

Captive Slave 350

Chapter

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Blood burst from her lips, and a strangled cry tore from her throat. She doubled over, one hand clutching at her side, blood staining the front of her robes.

Daemonikai's pulse thundered in his ears.

Slowly, he rose from his throne, and so did Ottai-but no one interrupted. Dead silence rang in the hall.

The Oracle straightened, shaking. Her pale eyes found Daemonikai's.

"It was never young Alvin, but dark magic planted in his mind," she said hoarsely. "Our people fell beneath the blades of humans, yes-but it was one of ours who brought them here." Another sharp cry as she clutched at her chest, staggering. "One of ours stole the Chalice... so our people would be weak... defenseless," she gasped.

Daemonikai could not breathe. Or perhaps he was breathing too fast. He was not certain.

His lungs burned as though deprived of air, but in his ears was the harsh rasp of his own breathing.

This is not real. This cannot be real.

They rang through his mind like a chant As he met Vladya's eyes. Then Ottai's. Then the stunned, pale faces of his people.

And then... the bleeding Oracle before them all.

The bleeding Oracle, who would not bleed if she spoke false. The bleeding Oracle, who never interfered, never crossed the boundary of her sacred oath. And yet, here she stood, willing to risk everything-her vows, her life—just to deliver a truth that did not seem real. But it was.

Outside, the commotion raged on. The sounds of combat carried faintly into the great hall. The clash of steel, the snarls of beasts, the shouts of men. The battle was not dying down, growing worse.

"I cannot go into details," the Oracle panted, gripping her staff with a shaking hand, the wood slick with the blood that trailed from her fingertips. "Already... my life drains away, so I will use what little remains to give you the names of the ones responsible. The mastermind who betrayed his own kind."

A loud bang! split the air, jolting everyone's attention to the grand entrance.

The thick doors shuddered. The iron drawbars groaned as they shifted under the impact.

Another bang! followed, louder this time. The doors trembled again.

The third was a brutal, deafening crash! and it splintered the heavy wood, the planks of the barricade snapping and scattering across the floor.

"Who dares do this!?" Daemonikai roared. "Stop this at once!"

A beast stomped in through the broken doorway, snarling as it shifted. Bones cracked, muscle shrank, and a male stood in its place.*w@w.môvelwo@m.có(m)*

Somehow... Daemonikai already knew.

From the force of the commotion and the audacity to break into the event hall- even when ordered not to, somehow, he'd known it would be Zaiper.

"Do not believe the lies of that withered hag!" Zaiper barked stalking forward, fury blazing in his eyes.

"Zaiper, what is the meaning of this?" Vladya growled.

Daemonikai glanced at him. There was fear in Vladya's eyes.

Not confusion, not outrage. Fear.

The same bone-deep fear he was sure was reflected in his own eyes.

Because the Oracle's words were coming together. And they made sense.

"She dares to slander the Dragaxlov name!" Zaiper thundered, drawing his blade, taking a step toward the Oracle in open threat. "I will not stand for this!"

In a blur of speed, Vladya was between them, pushing the shaking female behind him with one arm.

"The Dragaxlov name?" High Chief Yazaro of the northern clans rose slowly to his feet, his brow wrinkled together. "But... she has not mentioned any names yet." Zaiper stopped short. Blinkered once. "She has not?"

Yazaro shook his head, his face pale. "What exactly is going on here?"*w@W.mó(v)Eflworm.COm*

The silence that followed was suffocating. Cold.

Was it really chilly in here, or is it my insides making ice? Daemonikai's feet remained pinned on the spot.

Zaiper seemed to realize what he'd done, stepping back slowly, lifting his hands to placate. "It seems I may have misunderstood. I'm not certain what is happening here, and that's my mistake." His smile was strained. "But in any case, I will be taking the Oracle away now. If you will excuse me."

The Oracle doubled over, shuddering and coughing aggressively.

Daemonikai forced his frozen limbs to move. In the space of a heartbeat, he was beside Vladya, his hand closing around the Oracle's frail shoulders. Together, they guided her back to the dais, supporting her falling body.

There were so many things he wanted to say, so many questions he needed to ask, and so many truths he needed to hear from her. But only one thing mattered now.

Gripping her shoulders, Daemonikai held her upright as her weight sagged into his hands. He brought his face close to hers, locking eyes with that ancient gold, ringed in black, dimming fast.

"I need to hear you say it." His furious voice shook as much as his hands. "Give me their names."

"He is... responsible for everything..." the Oracle's face reflected a great physical pain no one could see. "The females in heat... disappearing." A cough sprayed blood over Daemonikai's hands. "The assassin... who tried to kill you... while you fought soul-sickness." Another splatter of blood. "The current state..... of your mind."

Tears blurred Daemonikai's vision as the Oracle fell into the crook of his arm.*(w)Ww.no@éLWô(r)mm.com*

Must hold back. Information first, breakdown later. He shook her. "His name, Oracle!"

Zaiper's voice cracked across the hall. "Do not believe anything that—!"*w@w.NoVzLw@Rm.Co*

"Silence!" Daemonikai roared, trying hard to suppress his pheromones. Even the slightest release would affect the dying female in his arms, and not in a good way. "His Name! Shout it for all to hear!"

"Grand Lord Zaiper!" The Oracle shouted, followed by a wailing cry of such excruciating pain, it would forever be etched in the minds of all who heard it. "He was the mastermind behind everything. Joined forces with—"

The coughing fit was even more aggressive. Turned unending.

The carved glyphs on her staff began to glow and sparkle. Then, at last, the Oracle's eyes closed, and her body went limp.

The staff slipped from her fingers, clattering against the floor.

Daemonikai lowered her gently to the ground, laying her out respectfully. For a second, he remained kneeling beside her. Slowly, he rose to his feet, and, like everyone else, he turned to Zaiper.

It was him.

Not the humans.

Not my son.

Him.