

## Chapter 62

And to think that the boy felt so safe he fell into slumber.

"What is it about him, Daemon?" Vladya whispered, observing them. "Is it his blood? Or is he simply your new fascination? Is he a new plaything?"

The beast didn't answer, nor did Vladya expect him to.

"Could this boy have the power to bring you back from insanity? Is that even possible?" But he was watching an impossibility happening before him, right now.

He was missing something here. Something important. But what could it be?

On his way back, his mind was preoccupied. But as he passed through the second floor of the southern wings, he heard Akeira's soft cries in her chamber, far away.

By the sound of it, she must be lying on her bed, muffling her sobs with her pillow. Yet he was so attuned to her that his hearing picked up on it.

Don't you dare, Vladya. Don't you dare.

He glared at the pathway that led to her chamber. He cared not about the girl's state of mind, and he certainly did not care if she wept and tormented herself throughout the night.

So why were his legs taking him toward her?

Because your body craves that girl. You can't get enough of her.

By Ukrae, he needed to put a stop to this. This was not him. He did not force himself on slaves or take unwilling servants to his bed.

He did not fixate on humans—or any beings, for that matter. He was stronger than that. So why was he walking toward the girl's door right now?

And worse, despite all his internal pep talks, why could he not stop himself?

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GREYROCK DOMAIN, THE NORTHERN WINGS

GRAND LORD ZAIPER

Grand Lord Zaiper stood beside the narrow, arched window in the vast underground, peering out into the shadowy expanse of the courtyard.

The trees lining the edge of the courtyard swayed gently in the night breeze, casting dancing shadows on the ground. The occasional hoot of an owl or the distant bark of a hound filled the air.

A few feet away, Madah, one of his finest slave masters, lashed a slave with a searing whip. The agonizing screams of the slave were a beautiful melody to Zaiper's ears. A little bit of comfort for his troubled heart tonight.

Humans are the scum of the earth, and Zaiper would be happy if none of them remained. They were unworthy of sharing the same air the Urekai breathed.

This was one of those nights Zaiper would love to let his beast run free. To simply shift into his beast form and go hunting in the woods.

Hours had passed since the incident in court and the news had spread throughout the land. Zaiper was angry for so many reasons.

Why now? Why tonight?

He had delivered his speech with great skill. Had convinced so many people—Zaiper was sure. The expressions on their faces revealed their agreement. If there had been another court meeting to discuss the dismissal and elimination of Daemonikai's beast, he would have had a multitude of supporters.

But then...

Emeriel. That damned human prince.

What was that boy's deal?

If Zaiper wasn't vastly knowledgeable of the species around them, he would believe the boy to be a wizard, capable of weaving spells. For there was simply no other explanation that could justify what had happened earlier.

"Please, my lord. I beg of you!" the male slave screamed as another lash struck his back. The sound of skin tearing was a soothing balm to Zapier's soul.

For a moment there, when Daemonikai's paw had gripped his throat, and his yellow eyes locked onto Zaiper, he could have sworn he witnessed a glimmer of something within those eyes.

Not just the vacant gaze of a feral. But a glimmer of...awareness?

What in the depths of hell was going on?

Was it the scent of the boy's blood? But Zaiper had gotten close to that boy, and while he did smell enticing, it was no different from the scent of all the other humans he found attractive over the years.

So what was so special that a feral would take an interest?

Zaiper raised his hand. Madah, whose whip was poised high in the air, paused.

With a downward motion of his hand, Zaiper signaled Madah to step back. Moving away from the window, Zapier approached the man.

The slave was battered and bloodied. Tears and sweat streamed down his face, and his attractive biceps quivered from agony. Oh, the beauty of a well-whipped body.

"You know, if he were a girl, I would have believed her to be his Soulbond." Zapier circled the slave. "That would be a plausible explanation that comes close to explaining why a feral would fixate on anyone. Or does he see the boy as his new plaything? We do know how to personalize what we consider ours." He stopped before the slave. "What are your thoughts?"

"I-I don't understand, my lord," the male cried, bewildered and in pain.

Grand Lord Zaiper sighed and shook his head. "That is why you humans are dumb. So why would Daemonikai want a dumb human?"

A thought crossed his mind. One that made him stop dead in his tracks.

What if Daemonikai actually regains his sanity again? What if, through some inexplicable miracle, the grand king is able to shift back into his human form, with his mind intact?

Fear prickled down Zaiper's spine. If that were to happen, everything he had worked tirelessly for would come crumbling down.

He was finally making progress in swaying people to his cause. Garnering supporters who stood behind him. He could actually ascend to the grand throne if he exerted more effort.

But if Daemonikai returned, all his endeavors would be in vain. Daemonikai was far too strong. Far too powerful.

Zaiper stared at his wounded arm, where the beast had dug into his skin. The bleeding had stopped, but the wound was deep. Daemonikai had humiliated him in court today.

But today would be nothing compared to the humiliation and pain he would have to endure if Daemonikai regained his sanity. He would reign for thousands of more years while Zaiper remained on the sidelines. Looked down upon. Seen as weak. He deserved the grand throne.

"Finish up here, Madah. Thirty more lashes," Zaiper ordered before he turned and departed. The slave wept, pleaded, and screamed.

Zaiper strode towards his chambers, his anger morphing into seething rage.

This was his one true opportunity to become the grand king, and he would be damned before he allowed it to slip away. He would destroy everything that got in his way, if he had to.

And he would begin with Emeriel.

He had no idea what that boy was, but Zaiper did not care to know. He needed to kill the boy before the boy did any more harm.

Now, he simply needed a plan on how to get the boy right where Zaiper wanted him. Here, in his domain.