

# To ruin an Omega

## Chapter 306: I want to break free 3

### FIA

I found myself staring up at the high window again, at the thick dark pressed against the glass like it had weight, like it could leak inside if it wanted to. It showed nothing back. No sky, no stars, no sense of time. Just absence.

When I lowered my gaze, it landed on the woman across from me, and the way she held herself made something inside me hollow out. She looked present and gone at the same time, like a shell that had learned how to breathe.

That was when I noticed her hands.

The marks were faint but impossible to miss once I saw them. Lines and shadows that did not belong to ordinary work or age. They sat against her skin like memories that refused to fade, and the thought that followed made my stomach twist before I could stop it.

I turned toward the younger version of my mother. I never spoke the question out loud, yet the words hung between us anyway, heavy and obvious. She watched me for a moment, and I felt the answer coming before she opened her mouth.

"It's a choice she told me she regrets," she said quietly. "No matter how much she didn't want to live anymore."

The room felt smaller after that. The air did not move.

"She stayed," I said, the words leaving me before I had time to soften them. "Even when she could have gone. She stayed because of you."

Silence stretched out, long enough that it started to feel like part of the room itself.

"She was afraid of what they would do to me," my mother finally said. "If she ran and they needed to punish someone for it."

My chest ached.

"Every time she got close to that point again," my mother continued, "I was what stopped her. She would get to the edge of it and then think of me and come back. But I think even that is getting hard for her. I have never known the outside world. Aside from

words she has told me, I don't know what I am missing. But she has. She knows what she lost."

The woman sat so still it almost felt wrong to call it sitting. More like she had been placed there and forgotten. I moved toward her without thinking it through, the urge sudden and sharp, like if I did not reach her now she might drift somewhere I could not follow.

I lifted my hand.

For a second I thought I would touch her shoulder. That I would feel skin, warmth, something real and solid. Instead my palm met resistance that was not resistance at all. It felt like pressing against the surface of water before it breaks, that strange trembling barrier that holds for half a breath before giving way. My hand stopped there, hovering, shaking, the air thick and wrong between us.

Pain flared in my chest so fast it stole the rest of my breath.

"You cannot despair now," I said, the words cracking as they came out. "It gets better. She escapes. Your daughter escapes. Muna escapes."

Saying it hurt. It hurt like forcing light into a place that had learned to live without it.

Athena did not move. Neither did she sense me.

Mother didn't escape with anyone. So that would have meant that Athena did but survive here enough to escape.

I turned to look at my mother in the doorway. Young and thin and standing with her shoulders slightly curved inward, a habit that had become posture that had become the shape of a body learning to take up less space.

"When did you know about her hurting herself?" I asked. If I was here now, could I change something? "When did you know that was what was happening?"

"Not until later. When I was a bit older." She said as she looked at Athena. "But knowing changes nothing."

The admission was quiet. There was no blame in it. Just the truth of two people who had loved each other inside a cage and made their peace with the shape of the walls.

I turned back to Athena.

I reached out once more. Even harder might I add.

My fingers stopped just short of her arm. The membrane hummed between us, thin as breath.

"She really can't feel me," I said, though my hand stayed where it was, hovering in that thin space that felt like the surface of something unseen.

"Not directly." My mother paused before continuing, like she was choosing each word with care. "But she has. Before. In the same way she felt me. The way you've been here before without knowing it."

I did not pull my hand back. I could not. It felt wrong to give up the space, even if nothing in it would ever push back.

"I've been coming here," I said slowly, the realization forming as I spoke it aloud. "Since when?"

"I wouldn't know. But yes."

I turned toward her. "And you knew. You recognized me."

"Every time." Her voice softened even more. "You never stayed long. But you always came when it was worst. When she... or even me became close to the edge. You would arrive and something would shift and we would..." She hesitated, searching. "Hold on."

Something in my chest tightened until it felt too big for my ribs. Too heavy to sit quietly inside me the way it had before.

Had I been saving them? Was that what this was? Even if I never chose it, even if I never understood it, some part of me had been finding its way back through years that should have been unreachable. Back to a woman I had never known and another I knew too well, as if there had always been a thread pulling me toward them because leaving them at the bottom of whatever this place was had never been an option.

Before I was born, I had been finding my way back here.

The idea pressed in from every side, too wide and too deep to take in all at once, so I didn't try. I let myself hold only the smallest piece of it and hoped that would be enough for now.

"What do you mean when you say break the cycle?" I asked. "You asked me that when I arrived."