

## Chapter 134

LORD HEROD

Time grew short as Lord Herod scrambled to prepare.

He dispatched his male soldiers and urgently requested female guards from Lord Jakal. He ordered enough supplies to last three days and held an emergency meeting with his steward, bailiffs, and head farmers.

He informed them of his impending absence, delegated responsibilities, and provided detailed instructions to ensure the smooth operation of work and his estate while he was unavailable.

It had taken longer than usual, and by the time he returned to the cottage in the early afternoon, a sliver of worry crept into his mind. Would Emeriel still be there?

Females in full heat tended to run away. So crazed with need, driven by instincts to flee, in search of a male to sate them.

Relief flooded him as he entered the cottage and found her still pacing the room, a whirlwind of restless energy. But the moment he crossed the threshold, her scent hit him like a storm.

Bloody hell, it has gotten even stronger. Choking. Intoxicating.

Females in full heat smelled amazing, and Emeriel was no different. Herod had never seen her as anything more than his young friend, which is why he had struggled with the idea of helping her through her heat.

But the potent scent pouring from her stirred a hunger in him. A deep, raw lust.

He swallowed hard, pushing down the rising tide of desire.

"How are you feeling?" he asked, his voice sounding strained even to his own ears.

"Can't ex-plain it," Emeriel stammered, her words punctuated by ragged breaths. She resumed her frantic pacing, her fingers raking at her arms, leaving angry red marks in their wake.

"These clothes burn." With a cry of frustration, she tore at her tunic and trousers. Her fingers, fumbling, frantic, and uncoordinated, struggled against the fabric.

Herod watched helplessly, unsure what to do. She then attacked her chest bindings, but the material proved resistant.

A cry of distress escaped her lips. "I need them gone!"

Herod rushed to her aid, unable to bear her anguish any longer. Together, they tore at the bindings, ripping the fabric to shreds until she was finally free. Emeriel shed the last vestiges of her clothing until she stood before him, completely naked.

Herod nearly swallowed his tongue.

Emeriel had always been exquisite, but stripped bare, she was a vision of rare, untamed beauty. Her porcelain skin was drenched with sweat, and her cheeks flushed with feverish hotness.

Her eyes, normally so sharp and intelligent, were now clouded with arousal. The soft curve of her breasts was alluring, and the delicate blush of her nipples was taut with desire. Her hips were soft and inviting, accentuated by the sun's warm rays peeking through the curtains.

She was breathtaking.

Emeriel has the kind of beauty that made her stand out in a crowd. She had been the first to catch his eye while surveying the slaves on that fateful day, but he had tried to ignore her, dismissing her as a male.

But something about her had seemed amiss, just as it had with Vera. In the end, he had given in to his curiosity, a decision he had never regretted.

Emeriel was a brilliant and quick-witted friend, a beacon of light in the darkness that had engulfed him after the loss of his bondmate. She helped him in ways he could have never imagined. Filled his life with laughter and purpose, becoming an indispensable part of it.

Emeriel climbed onto the bed, curling into a fetal position against the headboard. Her body trembling as she rocked back and forth.

He liked the girl, and the sight of her now, so consumed by her heat, twisted a knife in his heart.

"It will get worse, won't it?" she croaked.

Herod couldn't lie to her. "Yes," his voice heavy with regret. Herod couldn't lie to her. "Much worse. This is just the beginning, dear one. The full force of your heat is yet to come."

Fear flickered in her beautiful blue eyes, a familiar expression whenever the topic of her heat arose.

It pained him to see her so afraid. Hurt him to know her unique circumstances made this experience all the more terrifying for her. And she had every reason to be.

A soft knock at the door broke the tense silence. "Water is here, my Lord," a maid announced from outside.

Herod opened the door, accepting the water pots and wooden cup from the female servant. He placed them on a table in the corner of the room.

"You need to be at full strength for the next three days. You mustn't become dehydrated."

He filled the cup with cool water and climbed onto the bed, holding it to her lips. Emeriel gulped it down eagerly, her hands clutching her knees.

"You will help me with my heat, won't you?" she asked, hoarsely. "You said you would think about it."

Herod had said that. His hand hovered over her knee, watching as she flinched away.

Yet, her eyes remained locked on his, pleading for a solution to her torment.

"When the time comes, your body won't want my touch, little one. I am not the one you desire."

"B-but you said it didn't matter," she spluttered, her voice thick with tears. "You said—"

"It doesn't, not when the heat fully takes hold. But I cannot, in good conscience, take you that way, knowing your heart and soul belong to another. Watching you jerk away from my touch while begging for his, hearing you cry out his name as I take your body..." He brushed a stray lock of hair from her forehead, his touch featherlight. "My alpha beast would not tolerate that rejection, Emeriel, and might hurt you. I care for you too much. I cannot bear to hurt you like that."

Emeriel swallowed. Her eyes now a vibrant crimson, reflected the growing intensity of her heat. "I don't know what to do. If it's already like this... I can't even begin to imagine what it will feel like when it fully hits."