

Chapter 9

Caleb POV:

I didn't care about the knife. I didn't care about the silver.

I stepped forward. The silver blade pressed against my chest, searing my skin, burning through my shirt. I didn't flinch. The physical pain was a distraction I welcomed.

"Do it," I whispered to Rosa. "Kill me. But let me see her first."

Rosa stared at me, searching for any sign of the arrogant Alpha she despised. She found only a broken man. She lowered the knife slowly, shaking her head.

"Go," she said, stepping aside. "But know this: she died smiling because she was finally free of you."

The words gutted me, but I kept moving.

I walked into the back room. It was warm, smelling of burning wood and sage.

On a narrow cot, covered by a simple white sheet, lay a small shape.

My knees gave out. I hit the floor hard, crawling the last few feet. My hands shook so badly I could barely grip the fabric of the sheet.

I pulled it back.

Elena.

She looked... peaceful. Her skin was pale as marble, the bruises on her face standing out in stark contrast. Her eyes were closed. Her lips were slightly parted.

But the chest. It wasn't moving.

"Elena?" I whispered. I reached out and touched her cheek.

Ice.

The cold shock traveled up my arm and froze my heart.

"Awooooooooooooo!"

The howl ripped out of me. It wasn't human. It was the sound of a wolf whose soul had been torn in half. It shook the bottles on the shelves. It shattered the window glass.

Behind me, Sarah and John entered. They saw the body. Sarah screamed and tried to rush forward.

Rosa blocked her. *Smack!*

The sound of the slap was sharp.

"Don't you touch her!" Rosa hissed. "You called her a disgrace. You let her sleep in a closet. You don't get to touch her now!"

Rosa walked over to a small table and picked up a phone-Elena's phone. She tapped the screen and held it up.

"Look," Rosa commanded.

It was a text thread.

Lydia: You should just kill yourself. Caleb hates you.

Lydia: Mom and Dad are laughing about your attempt to train today. Pathetic.

Caleb (Me): Stop bothering me, Elena. You are nothing.

I stared at my own words. I remembered sending that text. It was two years ago. She had asked if I wanted a birthday gift she made. I hadn't even opened it.

"And look at this," Rosa said, swiping to the drafts folder.

To Mom: My back hurts so much today. I think I need a doctor. I love you.

To Dad: I watched you train the new recruits. You looked so strong. I wish I could make you proud.

John fell against the doorframe, sliding down to the floor, burying his face in his hands. *"She just wanted us to look at her. We threw away a diamond because we were too busy polishing a piece of glass."*

I took Elena's cold hand in mine. It was so small. I tried to push my Alpha energy into her, a desperate, irrational attempt to jumpstart her heart.

"Come back," I begged. "Elena, please. I accept the bond. I accept you. Just wake up."

Nothing. The energy dissipated into the dead flesh.

In the corner of the room, unseen by anyone, a faint shimmer of light hovered. It was Elena's soul, watching us. She looked at my weeping form, at her parents' devastation.

She didn't feel pity. She didn't feel love. She just felt... bored.

She turned away, fading into the moonlight.



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