

My Sister 433

Chapter 433 THE ONE SIN

CELESTE'S POV

I had been in Nightfang for weeks now.

Long enough to learn the rhythm of the place.

Long enough to recognize the shift of guards at the perimeter, the distant echoes of training from the fields beyond the main compound, the way the halls grew emptier as night settled in.

Long enough to understand that while no one barred my door, no one truly welcomed me either.

Freedom, in its most hollow form.

I could walk the halls.

I could sit in the gardens.

I could exist.

But I did so alone.

No one sought me out. No one lingered if I happened to cross their path. Conversations died the moment I stepped too close, eyes slid away, shoulders stiffened, and whatever warmth had been there before I arrived vanished into thin air.

They knew who I was, what I had done.

And in Nightfang, that mattered more than any title or position I used to hold.

I sat by the window, my fingers tracing the edge of the glass as I stared out at the stretch of trees beyond the compound walls.

The forest here was dense, alive in a way Frostbane's harsher terrain never was. Green bled into every corner, thick and unrelenting, as if the land itself refused to leave any space untouched.

It should have felt comforting.

It didn't.

Because no matter how far I looked, no matter how much open space lay beyond those trees, I still felt caged.

A soft knock broke through the silence.

For a moment, I was too stunned to move.

No one ever came to see me.

The knock came again, quieter this time.

Slowly, I pushed myself to my feet, smoothing my hands over the fabric of my dress as I crossed the room.

My reflection caught briefly in the mirror across from me—pale, composed, carefully put together in a way that had long since become instinct.

Untouchable. Unbreakable.

A lie I had worn so long it almost felt real.

Almost.

I opened the door.

And froze.

Seraphina stood on the other side.

For a second, I thought I was imagining her.

I knew the only reason I'd been allowed to stay at Nightfang was that her precious son had requested it.

She'd avoided me like the plague since then, making sure I knew what my presence in Nightfang was: tolerated, but unwelcome.

And yet, here she was.

Her gaze met mine, steady, unreadable in that new way of hers that made me feel like she was seeing far more than she let on.

“Celeste,” she said.

My throat felt dry.

“Sera.”

“I have someone who wants to see you.”

I frowned, confusion threading through the edges of my thoughts. “Me?”

Not one, but two people wanted to see me?

“Yes.”

I searched her expression for some kind of explanation, some hint of what this was about, but found nothing. Just that same calm, controlled stillness that had come to define her.

“Who?” I asked.

Instead of answering, she stepped aside, giving me space to move past her.

I hesitated for only a fraction of a second before crossing the threshold, pulling the door closed behind me with a soft click.

We walked in silence.

Through the corridors I had grown used to, past the turns I could now navigate without thinking.

Once, I thought this would be my home, my pack.

Now, I felt like an intruder.

With every step, the tension in my chest tightened, my stomach twisting.

We stopped just outside one of the smaller sitting rooms near the eastern wing.

The door was already open, and there, standing just beyond the threshold, was her.

My breath caught.

As soon as I saw her face, I knew.

It wasn't in the details—not in the shape of her features or the color of her eyes or anything so simple as resemblance.

It was something deeper. Something instinctive.

The way she held herself. The quiet strength in her posture. The sharp awareness in her gaze.

Olivia.

No—not Olivia.

My stomach twisted.

“Mireya,” Sera said, her voice cutting gently through the silence. “This is Celeste.”

Mireya.

The name settled into place, and with it, recognition.

'You remind me of my sister, Mireya. She thinks she's invincible, too.'

Olivia's sister.

Mireya turned fully toward me, her brown eyes meeting mine with a steadiness that made something in my chest constrict painfully.

She didn't look like Olivia, not really.

Where Olivia had been softer, warmer in a way that put you at ease without effort, Mireya was sharper, more contained, like someone who had learned to hold herself together the hard way.

And yet, the connection was undeniable.

"I know who you are," she said, her voice calm.

I swallowed. "You...do?"

She nodded. Her gaze shifted to Sera. "I was told about you and Olivia."

