

My Sister 207

Chapter 207 HEAD OVER HEELS

SERAPHINA'S POV

At thirteen—back when I was considered a late bloomer, not a wolfless weirdo—I'd decided I was tired of waiting for my wolf to appear before I could join the others on the training field.

Tired of watching from the sidelines while Ethan sparred with the older boys.

Tired of being the Alpha's daughter who couldn't Shift yet. (Oh, how I miss the days when "yet" was still fixed at the end of that sentence.)

Anyways, that morning, with the reckless conviction only a young teen could muster, I took the kitchen scissors and stood before my mirror.

Hands trembling, I sawed through the thick waves of hair framing my face. Wheat-blond locks fell into the sink, one after another.

The end result was...disastrous. Uneven. Patchy. But from the right angle—and if I squinted—I almost looked like one of the boys.

The two almonds on my chest posed no problem for me.

That was good enough.

My pulse pounded as I slipped into Ethan's old tunic, which I'd stolen from the laundry room and snuck through the eastern hedge. The distant clang of metal and barked orders called to me like a siren song.

The training grounds were alive with noise and kicked-up dust. Warriors moved in tight formation, their shadows sharp beneath the late-morning sun. I hugged the fence line, crouched behind shrubs, but my curiosity burned too bright to keep me hidden.

I'd barely taken two steps onto the field when a familiar voice thundered, "Seraphina Lockwood!"

My heart leapt into my throat.

My father's silhouette cut across the yard, broad and formidable, his Alpha aura enough to still every wolf within hearing range.

"I—uh—hi, Father," I stammered, tugging the too-large tunic straight.

He stopped in front of me, expression murderous. "What in the Goddess' name are you wearing?"

“Clothes?”

“Whose?”

I hesitated. “...Ethan’s.”

Father closed his eyes briefly, his lips moving soundlessly, like he was asking the heavens for patience.
“And your hair?”

I ran a self-conscious hand through the short, uneven strands. “It’s practical,” I answered. “Less likely to get in the way when I’m—”

“When you’re what?” His voice was low, dangerous. “When you’re disobeying me?”

“It’s not disobedience!” I insisted. “It’s initiative. I just want to learn, Father. Everyone my age is already training—”

“Everyone your age who has a wolf,” he cut in sharply. “You do not. And I will not put you in a position to get hurt.”

The words hit like stones to the chest.

"I'm not helpless," I muttered through gritted teeth.

His expression softened for a fraction of a second before hardening again. "You're not ready. You'll train when your wolf emerges, and not a second before."

"I'm never going to be ready if you keep treating me like a useless, fragile little thing!"

He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Enough, Seraphina. We have important guests visiting later. Go to your room now."

"Father—"

"And stay there. You look unsightly; I don't want you embarrassing yourself—and me—further."

I don't remember what I said after that—something defiant, I think—but I do remember the sting of tears as I turned and bolted from the field.

I didn't stop running until I reached the forest.

The air was cooler there, thick with the scent of damp leaves and earth, and the sound of birdsong. I stumbled over roots and rocks, my breath coming out in hiccupped gasps, until finally I collapsed against the base of an old oak and burst into tears.

I wasn't sure how long I cried for—long enough for the ache in my chest to dull into exhaustion—when a dry voice drifted down from above.

“You know, if your plan was to scare off every creature in the forest, you're doing a great job.”

I blinked and looked up.

A boy was sprawled along one of the branches, long legs dangling lazily, his head propped on one arm. Sunlight filtered through the canopy, catching on the strands of his dark brown hair and the faint sheen of sweat on his temple.

He looked to be only a year or two older than me, but his confidence gave him the kind of presence that made the air seem to bend around him.

My tears stopped instantly. “Who are you?”

He tilted his head, regarding me with mild amusement. “Who are you?”

“Answering a question with a question is rude. Don't you have manners?”

He grinned. “Bold attitude for someone who looks like they lost a fight with a pair of garden shears.”

Heat shot up my neck. “It’s a style.”

“Uh-huh,” he said, clearly unconvinced. “And what’s a...guy like you doing crying in the woods?”

“I’m not a guy,” I snapped, insulted—even though that had been the misrepresentation I was aiming for.

He raised a brow, the smirk vanishing into mock surprise. “Oh. My mistake.” Then, as if that amused him even more, he added, “That explains the crying.”

I glared. “You’re an asshole.”

“Eh, I’ve been called worse.” He shifted to sit upright, legs swinging idly. “So? What’s wrong?”

