

## Chapter 214

PRINCESS AEKEIRA

Grand Lord Vladya kissed Aekeira again.

All her resistance melted away like wax under a flame, pooling at her feet. Pressing her body against his, she met his tongue with hers, kissing him back hungrily even as her tears kept running free.

Light-gods, she has missed him so much.

Just like the first time, their kiss went on forever. Aekeira forgot to breathe entirely, losing track of everything yet again.

By the time he broke the kiss, she was gasping for air. No longer pinned against the wall, she found herself lying on a thick, blanket-like covering, Lord Vladya half atop her.

Through a hole in the cave's roof, the afternoon sunlight streamed in, casting golden rays across them. Where had the morning gone?

Eyes heavy-lidded, body humming with desire, Aekeira could barely think straight.

"I want you," she confessed in a whisper, greedily drinking in the sight of him.

Lord Vladya stared at her mouth. "I want you too, Aekeira, so much," he growled, but then, to her surprise, he pulled away. "But, unfortunately, we can't. It's not good for me."

"What... what do you mean?" Aekeira struggled to clear the cobwebs from her mind, still lost from his brain-melting kisses.

"It will reactivate my sexlust," There was hunger in his eyes, but also restraint.

She sat up, confused. "Your sexlust went dormant...?"

"After your departure, the first few months were...unbearable. Trying to resist the sexlust alone nearly drove me over the edge. My beast and I didn't want anything to do with the females Daemonikai brought to me. No matter how much blood I drank, the hunger wouldn't abate." Pain flickered in his eyes. "It was horrible."

Aekeira could imagine.

"But I thought I could handle it." Lord Vladya said, his expression faraway. "After two months of resisting, I went on my first killing rampage."

Something inside Aekeira shriveled up and died. The lust that plagued her vanished as if it had never been there, and a chilling cold replaced it.

"How many?" she asked hoarsely. Dreadfully.

"Six."

Aekeira gasped.

He pulled back completely, sitting at the bed's edge. "I had taken six lives." His tone was neutral, but the pain was right there in his gray eyes. "Three humans, three Urekai. They had families. They weren't meant to die that way."

No wonder he exiled himself to this place. Aekeira wet her parched throat. "What happened, after...?"

"I woke up, snarling, half-mad, chained to my bed. Daemonikai had found and subdued me. I remember the driving urge to kill him. To kill everyone," he recalled, face pinched. "But Daemonikai looked me dead in the eyes and said, 'I'm doing this for your own good.' Then he left me there for the rest of the day."

Aekeira didn't say a word, but her heart, as treacherous as ever, reached out to him. Pulling closer to where he sat, she took his hand—his paw—in hers, uncaring of the long, sharp claws.

"By the time he returned the next day, my demons had quieted. Only then did he send the females in. They forced me and my savage beast to satisfy the lust that'd pushed me over the edge." His spacey eyed blinked, then glanced at her. "He saved my life. For the first time in months, I could breathe again. But..."

"But?" she urged.

"That was the last time I felt that overpowering hunger for sex. The instinct that drives our kind to need sex as a necessity went to sleep. Dormant."

Aekeira's mouth gaped open. "Is that bad? It sounds bad. Did something damage in you?" He hadn't been with another female in two years?

There was something different in his eyes now. In the way he looked at her. Like he was seeing her for the first time.

Intense. More focused.

Her heart started to race. Aekeira squirmed under that penetrating stare. "My lord...?"

"It's not bad, just...impossible." Lord Vladya said in a low voice. "I didn't want to believe it. If I hold on to hope only to be disappointed again, I fear it will be my breaking point. So, I do not expect. I do not hope."

She struggled to keep up with him. "... I don't understand."

"Our kind has two compulsory urges that must be satisfied every once in a while, or we cannot function—"

"Yes, I know. To drink blood and to have s-sex," Aekeira supplied.

Lord Vladya nodded. "Correct. We call them Bloodlust and Sexlust. We must indulge occasionally to keep the mind clear and the beast satisfied. Bloodlust never goes dormant, but Sexlust can. Do you know when our Sexlust instincts go dormant, Aekeira?"

She shook her head.

"When two bonded mates are separated by distance, they don't feel Sexlust until they are reunited," Lord Vladya told her, his eyes never leaving hers. "Yes, they still get aroused, they still feel lust, but not in its overpowering state—the kind that drives our beasts restless and insane when one abstains for weeks."

"That's how bondmates who go to war for months, even years, survive without their significant other," he continued. "Their souls recognize the absence of their mate and put the instinct to sleep until they are together again."

"Okay, I understand now. But what has that got to do with you?"

"My instincts are asleep now," he reiterated. "I have no idea how that happened, but I think being with those females made it clear to my very core that you, Aekeira, were truly unavailable. That's when my sexlust went dormant."

Realization dawned, and Aekeira's eyes widened, as round as the full moon. "You're saying it happened b-because of me?"

"Because of you," he confirmed.

Her heart beat faster. "But, we're not b-bonded."

"That's the part I can't explain, the part I don't understand." Lord Vladya said.

Then, he leaned in, his breath warm against her neck. "But I know that if I were to lay you down on these covers and bury myself deep inside you, my sexlust would reawaken."

Aekeira's breath caught in her throat.

"If I were to take your sweet little body until you're screaming my name so loud the birds take flight, and the woods listen in to the music you make—just the way I so desperately want—then that driving urge, in all its animalistic, lustful glory, would come roaring back to life."

"Lord Vladya!" Her cheeks flushed beet red, and Aekeira quickly lowered her head.

He smiled a little and pulled back. "But I won't do that. That instinct was the hardest to control, to the extent I killed for it. I don't miss it." Then, turned serious. "What kind of connection do we have that even my soulless self recognizes you?"

Fire in his eyes." How did my instinct know that the one female we truly wanted was far away, and instead of looking for another female to fixate on, it went dormant? What does that mean for you and me?"

I don't know. Aekeira shuddered, mind reeling. His instinct went dormant because of me.

He rose, pulling her up with him. "I wanted, more than anything, to track you down and drag you back here," he said. "Ukrac, I was ready to cross into Navia and haul you back, even if it meant taking you against your will while you kicked and screamed. I wanted it that badly. But I couldn't. I wasn't fit to travel long distances."

Be still, my heart. Please, be still. "You w-wanted to come for me?"