

To ruin an Omega

Chapter 302: House of Mirrors

FIA

The words still made my stomach turn in a way that lingered long after the vision faded. They did not feel like a threat tossed out in anger. They felt deliberate. Claimed. Like someone planting a flag in ground that was still wet with blood.

Aldric killing Cian was not just revenge or ambition. It was a move. A messy, calculated step toward power. Toward becoming ruling Alpha.

My thoughts started racing even while I forced my breathing to stay slow and steady against Cian's chest. Aldric had always had access to him. Always had the chance. If he wanted Cian dead, he could have done it years ago... weeks ago... days ago There had to be a reason he waited. Which would mean something was going to shift. Something was going to change that would make the risk worth it, or make it unavoidable.

Was it because of what we knew now? Because Cian was finally starting to believe me about his uncle?

The questions tangled together until they were impossible to separate. If Aldric staged a coup and succeeded, what would happen to the pack? What would happen to his mother? To me?

And when would it happen? How close were we to that moment?

Cian pressed a kiss to my forehead. The softness of it hurt more than anything else had. Guilt slid into my chest and twisted until it felt like something sharp had lodged between my ribs.

"Come on," he murmured. "Let's skip dinner tonight. We should go rest."

I nodded into him because speaking felt dangerous. My voice would have betrayed everything sitting heavy in my chest.

He pulled back slightly and studied my face, his eyes searching in that quiet, careful way he had when he thought I was hurting. The concern there made the guilt swell until it felt suffocating. I was lying to him. Sitting here in his arms while holding something massive and horrible just out of reach, because I was still too shaken to figure out how to hand it to him without breaking everything.

Morrigan's warning from earlier replayed in my mind. The situation with Valentine. The quiet insistence that I needed to be careful. And layered over all of it was the image of Cian's death, bright as it was impossible to ignore.

It felt like too much for one body to carry.

He took my hand and led me out of the pool house to collect our soaked clothes. I followed because my body knew the motions, even if my mind lagged somewhere far behind. Every movement felt delayed, like I was walking through thick water. The world looked normal, the path familiar, the evening light warm against the grounds, but everything felt distant and muffled.

Somewhere between the pool house and the main building, one thought cut through the noise with terrifying clarity.

I had to kill Aldric. As quickly as possible.

The realization settled in my chest like a stone dropped into deep water. Heavy. Cold. Final. Once it was there, it did not move.

Cian opened the door to his room and guided me inside. His hands were gentle, careful, like he thought I might shatter if he moved too quickly. He sat me on the edge of the bed and lingered for a moment, watching me like he was trying to read something written just under my skin.

"Perhaps I should call on Thorne," he said quietly. "He can prepare a tonic to help you rest."

I swallowed past the tightness in my throat and managed a small nod. "Thank you."

He lingered a second after I thanked him, then turned toward the wardrobe with the towel still slung around his hips. For a moment he just stood there staring inside like he had forgotten what he came for, then he shook himself and reached in, pulling out the first shirt he grabbed and tossing it onto the bed.

"You should lie down," he murmured over his shoulder.

I nodded but stayed where I was.

He dropped the towel without ceremony and pulled the shirt over his head in one quick motion, still damp from the pool. Briefs and trousers followed just as quickly, dragged on with quiet efficiency. By the time he buttoned his cuffs, the soft vulnerability from earlier had slipped back behind the mask he wore so easily.

He looked at me again, worry still plain in his eyes. "I won't be long."

He then pressed another kiss to my forehead and left the room. The door clicked shut behind him.

I sat there for maybe three seconds before I was up and pacing. My feet moved of their own accord. Back and forth across the room.

Back and forth.

How could I get rid of Aldric?

The thought should have horrified me. It should have made me recoil from my own mind. But I felt nothing except cold determination. The goddess had given me that vision for a reason. To prevent it. To save Cian.

I could hire an assassin. But I'd never done that before. I didn't even know where to start. And what if it failed? What if Aldric survived and came after us with even more vengeance? He would have the legal route to use if he could prove it. And I knew he would.

