

My Sister 123

Chapter 123 HOVERING PREDECESSOR

KIERAN'S POV

Whatever tempest Celeste was trying to whip around me, it all faded at the thought of my son.

"Daniel," I answered, my voice softening despite the tension still clawing through the room.

"Dad!" His words tumbled out, breathless and excited. "I need your help. I'm in the kitchen and I think I almost got it right this time, but—well, there's one thing missing."

I blinked, confusion tugging my brows together. "Missing from what?"

"The elixir!" he declared, as though I should've known, waving his hands for emphasis, hair sticking up from the number of times he must have dragged his fingers through it. "The one from Dr. Ainsworth's notes—the energizing drink for wolves. I found it in Grandpa's library, and he was really famous for powerful potions even stronger than Alcanor's."

A chuckle rumbled through me, and I didn't even flinch when a door upstairs slammed—courtesy of Celeste, no doubt.

"Let me get this straight, Danny, you're telling me you're trying to brew one of Alcanor's fabled elixirs?" I asked, my lips twitching despite myself.

He rolled his eyes exaggeratedly. “Not Alcanor, dad. Dr. Ainsworth. His elixirs were much stronger than Alcanor’s.”

I nodded, trying to feign seriousness to match his. “Right. Got it.”

He nodded. “Mom’s been working so hard lately, and I thought that if I could make the elixir for her, then she wouldn’t feel so worn down.”

His earnestness hit me square in the chest.

Gods, the way he adored his mother—so fierce, so unyielding. If only I’d given her even half of that consideration.

I leaned back on the couch, letting the weight of the day loosen just enough to savor the purity and comfort of my son’s presence.

“So, what’s missing?” I asked, humoring him.

“Angelica root,” he said at once, his voice dropping to a whisper as though it were a forbidden treasure. “I checked the cabinets twice, and I asked Chef, but we don’t have any.”

Angelica root. A harmless herb, hardly the stuff of legends.

Still, at the sight of him standing there in the kitchen, sleeves rolled up, stubborn determination burning in his eyes, it was all I could do not to laugh.

“You’ve already tried making it?” I asked.

There was a pause. Then, sheepishly, “Twice.”

I bit down a chuckle, shaking my head. “And?”

“...The first one tasted like boiled socks,” he admitted. “The second exploded. Chef may or may not smell like rotten eggs for a while. He’s refused to keep helping me.”

My laugh broke free then, low and warm. “Daniel...”

“I’ll get it right,” he insisted. “If I can just find the last ingredient, I know it’ll work.”

I wanted to tell him legends were just that—legends. That no root or herb could breathe new strength into Sera.

But the words died on my tongue. I couldn't bear to puncture his iron belief.

Instead, I leaned forward, resting my forearm against my knee. "Listen to me, champ. Angelica root's hard to come by here, especially this late. Even if I wanted to get it, there's no guarantee I could get it to you in time."

His silence carried disappointment, and I felt it like a weight.

"But," I added quickly, "I've got a better idea."

His head lifted, his eyes lighting up. "Better than Dr. Ainsworth's elixir?"

"Much better," I said solemnly. "Because instead of relying on an old doctor's scribbles, we'll come up with something ourselves. Something only you and I know about. A secret recipe that's just for your mom."

His breath caught, excitement reborn. "Really?"

"Really." I let a smile curve my lips, and he mirrored it. "We'll work on it when you return, and we'll make it so good she'll believe it is one of Alcanor's fabled elixirs."

“Yes!” His voice burst out, brimming with glee. “Dad, that’s genius! We’ll call it... We’ll call it the Blackthorne Brew!”

I chuckled. “Careful, that sounds like something that should come with a warning label.”

He laughed, and the sound lifted the heaviness from my chest.

For a while, we talked—half-serious debates over ingredients, whether honey would overpower ginseng, whether cinnamon was too obvious.

He scribbled notes like a little scholar, his enthusiasm infectious.

For those few minutes, the world outside didn’t exist. There were no rogues, no threats, no cantankerous women clawing at my shoulders.

Just my boy and his impossible dream of giving his mother the moon in a bottle.

“Okay, bud,” I chuckled when a yawn cut him off mid-sentence. “I think you should head on to bed.”

