

## Chapter 37

"Regarding the introduction..." Aekeira's voice interrupted his thoughts. "...I heard that not everyone will be compelled to undress. The lords will handpick those who catch their eye and disrobe them. Who knows, they may never choose you. Or perhaps the lords will be hesitant to select a male?"

Emeriel emitted another snort. "Urekai do not conceal their desires for whom they want to mount, be it male or female. You know that. I am more concerned for you, Kiera. I do not wish for you to suffer any further."

"I am not worried about myself. It is you I fear for. I am terrified of what will transpire in that court tomorrow." Silence enveloped them thereafter.

"Come now, everyone has departed. Let us bathe," Aekeira declared, extending her hand, which Emeriel accepted.

Together, they made their way towards the river.

Aekeira remained on high alert throughout their bath. Although Emeriel spent most of the time with his body submerged in the river, only his head above water, and Aekeira positioned herself protectively, always shielding him from anyone's view.

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EMERIEL

They stood in front of the court, clad in the slaves's formal attire. A short, fitted dress that barely reached their knees.

Gathered on one side of the enormous court, their eyes fixed on the lords seated around the round table, a lavish feast spread before them.

The table was adorned with an abundance of flowers, and some lords had brought their own slaves, made to dine at their masters' feet, wearing unique collars around their necks.

Emeriel gazed at the Urekai Grand High Court, awestruck and horrified. He had never seen so many lords gathered before.

All dressed elegantly, yet their eyes held a glimmer of hatred and cruelty as they stared at the humans before them.

The herald announced the entrance of the grand lords, prompting everyone to stand and those already standing to straighten. The imposing doors swung open, and the trio entered.

Cloaked in their customary white garments, their flowing fabric exuded grace, adorned with gold embroideries, adding to their majestic appearance.

The irony did not get past Emeriel. These males donned pristine white robes, yet their hearts were as dark as coal.

The grand kings took their seats on their thrones, before the crowd followed. As they settled, the esteemed Lord of Ceremonial Affairs stood, commanding attention as he addressed the high court.

"Ladies and gentlemen, today we assemble not only for our customary banquet ceremony but also to mark the auspicious occasion of introducing and unveiling the new slaves the Urekai have acquired over the past year. This gathering is a testament to the continuity of our traditions and the expansion of our noble household. As we partake in this joyous event, let us celebrate the prosperity and growth of our realm."

Nods of agreement rippled through the crowd as the lord resumed his seat. Another lord rose to continue, and Emeriel's mind drifted. His nerves overwhelmed him, his mouth felt dry, and his palms were sweaty.

The binding cloth wrapped around his chest today was exceptionally tight, meant to really flatten his breasts under the single tunic that was not loose-fitting.

Aekeira's hand covered his. He looked at her, finding comfort in her nervous smile. Despite his fear for his sister's well-being, her presence beside him provided solace.

"Let the feast begin!" the voice announced, drawing Emeriel back to the present. Heads nodded in agreement, and applause filled the hall. Things seemed to be going well—so far, no one has summoned any slave. Perhaps it would only get better—

"You, you, and you," a lord's voice boomed, his finger pointing at three slaves simultaneously. "Strip."

The slaves stepped forward and began to undress and Emeriel swallowed his nervousness, his hands squeezing Aekeira's for support.

Another lord joined the chorus of commands. "You there, with the wavy auburn hair. Step forward. Undress." His tone was cruel, his gaze cold and assessing.

The auburn-haired slave obeyed, her steps hesitant but dutiful as she moved into the center of the hall. Her tunic slipped from her shoulders, baring her nakedness to the room.

It didn't stop. The demands came like a torrent.

"Show me your back."

"Turn around slowly."

"Let me see if you're worth keeping."

More slaves were called, more clothing shed.

Some lords preferred to issue their commands from their seats, watching with calculating eyes. Others rose and prowled like predators, inspecting the slaves as if they were cattle at market.

Hands reached out, groping flesh, lingering on breasts, gripping backsides. The inspection left no part untouched. If the lords liked what they felt, they commanded the slave to undress.

The hall was soon filled with feasting and "celebration.". Naked bodies knelt before their masters, forced to provide oral pleasure while jeering laughter filled the air. Others were laid bare across the round table, hands roaming over their exposed skin like vultures picking at carrion.

Some were bent over, Lords taking them from behind. A few were ordered onto the podium, their trembling forms commanded to dance to the applause of the crowd.

Emeriel couldn't look away, though every fiber of his being wanted to. Abhorrent. He clung to Aekeira, so nervous he thought of nothing else.

As the night wore on, the once-crowded group of slaves standing in presentation thinned until only a few remained. Exposed. Nowhere to hide.

And then it happened.

Grand Lord Zaiper's gaze locked on Emeriel, sharp as a hawk's. The grand lord's finger rose, pointing unerringly at him. "The boy. Undress."

Emeriel's world tilted, his pulse roaring in his ears.

Unlike others who had to raise their voice to be heard, the grand lords spoke their commands in a steady tone, but its weight silenced the hall. Every eye turned toward him.

He couldn't move. His feet felt like they'd grown roots, anchoring him to the spot. His heart pounded so violently it was a wonder no one could hear it. His gaze darted around the room, searching for a way out, but there was none.

"What are you doing?" hissed the slave beside him. Her voice was sharp, urgent. "Do you want to lose your head? Move forward and undress!" Her whisper felt like a lash, jolting him from his paralysis.

Emeriel didn't want to offer his head on a platter for the lords to feast upon, so his legs found their strength, and he strode forward.

In the open, his trembling fingers reached for the hem of his tunic, and he began to undress.