

# TO RUIN AN OMEGA

## *Chapter 324: Lie Lie Lie 2*

### **FIA**

I turned that over slowly, testing it against my ribs. It was difficult to decide how I felt about it when I was currently balancing several secrets of my own, tucked away neat and quiet, with no intention of laying them out on the table for him to examine.

Steam rolled out from the bathroom and his voice cut through it, warm and entirely too pleased with himself. "I was half expecting you would join me."

It pulled me out of my head in spite of everything. A laugh slipped out before I could stop it, the sound surprising both of us. "You pervert."

"Coming?"

"Coming," I said, and left the dirt and the cobwebs exactly where they were.

Whatever explanation existed could wait.

The bathroom was thick with heat and fog, the mirror already surrendering to it. He reached for me with soapy hands and zero apology, tugging me under the spray like he had every right. For a while there was nothing but the water hitting tile, his hands sliding over my waist, the way he looked at me like I was both a complication and the only thing he wanted to deal with.

It was easy with him in a way that almost felt unfair. Outside that door were politics and expectations and things that could break bones. In here it was just skin and breath and the low hum of want that neither of us bothered pretending was noble.

He said something against my ear that I refused to store properly in my memory, and I told him to behave.

"I am behaving," he murmured, and I could hear the smile in it.

Neither of us believed that.

We got out eventually, the mirror a lost cause. We moved around each other without thinking, reaching past shoulders, handing over towels without asking. There was a comfort in it that had crept up on us somewhere along the way, the kind that made you forget you had ever been careful.

"It's going to be so awkward walking to breakfast in your clothes," I said, dragging his shirt down over my head and making a face at my reflection. It swallowed me in the way his things always did.

He caught my eye in the mirror. "We're mates. That isn't a problem."

I turned and gave him a flat look.

He returned something serene and entirely unrepentant.

When he stepped toward the wardrobe, I drifted back toward the bed like I had nowhere in particular to be. My hands hung loose at my sides. My steps were unhurried. If he glanced over, he would see nothing more than idle movement.

I reached his side of the mattress and peeled back the sheet.

This time, I made sure the sound that left me was sharp enough to carry.

He was beside me immediately, close enough that our shoulders brushed as he looked down at the mess. The dirt, the fine grit ground into white fabric. The cobwebs caught along the edge.

"This cannot just be a missed spot," I said, letting confusion edge into my voice. "They change the sheets everyday."

He scratched the back of his head, a gesture so uncharacteristically sheepish that I almost forgot to stay in character. I had seen him face down murderous people without blinking. Dirt in a bed should not have rattled him.

"Oh," he said slowly. "It slipped my mind." He glanced at me from the corner of his eye. "I used the estate's secret passages."

Something inside me straightened.

"Secret passages."

"Yes."

"I didn't know Skollrend had them."

"It's a given," he said, as if that settled it. "Most old estates do."

I kept my tone light, curious but not prying too hard. "That doesn't explain what you used them for. Where did you go? And when?" I tilted my head, letting a small frown crease my forehead. "You weren't covered in cobwebs when you brought me the tonic."

He went quiet.

The measured kind. The kind where he was arranging thoughts before he allowed me access to them in spoken words.

He sighed after a moment, like someone who already knew resistance would only make things worse. "I had to make contingencies."

The word sank into me slowly. "About what?"

He stepped closer and closed the distance I had not realized was there. His hand came up to smooth my hair back from my face with gentle, almost tender fingers. I knew him well enough to recognize it for what it was. Reassurance, yes. Also distraction.

"It's better you don't know," he said quietly. His eyes held mine without wavering. "Don't worry about it. I promise I'm not being rash."

I drew in a breath and held it for a few seconds, long enough to feel my pulse against the inside of my throat. Better I don't know?

That was a line people used when they were protecting you or when they were underestimating you. Sometimes both.

That wasn't an option I could quite accept now. Not when I was trying to prevent a vision from coming true

I let my breath out slowly and nodded. I offered him the best smile I had, the kind that did not show teeth and did not show suspicion.

"You lied the first time, though," I said, keeping my voice even. "When I asked. Secrets aren't exactly healthy at a time like this."

Oh, I was the biggest hypocrite saying that line.

"I know." He did not flinch. "I am sorry. I just didn't want you to worry." A pause followed. It was brief but so deliberate. Something shifted in his expression then, something lighter. "Besides, I'm sure you have yours as well."

My stomach tightened before I could stop it.

"What does that mean?" I asked.

He smiled at me, and it was not sharp. It was clear he did not mean it in an accusing manner. Even if I had taken it that way. "Why do you look so guilty? I'm only saying. It's a given."

The truth of it hovered between us, quiet and undeniable. It felt like we were both playing careful games. Even if he didn't know the depths of mine.

I felt the weight of my own secrets pressing against the inside of my ribs, things I had locked away because timing mattered and survival mattered more.

I made sure my face stayed open. I let my mouth curve just enough.

"I guess you are right," I said. "It's a given."