He nodded. “Okay. Oh—Dad, by the way, Grandpa said you should call him.”

I stiffened. I'd judiciously ignored my father's calls all day. But if he was sending Daniel to me, I knew I could no longer avoid the conversation.

"Right," I said after a pause. "Thanks, bud. I should do it now."

"Good," Daniel said firmly, his best imitation of adult authority. "He said it was important."

"Yep," I said tightly. "Goodnight, Danny. Sweet dreams."

"Night, Dad!"

The quiet of the room pressed in after I hung up, heavier than before. I raked a hand through my hair, then dialed my father.

He answered on the second ring.

"Kieran." His voice was sharp, clipped. No preamble.

"Father." I kept my tone neutral, though my jaw tightened instinctively.

"I assume you know why I wanted this call."

I exhaled. "How did you find out?"

"You forget that I was Alpha before you. Nothing goes on that I'm unaware of."

Lovely, I thought. Nothing better than a hovering predecessor.

"Okay," I braced myself. "Let's hear it."

"Cuff the attitude," my father snapped, his tone hardening further. "Marcus Draven has always been volatile, but you've done a spectacular job of pouring gasoline on his sparking temper."

I bristled. "I handled it."

"You mishandled it." His voice cracked like lightning. "Do you have any idea what kind of fire you've stoked? Marcus may lead a diminished pack, but a hotheaded Alpha with nothing left to lose is more dangerous than one with full strength. And if he throws his lot in with the rogues—especially since his heir is one of them—we will all pay for your recklessness."

My hands curled into fists against my knees. "I know my limits."

"No, you know your rage," he snapped. "You know your impulse. You let your emotions steer you, and our pack will bleed for it."

The words hit deep because they carried a kernel of truth. My wrath had burned too hot where Jack was concerned.

He'd crossed the line when he targeted Sera, and I couldn't deny that my fury might have made me a little rash.

But admitting that weakness to my father was out of the question.

"I won't let Marcus threaten my family," I said coldly.

"It's not about that," he shot back. "Without a Luna, who reinforces you when you're outnumbered? You think your warriors are enough? You think raw strength is enough? Foolish. A pack is only as strong as the bonds at its heart. You know this, Kieran."

I gritted my teeth. "I thought Mother was more than happy to play Luna."

"Don't act sly with me," he retorted. "The rogues are gathering, Marcus is snarling, and you are parading about without a true Luna at your side. Expedite your wedding to Celeste. Seal the bond. Give your wolves something solid to rally behind before this explodes into war."

His words pressed against the unease already coiled in me.

Celeste. Her wolf was still frayed, her mind increasingly unstable.

I thought of her desperate eyes earlier tonight, her hands clutching at me with something close to mania.

I thought of the very real possibility that she'd thrown herself in front of a moving vehicle.

She wasn't ready—not for the bond. And she sure as hell wasn't ready for the responsibility.

And yet...my father wasn't entirely wrong. The pack needed more than my strength. It needed faith. Unity. A Luna.

My voice dropped, iron-low. "She's not ready."

"She doesn't need to be ready. She needs to stand at your side. Everything else comes later."

"No." The word burst sharper than intended. "That's not how this works. If I bind myself to someone who can't carry the weight, I cripple the pack, not strengthen it."

His silence was thick, then: “You’re letting sentiment cloud judgment again. Always sentiment with you, Kieran. Even with Sera—”

My teeth snapped together. “Don’t.”

I couldn’t bear to think about Sera right now. Couldn’t bear to slide down the slippery slope of comparing her eligibility as Luna to Celeste’s.

“Then prove me wrong,” my father growled. “Handle Marcus. Contain the rogues. Do it without dragging our name through the mud of your temper. Otherwise, I expect to see preparations for a wedding within the fortnight.”

The line went dead.

I sat in the heavy quiet, the phone still pressed to my ear. My father’s words reverberated like thunder. A resounding truth I had to face.

Marcus was dangerous. Jack was reckless. The rogues were circling like vultures.

And through all the crowding thoughts, my son’s innocent voice echoed in my memory.

I closed my eyes, forcing breath through my lungs. Whatever chaos was gathering, I would not let it touch Daniel. Or Sera.

I would not allow harm to reach my family.