

My Sister 255

Chapter 255 NEVER REACH HER

LUCIAN'S POV

Kieran went still when he finally settled before the moonstone.

I watched the shift happen in his body—a slowing of breath, a lowering of shoulders, a gradual unclenching of muscles that moments earlier had been coiled like a beast ready to rip through mountains.

His hands pressed flat to the pale surface, the stone thrumming with a pulse that answered the rhythm inside him.

In that instant, a feeling I had always forbidden myself to acknowledge around him surged up, unbidden.

Envy.

Not of his strength. Not of his title. Not of his place in the world.

But of that tether between him and Sera—frayed as it was, fractured as it might be, cracked down its divine center yet still undeniably alive.

He could feel her pain.

I could not.

He could reach her.

I could not.

Logic whispered that he was doing what was best for her. My rational mind knew Sera would feel the bond through that moonstone, knew that Kieran's stabilizing influence might very well be the difference between her surviving this trial or being consumed by it.

But the part of me I kept locked beneath iron discipline—the part with fangs and old wounds—snarled at the sight.

Fate, it hissed, has already chosen.

And it is not you.

I forced a slow breath through my nose, willing my exterior to remain composed. The air around the barrier crackled again, silver magic rippling like a shiver across the mountain.

Alois folded his hands behind his back, as serene as if he were watching dawn break, not two Alphas straining against the leash of set boundaries.

“Open a way,” I said quietly.

Alois didn’t turn. “No.”

I stepped toward him. “You allowed him to help.”

“Kieran does not enter,” he corrected. “He lends her steadiness from afar. You would attempt something else entirely.”

I stiffened. “My presence will not harm her. There is no fracture between us.”

Alois finally looked at me, and the weight of that gaze hit with unexpected force.

“You trust her,” he said, “but not enough.”

My jaw clenched. “You presume—”

"You think if she loses her footing, it should be you who pulls her upright," he continued, unmoved. "You think she needs your guidance to rise. And you fear, deeply, that she may rise without you."

The words struck with a surgical precision that fissured something inside me. A crack right down that cultivated calm I wore like a second skin.

"That is why you are always by her side," Alois went on, "always behind her. You want her to soar, but you accept her falling—so long as you are the one to catch her. This is not about Sera needing help; it is about you needing to be the one who gives it."

His gaze gentled. "Lucian Reed, if you truly trusted her future, you would not try to cage it under your wing."

My throat tightened.

"She is no common bird," he murmured. "She is a phoenix. Destined to fly far beyond the reach of those who mistake possession for protection."

I looked away, swallowing hard.

Behind us, Kieran sat in perfect stillness, head bowed, the moonstone's glow rising around him like soft breath. His aura—once a storm—had softened to a quiet pull. A warm gravity steadied by purpose and devotion.

It twisted something sharp and merciless beneath my ribs.

Sera was fighting for her life inside that barrier, and the man who'd caused her the most pain in the world was the one with the ability to reach her, even from miles away.

And me?

I was reduced to waiting.

I was a man of great patience.

But idleness? That had never been my strength.

My fingers curled at my sides. "I cannot simply stand here."

Alois gave the barest shrug. "Then don't. The path in is restricted, but the path out is wide open."

I clamped my mouth to trap a growl.

I did not come all this way to be held back. To be told to sit on my ass and twiddle my thumbs.

If I could not enter through the front, then I would find another way. The mountain's terrain was vast. I knew its geography better than Kieran, better than most wolves who hadn't spent half their youth studying old maps and older wards.

The barrier wasn't flawless—no enchantment ever was. Cracks existed in everything. Weak points lived in every crafted thing, especially magic woven by beings older than history.

I bowed my head slightly to Alois. A gesture of courtesy. Respect.

It was either that or I flipped him off.

His words meant nothing. I did not wish for Sera to fall, but was it truly wrong to want to stand at her side?

Whether she broke or rose. I just wanted to be there.

To be the one she saw first. So she would realize: we might not share a mate bond, but I was the one who'd been there for her, unwaveringly, since the very beginning.

I turned and slipped into the tree line from where I'd come.

The shadows welcomed me like old allies. I drew a breath, forcing my pulse to steady, and activated the cloaking art passed down through my mother's side—an ability I rarely showed, rarely trusted anyone with knowing.

Cool air draped over me like a veil, muting my presence, softening the crunch of leaves beneath my boots. The forest quieted. Even the magic in the air seemed to shift, warping around me so that light bent slightly at the edges.

I kept my steps soft, my breathing shallow. Left. Up. Over the ridge. The barrier shimmered faintly between the pines, a curtain of silver-dusted air.

If I could find the right angle—maybe approach from the ravine, where the wards thinned to account for runoff—perhaps I could slip through.

But the deeper I went, the stranger the forest became.

Fog gathered—thin at first, then denser. It clung low to the ground, then rose slowly, swirling around my legs. The path twisted subtly—not enough to alarm a normal traveler, but enough that I noticed.

And I'd studied enough enchantments to recognize this for what it was.

An illusion. Gentle and soft, but sly and misleading.

My next step sank deeper into mist. When I moved forward, the mountain ridge I'd been approaching seemed no closer. I adjusted my course—sliding left, veering uphill—but the terrain curved quietly back on itself.

A loop.

I let out a slow breath.

“Alois,” I hissed under my breath, “you sly old fox.”

Another flare of spiritual energy pulsed through the mountain, bright and cutting, slashing through the fog like lightning. My heart seized.

“I should be with you, Sera,” I whispered, anger and longing tearing through the words. “Not pacing a phantom trail like a restless spirit.”

The urge to run, to rip through the illusion through brute force, rushed up like wildfire. But I knew that would only cinch the snare tighter.

And the truth, silent and unwelcome, seeped into my bones.

Kieran could sit still beside a moonstone and reach her soul.

I—with all my knowledge, all my secrets, all my power—could walk every hidden path on this mountain and never reach my destination.

Never reach her.