

## **My Sister 405**

Chapter 405 SPOILS OF WAR

SERAPHINA'S POV

The moment I stepped into the hall, I felt the tension.

It hung in the air like something alive, settling into every gaze that turned toward me.

My eyes swept the room, taking everything in with one glance.

Clusters of OTS members dotted the room. Some stood close together; others had pulled back, as if distance could protect them from whatever was happening.

Then my gaze settled on the five strangers at the center.

Judy faced them, shoulders squared, a folder clutched too tightly in her hand. There was tension in her grip, strain in her posture.

I walked forward, each step purposeful.

The crowd parted without being asked.

“Sera,” Judy breathed, the relief in her voice barely contained.

I didn’t look at her immediately. If I did, I might soften, and this was not the moment for that.

Instead, I stopped a few feet from the man who had been speaking, meeting his gaze head-on.

“You’ve made quite a disturbance,” I said, tone flat.

His lips curved slightly, not quite a smile.

“You must be Seraphina.”

“I am.” I didn’t bother to ask how he knew.

He stretched out a hand. “I’m—”

“Standing in a place that doesn’t belong to you,” I cut him off.

A flicker of amusement crossed his expression. "That depends on your interpretation of ownership."

My gaze didn't waver. "It doesn't."

For a brief second, neither of us spoke.

Then he inclined his head.

"Perhaps not emotionally," he said. "But legally?"

He gestured toward the folder Judy held. "That's a different matter."

I extended my hand.

Judy didn't hesitate. She passed the folder to me immediately, as if its weight was too much to bear.

I opened it, keeping my expression blank as I looked through the contents.

My fingers stilled on the page when I recognized Lucian's signature.

Oh, Lucian. What did you do? Why?

I thought about the resigned look on his face the last time I saw him.

Did he know this would happen when he gave me the seal? Was the deal already done?

I closed the folder.

When I looked up, the man was watching me with interest.

“Well?” he asked.

I let the silence stretch just long enough to settle into something uncomfortable before I spoke.

“These documents are valid,” I said.

The reaction was immediate.

Sharp inhales. Muted curses. The sound of something fragile cracking just a little further.

Judy turned to me sharply. "Sera—"

"I didn't say I accept them." My voice was calm, carrying easily. "I said they are valid."

The man's smile tightened. "What's the difference?"

"You claim Lucian sold OTS," I continued. "Full operational control. Transfer of authority. Ownership of assets."

"All clearly outlined, notarized and witnessed," he confirmed.

I nodded once, as if acknowledging a point in a negotiation rather than a threat to everything we had built.

"Then let's be equally clear," I said.

I reached into my coat and pulled out the seal Lucian had given me.

It caught the light as I held it up, the room going quieter by the second as recognition spread.

“This,” I said, “grants me executive authority in Lucian Reed’s absence.”

The man’s gaze flicked to it, then back to me.

“So?”

I stepped forward, closing the distance between us just enough to shift the balance of the conversation.

“So, it means that your claim doesn’t erase mine.”

There was a small pause in which his mouth parted and closed. It was brief, but making him speechless was mighty satisfying.

“Lucian Reed—”

“Isn’t here,” I cut him off again. “And thanks to this seal, I carry the same authority as he, and I refuse your claim to OTS.”

His expression sharpened. “That’s not how contracts work.”

“That’s how power works,” I countered.

Silence followed, and I could practically see the gears whirring in his head as he figured out his next move.

Finally, he spoke. “So, what are you proposing?”

I didn’t answer immediately.

Instead, I let my gaze drift past him, taking in the room again. The faces. The uncertainty. The fear. The quiet, desperate hope clinging to something—anything—that could hold.

In truth, I knew that Lucian’s signature held as much power as Lucian’s seal. There was only so much I could do.

But OTS was more than a building. It was the people within.

I drew in a slow breath before speaking.

“You keep the building.”

Judy’s head snapped toward me. “Sera—”

“I’m not finished,” I said quietly.

Her mouth closed.

The man watched me with renewed interest.

“You keep the physical structure,” I continued. “The property. The fixed assets that cannot be relocated without compromising operational integrity.”

