

To ruin an Omega

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HAZEL

Sleep never came.

I lay on my bed, staring at the ceiling, watching the shadows shift as the hours crawled by. My cheek still burned where Mother had slapped me. My hands throbbed beneath the bandages. But those pains were nothing compared to the rage coiling in my chest like a living thing.

A prisoner. In my own room. In my own pack house.

The absurdity of it should have made me laugh, but I couldn't find anything funny about it. Not when every breath felt like swallowing glass. Not when Baruch's face kept flashing through my mind—his smile, his touch, the way he'd looked at me like I was something precious right before he destroyed everything.

I rolled onto my side, then my back again. The mattress felt wrong. Everything felt wrong.

Around three in the morning, I gave up on sleep entirely.

I stood and walked to the door, testing the handle even though I knew it was locked. It didn't budge. Of course it didn't. Mother had made sure of that.

I pressed my forehead against the wood, closing my eyes. This wasn't supposed to happen. None of this was supposed to happen. I was supposed to be Luna. I was supposed to have power, respect, fear. Now I had nothing. Not even the dignity of freedom in my own home.

The walls seemed to close in. My room, which had always felt spacious and luxurious, suddenly felt like a cage. I backed away from the door, my breathing coming faster.

There had to be a way out. There had to be.

Silver Creek was full of secret passages. I'd heard the stories my whole life. Hidden doors in the walls, tunnels beneath the floors, routes the former Alphas had used to move unseen through the pack house. Father had mentioned them once or twice when I was younger.

If there were passages throughout the pack house, surely there was one in my room. There had to be.

I started with the wall beside my bed, running my hands over the surface. The wallpaper felt smooth under my palms, unbroken. I pressed harder, searching for any give, any hollow sound that might indicate empty space behind it.

But I got nothing.

I moved to the next section of wall, then the next. My fingers traced the molding, pushed against the panels, searched every corner and seam I could find. The bandages on my hands made it awkward, but I didn't care. I kept going, methodical and desperate.

There had to be something. Some lever, some hidden button, some trick to make the wall swing open.

But the more I searched, the more frustrated I became. The walls were just walls. Solid and unforgiving. Mocking me with their simplicity.

I moved to the area near my closet, pressing and prodding at every surface. Then to the section by the window. Then back to the door side of the room.

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

Fucking nothing.

My hands were shaking now. From exhaustion or rage, I couldn't tell. Maybe both.

I knew there was a passage. I knew it. Silver Creek didn't just have them in the common areas or the Alpha's quarters. They were everywhere, woven through the pack house like veins. Someone had told me that once. Or maybe I'd overheard it. Was that also Father? I didn't even care at this point. The details didn't matter. What mattered was that there had to be one here, and I couldn't find it.

I wanted to scream. To put my fist through the wall just to break something. But that would only give Mother more ammunition, more proof that I was unstable and needed to be shipped off like a mail order bride.

So I kept searching, even as dawn light began creeping through my windows. Even as my fingers grew sore and my legs tired from crouching and stretching. Even as the futility of it all pressed down on me like a physical weight.

When I finally stopped, it was only because I heard footsteps in the hallway.

I froze, my hand still pressed against the wall near my dresser. The footsteps grew louder, then stopped outside my door.

A key slid into the lock. The sound of it turning made my stomach clench.

The door opened.

Mother stepped inside first, her face composed and cold. Behind her came Delta, carrying a tray with a covered plate and a glass of water. The smell of food hit me, and my stomach cramped with hunger, but I refused to acknowledge it.

I needed to stay prideful so mother could see how badly she has hurt me.

She didn't look like she was about to play that game with me this time around though. If anything, she looked like she was tired with my 'bullshit'.

I stood up straight, squaring my shoulders. "This is insane."

Mother didn't react. She just looked at me with those calculating eyes, taking in my rumpled nightgown and the dark circles I knew must be under my eyes.

"What does Father think about you locking me here?" I demanded.

"He doesn't care much." Her voice was matter-of-fact. "You are basically a humiliation to him now. He resents you as the foolish girl that you are."

The words landed like physical blows, but I kept my expression neutral. I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of seeing how much that hurt.

"I am starting to resent you too," Mother added.

I scoffed, but it came out shakier than I intended. "I didn't ask to be born."

"No, you didn't."

"But I am here. I am here to stay and take up space. I am your child. I am his too." I walked toward her, softening my expression, making my voice smaller. "You cannot hate me."

I stopped right in front of her, looking up through my lashes. The most pitiful expression I could manage. The one that used to work when I was younger, when I could still wrap her around my finger with tears and pretty words.

"I understand that you are angry, Mother. And you are not wrong to be. I am foolish and myopic and stubborn." The words tasted like ash, but I forced them out. "I have had time to reflect here. I will never do something so stupid again. I am better now. My mind is in a better place."

Mother's expression didn't change. "No, you're not."

