

My Sister 403

Chapter 403 MARCUS AND CATHERINE

SERAPHINA'S POV

By the time everyone gathered, the sun had shifted higher, pale light filtering through the tall windows of the main conference hall and stretching across the long table in muted bands.

The brightness did nothing to soften the tension in the room. If anything, it made everything feel too exposed, too clear, as if there was nowhere to hide from what we were facing.

Kieran stood at the head of the table, one hand braced against its surface, the other resting loosely at his side.

He looked composed, controlled, but I knew him well enough to recognize the strain beneath his facade—the white-knuckled grip of his hand, the jaw tight with barely checked tension, the stillness that wasn't calm so much as contained force.

I took a seat to his right, aware—acutely, this time—of where I was placing myself.

Not at the edge. Not in the background.

By his side.

Ethan, Maya, Corin, Maris, and Brett arrived together.

No one lingered on greetings. No one wasted time.

The moment the doors closed, the discussion began.

It unfolded in pieces, each of us adding something until the gaps between them began to close, until the scattered fragments aligned into something that felt far too deliberate to be a coincidence.

“The psychic residue I found in Frostbane,” Corin began, his voice steady and sharp, “matches what Sera described here. It’s structured, intentional—and it was left behind on purpose.”

“And the rogues?” Kieran asked, his tone even, but there was an edge beneath it. “The ones wearing faces of dead pack members at Nightfang?”

Maya exchanged a glance with Maris before answering, her expression tightening. “I bet they were similar to the rogues we faced while you were with Catherine. They were coordinated. Too coordinated for rogues acting independently.”

Maris nodded, leaning forward. “We’ve fought rogues our entire lives. They don’t move like that. They don’t hold formation, they don’t anticipate like that. These ones did.”

Brett's jaw set. "Which means they were Marcus'."

Ethan exhaled, the sound heavy with implication. "So Marcus and Catherine are working together."

Maris nodded. "They're definitely aligned."

The knowledge sank within me, giving rise to a host of questions.

What was their endgame?

How did they even know each other?

How did I fit into all of it?

Kieran's attention turned to Alois. "You've been quiet."

Alois had taken a position slightly removed from the table, his posture composed, hands loosely clasped behind his back.

He didn't rush to speak, and when he did, his voice cut cleanly through the layered tension.

"The first thing you all need to know is that we're dealing with more than a powerful psychic. There's powerful magic involved, too."

Kieran scoffed bitterly. "And here I thought I was lying when I chalked it up to dark magic."

"Catherine," I whispered. "I heard rumors when I was little that her mother was a witch."

Alois nodded. "That is likely true, and it will explain how she's able to do what she does."

"And what exactly is that?" Kieran asked.

"What we are observing with the dead pack members," Alois said evenly, "is not resurrection in the natural sense. It is reconstruction."

The word settled into the room, and we waited with bated breath for him to continue.

"A portion of the original subject's essence—what you would recognize as the soul—is revived and extracted using powerful dark magic," he continued. "Not enough to sustain the original, but sufficient to preserve identity markers."

My stomach tightened, the memory of Aaron's mind flashing through me unbidden—the hollow spaces, the absence that shouldn't have existed.

"Those fragments are then implanted into a separate vessel," Alois went on, his tone remaining calm, almost clinical. "The result is a being that carries the original's appearance, partial memory, and basal instincts."

Alois's gaze moved across the table, ensuring we were following.

"However," he added, "such a construct is inherently unstable."

Corin shifted, his attention sharpening. "Because the original still exists."

Alois inclined his head. "Precisely. As long as the revived original soul remains intact, the transplanted fragment cannot fully anchor."

Each word landed heavier than the last, slotting into place with everything we had already seen.

Aaron's confusion.

The way his thoughts slipped.

The emptiness where something vital should have been.

Ethan's jaw tightened. "So what's the end goal?"

"If the original subject dies—again," Alois said, "and the remaining soul dissipates, the transplanted fragment is no longer in conflict. The construct stabilizes."

A gut punch of horror and understanding slammed into me.

"They're not just bringing people back from the dead," I said slowly, the realization forming even as I spoke it.

"No," Alois replied. "They are replacing them. With versions they can control."

"Puppets," Corin whispered.

Maris exhaled, her voice softer when she spoke. "And the original...?"

"Becomes unnecessary," Alois said.

There was no cruelty in the way he said it, but that didn't make it any less brutal.

Catherine's proposal to reunite me with my father slid back into memory, and bile rose as I pictured her doing unspeakable things to his corpse.

"So is Aaron—" Brett started, then stopped, as if he didn't want to finish the thought.

"Actually, the Aaron we have with us is the original," Alois said. "He must have escaped before they had a chance to perfect the transition. Subjects in that condition are not expected to survive, much less return to familiar territory."

"Residual instinct," Corin said. "Something strong enough to override the damage."

"Precisely," Alois agreed.

Ethan dragged a hand down his face, frustration bleeding through the motion. "So they revive a dead person, take part of their soul, put it into something else, and rekill the original so the copy stabilizes."

Alois gave a small nod.

No one spoke for a moment as we all faced the growing certainty that we were dealing with something far larger than we had anticipated.

Kieran's hand tightened against the table, the only outward sign of the tension coiling beneath his control.

"How do we stop them?"

The question hung in the air, heavy with expectation.

"Well," Alois said, "the first step would be gathering proof."

His gaze moved around the table, resting briefly on each of us.

"Do any of you have that?"

No one answered.

Because we didn't.

We had logic.

We had theories.

We had absurd conclusions that made perfect sense when laid out like this.

But nothing we could present.

Nothing we could use to stop, or at least punish, Marcus and Catherine.

“They’re staying just far enough ahead,” Ethan said, his voice tight. “No direct evidence. No trail.”

Kieran dragged a hand through his hair, frustration sharper now, harder to contain. “So we’re watching them build an army—literally—and we can’t do a damn thing about it?”

“Not yet,” Alois said calmly.

All eyes turned to him.

“Then when?” Kieran demanded.

“When we find the piece they’re missing,” Alois replied.

A frown tugged at my brow. “Missing?”

“They are refining a process,” he said. “Which means it is not yet perfect. Aaron’s escape is proof of that.”

Before anyone could respond, my phone vibrated hard against the table.

I snatched it up, my pulse spiking as Roxy’s name flashed across the screen.

“I have to take this,” I said, already stepping away as I answered.

“Sera.” Roxy’s voice came through, strained and tight. “We have a situation.”

My grip on the phone tightened.

“What happened?”

There was a brief crackle on the line, like she was moving—like something was happening behind her.
Then—

“It’s OTS. There’s trouble.”