

My Sister 357

Chapter 357 TEMPORARY TRUCE

KIERAN'S POV

When we returned to the strategy room, I felt...recalibrated.

Not a hundred percent trusting, but a lot less likely to maul Corin Vale.

He stood near the long oak table, hands resting lightly against its edge. He looked up when we entered.

He didn't ask what Alois had said. He simply waited.

I studied him carefully now—not as a rival. Not purely as an outsider.

As an asset.

"As far as the psychic network goes," I began, "you told the truth."

"Is it too childish to say 'duh'?" he drawled.

I bit back a growl.

“You are not here to destabilize Nightfang or hurt Sera,” I continued.

“No.”

“And you will not act without consulting me. Without receiving my express permission.”

His jaw tightened faintly, but he nodded.

“Agreed.”

I stepped closer—not as aggressively as before, though.

“Understand this,” I warned, my voice lowering. “If you endanger her in any way—”

“I won’t,” he interrupted. “You know I can’t.”

His gaze shifted to Sera, and the fierceness that flickered in his mismatched eyes wasn't hunger or desire—which is the only reason I didn't rip his eyes out. "I'll protect her with my life if it comes down to it."

Ashar bristled at the thought of another male willing to die for our mate, but thanks to Alois, I knew now that it was not something Corin could help.

And, honestly, those were the first words he'd spoken since entering my territory that I believed.

Ethan cleared his throat.

"If we're finished measuring claws," he said dryly, "we should talk logistics."

I exhaled slowly and stepped back.

"You'll stay at Frostbane," Ethan told Corin. "I don't trust your truce for shit, and I will not tolerate any violence around my nephew."

I shot him a look.

He shrugged. "Look me in the eyes and tell me I'm wrong."

Corin's mouth twitched faintly. "Frostbane is acceptable. I don't need physical proximity to look out for Sera."

"Good." Ethan nodded. "You'll have a guest suite on the upper level. Guard rotation will be standard. Not because we distrust you," he added, though his tone suggested otherwise, "but because everyone is under scrutiny."

"That's fair," Corin replied.

I extended my hand.

The gesture felt archaic.

But...necessary.

Corin regarded it briefly before he took it, an agreement passing between us.

Temporary truce based on one objective: Protect Sera.

We released.

Sera exhaled beside me as if she'd been holding her breath.

"It's been a long day," Ethan said. "Kieran, you need to get ready for this evening's events, and I need to see to my new...guests. I say we reconvene another time."

There was no argument, and almost simultaneously, we all moved toward the door.

We stepped into the hallway—and nearly collided with Celeste.

SERAPHINA'S POV

I'd been given evidence that could absolve me of my "crimes" eleven years ago. I'd been attacked yet again by rogues, I found out that the target on my back was bigger than I thought, and I'd finally confirmed my anchor.

None of that hit me as hard as the sight of my sister.

She stood only a few feet away in the corridor, one hand braced against the archway as though she'd needed it for balance.

The torches along the walls cast uneven light over her face, and for someone who'd spent the last couple of months on a beach, she looked positively ghostly.

She seemed clearer than last time.

Less frantic. Less wild.

But still not whole.

Her gaze moved first to Corin.

Then to Ethan

Then to Kieran.

Then to me.

Without thinking, I shifted closer to Kieran.

His arm slid around my waist instantly, anchoring me to his side.

She zeroed in on that point of contact, and something ugly flickered in her eyes.

Her lips curved.

“My, my, Sera,” she purred, voice smoother than I expected, “starting a collection now, are we? Is the term ‘slut’ still appropriate if your clientele is high-class?”

A surge of emotion—guilt, anger, resentment—hit me so abruptly that I nearly staggered. It was disorienting, the way old wounds reopened without warning.

Kieran’s grip on me tightened, and he opened his mouth to say something, but Ethan stepped forward, wrapping a hand around Celeste’s arm.

