

## **My Sister 356**

Chapter 356 LUMINOUS

SERAPHINA'S POV

Corin's words fractured the room.

Kieran went very still beside me. The kind of stillness that came before a blade was drawn.

"To protect her," he echoed, each word sharp.

Corin didn't waver. "Yes."

"You think she needs you?" Kieran asked, voice trembling.

Corin's expression was soft when he looked at me, then hardened to steel when he looked back at Kieran. "I think she needs more than one layer of defense."

I held back an exasperated sigh. This was not how I had imagined this conversation unfolding.

If Corin had remained as a representative, he could have been managed as an ally.

But by positioning himself as a protector, he implied we were vulnerable. That Kieran wasn't enough.

And that struck at something primal inside him.

Kieran took a menacing step forward.

"You presume a great deal for someone who just admitted that I shouldn't trust him."

"And you presume control over forces that don't answer to you," Corin replied evenly.

The temperature dropped another degree.

I knew that, beneath Kieran's jealousy, beneath the possessiveness, beneath the territorial instinct, the real issue was suspicion.

Corin's power was undeniable.

His psychic presence was controlled, layered, disciplined. And it wasn't just raw talent; it was honed mastery.

If anyone could protect me from a powerful, elusive psychic, it would be him.

And though I knew and trusted him, Kieran didn't, and thus had no reason to.

How could he prove Corin wasn't an infiltrator?

Or worse—an instigator?

“You said psychics are territorial,” Kieran continued, voice hardening. “Suspicious of volatility. What stops you from being one of them? Stirring paranoia. Feeding instability.”

Corin's jaw tightened. “You think I would endanger her to make a point?”

“I think I don't know you,” Kieran shot back. “And I don't make strategic decisions based on strangers' opinions.”

A shadow crossed Corin's gaze.

And for the first time since I knew him, his usual warmth drained away. Replaced by something cold. Something venomous.

"It's funny that you keep calling me a stranger," he muttered, "when our histories are so tightly entangled."

The words struck like flint.

Kieran stiffened.

The room went silent in a different way now.

Corin continued, voice losing its polish, "You're questioning my motives. Fair. But let's not pretend your bloodline doesn't carry dubiousness in its own history."

My pulse spiked.

Somehow, a switch had been flipped, and this was no longer jealousy or suspicion or a clash of opinions.

"What history?" I asked carefully.

Corin's gaze flicked to me, then back to Kieran. "Ask him," he said, "about the coastal war a hundred years ago. Ask him how his family led the charge that wiped out mine."

The tension that followed Corin's words was so dense that a knife would break trying to cut through it.

Kieran was silent, every muscle locked.

I reached out my senses—searching. An impression of history flickered: broken alliance, retaliation, blood-soaked waters.

Finally, Kieran spoke.

"You're implying my ancestors slaughtered yours without cause," he said through clenched teeth. "That isn't the history I learned."

Corin's expression remained controlled, but there was nothing easy about it now. "Yes. Because the victors always record the infallible truth."

The sarcasm dripping from his words made Kieran growl.

"They broke the pact first," he replied. "They withdrew protection from agreed trade routes and left Nightfang exposed."

“That’s what you were told,” Corin countered. “We were told your forces pulled back first. That coastal convoys were abandoned and that the pact had already been violated.”

“That’s convenient.”

“So is your version.”

The tension thickened, old grievances rising from a century neither of them had lived but both had inherited. Suddenly, Kieran’s unprovoked hostility made a lot more sense.

Kieran took another step toward Corin. “My family did not attack allies without provocation.”

“And mine did not abandon theirs without reason,” Corin shot back.

Ethan and I exchanged a glance, equal parts confused and uneasy. I could feel the room inching toward a precipice that had nothing to do with the initial matter at hand.

“Stop.” My voice was soft, but it carried enough weight that both of their attentions turned to me.

“Whatever happened in the past is in the past,” I said. “We’re not here to dissect a hundred-year-old war that neither of you fought in. What matters now is verifying your story, Corin, and there’s a simple way to settle this.”

“How?” Kieran gritted out.

“We call Alois.”

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Kieran and I retreated to one of Frostbane’s upper chambers—stone walls, narrow windows overlooking the northern tree line, the late afternoon sun slanting pale gold through glass thick enough to muffle the world.

I reinforced my barrier first. It sealed around the room, muffling psychic resonance, dampening stray currents.

And then we called Alois.

The screen flickered as the connection was established.

Alois appeared in the steady lamplight of his office at the New Moon Institute. The familiar stone archways rose behind him, lined with orderly shelves of leather-bound archives.

