

My Sister 260

Chapter 260 A FOOL'S ERRAND

SERAPHINA'S POV

The coastal transit warehouse behind the institute was nothing glamorous—a squat concrete structure crouched between salt-scrub grass and a stretch of cracked asphalt that obviously hadn't seen steady traffic in years.

Its windows were dark, doors mottled with rust, but the low, electric hum crawling beneath my skin told me all I needed to know.

Wards. Old but efficient.

I pulled my jacket tighter as I approached, the wind sharp and damp against my cheeks. The smell of brine and oil hung heavy in the air, carried in from the far-off docks.

Inside, four wolves were in the final stages of prepping a matte-black transport van. Unlabeled wooden crates lined the walls.

I stepped inside, and all four heads turned toward me.

The woman closest to the van—lean, her blonde hair yanked into a severe knot—was the first to step forward.

“You’re Seraphina Blackthorne,” she said. Not a question.

I swallowed. “I am.”

“Iris,” she said, offering a firm nod instead of a handshake. “Team lead.”

Her eyes, pale gray and unblinking, cut through me with sharp assessment. She stood balanced and ready, boots worn smooth at the toes from use.

Beta, without question—but the kind forged by discipline and power, not proximity to an Alpha.

Former special forces, if Alois’ briefing hadn’t been exaggerating.

“I don’t usually accept last-minute additions to my missions,” Iris said. “But no one says no to Alois.”

I chuckled dryly. “Tell me about it.”

Her lips quirked slightly. “Route’s tight, timing tighter. Let’s get introductions done fast.”

She tossed her thumb behind her. "That's Gear."

A broad-shouldered man with arms like hydraulic pistons glanced up from tightening a bolt on the van's undercarriage.

He gave a silent nod, expression unreadable under heavy brows, then returned to work without a word.

The air around him felt dense, grounded. Beta, too, his strength so tangible it seemed to vibrate in the space.

"Wren," Iris continued.

A petite brunette woman perched on top of a crate, one foot braced, the other dangling. She lifted two fingers in greeting.

Her brown gaze sharpened as our eyes met—quick, assessing, like she'd already clocked three exit routes and my breathing rate.

Omega, but there was nothing fragile about her. Not in the slightest.

"Heya," she chirped. "Don't mind Gear. He's allergic to small talk."

Gear grunted in reply.

“And Codex.” Iris pointed to a dark-haired man who stood slightly apart, tablet in hand, glasses catching the overhead light as his eyes flicked between me and whatever data stream he was parsing.

His aura was...odd. Controlled. Layered. Possibly a Beta. Possibly a low-perception Alpha. Hard to tell, and I suspected that was intentional.

“Pleasure,” he said, giving a small wave.

A flicker of *déjà vu* tugged at me as I recalled my first meeting with the LST team, but these wolves were nothing like those at OTS.

My OTS team had been brilliant, idealistic, restless—fueled by belief and ambition.

This team was something else entirely. I could feel the weight of their experience and prowess. No restless energy vibrating beneath the surface. Taciturn in a way that spoke of things already endured.

“So, Alois’ addition,” Iris said, folding her arms. I didn’t miss the way her gaze flicked briefly to my throat. To where my pulse carried the unmistakable hum of Alpha blood.

“You’re Alpha-born.” Again, not a question.

I inclined my head. “I am.”

“And yet,” she said carefully, “no full shift.”

The warehouse fell very quiet.

I didn’t flinch. “Correct.”

Something in the group shifted—not rejection exactly. Adjustment. Expectations recalibrating.

Wren’s smile faded into neutrality. Codex tapped his tablet once, likely tagging a note. Gear’s eyes narrowed—not in judgment, but calculation.

Iris studied me a beat longer, then nodded. “Understood.”

No complaints. No grumbled dissent.

Just acceptance—anchored firmly in Alois's authority.

“We roll in ten,” Iris announced.

Urgency pulsed in the air as the team slipped into their roles with seamless coordination.

Crates were already sealed and warded, loaded onto the large vehicle.