“That’s enough,” he snapped.

Celeste blinked up at him, wide-eyed. “What? I’m simply commenting.”

“The only comment I want from you is Mother’s whereabouts and the truth of what happened in that hotel room,” he growled. “Unless that’s what you’re saying, I don’t want to hear another word from you. Go to your room.”

Her eyes narrowed. “You can’t order me around.”

“Now.” His voice dropped, Alpha aura crackling.

She glared at him for a tense second. Then she...smiled—a crooked, sinister-looking thing that made my stomach churn.

“Yes, Alpha,” she spat.

She looked at me one last time, and in her eyes, I saw something that unsettled me more than jealousy or anger.

Loss. Pain.

Then she turned sharply and stormed down the corridor, skirts snapping behind her like a banner in retreat.

The echo of a door slamming rang through the stone hall.

Ethan pinched the bridge of his nose.

"I swear to the gods," he muttered under his breath.

"Unstable," I mumbled. "Got it."

"It's worse than that," Ethan sighed.

"How?"

He exchanged a glance with Kieran, and I tipped my head back to look at him.

"What aren't you telling me?" I asked.

Kieran's chest rose and fell against me with a sigh. "Celeste lost her wolf."

The words struck like a lightning bolt to the heart. If Kieran hadn't been holding me, I might have crumpled to the floor.

"What?" I gasped.

Ethan's jaw tightened. "She won't divulge the details, but Kharis is gone."

My mind stuttered.

"You mean suppressed?" I asked. "Like Alina was?"

He shrugged. "I have no clue. And she's being so fucking difficult."

I sagged against Kieran. It was all too much—one thing layered over another, nothing resolved.

"We're investigating," Ethan added quickly. "It could be similar to your case. It might not be permanent."

But his eyes betrayed doubt.

"And what about Mother?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I can feel that she's alive and unharmed, but she's too far away to sense anything else. And Celeste has been mute on the matter. If she isn't throwing a bitch fit, she's staring at the wall for hours."

I exhaled. "Gods."

"I'll keep an eye on her," he promised. "You don't need to worry about that."

Don't worry.

How could I not?

Celeste might hate me.

She might have spent years trying to undermine me.

But she was still—

'My sister,' Alina whispered.

An ache opened in my chest.

Wolves understood each other in ways humans didn't.

Their bonds were purer. Simpler.

Maybe Kharis had been different than Celeste.

Maybe if she'd met Alina...

"You're not responsible," Kieran said firmly, cutting through my churning thoughts on the drive home.

"I can't believe I didn't sense it sooner," I whispered, leaning against the window. "She lost her wolf. And I didn't even know."

"You owe Celeste nothing."

Technically, the words were true.

But they didn't sit right.

"I know how it feels," I said. "That emptiness, the disconnection from yourself. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy, let alone my blood. Regardless of everything."

Kieran glanced at me then, something conflicted in his expression.

“She chose cruelty,” he said. “She constantly chooses cruelty.”

“I know,” I admitted softly, “but I hoped that maybe Kharis would be different. That maybe if our wolves met, things between us could be different, too.”

Kieran reached across the console and threaded his fingers through mine.

“Alina came back to you,” he murmured. “Don’t give up hope.”

I nodded, even though hope was the last thing I felt. “Yeah, you’re right.”

Kieran wasn’t subtle with his topic change as we pulled into my driveway.

“I’m bringing you here to pack. You’re coming back to Nightfang,” he declared, no room for argument in his tone.

I arched a brow. “Am I now?”

“Screw all the plans. If Marcus wants you, he’s going to have to break down my front door to get to you.”

I didn’t even have to consider anything before I reached out and interlaced our fingers. “Wanna help me pack?”

Relief flickered across his face as he squeezed my hand.

Our hands were still joined when we walked the short path to my door—and froze.

Because standing on my porch, hands clasped loosely behind his back, posture relaxed, was Lucian.