A lump formed in my throat. The entanglement of fear and resilience in Olivia's eyes as she pushed for me to run flashed in my mind's eye, and it felt like the walls were closing in.

I forced myself to hold Mireya's gaze, to keep my expression steady despite the sudden rush of something dangerously close to panic clawing at the edges of my composure.

I refused to look at my own sister, knowing all the evil deeds she must have relayed to Mireya.

"What...did she say?" I asked.

Mireya's smile softened, though it didn't quite reach her eyes.

"She said you were kidnapped like I was. That you were important to each other; you looked out for each other."

The words landed like a blow.

"I—" My voice faltered, and I had to steady it before continuing. "I see."

Then Mireya spoke again.

“When I first learned she was gone...” She paused, taking a deep, shuddering breath like she was willing her emotions to stay contained. “I thought I would break. I didn’t understand. I didn’t know why she would be in a situation where...” She exhaled softly. “Where she wouldn’t come back.”

My hands curled at my sides.

I couldn’t move. Couldn’t speak.

Couldn’t do anything but stand there and listen.

“Grief doesn’t really make sense at first,” Mireya said. “It just...exists. Everywhere. In everything.”

Her gaze returned to mine.

“But eventually, you start looking for something to hold on to.”

My chest tightened as a sense of dread crept in, slow and suffocating.

“And I realized...” she said softly, “that Olivia wouldn’t have thrown her life away for nothing.”

My breath caught.

“She had her reasons,” Mireya continued. “She always did.”

No.

“She must have believed in what she was doing.”

Stop.

“And if that belief led her to protect you—”

Please.

“Then you must have mattered to her.”

Gods, I was going to be sick.

“I don’t resent you,” Mireya said.

I didn’t know which was worse—her words or the way she was looking at me.

Because she was looking at me with calm acceptance. With understanding. With something dangerously close to gratitude.

“As Sera saved me,” she added quietly, “you must have done something just as important for Olivia.”

The room was definitely closing in.

The walls pressing closer.

The air growing too thick to breathe.

I stared at her—at this girl who had every right to hate me, to blame me for her sister’s death.

And instead, she offered me absolution.

Undeserved.

I couldn't carry that.

"I—" My voice faltered again, my throat tightening painfully. "You don't understand."

Mireya's brows drew together, confusion flickering across her expression.

"Then help me understand," she said.

The words were simple—an invitation.

All I had to do was tell the truth.

Olivia died because of me.

Because I was too weak.

Too selfish.

The words rose—

And stopped.

Trapped.

Locked behind the same wall I had built so carefully, so deliberately, over the years.

Because if I said it, if I let it out, then it would be real in a way I could never take back.

And I would have to live with the look in Mireya's eyes when she realized the truth: her sister died for a worthless cause.

"I just..." I stepped back, the movement unsteady despite my best efforts to keep it controlled. "I'm not feeling well."

It was a weak excuse, as pathetic as I was.

Sera's gaze sharpened, her attention snapping to me with quiet intensity, but she didn't call me out on it.

Mireya watched me, something unreadable flickering across her face.

Concern? Confusion? Suspicion?

“I’m sorry,” I said, the words tasting hollow even as they left my lips. “I need...a moment.”

I didn’t wait for a response.

I turned and walked away, my steps measured at first, controlled—until I reached the corridor.

And then, I moved faster.

The distance between us stretched, the sound of my own footsteps echoing too loudly in my ears, my heartbeat pounding so hard that everything else faded into the background.

I didn’t stop until I reached my room, until the door was closed behind me.

And even then, I didn’t feel relief.

Because Mireya's words followed me. Echoed in my mind till it was deafening.

'I don't resent you.'

My knees gave out, and I sank to the floor, my back pressing against the door as the weight of it all came crashing down.

'I don't resent you.'

A broken sound tore from my throat, my hands coming up to cover my face as the truth I had refused to speak clawed its way to the surface anyway.

Olivia had died because of me. She had, in fact, thrown her life away for nothing.

After years of justifying my many transgressions, I had found the one sin I could not excuse.