

My Sister 197

Chapter 197 GOODBYE

LUCIAN'S POV

Sera's scent lingered long after she left—lavender, threaded with something softer that was uniquely hers.

The silence pressed in, thick and reflective as I sat by the fireplace, staring into the flames that had begun to burn low.

She'd told me the truth—about her wolf, about Kieran. And though everything in me twisted at the mention of his name, at the revelation of their bond, I appreciated her honesty.

I could only hope that when she said she had no intention of going back to her ex-husband, she meant it.

With a heavy sigh, I rose and doused the fire. The faint hiss of water meeting ember echoed in the quiet.

Then I turned and headed down the corridor toward my quarters.

The moonlight filtered through the tall windows, painting silver patterns on the stone floor.

Soft laughter floated in from outside, but in here, the night felt too still, like it was holding its breath.

Inside my room, I shed my shirt and tossed it aside. Cool air washed over me as I stood by the large floor-to-ceiling window. From here, I could see the valley that housed the Moonlit Spring.

I could still picture Sera stepping in, her head thrown back as the moon bathed her in its luminescence. She'd never looked more beautiful in that moment. And when she hugged me—

I shook my head, instantly banishing the carnal thought.

And that was when I heard him.

'You're troubled.'

The voice was deep, resonant, threaded with a calm I hadn't felt in years.

I was stunned for half a heartbeat before my pulse kicked. "Rhegan?"

It had been months—no, years—since my wolf had spoken clearly. There'd been the occasional whisper, an instinct here or there, heightened whenever I Shifted, but nothing like this.

Hearing him again felt like having an old friend suddenly return after years of war.

“Is that really you?” I asked, rubbing a hand over my jaw.

‘Do you have more than one voice in your head?’

I exhaled an incredulous laugh. “I thought you’d gone silent for good.”

‘I was watching,’ Rhegan replied, his tone warm. ‘And waiting. You needed space to grieve. We both did.’

I lowered myself into the chair by the window. “You know, I could have used your help. Grieving was a lot harder when you abandoned me.”

‘I didn’t abandon you,’ he said simply. ‘I never could. But remember, you weren’t the only one who lost a mate.’

I swallowed hard, my gaze drifting outside to the Moonlit Spring. That I was hearing Rhegan’s voice loud and clear after all this time... Had I also been blessed by the spring tonight?

“How are you?” I asked softly.

A moment of silence passed before he answered. 'Half a soul is still a soul.'

A melancholic smile crept onto my lips.

And then he caught me off guard. 'She's quite something, Alina.'

I felt his amusement at my surprise. 'I sensed her, long before you did.'

I let out a sharp, incredulous laugh. "You could have told me, you know?"

'It was not my news to share.'

I rolled my eyes.

"And what do you think of her?"

'She's strong, fierce,' he said, admiration thick in his voice. 'When she fully emerges, she will be a force to reckon with.'

Surprise rippled through me. “You...like her.”

‘I do.’

That was unexpected. Even before Zara, Rhegan rarely acknowledged female wolves. And since Zara’s death...silence.

‘You haven’t said that about anyone in years.’

“None were worth saying it about,” he said without hesitation. “This one is different. If I disliked her, do you think your connection with her would have unfolded this smoothly? You would’ve felt resistance. Conflict.’

I leaned back, frowning slightly. I wouldn’t necessarily call my connection with Sera ‘smooth.’

“So what—you’ve been quietly approving from the shadows?”

‘Observing,’ he corrected. ‘And waiting for you to realize your heart was trying to wake long before your mind let it.’

His words hit too close. I closed my eyes, pressing my thumb and forefinger against them. “I haven’t been denying my heart. I love Sera.”

'But you haven't fully given yourself over either. And I understand why. But Lucian...' His tone softened. 'You cannot keep punishing yourself by caging every emotion that isn't grief. Zara wouldn't have wanted that. Nor Arden.'

The sound of her name—their names—in his voice was both balm and blade. Grief surged beneath the comfort, sharp and tender, leaving my heart raw.

I clenched my jaw and stared down at my hands. Old scars caught the moonlight—reminders of battles fought both outside and within. "You think I should just...forget about them?"

'Not forget,' Rhegan murmured. 'You should live again. Feel again. You honoring her doesn't mean you have to wither beside her memory.'

My throat tightened. "You want me to let her go."

'I felt her last thoughts,' he said softly. 'Arden's, too. Neither of them wished for you to spend the rest of your life trapped with ghosts. They wanted you free.'

For a long moment, I said nothing. The silence stretched, heavy and fragile.

I sighed, dragging a hand down my face. "I forgot how clear-sighted you could be."

'Wolves see truth without complication,' he replied simply. 'You humans like to twist it into whatever shapes hurt less.'

A humorless smile tugged at my lips. "Maybe. But I have no idea how to twist the news about Sera and Kieran."

He hummed quietly, a low rumble of understanding. Then, softer: 'You fear the bond between them.'

I grimaced. "Can you blame me? You know exactly what it feels like."

I couldn't fathom even looking at another female if Zara were still alive.

'So tell me, will you back down because of it?'

That question was sharp, piercing. I sat up straighter.

"Back down?" I echoed. "You know that's not me."

A deep, approving rumble vibrated through our link. 'Good. Because fate is only one thread in the tapestry. The rest, you weave with your own hands.'

That made me laugh, low and rough. “You’ve gotten philosophical in your silence.”

‘Maybe I had time to think. Put things into perspective.’

“Or maybe you’ve been waiting to lecture me.”

‘Also that.’

