

My Sister 360

Chapter 360 FEAST WITH NO FOOD

KIERAN'S POV

The Hunting Festival without Sera was like a feast with no food.

Everything was technically perfect—the banners strung high across the courtyard, the scent of roasted game drifting from the long tables, the rhythmic beat of drums marking the start of the evening's competitions—but something essential was missing.

Her.

I stood beneath the carved archway of Nightfang's main grounds, mechanically accepting greetings, clasping hands as guests approached, and nodding at praise that barely registered.

"Alpha Blackwood, the hunting grounds this year are remarkably well organized."

"Nightfang always sets the standard," another chimed in.

Another Alpha clapped me on the shoulder. "Strong turnout this year. It's good to see stability."

I smiled when required. I spoke when expected. I even laughed once or twice.

But Ashar was restless beneath my skin, his focus far from the festival grounds.

He was oriented northward—toward the packhouse. Toward the porch where Daniel had nearly knocked Sera off her feet earlier. Toward the dining table, where our son wanted to celebrate our reunion.

Home.

It had been a long time since I'd associated that word with something warm. Something beautiful.

Now it was tangible. Real.

And infuriatingly far away.

Another chip on my shoulder was Vidar's noticeable absence.

The Shadow Claw representative had departed in suspicious haste at dawn, citing "urgent matters."

My sentinels had picked up his trail before he crossed the outer perimeter and were now shadowing him.

If he was moving to consolidate anything after yesterday's failed scandal, I intended to know about it.

Still, his early departure left a sour aftertaste.

Men like Vidar only retreated to recalculate.

"Alpha Blackthorne."

I turned at the smooth, measured voice.

Astrid Volker stood before me, radiating polished control and elegance. Beneath the festival lantern light, her rings glimmered.

"President Volker."

The image of her dance with Sera flashed through my mind, and the only thing I could manage by way of a smile was a grimace.

If Astrid noticed, she didn't comment.

"We finalized the shipping agreement with your Beta earlier," she said. "The revised tariffs will reflect in the next quarter."

I inclined my head. "Efficient as always."

"I try not to waste time," she replied. "I see what I want; I go for it."

There was something pointed in the phrasing.

"And," she added smoothly, lowering her voice just enough to escape nearby ears, "I wanted to say congratulations."

"For?" I asked, though the smugness on her face told me everything.

Her lips curved. "I find that I prefer assets where the foundations are stable and united. Personal and political."

I met her gaze evenly.

“If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you’re rooting for us, I said dryly.”

“Alpha,” she said, almost amused, “I don’t root. I invest.”

A pause.

Then, softer—just enough to be genuine: “But yes. Feel free to call me a fan.”

Before I could respond, she stepped back, bowed slightly, and was already pivoting to greet another delegation.

I stifled a groan. All that exchange did was make me miss Sera even more.

My eyes swept the courtyard, looking for something to distract me.

And landed on Corin.

He stood near the fountain, Seabreeze colors subtle but unmistakable in the gold and blue threads woven into the trim of his dark jacket. Lantern light caught in his sandy-brown hair, turning it almost gold at the edges.

Women hovered near him like moths to a flame.

He acknowledged them with polite detachment, nothing more. A slight incline of his head. A courteous half-smile that didn't reach his eyes.

One of Iron Hollow's young members laughed too brightly at something he hadn't actually said. Corin offered a polite nod and stepped aside, disengaging with surgical precision.

A second attempt came from a minor pack's heiress—this one bolder, hand lingering too long on his sleeve.

His gaze dropped to her hand, cool, impersonal. She withdrew first.

I should have found the spectacle amusing.

Instead, irritation flared.

It wasn't jealousy. I didn't care for any female attention other than Sera's.

It was the simple, grinding awareness that he was here—close. Within Nightfang's walls. Within Sera's orbit.

Ethan had been right to host Corin at Frostbane.

Truce or not, I still didn't trust him.

I'd sent investigators to look into Seabreeze. They had instructions to leave no stone unturned: their history, economy, politics. If there was even the tiniest crack, I wanted to know.

If Corin was indispensable against what was coming, fine.

But I would not be blindsided.

The drums signaled the start of the final archery demonstration, and applause rippled outward.

I forced myself to focus.

By the time the moon had climbed to its peak and the last ceremonial toast had been delivered, my patience was threadbare.

As soon as the closing formalities concluded, I stepped down from the dais without lingering.

“Alpha, one more question about—”

“Tomorrow,” I cut in smoothly. “My family is waiting.”

I didn’t look back.

When the doors of the packhouse opened, warmth greeted me—firelight, polished wood, the faint scent of lavender lingering.

“Where are Daniel and Sera?” I asked the nearest servant.

“Daniel is asleep, Alpha. And Lady Sera has retired to her guest suite.”

Guest suite.

The word grated.

I nodded and headed upstairs to the Alpha wing.

I stopped at Daniel's room first, gently cracking the door open.

Inside, he was sprawled diagonally across the bed, blanket half-kicked off, one arm thrown dramatically over his head.

I stepped in quietly and adjusted the blanket.

He didn't stir.

For a moment, I just stood there.

Earlier, when Sera had said we were together, his expression had shifted like sunrise breaking over a storm.

I didn't think I'd ever seen joy that bright.

He'd held his emotions in check so well, I hadn't realized how much our separation had affected him or how much he'd wished we'd get back together.

The thought tightened something in my chest.

I'd spent too long disappointing the people I loved. Never again.

I left him sleeping and headed down the hall.

The guest suite door was closed when I reached it, a thin line of light visible beneath the frame. I knocked out of habit and pushed it open without waiting for an answer.

"Fun fact," I began, stepping inside and letting the door swing shut behind me, "the master bedroom is actually a lot more comfor—"

The rest of the line dissolved on my tongue.

The room was dim, lit only by the soft amber of the bedside lamp and the colder, bluish glow of the laptop in front of Sera.

She was sitting upright against the headboard, knees drawn slightly inward, the sheets tangled around her waist as though she'd been there for hours without realizing it.

The glow from the screen cast faint light across the wall, but from where I stood, I couldn't see what was playing.

She looked up at the intrusion.

And everything in me went still.

Her eyes were swollen and glassy, and tears tracked openly down her cheeks.

For half a second, I didn't understand what I was seeing. My mind refused to reconcile the image of her—my composed, steady, unshakeable Sera—with this level of raw devastation.

Then I moved.

“Sera.”

She inhaled sharply at the sound of her name, and before I could reach the edge of the bed, she had already thrown the covers aside. Her bare feet hit the floor, and she crossed the space between us in three unsteady steps before colliding with me.

I caught her automatically, one arm bracing her back, the other coming up to cradle the back of her head.

Her arms wrapped around my torso so tightly it was almost painful, her fingers fisting into the back of my shirt as though the grip was the only thing keeping her from falling off a cliff.

Her face pressed into my chest as sobs ripped out of her.

“What happened?” My voice came out hoarse and trembling.

She shook her head against me, breath shuddering.

“I never imagined,” she choked, the words breaking apart between sobs, “I never imagined it would be him.”