

My Sister 415

Chapter 415 HUNGER AND VIOLENCE

JACK'S POV

The forest surrounding Silverpine was too quiet.

Not the kind of quiet that came with peace, or even caution. This was the kind that settled after something had gone wrong, when everything living had learned—quickly and brutally—that drawing attention was the fastest way to die.

I leaned against the rough bark of a dead tree, one boot braced on its roots, eyes half-lidded, listening.

No birds.

No scurrying animals.

No distant movement.

No careless footsteps from the idiots I had dragged into something far bigger than they understood.

Good.

They were learning.

Agonizingly slow.

But learning.

It had been like this since the last attack.

The rogues had gone quiet, slipping through territory like ghosts instead of tearing through it like beasts.

No unnecessary fights. No wasted energy. No reckless displays of dominance that would have gotten them killed two weeks ago.

Caution.

It sat wrong on them.

Rogues weren't meant for restraint. The moment a wolf broke from a pack, something fundamental snapped loose.

Structure went with it. Discipline followed soon after.

What remained was instinct, sharpened and unfiltered, chewing through everything until there was nothing but hunger and violence.

Most of them didn't last long enough to notice the difference.

The ones who did either died or followed the ancient laws.

The ones whispered about like curses instead of commandments.

Rules set by the fallen Alpha King, back when rogues had first started becoming more than accidents.

Back when someone had realized that if you didn't impose something—anything—on the chaos, it would consume itself and everything around it.

Feed, but not endlessly.

Kill, but not without purpose.

Rest, or lose your mind.

Stay tethered to something, or become nothing.

I huffed a quiet breath, dragging a hand through my hair.

“Ridiculous.”

The word came out under my breath, but it echoed louder in my head.

I tilted my head, feeling the faint pull under my skin—the constant, gnawing pressure that never fully went away.

I pushed off the tree, pacing a few steps before turning back, the restless energy under my skin refusing to settle.

Most rogues clung to those laws like lifelines.

I never did.

If I didn't have to follow the rules of a pack, I sure as hell wouldn't follow those written by some long-dead monarch.

My lips curled at the thought.

No.

I had something better: Catherine.

For years, that had been enough.

Her controlled, precise energy, tailored like no other, kept the worst at bay.

Where other rogues spiraled into feral madness for not following the rules, I stayed...intact.

My jaw tightened.

But lately...

It wasn't enough.

The pressure surged again, sharper this time, like something clawing its way up from under my ribs.

I sucked in a slow breath, forcing it down, forcing it back into place where it belonged.

It didn't go quietly. It never did anymore.

"Boss?"

The voice cut through my thoughts, hesitant in a way that immediately irritated me.

Rafe stood a few feet away, shoulders tense, eyes flicking between me and the others scattered deeper in the trees.

Waiting.

"For what?" I asked.

He blinked. "I—what?"

"For what," I repeated, slower this time, letting the edge slip into my tone, "are you all standing around waiting?"

His throat worked as he swallowed.

"Orders."

I let out a short, humorless laugh, stepping closer until the tension in his posture spiked.

"You had orders," I said. "Maintain position. Stay hidden. No unnecessary movement."

"We've done that," he said.

"And now?"

He hesitated.

There was the problem.

Rogues didn't do well with stillness.

Too much time to think.

Too much time to feel.

Too much time for whatever was left of their minds to start slipping.

"And now," I said, finishing it for him, "you don't know what to do without being told."

His jaw tightened, a flicker of defensiveness breaking through the fear. "We're waiting for the next move."

"No," I said softly. "You're waiting for permission to run wild."

Silence stretched between us.

Behind him, a few of the others shifted. They could feel it—the edge.

The instability that had been getting harder to hide.

I exhaled slowly, dragging a hand down my face.

“Forget it,” I muttered. “Status.”

Rafe straightened, relieved to have something concrete to focus on.

“Scouts reported increased patrols along the eastern ridge,” he said. “Nightfang’s tightening their perimeter.”

Of course they were.

Kieran Blackthorne wasn’t an idiot.

Neither was Ethan.

“And the others?” I asked.

“Frostbane’s quieter,” he said. “But that doesn’t mean they’re vulnerable.”

“No,” I agreed. “It doesn’t.”

It meant they were planning. Preparing.

Just like we were supposed to be.

Just like—

My thoughts cut off as the pressure surged again, sharper this time, twisting low in my gut.

I stiffened, fingers curling slightly at my sides.

Not now.

Not—

“Boss?”

Rafe's voice sounded farther away than it should have.

I turned my head slowly, fixing him with a look that made him take an involuntary step back.

"When did you last contact her?" I asked.

He froze.

The others went completely still.

"You told us to limit—"

"I know what I told you," I snapped.

Rafe swallowed.

"It's been three days."

Three. Days.

The pressure under my skin twisted violently, something sharp and ugly rising with it.

"She's busy," he added quickly. "Your father said—"

"I didn't ask what my father said."

Rafe's gaze flicked down, then back up. "He said she's handling multiple fronts," he said anyway. "That she's...stretched thin."

I let out a low laugh, the sound rougher than I meant it to be.

Catherine stretched thin.

The idea should have been impossible.

She had always been...more.

More capable.

More controlled.

More than anyone else in this entire mess.

And yet—

I had seen it the last time—the flicker of strain she hadn't quite managed to hide.

The way her focus had shifted. Divided. Pulled in too many directions at once.

And now I was feeling the cost of that.

“She knows what I need,” I said, more to myself than to Rafe.

“She does,” he agreed.

“Then why isn't she here?”

He didn't answer.

Because we both knew the truth.

Whatever she was dealing with was taking priority over my needs.

My jaw tightened.

Wrong choice.

A flicker of movement at the edge of the clearing pulled my attention, and I instantly went on high alert.

Lucian Reed stepped into view, moving through the thinning line of trees. He entered the clearing with measured steps, his body language composed and deliberate, his presence sliding into the space without disturbing it.

"Jack," he said, his voice calm, measured, carrying a quiet authority that made weaker wolves listen without questioning.

"Lucian Reed," I exhaled.

He glanced at the others, and that was all it took for them to retreat further back, giving us space without being told.

"I hear you've been...restless," he said.

I bared my teeth. "What's it to you?"

He stepped closer, unbothered by the tension coiling in the air between us.

"I'm here to help," he said.