

## **My Sister 329**

### Chapter 329 OPTION THREE

#### SERAPHINA'S POV

The sky was already bruising toward evening by the time training wrapped at Nightfang the next day.

Sweat clung to my skin, my muscles humming with the pleasant ache of exertion.

It still felt faintly miraculous, this new equilibrium.

Alina was fully present now, settled and steady, her presence no longer overwhelming but strong beneath the surface.

Training had shifted to reflect that.

Christian still oversaw the broader structure, watching closely and correcting when needed, but when it came to my wolf, to the specifics of my form and balance, Kieran had mainly taken over.

He had buried himself in every scrap of research on silver wolves the archive in the basement had to offer and more: old journals, fragmented records, half-mythic accounts.

He was methodical, patient, and endlessly attentive.

As for our new...dynamic. Not much had changed.

Except that everything had changed.

He no longer hovered on the edge of restraint, no longer pulled himself back as though proximity alone might be a transgression.

Instead, he stayed—close enough that I could feel the warmth of him when he corrected my stance, close enough that our breaths occasionally fell into the same rhythm.

And this time, I didn't retreat.

When his hand hovered near my elbow, I leaned into the adjustment instead of tensing away. When he stepped into my space to guide my balance, I let him. When his fingers lingered on my skin, I didn't hide the shiver that ran through me.

There was something profoundly different about choosing closeness instead of being pulled into it. About meeting his gaze without flinching, about allowing the quiet electricity between us to exist without fear of what it meant.

And although the snail's pace we were taking looked boring to the average outsider, to me it felt...exhilarating. Like the slow thrill of being lab partners with your first crush. Which was pretty fitting since Kieran was mine.

When he gently gripped the edge of my jacket as I shrugged it on, my heart tripped in my chest.

"I wish I could go with you," he murmured.

I smiled as I shook my head. "I know, but not tonight." I gestured towards the packhouse. "Taking you to dinner with my OTS teammates when we haven't even told the family about us yet is...a lot."

I know it was weird not to tell people, especially Daniel, about us, but it didn't feel like the right time, not with so many things still unsettled—Celeste's return looming like an approaching storm and Lucian's absence gnawing at the edges of my thoughts.

I wanted to protect this new beginning between Kieran and me. Let it breathe before the world weighed in.

His jaw flexed, but he didn't argue.

I reached out and slipped my hand through his. "It's just dinner with my friends. And you'll have people watching me, anyway, right?"

He nodded and squeezed my hand. "Right."

He didn't let go right away. Neither did I.

For a few heartbeats, we just stood there, hands linked, the evening settling around us, the promise between us unspoken but steady.

Then I stood on my tiptoes and pressed a chaste kiss to his jaw. "I'll see you later."

His answering smile was quiet and certain. "I'll see you later."

And walking away didn't feel like leaving.

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The team dinner had been pinned in the group chat for weeks, long before everything spiraled into chaos, and stepping into OTS after so many days in Nightfang felt like a disorienting trip down memory lane.

The private dining room we'd secured was tucked away from the main hall, smaller, quieter, lit with warm overhead lamps instead of harsh fluorescents.

The smell of food hit me immediately—spiced rice, roasted vegetables, something fried and unapologetically indulgent.

It carried a comforting, home-cooked warmth that made my shoulders ease before I'd even taken a full step inside.

Talia stood near the sideboard, carefully setting down a tray of flatbread, her sleeves pushed up just enough to reveal flour-dusted wrists. She looked up when she noticed me and offered a soft, shy smile.

"I hope it's good," she said. "I...may have made too much."

"You cooked all this?" I asked, genuinely startled.

She nodded, cheeks pinking.

"It smells incredible," I said.

Voices overlapped in easy camaraderie as I moved farther in.

"Sera!"

Judy spotted me first, waving a chopstick like a weapon. “About time. We were debating whether to send out a search party.”

Roxy narrowed her eyes. “Yet, here you are, obviously not hurt and glowing.”

I blinked, sliding into the seat next to her. “Glowing?”

Judy leaned back in her chair, eyes sharp and delighted. “Oh yeah.” She cocked her head. “Either you swallowed fireflies or your life has taken an...exciting turn.”

