

Chapter 26: She Belongs To Me

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I didn't know how I managed to change with Darius still inside the fitting room.

He hadn't moved much—only a few steps away from me, his back still turned. But even without looking, I could feel him. Not just his presence... but the weight of it.

It pressed into the air, thick and hot and restless.

I watched him in the mirror. Broad shoulders. That same familiar tension in his posture, like a beast leashed too tightly.

I dressed slowly, fumbling slightly as I pulled the soft cotton dress over my head and smoothed the fabric down.

My fingers shook not from fear, but from something deeper. Something that buzzed in my veins and made my skin burn.

I was done, but I didn't speak.

I didn't have to.

Because somehow, without a word, he knew.

And before I could turn, he did.

I froze.

His eyes swept over me from head to toe, making my knees feel unsteady as if he were checking if I'd dressed properly.

He met my eyes for a beat too long.

I looked away, biting the inside of my cheek.

Then—voices.

Muffled. Hushed.

Lorelei.

Kael.

They were still out there.

I couldn't make out their words through the velvet curtain, but the tone was sharp, clipped—an argument veiled behind civility.

Kael's voice was low and urgent.

Lorelei's was sharp and sweet and fake, like honey masking poison.

I glanced toward the sound, but Darius's expression shifted.

His jaw tightened.

His golden eyes darkened... then narrowed.

He'd heard it.

All of it. Of course, he could hear what I couldn't with his ability. He's not a weak omega like me.

And it seemed like he didn't like what he heard.

Or so I thought...

Because his lips twitched upward into a smirk.

Slow. Cold. Dangerous.

As if he'd just thought of something. Something that entertained him.

"Let's go," he said.

And without waiting for me to answer, he pulled back the curtain.

I blinked against the sudden light.

Kael and Lorelei turned at once.

Lorelei's face twisted into surprise then quickly morphed into another practiced smile.

Kael...

His eyes found mine immediately.

And I swear I saw a flicker of something that almost looked like pain.

But Darius didn't give him a chance to speak.

He stepped forward and placed his hand on the small of my back.

Possessive. Intentional.

I saw Lorelei's gaze on us.

Then, she stared slowly from the tips of my polished shoes to the soft fall of my dress. Her eyes examined every detail. And in that moment, I saw it.

A flicker of something sharp behind her smile.

Envy.

This wasn't like before, when I wore her unwanted, wrinkled clothes that smelled faintly of her perfume and pride.

This dress was mine.

New.

Uncreased.

Untouched by her hands.

It didn't matter that it was simpler than the one I'd tried earlier. She knew. She could see it.

I was no longer wearing what she thought I deserved.

And she hated that.

Still, she smiled as she stepped forward, that same fake sweetness curling around her voice like spoiled sugar.

"Oh, what a sweet husband you have here," she said, her tone dipped in mock innocence. "A Lycan King... even helping you change your clothes. I guess you're too weak to do that yourself—"

"Lorelei." Kael's voice cut through her words, low and firm.

A warning.

"Let's go."

Lorelei's smile faltered for a second.

She cleared her throat, brushing invisible dust from her sleeve as if to mask the sudden shift in her composure.

"It's still early," she said lightly, turning to me with a look that barely masked her irritation. "And it's been such a long time since I've seen my sister. Can't we catch up? Maybe have lunch together?"

Before I could open my mouth to refuse because every part of me wanted to—I saw her gaze slide past me.

To Darius.

Her lips parted again, this time with soft intent as if trying to seduce him. "Would you allow us to have lunch with you, Darius?"

I stiffened.

Her voice was laced with fake courtesy, like she wasn't addressing a king but a man she thought she could charm.

Darius didn't move.

His golden eyes remained fixed forward. Unreadable. Cold.

And I waited.

Confident.

He wouldn't say yes.

Of course not.

He wasn't the type to entertain people—

But then—

"Sure," Darius said, his voice smooth and detached.

My stomach dropped.

Lorelei beamed.

Kael's jaw clenched again.

And I...

I forgot how to breathe.

"B-but the Queen—"

"They already left us," Darius cut me off, the pressure of his palm against the small of my back making me swallow hard.

"Let's go. I'm sure you're hungry," he said in a tone that made my skin flush.

As if he weren't talking about food.

As if he meant something else entirely.

