

My Sister 275

Chapter 275 POOR CELESTE

CELESTE'S POV

The treatment room was as pristine as everything else in Catherine's villa. White walls. Soft lighting. Glass panels humming faintly with power. The scent of metal beneath the sterile floral overlay.

The chair sat at its center, surrounded by arcane instrumentation and sleek modern tech—a marriage of magic and science that made my skin prickle.

I lay back on it while technicians moved around me, attaching leads, adjusting settings, murmuring numbers I couldn't understand.

Catherine remained at my side, one hand resting lightly on the armrest, grounding me—or so it was meant to feel.

When the headpiece descended, unease settled into my bones.

I hated this room.

I hated how small it made me feel.

The room I'd been held in had been small, too. Concrete walls closed in on either side, stained dark in places I refused to look too closely at.

The ceiling was low here, too. Designed to make you hunch. To shrink.

'You're safe, Celeste.' I hissed internally. 'You're not there anymore.'

Straps fastened around my wrists and ankles—not tight, not painful. Gentle. Considerate.

"You're doing very well," Catherine murmured close to my ear. "Much better than the last session."

"I don't feel any better," I said flatly.

Her smile was indulgent. "Patience, dear. Remember?"

I pursed my lips. "I remember."

She gently smoothed my hair back from my forehead. "That's my girl. Now, relax. We'll have you fixed up in no time."

My godmother watched me the way one observes a delicate machine—attentive, patient, always anticipating the next malfunction.

I felt it most in the silences between us. In the way her gaze lingered just a fraction too long after I finished speaking, as if she were cataloging not my words but the subtext behind them.

The cadence of my breathing. The steadiness of my hands.

Once—before everything—I would have found it comforting.

Catherine had been the adult I trusted most besides my mother. The woman who smelled of expensive perfume and ocean air, who brought gifts back from cities I'd only ever dreamed of visiting.

The one who spoke to me like I was already grown, already important. Already destined.

It made sense that after Kieran's betrayal ten years ago, I would run to her.

It made sense that she was the one who'd saved me from the hell I'd found myself in.

But now, under her meticulous gaze, unease twisted in my gut.

The timing gnawed at me.

Catherine had sensed my distress—that was how she put it, lips pursed in concern, hand warm where it cupped my cheek when I first woke on a soft, warm bed on her island.

We were connected. She'd felt a disturbance. A pull. A wrongness that demanded investigation.

And yet she hadn't called my parents. Not until my mother called her.

She hadn't alerted the pack. Hadn't triggered alarms or summoned help the moment she realized I had been taken.

Instead, she'd arranged a stand-in—simple AI technology. A version of me to be seen in public places, someone to create a paper trail just convincing enough to buy time.

Someone to talk to my mother and reassure my family.

“For your privacy,” she'd said smoothly. “For your recovery.”

At the time, I'd been too weak, too shattered, to question it.

Now, the explanation tasted sour in my mouth.

It wasn't only the delay. It was the surgical precision, the way every detail was managed quietly, efficiently, without a hint of panic.

As if she'd anticipated not only my disappearance, but the aftermath. As if this had always been one possible outcome, already slotted neatly into place.

That thought sent a chill racing over my skin.

But I didn't chase it.

Because chasing it meant asking questions I wasn't ready for answers to. It meant plunging back into the why.

Why was I taken? What did they want?

What would have happened if—

Let's face it, no matter what happened, Catherine was all I had now.

She was the reason I had a shot at returning to my old self.

I didn't want to return to Los Angeles as something fragile and pitiful, especially not now. Not after Sera. Not after the LST championship.

Not after the world had watched my sister rise and rewrite the Lockwood narrative around her strength, her resilience, her triumph.

Not after Kieran had fucking left me for her.

I could already hear the comparisons, whispered and overt.

Sera fought her way back. She triumphed.

Poor Celeste...broke.

No.

I refused to hand them that satisfaction.

And even if I did return, what could the Lockwoods offer me?

I was suddenly as pathetic as my sister—my wolf was gone. For real this time.

And the only person who could help me get Kharis back was Catherine.

