

To ruin an Omega #Chapter 209: Lily Of the Valley - Read To ruin an Omega Chapter 209: Lily Of the Valley

Chapter 209: Lily Of the Valley

FIA

I stared at the approaching vehicles, my breath catching in my throat. Even from this distance, I could make out the emblem on the lead car's hood. A delicate white flower against black metal.

The Lily of the Valley pack.

Only one pack carried themselves with that kind of arrogance. That level of pristine coordination. The cars moved like a military convoy, each one positioned with exact precision. This wasn't a delegation. This was a show of force.

"Oh goddess." The words slipped out.

The lead car pulled to a stop at the main entrance.

Then another.

And another.

There were six vehicles in total. And then the doors opened in near-perfect synchronization.

Armed guards emerged first. They didn't look like the ceremonial kind. These were real soldiers. Their weapons weren't just for show. They fanned out with practiced efficiency, securing the perimeter like they were entering hostile territory.

Then came the officials. High-ranking wolves dressed in formal attire that screamed overt wealth and too much power. They moved with the confidence of people who had never been told no in their entire lives.

Behind me, I heard the heavy oak doors of the elder circle building swing open.

I turned. The lead elder stood at the threshold with the other council members crowding behind him. Their faces had lost all color.

"I told you." My voice came out sharp. "I told you this would happen."

The lead elder's jaw worked. He stared at the delegation, at the armed guards, at the unmistakable message of power on display. "This is preposterous."

"Is it?" I took a step toward him. "Is it really so surprising? I warned you. I told you exactly what they were planning and you threw me out."

The silver-haired woman clutched at her papers. The calculating elder had gone very still. They all looked like they'd been slapped.

"I'll go speak with Alpha Joseph." The lead elder straightened his robes. His hands shook slightly but he kept his voice firm. "This can be handled diplomatically."

Two other elders moved to follow him. They walked with stiff backs and tight expressions toward the main estate building. The Lily of the Valley delegation was already heading in that direction.

I moved to follow.

"Luna Fia." Garrett caught my arm. "Where are you going?"

"Where do you think?" I pulled free and strode after the elders.

The main hall. Of course they'd use the main hall. It was the most impressive space in the estate. With high ceilings and ornate decorations. The only place that Silver Creek had to intimidate visitors and remind them that Silver Creek too had supposed grandeur.

Problem was it wasn't that big. It was why the open field was used when Cian came to wed Hazel.

We reached the entrance just as the elders filed through the tall doors. I caught a glimpse of the interior. My father stood near the center of the room. My stepmother beside him, her face arranged in that practiced pleasant expression she wore for important guests. It was a far cry from the rejection she had when I was hitting her daughter back to back in the trial. And there, off to the side, was Pauline.

Of course she was there. The architect of it all.

I stepped forward to enter and that was when two sentinels moved to block my path. Their bulk filled the doorway.

"This is Silver Creek business." The taller one spoke without looking at me. "You may not enter."

"I'm a daughter of this house." My voice rose. "This concerns my family."

"Step back, Luna Fia."

"What does that even mean?" I gestured at the closed doors. "Silver Creek business? My sister is being discussed and my father is in there. This affects me directly."

They didn't respond. They didn't even acknowledge I'd spoken. They just stood there like stone statues, completely unmoved by my protests.

I opened my mouth to argue further and that was when Baruch's hand touched my shoulder.

"Luna Fia." He kept his voice low. "Talking to them is a waste of time. They must have been warned to keep you out. There are however secret passages all over this estate. Surely a place such as this room where enemies have dined together has one."

I turned to look at him.

"Yes." The word came out slowly. "Yes, you're right."

I spun on my heel and headed back through the corridors. Garrett and Baruch followed without question. My feet carried me through familiar passages, up stairs I'd climbed countless times as a child.

My old room stood at the end of a dim hallway. The door hung slightly crooked on its hinges. No one had maintained this space in years. Why would they? I was the unwanted daughter. The embarrassment.

It was funny how much you could see without the rose filter.

