

# TO RUIN AN OMEGA

## *Chapter 315: Soul Kiss*

### **CIAN**

"And I chose mine too." She held my gaze. "How can you fault me for that? You chose your family, Cian. I chose mine. We are exactly the same."

The comparison sat in my chest like something swallowed wrong.

"I'll get a sentinel," I said. "Get this over with."

I started for the door. I heard the shift in the air behind me, that particular charge that magic carried right before it was released, and I turned.

Her hands were up.

I looked at them. Then I looked at her face.

"Go on then," I said softly. "I bet it feels good. The thought of it. Striking me down. Maybe popping my head clean like you did with good old Ophelia."

"I don't want to hurt you." Her hands dropped. Her voice broke completely. "I don't."

I walked toward her.

"No," I said. "You do."

I stopped close. Too close. I could see every ruined line of her face.

"I curse the day I met you."

She fell apart.

It was not the careful falling apart she had been doing since I arrived. Those words... My words... They cut something. Her knees hit the floor and the sound she made was not a performance. It was ugly and true and I almost looked away.

I turned to walk away but her hand caught my leg.

"Please." Her voice came from somewhere below me. "Cian. Please."

I didn't move.

"I have lost you," she said. "I have made peace with that. But I cannot lose my family too." She was crying hard now, trying to speak through it. "My father is a monster. I know that. But I am his daughter. I need my family intact. I can be useful to you. I swear it. I'll be a double agent. I'll feed you everything."

"I cannot trust you."

"I know." She didn't argue it. "I know. But all of this, all the threats, the years of it, it didn't have to happen. I know that now. I could have come to you and I didn't."

I looked down at her.

"You could have," I said.

"I don't know. You weren't the big tough ruling Alpha then." She tilted her head up to look at me and her face was wrecked. "You were a boy who lost his father. With the threats Aldric kept giving me, I was scared. Not just for myself. For you. I thought he would take you out. Until I realized he still needed to be seen as a saint. In your eyes. In all your eyes."

"I would have been by your side."

"No." She shook her head. "No, you wouldn't have. You loved your uncle. And you probably would have pieced it together faster if you weren't so trusting of him. If you didn't hold him in such high regard." She wiped at her face. "Aldric can be sloppy. But he has always known he had you. Had most of us. If I had told you, you might have gone straight to him. And even if you didn't, even if some part of you believed me fully, you would have tried to find a way to absolve him. To make it make sense. Because in what world would Aldric betray you?"

She laughed once, a broken sound.

"Trapped in all of this, I know even Fia has tried a little." Her eyes went soft in a way I didn't like. "I wonder what made you finally see it. Was it her almost dying?"

My chest did something I couldn't name.

I turned back again.

"I might have struggled with it," I said. "But I would have believed you."

"Maybe." She didn't say it cruelly. "And then you would have gone straight to Aldric with little to no political power to back you. He would have had a field day with my family."

"Is that how low you think of me?"

"I don't think low of you." She met my eyes and held them. "This is just how you have always been. Rash. It's why people feel obligated to keep things from you. It is why I did." She steadied herself. "If it was anyone else in this situation I'm in right now, they might not have hesitated to hurt you. You've confronted me twice now. If I was such a monster, how far would this conversation have gone?"

I stood there.

Then I lowered myself. Slowly. Until I was crouched in front of her, eye level, looking at her face up close the way I hadn't let myself do all night.

"Then give me something tangible," I said. "Something that makes it possible for me to trust you."

She looked at me steadily.

"A soul kiss pact," she said. "Different from the one we made before when we were younger. Stronger. With a different purpose. I'll stake my life on it. And I'll tell you everything I know about Aldric. Every piece of it."

"You broke that pact we made as stupid teenagers."

"No." She shook her head slowly. "We did. That's the thing with a pact. You can't unbind without the second party. Remember?"

I went still.

She was right. I did remember. I remembered the night we made it and everything that led up to it. I remembered the feel of it settling, the weight of it. I remembered thinking nothing could get between us after that. I was sorely mistaken though.

We got between us.

"What about Aldric," I said. My voice had gone very quiet. "Did you make a pact with him too?"

"No." She didn't hesitate. She didn't look away. "Of course not."

The room was quiet.

I stayed crouched in front of her and looked at what was left of the woman I had once built half my life around and tried to figure out what was left inside me that was still usable. Still worth anything.

She had burned me. That was the truth of it. She had burned me and she had done it with her hands open and her face familiar and her voice saying things she meant, at least some of them.

And I still didn't know what to do with that.

"Make your stupid pact."