

## Chapter 137

LORD HEROD

Emeriel's screams began again.

Herod could hear her crying, begging, and he hated it so much. She was in agony, and he despised how helpless he was to help her. But being far away from her was the best way to protect her.

Once he caught a whiff of her scent, Herod knew it would be over. He would go into a rut.

That's why he was in his room, pacing. His fists clenched so tightly that his knuckles ached, the floorboards creaking beneath his agitated strides.

"Somebody help! Please!" she cried, her voice raspy and raw. The sound of her shaking the cottage door rang in his ears.

Herod squeezed his eyes shut, his nails digging into his palm. He had to ignore it. He had to.

"I ca-can't... I can't take this," she sobbed. "It's too much, please...I feel like I'm dying."

Herod pressed his palms against his ears, desperate to block out the sound of her pain. But it was no use.

His beast sensed the agony of someone they cared for, and was annoyed and restless within him. The urge to investigate, to comfort, was almost overwhelming.

"Please! my king, I ne-need you!" she cried. "I need you s-so much...Where are you? Please, I'm dy-dying."

The door rattling had stopped, and Herod imagined her small body writhing in agony on the floor of the cottage. A pounding headache developed.

"Please, come before it gets me again. I ca-can't...I can't..." Panic entered her voice. "It's coming again—" A scream tore from her throat, cutting through the night air like a jagged blade.

Herod imagined her twitching from the pain, her eyes filled with terror. Vulnerable and defenseless.

Orin had been right. Emeriel's heat was merciless. Brutal in its intensity.

Sobs echoed through the night, each one a fresh wound to Herod's soul.

Herod could not take it any longer, he was close to breaking.

Desperate for a distraction, he crossed to the window and flung open the curtains. In the distance, the cottage stood bathed in moonlight, its doors firmly shut. Herod needed air, needed to escape the suffocating guilt crushing him. He threw open the window—

And her scent hit him with the force of a lightning strike. He had made a terrible mistake.

Herod's muscles tensed, his body frozen in place. Her scent flooded his nostrils mixed with heady musk, amplified a thousandfold by her heat.

He registered distantly that he was growling. Raw need flooded his senses. Irresistible, uncontrollable. Want her, want her, want her!

His vision blurred, cock aching fiercely. Must have her. Must pin her down and take her.

Herod was barely aware of leaving his bedchambers and heading toward the cottage. His mind a fog of lust. He wanted, badly.

With every step he took toward that alluring scent, his want grew worse.

Opening the cottage door, he entered, a snarl ripping from him. Heavens, this scent.

Something ran toward him and slammed into his chest. Not something, someone. The owner of that heady scent.

"Must have you," he growled, the words torn from his throat. "Must take you."

The sweet body in his arms flinched as their bodies made contact. "King Daemonikai," she sobbed, her body clinging to him like a lifeline. "You are here...you are here."

His beast roared in protest, pained and angry. His name was Herodis, not Daemonikai!

The fog of arousal lifted a bit, replaced by a wave of guilt and panic. Zounds, he was not supposed to be here.

"Emeriel," he groaned, his voice thick with shame. "Hell, I should not be here."

She stared at him, eyes unfocused. "Lord H-Herod?"

"It's me, dear one."

A small sound of disappointment and pain came from her a moment before she clung to him. "Please, just make it stop. I beg of you, just make it stop," she cried, her tears mingling with the sweat on her face.

"Emeriel..."

"Please, Lord Herod." Her eyes, red and swollen, filled with arousal, finally held recognition. "If you care for me at all...Just make this agony stop."

Herod tried to think through his rut. It was incredibly difficult. "I am not Daemonikai, little one," he choked out, his voice barely recognizable. "I am not the one your body needs."

"I don't care!" She writhed, rubbing her very naked body against his, trying to seek relief from the fire. "Just make it stop. It's too much! Too much...I can't handle this."

Herod's resolve crumbled and he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer.

Emeriel cried out again, her body twisting, rejecting him, yet desperate enough to take his touch. "Yes..."

Herod's hand moved down, caressing her soaked privates. But, Emeriel shoved him away.

"No! Don't touch me!" she yelled, scrambling away from him until her back hit the wall. Sliding down, she curled into a tight ball, rocking back and forth.

"No, no, no! Fe-feels wrong. So, so wr-wrong. I want my Beloved. I want my Beloved!" She wailed, bawling unrestrained.

It struck Herod like a knife to the gut. Rationally, he knew she was not rejecting him personally. But his beast so close to the surface, felt only the sting of rejection.

While it raged like a crazed, wounded animal, the male fought against the pull of the rut. He would not take her. He wouldn't force her. He wasn't the one she needed, the one her body craved.

The battle inside him raged. A tug-of-war between his instincts and his conscience. It was like trying to breathe underwater, each gasp a struggle for survival.

Finally, with phenomenal effort, he forced his legs to move. Herod stumbled out of the cottage, slamming the door behind him.

Gasping for air, he leaned against the wall. Greedily taking fresh air into his lungs, his mind slowly began to clear. The scent of her still clung to him, but the distance provided a modicum of control.

Another scream ripped through the night, shattering the fragile peace he had found. Herod's heart clenched. No, she cannot go on like this.

Making a decision, he hurried back to his study.