

My Sister 183

Chapter 183 SOMETHING MONSTROUS

CELESTE'S POV

Cold.

That was the first thing that tore through the fog in my head.

Not the sharp bite of winter air, but a damp, stale chill that crawled under my clothes and clung to my skin.

My body jerked—and metal rattled with the movement. I realized...

My wrists wouldn't move. They were held in place by cool iron.

W-what?

My lashes fluttered open, my vision blurry. For a moment, I thought I was still in the hotel suite—the silk sheets, the glinting chandeliers, Brett's flat voice twisting through my mind like a cruel dream.

But hotel suites didn't smell like this. Rust. And gasoline. And sweat. And urine.

My surroundings came into focus. With it came cold, heavy dread.

I wasn't in a bed.

I was sitting on a metal floor—corrugated, ridged, rocking slightly beneath me as if...

As if I was moving.

A truck.

I was in a fucking truck.

I blinked, taking in the space. It was dimly lit by slivers of light seeping through the cracks of the shuttered back doors.

Harsh shadows flickered with every bump in the road. The ceiling was low. My knees were bent awkwardly to my chest because there wasn't room to stretch out.

My wrists were shackled together with thick cuffs connected to a chain bolted to the floor. Something heavy weighed down my ankles, too.

All around me, huddled shapes moved with weak, trembling breaths. Women. Girls. Some barely more than kids.

They all wore collars around their necks, chains rattling with every shift. Their faces were streaked with grime and tears. Some stared blankly ahead like their souls had already checked out.

A strangled cry scraped free from my throat, raw with panic. My neck was weighed down by a collar of my own.

“No,” I whispered, my voice hoarse. “No, no, no—”

Panic hit me like a tidal wave. I yanked at the shackles on my wrists, metal cutting into skin. “HEY! WHAT IS THIS? LET ME OUT—LET ME—”

A boot slammed into my ribs so fast I didn’t even see it coming.

The air whooshed from my lungs as my body crumpled sideways, my vision exploding into bright white stars. Pain flared like fire beneath my skin.

“Shut the hell up,” a gruff male voice snarled.

A shadow loomed above me, and I had to blink the stars away to take him in. He wore a dark jacket and was heavily built, his features hard and cruel in the dim light.

The other women shrank back.

I gasped, struggling to pull in air. Shock and fury warred with disbelief.

“Do that again,” I rasped, rage lacing every word, “and my fiancé will—”

A sharp crack split the air.

Something lashed across my arm—whip? Belt? Gods, it burned, tearing my skin with a sting so vicious I screamed before I could stop myself.

“Watch her face, dumbass!” another voice barked from the front of the truck. “Pretty ones get better prices. Don’t mess up the goods.”

Goods.

Goods.

The word rang in my skull like a sick joke.

A shudder wracked me. I was shaking, paralyzed, lungs spasming in frantic, useless gulps.

One of the girls beside me whimpered silently, shoulders jerking.

The man who had struck me snorted and stepped back. "That's better," he muttered, satisfied now that I'd gone quiet.

My heart hammered in my chest, a wild, chaotic rhythm that had nothing to do with the cold.

Goods.

No.

No, absolutely fucking not!

"I'm not—" My voice quivered. I swallowed the sting of tears, forced more volume. "I'm Celeste Lockwood, daughter of Edward and Margaret Lockwood of Frostbane Pack. My fiancé is Alpha Kieran Blackthorne of Nightfang Pack. If you don't let me out of these chains right now—"

Laughter.

Harsh, mocking laughter.

“You hit her too hard, asshole,” someone else I couldn’t hear muttered, amusement ringing in his voice.

The man who’d hit me spat on the floor. “Oh, sure, princess,” he sneered. “And I’m the King of the Council.”

That sent them into another fit of raucous laughter.

“Are you hearing me?” I hissed, more pissed off than scared now. “I am fucking royalty!”

“There is no royalty here,” another chimed in lazily. “Only mutts, Omegas, and wolfless filth no one gives a shit about.”

