

Chapter 50

Haven Kramer POV:

Just as I expected, Silas came to report to me first thing the next morning Danita May was back.

"She refused the carriage we sent for her," Silas said, a hint of suppressed laughter in his voice. "She walked here herself, wearing the same clothes as yesterday. She looks quite pitiful and travel-worn."

I put down my quill and leaned back in my chair. "Where is she now?"

"At the main gate of the estate. She says she doesn't want money, that she must speak with the Alpha in person. She has something more important than money to say." Silas mimicked Danita's tone perfectly.

I smiled. It seemed she had chosen her script: the great savior, unmoved by money, driven only by "true feelings."

Her new strategy was to feign selflessness.

It was laughably stupid, but it suited my purposes perfectly.

I stood and walked to the window, looking at the small, stubborn figure at the estate gate. "She wants to act, so we'll give her a stage."

I turned and gave my orders to Silas. "Prepare the parlor, let her in... and then, inform the Alpha that our little show is about to start ahead of schedule."

Silas's eyes shone with understanding and anticipation. He bowed and left quickly.

I didn't go to the parlor. I went straight to Demetri's bedroom.

He was undergoing his daily check-up with a nurse I had appointed, who was tapping his knee with a small hammer to test his reflexes.

When I told him about Danita May's latest move, the exact same look of someone anticipating a good show appeared on his face.

"So she's finally stopped playing the greedy village girl and started playing the devoted saint?" he mocked.

"I'm afraid so," I said. "And I'm guessing this time she'll refuse any monetary compensation and then offer to stay and 'personally' care for you until you've 'recovered'."

Demetri made a sound of disgust. "I'd rather be stabbed with a silver sword again than let her touch me."

His comparison made me laugh. "Don't worry, she won't get to touch you."

I leaned in and whispered my plan in his ear.

As he listened, his eyes grew brighter and brighter. Finally, he took my hand and pressed a searing kiss to the back of it. "Do as you say, my brilliant strategist."

I pulled my hand away, my cheeks burning but my heart was filled with the thrill of the impending hunt.

About half an hour later, Silas came to report that Danita May was growing impatient in the parlor.

I didn't go. I sent Silas with a message.

"Go and tell her," I instructed him, "that Madam Kramer is very 'moved' by her selflessness and has persuaded the Alpha. The Alpha has agreed to see her in person."

Silas left to deliver the message.

I could imagine Danita's ecstasy upon hearing the news. She must think her plan had succeeded, that she had taken the first step to becoming the mistress of the manor.

She had no idea she was about to step into the antechamber of hell.

I stood at the window of Demetri's bedroom, watching as Silas led the woman in the simple dress across the courtyard, toward the Alpha's wing where we were.

Her steps were light, full of hope, like a foolish moth flying towards a flame.

Demetri rolled to my side in his wheelchair, side by side with me.

"The stage is set," he said in a low voice, a hint of cruel amusement in his tone. "And the actor is in place."

I nodded, watching the approaching figure, the smile on my lips deepening turning cold and expectant.

"Yes," I said. "The show is about to begin."

Silas knocked on the door, his voice loud and clear. "Alpha, madam, Miss Danita May has arrived."

I met Demetri's eyes. We both saw the same excitement and coldness in each other's gaze.

"Let her in," Demetri said, his voice weak but still carrying the weight of command.