I pushed the door open and dust mites immediately danced in the weak light filtering through the grimy windows. The furniture sat covered in sheets. The air tasted stale.

But I wasn't here for nostalgia.

"Help me with this." I moved to the far wall where an ornate mirror hung. It looked decorative. Most people would assume it was the only piece of expensive decor that I was spared.

It wasn't. In fact, the only the reason, it was still there was because it was necessary that it be there.

Garrett and Baruch positioned themselves on either side. We gripped the frame and pulled. The mirror resisted at first. Years of disuse had settled it firmly in place. Then something clicked. The whole thing swung outward on hidden hinges.

Darkness yawned beyond.

I pulled out my phone and activated the flashlight. The beam cut through the blackness, revealing a narrow space behind the wall. Wooden and stone beams. As well as cobwebs thick enough to be curtains.

"Of course." Garrett muttered at the sight. I could tell he was displeased. "Secret passages."

"Every old estate has them." I stepped through the opening. "My mother knew them like the back of her hand."

The passage smelled of must and old wood. The ceiling hung low enough that Garrett had to duck slightly. Our footsteps made no sound on the dust-covered floor.

I moved forward, trying to remember. It had been so long. My mother had made it seem like a game. A secret adventure just for us. She'd shown me the hidden ways through the estate. Places where little girls could hide and listen to conversations they weren't meant to hear.

Left here. No, right. Down this narrow corridor. Past the junction where two passages met.

"You remember this?" Baruch asked.

"Sort of." I kept my phone light trained ahead. "I was young. But it's coming back."

We moved deeper into the walls. Sometimes I heard muffled voices through the plaster. The estate going about its business, completely unaware we were here.

Then I found it. A section of wall with a thin line of light bleeding through. I pressed close and located the small hidden panel. My fingers found the catch.

The panel slid aside with barely a whisper. Suddenly I could see into the main hall.

And more importantly, I could hear everything.

The space we occupied was cramped. The three of us had to press together to get a decent view. But the vantage point was perfect. We could see the entire hall spread out below.

The Lily of the Valley delegation dominated the space. Their Alpha's representative stood front and center, a stern-faced man with silver threading through his dark hair. Behind him, a younger figure stood with perfect posture.

My father and stepmother hovered nearby, trying to look welcoming. The lead elder faced the delegation with his council members arranged behind him like a shield.

The representative pulled out a document. Even from here, I could see the official seals. The careful script.

"The betrothal contract." His voice carried easily in the cavernous hall. "Already signed by Alpha Joseph and Luna Isobel. Two weeks ago."

My father's signature and my stepmother's signature?

Two weeks ago?

Were they even trying to be believable?

The representative continued. "It is a significant honor that the Alpha's heir has come personally. But it is not for fancy. We are here because we received disturbing reports. Claims that his betrothed is on trial for murder. It is such a vile thing to hear."

The lead elder's spine straightened. "There is strong evidence suggesting she did commit the crime."

The room went very quiet.

The representative looked back at the younger man. The one standing with such perfect stillness. All I could make out was dark hair. Broad shoulders. The kind of bearing that spoke of absolute confidence.

Was that the Alpha of the Lily of the Valley's son?

"The audacity." The representative's voice dropped to something dangerous. "An accusation like that against a member of Lily of the Valley, even if she is not completely ours yet is not taken lightly. Such a stain cannot be dismissed."

My father stepped forward, hands raised in a placating gesture. "Of course not. We don't want conflict. But due process must be followed."

"We cannot send the message that lower rank lives don't matter." The lead elder found his voice. "They absolutely matter. The victim deserves justice if he was indeed murdered in cold blood."

"Of course." The younger man spoke for the first time.

My entire body went cold.

That voice... I knew that voice.

"Murder is a serious charge," he continued. "Especially for a woman now connected to us. I'm all for justice. But the pride of my people comes first."

He moved slightly and stepped forward into better light.

"We can either settle this amicably," he said, "or we can go to war. See how Silver Creek fares against us."

His tone remained conversational. Almost pleasant. But the threat underneath was unmistakable.

