

To ruin an Omega

Chapter 265: Memory Lane 1

FIA

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Fia? Fia, are you alright?"

The voice came from somewhere far away at first. Muffled, as it was distant. Like it was calling to me through water. I groaned, my face sticky against something flat and rough. Pages. I was face down on pages.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Fia?"

I peeled my cheek off the open book and blinked. The room was still dim, the kind of grey light that only came in the earliest hours of morning when the sun hadn't fully committed to rising yet. My neck ached. My mouth was dry. And there, right in the center of the open page, was a wet smear.

Drool.

I was drooling on the book.

"Fuck," I whispered, sitting up fast enough to make my head spin. I grabbed the end of my skirt and wiped at the page in quick, frantic strokes. The saliva had already started to dry into the paper, leaving a dull sheen over the ink. I wiped harder, pressing my nightdress fabric flat against the damage, and tried not to think about how long I'd been out.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Fia, please. Can you hear me?"

Right... The door.

I ran my fingers through my hair, tugging at the tangled mess of it until it fell somewhat flat against my head. My babygirl nightdress was wrinkled. The book was still open on

my lap, and I closed it quickly, setting it face down on the mattress beside me before I stood up and crossed the room.

I opened the door.

Grand Luna Morrigan stood on the other side, dressed in something soft and cream-colored, her hair pulled back loosely from her face. She smiled when she saw me. It was warm and genuine.

"Oh," I said. "I'm sorry. I was asleep."

"No need to apologize," Morrigan said, shaking her head gently. She glanced past me into the room, and something in her expression shifted, just slightly. Concern, maybe. Or maybe she still carried the pity from last night. I couldn't tell which. "I'm sorry for waking you up this early. But you need something in your belly."

She snapped her fingers.

The sound was light and almost casual. But behind her, an Omega stepped forward from where she had been standing, barely visible in the corridor. She was young, small-framed, and moved with the kind of practiced silence that came from years of being told to take up as little space as possible. She pushed a trolley ahead of her. The wheels rolled smoothly, and the smell hit me before it even came through the door. Warm bread. I smelled something buttered too. Eggs, maybe. My stomach turned over, suddenly and violently awake.

"Oh," I said again, stepping back to let her through. The trolley was loaded. Plates covered with domes. A pitcher of something that looked like strawberry juice. Sliced fruit arranged in neat rows on a small board. It was more food than I was sure I could take.

The Omega wheeled it to the bedside without a word. She set the trolley into place, adjusted one of the covered plates so it sat straighter, then turned and bowed. A clean, practiced movement. Her eyes dropped to the floor.

"I'll be outside if I am needed," she said in a tone that was barely above a whisper.

Then she closed the door behind her.

I stood there for a moment, watching the space where she'd been. The room felt different now. Fuller. Morrigan was inside too, and the two of us were alone together for what felt like the first time. Not really. We had been in the same room before. Plenty of times, actually. But Cian had always been there. A buffer. A bridge between us. Without him, the air felt thinner somehow. Like the room hadn't figured out what it was supposed to be yet.

"Please," Morrigan said, gesturing toward the bed. "Sit."

I sat.

She moved toward the other end of the mattress, lowering herself down with care. She was healthier now. That much was obvious. The last time I had seen her up close, really up close, she had been pale and fragile in a way that made me afraid to look at her too long. But now there was color in her cheeks. Her movements were steady. She carried herself like someone who had been given time to heal and had used every second of it.

Her hand reached out toward the book.

I watched it happen in slow motion. Her fingers brushed the cover, and she turned it over, tilting it so she could read the spine. Her brow creased. Not in confusion. In recognition.

"Nocturne," she said.

She turned to me. Her eyes were calm, but there was something sharper underneath. Curiosity, maybe. Or caution.

"Why are you reading up on them?" she asked. "Did Cian perhaps say something about them?"

"No." I shook my head, keeping my voice even. "Is there some history between Skollrend and Nocturne?"

Morrigan held the book for a moment longer, turning it over in her hands like she was weighing it. Then she set it down between us and leaned back slightly.

"Well," she said. "It's a long story."

She paused, choosing her words. Not the way Cian usually did. This was different. This was someone who had lived through something and was trying to find the right place to start.

"Most packs are one spark away from full-on war," she said. "And most of them only tolerate each other because war is expensive. War means bodies. Bodies have to be disposed of. Great packs want to stay great. Smaller packs want to grow, not shrink. Strength is in numbers. That's the only reason anyone keeps the peace. Though there are moments. With people, there are always moments."

She folded her hands in her lap.

"Nocturne and Skollrend did have their scuffle. But that was mostly Gabriel's doing. When he acted as regent."

The name landed in the room and stayed there. Gabriel. Cian's hiding uncle. The villain who stayed as invisible as Aldric.

"What caused it?" I asked. "...The scuffle."

Morrigan looked at me. There was something careful in the way she held my gaze. She was not guarded. But her eyes felt heavy.

"Have you ever heard of the rogue faction massacre?"