The image pixelated briefly—poor signal through Frostbane’s thick stone walls—before stabilizing.

“Kieran, Sera,” he greeted calmly. “I assume this isn’t social.”

“No,” I agreed. “It isn’t.”

Kieran inclined his head. “We need confirmation.”

Alois nodded as if he’d been expecting that. “About Corin.”

I did not bother asking how he knew.

“Yes,” I said. “He’s said...a lot since he arrived, and—”

“He has not lied.”

Kieran did not relax. “Define ‘not lied.’”

Alois’s mouth twitched. “He did not embellish. He did not exaggerate. The stir within the psychic circles is real.”

Dread pooled in my stomach.

“How bad is it?” I asked.

“Worse than gossip. All but decree.” Alois folded his hands. “You rose quickly, Seraphina. Too quickly for comfort. Untrained, unaffiliated, unanchored.”

“Uncontrollable,” Kieran muttered.

“Yes,” Alois agreed calmly. “They chafe against instability.”

Heat flickered in my chest.

“I am not unstable,” I said quietly.

“I know that,” Alois replied. “But fear does not require accuracy to spread. Only perception.”

“And Corin?” Kieran pressed. “You really sent him?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Selene reached out to me months ago,” Alois said. “When you were still a guest in her pack.”

My pulse skipped. “She anticipated the hostility?”

“Selene’s motivations are more than that,” he said. “She understood something you were yet to discover.”

“And that is?” Kieran asked, his tone tight.

Alois looked directly at me.

“You are anchored to the moon.”

The room was silent as the words landed, settling inside me, solidifying the hunch I’d been nursing.

The moon was my anchor.

"I figured," I said.

"Maybe," he replied gently. "But you don't understand the gravity."

The screen flickered slightly as he continued.

"The moon is not merely symbolic for wolves. It governs them. Their cycles. Their strength. Their transformations. And for the merfolk, it governs the tides. Migration patterns. Psychic currents tied to oceanic flow."

My breath caught. Corin's anchor was the ocean.

"You sit at the intersection of both," Alois finished.

"What does this have to do with Corin and Selene?" Kieran asked.

"Because of the war," Alois answered.

Kieran's sharp intake of breath was almost deafening.

"I'll spare the details, because that's not important right now," Alois continued. "But know that, among his kin, Corin inherited a stronger merfolk strain. That makes him more sensitive to lunar influence. He inherited not only ability but memory. The hatred lingers. Even if he doesn't consciously nurture it."

"And you thought placing him near me was wise," Kieran said coldly.

"I thought placing him near Sera was wise," Alois corrected.

"What do you mean?"

"Selene believes that the fracture could not heal without a living bridge."

I swallowed, a tangle of responsibility and apprehension catching in my throat.

"You believe a century-old hatred can be resolved because of me?" I whispered.

Alois's eyes softened. "Because of your anchor, you draw wolves naturally, but you also draw the sea-bound. Not by command. By resonance."

“But—”

“None of that is paramount right now,” Alois cut in. “Yes, Corin is here for himself, but he is primarily here for you.”

Kieran leaned in. “That’s my bone of contention. How can I trust that his intentions are pure?”

“Because he cannot harm Sera,” Alois answered. “Not merely out of ethics. It would backfire. Psychic backlash tied to lunar anchoring would destabilize him profoundly.”

“You’re certain?” Kieran pressed.

“I’m sure by now you’re aware Corin broke through Dominator rank?”

I nodded.

“So you know that before a psychic enemy, he would be indispensable.”

Silence stretched. I could feel Kieran’s grudging acceptance of that fact.

Alois nodded once. "Now, I have to go."

"Wait!" I called out. "How is the Moonlight Alley? Ava?"

Alois smiled, his gaze softening. "Little Ava is fine. And thank you, Kieran. The help you sent has been invaluable."

Kieran inclined his head. "Anytime."

"Now I really must go," Alois said. "I have an alliance treaty to review."

Kieran smiled. "I await your answer with bated breath."

"And Seraphina," Alois added.

"Yes?"

"You are not volatile. You are luminous."

The call ended.

Kieran turned toward me slowly.

“Luminous,” he repeated, something like awe in his voice.

I exhaled shakily, tension slipping out only to be replaced by self-doubt.

“I don’t feel luminous.”

“You don’t have to,” he said. “And you don’t have to bear any burden you don’t want. You just have to survive.”

He pulled me into his arms, and I buried my head in the crook of his neck.

For a moment, the weight of ancient wars and psychic hierarchies and anchors faded into the simple steadiness of his heartbeat against mine.