

Untouchable: The Alpha's Miracle Doctor

Chapter 5

Haven Kramer POV:

A timid knock woke me the next morning. A young woman, about my age, with a spray of freckles across her nose and frightened eyes, entered the room.

"I'm Phoebe Hayes, miss," she whispered. "I'm... I was sent with you from the Kramer estate."

My only maid. The only person from my old life.

Phoebe looked around the bare, cold room, and her eyes filled with tears. "Miss, how could they do this to you...?"

In the face of the cold indifference of the Contreras estate, her genuine distress was a small, flickering candle in the dark. A warmth spread through my chest.

"I'm fine, Phoebe," I said, and I was surprised to find I meant it. "It's a roof over my head."

As she helped me unpack the few belongings I was allowed, Phoebe leaned in, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper.

"Miss, did you hear? I went down to the kitchens to fetch hot water, and the low-ranking guards who just arrived from the main territory were whispering about Charly's wedding. They say she and Alpha Darren had a terrible fight last night!"

She recounted the rumors with wide-eyed relish-the sudden, violent rash that ruined Charly's face, Alpha Darren's public disgust, and how he stormed out to spend the night with a maid named Jenna White.

I listened, a cold, thin smile playing on my lips. My finger traced the edge of my vanity table. Seventy-two hours. The incubation period of the Ghost Flower extract was mathematically perfect. Without modern antihistamines, that cloying sweet pea perfume would keep her clawing at her own skin for days.

A small lesson. The final exam was yet to come.

"Phoebe," I said, cutting through her gossip. "Take me to Alpha Demetri."

Phoebe froze, her face paling with fear. "Miss, you want to see him? They say... they say he's terrifying. And the silver poison... they say it's contagious."

"I am his mate," I said, my tone leaving no room for argument. "It is my right to see him."

My own words felt strange in my mouth. His mate. A political designation. A legal fiction.

Under my insistence, Phoebe reluctantly led me through the grim, silent halls of the manor. We walked toward the deepest, most forbidden wing of the house. The air grew increasingly stagnant as we ventured further.

As the temperature dropped, the invisible markers of a dying patient began to hit me.

My years at the Imperial Medical Academy in Astraea had trained my senses to be sharper than any diagnostic instrument.

Even from yards away, my nose picked up the subtle, distinct sweetness of failing organs and the unmistakable metallic tang of heavy silver poisoning.

The diagnostic deduction running through my mind confirmed my suspicions.

The patient was close. We arrived at a heavy oak door. No guards stood watch. The air here was thick with the smell of useless medicinal herbs and something else... something foul. The smell of decay.

Phoebe stopped, trembling. "I can't, miss. I'm sorry."

I took a deep breath, the foul air stinging my nostrils, and pushed the heavy door open myself. The stench that hit me was overwhelming.

A sickening wave of rot, infection, and stale blood. It was a smell I knew well from my past life. The smell of sepsis. The smell of death.

The room was dark, the windows covered by thick, dust-laden curtains. My eyes adjusted to the gloom, and my gaze fell on the large bed in the center of the room. A figure lay there, utterly still.

I moved forward slowly, the sound of my own footsteps unnaturally loud. I finally saw him.

The man on the bed wasn't just a "crippled Alpha." He was a corpse in waiting. A body being left to rot.

Demetri lay still as stone, his face a waxy, grayish color. His lips were cracked and dry. A thin, dirty blanket was draped over him.

I reached out and pulled back a corner of the blanket. A sharp, involuntary gasp escaped my lips.

His body was a roadmap of agony. Deep, vicious wounds, many clearly made by silver blades, littered his torso and limbs. The edges of the wounds were black and necrotic. Worse, most of them were weeping pus, the source of the horrific smell.

This wasn't healing. This was neglect. This was a slow, deliberate execution.

There was no fear in my eyes. Only the cold, sharp anger a surgeon feels when seeing a patient so horrifically mismanaged.

I turned to Phoebe, who was peeking around the doorframe, her face a mask of terror.

"Phoebe," I said, my voice crisis-sharp and authoritative, stripped of all emotion. "Go boil water. As much as you can. And find me clean cloths and the strongest alcohol in this house. Now."

My operating theater was a tomb, and my patient was half in the grave. But the surgeon was in.