

To ruin an Omega

#Chapter 228: Mutually assured destruction - Read To ruin an Omega Chapter 228: Mutually assured destruction

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MADLINE

I pulled Wilhelm off the floor and dragged him to the bed. His body was dead weight in my arms. Blood kept pouring from his nose, soaking into his shirt and spreading across his chest. His eyes were still rolled back, still showing nothing but white.

"Will, come on." I grabbed a cloth from the nightstand and pressed it against his face. The fabric turned red almost instantly. "Wake up. Please wake up."

His breathing was shallow. Too shallow. Like his lungs couldn't remember how to work properly.

I wiped the blood away and it just kept coming. My hands shook as I tried to clear his airways, make sure he could breathe. The seizures had stopped but he was so still now.

Too still.

"Don't you dare die on me." I grabbed his shoulders and shook him. "Wilhelm!"

There was nothing. Horror climbed over my skin.

I pressed my hands to his chest and felt for his heartbeat. It was there but weak and irregular. Like it might give up at any second.

The smoke from the burning book made my eyes water. I could smell the leather turning to ash, could feel the heat of it even from where I sat on the bed. But I couldn't leave him to put it out. I couldn't risk letting go.

I started whispering. Old words my mother taught me. Healing words that were supposed to help with pain and injury. My magic pushed out from my palms and into his chest, searching for the damage, trying to fix whatever had broken inside him.

His body jerked once. Hard enough that I almost lost my grip.

Then he gasped.

The air rushed into his lungs like he'd been drowning. His back arched off the bed and his hands came up to clutch at my wrists. His eyes were still white but there was movement behind them now. Like he was trying to come back from wherever that attack had sent him.

"It's okay." I kept my magic flowing, kept my hands pressed to his chest. "I've got you. You're safe."

He gave another gasp and this time, his fingers dug into my skin hard enough to bruise.

"Breathe, Wilhelm. Just breathe."

He did. Slow and ragged at first, then more steady. The white in his eyes started to fade. Little specks of color broke through the blankness. His pupils came back in pieces, dilating and contracting like they couldn't quite remember what size they should be.

"Mads?" His voice was barely audible.

"I'm here."

He blinked several times. His vision cleared slowly, focusing on my face then losing focus then finding it again. Blood still covered the lower half of his face and dripped down his neck.

"What happened?" The words came out slurred.

I grabbed a clean cloth and started wiping the blood away properly this time. "You tell me. One second you were watching Aldric, the next you were on the floor having a seizure."

Wilhelm tried to sit up. I pushed him back down.

"Stay still. You almost died."

"Almost?" He laughed but it turned into a cough. Blood flecked his lips. "Felt like I did die."

"You didn't. But whatever hit you hit hard." I kept cleaning his face, kept checking to make sure he was really okay. "Do you remember anything?"

His eyes circled the room. He took in the smoking remains of the book in the bowl, the blood on the floor, the general mess we'd made of my space. His breathing was still slow and heavy but getting better with each inhale.

"There was a protective barrier." He touched his nose gingerly and winced. "Very anti spying."

"I figured that much out."

"It didn't just repel me." He looked at me and something dark moved behind his eyes. "It tried to kill me. That wasn't a warning. The goal was to take me out."

My stomach dropped. "You're sure?"

"Positive." He pushed himself up on his elbows and this time I didn't stop him. "I've encountered magical barriers before. They push you out, maybe give you a headache if you're stubborn about it. This one went straight for lethal force."

I sat back on my heels and processed that. Aldric had put up a barrier strong enough to kill anyone who tried to spy on that room. Which meant whatever was in there was important enough to murder for.

"He was two steps ahead again." I ran my hands through my hair.

"No." Wilhelm shook his head and immediately regretted it based on the way his face twisted. "No he's not."

I stared at him. "How is he not? He nearly killed you."

"Because now we know something we didn't before." Wilhelm sat up fully, ignoring my protests. "For starters, if magic is blocking us from that space, then it's certain he has something big to hide over there."

"We already knew he had secrets."

"Not like this." Wilhelm grabbed my arm. His grip was weak but insistent. "This isn't about hiding documents or covering tracks. This is something else entirely."

I waited.

"Before I was violently repelled, I did see something." He wiped at his face again, smearing the remaining blood. "There was a cage in that room."

The words hung there for a moment while my brain tried to make sense of them.

"A cage?"

"Yeah. Big enough for a person. I think someone was inside too. I only caught a glimpse before everything went to hell but I saw bars and I saw movement."

"What..." I couldn't finish the sentence. "Are you sure?"

He nodded. "Yes."

"Why would he imprison someone?"

"Who cares?" Wilhelm's voice went sharp. "What's mostly important now is that we get to that estate and get to that person."

I started to protest but he cut me off.

"Listen to me. The whole reason Aldric has a noose around our family's neck is because he has concrete evidence of the crimes against supernatural society that father has done." He leaned forward and his eyes were clearer now, focused with the kind of intensity that meant he was planning something. "We reveal who he is to Skollrend and we'll most likely not be believed. He throws it back on us by exposing our sins."

"I know that already."

"But if this person is some sort of key or something we can dangle against Aldric to protect ourselves, then I say we fucking take them." His words came faster, more urgent. "It would be mutually assured destruction afterward. Aldric stays off our back and we stay off his."

I thought about it. About everything that could go wrong. About what it would mean to break into Aldric's estate and free whoever he'd locked up down there. About whether that person even wanted to be freed or if they were dangerous themselves.

"I don't know."

"Yes you do." Wilhelm grabbed both my arms this time. "If you still care about Cian truly and you're tired of being Aldric's pawn even if it is to protect our family, then we have to do this."

His words hit harder than I wanted them to. Because he was right. I was tired. Tired of dancing to Aldric's tune. Tired of watching him manipulate everyone around him while we just stood by and let it happen because we were too scared to fight back.

"How would we even get in there?" I asked.

"I'll figure that out." Wilhelm finally let go of my arms and leaned back against the headboard. "I'll tell father what I found here once I leave tomorrow. We'll come up with a plan."

"And if the plan fails?"

"Then we're no worse off than we are now." He closed his eyes and exhaled slowly. "At least we'll have tried. At least we'll have done something instead of just rolling over and taking whatever Aldric decides to dish out."

I stood and walked to the window. The moon was slowly coming out, painting the sky in shades of blue. Somewhere out there, Cian was probably with Fia. Or searching for her if something had actually happened. And here I was, plotting against the man who'd made both our lives miserable.

"Okay." The word came out quieter than I intended.

"Okay?" Wilhelm opened his eyes.

"Okay." I turned to face him. "We do this. But we do it smart. No rushing in. No mistakes."

He smiled despite the dried blood still caked on his skin. "We got this."

I wasn't sure if I believed him. But I wanted to. I needed to believe that there was still a way out of this mess. That we weren't completely powerless against Aldric's schemes.

Wilhelm struggled to his feet and I moved to help him. He was steadier now but still weak. The barrier had taken a lot out of him.

"You should rest before you leave tomorrow."

"I will." He headed for the door and paused with his hand on the knob. "Thanks for not letting me die."

"You're my brother. What else was I supposed to do?"

He left without answering. The door clicked shut behind him and I was alone with the smoking bowl and the blood stains and the weight of what we were about to do.

I walked over to the scrying bowl and looked at what remained of Aldric's book. It was now ash and charred leather.

I'm just hoped he didn't notice it was gone now.