

Chapter 133

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LORD HEROD

Emeriel scoffed, shaking her head vehemently. "Please do not even joke about something like that, my Lord. I feel fine. I've had mini-heats before, and I can definitely tell you that I'm not in heat right now. I'm not feeling anything like that." She leaned forward, her eyes scanning the scroll before him, desperately seeking a distraction. "I need to look at these records carefully."

Hours passed as Lord Herod observed with growing concern as Emeriel flitted about the study like a moth caught in a lantern's glow.

She paced, she perched on the cushions, and she paced once more, her brow furrowed in concentration, as she clutched a stack of parchments in her shaky hands.

"You could try rotating crops, My Lord," she suggested, her voice clipped and focused. "Planting legumes in one season and grains in the next could potentially replenish the soil."

"Mmm," Herod murmured noncommittally.

"Furthermore, investing in new irrigation systems might prove beneficial," her words tumbled out in a rush. "Providing water to the fields during droughts could significantly improve their yield."

"Mmm," Herod's eyes fixed on Emeriel's agitated movements.

"And as for the unexplored land," she pressed on, barely pausing for breath, "one could experiment with different seeds and explore the use of new fertilizers—"

"Emeriel," he called softly.

"Yes?" Pausing, Emeriel glanced at him, her eyes wide and unfocused. "The legumes that should be planted need—"

"Emeriel," his tone was more insistent this time.

Emeriel stopped abruptly, her attention snapping back to him. "Yes, My Lord?"

Lord Herod rose from his seat and walked towards her. Kneeling before her, he gently took the parchment from her trembling hands and set it aside. Tenderly, he reached for her hand, forcing her to meet his gaze.

"Have you noticed that you have changed seats seven times since your arrival?" he asked, softly. "From the office chair to the cushions, then pacing, then more pacing?"

Emeriel blinked at him as if her mind was struggling to catch up. "Huh?"

"It is bitterly cold outside, little one. Yet you are sweating profusely." Lord Herod paused, his eyes searching hers. "You are restless. Uncomfortable."

Emeriel shook her head in denial, dread in her eyes. "I know the signs—"

"You have jerked your hands away from mine three times," Lord Herod continued, his gaze dropping to their intertwined fingers. "Even now, your hand practically trembles with the effort to separate from mine."

He paused, allowing his words sink in. "It means your body is starting to reject touch. By tonight, you will be feeling the full effects. Your full heat is here, Emeriel."

EMERIEL

Much Later:

"Alright, alright, stay calm," Emeriel muttered to herself pacing restlessly around Lord Herod's study. The ledger lay forgotten on the table.

Waves of intense discomfort washed over her, leaving her feeling hot, restless, and utterly miserable. Her clothes were suffocating her. Her skin prickled with an unbearable itch. Sweat trickled down her face and back, despite her frantic fanning.

The door creaked open, and Lord Herod entered the room, his eyes filled with concern.

"I have told the maids to prepare the cottage," he spoke in a soothing tone. "Over the past week, I have instructed them to fortify the walls in preparation for your full heat. Now, all that remains is for them to clear the space, and I shall escort you to see it." He took a step closer, his gaze searching her face. "How do you feel?"

Emeriel raked her fingers through her hair. "Very uncomfortable."

"Come, let us venture outside," Lord Herod suggested gently. "You can get some fresh air."

Emeriel hesitated. What she really wanted was to tear off her clothes and run around naked through the cool morning air, but she knew that was out of the question.

"Alright," she said reluctantly, allowing Lord Herod to lead her out of the study and towards the grand entrance.

As they passed the servants, Emeriel felt their eyes burn into her skin like hot coals. She saw the hunger in their gazes, heard the low groans escaping their lips.

"Why do they look at me in such a manner?" She pressed closer to Lord Herod despite the discomfort it caused her.

"Your scent has intensified tenfold, Emeriel," Lord Herod explained with a touch of strain in his voice. "Fear not, for I will not let any harm come to you."

She noticed the change in his tone. He was also fighting to maintain his composure. Yet, even in that moment, she knew she could trust him. She nodded slowly. "Thank you, my Lord."

"Here, allow me to examine your eyes." Lord Herod leaned forward, his fingers brushing against Emeriel's skin as he gently held her chin, disregarding her slight flinch. Peering into her eyes, his gaze searched, intense. "Just as I expected," he murmured, releasing her chin. "Quite red. Your full heat is progressing steadily."

Outside, the cool air washed over Emeriel's heated skin, providing instant relief. She inhaled deeply, filling her lungs with the refreshing breeze. "I feel a little better."

"I am glad." Lord Herod's eyes softened. "I shall dismiss the soldiers, save for the sentries."

Embarrassment tinged Emeriel's cheeks. "I apologize for the trouble," she murmured, her gaze fixed on the ground.

"No trouble at all." Lord Herod's voice was warm. "Remember, I had a bondmate in the past. This is merely routine. One I have missed, if I am to be honest."

Emeriel lifted her head, trying to focus on the breathtaking view of the estate, but the burning flames in her body returned, overshadowing the cool breeze.

"Where shall the soldiers be sent?" she asked, desperate to distract herself from the escalating discomfort. "Once they are released from duty, that is?"

Lord Herod's eyes twinkled with amusement. "Ah, that is when the female soldiers come in."

Emeriel's head snapped to him. "Urekai have female soldiers?" She couldn't recall seeing any female soldiers since she had arrived in Urai.

"Indeed," Lord Herod chuckled. "Mostly, it's just the males, but we have female soldiers trained to protect and guard in situations like this." A hint of pride tinged his voice. "The Lord of Military Affairs has it taken care of. We hire their services, and in exchange, they come to work here for the duration they are needed while our male soldiers take care of whatever assignments the female soldiers were working on before their services were required. It's more like an exchange of sorts."

"Really?" Emeriel's eyes lit up with fascination. "That is remarkable. I often wondered how households safeguard themselves when a female is in heat, if they have to let go of the male workers and soldiers."

"As Urekai, we leave nothing to chance." Lord Herod declared. "We do not trifle with security. King Daemonikai ensured that. That is the foundation of our dominance among the species. We are eternally vigilant, perpetually prepared. There is always a solution." A fleeting shadow darkened his eyes. "Except during the Eclipse Moon. Then, we are all at its mercy."

The tense silence lingered until it was disrupted by the hurried approach of a maid. Gasping for breath, she bowed before Lord Herod. "My lord, the cottage is prepared."

Lord Herod turned to Emeriel and urged gently. "Come, let us inspect it."

Moments later, Emeriel stood in a quaint room, its walls adorned with soothing patterns and soft fabrics. Dominated by a vast, inviting bed draped in cool linens.

Yet, Emeriel could barely focus on her surroundings. Her breaths came in short, desperate gasps. The fine fabric of her chest-bind felt like molten lava against her skin, every fiber a source of unbearable irritation.

"Ukrae," Lord Herod's nostrils flared. "Your scent... This is going to be far more difficult than I expected. Give me a moment, I must see to the soldiers."

Abruptly, he left.

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