

Chapter 8

Damien and Kenneth looked the most stunned. Their faces were white with shock.

"Is this a joke?" Damien finally managed to say, his voice tight. "Elena, are you doing this to make me angry?"

Kenneth stepped forward, his eyes pleading. "Elena, why him? I can be whatever you want me to be. You can use me, hurt me, anything. Just don't choose him."

His performance was so convincing that a wave of murmurs went through the crowd.

"Wow, he really loves her."

"To be willing to be her plaything... that's true love."

"What a shame. She's breaking his heart."

I almost laughed. I stepped away from Hunter and faced Kenneth directly. "You love me? Is that what you're saying?"

"Yes," he said, his voice thick with emotion. "I would die for you, Elena."

"Really?" I asked, my voice dangerously sweet. "Because I seem to recall you saying, and I quote, 'Why is it our job to cheer her up? I'd much rather be with Eve.' Or was that someone else?"

The color drained from Kenneth's face. He stammered, "I... I don't know what you're talking about. Someone must be spreading lies!" He looked around desperately. "I swear, Elena, I love you!"

His acting was flawless. He almost looked like he believed it himself.

"Is that so?" I said, pulling a small digital recorder from my clutch. I pressed a button.

Kenneth's own voice filled the ballroom, loud and clear. "Why is it

our job to cheer her up? I'd much rather be with Eve."

The room fell into a dead silence. Kenneth's face was a mess of horror and disbelief.

"That," I said, my voice as cold as steel, "was you. This morning. So please, stop the act. It's pathetic."

Kenneth's eyes welled with tears as he struggled for words.

Before he could speak, Hunter strode forward and punched him squarely in the jaw. Kenneth crumpled to the floor.

"No one," Hunter snarled, standing over him, "insults my fiancée." He looked up, his eyes sweeping over the other Fellows. "I love her more than any of you ever could."

Damien's jaw tightened at the word "fiancée." He stepped forward, trying to regain control. "Elena, stop this foolishness. You know you want to marry me. We are meant to be."

He tried to give me a reassuring smile. "I will cherish you. You will have everything you desire." He lowered his voice. "Don't ruin the relationship between our families over a little tantrum."