"I'll tell you how it ends." He took another step forward. "We win. You lose. But we don't want it to come to that. So a compromise must be reached."

The lead elder's hands clenched at his sides. "Are you threatening us to reduce her sentence?"

The young man turned slightly. I caught his profile then. The strong line of his jaw. That distinctive Greek nose. And his eyes.

Green... No.

They were as green as the lush moss even in the muted light. Just green wasn't enough to describe them.

"No." He spoke with measured patience. "I want justice. But not something as barbaric as a beheading. You can choose to follow through with your sentence. We won't stop you. It is the law after all."

He paused. Let the silence stretch.

"But pack law also allows us to declare war if we feel we've been gravely offended. Beheading my would-be bride definitely counts as an offence, don't you think?"

He turned fully toward the lead elder then. His face came into complete view.

My hand flew to my mouth. I had to physically stop myself from making a sound.

I knew him. I knew that face. Those eyes. That voice.

The boy from the meadows.

Chapter 210: Tell me Lies

MADELINE

I froze.

The words didn't land the way accusations usually did. They didn't crash into me or set me ablaze. Instead, they settled over me like snow. Cold, silent and suffocating.

I couldn't breathe.

"What did you just say?"

My voice came out thin and reedy. Like someone had taken all the air from my lungs and left me with barely enough to form words.

Cian didn't move. He stood there, watching me with those eyes that had once looked at me with warmth. With trust. Now they held something else entirely.

Suspicion.

"Mads." His voice was quieter now, softer even, like he was trying to coax something out of me. "You heard me."

My knees went weak.

I had to lock them in place to keep from swaying. My hands trembled at my sides and I pressed them against my thighs to still them.

"You are accusing me of killing a witch?" The words scraped out of my throat. "A kin?"

He said nothing.

"Why would I do that?" My voice pitched higher. Desperation leaked into it despite my best efforts to keep it contained. "What would she even do to me? I didn't even know her."

"I don't know."

"You don't know," I repeated. The disbelief was genuine. I didn't have to fake that part. "You don't know but you're standing here asking me if I murdered someone."

"All I know," he said slowly, like each word cost him something, "is that I smelled your magic before her head fucking exploded."

The world tilted.

I stared at him. At the man I had loved. At the man I was destroying my life for.

"And then you came back into the picture," he continued. His jaw was tight. His hands had curled into fists at his sides. "After going cold turkey on me for years. Why? Because I was married now or because you are working for someone?"

The accusation hung between us. Heavy and damning.

Something snapped inside me.

My hand moved before I could think about it. The crack of my palm against his cheek echoed through the space between us.

His head turned with the force of it. A red mark bloomed across his skin.

I was shaking now. Trembling so hard my teeth wanted to chatter.

"Oh my goddess." My voice broke. "This is insane."

He touched his cheek as he kept his eyes trained at me.

"You are insane," I said. The words tumbled out faster now. Louder too. "You have had all these thoughts about me this entire time and you let me help your mother. You let me help your mate. You even offered to let me stay here."

"Mads—"

"This is sick," I cut him off. My chest heaved. "So you think I took out this witch, made myself available to you to help, for what exactly? Tell me. Who do you think I am working for? Your uncle? Gabriel?"

He was quiet for a beat too long.

"I am being honest," he said finally, "because of the relationship that we had. Because I want to squash this before it blows out of proportion." He took a breath. "You just need to say no and I will with everything in me believe you right now."

I laughed.

It came out harsh and bitter.

"The fact that it is even a thought at all is disappointing."

I watched the words hit him. I watched something in his expression crack just slightly.

"But since you want to hear it," I continued. My voice dropped and went cold. "No."

The word sat between us like a stone.

"Do you believe me now?" I asked.

He looked at me. He really looked at me. His eyes moved over my face like he was searching for cracks in a foundation. Looking for the lie beneath the truth.

The seconds stretched and that was when I knew he was fighting with everything he has and he still couldn't assure me.

In another time and in a other life, the fact that he could still remember how my magic smelled would have been comforting and healing. It would have meant that I meant that much to him. The fact that he was even willing to eventually come clean and just tell me rather than watch me fuck up and give myself away from the distance made it even better. But this was about fucking exploding heads and murder.