“I—” My voice trembled with fury. First, I’d been kidnapped, and now I was being classified with fucking filth? “I’m not an Omega. I’m not wolfless. I am—”

“Delusional, sweetheart,” he chuckled. “You’re delusional.”

“You fucking—”

The truck lurched violently as it hit a bump, pitching us sideways. My wrists ached as the chains held me in place.

“Pathetic,” he snorted.

My tongue felt thick in my mouth. Sweat trickled down my back despite the cold.

They didn’t believe me.

Or worse—they didn’t care.

I tried to push past panic and think.

Okay. What did I know?

I remembered the hallway. Chasing Brett. The elevator doors closing. Then—arms grabbing me. Hand over my mouth. No chance to scream. No scent to latch onto because—

Because Kharis was sealed.

A tremor rippled through me.

If she weren't locked away... if the bond between us weren't muted... maybe I would've felt the danger sooner. Maybe I could've fought back.

But I'd caged her. Smothered her voice until she barely even scratched against the inside of my mind anymore.

Brett's voice from earlier sliced into my thoughts like a hot blade:

'Stop keeping Kharis locked away like she's some inconvenience you wish never existed.'

Panic wavered. Guilt slithered in.

No.

I tossed that panic aside with a savage will. I refused to break here. I refused to become like the hollow-eyed girls around me.

Think, Celeste. You are a Lockwood. You were raised for power. Taught how to survive politics, mind games, social warfare—

But this wasn't politics. This was chains. Flesh. Fear. Real danger.

The truck slowed suddenly.

My breath hitched.

A murmur rippled through the girls around me—small, broken sounds that were more like sobs swallowed by fear.

The guard hit the metal wall twice.

“We’re here!”

Here.

Where the hell was here?

One of the doors creaked. I instinctively squinted as light spilled in, blinding after the darkness.

As footsteps approached, I straightened, forcing my spine stiff despite the burning pain in my ribs. My wrists throbbed where the metal bit into my skin.

I didn't know where I was being taken.

But a cold truth whispered through me with bone-deep certainty: This was the beginning of something monstrous.

MARGARET'S POV

Ethan was rolling his shoulder when I walked into the Frostbane training hall, still damp with sweat from sparring.

The other pack members were dispersing, exchanging lazy jokes as they filed out. As they passed, their heads bowed in deference to their Dowager Luna.

Normally, I would return the gesture with grace, but I was too agitated to give more than a distracted nod.

Outside, there was a chill in the early evening air, but here, it was warm with exertion, laughter, and pack-bonded ease.

But ease wouldn't settle in my chest.

My heart had been beating wrong for days—uneven, out of sync.

Ethan glanced over when he sensed me, and his brow arched slightly.

"Mom?" His voice was soft, his posture relaxing.

"I need to talk to you." I tried to sound steady. Failed.

He frowned slightly. "Give me five minutes to shower." He glanced behind me, at the wall clock. "I have a date with Maya, she'll kill me if I'm even a minute late."

I attempted a smile. Failed again. It brought me nothing but joy that my son had found his fated mate. But right now, I couldn't bring myself to care about her.

“This won’t take long.”

He hesitated, then stepped closer, towel draped over his shoulder. Up close, I could see the bruise blooming near his collarbone.

A sparring accident, probably. He would heal fast. Ethan was strong. Stable.

The same couldn’t be said for his sister.

Celeste, I mean.

When it came to Sera... Well, I still couldn’t get an accurate read on her.

The thought of my oldest daughter sent a pang through me, but I pushed it aside and focused on the reason I was here—my youngest daughter.

“When was the last time you heard from Celeste?” I asked Ethan.

His brows knit together as he thought. “Not since I dropped her off at the house after the LST. I tried calling her the day after. She picked up, cursed me out, told me not to fucking bother her again, and hung up.”

He shrugged. "I tried not to take it to heart." His frown deepened, seeing the worry on my face. "Why?"

"She hasn't been home in days," I whispered.

