

Chapter 36

Haven Kramer POV:

The next morning I summoned Silas.

I placed a newly drafted budget for the estate's expenses in front of him. "From this month on, all manor expenditures will follow this standard."

Silas picked up the document. He only needed one glance before he sucked in a sharp breath.

The first item on the budget was a freeze on all non-essential luxury purchases, including spices, silks, jewelry, and any wine aged over thirty years.

The second was a re-evaluation of all servant salaries, adjusted based on workload and loyalty.

But the third item was what truly shocked him. "The nursing stipend for the former housekeeper, Mrs. Villarreal, is to be reduced from five hundred gold coins per month to one gold coin per month."

"One... one gold coin?" Silas's voice trembled. This wasn't a reduction; it was a naked, brutal humiliation. One gold coin could barely buy two loaves of black bread.

"Is there a problem?" I asked, looking up at him, my tone flat.

"N-no problem, madam," Silas said, quickly lowering his head. "It's just... Mrs. Villarreal... I'm afraid she will..."

"I will handle her," I interrupted. "You just need to execute the order."

I also gave him a list with a dozen names—Mrs. Villarreal's closest cronies. "These people are to be dismissed today. Settle their wages and have them out of the manor."

Silas looked at the list, cold sweat beading on his forehead, but he didn't dare ask another question. He simply bowed and left to carry out my orders.

I knew a major earthquake was about to shake the manor. I didn't care. I needed a clean, efficient team completely loyal to me.

Sure enough, less than an hour later, I heard Mrs. Villarreal's piercing

screams and curses echoing from the east wing.

I ignored it and continued with my work.

In the afternoon, Phoebe reported that Mrs. Villarreal had tried to storm the Alpha's sickroom but was stopped by the new guards I had posted. She had thrown a tantrum outside, cursing me as a "wicked witch" and a "power-grabbing thief."

"Let her scream," I said without looking up. "She'll run out of energy when she's tired."

At the same time, I didn't forget to send Mrs. Villarreal her daily "inhibitor"—that ordinary painkiller. I wanted her to continue living in fear of the "poison."

By evening the manor had finally quieted down. Mrs. Villarreal seemed to have exhausted herself and was dragged back to her rooms.

I finished my day's work, feeling a bit weary.

I walked into Demetri's room. He was propped up in bed, holding a book, but it was clear he wasn't reading. He was listening to the commotion outside.

He put the book down when I came in. "It was... lively... outside."

"Just some necessary spring cleaning," I said lightly.

I went to his bedside and began his routine leg massage, explaining the nerve-stimulating principles of the herbs in the new ointment.

I noticed that as he listened to my professional, emotionless explanation of pharmacology, his muscles unconsciously relaxed. He was unusually quiet today, just watching me. The atmosphere in the room felt heavy.

I suddenly remembered my past life, on night shifts at the hospital. To help patients who couldn't sleep from pain, I would sometimes read to them. Perhaps the sound of a voice itself could be soothing.

"Would you like to hear a story?" The question slipped out before I could stop it.

He froze, clearly not expecting this. He looked at me, and a flicker of curiosity... and was that anticipation? crossed his ice-blue eyes.

Before he could answer, I picked up the book he had just put down. It was an epic about the ancient werewolf wars.

I pulled a chair to his bedside, sat down, opened the book, and began to read in a calm, clear voice.

My voice echoed in the quiet room, telling ancient tales of glory, betrayal, and battle.

He closed his eyes, his long lashes casting shadows on his cheeks. His tense shoulders seemed to slowly relax.

The candlelight flickered. The sound of my reading and his steady breathing intertwined, creating a strange, warm atmosphere. As I read, I started to feel drowsy myself. When I finished a chapter and looked up, I saw that he had fallen asleep.

He was sleeping deeply, his brow smooth, his face free of its usual vigilance and gloom. He looked like... just an ordinary man, with all his defenses down.

