

## **My Sister 396**

### Chapter 396 DARK MAGIC

#### KIERAN'S POV

The first thing I noticed when we crossed back into Nightfang territory was the silence.

Not the absence of sound—there were still voices, still movement, still the distant rustle of activity as warriors moved through the aftermath.

It was the kind of silence that pressed against the ribs and made every breath feel heavier than it should.

Nightfang had known battles before. We had bled, buried our dead, rebuilt, and stood stronger for it.

But this...this felt different. Quiet in a way that had nothing to do with peace.

I parked haphazardly and stepped out.

Gravel crunched under my boots as I straightened and surveyed what was left behind.

The clearing had been mostly restored, but there were still traces if you knew where to look.

Dark stains that hadn't fully faded. Shallow gouges carved into stone. The faint metallic scent of blood lingered in the night air.

Beside me, the passenger door opened more slowly.

Sera eased herself out, moving gingerly. I immediately closed the distance between us.

"Careful," I said, reaching for her.

My hand slid around her waist, steadying her so she wouldn't lose her balance as she shifted her weight.

Up close, the strain was more obvious—the faint pallor beneath her skin, the tension she was holding too tightly in her frame, the almost imperceptible delay in the way she moved.

She stilled for a fraction of a second at the contact.

Then her hand came up, resting lightly against my arm—not to push me away, but not quite leaning into me either.

“I’m fine,” she said.

I didn’t let go.

“You collapsed,” I replied, struggling to keep my voice level.

Her lips pressed together, a hint of something flickering across her expression—annoyance, maybe, or resignation—but she didn’t argue further.

I adjusted my hold, keeping my hand firm at her waist as she straightened fully, making sure she was steady before easing the pressure just enough to let her stand on her own.

We moved together, and the moment we stepped into the main grounds, heads turned.

Conversations dropped, then resumed in lowered voices as we passed.

Even that reaction felt...off.

Whatever had happened here while we were gone had settled into the bones of the pack.

And that was not a good thing.

“Kieran.”

My head turned at the sound of my father’s voice.

He was striding toward us, his posture as straight and unyielding as ever, though there was a weight in his expression that hadn’t been there the last time I’d seen him.

Gavin followed a step behind, his gaze flicking to Sera before settling on me.

“Daniel?” I asked without preamble.

“He’s safe,” my father answered. “With your mother. We moved them to the safe house.”

The worry that had tightened my chest eased just enough to let me breathe properly again.

In my arms, Sera exhaled, sagging against me a little more. “Thank the goddess,” she breathed.

I tightened my grip on her.

“What happened?”

Father’s gaze held mine for a moment, something unreadable passing through it before he answered.

“Rogue incursion,” he answered.

I gritted my teeth. “Perfectly timed with the moment I was distracted by Catherine.”

He nodded. “Your guess is as good as mine.”

My gaze moved past him, scanning the warriors still stationed around the perimeter—the subtle adjustments in formation, the way some of them stood just a fraction too rigid, their attention stretched thin between vigilance and something else.

“What I want to know,” I continued, my voice dropping, “is why it feels like the entire pack is holding its breath.”

A brief silence followed. Gavin and my father exchanged a look.

Then Gavin exhaled. “Because they saw people who should be dead.”

My eyebrows shot up. "What?"

"They came in waves, like any other rogue attack," Father said. "At first, it was nothing unusual. We held the line. Pushed them back. And then they started breaking formation in ways that didn't make sense. Hesitation where there shouldn't have been any."

"Turns out we were fighting familiar faces," he continued. "Dead pack members."

A shiver went down my spine.

"Like Aaron," Sera whispered.

"But they didn't recognize anyone," Gavin added, his tone grim. "No awareness. No hesitation on their end. Only ours."

"And the casualties?" I asked.

"Not as few as I would have liked," Father said. "We regained control once I asserted authority. But the damage..." His gaze drifted toward the courtyard, where a small cluster of warriors stood speaking in low voices. "Isn't physical."

I followed his line of sight.

I didn't need to strain to hear them.

"...I saw him burn," one of them was saying, his voice rough. "I stood there. I watched—"

"You're sure it was him?" another asked, quieter, hopeful in a way that made something twist in my chest.

"He had the same scar—"

"That doesn't mean—"

"It means something," a third voice cut in, sharper than the rest. "It has to mean something."

Hope.

That was the real damage.

Not the hesitation in battle.

Not the fractures in formation.

Hope that shouldn't exist.

I remembered Imani. Remembered the look in her eyes when she believed she would be reunited with a love she thought she had lost forever.

"Some think it's real," Father said. "Others know better. But knowing doesn't stop the doubt."

I exhaled slowly, forcing my thoughts into order.

"Dark magic," I said finally. "Anyone asks questions, the answer is dark magic."

Gavin frowned. "Are you sure?"

"The alternative is to tell them that a powerful, psychotic psychic is somehow reviving their loved ones and weaponizing them," I said, voice low. "Do you want to be the one to share that narrative?"

He sighed, running a hand through his hair in frustration.

My gaze moved again, sweeping across the pack.

I could see it now, clearer with the context in place.

The subtle distance in the way some of them stood.

The way their eyes lingered just a fraction too long on the bodies being carried away.

The quiet, searching looks.

As if they were waiting.

As if they were hoping.

My jaw tightened.

I doubt Catherine ever planned to hurt Nightfang.

This was her plan.

“She wants them to hesitate,” I said, more to myself than anyone else.

“She succeeded,” Father replied evenly. “For a moment.”

Sometimes, a moment was enough.

“Kieran,” Sera called out softly.

I looked down at her, my focus narrowing instinctively. She was still, pale but unyielding, her eyes steady despite everything she had already pushed through.

“Let’s get you to bed,” I murmured, turning her toward the packhouse.

“Wait,” she said, placing a hand on my forearm.

“They’re confused, lost. The last thing they need is more lies. We have to tell them the truth.”

I frowned. "I barely understand the truth."

She nodded. "Which means it's time to remind Alois of his intention to visit."