

My Sister 354

Chapter 354 PAYDAY

SERAPHINA'S POV

For a while, I just stared at Corin.

Sea-green and blue eyes. Wind-tousled hair. The scent of sea salt and citrus. That easy smile, never strained, even with a rogue pinned under his boot.

And then laughter burst from me—sharp, breathless, edged with adrenaline and disbelief.

“Corin?” I breathed. “What are you doing here?”

The rogue groaned, trying to push up again. Corin shifted his weight, and the man went still with a strangled sound.

Corin flashed a grin. "Interrupting. You seemed fine, but figured I'd step in."

I laughed again. “No, smartass. I mean, here in LA.”

“Ah.” He shrugged again. “I’m late, actually. For the Hunting Festival.”

“Wha—”

Behind us, Nightfang guards reached the crest of the hill, weapons trained on the downed rogue. One of them aimed his silver-tipped spear at Corin.

“Lady—”

“He’s not a threat,” I said without hesitation. “He’s my friend.”

Corin’s gaze flicked to me, and something warmer than amusement passed through his expression.

“Shit, I don’t think I’m dressed well enough to receive such a high honor.”

I rolled my eyes good-naturedly. “I’m nothing if not altruistic.”

Corin stepped off, and a guard hauled the rogue up to bind his wrists.

I felt it then—a subtle, curious brush along my barriers.

“Well,” Corin murmured, “that’s new.”

I smiled faintly. “Don’t pry.”

He chuckled, pride flickering in his eyes. “Apparently, I can’t. You’ve grown a lot stronger.”

I met his gaze steadily, sensing a reinforcement in his psychic energy. “So have you.”

His eyes brightened. “Told you I was close to Dominator status.”

My eyes widened, and a delighted gasp fell from me. “Corin, that’s amazing! Congratulations!”

Before he could respond, the sound of engines reached us from below.

Seconds later, Kieran crested the lower ridge, Ethan not far behind him.

Kieran didn’t slow as he took in the scene—bound rogues, armed guards...me standing close to another male.

He closed the distance in long, controlled strides that were one breath away from a charge.

Ethan slowed half a step behind Kieran, gaze sweeping over me first—efficient, assessing, older-brother instinct layered beneath Alpha composure.

“Sera,” Ethan called, voice controlled but edged. “Are you okay?”

Before I could answer, Kieran reached me. His hand wrapped around my waist and yanked me back, my spine hitting his chest.

Mine.

The word didn’t need to be spoken; the fierce intent in his hold said everything.

“You’re bleeding,” he said, voice low and dangerous.

“Surface,” I replied calmly.

Ethan stepped closer now, ignoring the territorial display entirely. His eyes tracked the bruise forming along my shoulder, then dipped briefly to the faint tear in my sleeve.

“Let me see,” he said.

“I’m fine,” I assured them both, lifting my chin slightly.

Kieran’s hand slid to my shoulder, fingers gingerly brushing the swelling skin. His jaw flexed.

“Are you sure?” he pressed.

‘I wasn’t allowed to fight,” Alina groused, ‘the least I can do is heal you in time.’

I bit back a snort and nodded. “I’m sure.”

Kieran studied me for one more tense moment before he turned. His gaze lifted to Corin, and the temperature dropped several degrees.

Corin, to his credit, didn’t cower under Kieran’s glower.

If anything, his smile widened.

“Alpha Blackthorne, Alpha Lockwood,” he said smoothly. “It’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m—”

“Corin Vale of Seabreeze,” Kieran said flatly, his grip tightening at my waist.

I blinked, wondering how the hell Kieran knew Corin.

“Um...Corin assisted,” I said evenly. “He caught the leader.”

“Well then, thank the goddess for Corin’s timing,” Kieran replied, not taking his eyes off him.

Corin shrugged. “I’ve been told it’s impeccable.”

“And what brings you to Los Angeles?” Ethan asked.

“Official business,” Corin answered. “I’m representing Seabreeze at the Hunting Festival. Delayed by some matters along the coast.”

His gaze shifted to me. “Maris and Brett will arrive later.”

My eyes lit up at the news. I turned to Kieran and explained, “That’s his twin sister and her mate. They were amazing hosts to me when I was at Seabreeze.”

Kieran’s hand slid from my waist to lace with my fingers.

“You should have officially announced yourself,” he said, voice icy.