"Sera and Daniel came over the other day, and—"

"Let me guess," he muttered, "Celeste wasn't happy about that and threw a bitch fit."

"Language," I gasped instinctively.

He rolled his eyes.

I sighed. "Anyway, I might have...struck her." I wrung my hands, feeling the phantom sting from hitting my precious daughter. "She stormed out after that, and she's not answering my calls or messages."

Ethan's expression tightened slightly. He brushed a lock of damp hair away from his forehead. "She's probably still pissed about Kieran breaking off the engagement. Any hit to her ego makes her...dramatic."

My eyes widened. "Kieran broke off their engagement?"

He nodded.

Guilt churned in my stomach when I remembered how happy she had been to go out to meet Kieran that morning. Oh, how she must have been hurting when she returned, and I—

Why did it feel like I couldn't do right by any of my daughters?

I took a breath. My thoughts had circled uselessly for hours. I agreed that Celeste had a flair for theatrics, and she could easily be doing this for attention.

But something didn't feel right.

"I know pride," I murmured. "But this doesn't feel like pride."

He sighed. "I'm sure she's fine."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Kieran's credit card statement," he answered simply. "She's been using it since they broke up like some kind of revenge tactic."

“What?”

He nodded, sounding somewhere between annoyed and weary. “She went on a shopping spree in the city, and then booked a week in a luxury presidential suite at the Vesper Grand.”

My chest tightened. I was still uneasy.

“I want to check on her,” I whispered.

Ethan’s brow furrowed. “Mom—”

“I won’t feel at peace until I see her with my own eyes,” I insisted.

He hesitated—then gave in with a slow, resigned nod. “Fine. I’ll text Maya.”

I touched his cheek briefly, a silent thank you.

The Vesper Grand Hotel had always been Celeste's favorite—dripping in elegance, with gilded chandeliers and velvet drapes. We'd booked rooms here for pack events and summits when my Edward was still alive.

Something about the opulence and extravagance of the place reminded me of Celeste.

She'd always wanted to be seen. To be adored.

I guess that's why Sera's quiet existence had always infuriated her so much—how someone so muted could still hold attention without trying.

I stepped into the elevator with Ethan at my side, accompanied by the hotel manager, a well-dressed man with carefully styled hair and a master keycard.

My pulse thumped in my ears. Anxiety and anticipation wound tight inside me as the numbers in the elevator counted till we got to the presidential floor.

The hotel manager's smile was politely strained as he led us to her door. "Miss Lockwood has not requested any services since she checked in. We assumed she wished for privacy since no complaints were lodged."

"Open it," Ethan said flatly.

The electronic beep echoed almost too loudly.

I braced myself for the chaos of Celeste in meltdown mode—clothes scattered, makeup smudged, designer heels thrown, maybe her crying in the hot tub or sprawled dramatically on the bed.

But.

The bed had been slept in—once. Sheets rumpled lightly. Her Chanel purse lay on the chaise. Her heels were scattered at the foot of the bed.

Nothing else.

My pulse spiked.

“M-maybe she stepped out,” the manager offered weakly.

Ethan stalked to the closet. Empty.

“Where is she?” I breathed.

I moved through the suite slowly, every step heavier than the last. My mind spun through every possibility, none of them comforting.

Then, on the marble table next to the minifridge, I saw it—a black American Express card. My fingers trembled as they brushed the name embossed along the bottom. Kieran Blackthorne.

She wouldn't willingly leave this behind.

Ethan's voice was low. Tight. "Mom..."

My breathing came faster. The room blurred.

I pulled out my phone with numb fingers and dialed Kieran.

He answered on the second ring. "Margaret?"

I cut to the chase. "Are you certain Celeste checked in at the Vesper Grand Hotel?" My voice shook.

He paused—likely thrown off by the raw panic in my tone. "Yes. Like I told Ethan, the reservation was charged to my card. Why?"

“She’s not here,” I whispered. “She’s gone, Kieran.”