

TO RUIN AN OMEGA

Chapter 357: Paternal Bond 3

FIA

Cian's expression didn't change. "What are you getting at?"

Valentine's smile widened.

"The villain in your story has always been Gabriel. But that has been a lie peddled by Aldric. Gabriel has been trapped and imprisoned under Aldric's own estate for Hekate knows how long. But thanks to me, he is about to see the light again."

My heart stopped.

Gabriel.

Cian's other uncle?

The one everyone said had tried to hurt them and committed several sins. The one who had practically exiled himself because of the evil he had done. The one whose name was spoken like a curse.

"You can have the greatest testimony against Aldric," Valentine continued. "By having Gabriel here. But he'll only be here on time and today if you break the soul kiss."

The room went silent.

Cian stared at Valentine. His face was unreadable. I couldn't tell if he was shocked or angry or something else entirely.

Madeline had turned back toward the room. Her eyes were wide.

"Father, what are you doing?" She asked.

I stood frozen near the door. My mind raced.

Gabriel was not a villain? He had been imprisoned under Aldric's estate this whole time? Surely Cian was not buying this lie.

But one look at Cian and that thought extinguished. Cian did look like he was buying it.

Cian straightened slowly. He uncrossed his arms and placed both hands flat on the desk behind him.

"You're telling me my uncle, Gabriel was imprisoned by Aldric."

It wasn't a question. It was a statement. The way it came out was flat and a testament of how shocked Cian seemed to be.

Valentine nodded. "Very much so. And I'm sure he is very eager to tell the truth about what happened all those years ago."

Cian's jaw tightened. I could see the muscles working under his skin. He was thinking. Calculating. Weighing the offer against whatever the soul kiss bound Valentine to.

"Where is he?" Cian asked.

"Safe," Valentine said. "For now. But I need assurances. I need to know that once this is over, I will be truly free. Completely free."

Cian pushed off the desk. He walked around it and stopped a few feet from Valentine.

"If you're lying to me," Cian said quietly, "there is no place you could hide that I wouldn't find you."

Valentine didn't flinch. "I'm not lying."

They stared at each other. The air between them felt charged. Dangerous.

"I promised that already, did I not?"

"Well," Valentine replied. "I don't quite believe you. One more soul kiss won't hurt, will it now?"

No. I had to step in.

"Cian," I couldn't help myself. "This man is not to be trusted. There is something off about—"

"Miss." Valentine cut in smoothly, turning his attention to me. "That is an incredibly vile thing to say to someone."

The temperature in the room seemed to drop.

Cian's head turned slowly toward him.

The calm on his face did not reach his eyes.

"Careful," he said, his voice low and tight. "Watch how you speak to my Luna."

Silence followed. But I noticed something in Valentine shifted.

His brows lifted a little, surprise flashing across his face before he raised both hands in a mild gesture of surrender.

"My apologies," he said quickly, the sharpness gone from his voice. "No disrespect was intended. I spoke out of turn."

Then Cian turned to me.

His eyes found mine across the room. There was something in his gaze I couldn't quite name. Desperation maybe. Or hope. Perhaps even both.

"Fia," he said softly. "I understand why you're worried. But I can do this. I don't mind it."

His voice gentled. "You don't have to stay for it."

I opened my mouth to argue. To tell him I wanted to stay. That I needed to know what happened next.

But the look on his face stopped me.

He was practically pleading with his eyes.

I nodded once. "Alright."

I turned and pulled the door open. Before I stepped through, I glanced back at Valentine.

He was watching me again. That same strange look in his eyes.

And I knew. I knew with absolute certainty that this man was still as dangerous as I had seen in my visions.

That whatever Cian was about to agree to would come with a cost. That nothing this man could offer came without strings attached.

But I also knew that if Gabriel was really alive, if he really could testify against Aldric, then this might be the only chance we had to end this hellish mess that stood over Skollrend for good.

I could have mentioned the poison and how there was a chance that Aldric wouldn't even live long enough for any of it to matter. But it did matter. Because the rot was deep. Aldric and Ronan weren't the only ones. Every traitor needed to go and if Gabriel has indeed been imprisoned by Aldric. He would know things. A lot of things. Names. Deals made in the dark. Secrets no one else had lived long enough to speak of.

That would help Cian's cause.

I walked out and closed the door behind me.

The hallway stretched ahead. Empty and quiet. My footsteps echoed against the stone floor.

I pressed one hand to my stomach.

Something felt off. A faint queasiness that I couldn't quite place. Probably just nerves. Everything that had happened today was enough to make anyone feel sick.

I kept walking.

The nausea grew stronger with each step. A low, rolling sensation that started in my gut and spread upward. I swallowed hard and tried to breathe through it.

I told myself again that it was just stress. The weight of everything crashing down at once.

I turned the corner toward the main stairwell.

That was when the world tilted.

My stomach lurched violently. I stumbled sideways and caught myself against the wall. The stone was cold under my palm. My mouth flooded with saliva.

I barely made it two more steps before my body betrayed me completely.

I doubled over and vomited.

The contents of my stomach hit the floor in a violent rush. I braced one hand against the wall and the other on my knee. My throat burned. My eyes watered. I heaved again and again until there was nothing left.

When it finally stopped, I stayed bent over. Breathing hard. My whole body trembled.

What in Selene's name was that?

I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand and straightened slowly. The hallway spun for a moment before settling. I leaned against the wall and tried to steady myself.

The nausea hadn't fully passed. It sat in my stomach like a stone.

I looked down at the mess on the floor and grimaced. A servant would find it eventually. I should probably call for someone to clean it up. But I couldn't bring myself to move just yet.

My legs felt weak and unsteady.

I pressed my palm flat against the wall and focused on breathing. In through my nose. Out through my mouth. Slow and controlled.

This wasn't normal.

I had been stressed before. I had been terrified before. But I had never reacted like this.

Unless...

A cold knot twisted in my chest.

There was no way.