

Chapter 23

Haven Kramer POV:

"Interesting?" Demetri's voice was laced with disbelief and a raw, offended fury.

I realized my choice of words was poor, a slip of my professional detachment. I immediately reined in that surgeon's thrill. "I mean, the situation is complex, but not without a solution."

I met his eyes, my tone leaving no room for argument. "The silver poison is attacking your central nervous system and suppressing your bone marrow's ability to produce new cells. If we wait any longer, it won't just be your legs that are necrotic."

My Healer's Gift was a torrent of data in my mind-neural conduction blockage, myelin sheath damage, cell death rates... The situation was a hundred times worse than I'd initially assessed.

Demetri's face grew even paler. He knew I was telling the truth.

"We don't have time to waste on your pride, Alpha." I stood and walked to the chest that held my medical supplies. "Now, I am going to debride your legs."

I took out a sealed metal tray. Opening it revealed a set of gleaming surgical tools. They were crude instruments I'd had the estate's blacksmith secretly forge from mineral powders I'd brought, based on my drawings. But they would have to do.

Demetri's eyes locked onto the scalpels, forceps, and probes. His gaze turned wary, lupine. "What are you going to do?"

"Scrape the bone to heal the poison," I said simply. I lit a high-intensity magic-crystal lamp, flooding the bed with a light as bright as day.

I poured a clear liquid onto a cotton pad and began swabbing his lower leg. "This is a powerful anesthetic, but its effect will be limited against such deep nerve damage. It will hurt. Endure it." ①

He didn't speak. He just clenched his fists, his jawline tightening into a line of steel.

I picked up a small, razor-sharp debridement scalpel. I took a deep breath, my focus narrowing until the entire world was just his wound and my hand. The memories and instincts honed over a lifetime took over completely.

The tip of my blade sliced precisely into the worst of the rotting flesh at his ankle. There was no hesitation, no tremor.

Demetri's body arched off the bed, a strangled grunt forced from deep in his throat. Even with the anesthetic, the pain of scraping away dead tissue down to the bone was inhuman.

I ignored his reaction. My eyes saw only the black, necrotic tissue that had to be removed, the pus that had to be cleaned. My movements were fast, efficient, imbued with a kind of ruthless grace.

He watched me. He watched the small blade dance a ballet of death on his own leg, watched my profile, which was so focused it appeared cold. I could feel his gaze shift from initial alarm to utter shock.

He had never seen a woman perform such a bloody, horrific task without so much as flinching.

Time stretched on in the silent room, the only sounds the faint scraping of metal against bone and his increasingly heavy, ragged breaths.

Finally, I cut away the last shred of necrotic tissue, exposing the pale, but relatively healthy, bone and tissue beneath. I irrigated the wound with a saline solution I'd prepared, then applied a thick paste I'd compounded with regenerative agents.

"Done." I set down my tools. A thin sheen of sweat coated my own forehead. The intense concentration of the procedure had drained me.

I looked at Demetri. He was soaked, as if he'd been pulled from a river. His face was deathly pale, but his ice-blue eyes were blazing with a startling intensity.

He stared at me, his expression a maelstrom of emotions I'd never seen on him before—shock, agony, awe, and a flicker of something else... a dependency he himself hadn't yet recognized.

I gave him no time to process it. "That's all for tonight," I said, already packing away my instruments. "We'll continue tomorrow."

I cleaned and stored everything, then walked to the sofa in the corner of the room without another glance at him.

I needed to rest, but more importantly, I needed to process the new information and refine my overall treatment plan.

I collapsed onto the sofa, pulling out a piece of parchment and a quill. In the dim light, I began to write and sketch furiously—nerve distribution charts, chemical formulas, a timetable for the treatment cycles.

I was completely lost in my own world. This was my instinct as a doctor.

And on the bed, Demetri's eyes never left me. He watched me work under the lamplight, this woman who had just subjected him to torture and now sat as quietly as a scholar.

He couldn't understand what I was writing, but he could feel the absolute focus, the unshakeable professionalism.

The ice of his suspicion, without him even realizing it, had begun to crack. For the first time, he felt that putting his life in this woman's hands might have been the right decision after all.

I wrote the last character, blew the ink dry, and closed my eyes in exhaustion. And he, finally, in the aftermath of agony and a strange, new sense of security, drifted into a deep sleep.



