

My Sister 376

Chapter 376 ANOTHER LINK

SERAPHINA'S POV

The moment we arrived at Frostbane, a jolt of dread clamped around my chest; the tension in the air was unmistakable.

Guards lined the corridor leading toward the strategy room, their posture rigid and alert as if the entire pack had been placed on edge.

Frostbane was never a relaxed territory, but today the atmosphere felt heavier, charged with the kind of restrained urgency that usually preceded battle.

Kieran's hand stayed at the small of my back as we walked down the hallway together. The touch was steady, grounding, though I could feel the restrained tension in him just as clearly as I felt the restless hum of power beneath my own skin.

Corin followed a few steps behind us, silent and observant.

When we stepped into the strategy room, Ethan was already there.

He stood beside the long wooden table in the center of the room, one hand braced against its edge while the other held a tablet he wasn't looking at.

His shoulders were tight, his posture composed, as if he were forcing control over something far more volatile beneath the surface.

The moment he saw me, his gaze softened slightly.

“Sera.”

I crossed the room toward him without hesitation.

“What happened?”

Kieran moved to stand beside me while Corin took a place near the window, folding his arms loosely as he watched Ethan with quiet interest.

Ethan exhaled slowly before answering. “I should have told you about this sooner.”

My brow furrowed. “Told me what?”

He ran a hand across his face before answering.

“The moment Celeste made her dramatic return, something about the situation in the Maldives didn’t sit right with me.”

“What do you mean?”

Ethan gestured with the tablet in his hand. “The storm.”

My stomach turned with the memory of that tense, brittle phone call with Mother, her voice laced with fear I tried not to acknowledge at the time.

“You think it was more than a storm?” I asked.

He nodded. “The truth was that the feeling had struck me almost immediately. Too many things about the situation had been off. The timing. The sudden loss of communication. The fact that Mother had insisted on staying longer than expected.”

“But you said you sent people to retrieve them, right?”

He nodded again.

“And?”

He shook his head. “At first, they checked in daily, but...since Celeste returned, I haven’t been able to reach them.”

For a moment, I simply stared at him. “What?”

His jaw clenched. “I’m sorry, I should have told you.”

“Why didn’t you?”

He sighed. “Because the last couple of days have already placed enough strain on you. I didn’t want to add another burden unless it became necessary.”

I exhaled slowly, pinching the bridge of my nose. “I need all you Alphas,”—I shot a pointed look at Kieran—“to stop treating me like an egg that’ll break at any moment. I’m not fragile, dammit! How much more do I have to prove myself?”

Ethan’s throat bobbed with a swallow. “You’re right, Sera, I’m sorry.”

I sighed. “So what changed this morning?”

Ethan's expression hardened. "My team finally made contact again. They had...news."

Kieran leaned forward. "What did they find?"

"One survivor out of the team that went with Mother."

A cold sensation crept down my spine. "What? Who?"

"Jonathan."

My breath caught.

Jonathan had served my father for decades. He had been Edward Lockwood's Gamma long before Ethan inherited the pack, and still stayed loyal after his death.

"What happened to him?" I asked.

Ethan's jaw tightened. "He was found barely alive."

The words felt like ice sliding through my chest.

“He managed to speak briefly before losing consciousness.”

My hands curled slowly against the edge of the table. “What did he say?”

Ethan met my gaze. “Mother was abducted.”

The air in the room seemed to thicken, pressing down on my chest until each breath became shallow, heavy.

Then Ethan finished the sentence. “By Catherine.”

The name landed with quiet weight.

Corin straightened slightly behind me.

Kieran’s expression darkened.

I struggled to keep my legs from buckling.

Catherine.

I couldn't wrap my head around it.

I knew she'd performed the sealing on me; I knew there was something suspicious about her.

But she was Celeste's godmother. She was Mother's best friend.

Why would she do this?

Was this a standalone or another link in the long chain of mishaps?

What the fuck was going on??

"What else did Jonathan report?" Kieran asked.

Ethan's jaw clenched. "Not much."

My chest tightened. "What do you mean not much?"

Ethan spoke carefully. "He said that if we want Mom returned safely..." His gaze fixed on me. "You must meet Catherine. Alone."

Kieran reacted instantly. "That's not happening."

The bristling fury in his voice carried the full authority of an Alpha who had already made his decision.

Ethan nodded. "I agree."

"It's very clearly a trap," Corin chimed in.

I exhaled slowly, fighting the panic clawing at my throat.

Margaret Lockwood might never have been the most affectionate mother, but she was still my mother. She'd loved me in her own flawed way.

Ignoring Catherine's demand entirely could easily place her life in greater danger, and that thought twisted something deep in my chest.

Family bonds did not disappear simply because they were imperfect.

Kieran stepped closer, his hand resting firmly against my back.

"You shut that train of thought down right now," he said, his voice carrying finality. "There's no way you're going there, especially not alone. You are not ransom."

I looked at him. "I can't just leave my mother there."

"We'll figure something out," he assured me.

"But—"

"Why now?"

Everyone's attention snapped to Corin, who had voiced the question.

"What do you mean?" Ethan asked.

Corin gestured toward me.

“If Catherine’s goal is Sera, she has had more than twenty years to act. Countless opportunities to approach Sera directly or manipulate events indirectly. Why wait so long?”

The logic of that statement settled slowly into the room.

Corin answered his own question. “Something changed.”

My fingers brushed unconsciously against my lower back, where the silver markings now rested beneath my clothing.

Something had changed.

“My power,” I whispered.

Kieran asked, “You think Catherine knows the seal has been broken?”

Corin gave a small shrug. “I would be surprised if she didn’t.”

A chill ran through me.

If Catherine had somehow sensed the shift in my abilities...

"She wants the power inside me," I said softly.

Corin nodded. "That would be the most logical explanation."

Kieran's hand tightened slightly on my back.

"And abducting Margaret guarantees Sera will respond."

"Yes."

"There's no way Sera is just going to walk straight into Catherine's trap," Kieran said. "We have to figure out a way to outsmart her. Save Margaret and protect Sera."

Ethan sighed. "There may be one way to understand Catherine's intentions."

"How?" I asked.

His expression darkened slightly.

“Celeste.”

The name immediately filled the room with tension.

Kieran’s expression hardened. “She has caused more than enough damage.”

“Yes,” Ethan agreed calmly. “But she knows Catherine better than anyone else in this room. Plus, I sent the team to retrieve her and Mother. How did she get away, and Mother didn’t? She has answers to a lot of our questions.”

“She’s been tight-lipped until now,” I said. “What makes you think she’ll finally cooperate?”

“Hopefully, she still has a little piece of a heart, and the news of Mother’s abduction jolts her,” Ethan said in a voice that held no hope.

Images of Celeste flashed through my mind—her cruelty, her jealousy, the way she had orchestrated my humiliation eleven years ago.

But none of that mattered now.

Because if we didn't understand Catherine's motive, if we couldn't anticipate her moves, then we had no way of saving Mother without sacrificing me.

I sighed. "Then we talk to Celeste."