His eyes narrowed. “Go on.”

“I take personnel,” I said. “Those who choose to leave. Along with movable assets, research, and materials directly tied to ongoing projects that can be relocated without loss of function.”

Murmurs spread through the room as he considered.

“You’re dividing an organization like spoils of war,” he said.

“I’m preserving it.”

He glanced at the others behind him, and a silent exchange passed between them before his attention returned to me.

“Timeline?” he asked.

“Those who choose to leave will have forty-eight hours to do so,” I said. “No interference. No obstruction.”

“And those who stay?” he asked.

“They answer to you,” I said.

The words tasted like ash, but I didn’t let it show.

He studied me for a long moment.

Then, slowly, he smiled. "Acceptable."

The word echoed with a finality I felt down to my very bones.

I turned away from him before that weight could settle on me and drag me down. I faced the others.

"This is your choice," I said. "No one is being forced. You decide where you stand."

Silence answered me.

I could see it in their faces. The conflict. The attachment. The fear of the unknown warring with the familiarity of what they had built here.

OTS wasn't just a workplace; it was their home.

Leaving wasn't just relocation; it was loss.

"Lucian put me in charge in his absence," I said. "I know you have questions, and I wish I could answer them all, but I can't."

Murmurs rose again.

“I’ll arrange housing,” I added, my voice softer now. “Nightfang. Frostbane. Temporary placements until we establish a permanent arrangement. We’ll make it work.”

But even as I said it, I felt the hesitation ripple through the room—subtle but undeniable, like a current beneath still water.

It wasn’t loud or dramatic, but it was there: in people shifting their weight, in gazes flickering between the strangers and me, in how no one moved immediately despite being given a choice.

Not everyone wanted to belong to a pack.

OTS had never been that. It never asked for allegiance like packs did, nor demanded identity, submission, or structure beyond the work itself.

It was something rarer—chosen not by birth or blood, but by belief. It gave people space to build, create, and exist without being folded into something larger that might one day consume them.

Independent. Free.

And now I was asking them to give that up.

Some looked at the floor, searching for answers. Others looked at the walls, weighing the structure holding years of work and identity against uncertainty.

Judy moved first, closing the small distance between us without hesitation.

“I’m with you,” she declared.

I turned toward her, the tension in my chest easing slightly. I squeezed her hand, grounding myself in its warmth and the reality that I wasn’t alone.

Roxy appeared on my other side a moment later. She didn’t say anything, just placed a steady hand on my shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze.

I exhaled slowly, letting that small, fragile sense of balance settle before lifting my gaze back to the room.

The silence stretched.

It filled the space between us, thick with everything left unsaid—fear, doubt, attachment, hesitation.

I could feel the weight of it pressing down, could see it reflected in the subtle tightening of shoulders, in the way some of them leaned ever so slightly backward instead of forward.

A few people stepped forward.

Then some more.

There was more hesitation. More stillness.

And then—

Nothing.

The rest stayed where they were.

Some avoided my gaze entirely, as though not looking would make the decision easier.

Others met my eyes and held them, their expressions complicated—apologetic, conflicted, resolute in a way that didn't align with me but wasn't dismissive either.

Some looked at the building. At the walls, the floors, the structure that had held them for years.

I let the silence sit for one more second, just long enough to acknowledge what it meant, before I nodded in understanding.

This was their home, and I was asking them to walk away from it.

I turned back to the man at the center of it all, forcing my focus to narrow, to sharpen, to move past the weight of what I was leaving behind.

“They have forty-eight hours to change their minds,” I said, my voice steady despite everything pressing beneath it.

He inclined his head, the motion smooth, almost courteous.

“Of course.”

Of course.

As if we were discussing a routine transition. As if this were nothing more than logistics, timelines, and asset division.

As if something fundamental hadn't just fractured down the middle.

I held his gaze for a moment longer, searching for something—hesitation, satisfaction, anything that might reveal more than the controlled composure he presented—but there was nothing there I could use.

So I let it go.

I closed my eyes for a second, letting the noise of the room dull into something distant, letting the weight settle without crushing me beneath it.

Then I opened them again.

And started moving.