

My Sister 385

Chapter 385 ALIGNED INTERESTS

CATHERINE'S POV

The reception room on the upper level of the facility had been designed to resemble one of the resort's more private lounges, the kind wealthy visitors expected to find in exclusive retreats scattered across the Maldives.

Tall windows overlooked the ocean past the cliffs. At this hour, the glass reflected only the interior lights and the darkening sky.

The room smelled faintly of polished wood and sea air drifting in from the vents, a carefully constructed illusion of normalcy that masked what lay beneath the island.

Marcus Draven stood near the window when I entered.

He did not turn immediately. His broad shoulders remained squared toward the ocean, hands clasped loosely behind his back, his reflection faintly visible in the glass.

Even in his stillness, an undercurrent of barely restrained energy radiated from him—a volatile mix of impatience and command.

Only when the door closed behind me did he speak.

“You took your time.”

I stepped farther into the room, the soft click of my heels on the marble floor echoing.

“And you arrived earlier than expected,” I replied calmly. “If anything, that suggests impatience on your part rather than delay on mine.”

Marcus finally turned.

The years had etched harsh lines into his face, though they had done nothing to diminish the intensity of his presence. His dark eyes settled on me with a faintly irritated look.

Despite having worked together for years, we had never developed anything resembling friendship.

Our alliance had always been based on our aligned interests, nothing more.

Our eyes met, and the tension coiled instantly, a pulse of resentment sharpening the air like static.

“Well,” he said bluntly. “I’ve been hearing disappointing news.”

I arched a brow. "Disappointing?"

He stepped away from the window and crossed the room with slow, deliberate strides.

"Not only has your research slowed down and isn't yielding promising results, but you also allowed Celeste Lockwood to escape," he said flatly. "That hardly inspires confidence."

I folded my arms loosely across my chest.

"If you intend to lecture me on operational discipline, Marcus," I said coolly, "look in the mirror first. I'm not the only one producing disappointing news."

His eyes narrowed slightly. "Meaning?"

"Meaning you invited unnecessary complications when you decided to bring Lucian Reed into this operation."

Marcus snorted. "That again?"

"Yes, that again."

I moved toward the long table at the center of the room, trailing my fingers lightly along its polished surface.

“I told you from the beginning that his loyalty is questionable,” I continued. “Lucian is clever, ambitious, and far too comfortable operating independently. Not to mention that he is loyal to many of our adversaries. Those qualities rarely produce dependable allies.”

Marcus waved the concern away with an impatient flick of his hand. “I have Lucian’s loyalty in the palm of my hand. You’re worrying over nothing.”

“Am I?”

He leaned against the edge of the table, crossing his arms.

“I brought Lucian into the fold because he’s useful,” Marcus said bluntly. “His heritage alone makes him valuable.”

I scoffed. “He’s not the only Alpha around with witch blood.”

Marcus nodded. “True, but you know why he’s the best candidate.”

I wanted to argue. Unfortunately, I couldn't.

Lucian Reed's lineage was...complicated.

His mother was my mother's daughter from her second marriage, which technically made Lucian my nephew, though the boy himself remained blissfully unaware of that connection.

So his value lay not only in his witch blood, but in his connection to me.

"Besides," Marcus continued, "you forget that our plan would have never required his involvement if you hadn't fucked up."

A sharp burst of anger coiled in my chest. "Oh, screw you. I wouldn't have had to step in and kill Edward if your son had done things right. I'm still suffering from the backlash—worse now that Seraphina's seal has been broken."

When Seraphina's seal broke, the power I had stolen from Margaret years ago surged with renewed strength.

For a time, it was intoxicating, the expansion of my psychic reach pushing me closer and closer to the threshold of Sovereign level.

But that same growth had triggered something else.

Margaret's power still recognized Edward as her mate. And killing a mate carried a punishment that no ritual could assuage.

The backlash had been subtle at first—a persistent drain on my control that manifested in headaches and intermittent instability in my psychic threads.

It had quickly worsened, turning into a lingering interference that made certain procedures far more difficult than they should have been.

Which was precisely why we now needed Lucian.

Someone from the same bloodline.

Someone capable of stabilizing the next phase should I falter.

I exhaled slowly, rubbing the bridge of my nose. "I hate relying on others. That fucking rogue had one job."

Marcus's eyes hardened. "Don't you dare."

"It's the truth," I retorted. "If he'd done things right, I wouldn't have had to step in to deliver the fatal blow."

Marcus studied me for a moment before letting out a quiet, humorless laugh. "You always did enjoy pretending your decisions are purely strategic. As if you didn't want to kill Edward for years."

I pushed down the complicated swirl of emotions that the accusation triggered.

"That's not the point," I snapped. "Take responsibility for your son's behavior."

Marcus's expression darkened. "Be careful, Catherine."

"Why?" I asked coolly. "Am I pushing buttons?"

He pushed away from the table with sudden force. "Jack's lack of discipline is not solely my fault."

I met his gaze without flinching. "No?"

Marcus's voice dropped slightly. "You should stop acting as if you bear no responsibility. After all, he isn't just my son."

The room fell silent.

Neither of us spoke for several seconds.

The tension between us thickened into something almost suffocating as the truth neither of us liked to acknowledge hovered uncomfortably between us.

Officially, Jack belonged to Marcus and his lawful wife.

Unofficially...

He carried both our bloodlines—the product of one stupid, stupid, careless night.

That inconvenient fact had bound Marcus and me together in ways we both hated.

We were not mates. There had never been anything remotely resembling love between us.

But Jack represented something neither of us could easily discard.

He was the last remaining bloodline for both of us.

Which meant that despite everything—our mutual irritation, our frequent disagreements—we had no choice but to work together to protect him.

Marcus broke the silence first.

“Let’s return to the matter at hand,” he said stiffly.

“Agreed.”

He studied me carefully. “What about Seraphina?”

I tilted my head. “What about her?”

“You’re certain she’ll come?”

“Absolutely.”

Marcus’s eyes narrowed. “How can you be so sure?”

I allowed a faint smile to appear. "I understand Seraphina far better than you do."

Marcus remained unconvinced. "Really?"

I walked slowly toward the window, looking out at the dark ocean beyond.

"She's her father's daughter," I said.

His brows furrowed. "And that means?"

"Edward Lockwood had many admirable qualities," I continued. "And one great weakness—family."

I turned back toward Marcus. "That weakness passed directly to Seraphina."

His gaze lingered on me for a long moment before he finally nodded.

"Well," he said, "for your sake, I hope you're right."

“Oh, Marcus,” I replied with a smirk. “I’m never wrong.”