

My Sister 406

Chapter 406 NEUTRAL ZONE

SERAPHINA'S POV

As we walked out of OTS, the building behind us felt different.

The same glass façade caught the late afternoon light, the same steel framework held steady against the skyline, the same quiet hum of systems ran beneath it all—but something fundamental had shifted.

I didn't stop walking until we reached the edge of the lot, the small group that had chosen to follow me trailing close behind.

I could feel them there without turning—the weight of their decision, the quiet gravity of it settling into place now that there was no going back.

It wasn't a large group, but as I finally slowed and glanced back, I recognized most of the faces.

Not the peripheral members who came and went with projects, but the ones who had built things from the ground up, who had been here long before me.

The core members who understood how OTS functioned beneath the surface—the systems, the networks, the things that couldn't simply be written down and handed over.

It didn't lessen what we had lost.

But it meant we hadn't lost everything.

"Alright," I said, coming to a halt.

The city stretched behind me. The distant traffic noise blended into the background. Here, in this moment, it felt as if we stood in a pocket of stillness, isolated from everything else.

They all watched me expectantly.

"First," I continued, "housing."

A few of them exchanged glances.

"You said Nightfang and Frostbane," one of them—Elliot—said carefully.

"I did."

“But that’s not exactly…” He hesitated, searching for the right word. “Neutral.”

That was the problem.

Most of them had chosen OTS because it wasn’t tied to pack politics, because it existed outside that structure entirely.

Asking them to step into it now—even temporarily—was a compromise that came with weight.

“I’m aware,” I said.

Silence stretched again, thinner this time, edged with something more uncertain.

Before it could deepen, Judy stepped in.

“Most of us already have places,” she said, glancing around the group. “Apartments, shared housing. We’re not exactly starting from nothing.”

A few nods followed.

That eased something tight in my chest.

“Then we don’t force relocation,” I said, adjusting quickly. “We centralize operations instead.”

“Where?” Roxy asked.

That answer came easier.

“There’s a house I’ve been renting in a neutral zone,” I said. “It’s big enough to function as a temporary base. Meetings, coordination, storage for anything we recover from OTS.”

Judy’s brows lifted. “You’re offering it?”

I nodded. “I’ll buy it outright, and it will serve as a base while we figure things out.”

“You sure about that?” Roxy asked.

“It’s faster than trying to establish something new from scratch,” I said.

We didn't have the luxury of time—or options.

"Alright," Judy said, nodding once. "Then we start there."

The group shifted as something like direction began to take shape out of the uncertainty.

It wasn't stability.

But it was progress.

The house felt smaller than I remembered.

Or maybe it was just fuller.

People moved through the space in quiet, purposeful patterns—setting things down, clearing surfaces, opening laptops, checking connections.

The energy wasn't chaotic, but it wasn't settled either. It hovered somewhere in between.

I stood just inside the doorway for a moment longer than necessary, watching it unfold.

This was what we had left. What OTS had been reduced to.

“Okay,” Judy’s voice cut through the low hum of activity as she moved toward the center of the room.
“We need structure before this turns into organized confusion.”

A few quiet huffs of agreement followed.

“Agreed,” I said, stepping forward. “Judy, you handle coordination. Internal communication, task assignment, tracking who’s where and doing what.”

She blinked. “Me?”

I nodded. “You can do it. I trust you.”

She opened her mouth, then closed it again, something like reluctant acceptance settling into her expression.

“Fine,” she muttered.

“See if you can get a hold of Finn and Talia,” I added. I knew they’d both taken leave of absence to see their families. “We could use their help.”

She nodded. “Already texted them.”

“Roxy,” I continued, turning to her, “logistics. Equipment, materials, anything we manage to pull out of OTS. Inventory, transport, setup.”

Roxy gave a short nod. “On it.”

I paused, letting my gaze move over the rest of them.

“This is temporary,” I said. “We stabilize first. Then we figure out what comes next.”

“And you?” someone called from the back, their voice cutting through the noise.

I didn’t answer immediately.

Because there wasn’t a clean answer to give.

“I’ll be involved when needed,” I said finally.

A flicker of something passed through a few of their expressions.

Not outright disagreement.

But not satisfaction either.

“You’re not staying with us?” Elliot pressed, more direct this time.

“I’ll do my best to—”

“Because your loyalty is with your pack,” someone—Vanessa—interjected. “We’re just an afterthought.”

“Look, I stepped in because someone had to,” I said. “Because what happened today shouldn’t have happened the way it did. Because OTS matters.”

“I know what that place meant to you,” I continued. “What it still means.”

My gaze flicked toward the direction of the city—toward the building we had just walked away from.

“And I know what it meant to Lucian.”

That was where my voice tightened. “He didn’t build OTS just to sell it off like a commodity.”

Someone scoffed. “The last couple of hours beg to differ.”

No.

That didn’t fit.

Not with the man I knew.

Not with the way he had run things.

Something had happened.

Something we weren’t seeing yet.

"I don't believe this was his choice," I said. "And you shouldn't either. Until I know what happened, I'm not stepping into a role that assumes he's gone."

Understanding flickered across a few faces; resistance across others.

"I'm not replacing him," I said. "I'm holding the line till he returns."

What I did not add was that being tied too closely to me right now could put them all in even more danger.

Because if this wasn't random—if this was connected to everything else unfolding—then proximity wasn't protection.

"And the ones who stayed behind?" Judy asked softly.

I exhaled.

"They'll keep OTS running," I said. "They know how."

Even without Lucian or me.

“But if things go wrong,” I said, my gaze steady now, “they reach out. And we respond.”

“We don’t abandon OTS,” I finished. “Not now. Not ever.”

That settled something.

Judy nodded once, more firmly this time.

“Alright,” she said, raising her voice enough to be heard by the whole room. “Let’s get to work.”

By the time I made it to Maya’s car later that evening, the adrenaline had worn off.

I sank into the passenger seat, letting my head fall back against it for a brief second before I forced my eyes open again.

Maya was not calm.

“What the fuck is up with Lucian?” she demanded, her voice tight, on the edge of snapping.

I groaned. “I can’t even begin to unpack that train of thought.”

She exhaled sharply, her fingers tightening around the steering wheel.

“I don’t like it,” she said.

“I know.”

“There’s something off about all of this.”

“I know.”

The silence that followed was heavy as I tried to connect pieces that didn’t quite fit yet.

Why had Lucian done this? Who were those people? How was I supposed to lead what was left of OTS?

My phone buzzed.

I didn't need to check to know it was Kieran.

Something in my chest tightened as I pulled it out and unlocked it.

I read the message once.

Then again.

The exhaustion that had overwhelmed me evaporated, replaced by something sharper. Colder.

Maya glanced at me. "What is it?"

I didn't answer immediately.

I read the message yet again.

Because I needed to be sure I wasn't misreading it.

I wasn't.

"The company that acquired OTS is connected to Jack fucking Draven."