

My Sister 262

Chapter 262 UNEXPECTED VARIABLE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The silence that followed my warning was absolute.

No one moved. No one reached for a weapon or a door latch or a comm.

They just stared at me—Gear through the rearview mirror, Wren frozen mid-breath, Codex's fingers hovering above his tablet, Iris standing rigid between the front seats like a carved figure.

Their skepticism didn't bristle with hostility or the careless dismissal I'd come to expect. Instead, it was careful, deliberate, as if they were weighing me on invisible scales.

And I couldn't blame them. I couldn't explain what was happening.

Not in any way that would satisfy soldiers trained to trust data and experience over 'hunches.'

Alois might have mentioned my journey, but I doubt he told them about the Origin Archives and the Starlight Hallway.

About how the world had split open there, revealing just how fragile the boundary between realities could be. About how my senses apparently now slipped through those cracks instead of merely skimming the surface.

Iris' gaze sharpened, not on the dark beyond the headlights—on me.

"All right," she said, her voice calm. "Then tell me this. How many?"

The question landed heavily, more a responsibility than an inquiry.

I swallowed and closed my eyes.

My breath deepened, pulse finding a steady rhythm. The hum beneath my skin adjusted, tuning itself like an instrument being brought into alignment. I didn't push outward. I didn't reach.

I listened.

The energy field around us bloomed into clarity—layered, crowded, vibrating with intent. Shapes pressed in from every direction, not as individuals at first but as pressure points, like dents in the air where something solid should not be.

Circling. Waiting.

My chest tightened.

"At least twenty," I whispered. "That's conservative."

A heartbeat of silence. Then a ripple of tension through the team.

"Are you sure—"

The night erupted.

Howls ripped through the darkness, feral and ragged, weaving together in a chorus that sent shivers racing up my arms.

Shadows peeled away from the treeline, bodies emerging in motion, eyes catching the headlights with predatory gleam.

A pack of rogues.

They fanned out fast, sealing off every escape route with ruthless precision.

Gear muttered a curse, hand darting to the ignition. Wren's posture snapped into readiness, fluid and lethal. Codex's tablet chimed, systems flickering to life as he recalibrated.

Iris spoke with a quiet authority that needed no volume.

"Team," she said, voice crisp, her eyes on the field. "Formation delta. Wren, flank left. Gear, right. Codex, defense and comms."

Her gaze flicked to me. "You. Keep sensing. I want to know their plan of attack."

I nodded, heart pounding, and closed my eyes again.

The ambush had layers. That was the first thing I saw once I let go of incredulousness.

There were the visible rogues—moving fast, aggressive, confident.

And then there were the others.

The ones crouched higher along the cliff edges. The ones waiting behind the wreckage line. The ones whose presence distorted the field not with noise, but with absence.

"They're staggered," I rushed out. "Two rings. First wave draws you out. Second hits your blind side."

Iris adjusted instantly. "Shift the line," she barked. "Don't overextend."

Steel flashed. Gunfire cracked the air. The night exploded into chaos.

Iris vaulted from the vehicle, her boots striking the ground with a decisive crack.

"I'm coming with you," I said.

Iris didn't even turn. "Negative."

"What?"

"You stay here."

I leaned forward. "I've been trained. I can fight, and I can half-shift."

“I bet you can,” she said, finally looking at me. “But not tonight.”

Anger flared hot and sudden. “You don’t get to sideline me after asking me to map the battlefield.”

“This isn’t punishment,” Iris snapped. “It’s risk management.”

“I’m not helpless!”

“No,” she agreed. “You’re unpredictable.”

I blanched.

“You lack control,” Iris continued. “You’re sensing things you don’t understand yet. If that ability spikes mid-fight, it might immobilize you, or you’ll draw attention you can’t survive. There are too many variables.”

“You don’t know anything about what I can survive,” I shot back.

“Enough,” she barked, her tone leaving no room for argument. “Stay with Codex. Guard the cargo.”

She turned away before I could argue again.

The order hit harder than I expected.

Not because she doubted my strength—I was used to that.

