

My Sister 423

Chapter 423 WASTED POTENTIAL

KIERAN'S POV

The moment I crossed the threshold, the world...yielded.

That was the only way I could describe it.

There was no violent shift, no disorienting collapse of space the way I had half-expected after watching Sera disappear from my side.

Instead, the darkness beneath the hollow seemed to part around me, unfolding in a way that felt less like entry and more like acknowledgment.

I immediately felt Sera's absence.

Not just physically, but in that deeper way I had grown used to—her presence brushing against my awareness, steady and grounding.

It vanished the instant I crossed the threshold, leaving behind a silence that was too clean to be natural.

For a brief moment, instinct urged me to reach out, to find her, to confirm where she was—

But I stopped myself.

This place was not built to be navigated by instinct alone, and forcing my way through it blindly would get me nowhere.

I exhaled slowly, letting my awareness settle, letting the space reveal itself rather than trying to impose my will on it.

The darkness lifted.

Not into the endless starlit expanse Sera had described once before, but into something else entirely.

The ground beneath my feet solidified into smooth, dark stone, polished to a reflective sheen that caught faint threads of light running through it like veins.

The air was still, unnaturally so, carrying none of the organic atmosphere of the forest outside or the cosmic vastness I had expected.

This place had edges. Walls.

I took a step forward, my boots echoing, the sound absorbed almost as quickly as it formed.

The space around me extended in clean lines. Corridors branched outward in deliberate symmetry, each one illuminated by a dim, ambient glow that seemed to emanate from the structure itself.

It didn't feel like the trial I expected.

It felt like a system.

And somehow, I understood that I was not where most people ended up.

Elias' words surfaced in my mind. 'Not many get noticed like that.'

I hadn't thought much of it at the time.

Now, though...

I moved forward slowly, my gaze tracking the architecture around me, noting the way everything aligned with an underlying order that wasn't immediately visible but was undeniably present.

A faint pull drew my attention down one of the corridors, subtle but distinct, like a thread tightening just enough to be noticed.

I followed it without hesitation, my pace steady, my focus narrowing as the structure around me began to shift.

The corridor widened.

The light brightened.

And then I stepped into something that made me stop.

The room was vast, but not empty.

It curved outward in a wide arc. The walls were lined with suspended panels of light—hundreds of them, perhaps more—each one flickering with movement.

Screens.

Though that word didn't quite fit what I was seeing.

They weren't devices.

They were...windows.

Each one displayed a different scene.

Different people.

Different moments.

All of them visitors of the Origins Archives.

I stepped closer, my gaze sharpening.

Every panel showed someone inside it—standing on the starlit floor, walking through shifting constellations, kneeling, shouting, breaking, enduring.

My eyes moved from one panel to the next, taking in fragments of lives, of choices, of questions being asked and answered in ways I couldn't hear.

There was no sound, only movement.

And then I saw her.

Sera stood at the center of one of the panels, the starlight beneath her feet glowing as she faced something unseen.

Her posture was steady, her expression composed in that way it was when she braced for something.

I stepped closer instinctively, my attention locking onto that single panel, shutting out the rest of the room.

She was speaking, but I couldn't hear her.

I frowned, my gaze shifting, searching for something that might allow me to bridge that gap.

There had to be some form of control.

I turned, scanning the room more carefully. My attention caught on a central platform that rose from the floor, its surface smooth and unmarked.

I approached it, my steps measured.

The moment I stepped within reach, the surface shifted.

Lines of light spread outward from a single point beneath my hand as I rested it against the surface, forming patterns that felt...responsive.

Alive.

I narrowed my eyes, adjusting my hand, testing the reaction.

The light followed.

I tried to focus, to direct it, to find a mechanism to isolate Sera's panel and hear what she was saying.

Nothing changed. The screens remained silent.

Frustration coiled low in my chest, tempered quickly by caution.

This wasn't a system I understood. One wrong move could lock me out.

"Then how does it work?" I muttered under my breath.

'You may only observe.'

I startled, before I remembered the voice Sera had described.

I straightened, my expression still, my attention sharpening.

"That's it?" I asked evenly. "Just observation?"

'Your access is limited,' the voice answered. 'Your blood grants recognition, not authority.'

My first instinct was to ask what kind of recognition, but, deep down, I knew the answer. And I did not want my suspicion confirmed.

I exhaled, the pieces aligning whether I wanted them to or not.

"So I can watch," I said, my tone neutral. "But not interfere."

'Correct.'

My gaze returned to Sera's panel, tracking the subtle shifts in her posture, the steadiness of her stance.

"And if I wanted full access?"

'Full access requires acceptance.'

"Of what?" The question slipped out before I could help myself.

'You already know the answer to that.'

The answer surfaced uninvited.

A title no one spoke of openly anymore.

A position that had been erased, buried beneath time and blood and war.

My jaw tightened.

I wasn't surprised.

I knew that one day, it would come back to that.

Another test. Another lure.

Another carefully placed path leading toward something I had already decided I would not take.

"I refused the throne a long time ago," I said through gritted teeth.

'We offer nothing,' the voice replied. 'We simply recognize—both current and wasted potential.'

That almost made me laugh.

I looked around the room again, at the countless panels, at the silent witnesses to lives being weighed and altered within this place.

Wasted potential...

I knew what was implied.

Control.

Authority.

The ability to see, to know, to perhaps even influence.

And for a brief moment, I understood the appeal.

Power like this could change everything.

End threats before they formed.

See enemies before they moved.

Protect—

I cut the thought off before it could root.

I didn't need this.

I had never needed this.

Everything I had built, everything I had fought for, had been done without titles handed down from ghosts.

I had my pack. I had my family.

That was enough.

"I'm not interested," I said, my voice steady, final. "Never have been, never will be."

'As you choose.'

The weight in the room shifted subtly, the threads of attention that had been focused on me loosening.

Access remained.

But no further.

I took one last look at Sera's panel, committing the image of her—standing, steady, unbroken—to memory.

Then I stepped back.

The room responded immediately.

The light dimmed.

The panels faded.

The structure itself seemed to fold inward, the pathways dissolving as the space began to release me.

And then I was back.