

Chapter 11

Caleb POV:

The Silver Dungeon wasn't just a prison; it was a tomb for the living. Located deep beneath the Pack House, the walls were lined with microscopic filings of silver mixed into the concrete. For a human, it was just a cold basement. For a wolf, simply being in the room felt like standing too close to a bonfire. The air itself itched.

I dragged Lydia down the metal stairs. She kicked and screamed, her heels scraping against the rusted steps, but against my Alpha strength, she was as light as a doll.

"Caleb, please! It burns! The air burns!" she shrieked, clawing at my hand around her throat.

"Good," I said. My voice was dead. "Get used to it."

I threw her into the central cell. She scrambled backward, huddling in the corner, her expensive white dress now stained with the grime of the floor.

John and Sarah followed us down. Sarah was still clutching the bloody wooden sword John had found at the motel. Her eyes were swollen shut from crying, but when she looked at Lydia, there was no motherly love left. Only the feral hatred of a wolf who realized a cuckoo had killed her fledgling.

"Why?" Sarah whispered, her voice echoing in the damp space. "We gave you everything. We adopted you. We treated you better than... better than our own blood."

Lydia looked up, her mascara running down her face in black streaks. The mask of the sweet, innocent girl finally cracked, revealing the rot underneath.

"Better?" Lydia spat, baring her teeth. "You treated me like a pet! 'Oh, look at poor orphan Lydia, isn't she grateful?' But every time Elena walked into the room, I could smell it on you. You wanted her to be the Luna. You wanted her bloodline to carry the pack."

She stood up, trembling from the ambient silver in the walls. "But she was weak! I made her weak! And you idiots fell for it every single time.

'Oh, Elena is sick again.' 'Elena can't shift.' You hated her for it. I just gave you what you wanted!"

"You poisoned her," John said, his voice shaking. He stepped forward, his hands clenched into fists. "You made us hate our own daughter."

"I didn't make you do anything," Lydia sneered. "You hated her because you are vain, shallow people who care more about reputation than family. I just handed you the gun. You pulled the trigger."

The truth of her words hit me like a physical blow. She was right. We were all guilty. But she was the architect of this hell.

"Enough," I commanded. The Alpha tone slammed into her, forcing her knees to buckle. She slammed onto the concrete floor, unable to move.

I walked over to the wall where the restraints hung. I took down the collar. It was solid, unpolished silver. Crude. Heavy.

I walked back to Lydia. Her eyes widened in terror as she saw the metal.

"No," she whimpered, the defiance vanishing. "Caleb, please. Not the collar. It will never heal. It will burn forever."

"Elena burned for ten years," I said softly. "She burned from the inside out because of the wolfsbane you fed her. She burned from the rejection I gave her because of your lies."

I knelt behind her. I didn't hesitate. I snapped the heavy silver collar around her neck.

Hiss.

The sound was sickening, like meat hitting a hot grill. Smoke rose instantly, carrying the scent of charred skin.

"AAAAAHHH!" Lydia's scream was bloodcurdling. She clawed at the metal, but her fingers burned upon contact. She writhed on the floor, howling in agony.

I stood up and looked down at her. I felt no satisfaction. I felt no joy. The hole in my chest where my mate bond used to be was still there, gaping and empty. This wasn't justice. It was just waste management.

"I, Caleb, Alpha of the Black Moon Pack," I announced, my voice booming off the concrete walls, "hereby strip you, Lydia, of all rank. You are not a Warrior. You are not a Beta. You are not a Pack Member."

I felt the magical severing happen. The pack link in my mind, which usually hummed with the presence of my members, spasmed as Lydia was cut loose. She gasped, clutching her chest as the connection was ripped away, leaving her isolated in the silence of her own mind.

"You are a slave," I pronounced. "You will remain in this cell. You will be fed enough to stay alive, and you will be given enough medicine to prevent infection, but never enough to stop the pain."

I turned to leave. Sarah walked up to the bars. She looked at the screaming girl she had raised.

Then, Sarah spat through the bars, the saliva landing on Lydia's burning neck.

"Rot in hell," Sarah whispered.

We walked out, leaving the screams behind us. But as the heavy iron door clanged shut, sealing the dungeon, I knew the silence waiting for me upstairs would be far worse.