

My Sister 299

Chapter 299 IMPOSSIBLE SIGHT

LUCIAN'S POV

I set my phone face down on the table.

I felt the vibration from Sera's reply in my bones, a faint echo of warmth I couldn't afford to indulge.

It would have been so easy to let myself drift, to picture the golden glow of the restaurant where she waited. Where the answer I'd waited so long for lay, just within reach.

Instead, I focused my gaze.

Alpha Marcus Draven sat across from me, fingers steepled, mouth curved in the faintest suggestion of a smile.

The Silverpine packhouse conference room was colder than it needed to be, stone walls leached of warmth, banners heavy with age and old victories.

This was a room designed to haunt visitors with memories of power, even if true authority had long since slipped away.

I straightened in my chair. "Let's get this over with, Marcus. I have no time for any more games."

His brow arched, slow and deliberate. "Straight to business," he said mildly. "I'd forgotten how little patience you have for pleasantries."

"I don't have time to entertain petulance masquerading as mystery," I replied. "If you've summoned me here, say what you intend to say."

He leaned back, chair creaking. "If you're so peeved by my summons, why do you keep coming?"

My jaw tightened.

Marcus's smile widened, satisfied. "Curious, isn't it? You call my games dull, but you still follow the trail. Every time."

"I come because you keep dragging ghosts into the present," I said flatly. "And because I'm foolish enough to believe you might eventually say something worth hearing."

He chuckled. "My so-called games are effective, then."

His words grated along my nerves, stirring a dangerous edge beneath my irritation.

Very few people could aggravate me; I'd mastered the art of self-composure a long time ago.

But Marcus Draven somehow always knew exactly where to prod.

My grip tightened around the necklace in my hand.

It was delicate, the fine chain cold in my grip. A deep, muted blue stone hung at its center, veined with faint threads of silver that only caught the light at certain angles, easy to miss unless you knew to look for it.

The clasp had been polished smooth by years of fastening and unfastening, by the way Zara would absently thumb it whenever she was lost in thought.

"Where," I ground out, "did you get this?"

Marcus's eyes glinted. "That's privileged information, and I'm not sure you've earned the privilege yet."

I pushed back from the table, the chair legs scraping stone. "Do not attempt to manipulate me."

Marcus's smile thinned. "Manipulate? That's a harsh word."

"I don't know how you keep getting your hand on Zara's belongings," I continued, voice low. "But this bullshit stops now. Let the dead rest and stop parading pieces of her life in front of me like bait."

His gaze sharpened. "And here I was thinking you would be grateful for the keepsakes. After all, she was important to you."

"She was everything," I snapped.

"You sure? Cause you don't seem happy—"

My palm slammed the table, sending a jolt through the wood. The crack of sound split the room, sharp and absolute.

Somewhere beyond the doors, I heard movement—guards shifting, senses pricking.

Marcus didn't flinch.

"Don't push me," I said, every word measured, restrained by effort. "You are skating dangerously close to something you cannot afford."

A beat.

Then Marcus laughed.

His laughter was loud and raucous, bouncing off the stone walls and scraping at my ears like fingernails on a chalkboard.

He clapped his hands together as though I'd just delivered a particularly entertaining performance.

"Ah," he said, wiping at his eyes. "There it is. The temper. It's so exciting for me that I get to see a side to you that no one else does. It thrills you too, doesn't it? To shred your restraint and show your true self."

I leaned forward, meeting his gaze unblinking. "My restraint is not weakness."

"No," he agreed. "It's actually quite fascinating to watch it at work."

My fingers curled against the tabletop. "Careful, Marcus. Trust me, you don't want to be anywhere near the line of fire should my restraint snap altogether."

He arched a brow, some of his amusement fading. "Is that a threat?"

I leaned in further. "Shadowveil may not boast your numbers, but I do not lead weaklings. Every operative under me is chosen, trained, loyal—and that's not considering the small army I've built at OTS. If you provoke me any further..."

I let the sentence trail off.

For the first time since I'd entered the room, Marcus studied me without amusement, his gaze assessing.

Then, slowly, his expression softened again. "You misunderstand me, Lucian," he said. "I have no intention of making an enemy of you."

I didn't relax. "Then stop behaving like one."

He spread his hands in a show of mock surrender. "I want cooperation. Sincerely."

"Your sincerity involves bait and emotional blackmail," I said. "Forgive me if I doubt its purity."

Marcus rose from his chair, his broad shoulders and towering presence undiminished by the years lining his face.

He circled the table, boots heavy against stone, until he stood beside me.

“You and I,” he said quietly, “are alike in one regard: we both lost something precious, something that changed us.”

I rose to my feet, any attempt at intimidation dissolving when I towered over him.

“My mate was killed. Your son sinned and was cast out. Do not compare us.”

He smiled, unoffended. “Why not? Loss is a universal language.”

“I don’t speak your dialect.”

“Perhaps,” he conceded. “But you understand leverage.”

I arched a brow, but before I could respond, Marcus stepped back and clapped his hands once.

The doors at the far end of the conference room swung open.

I turned toward it—and the world fell off its axis.

She stood framed by torchlight and shadow, the familiar slope of her shoulders unmistakable even before my mind could catch up.

Her pale hair tumbled loose down her back, a little wild. Her eyes darted around the room, posture hesitant, one foot set half a step behind the other, as though she weren't certain she was allowed to take up space.

My mind rebelled, scrambling for logic, for deception, for any explanation that made sense of this impossible sight.

I'd buried her. I'd mourned her.

I'd built an entire section of myself around the grief that I would never see her again.

And yet—

Her eyes met mine.

Recognition flared in the cerulean depths, and something inside my chest splintered when she smiled.

"Lucian," she whispered.

The sound of my name in her voice nearly brought me to my knees.

I scrambled for my own voice, and when I found it, it didn't sound like mine. "Zara?"