Heat crept up my neck. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Uh-huh,” she said. “There are only three things that cause a glow like yours.” She lifted her index finger. “A luxurious spa treatment,”—she held up the second finger—“a luxurious shopping spree”—she lifted the third, a mischievous smirk on her lips—“or an exciting new romance with some really good fucking.”

Finn choked on his drink.

I smacked Judy’s arm. “Judy! What the hell?”

Roxy grinned wickedly. “Ooh, I like option three.” She leaned in, wiggling her brows. “Are we talking secret rendezvous? Because both you and Lucian have been ghosts lately. That feels...coordinated.”

My smile faded, something colder settling into place. “No,” I said evenly. “I’m not with Lucian.”

The words landed heavier than I intended. Definitive. Final.

The table fell silent, and I felt the energy fluctuate.

Roxy’s grin faltered. “Oh. Okay. Sorry, I didn’t—”

“It’s fine,” I said, then hesitated. “Actually...does anyone know where he’s been?”

They exchanged looks—quick, loaded glances that didn’t go unnoticed.

Finn rubbed the back of his neck. “Not really. He hasn’t been around OTS lately.”

My chest tightened. “At all?”

He shrugged. “Honestly, this place has been...weird over the last couple of days.”

I frowned. "What do you mean?"

"The data department's been swamped."

Judy propped her elbow on the table and rested her chin in her palm. "Swamped how?"

Finn leaned forward, lowering his voice instinctively. "This morning, they pulled together a group of undercover operatives. Short notice. High clearance."

Roxy arched a brow. "And?"

"And I noticed a lot of them were from...well-established packs," Finn finished carefully.

Roxy straightened. "Are you implying something?"

"I'm not implying anything," he said with a shrug. "I just noticed a pattern."

"OTS doesn't discriminate by class or background," Roxy shot back. "You know that."

"I do," Finn replied, bristling slightly. "That's why it stood out."

I raised a hand, cutting through the rising tension. "Hey."

They all looked at me.

"No one's accusing OTS of anything," I said calmly. "Finn's attention to detail comes from care, not suspicion."

Finn exhaled gratefully. "You get it."

"This place took us in," I continued. "Trained us. Protected us. Of course, we want it to stay strong." I met Roxy's gaze. "LST put OTS on a bigger map. That comes with attention. Some of it...ambitious. We know about that firsthand."

The word settled uneasily. Each of us had had our fair share of propositions after the LST.

"Which is why now what matters the most is unity," I said. "We have to stand together, no matter what."

Judy studied me for a long moment, then tilted her head. "That sounded like a warning."

It did sound like a warning. Even as I said the words, uncertainty and dread pooled in my gut. But I couldn't take them back; I felt the gravity of them settle heavy.

It was like the ambush with Iris' team all over again. I couldn't see the danger clearly, but I knew in my bones that there was something to be braced for, and I was way past questioning my intuition.

"More like...an admonition," I said carefully.

"And you?" she pressed gently. "What's going on with you, Sera?"

I looked around the table—at the faces that had watched my back in combat, who'd trusted me in the face of danger, who'd become somewhat family to me.

"I'm dealing with some things," I admitted. "Complicated things. I can't share details yet. But I will, when the timing's right."

Roxy nodded slowly. "Okay, enigma, we see you."

My lips pulled into a small smile even as heavier words fell from my lips. "I just...I need you all to be careful in the days to come. Watch each other's backs; don't take unnecessary risks."

Judy sighed. "And we're back to ominous."

Talia shuffled nervously. "You'll take your own advice, right? You'll let us watch your back, too."

A faint smile tugged at my lips. "I'll do my best to keep my mess from becoming yours," I said. "And if I need help, I promise I'll ask."

Judy studied me for a while, and whatever she saw in my face must have satisfied her because she raised her glass. "To asking for help before everything explodes."

Laughter rippled around the table, easing the tension a bit.

"To OTS," Roxy added.

"To unity," Finn said.

Glasses clinked. The warmth returned, tentative but real.

Later, as the night thinned and we said goodbye, I stepped outside into the cool air armed with containers of leftovers Talia had packed for everyone.

The compound was quieter now, lights dimmed, shadows stretching long across the pavement.

I'd just pulled my jacket tighter around myself when a familiar presence brushed against my senses.

"Sera."

I turned.

The person stood a few feet away, half-shadowed beneath a lamppost. But I didn't need light to know who it was.

Lucian had returned.