

My Sister 113

Chapter 113 PATIENCE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The next morning, I woke with a heaviness I couldn't explain.

The light filtering through my curtains felt duller somehow, the colors washed out, as though someone had drawn a gray veil over the world.

At first, I thought it was exhaustion from the day before, or maybe I'd slept wrong.

But when I reached inward—the way I had done the night before, the way that had sparked everything into brilliance—I found nothing.

No heightened clarity.

No hum of connection.

No whisper of her.

My wolf was...gone.

A sick panic shot through me, cold and metallic. I sat up too quickly, breath shuddering in my throat.

"No, no, no," I muttered, pressing my palms to my temples.

'This can't be real,' I thought frantically. 'Maybe I'm not awake yet. Maybe this is the dream.'

But the silence inside me was too absolute.

Yesterday the world had sharpened into crystalline detail, sounds layering like a hidden symphony.

Now, all I heard was the drone of a distant lawnmower and the ticking of the old clock by my bed.

It was as if someone had switched me back to human.

By the time I got to OTS, my hands wouldn't stop trembling.

I went straight to the Moon Hall and demanded a meditation session with Ilsa.

She tried to guide me through breathing exercises, postures meant to center the wolf.

She called in one of the healers, Laurel, who set out herbs, their pungent scents crowding the small chamber—sage, rosemary, crushed juniper.

Those fragrances were supposed to calm me, ease me into the state of mind to make the connection that had come so easily the day before.

They just stung my throat and eyes.

I closed my eyes and tried. Again and again.

I pulled air in and out of my lungs until I was dizzy, waiting for that shimmer of heightened sight, that delicate pull on my hearing. But each time I reached inward, I found only emptiness.

“Breathe slower, Sera,” Ilsa urged softly, her hand hovering near my shoulder but never quite touching. “Don’t chase it. Let it come.”

My voice cracked, frustration simmering through. “I did let it come. It was there yesterday. Why not now?”

Laurel added gently, "Sometimes the wolf stirs in fragments. A glimpse before the true awakening. Don't despair. This isn't uncommon."

But I heard the hesitation in her voice. The pause between her words was too long, her smile stretched too thin. I snapped my eyes open and met her gaze. "You've never seen a case like mine before, have you?"

The silence was answer enough.

The frustration boiled up. I shot to my feet, the cushion I'd been sitting on toppling to the side.

"So it was just a dream? A cruel trick?" My throat tightened, despair bleeding into anger. "You don't understand. I felt her. I know she was real."

Lucian, who had been waiting outside the chamber, came in at the sound of my raised voice.

His presence usually steadied me, but today I only felt the weight of his disappointment—at them, at me, maybe at fate itself.

"Hey, Sera." He came to stand beside me, his shoulder brushing mine. But the warmth and comfort I expected didn't come, and it was all I could do not to move away from him.

"Ilsa, you promised progress," he said flatly, disapproval clear as his gaze swept between Ilsa and Laurel.

"It's not their fault," I snapped, though part of me knew my anger wasn't really for him. If anything, I was embarrassed.

He'd told me yesterday that what I felt was evidence of my wolf awakening. What did this mean now? Evidence of her disappearance?

"At the end of the day, this is my battle to fight." Even though it felt like I was already losing.

Lucian's jaw tightened, but he held his tongue. He reached for my hand, but I pulled it back, shaking my head. "I need air."

"Then I'll take you—"

"No," I interrupted. "I need to be alone."

Before he could protest, I slipped past him and out the door.

The forest welcomed me with its hushed canopy. Damp earth squelched beneath my sneakers, leaves whispering overhead.

I ran, half-blind with desperation, until my lungs burned. And then I screamed into the trees.

“Where are you?” My voice cracked, swallowed by the shadows. “Why did you come only to leave?”

Silence.

I tried again, softer this time, hands pressed against my ribcage as if I could coax her out. ‘Please. Please, I need you. Just one sign. A breath. Anything.’

But all I heard was the mocking echo of my own voice.

A sick thought slithered through me: ‘Maybe it was never real at all. Maybe it was nothing but my own wishful thinking.’

I sank to the ground, knees digging into damp moss. My chest felt hollow, scraped raw.

I could train as hard as I could, but was it even worth it if I couldn’t reach the one part of me I so desperately longed for?

Maybe it was better when I'd been completely detached. At least then, I hadn't known what I was missing.

But now...

Now, I knew what it was like. I knew how wonderful and fantastic and fucking amazing the connection could be.

And the idea of never achieving that in its fullness was like a knife carving at my heart.

A faint cry sliced through my haze of self-loathing and pity.

