

Chapter 72

Even he, proud and dominant as he was, could admit he needed help when it came to the girl. He had tried to resist, had tried to pull himself back from his obsession, but he failed every time. Aekira lingered in his thoughts like a shadow he couldn't escape, and Vladya was male enough to acknowledge that his willpower alone wasn't enough.

No, he needed something stronger. A push. A reason to stop. And what better way to create that reason than to give his word?

His word was his bond, after all. Once given, it was unbreakable.

"You must choose one option," Vladya said, leaning forward slightly. "The sexual satisfaction of the beast is crucial in maintaining his composure. Without it, he breaks free and goes on a rampage. If I were to remove your sister from her role of servicing the beast sexually, you must understand that you would fully take on that responsibility."

His words slow and measured, he continued. "So, the first option is quite challenging. But if you were to choose the other option, I would cease touching Aekeira from this day forward. I give you my word."

Emeriel's hands clasped and unclasped nervously. "And... if I choose the first option?"

"She would no longer be the beast's slave, effective immediately." Vladya tilted his head slightly. "However, you would have to assume that responsibility entirely. So, you must choose wisely."

EMERIEL

Emeriel weighed his choices carefully. While he desired Grand Lord Vladya to stop hurting his sister, to put an end to Aekiera's tears and screams, his ultimate wish was for the beast to stop mounting Aekeira. Emeriel wanted that even more than preventing Lord Vladya from sneaking into Aekeira's room at night.

The beast barely kept Aekeira alive the last time, and that was because Emeriel had touched her arm. But now that he had Emeriel's scent from the source, would he still spare his sister if she ever went to service him again?

What if a scented arm was no longer enough? What if it angrily killed Aekeira for daring to come service him? Emeriel envisioned countless scenarios, and all of them ended tragically for his sister.

"I wish for my sister to never serve the beast again," Emeriel made his request.

Lord Vladya's jaw clenched, and he gave Emeriel a steely gaze. "Are you absolutely certain?"

"Yes, I am." And shockingly, Emeriel didn't mind. The thought of being mounted by a powerful feral, was still scary, but it didn't bother him much anymore. "Besides, the beast wants me far more than it does my sister."

Vladya leaned forward, his eyes like gray chips of ice. "And why is that, little prince?"

Emeriel's tongue felt thick in his mouth. For a moment, he contemplated telling Lord Vladya the truth—that he was a girl, and he feared he might be the beast's soulmate. The possibility clawed at his insides.

But Lord Vladya's perpetual scowl, the disdain he held for humans, the gravity of Emeriel's deceit, and the ruthlessness of Lord Vladya's punishments choked the words back down. Emeriel simply could not do it. Heavens help him, he was not brave enough. Not yet.

"I have no idea, my Lord," Emeriel managed, his voice barely above a whisper.

"Very well then. From this day forward, Aekeira has been relieved of her duties, and you, Emeriel, are henceforth the only beast's slave."

Emeriel felt the weight lifting from within him, and his heart grew lighter. Any form of salvation from this tough life, no matter how small, brought him some consolation.

The thought of his sister living without the constant fear of being subjected to the beast's advances was enough to bring him a measure of relief.

"May I request something else, Your Highness?" A blush crept up Emeriel's neck, eyes downcast. "I would like a room in the southern wing as well."

Lord Vladya's brows snapped together in a frown. "I said you could have only one—"

"I mean, if I were close to the grand king's beast, it would be easier for me to spend more time with it, wouldn't it?" Without missing a beat, Emeriel jumped in, his mind working fast.

"Additionally, if the beast were to break free because of me, it wouldn't have to roam far, right? That chamber is closer to the forbidden chambers than the slave quarters."

A thoughtful silence fell as Grand Lord Vladya mulled it over. Emeriel held his breath. He really wanted to stay close to his sister.

"Very well. I shall issue an order. You may have the room next to your sister," the grand lord said at last.

Emeriel broke into a wide grin, accompanied by a deep bow. "Thank you ever so much! Your kindness overwhelms me, your majesty!"

Vladya waved away the gratitude. "Let us now discuss the fact that your life may be in jeopardy. I hate to entertain the notion, but there might be individuals who would go to great lengths to ensure that King Daemonikai remains gone. These people would stop at nothing to eliminate anyone they perceive as a hindrance to their plans. Anyone they deem an enemy."

Emeriel stood at a loss for words. His life in danger? "But why would they wish to harm me?"

Grand Lord Vladya arched his eyebrow.

Emeriel's shoulders slumped, and he averted his eyes. "The truth is," he began, "I don't think I have anything to do with the grand king's progress. How could I? I'm just a small, insignificant human. Perhaps this is all a misunderstanding..." His words trailed off, his voice thick with sincerity.

"But...if there's even a sliver of a chance...if there's something I can do to aid him, then I will." Emeriel squared his shoulders, a flicker of determination igniting in his eyes. If there were truly something Emeriel could do, then he would take the chance. "I'll do whatever it takes."

Grand Lord Vladya scrutinized Emeriel. His gaze piercing, his expression unreadable.

"Perhaps I am mistaken regarding the danger to your life. Nevertheless, I am not taking any chances," Lord Vladya said with conviction. "I will be absent for three days. During this time, the maids will prepare a room for you here in Blackstone. You will reside and work within these walls for the next three days. Under no circumstances should you venture beyond Blackstone. In my absence, I cannot ensure your safety outside my domain. Do you understand?"

A knot tightened in Emeriel's stomach. "Yes, my lord. Um... might I see Aekeira? Just for a little while?" All of this sounded extremely serious. Apart from the Mistress, Emeriel couldn't imagine any powerful person wanting him dead. The thought was terrifying.

"Your sister may visit." Vladya dismissed him with a wave. "You may leave. Do not get yourself into trouble. Do not get yourself killed."