It's like there was a hidden message in what he said, and from my peripheral vision, I saw their reactions as if they knew exactly what it meant.

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The soft chime of the restaurant door barely registered over the pounding in my chest.

I had never stepped into a place like this before.

A restaurant—and not just any restaurant, I think this is an elegant and expensive one.

Every chandelier sparkled like starlight above perfectly set tables. Conversations hummed elegantly, like a song I didn't know the lyrics.

It was Lorelei's choice, of course. She had smirked as she suggested, her voice lined with fake charm and backhanded grace.

"Oh, I just love this place. I hope it's not... too refined for you, Elira."

She said it gently, but the dig was sharp.

And loud enough for me to hear.

My fingers curled into fists at my sides.

Everyone seemed to turn and look the moment we entered, as if they could smell the unfamiliarity on me. Like they knew I didn't belong here. Like I was a stain in their perfect little world of gold cutlery and whispered gossip.

I kept my chin down, heart racing.

But then—

I remembered Queen Selene's voice.

That I shouldn't let anyone make me feel small. That I shouldn't let them see how their words affect me.

I breathed in deeply.

I lifted my chin and walked forward.

Kael reached the table first and pulled a chair without saying a word.

But before Lorelei could sit in it, he sat down in it himself.

Her expression cracked—just for a second.

Her cheeks flushed a deep red, and she laughed sharply before pulling out a chair for herself like it didn't bother her at all.

It clearly did.

I hesitated, unsure of what to do. The chairs were heavy, and my hands weren't steady. I reached toward the nearest one—

But before I could pull it—

Darius moved.

Silent, composed, and swift, he stepped behind me and pulled out a chair.

I thought he was going to sit in it himself.

"Sit," he said quietly, low enough that only I could hear.

My heart skipped.

Then thundered.

I sat slowly, and to my surprise, he didn't stop there. He made sure I was seated just right, his hand barely grazing the curve of my shoulder as he adjusted the chair. His movements were firm, almost gentle.

And then he finally moved to sit beside me, directly across from Kael.

A waiter approached us, handing each of us a leather-bound menu with a polite nod.

"Please take your time. Would you like still or sparkling water to start?"

"Still," Lorelei answered quickly, then glanced in my direction. Her smile returned—fake and laced with insult.

"Elira might not be used to sparkling, after all. It can be... overwhelming."

I stayed quiet, gripping the menu a little tighter.

"And I suppose you might need help choosing," she added lightly, flipping open her own menu. "Menus like these can be a little confusing if you haven't dined this way before. Don't worry, I'll help you pick something simple."

Her voice was light, but the insult beneath it was clear.

Kael shifted beside her but didn't speak. His jaw was clenched.

I was used to it. The insults. The silence. The absence of anyone to defend me.

But today... someone did.

"Watch your words," Darius said coolly, not even bothering to look at Lorelei as he spoke. His tone wasn't loud, but it carried.

Lorelei froze mid-sentence.

"I—I was just trying to help—"

"You're not," he said sharply, finally turning his gaze to her. "You're insulting her. Subtly, but intentionally."

Her smile faltered.

"That wasn't my intention, I—"

"You're not in your territory, Miss Wynter," Darius continued, his golden eyes narrowed and unblinking. "This isn't your pack. And it certainly isn't your home. You don't get to humiliate my wife here—or anywhere."

The table went quiet.

Lorelei tried to recover her smile, but it trembled.

"I didn't mean to offend—"

"Elira," he said, his gaze flicking to me, "doesn't need help choosing a meal. And even if she did, that wouldn't be your concern."

Then he looked back at Lorelei.

"She is no longer the omega your pack pushed aside... and rejected," he said, then glanced at Kael before returning his stare to Lorelei. "No longer someone beneath you."

He tapped his fingers once on the table.

"She belongs to me."

Those four words settled over the table like a silent quake.

I stiffened.

I knew what he meant by that—I was his slave. I belonged to him.

But this time, hearing it didn't feel like chains.

It felt like protection.

Then Darius leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table. His expression was unreadable—but sharp, like a blade hidden in silk.

"And if you ever forget that... if you so much as let another insult slip from your tongue, know this..."

He paused.

"You won't just be disrespecting her. You'll be disrespecting our Kingdom, and you'll be challenging me. And you don't want that... do you?"