

Chapter 27: I Hate You

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An uncomfortable silence clung to the table, heavy and unmoving—like the moment before a storm.

Lorelei let out a breathy, forced laugh. “O-of course, Darius—”

Darius’s gaze sharpened.

“Mr. Vane.”

His voice sliced through her words like a blade.

“Don’t call me by my first name.”

Lorelei blinked. Her painted smile faltered, embarrassed.

“Are you threatening Lorelei, Mr. Vane?” Kael finally spoke, his tone low and tight, barely veiling the hostility underneath.

Darius didn’t even blink.

“It’s a warning. Not a threat.”

He leaned forward slightly, never breaking eye contact.

“Because I’m not good with threats. I take action.”

The words hung in the air—quiet but unmistakable.

Lorelei’s throat bobbed as she swallowed.

No one spoke.

Even the low hum of conversation at the surrounding tables seemed to dull as if the entire room sensed the atmosphere shift.

Lorelei cleared her throat with a nervous laugh.

“W-well, I think I need to excuse myself. Just for a moment.”

Her voice was tight. Breathless.

She stood too quickly, bumping the edge of the table. Plates clinked, and a few heads turned.

Offering a stiff, uncertain smile to no one in particular, she hurried toward the restrooms—her heels clicking faster than her dignity could keep up.

And then there were three.

Me.

Kael.

Darius.

I could feel the storm simmering between them—two powerful men seated across from each other.

Kael's jaw was tight, his gaze locked on Darius.

Darius didn't return it.

Instead, he lifted his glass and took a slow sip of water as if Kael didn't even exist.

And I—

I sat there, my heart pounding in my chest, caught between them.

The one that broke me...

And the one that was now protecting me.

Wait...where did that come from?

Protecting me?

Defending me?

Yes... he's doing that.

But why?

I held my breath. The tension didn't fade—it thickened. Layer upon layer, like two storms converging on the same path.

And I don't like it.

Violence. Anger. That unspoken threat in the air.

I'd seen enough of that in my life.

So when Darius's phone vibrated against the table, breaking the tension, I nearly jumped.

He answered it calmly, pressing it to his ear.

"I'll take this call," he said coolly as he stood. His gaze dropped to me—piercing as if warning me to behave.

Then he turned and walked away, slipping through the side doors of

the restaurant.

I couldn't stop watching him. My eyes followed his tall frame until he disappeared through the glass.

"So..."

Kael's voice dragged me back.

I turned slowly toward him.

"Should I expect a thank you from you, Elira?"

I blinked. "What?"

His gaze swept over me—my dress, my face, and the place we were in.

"Look at you now," he said with a bitter chuckle. "Sitting in fine restaurants. The Lycan King's wife."

He tilted his head slightly, eyes narrowing.

"And all because I rejected you."

My breath caught.

"You're saying I should be... grateful?" My voice came out quieter than I intended—but sharper.

"I'm just saying," he shrugged, "it turned out well for you, didn't it? From the weak omega everyone used to bully—the cursed one... to the woman beside him. You've won. So yeah—maybe you owe me."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

Tears stung—not from pain, but from frustration. From disbelief.

"Kael..." I said through clenched teeth. "Are you even listening to yourself?"

He didn't answer, but the flicker in his eyes said enough.

"I was thrown out like trash. You didn't just reject me—you broke your promise. You proved them right. That I was nothing. A cursed one."

My voice shook.

"I had no one but you. And you abandoned me."

I leaned forward slightly, my hands trembling.

"I was offered like a deal. A token. You think that's a reward?"

For a moment, something flickered in his expression—something like

regret.

But he looked away. Jaw tight.

"But you like it now," he muttered. "It's obvious. In just a short time, you've already—"

"Already what?" I snapped.

"Fallen," he said. "For him."

I stared at him.

Then, slowly let out a breath.

"And if I have?" My voice dropped, cold and steady. "If I've fallen for my husband... why does that matter to you?"

"Am I not allowed to do that?" I asked, my voice trembling—but not from fear. "To fall for someone else... like what you did?"

Kael's face darkened.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Elira."

"No," I said firmly. "I know very well."

I looked him straight in the eyes.

"If you're saying it was easy for me to forget you and give my heart to someone else... then what about you?" I forced a bitter smile. "I guess we're just the same, aren't we?"

His jaw clenched.

"You tricked me," he snapped. "You didn't tell me about your condition. And my mother—"

"I didn't trick you!" I stood up abruptly, my chair scraping against the floor. Several people turned to look, startled by the sudden movement. I didn't care. "You just didn't believe me! No—you didn't even try to listen to me. So, how dare you speak to me like this? Like I was the one who wronged you?"

