

## Chapter 35: Sleeping Darius

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Sleeping like a log...

Some dumb omega who lost her medicine...

Sera's words echoed in my mind long after the door had shut behind her. Sorin had warned her to stop, and it seemed it made her angrier, she stormed out.

Sorin followed her. Damon, too.

I was still sitting in bed, the tray of untouched food beside me. Dianne had tried to feed me, but I told her I'd eat in a bit.

She excused herself for an errand she needed to run, but I knew she was avoiding my questions.

She didn't want to tell me what happened to Darius. It was as if she was hiding something.

No... not just her.

All of them.

Darius, sleeping like a log? And from what I'd heard from Damon and Sera... the latter had healed her brother?

Sera sounded like she blamed me for that.

And she was right.

This was all my fault.

The pain in my hands. The heat. The missing medicine. The kiss. The way Darius touched me made me feel like he didn't hate me. Like he needed me.

It was all because of my dumb actions.

I made the powerful Lycan king sick.

A mere omega like me.

I wasn't careful.

I let everything slip.

And maybe I could blame the suppressant wearing off or the heat

overwhelming me, but it wouldn't change the fact that it happened.  
That I let it happen.

I curled tighter beneath the blanket, drawing my knees to my chest, my forehead resting against them.

I sighed heavily, my chest aching.

Not just from guilt but from... fear.

Fear that he might be hurting now. That maybe what happened between us triggered something worse. That perhaps I had dragged him into my curse.

"Stupid," I whispered to myself. "You're stupid, Elira."

A deep, restless ache twisted in my chest, an invisible tether that refused to break.

To him.

To Darius.

He said he wouldn't fall for someone like me.

He said I was the safest for him... because he'd never love me.

But when he held me in that cave...

When his lips met mine...

That didn't feel like distance.

That didn't feel safe.

It felt dangerous. Real. Too real.

Of course, Elira, you'd feel like that, but remember, you're in heat, and your scent triggered him.

Still... he's lying in his room because of me.

I stood slowly, feet brushing the cool floor. My legs trembled slightly from soreness, but I ignored it.

I walked toward the table and reached for Darius's coat. I draped it over my shoulders before moving to the door.

Before I could make... another stupid move.

I didn't know what I planned to do.

Just... see him?

Make sure he was breathing.

I gripped the doorknob.

Paused.

Breathed.

Then, I opened the door and stepped out into the hall, my heart pounding harder.

It was still early, but everything felt dim. The sky beyond the tall windows was a dull gray. Shadows stretched across the corridor, soft and unmoving. The silence settled over the place.

My feet barely made a sound as I moved.

I didn't need to ask where to go. I remembered the way.

Dianne had shown it to me when she toured me around the kingdom. I hadn't thought I'd ever need to come here. Back then, I told myself there'd be no reason. I'd keep my distance. I wouldn't cross that line.

And yet... here I was.

I stopped in front of the door.

It was tall. Sturdy. Quiet. My fingers hovered near the edge, trembling. I didn't knock. I couldn't.

What was I even doing?

He's sleeping.

He's resting.

He probably needs peace, especially after what happened last night and what I caused.

I had no right to be here.

Didn't I promise myself to stay away? To keep my distance?

Darius was cruel to me. Cold. Harsh. He never held back from making me feel worthless. He constantly accused me and humiliated me.

But...

He also saved me.

Last night.

Heat crawled up my cheeks as my thoughts slipped too far.

His arms around me, his heartbeat against my back, the roughness of his voice telling me to breathe. The way his lips crashed against mine... and the way he had touched me.

I shouldn't be thinking about that.

I shouldn't feel anything about that.

I shook my head and turned around.

No. This was wrong.

I should go.

I took one step away.

Then I stopped.

My body froze while my mind screamed at me to turn around.

Go back. Go back before someone sees you.

But my hand moved before I could stop it.

I reached for the doorknob.

My stupid, reckless thoughts won—again.

The metal was cool in my palm as I twisted it slowly.

The door creaked open.

And I stepped inside.

If it was dark outside... it was even darker inside his room.

Like the sun had never touched this place.

The only light came from a small bedside lamp, its glow a faint halo that barely reached the corners. It was quiet.

A quiet that felt sacred, almost forbidden.

I swallowed hard the moment I stepped in.

His scent hit me.

Darius.

It wrapped around me like a second skin. It was stronger here, like it lived in the walls, the sheets, and the air. Even though I'd taken my suppressant earlier, I could still feel a shift in my body, but I ignored it. It wasn't that strong, after all.

I tried to breathe past it.

My eyes moved to the bed.

There he was.

Darius.

Sleeping.

Peacefully.

He lay on his back, one arm resting above his head, the other draped over his stomach.

The blankets were slightly kicked down, revealing the bare curve of his shoulder and part of his chest. His hair strands curled faintly across his forehead.

And he looked...

Okay.

His face wasn't pale. His lips weren't tight with pain. He wasn't sweating or tossing or groaning.

He looked calm. Still. Almost... soft.

I exhaled slowly.

That was enough.

He's alive. He's okay.

I should go now.

I took a step back.

But my feet didn't move.

They felt rooted to the floor, like the moment I looked at him, I'd stepped into something I couldn't break away from.

I couldn't stop staring.

Not at the powerful Lycan who shouted at me, who called me names, who kissed me like he wanted to destroy me.

But at this version of him—unguarded.

Silent.

And for once, he was not looking at me like I was the worst thing that had ever happened to him.

My hand clenched around the edge of his coat, still draped over my shoulders.

I should turn around.

But gods help me... I didn't want to.

Not yet.

Another minute passed when I finally willed myself to take a step back.

One more glance. Just one more, I told myself.

But then... I saw it.

His calm expression shifted.

His brow knit tightly together. A faint frown pulled at the corners of his mouth.

Then he groaned, low, strained.

I froze.

At first, I thought he was waking up. I held my breath, heart thudding.

But his eyes never opened.

Instead, his body shifted beneath the blankets, tense and restless. One hand clenched the sheet beside him. His jaw tightened. He muttered something under his breath I couldn't make out.

He tossed to the side, still locked in sleep.

No...

He wasn't waking up.

He was dreaming.

No—he's having a nightmare.

His breathing grew uneven. Shoulders rising, falling. The lines on his face deepened like he was fighting something in his sleep.

"Darius..." I whispered without thinking.

He didn't hear me.

Of course, he didn't.

But I stepped forward anyway, my fingers loosening around his coat.

Something about seeing him like this... strong, terrifying Darius Vane,

looking so fragile, twisted something in my chest.

Was he in pain?

I should wake him.

Or should I?

What if touching him just made it worse?

I hovered there, helpless, unsure.

But it was as if my body knew what to do... My hands moved on their own, reaching out. I gently touched Darius's head, caressing it, then traced down to his forehead, smoothing the furrow between his brows.

"It's okay... it's just a dream... you're here. You're okay..." I muttered the exact words I always whispered to myself whenever I had a nightmare.

Darius stilled.

His body relaxed.

The tension in his jaw eased, and the groaning stopped.

But then...

His eyes opened.

And he looked straight at me.



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