

My Sister 199

Chapter 199 THE PACK RUN

SERAPHINA'S POV

The moon was rising, bright and full. It cast an otherworldly glow across the valley as the air pulsed with anticipation.

I could hear wolves stirring, voices blending with excitement as the pack gathered on the broad plateau overlooking the forest below.

The pack run.

After years of watching from the shadows, isolated as my pack ran under the full moon, I couldn't believe I would finally be part of a pack run.

My heart raced wildly.

'Breathe, Sera,' Alina murmured from within, her tone surprisingly serene, considering what this meant for us. 'You're trembling like it's the Snowfield all over again.'

'I'm not trembling,' I answered. Then, a second later, 'Okay, maybe a little.'

She chuckled. 'They're your pack for tonight. Let yourself belong.'

That thought filled me with warmth, like a long hug.

Sabrina appeared beside me, cheeks flushed from the cold, her hair braided in two sleek lines that made her look younger. She was practically vibrating.

"I can't believe you've never done this before," she said. "This is the best part of being a wolf."

"I can imagine," I replied, smiling faintly.

"No, you can't," she countered, not unkindly. "But you will. Trust me, when you hear the first howl rise, it's like—" She flung her hands up, eyes sparkling. "Like the moon itself is singing."

I laughed softly. "That sounds beautiful."

"It is." She glanced sideways at me, then bumped her shoulder against mine. "And if you get scared or nervous, just stick close to me. Or, if you prefer..." She winked. "Lucian."

I pretended not to hear that last part.

The pack was already forming a loose circle at the edge of the clearing. Over two hundred wolves, men and women in simple clothes or nothing at all, their eyes gleaming in the moonlight.

The hum of energy was intoxicating—wild, untamed, yet deeply connected. This wasn't a competition, or even a patrol. It was communion. A reminder that they were one body, one spirit.

Lucian stood at the center, commanding attention without even trying. He was shirtless again, the black insignia of his Alpha rank glinting faintly against his skin.

His gaze found mine through the crowd, and my breath hitched. With a slight of his head, he beckoned me to him.

"Ready?" he asked quietly when I joined him.

I nodded, even though I wasn't sure. "As I'll ever be."

His mouth curved, the slightest hint of a smile. "You'll do fine. Stay close to me until you find your rhythm."

Earlier, Sabrina had explained that, to accommodate those among the pack who didn't have wolves, everyone began the run in human form.

As the pace intensified, those who could, Shifted into wolf form. Those remaining in human form could then ride astride the strongest wolves, ensuring no one was left behind.

The fact that they were so accommodating, so mindful of others who were not as strong—it was mind-blowing.

“The pace can get intense.” Lucian’s tone was soft. “But you’re strong enough, Sera. You can keep up.”

I nodded, rolling my shoulders in anticipation.

There was no room for doubt tonight. Lucian believed in me so fiercely. I did myself a great disservice if I didn’t do the same.

He smiled and then stepped forward, lifting his head to address the pack. Instantly, the murmurs quieted. The wind itself seemed to pause.

His voice carried easily over the plateau, his gaze sweeping across the crowd. “Tonight, we run—not as ranked or unranked, not as leaders or followers, but as one. We run for the bond that ties us.”

A ripple of energy moved through the wolves, like a collective heartbeat.

“Run free,” he finished simply.

And with that, the pack surged forward.

At first, it was chaos—feet pounding against the earth, laughter and shouts echoing in the night.

But soon, the chaos found rhythm. Those at the front slowed just enough for the rest to keep up, then sped up again as the first bodies began to shimmer and Shift beneath the moonlight.

It was mesmerizing.

Bones reshaped, fur blossomed, eyes ignited gold and silver. One by one, wolves replaced humans, running side by side—some sleek and dark, others pale and ethereal.

The sound of paws on earth was like thunder.

I ran among them, lungs burning, heart soaring. The forest blurred by in streaks of green and silver, moonlight filtering through the canopy above. Every breath tasted of pine and freedom.

I'd never felt anything like it.

But as the run stretched on, my legs began to ache. My human body could only push so far, even with Alina's strength.

I slowed, panting, as the pack began to pull ahead. Sabrina's dark wolf glanced back at me and slowed, but before she could circle back, a shadow fell beside me.

