

## Chapter 42

Haven Kramer POV:

I stood in the hallway for a moment, forcing my breathing to even out. Demetri's words, "my sharpest blade," echoed in my ears, making my heart refuse to settle.

I took a deep breath, pushing the inappropriate feelings down. This was not the time for distractions. I had one last act to perform.

I called for Silas, who had been waiting respectfully down the hall. "Take me to see Mrs. Villarreal," I commanded.

A flicker of understanding crossed his eyes. He didn't ask questions, simply gestured. "Yes, madam. This way, please."

We walked through long, silent corridors toward the east wing to Mrs. Villarreal's suite. It was once the most opulent residence in the manor, second only to the Alpha's own.

Now, two unfamiliar, stone-faced guards stood at the door. My men.

They opened the door without a word. A foul stench hit me.

The room was a disaster. Expensive porcelain lay shattered on the floor, silk curtains torn to shreds. Mrs. Villarreal was huddled in a corner like a caged animal, her hair wild. When she saw me, her eyes blazed with venom.

"You! You venomous bitch! You'll die a dog's death!" she shrieked, lunging at me.

Silas stepped in front of me without a change in expression. The two guards immediately moved in, pinning her to the ground.

I walked around her and sat on the only intact piece of furniture, a velvet sofa, looking down at her. "Mrs. Villarreal, it seems you're not enjoying your stay."

She struggled wildly, cursing me, her voice filled with desperation.

I signaled for the guards to release her, then told Silas, "Show her the items."

Silas pulled a stack of documents from his coat and tossed them in

front of her.

It was a thick pile of IOUs, each one bearing her son Reynolds's signature and thumbprint. The total sum was enough to bankrupt a mid-sized noble family ten times over.

Mrs. Villarreal's curses died in her throat. She stared at the papers, her body beginning to tremble violently.

"Reynolds... my Reynolds..." she murmured, true fear finally appearing in her eyes.

I spoke calmly, my voice quiet but landing like a hammer blow on her heart. "He owes thirty thousand gold coins to the 'Bloodhound' casino outside the city. The owner said if the debt isn't paid in three days, they'll cut off one of his hands. If it's not paid in five, they'll cut off both."

I paused, enjoying the way the blood drained from her face. "Silas found him as he was about to flee in the middle of the night. My men... persuaded him to stay."

In the gentlest tone, I delivered the cruelest words. "He's in the manor's dungeon right now. Whether he lives or dies, whether he loses an arm or a leg, that all depends on you, madam."

"No... don't..." A desperate scream tore from her throat. She completely broke down.

She crawled toward me like a worm, grabbing the hem of my dress, her face a mess of tears and snot. "I was wrong, madam, I was so wrong! Please, spare my son, he's my only hope! I'll do anything you ask!"

I kicked her hand away in disgust and took a step back.

Silas placed a pen and paper in front of her. "Write," I said coldly. "Write down how you skimmed the Alpha's expenses, how you stole from the manor, how you framed me. The more detailed you are, the safer your son will be."

She grabbed the pen like it was her last lifeline, her hand shaking.

With Silas's "assistance," she wrote a detailed confession, listing every dishonest thing she had done in the past decade. She pressed her thumbprint onto the page with a hand slick with tears.

I took the confession, blew the ink dry, and read it with satisfaction.

I handed it to Silas. "Take this to the Alpha," I said. "Then, tell him his nursemaid and her son are ready to leave."

Silas took the document, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "As you

wish, madam."

He left with the confession. I gave one last look at the woman who was now just a heap of filth on the floor.

I turned and walked out of the room without a shred of pity. From this day on, the manor was finally clean.

I returned to Demetri's bedroom. He was leaning against the headboard, reading a book, as if nothing had happened.

He looked up as I entered and put his book down. "Is it over?"

I nodded. "It's over." I relayed the plan Silas had devised for Mrs. Villarreal and her son-exile to an overseas colony, never to return.

He just gave a soft "Mm" in response, then patted the space on the bed beside him. "Come here."