

TO RUIN AN OMEGA

Chapter 358: Paternal Bond 4

CIAN

I watched Fia leave and shut the door behind her. The latch clicked softly. For a moment, the room was silent except for the faint sound of her footsteps retreating down the hall.

I turned back to Valentine.

He stood there with that same knowing smile. Like he held all the cards and was simply waiting for me to realize it.

Madeline had moved closer to her father. She was looking at him with something between confusion and alarm.

"Father," she said quietly. "What are you doing?"

Valentine didn't look at her. His eyes stayed on me.

I moved around the desk slowly. I kept my hands loose at my sides. My wolf was restless beneath my skin. It didn't like this. Didn't trust it.

But if Gabriel was really alive, if he really had been imprisoned under Aldric's estate all this time, then I needed him. I needed his testimony. His knowledge. Whatever secrets he had buried with him when Aldric locked him away.

"This is exactly who your father is," I said to Madeline without taking my eyes off Valentine. "I hope after this, you stop protecting him. He's just as bad as Aldric."

Madeline flinched.

Valentine's smile didn't falter. If anything, it widened slightly.

"The difference," he said, his tone light and unbothered, "is that I would never hurt my family intentionally."

I let out a short, bitter laugh. "You've hurt your daughter in more ways than one."

Valentine's expression flickered. Just for a second. Then it smoothed over again.

Madeline looked away. Her jaw was tight. Her hands were clenched at her sides.

I let the silence sit between us for a moment. Then I exhaled slowly and straightened my shoulders.

"I'll agree to the soul kiss," I said.

Valentine's eyes brightened.

"But if we're making another one, I want to add to the rules."

He tilted his head. "Add?"

"Yes," I said. "A chip in the new covenant. One that ensures I actually get what I want out of this at the end of the day. I would hate to get played after all my efforts."

Valentine studied me for a long moment. Then he lifted one hand and drew it across the air in front of him. A thin blade of light appeared in his palm. He didn't hesitate. He sliced it across his own hand in one clean motion.

Blood welled up immediately. Dark red against his pale skin. It dripped onto the floor in slow, deliberate drops.

He reached toward me with his bloodied hand.

I didn't take it yet.

"Both soul kisses will only break if I get what I want today," I said. "Aldric and Ronan have to be punished for their crimes. It has to actually happen and also the full exposure of any other enemies we have hiding in the shadows. If that happens, then yes, you'll be free from the shackles of the first one."

Valentine's smile thinned slightly. He lowered his hand a fraction.

"Deal," he said.

I started to reach for him. Then I stopped.

There was something else. Something I needed to know.

Valentine's eyes narrowed. "I don't think you should push too hard," he said. His voice was still smooth, but there was an edge to it now. "I too have limits. And I will deny you bringing Gabriel here the moment that you need him the most if you make it too hard on me."

I held his gaze. "I am simply wondering how you bypassed the first soul kiss we had. Considering hiding my uncle's situation was a move that can only be seen as directly against me."

Valentine's smile returned. Slow and deliberate.

"Words are quite powerful," he said. "Shape them to what you want and they will become and unbecome."

I stared at him. He didn't elaborate. He didn't need to.

"Right," I said.

I reached out and gave him my hand.

Valentine's fingers closed around mine. His blood was warm and slick against my palm. He lifted his other hand and drew another line of light through the air. The blade appeared again. He brought it down across my hand without warning.

Pain flared sharp and immediate. Blood welled up and mixed with his.

The air around us shifted. I felt the magic take hold. It was a strange sensation. Like something wrapping around my chest and pulling tight. Like the first three times, it was not painful exactly. It was more... uncomfortable. Heavy in it's own way.

Valentine began to speak. His voice took on a different quality. The words started out in in any language I did not recognize, but I felt them settle into my bones.

"Sanguis voco. Vinculum creo. Anima ad animam, voluntas ad voluntatem."

He was binding us. Tying the new covenant into place. Making it unbreakable until the conditions were met.

"Let the old laws witness this and the new ones rise from it. From blood freely given, this covenant is born."

"By this blood, I establish a new covenant. A covenant that will break the old Soul Kiss, but not before the appointed moment."

A ripple of power moved through the room.

"The moment when Aldric and Ronan receive their punishment. The moment when the truth of the traitors is dragged into the light. When their crimes are revealed and justice is carried out."

The pressure around my ribs tightened. I felt the magic move through me like threads of iron being woven into place.

Valentine continued, his voice quieter now, final.

"When justice is done, the old bond shall fall. The Soul Kiss shall be undone. This covenant will hold until that task is complete."

When he finished, the pressure in my chest eased slightly. The magic settled. It was done.

Valentine lowered our hands slowly, blood still running between our fingers.

"So it is bound." he said as he stepped back, looking quite satisfied with himself.

I wiped my palm against my trousers and flexed my fingers. The cut was already starting to heal. Slow, but steady nonetheless.

I opened my mouth to say something else when a loud bang echoed from the hallway.

We all turned toward the door.

Voices rose outside the chamber, first a low swell of argument, then sharp shouts that carried down the stone corridor. My sentinels were barking orders, the sound of boots scraping across the floor echoing through the hall could be heard.

It hit a precipice when something heavy slammed against the door once, then again, harder.

Through the noise came a woman's voice.

It was raw and it sounded like she was in great pain.

"Let me through! Please, just let me see him!"

Another impact shook the door in its frame. The wood shuddered against the hinges.

I had just taken a step toward it when the door finally burst inward.

The hinges groaned in protest as it slammed against the wall with a violent crack before bouncing slightly back into place.

A woman stumbled across the threshold.

Three sentinels were on her immediately, grabbing her arms before she could take more than two steps into the room. One of them had already drawn his gun, the barrel aimed straight at her chest as they struggled to hold her back.