

## **My Sister 410**

Chapter 410 RISK AFTER RISK AFTER RISK

LUCIAN'S POV

The first thing the dungeon took wasn't strength.

It was time.

There were no windows, no shifting light to mark the hours, no subtle changes in temperature to hint at the passing of day into night.

Just stone, iron, and the choking tang of blood.

Even the air felt measured, as though it had been portioned out carefully to sustain life without ever allowing comfort.

I sat slumped against the cold wall, one knee drawn up, my head tipped back just enough that it rested against the rough surface behind me.

My body ached in ways that had long since blurred into something indistinct, pain no longer sharp but constant, like a second pulse beneath my skin.

Somewhere to my left, chains shifted.

Reece.

I could feel him there, the weight of his presence as familiar as my own breath.

A slow exhale slipped from me, my gaze unfocused as it settled on nothing.

There had been a moment—brief, fleeting—that we could have walked away.

I could still see it if I let myself.

The corridor had been quiet that night, the guards thinner than usual, their movements just slightly out of sync. A weakness. A gap.

Zara had been awake, sitting on the edge of the bed, pale hair falling over her shoulders, her expression softer than I had seen it since Marcus had brought her back into this half-existence.

There had been something almost...clear in her eyes that night. Not fully herself, not entirely whole—but closer.

“Luc,” she had said quietly when I stepped into the room.

I remembered the way my chest had tightened at the sound of my name, the way it had pulled my attention completely, dangerously inward.

“I’m here,” I had answered, crossing the room without thinking, my focus narrowing to her, to the fragile warmth of her voice, to the faint rise and fall of her breathing that I still wasn’t convinced was entirely real.

“You look tired,” she murmured, her fingers brushing my wrist.

Cold.

But I had leaned into it anyway.

“I’m fine,” I told her, because the alternative wasn’t something I could afford to acknowledge.

Her gaze lingered on me for a moment longer, searching in a way that made something uneasy shift beneath my ribs.

That was when I saw it.

Not just the awareness—but the clarity.

Not drifting.

Not fading.

Present.

Something in me sharpened instantly.

I didn't think.

Didn't hesitate.

"Come with me," I said, my voice low but firm, my hand tightening around hers before I could second-guess it. "We're leaving."

For a fraction of a second, something flickered in her eyes—surprise, maybe, or something deeper that I couldn't quite name.

“Leave?” she echoed.

“Yes.” My grip tightened, urgency threading into my tone despite my effort to keep it controlled. “Now. There’s a gap in the corridor rotation. I’ve been tracking it for days. We can make it out before they realize—”

I stopped.

Because she was still looking at me.

Not resisting.

Not questioning.

Just...watching.

“We don’t get another chance like this,” I added more quietly, searching her face. “This is my only chance to get you away from Marcus and take you somewhere safe where he can’t control you. Where he can’t use you to control me.”

Her fingers tightened in my grasp.

“Lucian,” she said softly. “I can help.”

Hope surged at her words.

Gods, I had been stupid enough to feel it.

“How?” I asked quietly.

For a moment, she didn’t answer.

Then her gaze shifted slightly—past me.

To the door.

And something in the air changed.

It was subtle. So subtle that if I hadn’t spent years navigating rooms where the smallest shift meant life or death, I might have missed it entirely.

A pressure. Internal.

Like the faintest brush against the edges of my mind.

My breath stilled.

Behind me, I heard the door open.

“Alpha—”

Reece’s voice cut off abruptly.

I turned, and what I saw made no sense.

My Beta stood in the doorway, his posture rigid, his eyes...

Wrong.

There was no focus in them. No recognition. Just a distant, glassy stillness that sent something cold and sharp down my spine.

“Reece?” I said, my voice low.

He didn’t respond. Didn’t even blink.

He moved.

Fast.

Pain exploded across my side before my mind could fully catch up, the impact driving the air from my lungs as I staggered back.

My shoulder hit the edge of the table, the force of it rattling through bone and muscle.

“What the—”

My gaze snapped back to Zara.

She was still sitting on the bed.

Still. Calm. Watching.

And her eyes—

They were glowing faintly, something distant and unnatural threading through their familiar shape.

Understanding hit me all at once.

“Zara—” My voice came out rough, disbelieving.

