

## Chapter 61

### GRAND LORD ZAPIER

Silence enveloped the room. The people were too stunned to find their voices, their mouths agape in disbelief. Even the grand lords wore expressions of utter shock.

Then, chaos erupted in every corner. The air was filled with a cacophony of voices, asking questions that no one had answers to.

"What just happened!?"

"Is that truly the king's beast!?"

"How could this be!?"

Though their words differed, the underlying question was the same. Had their feral grand king truly broken free from its confinement, entered a room full of prey, and casually picked up a human boy before leaving?

Amidst the murmurs, people began fleeing the court, eager to escape in case the beast returned. The fortress descended into commotion, with screams and frantic footsteps echoing through the halls.

"I need to ensure the safe evacuation of everyone," Lord Ottai declared. Turning to Vladya, he added, "Could you check which way the beast went? Is it heading towards the arena or the wings? We must be certain."

"Of course," Lord Vladya responded, taking a step forward to leave.

"Daemonikai's feral beast is a menace, that much I can tell you." Lord Zaiper stood rooted to the spot, his gaze fixed on the grand entrance.

"Why? Because you thought it would be amusing to provoke it, only to end up being lifted off your feet?" Ottai quipped, with barely concealed amusement.

Zaiper muttered a curse under his breath.

"How's the arm?" Vladya stared at the spot where the Daemonikai had dug into Zaiper. "That wound looks deep."

"It's nothing. I didn't even notice it," Zaiper stated.

Vladya cocked his head to the side. "That's not how I remember it. I'll have you know that the smell of your fear is not enticing at all. It smelled like ash."

Zaiper reddened and advanced a step. "You asshole."

"You two, not now." Ottai stepped between them. "We need to get our people to safety, remember?"

Vladya clicked his tongue and merely stepped away.

Zaiper glared at Vladya for a full minute, before he forced his focus elsewhere. Somewhere much more important.

Zaiper's brows furrowed. "Why that boy? How does a feral beast enter a crowd, spare lives, and depart with a boy cradled protectively in its arms?"

"I have no answers, Zaiper. We are all as bewildered as you are," Lord Ottai replied, running his hand through his perfectly slicked-back black hair.

Ottai turned to Vladya. "Do you think it intends to take the boy to a quiet place and kill him, or something? The last time he sought him out, it was driven by sexual hunger. What could be the motive this time?"

Vladya's thoughts seemed scattered, going everywhere and nowhere at the same time. He simply shook his head, just as confused as the rest of them.

"Maybe it has developed a taste for his blood, or something," Vladya muttered, still trying to wrap his head around what just happened.

"But now is not the time for speculation," Ottai said. "We must ensure the beast hasn't gone to the arena and evacuate the people."

With that, they scattered to guide their people to safety.

### MISTRESS SINAI

As the court emptied, Mistress Sinai remained seated, rigid and motionless. Her expression one of pure fury. What had just happened? How could this have happened?

One of the ladies approached her, wide-eyed. "Who is that boy, Sinai? Being his bloodhost, surely you have some information."

Sinai glared at her, spun around, and stormed out of the court before she succumbed to the urge to do something very unladylike. Like scream at the top of her lungs or throw things.

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### FROSTFALL DOMAIN, THE SOUTHERN WINGS

#### GRAND LORD VLADYA

Four hours later, after checking out the arenas and the wings, clearing the banquet hall and surrounding areas, Grand Lord Vladya made his way to the forbidden chambers. He had a hunch the beast returned to its confinement, but he needed to confirm it. And there was the matter of the boy—he was curious about the boy's fate.

As he reached the fourth wing, he heard feminine cries growing louder. Turning the corner, he found Aekeira seated on the floor, sobbing inconsolably.

The girl rose upon seeing him and hurried toward him.

She dropped to her knees, "They won't let me get close. The soldiers are blocking my path. I can't see my b-brother, please help me."

Vladya had purposefully ignored the girl all day as a means of self-preservation. But as he glanced at her now, that part of him that felt strangely drawn to her began to surface.

Pushing those thoughts aside, he met her with an indifferent gaze. "Return to your chambers, Aekeira. You should not be here."

"No, no, no," she shook her head vigorously, her eyes red and swollen. "Em has been missing for hours! I need to know if he is safe. I need to ensure that beast has not d-devoured my brother. Please, help me." Desperate hands clung to his garment. "I would do anything."

He didn't need to hear this now. "Aekeira—"

"Anything!" the girl persisted stubbornly, her eyes blazing with determination. The princess within her shone through her unyielding will. "I give you my body. Isn't that what you desire? You can have it. I'll spread my legs for you, and even present—"

"Don't you dare," Vladya snapped, anger flaring within him. Alongside that was a surge of arousal, pulsating through him. His manhood hardened, hungry, and demanding. "How dare you attempt to barter your filthy body with me?"

He took a menacing step forward, causing the girl to shrink back in fear. Drawing closer, he bent down and gripped her delicate neck with his fingers.

"You are my slave, Aekeira. I have ownership over this body," he said in a low voice, his gaze wandering down her figure. "I will take it whenever and however I please. If I choose not to, it is because I have no desire for it. You are in no position to negotiate with me."

The girl tightly shut her eyes, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I-I just... Please, I'm desperate. I need to know if my brother is safe."

"And you believe barging into the forbidden chambers and provoking the beast was the right course of action? Putting yourself and your brother's life at risk, as well as endangering the lives of my people?" he continued in a deceptively calm tone. "You fool. I should have you whipped."

Releasing her neck, he stepped back, "Get out of here, Aekeira. Return to your room. That is an order."

A cry of despair escaped her throat as she looked at him helplessly, before she rose and obeyed his command. Vladya watched her depart.

Her bravery...

A female who had been terrified of him, yet never hesitated to confront him for the sake of her brother. She even attempted to bargain with him, fully aware that he would not be gentle with her body.

Such fierce loyalty. Such love that gave her courage.

He admired and despised it. Vladya didn't want to see those qualities—or any qualities at all—in her or any human, for that matter. Was that too much to ask?

Continuing on his way to the Abyss land, he dismissed the soldiers he encountered. And was not surprised to find no soldiers guarding the chambers up close.

With the beast having escaped tonight and the locks not yet replaced, everyone knew better than to approach that chamber.

The metal gate locks lay in shambles on the floor, and the oak door was broken. Inside, the beast lay behind its barricade, its yellow eyes glaring at the entrance. At the intruder.

And then, there was the boy.

Curled up on the floor, his hair freed from its bindings, spilled around him. Fully clothed.

His breathing was steady, a rhythmic pattern, fast asleep. And a few feet away, the beast sat, watching over him protectively. Possessively.