My pacing grew more frantic. The room felt too small. Too confining.

Maybe keeping this secret was stupid. Maybe I needed to tell Cian right now. The moment he walked back through that door, I could just blurt it out.

But then Morrigan's warning came back. For me to be careful. He has a lot going now that any new thing would just make him explode.

Even Cian had implied as much earlier. He wasn't sure how much more he could take. The stress of his own best friend and brother in arms being a treacherous monster, pack politics, and even familial betrayal, all of it was weighing on him.

And now I had the Valentine situation to keep secret. Plus this vision of his death. It was too much. I couldn't dump all of this on him at once.

But keeping it bottled up inside felt like swallowing poison.

The door opened. I hadn't realized how long I had been deep in thought for Cian to have returned so quickly.

Cian stepped back in holding a small vial of dark liquid.

"Thorne was quick with it," he said. He crossed the room to me and held out the vial. "You should get back in bed. Your mind is a mess. You really need this."

I took the vial with numb fingers. The glass was cool against my palm.

Cian pulled back the covers and I climbed in. The sheets were soft and clean. They smelled like him. Like safety and home.

He sat on the edge of the bed.

"Thorne suggested you drink the whole thing," he said.

I uncorked it and tipped it back. The liquid was bitter and thick. It coated my tongue and throat as I swallowed. I drained every drop and handed the empty vial back to him.

"I'll leave you to sleep," Cian said.

Panic flared in my chest. I grabbed his hand before he could stand. My fingers wrapped around his wrist tight enough that my knuckles went white.

"No," I said. "Stay."

"I'm not running away," he said gently. "I'll just be in my study if you need—"

"Stay." My voice cracked. Tears burned hot behind my eyes and I couldn't stop them. They spilled down my cheeks before I could even think to hold them back.

Cian's expression shifted immediately. He pulled me into his arms and I collapsed against him. The sobs came hard and fast. They ripped out of my chest like something was tearing me apart from the inside.

"What's wrong?" he murmured against my hair. "Fia, what's wrong?"

"I think being so close to the edge of death makes you realize that life is short," I said between sobs. The words tumbled out faster than I could catch

them. "Life is precious and fragile and it can end so suddenly. I don't have a lot of people that I love who haven't been taken by death already."

His arms tightened around me. He rocked me slightly. Back and forth like I was delicate china.

Maybe I was at this point.

"So promise me, Cian." I pulled back just enough to look up at him. Tears still streamed down my face but I needed him to see how serious I was. "Promise me you won't die. That you'll fight death. That you'll stay by my side for a very long time."

"I promise," he said without hesitation.

"Promise me you'll be selfish." The tonic was starting to work. I could feel the edges of my consciousness getting fuzzy. But I had to get this out. I had to make him understand. "That if it comes to it. When it comes to it. That you will hurt those who want to hurt you. Without holding back. Without having flashes of the relationship you once had with them."

Cian studied my face. His brow furrowed slightly.

"I don't know if this is the tonic working," he said slowly. "But you're acting very strange."

"Promise me anyway," I insisted. My grip on his hand tightened even as my strength started to fade. "Please."

"Yeah," he said. "I promise."

"I mean it." My words were starting to slur. The room tilted slightly. "I mean that the most."

"I know," Cian said softly. "I can tell."

He nodded and pulled me closer. My head rested against his chest again. I could hear his heartbeat. Strong and steady and alive.

Sleep pulled at me like a riptide. I fought it for a moment and tried to hold on. Tried to memorize the feel of him breathing and the warmth of his body and the sound of his heart.

But the tonic was too strong. It dragged me under despite my best efforts.

My last conscious thought was a desperate prayer to the goddess. That the vision wouldn't come true. That I'd find a way to stop it. That Cian would keep his promises.

Everything slowly went dark but I did hear something.

A familiar homely voice.

A voice I hadn't heard in a long time.

"Fi. You are here again. Is it time to break the cycle?"

Mom?