Her head tilted slightly, her expression softening in a way that made something in my chest twist painfully.

“I’m helping,” she said gently.

Behind me, Reece moved again.

I barely managed to twist aside this time, the blow glancing instead of landing clean, but it was enough. Enough to throw me off balance. Enough to shift the fight out of my control.

“Reece, stop!” I snapped, trying to catch his arm, to break whatever hold Zara had on him.

For a second—just one—his eyes flickered.

Recognition. Horror.

Then it was gone.

And the next strike landed clean.

The memory fractured there, splintering into pieces that never quite fit back together cleanly.

By the time Reece came back to himself, it had already been over.

He woke up next to me in Marcus’ dungeon.

I dragged a slow breath into my lungs, forcing the memory down, burying it beneath layers of control that had been worn thin but not broken.

A soft, uneven exhale came from the other side of the room.

“Alpha.” Reece’s voice was hoarse.

I turned my head just enough to catch a glimpse of him from the corner of my eye.

He looked worse than I felt.

Which was saying something.

His head was bowed, shoulders tense, chains pulled taut as though he’d tried—more than once—to tear free of them.

“I didn’t—” His voice broke. He swallowed hard, forcing the words out. “I didn’t know what I was doing.”

I said nothing.

What was there to say?

That it wasn't his fault?

That he'd been under psychic influence?

We both knew that.

It didn't change anything.

"I would never—" he started again, more desperately now, as though the words could undo what had already been done.

"I know," I cut in quietly.

The words settled between us, heavy and final.

\*\*\*

Days blurred.

Torture became routine.

Marcus wasn't creative.

He didn't need to be.

Consistency broke people just as effectively.

Deprivation.

Pressure.

Agony.

Again and again, until resistance stopped being a choice and became a question of how long the body could hold out against the inevitable.

I lasted longer than he expected.

Longer than he liked.

But even I had limits.

I felt it tonight.

Not in some dramatic, breaking point kind of way.

Just...quietly.

In the way my body no longer responded the way it should.

In the way even breathing took more effort than it used to.

In the way the edges of my vision blurred and stayed that way.

But above all...

Something else.

A thread unspooling.

A connection unraveling.

The illusion I had cast—the one layered carefully into the package, into the documents—had broken.

Which meant they were in Sera's hands now.

And I could proceed with my plan.

\*\*\*

Marcus didn't waste time after receiving my message.

Less than ten minutes after I sent it, he and Catherine were down in the dark with me.

"Lucian," Marcus said, his voice carrying that same infuriating smugness it always did. "I'm told you've had a change of heart."

I let a beat pass before answering, just long enough to make it look like it cost me something.

"I'm done," I said, my voice rough. "You win."

Silence stretched for a moment.

Then a soft chuckle.

"I doubt that," Catherine said, her tone far less amused. "You're not the type who gives up."

I lifted my head then, meeting her gaze across the room.

"No," I agreed. "I'm the type who survives."

Marcus's eyes glinted at that.

"Smart man," he said.

“Don’t mistake this for loyalty,” I added, my gaze steady. “I’m choosing the option that keeps me alive. You want cooperation? Fine. I’ll cooperate.”

Catherine studied me for a long moment, her expression unreadable.

Then she stepped forward and held out a hand to me.

“Take it,” she commanded.

I squinted at the little white pill in her palm, my mind moving through possibilities, outcomes.

Poison.

Control agent.

Something worse.

“Is this necessary?” I asked, my tone flat.

Her lips curved. “Very.”

I let out a slow breath, then pushed myself up from the floor. The movement sent a sharp protest through my bruised body, but I ignored it, closing the distance between us, the chains clamped around my ankles clanging with each step.

Every instinct I had screamed against it.

Every calculation flagged risk after risk after risk.

But none of that mattered.

Not anymore.

I stopped in front of Catherine, took the pill from her hand, and tossed it back.

No hesitation.

No second thoughts.

Because hesitation got you killed.

Because second thoughts got you turned into something worse than dead.

Catherine watched me closely, her gaze sharp, searching.

Marcus, too.

I met their eyes evenly, letting nothing show.

Inside, my thoughts were already moving, already shifting. I was already planning.

Stay alive.

That was all that mattered.

Because as long as I was alive, it wasn't over.