

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.

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+120 Points at most

"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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