

8 THE MISSING OMEGA

Flynn POV 1

I wake up drowning in her scent.

Smoke and honey. Wild flowers and rain. It's everywhere—in my nose, my lungs, soaking into my skin like I bathed in it. My wolf Blaze is going absolutely insane, howling and clawing at my mind, demanding something I don't understand.

Find her! Go to her! MATE!

"Shut up," I snarl, pressing my palms against my eyes. "She's not our mate. She's the omega freak who finally shifted and ran away like the coward she is."

But Blaze won't stop. He's never been this loud, this desperate. It's like someone's tearing him apart from the inside.

I stumble out of bed and the scent gets stronger. I look down and realize I'm still wearing the shirt from last night—the one I wore during the ceremony. The one I was wearing when Wren shifted into that massive silver wolf and Dax chased her into the forest.

The shirt reeks of her.

I rip it off and throw it in the fireplace. My hands shake as I light the fire, watching the fabric

catch and burn. The flames make me feel better —they always do. Fire is clean. Fire destroys things that need destroying.

The shirt turns to ash.

But her scent doesn't fade.

It's still there, still coating my skin, still driving Blaze insane. How is that possible? I burned the shirt. The scent should be gone.

Unless it's not coming from the shirt. Unless it's coming from inside me.

"No," I say out loud. "No, that's not possible."

I take the fastest shower of my life, scrubbing until my skin hurts. Use soap three times. Stand under scalding water until the bathroom fills with steam.

The scent remains.

I punch the shower wall hard enough to crack the tile. What is wrong with me? Why can't I stop smelling her? Why is my wolf acting like I lost something important when all we lost was a worthless omega who should've died six years ago with her parents?

A knock on my bedroom door makes me jump.

"Flynn?" Dax's voice, rough and tired. "You awake?"

I wrap a towel around my waist and open the door. My older brother looks like he didn't sleep at all—his eyes are bloodshot, his hair is a mess, and he's gripping the doorframe like he needs it to stay standing.

"You look terrible," I say.

"Thanks. You look insane." He steps into my room uninvited. "We need to talk about last night."

"What about it? The freak shifted, you chased her off, problem solved."

Dax flinches at the word 'freak' like I slapped him. That's weird. He's the one who's been calling Wren that for six years.

"She crossed the northern border," he says quietly. "Into Northern Crescent territory."

I freeze. "Thorne's territory? That psycho Alpha who hates our family?"

"Yeah. And according to our border patrol, his warriors found her. Carried her away." Dax's jaw tightens. "She probably died from her wounds by now."

He says it like a fact, but something in his voice sounds... wrong. Almost sad.

"Good riddance," I say, because that's what I'm supposed to say. "One less omega to feed."



"Right. Good riddance." But Dax doesn't sound convinced. His wolf must be giving him the same problems mine is.

We head downstairs for breakfast. The dining hall is quiet—most of the pack is still sleeping off last night's excitement. Only our parents and Kade are at the table.

Mother looks pleased with herself, sipping tea like she just won a prize. "Good morning, boys. Sleep well?"

"Fine," I lie, sliding into my seat. The smell of bacon makes my stomach turn. Actually, every smell makes my stomach turn except... smoke and honey.

Stop it. Stop thinking about her.

"The omega problem solved itself nicely," Mother continues, setting down her cup. "I knew she wouldn't survive long outside pack protection. Weak thing probably bled out in the forest."

Kade hasn't touched his food. He's just staring at his plate, his face completely blank.

"Kade?" I snap my fingers in front of his face.

"You alive over there?"

He blinks slowly, like he's coming back from somewhere far away. "Don't you feel it?"

"Feel what?"

"Wrong." His voice is barely a whisper. "Like we lost something important. Like part of us is... missing."

The words hit too close. I slam my hand on the table. "I feel nothing! She was omega trash and now she's dead. End of story."

"Then why do you keep smelling smoke and honey?" Kade asks quietly.

I freeze. "What did you say?"

"I can see it. Every time you breathe, you're searching for a scent that's not here anymore." His gray eyes meet mine. "I'm doing it too. And so is Dax. We're all looking for her."

"You're insane." I grab a plate and throw it at the wall. It shatters into a thousand pieces. "I don't care about that wolfless freak! I'm glad she's gone!"

But even as I yell it, Blaze is howling inside me: *Liar. Liar. You killed our mate and now we're dying too.*

"Flynn, control yourself," Father snaps. "What's gotten into you?"

