would succeed in doing is angering him further. And you know what a furious feral does?" He paused. "It kills everything in its path. Our people are already in danger. We do NOT need to put them at further risk."

Lord Zaiper's expression twisted with anger as he glared at Ottai. "Curse you, Ottai. Are you implying that I am weak?"

Ottai took a deep breath, his voice calm. "You know I'm not—"

"We all know that you're practically itching to fight the beast again," Vladya interjected, fixing Zaiper with a pointed gaze. "Your pride was wounded the last time, and you want to prove yourself—we get that. But I highly advise against attempting it tonight. You would only make a fool of yourself. Even with a firearm loaded with the deadliest poison known to our kind, you couldn't kill him. Whatever makes you think you would succeed tonight?"

Shame and rage flushed Zaiper's cheeks. "You bastard."

"Let's focus on saving our people, shall we?" Vladya didn't flinch. "Your obsession with killing the beast can wait."

A loud snarl echoed. This time, much much closer.

Mistress Sinai approached them, fear etched across her face, yet trying to appear brave. "I could try to calm him down. Perhaps bloodfeeding him could—"

"That's not going to happen. Daemonikai didn't care much for you even when he was himself, remember?" Vladya snapped, his eyes blazing. "Without the bloodlust driving him, his feral beast will tear you apart, scatter your remains around this court, and drink your blood for sport."

Mistress Sinai recoiled as if she had been slapped. Her face ghostly pale as she returned to her seat.

Then, with a force that sent a gust of wind through the court, the grand entrance burst open.