

TO RUIN AN OMEGA

Chapter 323: Lie Lie Lie 1

FIA

Morning filtered through the curtains and painted the ceiling in a pale wash of light. I had been awake for a while, propped on one elbow, watching him breathe.

His chest moved in a slow rhythm. One arm rested above his head, fingers loose, his body arranged in careless comfort. Sleep stripped him of the sharpness he carried during the day. No authority in his expression. No calculation. His mouth was slightly parted, his lashes resting against his cheek. He looked younger this way. Unburdened.

I had already taken care of what needed doing downstairs. Thorne met me in the hallway. Our voices stayed low. The plastic bag passed between us with deliberate care, both of us aware of what it represented without speaking it aloud. He did not question me. He only said he would keep it until I asked for it. His eyes held judgment, worry, and loyalty all at once. I accepted all three and went back upstairs.

Now I lay beside Cian with something unsettled pressing beneath my ribs. It was not fear. Neither was it guilt. This was something harder to name.

His eyes opened gradually, awareness returning without urgency. He blinked and then found me immediately.

"Hey, beautiful," he said, voice rough with sleep.

He reached for me and pulled me into his chest with quiet certainty. I went easily, pressing my face into his shoulder. I gave myself a few seconds without thought, without strategy, without the weight of what I had just done.

He drew back slightly to study me. "Did I look good while I slept?"

"You gave damsel in distress," I said.

The laugh that broke from him was genuine and low. He tried to compose himself afterward, pressing his lips together as if that would restore his dignity, but the warmth lingered in his eyes.

He stretched, arms spreading wide, spine arching as a groan slipped from him. Strength rolled through the movement. When he settled again, his hand remained at my waist.

"I have a busy day today," he said.

"Pack business?"

"That too." His gaze drifted upward. "But mostly the Ronan and Aldric situation. The card doesn't seem to be doing enough."

He kept his tone even, but tension gathered along his jaw.

"I know silence is its own answer," he continued. "But I intend to shatter ranks today."

I pushed myself up to look at him properly. "Cian."

He turned his head toward me.

"That approach is volatile. Once you fracture something at that level, you cannot dictate how it reforms. If you move too quickly, you risk losing control of it."

"I know," he said. His eyes were steady. "I will not act without thought. Trust me."

He kissed me then, slow and deliberate. There was no urgency in it, only intention. When we parted, I noticed something caught in his hair near his temple.

It was a thin thread glinting in the morning light. Almost invisible unless you were looking for it. I reached up before I said anything and pinched it gently between my fingers, pulling it free.

"What is that?" I reached up and pulled it free.

He glanced at the strand of web suspended between my fingers and then dragged his hand through his hair, brushing at the spot absently. "Hm."

He rubbed his fingers together as if expecting to feel something there. "The Omegas must be slacking off somewhere."

"I doubt it." I let the strand fall. "They clean every inch of this place."

His eyes narrowed slightly.

"With one exception," I added. "The room that was used for me during my first week here."

A shift passed between us, subtle but unmistakable.

"They likely overlooked a corner," he finally said. "It happens."

He said it easily. And I almost left it. I reached toward the bond the way I sometimes did when something felt off. There was that instinct to check in, to feel how he was and whether what he showed me on the surface matched what was underneath. But he was closed. This shielding felt deliberate as hell too.

I was about to say something. I was forming the shape of the question in my mind, working out how to ask it without making him defensive, when he shifted and looked at me.

"Speaking of things that happen, I woke up yesterday and you weren't there." His tone was neutral. Curious more than anything. "Did you go somewhere?"

There it was.

My turn to fidget. I could feel it happening and I tried to keep my hands still in my lap. "I just stepped out for a bit. For air." I kept my voice light. "The tonic helped. But some things only touching grass can fix."

"Right, right," he said, like he was agreeing with a thought I had not actually shared. Then, "Well. Let's go have breakfast."

He got up without ceremony and crossed the room, already dragging his shirt over his head as he walked. I watched the muscles in his back shift under skin I knew too well, then he disappeared into the bathroom and the water came on a second later, steady and unbothered.

I let out a breath I had not realized I was holding and pressed two fingers to my temple, trying to smooth out the leftover edges of the morning.

When I pushed the covers back to stand, my hand slowed before my mind did. Something felt wrong. I looked properly at his side of the bed.

The sheet near the edge of the mattress was off.

There was fine dirt pressed into the fabric, the pale, powdery kind that clung to old places that did not see daylight or regular hands. And caught along the seam were thin threads of cobweb, more than you would get from brushing past a neglected corner.

I stared at it longer than I meant to.

He had gone somewhere.

The thought did not come with panic. It came with weight. He had gone somewhere and he had not told me. In fact, he was actively hiding it.