

To ruin an Omega

Chapter 275: Sympathy 2

FIA

Morrigan's breathing had gone shallow. Her hands gripped the armrests of her chair so tight her knuckles went white.

"Tell me," I said. "Tell me how he helped. After Gabriel's vendetta. Tell me everything."

She nodded and I waited. This part had to come from her. She had to walk herself through it. She had to see it with her own eyes, her own memory. That was the only way it would stick.

She started slow.

"When Gabriel first started targeting Nocturne," she said, "Aldric was the one who told me something was wrong. He came to me privately. Said Gabriel was acting erratic. Paranoid. He said Gabriel believed Nocturne was a threat to our pack's security."

She paused. Her eyes moved across the floor like she was reading words written there.

"Aldric said he tried to reason with Gabriel. Tried to calm him down. But Gabriel wouldn't listen. So Aldric came to me. He said we needed to stop Gabriel before things escalated. Before innocent people got hurt."

I stayed quiet and I let her keep going.

"He suggested we contact the royal wolves," she continued. "He said if anyone could intervene without making things worse, it would be them. They had the authority. The influence. Gabriel would have to listen to them."

Her voice was getting quieter now. Softer. Like she was talking to herself more than to me.

"I agreed," she said. "I signed off on it with the power vested in me. Aldric handled the details. He reached out to the tribunal. He arranged the meetings. He made sure everything was documented properly. He was... meticulous."

The word hung there. Meticulous.

She blinked. Once first. Then twice.

"The tribunal investigated," she said. "They found evidence of Gabriel's actions. Aldric was the one who helped compile it. He gathered testimonies. He made sure everything was ironclad. He wanted Gabriel held accountable. Or at least, that's what he told me."

Her hands loosened on the armrests. Just slightly. Like she was losing her grip on more than just the chair.

"Gabriel was sentenced," she said. "Temporarily stripped of some of his authority. Forced to make reparations to Nocturne. Aldric was the one who personally went to Nocturne on behalf of Skollrend to apologize. He negotiated the terms of reconciliation. He made sure Nocturne accepted our apology. He made sure things were... fixed."

She looked at me then. Really looked at me. Her eyes were wide.

"It is still just occurring to me that he was the one who fixed everything," she said.

"Yeah," I said. "He did."

"He fixed everything because he broke it first."

The words came out of her like a confession. Like something she had been holding back for too long and it finally tore free.

"Oh Goddess," she whispered. "He orchestrated the whole thing. He probably pushed Gabriel into targeting Nocturne the way he wanted. He planted the paranoia. He fed the fear. He let Gabriel spiral until Gabriel was the villain. And then Aldric stepped in as the hero."

She pressed her hands to her face. Her shoulders started shaking.

"He made us trust him," she said. Her voice was muffled behind her hands. "He made us believe he was the only one who could fix Gabriel's mess at the time. I wasn't in the right head space to do it. Cian was still young and stubborn... We believed him. I believed him."

I reached for her, putting my hand on her arm. She didn't pull away.

"He set it all up," she said again. "Every piece. Every move. He knew exactly what he was doing."

"He did," I said.

She dropped her hands. Her face was wet now. They weren't full of tears yet, but it was inching towards those waters. Her eyes were red around the edges.

"I have to confront that fucker," she said. Her voice had gone sharp and dangerous. "He needs to be put in jail right fucking now."

She stood up fast.

I stood up too. I grabbed her wrist before she could take a step toward the door.

"Wait," I said.

She looked at me. Her jaw was set. Her eyes were blazing.

"He poisoned me," she said. "He fucking poisoned me. Abs he still manipulated all of us while actively harming me... Harming Cian... I'm not going to just sit here and do nothing."

"I know," I said. "But aside from the fact that what you know in your heart is true, you have nothing concrete against him right now."

Her mouth opened. Then closed. She stared at me like I had slapped her.

"So I'm supposed to just sit here and do nothing?" she said. "I don't think I can manage that. There has to be something I can slap on him."

"No," I said. "I know you're angry but this has to be done in a smart way. You're supposed to wait until we have something that will actually stick. Because if you go to him now, with nothing but accusations, he will know you are on to him, he will spin it. He will turn it around. He will make you look hysterical. And he will walk away clean. If he has used the tribunal before, I'm sure he can use again. For an erratic woman who was poisoned is now distrusting of everyone around her. No one likes a mad woman. It'll only be shame she went mad."

