

Chapter 30

Haven Kramer POV:

The awkwardness from last night still hung in the air. When I performed Demetri's morning check-up, we both deliberately avoided eye contact.

I cleared my throat, breaking the heavy silence. "I need to go into town."

He was lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling. His voice sounded muffled when he replied. "Why?"

"While Mrs. Villarreal surrendered some of her stock, many of the precision instruments and special mineral catalysts I need are not available at the manor. I have to purchase them myself," I explained. It was also an excuse. I needed to get out of this oppressive manor, to breathe fresh air.

I expected him to object, or at least to question me further. But to my surprise, he was silent for a few seconds, and then just said, "Fine."

He picked up the Mind-Link Stone from his pillow. "I will have Silas arrange a carriage and guards."

It was the first time he had proactively done something for me. I glanced at him, surprised.

His gaze still wasn't on me, but I could feel that the dynamic between us had subtly shifted after last night's chaos.

Half an hour later, Phoebe had my cloak and a small purse of coins ready.

A sturdy black carriage was waiting at the main entrance, flanked by four tall, grim-faced guards.

As I walked out the front doors, every servant I passed-gardeners,

maids, stable hands-stopped what they were doing and bowed their heads deeply. Their posture was respectful, tinged with a healthy dose of fear.

The news of Mrs. Villarreal's downfall had clearly spread throughout the entire estate.

Phoebe followed behind me, her small chest puffed out with pride.

I settled into the carriage, with Phoebe sitting across from me. The guards took their positions, and the carriage began to move, pulling away from the manor.

Through the window, I watched the gloomy, gothic building grow smaller. To me, this place was not a prison, nor was it a home. It was simply my first base of operations.

My gaze shifted to the distant mountains and the wide-open sky. My battlefield was much larger than this. I would build my own medical empire, clear my mother's name, and make the Kramer family pay for their betrayal.

Phoebe watched the light glittering in my eyes, a little mesmerized. "My lady, what are you thinking about?"

"I'm thinking we need to hire some new people," I said calmly, my gaze returning to her.

"When we get back, I want you to draw up a list. Everyone who followed Mrs. Villarreal, who bullied the weak... they all need to go."

"We're going to replace them with our own, reliable people." My voice was soft, but the words sent a chill down Phoebe's spine. She knew a major purge of the manor staff was about to begin.

After more than an hour, the carriage entered the nearby town of Oak Creek.

It was a small but bustling place, the streets lined with all sorts of shops. I lifted the curtain, studying everything, assessing the commercial landscape.

I needed a storefront, a base for my future apothecary.

The carriage stopped in front of the largest herb and medicine supplier in town. I was about to step out.

My gaze drifted across the street to a newly opened, lavishly decorated tailor shop.

On the shop's sign, next to its name, was a small, gilded family crest.

My breath caught in my throat.

The crest—a roaring griffin with three stars clutched in its talons.

I would never forget it. It was the crest of the Contreras family, the house my half-sister Charly Kramer had married into. 

What were they doing here? Just when I thought I had escaped the shadow of the Kramer family, they had appeared, like a plague, in my new territory.

