

My Sister 318

Chapter 318 SELF-PRESERVATION

KIERAN'S POV

For the length of a heartbeat, no one moved, shock freezing us in place as Maya crumpled backward, blood blooming dark and obscene against her shoulder and collarbone.

Then the world surged back all at once, and the clearing exploded into chaos.

"Maya!" Ethan was at her side instantly, catching her before she hit the ground.

His hands came away red, slick, and steaming faintly in the cool air.

The wound was bad. Worse than bad.

Sera's claws hadn't just raked flesh; they'd struck high and deep, tearing across the hollow between shoulder and neck, dangerously close to the artery.

The edges of the gash glimmered, not with light exactly, but with a wrongness that made my instincts recoil.

Silver.

Maya gasped, her breath hitching as if the air itself resisted entering her lungs. Ethan swore viciously, pressing his palm over the wound, trying to stem bleeding that didn't behave as it should.

"Help!" he barked.

Gavin appeared out of nowhere, dropping to his knees, hands hovering just above Maya's skin as if he dared not touch her.

His face went grim as he said, "This isn't a normal wound."

"It's burning," Ethan whispered. "I can feel it."

Maya tried to speak. Winced. "She—didn't mean—"

"Don't," Ethan snapped, voice breaking as he cradled her head. "Save your strength."

I was dimly aware of Gavin barking orders, of someone else appearing with a box.

But my focus was already gone.

Because Sera was gone.

She'd attacked her best friend and vanished into the trees like a rabid animal.

What the fuck was I still doing here?

I turned, preparing to charge after her.

"Kieran, wait!"

My father came up behind me. "You need to know what you're up against."

I turned on him sharply. "Explain."

"This is the silver wolf's self-preservation response. When she perceives a lethal threat—real or imagined—her strikes carry a resonance," he said. "A cutting edge that mimics silver itself. Extremely lethal to unguarded wolves."

Ethan's head snapped up. "You're saying there's fucking silver in Maya's wound?"

"Yes." Father's jaw tightened.

"She...didn't—" Maya struggled to choke out.

"Stop fucking talking!" Ethan roared, his voice thick.

Father turned back to me. "Maya's not the only one in danger. This form is costing Sera. It burns through her life force. Fast."

I was already stripping off my jacket.

"Then I need to find her. Fast."

He nodded. "Let's just hope her spiritual power hasn't matured enough to obscure her scent."

I froze. "What?"

Father shook his head. "I don't think there's anything to worry about. If it were, she wouldn't have lost control like that."

That was our only mercy.

"One more thing," Father added. "In cases of feral regression, the strongest tether is attachment."

I frowned. "What?"

"She needs something to remind her of her humanity—of who she is, what she loves."

My jaw clenched as I nodded. "Got it."

"Go," he shoved me urgently. "We'll stabilize Maya. Find her, Kieran."

I didn't answer.

I was already shifting.

The forest opened to me the instant Ashar took over, gold fur slicing through underbrush, paws eating ground with practiced precision.

The first thing I noted with relief was that Sera's scent was everywhere. The second thing I noted with trepidation was her scent itself—raw panic, silver heat, guilt so sharp it burned my lungs.

'She's terrified,' Ashar growled. 'And bleeding from the inside.'

I pushed harder.

This forest was mine. Every fallen log, every ravine, every hollow carved by time and weather—I knew them the way I knew my own breath. And I could find Sera, no problem.

I cut left where a lesser tracker would go right, followed the subtle breaks in foliage, the places she'd stumbled when exhaustion began to take hold.

There.

A tree hollow, old and half-rotted, its roots forming a crude shelter.

She was curled inside it, knees drawn to her chest, silver wolf half-manifested and bristling.

The moment she sensed me, she snarled.

Not warning.

Challenge.

Her stance was wrong—too tight, too desperate. Defensive, but coiled to counterattack at the slightest provocation.

I slowed immediately, lowering my head and adopting a nonthreatening posture.

‘Sera,’ I tried to say, but it came out as a deep huff.

Her lips peeled back, fangs bared, amethyst eyes burning. No recognition. Just instinct.

Without the bond, there was no path to her mind, no thread to pull her back.

My father’s words echoed in my memory.

'In cases of feral regression, the strongest tether is attachment.'

I didn't need to think too hard.

I dipped my head and caught the leather cord dangling under my chin between my teeth.

Daniel's necklace.

He'd gifted it to me just a little while ago—thick leather, clumsily knotted, the charm uneven and unmistakably handmade.

It was long enough to stay with Ashar even when I shifted, a constant weight against my chest no matter which form I wore.

With a sharp twist of my head, I snapped the cord and let it fall gently to the forest floor between us.

The scent of our son bloomed instantly—sun-warm skin, soap, and home.

Then I backed away, slowly, carefully.

Sera's nostrils flared.

Her attention snapped to the necklace.

She crept forward an inch, then froze, body trembling. Her breath hitched as she caught the scent fully.

A sound broke from her—not a snarl this time, but a broken whine.

Her shoulders sagged. The light dusting of silver receded unevenly, flickering like a dying flame.

I surged forward, shifting mid-stride, catching her just as she collapsed.

She hit me hard, all her weight sagging into my arms, human again and frighteningly cold.

I pulled her against my chest, heart pounding as I wrapped her tightly in my arms.

"I've got you," I whispered fiercely. "I've got you."

Her fingers fisted weakly against my chest. "I hurt her," she rasped, tears streaking her face. "I didn't mean to—I couldn't stop—"

"I know," I said, voice rough. "It's okay. You're okay."

She went limp then, consciousness slipping as her body finally surrendered.

I held her there in the hollow, forehead pressed to her hair, listening to her uneven breaths, thanking all the gods that I hadn't been too late.