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When she saw Sierra, she smiled. But the smile quickly faded into concern.

"Sierra, what's wrong? You look pale."

Sierra forced a smile. "Nothing, Grandma. It's just a little hot outside."

She didn't know if her grandmother believed her.

The old woman reached up and touched Sierra's forehead gently.

"Sierra, if something's wrong, tell me. Don't keep everything bottled up."

"I won't," Sierra murmured, hugging her tightly.

"Grandma, promise me. You have to get better."

She was the only family Sierra had left. The only person who cared about her.

*Please, don't leave me behind.*

*Don't let me be alone.*

After spending some time with her grandmother, Sierra returned to the Xander family estate.

She didn't want to be here.

But she had to endure three more months.



But for some reason, Jonathan couldn't forget the way she had looked at him before leaving.

Understanding.

Disappointment.

And a finality, like she was giving up on something.

In the end, Jonathan made another call.

"Mr. Wagner, I need a favor."

After arranging everything, he sent Sierra a private message on the forum.

"I found you another lab. If you still need it, contact me."

There was no response.

Jonathan sighed but wasn't surprised.

She was a stubborn girl.

Meanwhile, Sierra arrived at her destination.

She stood in front of the villa, her expression unreadable.

If someone looked closely, though, they would see the resistance in her eyes.

And beneath that—fear.

She hesitated for a long time before finally stepping forward.

As if expecting her, the door unlocked with a soft click.

Her heart clenched.

She took a deep breath, pushed the door open, and stepped inside.

The first thing she saw was the man lounging on the sofa in a black robe.

Her pulse pounded—not from attraction, but from sheer terror.

She was afraid of this man.

She was afraid of Shane Goodman.

After all the effort she had spent escaping his grasp, she was now walking back into his territory.

Shane's lips curled when he saw her standing frozen in place.

"Come here."

Sierra took a shaky breath and forced herself to move.

Watching her stiff posture, Shane chuckled. "I didn't think you'd come looking for me."

She inhaled deeply, keeping her voice steady. "Warden, I need a favor."

She wanted to get straight to the point. She didn't want to stay here any longer than necessary, even if he had saved her life a few times.



Shane didn't respond immediately.

Instead, he intertwined his fingers, lazily rubbing his thumb against his index finger.

The room was silent.

The temperature was comfortable, but Sierra's back was already drenched in cold sweat.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Shane spoke.

"You know how this works. I don't do favors for free."

He tilted his head, watching her closely.

"What do you have to offer me?"

Sierra's lips pressed together, her face pale.

The first time she had encountered Shane was when someone had nearly crushed her hand.

Back then, he had looked down at her from above and said—

"I can save you. Your hand will be as good as new. But you'll have to give me something in return."

She had agreed.

She hadn't wanted to be crippled.

And getting medical treatment meant being able to contact the outside world.



She had hoped she could call Bradley.

She had hoped he would help her.

Instead, all she got was a cold, indifferent response—

"We've already cut ties with her. Whether she lives or dies has nothing to do with us."

She had been devastated.

After that, she hadn't cared about Shane's demands.

But when she was sent back to prison, she quickly realized what kind of nightmare awaited her.

Shane was a lunatic.

He healed her injuries—only to let people hurt her again.

Verbal abuse. Beatings. Humiliation.

She would get hurt. Then she would be patched up. Then she would be thrown back in.

Over and over again.

Even now, she couldn't stop herself from trembling at the memories.

If she had any other choice, she would never have come back to him.

What he wanted from her... she couldn't give.



But her grandmother was the only person in the world who still cared about her.

For her, Sierra had no choice.

She exhaled shakily. "What do you want?"

Shane studied her.

Her face was deathly pale, her body tense.

But she was still standing here.

Prison hadn't broken her.

Even after everything, she had managed to get back up again.

She was his best experiment.

His lips curled into a slow smirk. "I haven't decided yet. You'll owe me."

The uncertainty only made her more uneasy.

The unknown was always the most terrifying.

She had no idea what kind of twisted game he would play next.

But for now, she didn't have the luxury of worrying about that.

She stated her request.

Shane hummed in response. "Wait for my call."



That was enough.

Sierra turned and left as fast as she could.

The moment she stepped outside, her stomach twisted.

She barely made it to the side before retching.

A physical reaction.

For a long time, just hearing Shane's name had made her nauseous.

She wiped her mouth and slowly straightened, her eyes dark and calculating.

Back then, she had been powerless against him.

*Now?*

Not anymore.

She didn't believe Shane was invincible.

Once the lab situation was settled, she would make sure he never controlled her again.

Pulling out her phone, she saw Jonathan's message.

Her expression was unreadable.

She turned off the screen without responding.

Then, she headed to the hospital.





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When she entered, everyone was there.

Bradley glanced at her, looking like he wanted to say something.

But when he saw her emotionless face, he swallowed his irritation and simply stated, "Evan and I talked. In a few weeks, we'll set up a lab for you. Stop embarrassing yourself by begging others."

"Jonathan isn't someone you should be getting involved with. Don't drag us into your mess."

Sierra was exhausted. She didn't even want to acknowledge them.

She turned her head upstairs.

Sean, irritated by her attitude, stepped in front of her.

"Didn't you hear Bradley talking to you?"

Sierra didn't answer. She just stared at him.

Sean had more to say, but something about her gaze—dark, empty, utterly emotionless—made the words die in his throat.

After she left, he cursed under his breath.

"Shit. When did she turn into this?"

Bradley was silent for a moment before explaining what had happened to Sierra in prison.



Sean was stunned.

He hadn't known.

Remembering the way he had just spoken to her, an unfamiliar sense of guilt crept in.

Eleanor covered her mouth in shock.

"How did this happen? You said you handled everything. Why did she go through so much?"

Bradley didn't know either.

He turned to Denise, who was crying quietly.

"Denny," he said slowly.

"Cameron said you were the one in charge of this."

"So tell me—what exactly happened?"

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