She knew exactly what I meant. I saw her face go through hell knowing I was right. She pulled her wrist out of my grip. Enough to free herself.

"He literally poisoned my mind against you," she said. Her voice cracked. "And it worked. I believed him over you. I was ready to dismiss everything you said because he planted that seed."

"I know," I said.

"I trusted him," she said. "We trusted him. All of us. Fia... You can't know how this feels. Why child this even be happening to us? For what reason?"

I didn't have a word to say. I didn't even think she needed my words. These were rhetorical questions she was throwing because of how confused and angry she was.

Her face twisted. New grief hit her hard. Harder than the anger. I could see it ripple through her like a wave. Her shoulders sagged. Her hands fell to her sides.

"Cian has to know about this," she said.

"He knows," I said.

She looked at me, startled.

"He knows?" she repeated.

"Yesterday.... He took it in yesterday. It took a lot to convince him," I said. "And I mean a lot. He is stubborn like that. You know how he is. But I eventually did it. I made him see reason."

Morrigan exhaled. Long and slow. Like she had been holding her breath for hours.

"And now?" she asked. "What now?"

"He is building a case," I said. "Gathering evidence. Making sure everything cannot be swayed when he does clamp down. This way... when Aldric goes down, he stays down. But that is only when we have enough. When we have enough, when it's all solid and undeniable, then Aldric and his minions will face the full wrath of Skollrend's elder circle."

Morrigan shook her head. Slow. Like she was trying to shake off the weight of everything she had just learned.

"I cannot believe this," she said. "I cannot wrap my head around it."

She looked at me then. Her eyes were desperate and searching.

"Could it be that Aldric had a hand in his brother's demise?" she asked.

The question hung between us. Heavy, as it was ugly. It was more for her to ponder about than for me to answer. Because what did I even know?

"No one can be that evil, right?" she said. Her voice was small. Almost childlike.

I smiled. I knew better than that.

"I have had my fair share of an evil sibling," I said. "So I know anyone can be terrible."

Mother-in-law's face crumpled. Not into anger. Into grief. Pure, raw grief. She sat back down. Slow. Like her legs couldn't hold her anymore.

"You really are an angel sent to Cian and I," she said.

I smiled again. But before I could say anything else, a sound hit me.

A hum.

It was low at first. But then it gradually got louder. It cranked up so high that I thought my skull would crack open.

I slapped my hands over my ears hard and as quicky as I could manage. The sound didn't stop. It just kept going. Throbbing. Pulsing. Like something alive and angry.

"Fia!"

The Grand Luna's voice sounded far away. Muffled... Like I was underwater.

I felt her hands on my shoulders. She was shaking me. Saying something I couldn't hear over the hum.

I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to breathe through it. I did my best to push it back. But it kept coming and it kept pressing in.

Then, slowly, it started to fade. Just a little. Just enough that I could lower my hands.

The hum was still there. But it wasn't splitting my head open anymore. It was softer and steadier. If I could compare it to anything, it was like a heartbeat.

"Fia, are you alright?"

Morrigan was right in front of me now. Her hands were on my face. Her eyes were wide with panic.

"Yeah," I said. My voice sounded weird and shaky. "That was loud."

"What was?" she asked.

I looked at her. Really looked at her. What did she mean by that?

"You cannot hear that?" I asked.

"Hear what?"

I turned toward the door. The hum was coming from that direction. Throbbing and pulling like a magnet. It felt a lot like something was calling me.

"The throbbing sound," I said.

Morrigan stared at me, confused and worried.

"Fia, I don't hear anything," she said.

I looked down at my hands.

They were glowing.

A soft, blue light flickering in time with the hum. Pulsing as if it were alive.

"Fia," Morrigan whispered. "What is that?"

I kept staring at my hands. At the light. At the way it moved and shifted like water under my skin.

The hum grew louder again. But it was not painful this time. It was just insistent and so goddamn demanding.

This has happened before. When I practically brought myself back to life on the private road. This was the same thing. It has to be connected to the humming.

Was it a divine sign?

It had to be.

That would mean...

"I think somebody needs my help," I said.