I sniffled. “Nothing.”

He leaned down slightly, resting his forearm on his knee. “That didn’t sound like nothing.”

I clenched my fists. "My father says I can't train because I don't have a wolf yet. But I'm not weak."

The boy studied me for a long moment, and for the first time, there was no teasing in his gaze. "He's right, though. Training before your wolf awakens is dangerous."

"You sound just like him," I muttered.

He chuckled softly. "I doubt that."

"I just want to belong," I said, my voice small. "To feel like I'm not...less."

Something softened in his eyes. He jumped down from the branch with the effortless grace of someone whose body obeyed him without hesitation, landing a few feet away. "Your wolf will come when she's ready," he said. He was so tall, I had to crane my neck up. "Pushing too soon won't make her appear faster. It'll just make you frustrated."

"I've been waiting forever."

He smiled faintly. "Forever's not as long as it feels."

I scowled. "Something tells me you don't know how it feels."

“Maybe.” His gaze turned distant for a moment, then he crouched down so we were eye-level. “Your father wasn’t trying to stop you from learning, you know. He was trying to protect you.”

“From what?”

“From what happens when you get hurt before your wolf’s there to help you heal.” He plucked a leaf from the ground and twirled it between his fingers. “Trust me, you’ll be grateful later.”

The acuity of his words, the sincerity in his tone, disarmed me. I stared at him, trying to make sense of him—the effortless confidence, the way he seemed so sure of things I barely understood.

“You talk like an adult,” I said.

He smiled. “And you talk like a child who thinks the world is ending because she didn’t get her way.”

I smacked his arm. “You’re mean.”

“Ow!” he gasped exaggeratedly.

I rolled my eyes. “Oops.”

He froze, his eyes narrowing like he was trying to look through me. “Have we met before?”

I wrinkled my nose. “I don’t meet many assholes. I would remember.” That was a lie—I met a shit ton of assholes. Just none as cute as him.

He smirked, nodding. “You’re right. Your haircut is something I would have had nightmares about.”

I was about to retort when his expression shifted suddenly. His head tilted, eyes distant—like he was listening to something I couldn’t hear.

“Duty calls,” he murmured, standing.

I frowned. “Wha—”

That’s when it hit me. He’d been mindlinked. He had his wolf.

I don’t know why, but the realization hurt worse than my father’s scolding. My envy was raw, sharp, and almost childish in its ache.

As he turned, my hand shot out and gripped his shirt.

“Wait,” I said quickly. “You didn’t tell me your name.”

He hesitated, the corner of his mouth curving in a smile that was gone almost before it formed. “You’ll find out soon enough.”

He took only a couple of steps before he stopped. Turned slightly. “By the way, if your plan was to look like a boy, you failed. You’re way too pretty.”

Then he was gone—vanishing into the trees so swiftly I barely saw him move.

The silence he left behind felt strange. Empty.

My cheeks were warm from his last statement, but the ache in my belly seemed to chew through me, overpowering all else.

If my wolf had awakened, maybe I could’ve gone with him. Maybe I wouldn’t have felt so small in comparison.

I trudged home eventually, head bowed, the chopped ends of my hair sticking out in all directions.

By evening, the manor was abuzz with preparations for the visiting Nightfang delegation.

I'd been confined to my room so as not to embarrass my family, but, once again, curiosity got the better of me and I snuck down the stairs.

I lingered near the entrance to the main hall, trying to catch a glimpse of the Nightfang Alpha and his heir.

When I did, my breath caught.

It was him.

The boy from the woods.

He stood beside his father, dressed in formal black with the Nightfang crest gleaming on his chest. The easy grin was gone, replaced by a polite composure that looked entirely too grown-up.

Kieran Blackthorne.

The name rippled through the room like a low current, followed by murmurs of admiration.

Celeste—draped in a ceremonial gown, her hair in perfect golden curls—stood beside him, radiant as ever.

She was only eleven, but was already the prettiest girl in the pack.

The two of them together were the picture of a storybook future: the Blackthorne heir and the Lockwood princess.

And I was the outcast, watching from afar, wishing I hadn't been so incredibly stupid and short-sighted as to cut my hair and have myself banished.

But then Kieran's gaze flicked across the room and landed on me.

Time seemed to come to a screeching halt as his eyes lit up with recognition, and he smiled—small, private, the kind of smile that didn't belong to the room or the people in it, only to me.

And that was the moment I fell head over heels for Kieran Blackthorne.