"Nothing! I'm fine!" But I'm not fine. My hands are shaking. My chest feels like someone's crushing it. And no matter how hard I try, I can't stop smelling smoke and honey.

Mother stands gracefully. "Boys, I think you need rest. Last night was... traumatic. Seeing the omega shift like that, attacking you—"

"She didn't attack us," Kade interrupts. "We attacked her."

"She was a threat to pack safety," Mother says smoothly. "Dax did the right thing, chasing her away. Now let's not speak of it again."

But I can't stop speaking of it. Can't stop thinking of it. The look on Wren's face when she shifted—confused, scared, powerful. The way her silver wolf stood there, not attacking anyone, just trying to understand what was happening.

The way she ran when Dax charged her. Not fighting back. Just running.

Like she'd been running from us her whole life.

"I need air," I mutter, pushing back from the table.

I make it outside before the first wave hits. Pain—sharp and sudden, stabbing through my chest like someone shoved a knife between my ribs. I collapse against the wall, gasping.

Blaze is screaming: *MATE! THE BOND! IT'S BREAKING!*

"What bond?" I choke out. "There's no bond!"



But even as I say it, I feel it. A golden thread in my chest, thin and fragile, stretching north toward the border. Toward Northern Crescent territory. Toward...

Wren.

No. That's impossible. She's omega. She's nothing. She can't be—

The thread pulses once, weak and fading.

And I know with absolute certainty that if that thread breaks completely, I'll die too.

Dax and Kade burst out of the house, both looking as panicked as I feel. They're clutching their chests, breathing hard.

"You feel it?" Dax gasps.

"The bond," Kade whispers. "She's our mate. All three of us. How did we not know?"

"Because someone blocked it," a new voice says.

We spin around. A woman stands at the edge of our territory—old, dressed in black, her eyes milky white with cataracts. The dark witch Mother hired years ago for... something. I can't remember what.

"You," Dax snarls. "What are you doing here?"

"Collecting payment." The witch smiles, showing rotted teeth. "Your mother paid me well to curse

the omega girl. Block her shift, weaken her wolf, make sure the mate bonds stayed hidden until after she was dead."

Everything stops.

"Mother did WHAT?" I hear myself say.

"The curse worked perfectly for six years. But the girl shifted anyway—too much power to contain. And now the bonds are activating." The witch tilts her head. "You have maybe three days before they snap into place completely. Three days before you feel everything you've done to your mate for the past six years."

Kade makes a choking sound. "Everything we've done..."

All the beatings. All the burns. All the cruelty. We'll feel it all through the mate bond like it's happening to us.

We tortured our own fated mate for six years and we're about to experience every second of that pain.

"Can you break the curse?" Dax demands.

The witch laughs. "The curse is already breaking. That's why you're feeling it now. But here's the fun part—your mate is dying."

My blood turns to ice. "What?"

"The wound you gave her, Alpha Dax. She lost too much blood. Even with Northern Crescent healers, she probably won't last the night." The witch turns to leave. "So you have a choice: let her die and the bonds die with her, saving yourselves the pain. Or go get her back and live with what you've done."

She disappears into the forest.

We stand there in silence, the golden threads in our chests pulsing weakly.

Kade speaks first, his voice broken: "We have to get her back."

"Northern Crescent won't give her up," I point out. "Thorne hates us. This is his perfect revenge."

"Then we make him give her up." Dax's eyes flash amber. "We invoke pack law. She's our mate. Our property. He has to return her."

"She's not property," Kade snaps. "She's a person we tortured for six years!"

"And she's dying!" Dax roars. "We can feel guilty later! Right now we save her!"

The thread in my chest pulses again, even weaker than before.

He's right. Wren is dying. Our mate is dying.

And it's our fault.

"We need Mother's help," I say reluctantly. "She knows pack law better than anyone."

We storm back into the house and find Mother in her study, calmly reading. She looks up with a smile.

"Back so soon?"

"You cursed our mate," Dax says flatly.

Her smile doesn't waver. "I saved you from weakness. That omega would have destroyed everything we've built."

"She's DYING!" Kade slams his hands on her desk. "And when the bond completes, we'll feel her death like our own!"

Now Mother looks concerned. "The witch said you'd have three days—"

"The witch lied!" I shout. "Or the wound was worse than she thought! We need to get Wren back NOW!"

Mother stands slowly. "Then we go to Northern Crescent. We demand they return our property. And if they refuse..." Her smile turns cold. "We take her by force."