

My Sister 404

Chapter 404 BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS

JUDY'S POV

The first thing I noticed that morning was the noise.

OTS was never quiet. There was always movement, voices, the low hum of something being built, negotiated, planned.

Even in Lucian's absence, we had managed to hold that rhythm together. Not perfectly. Not without friction. But intact.

This was different.

Voices raised too high. Footsteps too fast. The kind of tension that didn't belong to routine—it belonged to disruption.

I paused halfway down the corridor, files tucked under my arm, my instincts tightening. My heart pounded, a sense of dread prickling beneath my skin.

A shout echoed from the main hall.

I didn't think; I moved.

By the time I reached the central floor, the space was crowded.

Members had gathered in loose clusters, some standing, some edging back, others pushing forward in agitation.

The usual order—the invisible lines that kept OTS functioning—had fractured.

At the center of it all stood a group of five I didn't recognize.

They stood too comfortably in a place that wasn't theirs, their posture relaxed in a way that suggested ownership rather than intrusion.

Their clothes were travel-worn but smart, their gazes sharp and assessing, as if they were measuring what belonged to them.

My grip tightened on the files.

"Who the hell are they?" Roxy whispered, sliding up beside me.

“No clue,” I muttered.

“I need to have a word with security,” she mumbled. “Just because Lucian’s not around doesn’t mean—”

“Not security,” I said, dropping my voice low. “Call Sera.”

She turned to me, brows arched. “You don’t think—”

“That this is the problem she warned us about?” I sighed. “I hope not.”

Roxy nodded and slipped out of view.

One of the strangers stepped forward.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, his presence cutting clean through the noise without needing to raise his voice.

“Who’s in charge here?” he asked.

Every conversation faltered. There was shuffling and a lot of side-eying. But no one stepped forward.

I frowned, craning my neck around the crowd.

Where were all the senior members?

Finn's words from dinner echoed in my mind. 'This morning, they pulled together a group of undercover operatives. Short notice. High clearance.'

Could it be—

"Is there no one in charge here?" the stranger reiterated.

I didn't realize I had moved until I stepped forward and heard myself say, "I am."

That couldn't be further from the truth, but someone had to take charge of...whatever this was.

The stranger's blue-eyed gaze slid to mine, sharp and assessing.

Then a smile touched his mouth.

“Good,” he said. “That makes this easier.”

“Makes what easier?” I asked, keeping my voice level.

“The transition,” he replied.

I blinked. “Transition?”

“We’re here to take possession of OTS.”

The words hit like a crack of thunder.

For a second, everyone was too stunned to react.

Then the room erupted.

“What?”

“Get the hell out!”

“Who do you think you are?”

“Take possession?” I repeated, my voice cutting through the rising chaos. “You walked into a secured organization and decided to claim it? Who do you think you are?”

He didn’t flinch.

He actually fucking shrugged.

“We didn’t decide anything,” he said calmly. “Your leader did.”

The noise faltered again, and my stomach dropped.

“Watch your words,” I snapped.

His amusement didn’t waver.

“Lucian Reed,” he said, “sold OTS to us. Signed. Approved. Finalized.”

“That’s a lie!” someone snapped.

“Lucian would never—”

“Get them out of here—”

“He wouldn’t abandon us,” another voice cut in, louder, fiercer. “Not like this.”

I felt it too, that instinctive rejection.

Lucian had built OTS from scratch. This place bore his blood, sweat, and tears. There was no way he would sell it.

Definitely not like this. Not without giving us prior notice.

“Enough,” I said, stepping forward.

The room quieted—not completely, but enough.

I kept my gaze locked on the man in front of me.

“If you’re going to make a claim like that,” I ground out, “you better be able to back it up.”

“Of course,” he said.

He reached into his coat slowly, deliberately, as if aware that every movement was being watched, weighed.

Then he pulled out a folder.

My pulse spiked despite myself.

He extended it toward me.

“Read,” he said.

I hesitated for half a second before I took it.

The weight of it felt wrong in my hands as I flipped it open.

The first page was formal—dense legal language laid out in precise, structured clauses detailing transfer of ownership, operational authority, and binding agreements that left very little room for interpretation.

My eyes moved quickly across the text, scanning terms and conditions, authorizations, dates, all of it aligning too cleanly, too deliberately—built to withstand scrutiny.

And then I saw the signature, and my breath caught.

It was Lucian's. Every stroke carried the same controlled precision I had seen a hundred times before on countless decisions within these walls.

There was no hesitation in it, no distortion, nothing that suggested forgery at a glance.

Around me, the room pressed closer, the tension tightening as voices rose in restrained urgency.

“What does it say?”

“Is it real?”

“Judy—?”

I didn’t answer. I couldn’t.

I turned the page, my fingers tightening against the paper as I moved on to the next document, only to find the same structure, the same formal language, and at the bottom—another signature.

I flipped again.

And again.

Each page reinforced the last, each document layered over the previous one with increasing weight, building a case that felt suffocating in its consistency. Transfer of authority. Full operational control. Legal recognition.

By the time I stopped, a cold, creeping sensation had settled deep in my chest, spreading slowly outward as the implications took hold, heavy and inescapable.

No.

No, this wasn’t right.

Lucian wouldn't—

But the evidence sat in my hands. Clear. Undeniable.

“They're forged,” someone said behind me, voice tight. “They have to be.”

But the conviction wasn't as strong now.

Doubt had slipped in.

I could feel it like cracks forming beneath our feet.

The man watched me closely.

“Convincing, aren't they?” he said.

I snapped the folder shut, my grip tightening.

“This proves nothing,” I said sharply. “Documents can be falsified.”

“Of course,” he agreed, as though we were having a reasonable discussion. “Which is why the documents were notarized and signed in the presence of verified witnesses.”

The room shifted.

Not in acceptance, not in surrender—but in uncertainty.

And that was far more dangerous.

Certainty could be defended. But uncertainty crept in quietly, eroding from within.

“He wouldn’t do this,” someone said again, but the conviction had dulled, worn thin by what sat in my hands.

“What if—”

“No.”

“He wouldn’t.”

The denial came quicker now, sharper, as if saying it fast enough, firmly enough might make it true. But the question had already rooted itself, small and invasive, slipping into the cracks that had begun to form.

What if?

I felt it too.

I hated it.

But it was there.

Because Lucian wasn’t here to deny it. Because we didn’t know where he was, what he was doing, or why he had left without a word that could anchor us now.

The man took a step closer, closing the distance just enough to feel intrusive without being overtly aggressive.

“You don’t have to make this difficult,” he said, his tone almost placating, as if we were discussing logistics rather than the dismantling of everything we had built. “This transition can be smooth, efficient, even beneficial...if you cooperate.”

My jaw tightened as I met his gaze, anger tight in my throat, defiance flickering beneath my fear.

“You’re not taking anything,” I growled.

“Legally,” he replied without missing a beat, “it’s already ours.”

For a brief, disorienting moment, it felt like the room tilted beneath us, like the ground we had always trusted had shifted just enough to throw everything off balance.

Then the doors at the far end of the hall opened.

The subtle sound cut through the tension like a blade, drawing attention without demanding it.

Conversations faltered mid-breath, heads turning in unison as something in the air shifted—something quieter, steadier, but no less powerful.

Sera.