“I prefer surprises,” Corin replied with another shrug.

“That much is obvious.”

I exhaled and squeezed Kieran’s hand once.

“He helped,” I repeated.

Kieran’s gaze dropped to me, softening a fraction.

“That’s the only reason his head is still on his shoulders,” he said, voice low enough that only I heard it.

I wasn’t sure what was more ridiculous—Kieran’s jealousy or that I liked it.

KIERAN'S POV

I didn't like Corin Vale of fucking Seabreeze.

I didn't like the way Sera's face had lit up when she saw him.

I didn't like the familiarity in their tone. The ease in their rapport. The shared history I wasn't part of.

And I especially didn't like the memory that resurfaced of how Sera had looked in that video Selene posted—barefoot on sand, wind and sunlight in her hair, laughing at something Corin had said, looking beautiful and free, as if she didn't have a care in the world.

That version of her had not been mine.

I tried to shove aside the irrational jealousy and focus as rogues were secured in vehicles, wrists bound with silver-thread restraints.

Frostbane was closest, so we went there for the interrogation.

The rogues were dragged into one of the lower holding chambers, wrists chained now to iron rings embedded in stone.

We wasted no time.

“Who sent you?” I asked, standing before their leader.

None of them spoke a word.

The leader stared at the wall behind me as though I wasn't there.

I grabbed his jaw, forcing his face to mine. Blood crusted his nostrils, and the knowledge that it was Sera who did that sent a thrill of pride through me.

“Who?”

He sneered. “I don't know.”

I drove my fist into his jaw, the impact snapping his head sideways with a sharp crack.

He spat blood onto the floor and sputtered, “The bitch packs a better punch.”

One of the other rogues laughed—then doubled over with a grunt when Ethan drove a fist into his ribs.

“I’d advise you to cooperate,” Ethan said coldly. “Death would be merciful compared to what we can do.”

Still nothing from any of them.

This was the silence borne out of discipline. Training.

Training meant hierarchy.

Hierarchy meant someone above them mattered more than their lives.

“Jack Draven,” I said suddenly.

The leader’s eye twitched. Panic—very brief—flickered there.

A satisfied smirk pulled at my lips.

“You realize,” I pushed, letting my voice drop into something colder, sharper, “that he can’t protect you.”

Silence.

I paced in front of them, hands clasped behind my back.

“Jack Draven was banished in front of half the western territories.” I tilted my head slightly. “He holds no land. No title. No pack. He is as powerless as you are.”

The leader’s jaw tightened.

I stopped in front of him.

“You’re risking your lives for an heir who couldn’t even keep his birthright.”

Still nothing.

But their shoulders had stiffened. I caught their gazes darting between each other.

A faint, humorless smile touched my mouth. "Did he tell you I oversaw his downfall? Did he tell you I recently held him at my mercy in a dungeon not so different from this one?"

A muscle ticked in the leader's jaw.

I stepped closer.

"Jack couldn't even protect himself," I said softly. "You think he'll come charging to save you?"

The leader's lips curled faintly, but there was a strain in him now.

"You're gambling on a powerless heir," I finished.

That did it.

One of the younger rogues snapped his head up.

"He's not powerless," he spat.

The leader shot him a warning look, but it was too late.

The young one's chest was heaving, anger breaking through discipline.

"He'll be reinstated," he continued, voice shaking with conviction. "You think banishment means anything? You think titles can't be restored?"

Ethan shifted slightly beside me.

I didn't move.

Gunnar's words echoed in my head. 'We were told he was being reintegrated under supervision.'

The rogue's eyes burned. "You don't know half of what's happening."

"Enlighten me."

A bitter laugh escaped him. "You're not the only Alpha with influence."

I felt the shape of it settle into place like a blade sliding into its sheath.

Jack alone was reckless. Unstable. Predictable in his grudge.

Jack could not rally organized rogue units operating with discipline.

But an Alpha could. One who also held a grudge against me for having his son banished.

My father's words from when I first captured Jack replayed in my mind.

'Do you have any idea what kind of fire you've stoked? Marcus may lead a diminished pack, but a hotheaded Alpha with nothing left to lose is more dangerous than one with full strength. And if he throws his lot in with the rogues—especially since his heir is one of them—we will all pay for your recklessness.'

Apparently, it was payday.