

To ruin an Omega #Chapter 303: Not your design - Read

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ALDRIC

I sat in my room and watched the door close behind the sentinel. The latch clicked into place with a soft sound that somehow felt too loud in the silence.

"Speak," I said.

The sentinel straightened his shoulders. His hands clasped behind his back in that military stance they all adopted when reporting to superiors.

"I have been watching the witch Madeline all morning, Alpha. She doesn't seem to be acting suspicious at all."

I leaned back in my chair. The leather creaked under my weight and I studied the man's face. His eyes met mine for a moment before darting away. Then back again. Then away.

Interesting.

I stood and walked toward him. Each step measured and deliberate. The sentinel's posture stiffened even more if that was possible.

"Remember," I said. My voice stayed level and calm. Almost gentle. "This is for the safety of our Alpha."

I stopped directly in front of him. Close enough that he had to tilt his head up slightly to maintain eye contact.

"If there is something you saw that you believe you didn't look deeply enough into, you can mention it now. I'm not going to hold it against you."

His eyes flickered. Left, then right, then down to somewhere near my shoulder. The classic tells of someone holding something back.

A small smile tugged at my lips.

"I know you are hiding something from me."

"I'm not, Alpha." The words came out too quickly. Too defensive. "I swear I'm not hiding anything."

The lie sat between us like a third presence in the room. Obvious, crude and insulting in its transparency.

I felt something shift in my chest. A coldness that spread outward from my core and into my limbs. My hand moved toward the table where several books lay stacked. My fingers wrapped around the spine of the thickest one.

I lifted it. Tested the weight. Turned back to face the sentinel who still stood there with his pathetic lies hanging in the air.

I swung.

The book connected with his face and the impact sent a satisfying jolt up my arm. His head snapped to the side and a grunt of pain escaped him.

I hit him again and again. The spine of the book bent with each strike. His cheek swelled. Blood trickled from his nose and split lip. His eyes watered but he didn't cry out. He didn't beg me to stop.

Good. At least he had that much dignity.

I raised the book one more time and brought it down hard against his temple. He stumbled and caught himself against the wall, looking up at me with those watering eyes that finally showed fear.

I blinked.

The sentinel stood in front of me completely unharmed. No blood. No swelling. No fear in his eyes. Just that same dodgy expression from before.

The book sat on the table where I'd left it.

My hand rested at my side. Not reaching for anything.

It was nothing but a fantasy then.

I took a slow breath and let it out even slower. The coldness in my chest remained but I pushed it down. Buried it under layers of practiced control.

Not here. I couldn't lash out like that here. Not in Cian's temporary territory and not after the reputation I had built for myself. I had to stay perfect, calculated and measured.

"Thank you," I said instead. My voice came out pleasant, almost warm. "That will be all."

The sentinel's shoulders relaxed. He bowed low and backed toward the door. The relief on his face was almost comical.

He left and I returned to my chair.

My phone sat on the desk. The screen dark and silent as if mocking me in its lack of notifications.

I picked it up and opened my messages and scrolled to the conversation with Hazel. The last several messages were all from me. Questions about what I needed to know. Reminders that I needed information. Instructions to report back immediately.

But I had gotten nothing in response.

Fucking radio silence.

I set the phone down and drummed my fingers against the desk several times.

She had until tomorrow. That was the grace period I'd decided on. After that I would have to show her that ignoring me was not an option. That treating my instructions like suggestions would have consequences she wouldn't enjoy.

But I couldn't just sit here and wait. Doing nothing felt like admitting defeat and I didn't do that. Ever.

I needed to understand what was happening. All the pieces were there but they didn't fit together the way they should.

Fia had survived an accident designed specifically to kill her. Not just survived too. She had walked away without a scratch. Meanwhile the sentinel assigned to protect her throughout her journey still limped around with bandages and bruises and cracked ribs this morning.

Ronan had mentioned most of it to me. He'd said something felt off about the whole situation. His instincts were good and when he said something didn't add up I paid attention.

The sentinel had injuries. Fia had none. The odds of that happening naturally were astronomical.

Then there was the delicate girl and her burning eyes. A phenomenon even I hadn't heard of.

Pauline had been so certain. So smug when she'd told me the assassin witch she used wouldn't be exposed. She'd known something. Used something.

What though?