Because she was right. My new...abilities were just that: new. I hadn't even had time to process and marvel at the fact that I somehow had psychic powers.

It would be reckless to throw myself into battle without properly understanding and testing my limits.

I knew all that, but still, being benched was a hard pill to swallow.

Codex moved closer, lowering his voice as the team surged forward. “Don’t misunderstand Iris. She’s not dismissing you,” he said. “She’s keeping you alive.”

“I don’t need—”

“You do,” he cut in gently. “What you’re doing right now? Sensing trajectories? That’s not a skill you deploy without mastery. It’s a beacon for danger.”

I clenched my jaw, hands shaking with the effort of staying still.

Outside, the fight intensified.

Steel clashed with claw. Gunfire ricocheted. Bodies crashed against rock and asphalt.

Some of the rogues were in wolf form but none of the team bothered Shifting. That didn't make them any less formidable.

Gear roared as he barreled through a knot of rogues, while Wren's silhouette flickered at the chaos's edge, swift as a blade. No rogue spent more than a second facing Iris before they were cut down.

But as proficient as the team was, they were grossly outnumbered, and soon, they started losing ground.

I felt it before I saw it. The pressure shifted.

The second ring closed in faster than Iris had anticipated. A feint on the right drove Wren back, leaving a gap at the rear of the transport.

A rogue slipped through.

“Gear, behind you!” I shouted.

Gear twisted just as claws raked across his shoulder, blood splattering dark against metal. His groan, more irritation than pain, cut through the chaos.

That was it.

I didn’t think.

I moved.

I burst from the front of the van, Codex shouting my name behind me, the night air ripping against my face as I let the Shift rise.

Not fully.

Not yet.

My bones burned as they realigned halfway, muscles swelling, senses snapping into razor clarity. Claws ripped from my fingers, vision sharpening until every heartbeat around me pounded like a drum.

I slammed into a rogue mid-lunge, momentum driving us to the ground. My claws found its throat before it could snarl, silencing it in a sudden, wet hush.

The rogues hesitated. I felt the reason—it wasn't my strength that unsettled them.

Because I wasn't supposed to be there.

Confusion rippled through their ranks. Their formation wavered as eyes fixed on me, recalculating to account for this unexpected variable.

"There's another one," someone snarled.

Their gazes dropped.

Not to my face.

To my legs. My hands. The incomplete Shift.

Laughter broke out, harsh and ugly.

"They brought a cripple," a voice mocked.

The pressure eased, and their guard dropped.

That was their mistake.

I moved into their hesitation before it could turn into caution.

One came at me laughing, sloppy with confidence. I slipped under his swing and tore through his side. He dropped, screaming once before going still.

Another tried to flank me. I pivoted, driving my elbow into his throat, dropping him before he hit the ground.

They scrambled to adjust, barking orders and closing ranks, but the damage was already done.

They'd dismissed me.

So I fought fast and low, breaking knees, opening tendons, slicing throats. The half-shift burned, strained, but I stayed upright long enough to buy the others a little relief.

Even as I tracked the others from the corner of my eye, Iris never once looked my way.

She was already engaged with a wolf who was most likely their leader—slick and corrosive, her presence oozing into the field like venom, eyes burning with feral cruelty.

She bared her fangs as she and Iris circled, two predators locked in a silent challenge.

“Well, well, if it isn’t the Institute’s favorite dog.”

Iris’ expression didn’t change. “You should’ve stayed dead, Miasma.”

“Then you should improve on your aim, Iris,” Miasma snarled.

“Don’t worry,” Iris hissed. “I’ll be sure to finish the job this time.”

My breath hitched. Iris knew our attackers?

With that piece of information revealed, their history was plain to see.

Their movements mirrored each other, shaped by old training and older grudges. Every strike was laced with memory, every dodge intimate and rehearsed.

"You've fallen far," Miasma taunted, glancing pointedly at me as I dispatched another rogue. "Resorting to half-shifters now? Alois must be desperate."

Iris' gaze cut to me as I ripped through a rogue's back, then snapped forward again without missing a beat.

Her lips curved, sharp as a blade. "Or fucking brilliant."