

## Chapter 10

Caleb POV:

The sun rose, but the world remained gray.

I sat by the cot. I hadn't moved for hours. The funeral home had called again-the one Elena tried to pay. I snatched the phone from Rosa and screamed at them, promising them enough money to buy the entire cemetery if they just came \*now\* with the finest casket they had.

"She doesn't need your gold, Alpha," Rosa said from her rocking chair. "She needs dignity."

"I want to wash her," I said hoarsely.

"No," Sarah sobbed from the corner. "I should do it. I'm her mother."

"You lost that right when you let Lydia poison her," I said, my voice void of emotion. I looked at Rosa. "Please."

Rosa studied me for a long moment. "Fine. But you need to see. You need to see every mark."

She brought a basin of warm water and a sponge.

With trembling hands, I unbuttoned the tattered, oversized shirt Elena was wearing. It was one of my old shirts she had stolen from the laundry. She died wearing my scent, even after I rejected her.

I pulled the fabric away.

The air left the room.

"Mother of Moon," John whispered.

Her body was a map of torture.

Her ribs were protruding, the skin stretched tight over bone. But it was the scars that destroyed me.

On her shoulder, a burn mark in the shape of a coin. \*Silver.\*

Across her back, thin white lines. \*Whip marks.\*

I traced one of the whip marks with a wet sponge. I remembered this one. Three years ago. Something was stolen from the pack treasury. Lydia said she saw Elena near the vault. I didn't ask for proof. I ordered the punishment for theft: five lashes.

I did this.

I moved the sponge lower. On her hips, angry red sores. \*Bedsores.\* From sleeping on the hard floor of that closet for years.

"She couldn't Shift," I realized, speaking to the silence. "Not because she was weak. But because her body was too broken. If she tried to break her bones to change... she would have died instantly."

I washed the silver burns. I washed the whip marks. I washed the bruises I gave her yesterday.

Every stroke of the sponge was a penance that would never be enough.

\*The door to the diner banged open. Two of my guards dragged a struggling figure into the room.\*

\*"Alpha," one guard said, panting. "You ordered us to bring the prisoner to you."\*

\*It was Lydia. She was still in her bridal fitting robe, but now it was torn and muddy. When she saw the body on the cot, her face twisted in disgust.\*

\*"Why did you bring me to this dump?" she shrieked. "Is that... eww, is that the body? Well, at least she's finally out of the way."\*

\*She looked at me, trying to summon a smile. "Caleb, baby, tell them to unhand me. We have a wedding rehearsal."\*

I stood up.

I didn't feel rage anymore. Rage is hot. This was cold. This was the absolute zero of the void.

I walked toward her. My shadow stretched over her, consuming her light.

"Lydia," I said softly.

"Yes, baby?" she smiled, \*though her eyes flickered with uncertainty.\*

I grabbed her throat. I didn't squeeze. I just held her there.

"You like silver, don't you?" I asked.

Her eyes widened. "Caleb? You're hurting me."

"Elena liked silver too," I said, my eyes flashing gold. "Or so you made us believe."

I turned to John. "Prepare the Silver Dungeon."

Lydia screamed. "No! Caleb! I'm your Luna!"

"You are nothing," I said, echoing the text I sent to Elena. "You are less than a Rogue. And you are going to learn exactly what silver feels like on every inch of your skin."

I dragged her out of the diner, past the weeping parents, past the dead body of my true mate.

The punishment would begin today. But my regret... that would last forever.



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