That was the question that kept circling back in my mind. What had she done? What did she have that made her so right about it and confident?

I reached for my phone again. My thumb hovered over Pauline's contact. One press and I could call her. Demand answers. Push until she broke.

But that would show weakness and desperation. It would give her power over me that I couldn't afford to grant.

The phone vibrated in my hand before I could make the call.

Ronan's name flashed across the screen.

I answered immediately.

"Did you get something?"

"I have one of your business cards." His voice carried that careful neutrality he used when delivering news he knew I wouldn't like. "The one where you impersonate Uncle Gabriel."

I straightened in my chair. My free hand gripped the armrest hard enough that my knuckles went white.

"What about that is news?"

"The sentinel who survived the accident with Fia handed it to me today." Ronan paused and I could hear him breathing on the other end of the line. "He says it was at the scene of the accident. That he noticed it and he picked it up."

My stomach twisted. Not with fear exactly. More like the sensation of pieces clicking into place in a way I didn't like.

"Oh." The word came out flat. "Was Pauline trying to set me up?"

"Perhaps." Ronan's voice stayed level. Professional. "You did push Northern Ridge's Nocturne to its limits. I'm sure she's tired of not having teeth."

A laugh escaped me. Short sharp and completely humorless.

He was right of course. I'd been brutal with Pauline. Taken everything from her piece by piece until she had nothing left but her usefulness to me. People tended to get vengeful when you backed them into corners like that.

"How are we supposed to make sure this card becomes a forgotten relic?" I asked.

"The sentinel came to me and not Cian. Said he forgot to mention it the night of the accident." Ronan paused again. "So I know Cian knows nothing about this. And from what I smoked out of Garrett, Fia isn't aware of the card either."

I processed that information. Turned it over in my mind. Examined it from every angle.

"It's a risky move," Ronan continued. "But I have to make it to ensure Cian doesn't have a strong link connecting this to Uncle Gabriel's work. Because if Pauline laid the groundwork for this, she intended for Fia to be killed and the card to be found. Probably other clues too. Enough to make sure you're discovered once Cian was pushed past his limits."

Understanding bloomed cold and sharp in my chest.

"And here I thought she was being rash." I couldn't help the admiration that crept into my voice. "Seems like she's calculated. As a bitch should be."

Pauline had played it smart. If Fia had died the way she was supposed to, the investigation would have uncovered the card. Maybe more evidence. A trail leading straight back to me disguised as Uncle Gabriel.

Cian would have followed that trail. Would have put together what happened. Would have known I'd orchestrated his mate's death.

Game over.

But Fia had survived. Ruined the whole plan with her impossible luck. And now the only evidence was a card in Ronan's possession that Cian knew nothing about.

"What about the delicate?" I asked. "Did you pay her handler extra to figure out what we need to know about how Cian's Omega survived that crash?"

"Yes." Ronan's voice shifted. Something uncertain entered it. "But nothing of particular interest came up. The delicate claims she was simply lucky."

"What?"

The word came out sharper than I intended. I forced myself to take a breath and moderate my tone.

"What about the blinding light you saw?"

"The girl saw none of it. So maybe it was a trick of mirrors." Ronan's uncertainty grew more pronounced. "But I don't know. Something seems off, Alpha Aldric—Sorry—Father. I know what I saw that night. It was no trick of light."

I believed him. Ronan wasn't prone to flights of fancy or seeing things that weren't there. If he said there was a blinding light, there was a blinding light.

Which meant the delicate was lying. Or someone had gotten to her. Or she wasn't talented enough to see it. Her gifts had left her with burned eyes after all. Something else did seem at play.

"I believe you," I said. "Just keep watching the Omega girl. And do keep the card situation under wraps."

I stood and walked to the window. Outside the grounds stretched, peaceful and completely ordinary looking. Like nothing sinister ever happened within these walls.

"Pauline is about to learn what happens when someone is too smart for their own good."

I ended the call and set the phone down on the windowsill.

The pieces still didn't fit together cleanly. There were gaps in my understanding. Holes in the logic that bothered me like stones in my shoe.

Fia survived when she shouldn't have. The delicate saw something then claimed she didn't or maybe she didn't. Pauline had set up an elaborate frame job that would have worked perfectly if Fia had died.

But she hadn't died.

Why?

What had saved her?