

Chapter 35

Haven Kramer POV:

The shared moment of joy passed, and I quickly forced myself to calm down. This was no time to celebrate.

Nerve regeneration was just the first step of a long journey. And the vipers inside this manor had to be cleared out before we left for the summit.

I took one of the ledgers I had marked and walked to Demetri's bed.

He seemed to be in a good mood. His face was still impassive, but the frost in his eyes had thawed considerably.

"There's something that requires your approval, as the Alpha," I said, getting straight to the point.

He raised an eyebrow, a silent invitation to continue. It was a new shorthand we had developed, one that didn't require wasted words.

I opened the ledger and pointed to a page. "According to the estate's accounts for the past five years, Mrs. Cliffie Villarreal, your former nursemaid, has embezzled funds totaling over thirty thousand gold coins."

I paused. "And that's not including her gray income from skimming servant wages and reselling manor supplies."

Demetri's eyes grew colder as he listened. He knew Villarreal was greedy, but he hadn't imagined the sum was so enormous.

"Last month," I continued, "she withdrew eight hundred gold coins under the pretense of 'purchasing tonics for the Alpha.' That money was used to buy a diamond necklace from the capital and a dozen silk gowns."

I closed the book and looked at him. "And you, the true Alpha, were eating pig slop during that time."

My words were calm, but sharp as a knife.

Demetri didn't speak, but the temperature in the room seemed to drop ten degrees. The rage radiating from him was almost a physical force.

"What do you want to do?" he finally asked, his voice low and dangerous.

I met his gaze. "I want to reclaim all her illicit gains and banish her from

the estate. But she was your nursemaid, and nominally, your elder. If I act without your consent, it will be seen as disrespectful and an overreach of my authority."

I threw the problem to him. I needed to know his stance. This wasn't just about punishing Villarreal; it was a test of whether he would back me without reservation.

He was silent. A storm was brewing in those ice-blue eyes.

I knew he was weighing the consequences. Disposing of one's own nursemaid would attract criticism in a society that valued tradition.

But then he remembered the spoiled broth. He remembered Haven having to share pig slop with him. He remembered her confronting Villarreal in the dining hall just to get him decent food.

The caged wolf inside him let out a bloodthirsty roar.

He looked at me, at this woman who had done everything for him. She was calm, powerful, yet she had come to ask his permission—the permission of a man everyone else saw as a crippled invalid—to deal with a mere servant.

That respect sent a searing heat through his cold heart.

"She stopped being my nursemaid long ago," he finally said, his voice merciless. "The moment she withheld my food, she became nothing more than trash to be cleaned out."

He paused, then added, "Haven, everything in this manor is yours to command. You don't need anyone's permission. Including mine."

It was the clearest, most unconditional authorization he could give.

I had my answer. I nodded. "Understood."

I turned to leave, but he suddenly called out to me.

"Wait."

I turned back.

"Make her spit out everything she swallowed, with interest," he said, a cruel smile touching his lips. "And then, torture her slowly. Don't let her die too quickly."

I saw the familiar ruthlessness of a top predator in his eyes, and I smiled back. "As you command, my Alpha."

It was the first time I had called him that, my tone laced with a hint of teasing and submission.

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+120 Points at most

He clearly froze for a second. Then, a faint, dark red blush crept up to the tips of his ears.

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