My parents had tried everything with Sera. Rituals. Specialists. Therapies that promised gentle healing and delivered nothing. Years of patience that amounted to prolonged suffering.

Soft solutions for hard problems.

Catherine, on the other hand, had never believed in passivity.

I remembered the argument clearly—years ago now. Catherine seated across from my mother, fingers steepled, expression cool but intent.

“Let her try the program,” she’d urged. “Risk is inherent in any breakthrough. Playing it safe is how potential dies.”

My mother had hesitated. Of course she had.

The technology Catherine postulated was unproven, experimental. My parents thought it was too dangerous; they felt that there was too much unknown.

Sera had paid the price for that caution.

I wouldn't.

I wasn't going to leave my life to chance.

I didn't have the luxury of waiting to see if the universe would be kind enough to restore what I'd lost.

Kieran hadn't waited. He'd walked away the moment it became clear I was no longer the obvious choice—the powerful one, the unblemished future Luna standing beside him.

My mother had called several times while I was here, but he'd never even reached out once.

And that steeled my resolve.

I absolutely could not return to Los Angeles a failure.

I would never let anyone know what had been done to me. What I had seen. What I had lost.

That awful, abominable part of my life would remain sealed, buried beneath immaculate presentation and careful smiles.

I was still a Lockwood.

I was still the princess Frostbane had raised.

Even if Catherine had motives I didn't fully understand—even if something about this arrangement felt too neat, too calculated—I couldn't afford to reject it.

Catherine was my mother's best friend. My godmother. She would never hurt me.

I had to trust her as I'd always done before.

Even if the treatments themselves were...strange.

Invasive in theory, but strangely gentle in execution. Catherine always ensured a team of seasoned hypnotists was present—people with calm voices and practiced hands, who guided my thoughts away the moment pain threatened to surface.

I knew there was pain. I could sense it distantly, like pressure behind glass.

But I never remembered it.

Each session blurred into the next. Light. Sound. The steady hum of machinery. Then waking with the sensation that something inside me had shifted—not enough to name, but enough to notice.

Like furniture rearranged in a dark room.

But with each one, my memory of that cold dark room, of those cold harsh hands, of Olivia—dark-eyed, soft-spoken Olivia—faded away. The pain faded away.

And I was one step closer to getting my wolf back.

That was enough.

I closed my eyes and tried to let the hum of the machines lull me into a relaxed state.

As the hum deepened and the world began to blur at the edges, my thoughts drifted despite myself—sideways, backwards.

Harsh light. Consuming darkness. Doors. Hands.

Time didn't pass so much as smear.

Voices tangled and dissolved until they lost meaning. My body learned the rhythm before my mind did—when to tense, when to go still, when to swallow sound before it escaped me and earned punishment.

Cold lived in the floor. In the concrete. In my bones.

‘You don’t have to stand,’ a voice whispered beside me.

‘Yes, I do.’

Because if I sat, if I let myself fold, something inside me might break for good.

‘My name is Olivia.’

Her shoulder pressed against mine. Steady. Too steady for this place.

‘You remind me of my sister, Mireya. She thinks she’s invincible, too.’

The hum swelled, rising to a fever pitch.

Pain sparked, sharp and distant, then vanished, swallowed by enforced calm.

‘It’s okay. You’re okay. I’ve got you.’

When I woke, Catherine’s face hovered above mine.

“You’re responding beautifully,” she said, adjusting a blanket around my shoulders. “Your cooperation is accelerating the program’s progress.”

The word ‘cooperation’ struck a strange chord, yet I found myself nodding all the same.

Because cooperation promised progress.

Because progress delivered results.

I parted my lips to ask what, exactly, that progress entailed—

When a servant appeared quietly in the doorway.

“Lady Catherine,” she said, bowing low. “Margaret Lockwood has arrived. Her flight just landed.”

My heart lurched, pounding wild and uneven.

Mother.

Catherine’s gaze flicked to mine, something unreadable passing through her eyes before it vanished beneath a smooth smile.

“Well,” she said, straightening, “it seems we have company.”