

TO RUIN AN OMEGA

Chapter 359: Paternal Bond 5

CIAN

For a moment she fought them with surprising strength. Not like a warrior, not with skill, but with the desperate energy of someone who had already decided she had nothing left to lose.

Then she lifted her head.

Only then did I realize it was Beta Teagan.

Ronan's mother.

I had seen her many times over the years. She had always carried herself with quiet dignity. Calm and composed in a way that made others trust her without thinking about it.

The woman standing in front of me now barely resembled that memory.

Her dark hair had come loose from whatever braid or knot she had worn earlier and now hung in tangled strands around her face. Dirt streaked across the sleeves of her dress and smeared along one cheek as though she had fallen more than once on her way here. The fabric was wrinkled and creased, the hem dark with dust.

But it was her eyes that held me.

They were wild.

Red rimmed, glassy with tears she was trying and failing to hold back.

She saw me.

The moment she did, everything else seemed to disappear for her.

"You," she breathed, the word torn out of her like something fragile breaking. Her chest rose and fell in quick, uneven breaths as she struggled to steady herself. "How... how could you do this to Ronan?"

For a second I said nothing.

Then I glanced toward Valentine.

"Is it done?"

He gave a small nod. "Yes."

The magic had settled. The covenant was complete.

I turned back to the sentinels.

"Let her go."

They hesitated. It was only a moment, but I saw the uncertainty in their faces. They had dragged her like a threat that she supposedly was. Letting her walk freely toward me was not what they expected.

Still, they obeyed.

Their grips loosened and her arms slipped from their hands. The sentinel with the gun lowered it slightly, though he kept it ready at his side, his eyes still fixed on her.

Freed from their hold, Teagan swayed where she stood.

For a heartbeat I thought she might collapse right there.

Then she forced herself forward.

Each step looked like it took more effort than the last. Not because she was weak, but because whatever had brought her here had already wrung everything out of her.

When she reached me, she didn't try to stand tall.

She sank to her knees.

The movement was slow and unsteady, like her legs simply gave out beneath the weight of what she was carrying.

Her hands came up instinctively, not touching me, but hovering there as if she did not know whether she was allowed to.

Up close, I could see the tracks tears had carved through the dirt on her face.

"Please," she whispered.

The word trembled.

She swallowed hard, trying to steady her voice, but it kept breaking apart anyway.

"I know my son has done terrible things. I'm not blind to it, no matter how much I wish I could be. I raised him. I know the boy he was, and I know the man he became." Her fingers twisted together in her lap as though she was trying to hold them still. "And I know you have every reason to hate him."

Her gaze lifted to mine again, filled with something that made my chest tighten.

Fear.

The kind of fear that belonged to a mother standing at the edge of losing her child.

"But he's still my son," she continued softly, her voice shaking. "I carried him for nine months. I held him when he cried as a baby. I watched him take his first steps across the floor of our home. I remember the way he used to run to the door whenever his late father came back from patrol."

A small, broken sound escaped her throat.

"I remember the boy he used to be."

Her shoulders trembled as she drew in a shaky breath.

"I know you're the Alpha. I know you have to protect the pack. I know justice has to be done." Her voice cracked completely now. "But I'm begging you... please don't destroy him."

Tears slipped freely down her face now, but she didn't try to wipe them away.

"Punish him if you must. Strip his rank. Lock him away. Do whatever you think is right."

Her head bowed slightly as if the words themselves were costing her something.

"Just... please don't take my son from me. Pleas. He has to live."

For a long moment she stayed there on her knees in front of me.

There was no pride in it.

No defiance either.

This was just a mother, trembling with the terrible love that refuses to let go even when it knows it probably should.

I cut her off. "You have no idea what your son Ronan did. How deep his betrayal runs. As much as it hurts me, there is nothing I can or will do about it. So if you're truly here to beg for mercy, I'm sorry to disappoint. You will not find empathy here."

Teagan's face crumpled. Tears spilled down her cheeks.

"The elders will arrive soon," I continued. My voice was flat. "There's no point to this."

She shook her head violently. "You don't understand," she sobbed. "All of this is my fault."

I looked down at her. "Ronan made his bed. You have no part to play in this."

"But that's the thing," she cried. Her voice broke. "You don't know. You don't know."

She wiped at her face with both hands. Her shoulders shook.

"That man," she whispered. "That monster got to him and it is my fault. All he wanted was a father figure."

I felt something cold settle in my stomach.

"This sounds like excuses," I said.

I motioned to the sentinels. "Take her."

They moved forward immediately. Each one grabbed an arm. They started dragging her toward the door once more.

But Beta Teagan fought against them. She twisted and pulled and tried to dig her heels into the floor.

"Ronan's your cousin!" she screamed.

I froze.

The sentinels stopped.

The room went completely silent.

I turned slowly. "What?"

Teagan's face was streaked with fresh tears now. Her eyes were red and swollen. But there was something else there now.

Desperation.

Truth.

"That's right," she said. Her voice shook but she didn't look away. "His father. His true father. Is Aldric."

The words hit me like a physical blow.

I stared at her. My mind went blank for a moment. Then it started racing.

Ronan???

Aldric's son???

My cousin???

"No," I said. The word came out flat. Disbelieving.

But even as I said it, I knew.

I knew it made sense. I hated that it did.

Teagan sobbed harder. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm so sorry... I am so sorry... I did not know... I just wanted to keep my secret. I just wanted the tale of affair to die."