Lucian.

He had Shifted.

His massive black wolf moved with effortless power. A ring of silver glowed around his navy eyes, but there was nothing predatory in them. Only warmth. Recognition.

He slowed beside me, lowering his head slightly, and for a moment I just...stared.

All the times I'd seen his wolf had been when he was saving my life. Now, in the wild chaos of the pack run, I could fully take in just how magnificent he was.

And then, gently, his large head nudged my thigh.

'He's asking you,' Alina whispered inside me, voice hushed, 'to ride.'

My heart pounded so hard I could barely breathe as I gave a short, hesitant nod.

Lucian crouched slightly, lowering his back in invitation. I hesitated only a second before stepping closer. My hand brushed through his fur, thick and warm beneath my fingers.

Then I blinked—and a blur of golden fur flashed behind my lids.

I stilled.

‘He never once invited you to run with his pack,’ Alina quietly reminded me. ‘Do not let his memory ruin this.’

She was right. Of course, she was right.

So I slammed a door on all thoughts of golden fur and obsidian eyes and ravaging sparks of electricity.

I climbed onto Lucian’s back, legs gripping just behind his shoulders. The moment I settled, he took off—smooth, fast, unstoppable.

Wind tore through my hair, cold and clean, as the forest roared past us in an indecipherable blur. Wild laughter tore out of me, half exhilaration, half disbelief.

Lucian's stride was steady beneath me, each bound measured and strong, just like his heartbeat I could feel through his spine.

'Hold tight,' Alina said, her tone rich with awe. 'You're flying.'

It did feel like flying. Like I was soaring high above the clouds, into a space where I felt beyond limitations.

We caught up to the front of the pack within moments. The howls began—one, then another, rising like a wave until the entire valley echoed with sound.

The sound hit something primal inside me. Tears blurred my vision before I realized I was crying.

I wasn't even a true member of this pack, but the warmth that poured through me as their voices rose felt like a salve on every wound I'd carried.

For the first time in my life, I didn't feel like an outsider in a pack. I felt seen. Included. Home.

Lucian slowed as the pack reached the clearing again. He tilted his head back and howled—a deep, resonant sound that sent shivers down my spine.

Without thinking, I tilted my face to the sky, and a howl of my own ripped from the deepest depths within me.

When the run finally ended, the wolves Shifted back, one by one, laughter and chatter filling the night air.

Someone passed me a blanket, another handed me water. My muscles ached, but it was the good kind of ache—the kind that you earned.

Lucian found me near the edge of the clearing, his hair damp with sweat, a shirt clinging to his chest. He was practically glowing.

“You did well,” he said softly.

“I didn’t do much,” I admitted shyly. “You did all the running.”

He chuckled. “You kept up.”

I hesitated, looking out toward the forest where the moon still hung bright. “That was incredible, Lucian. I can’t explain how it felt.”

He followed my gaze. "You don't need to." A pause. "You felt it. That's enough."

"I'm glad you invited me," I said quietly.

He took a step closer, his voice low. "Shadowveil might seem closed to the outside world, but our doors are open to those who understand what we stand for."

His gaze held mine, open and honest. "You'll always have a place here, Sera."

I swallowed hard. "Thank you. That means more than you know."

"It's not just the pack," he added softly. "My heart is also open to you."

I froze.

For a moment, the only sound between us was the soft rustle of leaves and the distant murmur of the pack. His confession wasn't loud or dramatic. It was quiet. Honest.

"Lucian..."

He shook his head gently. "I'm not trying to change your mind or anything. I just needed you to know. I won't pressure you—but I also won't hide what I feel anymore."

And then he stepped forward and drew me into his arms.

It wasn't a fierce embrace. It was tender, steady, certain. My hands hovered for a moment before finding his back, holding him just as gently.

"I'm grateful for you, Sera," he murmured into my hair. "For what you've brought into my life."

I exhaled shakily. "The feeling's mutual."

We stood like that for a while, just breathing.

By the time we returned to the pack house, dawn was brushing pale light across the horizon. The pack was dispersing, yawning, laughing, some already planning breakfast.

For them, it had been just another pack run. For me, it had been the experience of a lifetime.