"Help! Somebody—please!"

I startled, wiping at my eyes.

It came from deeper in the woods, and instinct overrode all else.

I rose and followed the sound until I stumbled upon a steep incline where an elderly woman had slipped.

She clung to a jutting root, her basket of herbs scattered down the slope.

“Shit—hold on!” I called out.

Without thinking, I scrambled down, mud streaking my jeans.

Carefully, I crouched low, planting my boots against a stone for balance. I reached for her, bracing myself against the incline as my hand found hers.

Her hands trembled in mine, paper-thin but strong enough to grip. Slowly, inch by inch, I guided her upward, the mud giving way beneath her shoes as she leaned heavily into me.

When at last her feet found solid ground, I pulled her the final step, and she collapsed lightly against me, her breath shaky, her weight surprisingly featherlike.

When she was safe, she wheezed out a laugh, brushing dirt from her dress. “Thank you, child. I’d have broken my neck down there.”

I managed a weak smile. “It’s nothing. Are you hurt?”

“Just my pride.” Her gaze, sharp and clear despite her age, swept over me.

Then her expression softened. “But you—you’re the one who looks hurt.”

“Oh no.” I spread my arms to show her I was unharmed. “I’m fine.”

“No.” She tapped her temple. “You’re heavy here”—then her heart—“and here. I can feel it.”

I tensed, my defenses reflexively slamming up. “I’m fine,” I repeated tightly.

“Oh, child,” she said softly, brushing her fingers against my cheek. “There is no loss greater than that which you barely had.”

My chest clenched, a tremor running through me.

Something in her certainty unmoored me. As if she could see right through me, like she knew exactly what I was going through.

Tears pricked the corners of my eyes as my tongue loosened. “I...I feel like I’m chasing shadows. I feel...a connection, and I know it’s there. But now it’s gone and I feel like I made it all up and...”

I exhaled. Did she even understand what I was saying—I barely did myself. “I just don’t know what to do anymore.”

The woman tilted her head. “I sense a power inside you, child. An energy within that doesn’t vanish—it only hides. Do you know why?”

I shook my head.

“Because pain blinds more than darkness does. Hurt clouds the heart, tricks the senses. You have immense strength inside you, girl, but it flickers because you don’t trust it. You don’t trust yourself.”

Her words slid under my skin like balm and blade at once.

“When you can stop being misled by appearances, when you learn not to let old wounds sway you,” she continued, her eyes glinting strangely in the half-light, “then your wolf will answer. Not as a dream. As truth.”

I swallowed hard, breath catching. “How...how do you know this?”

She only smiled. “I’ve seen many girls like you. Some rise. Some falter. The difference is not fate—it’s patience.”

Patience.

I pressed my hands together, forcing myself to breathe. Slowly. Deliberately. In. Out. In. Out.

I reached inward again, and this time, beneath the noise of doubt, I felt it. A flicker. Faint as a candle flame in a storm, but...there.

A tremor of awareness brushed my skin. The forest brightened slightly, edges gaining a clarity that wasn't only in my eyes but in my blood.

Not as sharp as before, not as steady—but enough.

My chest flooded with relief. I wasn't completely lost. I could do this.

I opened my eyes to thank her, but—

The old woman was gone.

No footsteps. No rustle of fabric. Just the whisper of wind through leaves.

I spun in a circle, heart pounding. "Hello?"

Nothing.

Had she ever been there? Or had she been some figment of my desperation? Or—something else entirely?

The thought made my skin prickle.

Either way, I straightened my shoulders. Whoever she was, she was right.

I'd nearly forgotten patience. Forgotten that strength wasn't born in a single night but in the thousand times you choose to stand again.

I knew that better than anyone else.

The months at OTS hadn't been wasted. I was stronger now than I'd ever been. This—this was only a setback.

And I would endure it, as I had endured everything else before now.

By the time I left the forest, the sky had bruised into evening purple.

But something in me was reluctant to leave the comfort of nature. So I walked, letting my feet carry me where they pleased.

I wandered into a small park quite a distance from my house.

At first, I wondered what brought me here—but then I recognized the oak trees that fringed the perimeter, the swings that swayed gently in the evening breeze, the duck pond at the far end.

I was in Daniel's favorite park.

Nostalgia and memories rushed me: his laughter as he darted ahead, the way he'd begged me to push him higher on the swing.

My chest ached with longing.

I pulled out my phone, intending to record a short video for him, maybe by our old bench. Something to let him know I was thinking of him.

But then I froze.

Because sitting on our bench, staring wistfully ahead of him, was Kieran.