

SHATTERED BONDS: THE OMEGA'S RECKONING

Chapter 2 - THE WOLFLESS OMEGA

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Kade POV

The scream from the basement stops me halfway up the stairs.

It's Wren. I'd know that sound anywhere—I've heard her scream plenty of times before. But this is different. This isn't the sharp cry she makes when Dax hits her, or the whimper when Flynn burns her. This is raw and wild and full of something I've never heard from her before.

Power.

My wolf Shadow surges inside me, slamming against my chest so hard I stumble. He's never done that before. He's usually quiet, controlled, the perfect Alpha wolf. But right now he's acting like he wants to rip through my skin and run back down those stairs.

Mate, Shadow growls in my head. *MATE!*

"Shut up," I snap out loud. "She's not our mate. She's wolfless. She's nothing."

But Shadow keeps pushing, keeps snarling, and I have to grip the stair railing to stay still. What is wrong with him? What is wrong with me?

Another scream echoes from below, followed by a sound like bones breaking.

I should go back down. I should check what's happening. But instead, I force myself to keep climbing. Whatever's going on with Wren isn't my problem. She probably just fell again. She's clumsy like that. Weak.

I reach the main hall and stop dead.

Everything's wrong.

The hall should be busy right now. Pack members should be setting up for tonight's ceremony, hanging decorations, preparing the feast. But everyone's frozen, staring at the basement door behind me. They're not moving. They're not even breathing.

They heard her scream too.

"Kade?" My mother's voice cuts through the silence. Luna Saskia glides toward me, her face perfectly calm, but I see the tension in her shoulders. "What was that noise?"

"Nothing," I say automatically. "Just the omega being dramatic."

Mother's lips curve into a small smile. "Of course. That girl has always been too emotional." She links her arm through mine and starts walking me away from the basement. "Come. We have important matters to discuss before the ceremony."

But I can't stop looking back at that door. Shadow is still going crazy inside me, still pushing and snarling and saying that word over and over: *Mate, mate, mate.*

"Kade." Mother's voice gets sharper. "Are you listening?"

"Yes, Mother."

She leads me to the far corner of the hall where no one can hear us. "Tonight will be very important. When that omega fails to shift again, the pack will see she's defective. Less than omega. Basically human."

"She's waited six years," I hear myself say. "Maybe tonight will be different."

Why did I say that? I don't care if Wren shifts or not.

Mother's eyes narrow. "Don't tell me you're developing sympathy for that creature. After everything we've done to keep her in her place?"

"No," I say quickly. "I just meant—"

"She's a stain on this pack." Mother's voice drops to a whisper. "Her bloodline is tainted. Her parents were nobodies. The only reason your father took her in was because the Council forced him to. But after tonight, when she fails again, we can finally banish her. Get rid of her for good."

Something twists in my gut. "Banish her? She's been here for six years—"

"And she's been useless for six years. She eats our food, takes up space, and embarrasses us with her weakness." Mother touches my cheek gently. "You understand, don't you, darling? Sometimes we have to cut away the rot to keep the pack healthy."

I should agree. I've spent six years treating Wren like rot myself. I've said worse things to her than anyone else, cut her deeper with my words than Dax ever could with his fists. I've made her cry more times than I can count.

So why does the idea of banishing her make Shadow want to tear my mother apart?

"I understand," I force out.

Mother smiles. "Good boy. Now, make sure the omega is presentable for the ceremony. We want everyone to see her fail properly."

She walks away, leaving me standing there with my wolf raging inside my head.

I turn back toward the basement door. Everything's quiet now. No more screaming. Maybe whatever happened is over. Maybe Wren just hurt herself and passed out, which would be typical. Weak little omega, always causing problems.

But my feet start moving toward the door anyway.

I'm halfway there when Flynn appears out of nowhere, blocking my path. My middle brother grins, his silver-streaked hair catching the light. He's holding a torch even though it's daytime. Flynn always has fire nearby.

"Heard the freak screaming," he says cheerfully. "Think Dax's beating finally broke her brain?"

"Move," I growl.

Flynn's eyebrows shoot up. "Wow. Defensive. Don't tell me you actually care about the wolfless wonder?"

"I don't care. I just need to make sure she's ready for the ceremony."

"Right. The ceremony." Flynn twirls his torch. "The one where she fails again and we finally get to kick her out. Can't wait."

He walks away whistling.

I reach the basement door and put my hand on the handle. Shadow is howling now, desperate and fierce. Every instinct I have is screaming at me to open this door, to go down those stairs, to get to Wren.

But that's insane. She's nothing to me. Nothing to any of us.

I turn the handle.

The door swings open.

The smell hits me first—wild and sweet, like honey and smoke and something ancient. It fills my nose, my lungs, my entire body. Shadow goes absolutely berserk, throwing himself against my mental walls.

MATE! MATE! GO TO MATE!

Then I hear her voice from the bottom of the stairs, but it doesn't sound like Wren anymore. It sounds bigger, stronger, wrapped in power that makes my Alpha blood want to submit.

"Stay away from me."

I step onto the first stair, my heart pounding. "Wren? What's happening?"

"I said stay AWAY!"

The roar that follows isn't human.

Light explodes from the basement—blinding, silver, pure. It rushes up the stairs like a tidal wave, slamming into me and throwing me backward. I hit the wall hard, gasping.

When my vision clears, I see her.

Wren is standing at the bottom of the stairs, but she's not the broken omega anymore. Her eyes are glowing pure silver. Her skin is rippling with power. And behind her, I can see a shadow—massive, ancient, terrifying.

Her wolf.

After six years, after everyone calling her defective and worthless and broken, Wren is finally shifting.

And her wolf is the biggest I've ever seen.

The mate bond slams into my chest like a silver bullet, and I know three things at once:

One—Wren is my fated mate.

Two—She's also Dax's mate. And Flynn's mate. All three of us.

Three—We've been torturing our fated mate for six years, and she has no idea what we are to her.

The silver light grows brighter, and Wren's scream splits the air.

Her shift is happening right now.

And I think it might kill her.