





# **Heku**

**Book 1 of the Heku Series**

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## Meeting

“Ms. Russo?” he asked, looking down at the woman in the house. He had spoken to her by phone but hadn’t met her yet.

Emily looked up, trying not to gasp as she saw that the men stood almost two feet taller than her and had broad shoulders that threatened to bulge out of the dark green western-style shirt, “Jerry, was it?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Please, call me Emily... and you’re a little early so why don’t you wait in the barn and I’ll be out in a bit,” she told him, and shut the door when he and his friend headed out toward the rustic barn.

Emily quickly ran a brush through her hair and pulled on her riding gloves before heading out. She glanced once around the house for Sam, the overseer, but he was still out plowing. Her attackers were all tall and muscular. She couldn’t help but wonder if these two were also going to attack her. She took a deep breath and headed out to the barn, they needed this sale if they were going to buy feed.

“Sorry about that,” she said, and skirted around the two men as she went to the stalls. “Can you ride a horse?”

Both of them glanced at her nervously. Her scent blew by them with the breeze and they fought to control their natural instincts as the mere smell made their throats burn with thirst.

“Yes, Ma’am, I can,” Jerry said, watching her closely. The man standing next to him was scanning the barn with an odd look on his face and his hands slowly curled into tight fists.

“Great, then you and I will head out,” Emily said, and started putting a saddle on a beautiful Arabian mare.

Jerry looked at her carefully. His keen senses focused on her while his guard studied the barn, trying to determine why the lingering scent of his own kind would be there. Her long red hair and fierce green eyes gave away her Irish heritage. She was a small woman, petite, but exquisitely beautiful. His eyes picked up the fading trace of a bruise on her cheek, something that would already be invisible to the human eye.

Emily led the horse out to him, “Will your friend be ok here in the barn for a while?”

Jerry smiled, “Yes, he’ll be fine.”

Emily swiftly hoisted herself, bareback, onto a painted mare. He noticed how natural and graceful she was on the horse, something that only came when you’ve been raised on one. He mounted the Arabian and turned the horse towards her.

“Let’s go then,” Emily said, and frowned slightly at his friend, who was glancing around the barn as if looking for something.

Jerry kicked his horse softly and followed Emily out of the barn and toward the pasture. A Border collie and a Blue Heeler fell in behind her and began to nip playfully at each other. After only a few minutes, he saw the large herd of Angus cattle they were heading towards. Emily was a few yards ahead of him so he studied her again. In the heat, she pulled her hair back off of her neck briefly and he caught a glimpse that made him frown and his heart pounded in his chest.

Her voice brought him out of his intense concentration, “You’re not from here, I’m guessing Texas?”

Jerry nodded, “Yes, we’re from Texas.”

“What brings you up to Montana for cows then?”

“I come for the best,” he said, and grinned when she blushed slightly. “Might I ask you a personal question?”



Emily glanced back at him as they neared the cattle, “Depends on what the question is.”

“Are you a donor?” he asked, unsure if he should even ask. Her appealing scent lingered on his tongue even out where the breeze took her smell away from him. It was stronger and more desirable than anything he had caught in his thousands of years of existence.

Emily frowned slightly, “Like an organ donor?”

“Never mind,” he said. Her question answered his. His body tensed as she nervously put her hand against her neck and he noticed her breath catch. “These are exactly as specified. We’ll take fifty of them.”

“We can gather them. You said you only wanted one bull?” Emily asked, glancing back at him. He noticed her eyes were no longer warm and inviting but had become guarded and unsure.

“Yes, you said he has papers?”

Emily nodded and turned back for the barn, “Yes, we’ll have them ready tomorrow if you can get them.”

“Will Saturday be ok?” he asked. He needed to buy some time to address some of his concerns about this young woman.

“Saturday’s fine. My husband’s gone for a few days, but will be back by then.”

They went the rest of the way in silence. He watched her carefully as they rode back toward the ranch house. As they drew closer, Jerry saw his guard standing outside of the barn beside a smaller, Hispanic man who had an angry look on his face.

“Sam, what’s wrong?” Emily asked when they approached him.

“You ok, Ms. Em?” he asked her, glaring at Jerry.

“I’m fine... Jerry is going to buy 50 head of cattle,” she told him, and slid off of the mare.

Sam nodded, "I'll hep dem, you git inside outa da heat."

Emily nodded and glanced nervously at Jerry before handing the reins over to Sam. She turned and ran into the house and he heard the door lock. Jerry got down from the horse and tied it to a post outside of the barn before turning to the older man.

"We'll be back on Saturday to get the cattle," Jerry said, eyeing Sam suspiciously. His guard stood perfectly still, giving no indication there was a problem.

"Your kind isn't welcome here," Sam said, scathingly. "You come get the cattle and then leave. Don't let me catch you back."

"My kind?" Jerry asked, and took a step towards Sam.

Sam stood his ground, "Yes, your kind. Go away and on Saturday deal with Keith only, stay away from Emily."

Not sure what to make of this entire visit, Jerry nodded and climbed into the pickup's driver seat while his guard glanced again at the barn and then crawled into the passenger seat. They were soon driving away from the small Montana ranch as Sam watched them with his arms crossed.

"I suspect we need to talk to the Council," Jerry said, pulling a cell phone from his pocket.

"We do," the guard agreed, watching the ranch disappear in the mirror.

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Jerry and his guard were ushered into the room by an equally tall and muscular man who wore a stark white shirt, black pants, and a flowing green cape. The room was large and had dirt floors, at the far end stood a platform where thirteen others looked down at them. They walked up and bowed to the three in the center.

"What brings you to the Council?" the woman asked, pulling the hood of her green robe down away from her face.

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