

Chapter 182

GRAND KING DAEMONIKAI

Her body moved with his, every sway and arch designed to seduce, to lure him deeper. Sweet, breathless moans filled the air, wrapping around him, intoxicating him.

Daemonikai thrust into the warmth of her, unable to get enough. He had to get deeper.

"Yess," Galilea moaned. Her fingers brushed against his arms, featherlight, as her bright blue eyes locked onto his. Looking at him as if the very sun and moon, rose and set around him. He liked that.

"Mine." Leaning forward, he pressed a kiss to her neck, breathing in her scent. Such sweet, sweet scent.

"Yours," she gasped, her voice trembling with need. "Always yours."

Daemonikai could feel the familiar, dizzying rush of his orgasm building. But he didn't want this to end, not yet. He needed more. More of her, more of the moment. He—

Suddenly, the world around him shifted.

The warm intimacy shattered like porcelain.

Blood. Blood everywhere.

Screams tore around him, piercing and chaotic. The sweet moans were gone, replaced by terror. Daemonikai's fingers were buried deep in a human's gut, and he watched as the life drained from their eyes, their body crumpling to the ground lifelessly.

"Father!"

That voice jolted him. Myka.

Daemonikai's gaze snapped to the vortex hall's entrance. Myka stood there, frantic, his usual calm shattered. In this chaos, Myka looked exactly like Alvin...wild-eyed and lost.

"Father! There are so many of them! We have to get Mother to safety!"

Daemonikai wrenched his bloody hands free and rushed to Myka. "Listen to me, son." Gripping his son's face, Daemonikai forced him to meet his eyes. "Go through the back."

"But..." Myka's breath came in ragged pants as he stared up at his father, eyes wide with fear.

"I cannot leave these people. They depend on us, on me, to keep them safe tonight. That is why they are here, instead of in their homes."

Myka nodded, though his hands shook. "Yes, Papa."

"Get your mother to our bedchambers." Daemonikai cupped his son's face, grounding him. "Lock everything down, do you understand me?"

Myka nodded again, more vigorously this time. "It's just... I cannot feel my strength," he said, scared. "I feel weak, empty. I'm scared I will fail you... and her."

Before Daemonikai could respond, another voice cut through the chaos. "Dae-Daemon..."

He turned at the sweet voice. Evie was pale and shaking, but with fire burning in her eyes. Even in the midst all this, she was trying to be strong.

"Do not worry about us. We will be fine. Alvin's already made it to our chambers. Protect these people. They will be slaughtered otherwise." A tear slipped down her cheek as she stepped forward and pressed her lips to his in a brief, tender kiss. "But come back to me when all this is over. I will be waiting."

"I know." He brushed his lips across her forehead. "I love you."

Evie smiled, radiant even in the face of danger. She squeezed his hand tightly before letting go. "I love you too, my dearest beloved."

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Daemonikai's eyes sprang open, his own breath choking him. There was an iron cage in his chest, squeezing tighter with each shallow breath he took, determined to kill him.

Palming his forehead, sweat slicked from Daemonikai's skin as he fought to steady himself. Feeling like he was underwater...drowning and drowning.

Control it. Breathe.

But it was impossible. The vividness of the dream—no, dreams—still stuck with him.

Two nightmares colliding. One, an erotic recall of Galilea, her touch lingering like fire on his skin, leaving him painfully hard. The other, a memory... the last moments of Myka and Evie. The last time he'd seen them alive.

His arousal wilted, and a roar built inside him, trapped in his chest with no outlet. Daemonikai's body trembled with the force of it, the need to release this anguish, but he could not make a sound. He could not breathe.

Forcing himself upright, Daemonikai stumbled out of bed, struggling to find his footing. Even gravity too had conspired against him.

His fingers scraped the walls for support as he staggered out of his room, his chest heaving with the effort of each breath. Wegai had the night off, but his second stood silently at the door.

"Do not follow," Daemonikai rasped in warning before he pushed past, nearly falling through the doorway.

The cool night air hit him, crisp and biting against his fevered skin, and for the first time in what felt like forever, he dragged in a breath that did not choke him.

He kept walking, mind blank, steps aimless. No destination, just the all-powering need to escape the crushing memories.

By the time he became aware of his surroundings, he was standing by the small lake in the Southern Wings' courtyard, hands clenched at his sides, knuckles pale. Tension coiled tight on his shoulder blades.

The water's surface rippled gently in the moonlight, sparkling as though in mockery of the torrent inside him. Daemonikai stood there, eyes locked on the water as it danced and simmered in tranquil beauty. He lost track of time. Minutes, hours? It didn't matter.

The night stretched around him, the sound of night owls blending with the distant howls of Urekai beasts prowling in the distance. He listened to them, letting their wild calls ground him.

When the first pale streak of dawn bled into the sky, he stirred at last, feeling... not calm, but better. The iron bands had let go, enough for him to breathe properly, to think.

Daemonikai turned walking back toward the fortress. Yet, instead of his chambers in Frostfall, he found himself daending in Blackstone, before her door.

For days, this urge had chewed at him like blizzards on a carcass, but he had fought it with everything in him. Yet, it seemed, no matter how hard he resisted, he would always be pulled back here... back to her.

What was he doing here?

Daemonikai took a step back. But that was all the moving away he could do. Standing there, rooted to the spot, he fought himself. His fists clenched at his sides, nails digging into his palms as he hovered outside her door, torn between instinct and reason.

In the end, reason crumbled. With a quiet exhale, he pushed the door open, stepping into the room with barely a sound, closing it softly behind him.

The scent of her, of Galilea, folded around him like a raven's wings, soothing and provoking all at once. His eyes found her curled beneath the heavy covers, asleep, her dark hair wild against the pillow. So young like this. Innocent, at peace.

His beast purred. His savage animal, hardened by long, drawn-out wars, who had witnessed kingdoms fall and saw fires rein, now relaxed. It rubbed against him like a lazy feline, content after days of feeling bloodthirsty and restlessness. The tension on his shoulders unraveled.

And it made sense now. Soulbound.

Fucking hell.

"Your Grace," a sleepy tone broke through the quiet.