I couldn’t help the small smile tugging at my mouth. “It’s good to have you back, Rhegan.”

‘You never lost me,’ he said quietly. ‘But it’s good to be back.’

I don’t remember falling asleep.

But at some point, fatigue must have crept in and dragged me under. Because I was dreaming.

And there she was.

Zara.

She sat by the Moonlit Spring, the water glowing faintly under the moon's touch. The light cast her fair hair in silver, and her eyes—those sharp, steady eyes—softened when they found mine.

For a heartbeat, my lungs forgot how to work. My whole body locked up, grief and longing erupting at the sight of her.

“Zara...” My voice cracked on her name.

She smiled faintly. “Hello, Luc.”

I moved toward her before I even realized it, feet sinking into the soft moss by the water's edge. “You're here.”

“In a way,” she said. Her tone carried a familiar serenity—the one that used to drive me mad because it meant she'd already made peace with something I hadn't.

A lump formed in my throat. “I never thought I'd see you again.”

“I know.” Her gaze softened further. “You weren’t supposed to. But I couldn’t leave without saying goodbye.”

I froze. “Goodbye?”

She nodded, her smile tinged with something like relief. “You’ve carried me with you long enough. Too long. It’s time to let go.”

I felt my breath catch, panic clawing its way up. “Zara, no. I—”

She held up a hand, the gesture gentle but firm. “Luc. You’ve done enough. You’ve kept your promise, led the pack, built our dream. But this guilt, this self-punishment—it’s not love anymore.” Her expression was tender. “It’s a cage.”

The world seemed to still—the soft ripple of the spring, the whisper of the wind through the trees.

“I don’t want to lose you again,” I said quietly, my voice trembling.

“You won’t,” she said simply. “You’ll carry me in the ways that matter. But I’m not meant to stay as your shadow.”

She shifted slightly, gesturing for me to sit beside her. I obeyed, lowering myself to the moss. Her scent surrounded us, familiar and bittersweet.

“Tell me,” she said. “What have you seen since I’ve been gone?”

The question startled me.

“What?”

Her smile deepened. “Tell me what you’ve built. What you’ve become. What you’ve seen worth living for.”

“You already know.”

She nudged me gently. “I want to hear you say it.”

I hesitated, but something about her calm steadiness pulled the words free. I spoke of Shadowveil—how we’d rebuilt after the attacks, how the pack had grown stronger. I told her about OTS, all the broken and lost wolves we’d helped.

And finally, I spoke of Sera.

Zara listened, her head tilted slightly, eyes bright with curiosity.

“She’s different,” I said softly. “Fierce and gentle at the same time. She brings light where she goes, even when she doesn’t realize it.”

Zara smiled knowingly. “She reminds you of life.”

You, I wanted to say. She reminds me of you.

Zara turned her gaze toward the spring, where moonlight turned the surface to liquid silver. “She’s a good woman. She will make a phenomenal Luna.”

“You sound like you know her,” I said, a faint, trembling smile pulling at my lips.

“In a way,” Zara murmured. “We share a bloodline, after all.” She smiled fondly. “I guess you have a weakness for women with fire in their veins.”

That drew a shaky laugh from me. “You make it sound like a flaw.”

“It’s not.” She reached out and intertwined our fingers. My heart stuttered painfully at the contact. “Luc, listen to me.”

I did. Every muscle in me stilled.

“You can’t stay where I am,” she said gently. “And I don’t want you to. Promise me you’ll keep moving forward. Whether it’s with her or not—promise me you’ll live.”

My throat was raw. “Zara...”

She reached out with her other hand, her fingers brushing my cheek. They were warm, her touch so real it hurt. “You don’t owe me your loneliness.”

I wanted to argue. To tell her she was wrong. That I owed her everything. That I’d spent years trying to make peace with her absence, with my guilt, and failed.

But her expression left no room for protest.

“You’ll protect her,” she said softly. “Not because she’s like me, but because she’s her own soul—and because protecting her will help you heal, too.”

A quiet sob threatened to escape me. I forced it down, jaw tight. “You really are saying goodbye.”

Zara smiled through the shimmer of tears in her eyes. “Yes. But you’ll be fine.”

Her hand lingered on my cheek, and then she leaned forward, pressing a light kiss to my forehead.
“Goodbye, Lucian.”

“Wait—” I choked out.

But she was already fading, light unraveling her like mist at dawn.

I reached for her, but my fingers caught only air.

And then I was awake.

The first rays of dawn slipped through the window, pale and gold. My chest rose and fell in steady rhythm, though it felt as though something enormous had shifted inside me.

The ache of the Zara-shaped hole in my chest was still there, but...softer. Manageable.

For the first time in years, I didn't feel chained by her memory. I felt blessed by it.

I sat up slowly, rubbing a hand over my face. “Goodbye, Zara,” I whispered.

Rhegan's presence stirred, quiet and calm. 'She's proud of you.'

"I know."

Outside, the pack was already stirring—the faint hum of life filtering through the stone walls. I rose, pulling on a shirt, and stepped toward the window.

The dawn stretched over Shadowveil, lighting the mountains in shades of rose and gold. Somewhere down the hall, Sera was waking, probably chatting with her wolf about breakfast or the weather.

A quiet smile tugged at my mouth. She really hadn't been the only one blessed by the Moonlit Spring.

'Ready to see where this path leads?' Rhegan asked gently.

I let out a slow breath, the weight of the night easing from my shoulders.

Whatever came next—fate, choice, chaos—it didn't matter.

For the first time in a long while, I was ready to meet it head-on.