His mouth parted, but I was already turning away.

"What's happening here?"

Lorelei's voice rang out behind me, light and false.

I didn't answer. I didn't even look back. I just walked—fast—biting down on my lip to stop the tears from falling.

"Elira!"

His voice chased after me.

And then—

A hand.

Fingers closed around my wrist, stopping me mid-step.

"I—I'm sorry, Elira—"

Kael's voice cracked.

But he didn't get to finish.

A sudden force knocked him backward.

He stumbled, nearly falling into a nearby chair.

The restaurant gasped as one.

"Kael!" Lorelei shrieked.

I turned just in time to see Darius standing between us, his hand still extended from where he'd shoved Kael away.

His golden eyes blazed.

His voice came low—furious and calm as ice.

"How dare you touch what's mine?"

The words cut through the restaurant like thunder.

Kael pushed himself up, one hand pressed against his chest. His jaw clenched, breath unsteady—but his eyes burned with defiance. He didn't back down.

"Stop calling her yours! She was just forced to marry you—"

"Kael, stop!" Lorelei screamed, panic rising in her voice.

But it was like he couldn't hear her.

Kael stepped forward, a low growl rumbling from his throat, challenging.

And Darius met him.

He stepped toward Kael, unblinking, his power radiating like a storm about to break.

Chairs scraped.

Gasps echoed.

People began to stand, backing away from their tables. Some hurriedly abandoned their meals, sensing what was about to happen. A waiter tripped in panic, and a wine glass shattered across the floor.

In moments, the room emptied—leaving only the four of us.

I couldn't move.

I was frozen, my heart pounding in my chest and my eyes darting between them.

Two forces—ready to collide.

Darius's power rolled off him in invisible waves, golden eyes flickering with something feral, something deadly.

"Please—stop!"

The words ripped from my throat before I even realized I was moving.

I stepped between them.

Between two powerful forces.

And without thinking, I reached for Darius.

My hand clutched his arm—firm, desperate—feeling the rigid tension in his body, the heat rolling off his skin like a coiled storm ready to strike.

"Darius," I whispered. My voice trembled. "Please... enough. Let's just go."

His golden eyes snapped down to me.

And then, I saw it—real, unfiltered rage in his gaze.

Not cold. Not calculated. But wild.

Dangerous.

My heart stopped.

For one terrifying second, I thought that fury might turn on me, that I'd overstepped. That touching him had been a mistake.

Tears blurred my vision, but I didn't move.

I didn't run.

I stood my ground, even though every part of me trembled. "Please..." I choked out. "Don't fight...him."

Darius didn't speak.

He just stared at me.

Breathing hard.

And then—

He moved.

But not toward Kael.

He turned to me fully, jaw clenched, and grabbed my hand—not harshly, not painfully, but with a grip that said he was done.

Without a word, he pulled me away.

Out of the restaurant.

Past the stunned staff, the shattered glass, Lorelei, and Kael.

He had listened.

Even with fury in his veins, he had heard me.

Darius didn't say a word as he dragged me, his grip tight around my wrist, not enough to bruise—but enough to make it clear he wasn't going to let me go.

My steps stumbled to keep up with his long strides, tears sliding silently down my cheeks. I didn't bother to wipe them. I couldn't. The lump in my throat made it hard to breathe.

The elevator doors opened with a soft chime.

He yanked me inside.

And then—

The doors closed.

The silence between us was suffocating.

Then—

A loud crack split the air.

I screamed.

His fist slammed into the wall beside the control panel, crushing the metal. Sparks burst, and the elevator jolted violently before everything went dark.

We were trapped.

The only sound now was the ragged rise and fall of his breathing.

And mine.

I turned slowly, my back pressed to the wall, trembling. "D-Darius..."

His golden eyes glowed faintly in the darkness. And then—

He moved.

Swift.

Sudden.

I gasped as he pinned me to the wall, his hands on either side of my head, caging me in.

My breath caught.

His face was inches from mine.

His fingers found my chin and tilted it, forcing me to look into those furious eyes.

"I hate you, Elira."

His voice was low, venomous. Each word cut sharper than any slap could.

"I hate how you look at me."

My heart pounded against my ribs.

"I hate the way you cry," he said through gritted teeth. "I hate that you make me listen when I don't want to. I hate that I can't..."

He stopped.

The silence crashed over us.

His fingers curled tighter around my jaw—and I whimpered, not from pain... but because that burning feeling was back, clawing through my chest, leaving me breathless.