Gear secured the final crate, hefting a full hundred pounds like it weighed nothing. Wren darted around the van, testing door locks and climbing onto the roof with acrobatic ease.

Codex triple-checked the internal cooling seals.

The medication—unstable, disguised, and potentially catastrophic if mishandled—never left my awareness. It thrummed faintly, like a held breath.

We departed as soon as everything was secure.

The road curved away from the warehouse and into the coastal stretches—long, isolated ribbons of asphalt flanked by cliffs and scrub and the distant roar of waves.

Gear took point in the monstrous, modified transport, engines whisper-quiet despite the vehicle's size. Iris sat beside him in the passenger seat, Codex and Wren behind them.

I sat in the rear at first, watching the team operate with the practiced rhythm of people who'd worked together for years.

And though no one rejected my presence, the realization dawned quickly enough.

I was useless.

Especially when night fell, and the driving rotation was set.

"Gear, first shift. Wren next. Codex after. I'll take dawn." Iris paused. "Seraphina...you'll rest."

I blinked. "Excuse me?"

"Alois hinted that you've been through a rough journey," she said pragmatically. "You can rest. We'll wake you if needed."

The words were practical. Kind, even.

Still, they stung.

Special accommodation.

The story of my life.

I stared out at the dark ribbon of road, jaw clenched, the engine's hum rattling up through my bones.

"No." I straightened in my seat. "I can contribute."

Iris didn't look away from the road. "You are contributing by not being a liability."

The words weren't cruel. Just factual.

But the sting lingered anyway.

"I didn't come to sit quietly in the back," I said, keeping my voice level. "And I'm sure that's not what Alois intended when he added me. Give me something to do. Let me pull my weight."

Silence stretched between us. Iris hesitated. Codex shifted, uneasy, while Wren offered a small, sympathetic wince.

Finally, Iris sighed. "You want a task?"

"Yes."

She glanced at me then and began to move from her perch beside Gear. "Passenger seat. Navigation, perimeter scans. You screw up, you're benched. Understood?"

Relief surged. "Understood."

I slid forward eagerly, heart pounding as I took the passenger seat next to Gear.

I felt useful again.

For all of five minutes.

Within that time, it became painfully clear that I'd been given a fool's errand.

Gear's navigation system was absurdly advanced—terrain mapping updating in real time, ward-sensitivity scanners adjusting route efficiency.

It recalibrated faster than I could blink, flipping between satellite feeds, terrain overlays, and live hazard warnings. The dashboard AI called out turns before I could even open my mouth.

Even Wren's earlier scouting notes had already synced into the onboard feed, her tagged ambush points and collapsible roads integrated seamlessly.

Every suggestion I made was either already accounted for or unnecessary.

My fingers curled against my thigh.

I tried again. "There's a coastal bypass ahead. Narrow, but—"

"Tagged," Wren said calmly. "Ruled out. Landslide risk."

I swallowed. "Alternate inland cut?"

"Gear's system already rerouted us."

Heat crept up my neck.

At some point, I benched myself.

I slumped back, eyes fixed on the dark ceiling, feeling hollowed out.

A familiar ache unfurled in my chest—the one that always whispered I was both too much and never enough.

Alina stirred within me. ‘You are doing well,’ she murmured. ‘You are not less than them.’

‘Yeah, well, that’s not what it feels like.’

Gear caught my reflection in the side mirror and, without looking away from the road, fished a cold can from the small cooler wedged at his feet and held it out to me.

“Here,” he grunted, his voice rough, likely from disuse. “You look like you need this.”

I blinked. “I don’t—”

“Relax,” he rumbled. “Non-alcoholic.”

I took it, surprised by his—albeit grudging—show of camaraderie. “Thanks.”

He nodded once, then settled back, his gaze sweeping the horizon.

I popped the tab—

And froze.

The instant the seal hissed, the hairs on my neck stood on end.

A shift. A ripple. An unseen current brushing across my senses like cold fingers.

A fluctuation sharp enough to prickle my skin, carrying a dangerous, distorted aura that did not belong to any of us—or the land.

My grip tightened around the can.

Something was very, very wrong.

