

## Chapter 6

\*I've been their victim for three years, Esme. I just didn't realize it.\*

My wolf's anger faltered, replaced by something like grief. \*Then let's leave. Tonight. Right now.\*

\*It's not that I don't love him anymore.\* I swallowed hard. \*I refuse to love a man who never truly saw me as his real mate.\*

Esme rumbled low in agreement. \*Then reject him. Officially. Sever the bond before he destroys what's left of us.\*

\*Soon.\*

The conversation continued.

"You think they're fucking right now?"

"Obviously. You saw how desperate he looked when she almost kissed Marcus."

"Camila played that perfectly. Making him jealous enough to claim her publicly."

"Smart woman. Unlike our resident fake Luna who just sat there taking it."

"What did you expect? She's got no backbone. No breeding. No fight."

"That's what happens when you try to punch above your weight class."

Reality always wins."

They finally left, their cruel laughter fading down the hallway.

I waited several minutes before emerging from the stall. My legs felt unsteady as I approached the mirror. The woman staring back looked hollow, despite the perfect makeup.

I splashed cold water on my face and tried to pull myself together.

When I stepped back into the hallway, Emily was waiting by the wall, her face creased with worry.

"Sable? I saw you head this way and..." She studied my expression. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

"No, you're not." She moved closer, lowering her voice. "What happened in there was completely wrong. Darrell humiliated you in front of everyone."

I forced a smile. It was just a game. I should head out. Congratulations again on your new life."

"Are you sure? You could stay..."

"No. I've seen enough for one night."

She hugged me tightly. "If you need anything — anything at all — call me."

"Okay?"

"I will."

The lie came easily. We both knew I wouldn't call. Our paths were diverging, and there was no point pretending otherwise.

I walked toward the exit.

From somewhere above, I heard Camila's distinctive laugh. Light and musical and completely satisfied.

I didn't look back.

\*\*\*

I went back to the house at 2 AM. I walked straight to the bedroom and pulled my suitcase from the closet. The zipper sounded too loud in the quiet room. My hands shook as I started folding clothes, placing them carefully inside.

Esme paced restlessly in my mind. \*"We're finally leaving this hell."\*

\*I should have listened to you sooner.\*

\*"You were blinded by hope. But we're awake now."\*

I moved to the dresser and opened the top drawer for my underwear. That's when I saw it – a small wooden box tucked behind my bras, pushed all the way to the back.

My breath caught. I'd never seen this box before.

Inside were photographs. Dozens of them. All of Camila.

Camila laughing. Camila naked. Camila in lingerie I'd never seen in any store. Love letters tied with red ribbon. And at the bottom, folded carefully, a pair of black lace panties that definitely weren't mine.

One photo made my stomach lurch. It showed Camila lying on our bed – the same bed I'd been sleeping in for three years. She was wearing nothing but a smile and holding a sign that read: \* "Waiting for you, Relly."

\*

The date stamp showed it was taken two years ago.

Two fucking years ago. When I thought we were happy. When I was planning our future.

\*"I'm going to be sick,"\* Esme whimpered.

I flipped the photo over. Written in Camila's flowing script: \*"To my only love, Relly. Wait for me. - C"\*

My hands trembled as I set the box aside. I needed to get out of this room. Out of this house. Before I lost what was left of my sanity.

But my body moved on autopilot to the walk-in closet. I pulled down boxes from the high shelf, searching for things I'd stored away.

That's when I found the scarf.

The cashmere scarf I'd spent two months knitting for Darrell's birthday last year. It was shoved behind old winter coats, covered in dust. Tags still attached.

He'd never worn it. Not once.

"Three months of my evenings went into that," I whispered to the empty closet.

Next to it sat a small jewelry box. Inside were the diamond cufflinks I'd saved six months to buy him. My first Christmas gift to someone I loved. The receipt was still tucked inside the lid.

The box looked brand new. He'd probably forgotten they existed.

My legs gave out. I sat hard on the closet floor, surrounded by the evidence of my own delusion.

"We gave him everything," Esme's voice cracked. "Our heart, our body, our fucking soul."

"And he kept another woman's panties in our bedroom."

I forced myself to stand. There had to be more. I searched through his side of the closet until I found his journal tucked behind a shoebox.

The entries from the past month made me want to vomit:

"Sable asked about marking again today. God, she's so fucking clingy. Camila would never be this desperate."

\*"Sometimes I close my eyes when I'm inside Sable and pretend it's Camila underneath me. The sounds are almost the same."\*

\*"The way Sable laughs reminds me how different she is from Camila. The fake can never replace the real thing."\*

\*"Called Camila tonight after Sable fell asleep. Just hearing her voice made me hard. Two more weeks until she's back."\*

The journal slipped from my numb fingers.

\*"This is why I could never properly connect with his wolf,"\* Esme whispered. \*"He was never truly ours."\*

I stumbled to the bathroom and threw up until nothing was left. When the heaving stopped, I splashed cold water on my face and looked at myself in the mirror.

The woman staring back looked hollow. Broken.

\*No more.\*

I went back to packing with mechanical precision. Every photo of us went into the trash. Every gift he'd given me — the cheap jewelry, the drugstore perfume, the clearance-rack clothes — all of it went into a garbage bag.

Then I found his laptop on the desk.




Banking records. Three years' worth.



My account showed monthly deposits of exactly \$2,000 – just enough for groceries and basic expenses. But Camila's name appeared on transfer after transfer. \$10,000 here. \$25,000 there. Over \$300,000 in the past year alone.

The most recent entry was dated yesterday: \*"Camila Ross - Welcome home gift - \$50,000."\*

While I was cooking him dinner and planning our future, he was funding another woman's life.

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