"I want to turn the rational part of my head off," he said quietly. "But it is hard."

Something in my chest twisted.

I reached into my pocket and pulled out my phone. My hands were still shaking but I managed to unlock it and hold it out to him.

"If this is really about me coming back into your life with nefarious reasons," I said, "you can check my phone."

He stared at it. At my outstretched hand.

He didn't take it.

"Anything else can really be explained away," he said. His voice had gone flat. Tired. "But not the smell. I can't shut that part off."

I pulled my phone back and shoved it into my pocket.

"The scent that comes with magic is indeed real," I said. Each word came out measured and controlled. "But there are many cases where scent can be identical."

He frowned slightly.

"The smell of my brother's magic is quite similar to the smell of my mother's," I continued. "Families share signatures. Strangers share signatures. This is something you must know now."

I could see him processing it. I could see the gears turning behind his eyes.

"Are we done here?" I asked.

He exhaled slowly and rubbed a hand over his face.

"I am sorry."

The apology landed wrong. It was too little and too late.

I scoffed. The sound was ugly.

"If the roles were reversed," I said, and my voice cracked on the words, "you know I would never doubt you."

His expression shuttered.

"What I hate the most is... I hate the fact that I just blew up my life for you."

The tears came before I could stop them. Hot, angry and humiliating. They tracked down my cheeks and I didn't bother to wipe them away.

I had to protect myself. I had to sell this. I had to make him believe that his suspicion had cut me so deeply that I couldn't bear to stand in front of him anymore.

It wasn't entirely a lie.

Part of me did hate what I was doing. I hated the manipulation. I hated the way I had taken his trust and twisted it into something ugly.

But I hated being caught more. I hated that he could hate me. I couldn't live in a world like that.

"I hate you Cian Donlon."

The words tore out of me. Raw and vicious.

His face went pale.

I didn't wait to see what he would say. I didn't wait to see if he would reach for me again or if he would let me go.

I turned and ran.

My feet pounded against the stone drive. The afternoon air was hot against my flushed skin. The tears kept coming and I let them. They blurred my vision until the sight in front of me were nothing but smears of gold and green..

I didn't know where I was going.

I didn't care.

I just ran.

Away from him. Away from the question that hung in the air like smoke. Away from the truth that I couldn't let him see.

Behind me, I heard him call my name.

I didn't stop though.

My lungs burned. My throat was tight. The sobs kept catching in my chest and choking me but I didn't slow down.

I had done what I needed to do.

I had played the part of the wounded woman. The betrayed ally. The innocent accused.

And he had to have believed me.

Or at least he'd want to believe me badly enough that he would talk himself out of his suspicions. That he'd convince himself that the smell was a coincidence. That the timing was just bad luck.

I reached the edge of the property and finally stopped. I pressed my back against a tree and slid down until I was sitting in the dirt.

The tears were real now.

Not part of the performance. Not something I could turn on and off.

I wrapped my arms around my knees and let myself cry. Let the guilt and the fear and the exhaustion wash over me in waves.

I had killed Ophelia.

I had felt her life snuff out under my magic like a candle flame pinched between fingers.

I had felt her head explode and felt nothing but cold satisfaction.

She had been in the way. So I had removed her.

And then I had come back. I had inserted myself into Cian's life with careful precision and I was now playing the role of the exiled witch who needed shelter. And it had almost worked.

Or rather, it would have worked if his instincts hadn't been so sharp. If he hadn't caught the scent of my magic at the scene.

But I had salvaged it.

I had turned his suspicion back on him and made him feel guilty for doubting me. I had played the victim so well that he would second-guess himself now every time the thought crossed his mind.

I wiped my face with the back of my hand.

The tears were slowing now. The sobs evening out into shaky breaths.

I had done what I needed to do.

I had protected myself and my family.

I had kept my secret safe.

And if a small part of me hated myself for it, well. That was a price I was willing to pay.

It was a price I had to keep paying.