

My Sister 434

Chapter 434 COURTING DANGER

SERAPHINA'S POV

The door closed behind Celeste with a soft, final click.

I kept my gaze on the empty doorway, my thoughts catching on the image she had left behind—the way her composure had fractured before she turned away, the way her voice had faltered, the way she had looked at Mireya like she was standing on the edge of something she didn't know how to face.

Guilt.

I had seen Celeste angry. Petty. Calculating. Cruel in ways I didn't even know existed.

But guilt?

I didn't even know she knew what the word meant.

I exhaled shakily, forcing my attention away from the door and back to the room.

Mireya stood where Celeste had left her, her posture still composed, her expression quiet but not shattered.

That, too, unsettled me.

When I arranged this meeting, I had expected something else entirely. Shock. Grief breaking through whatever control she had been holding onto. Some visible fracture that proved just how much Olivia had meant to her.

But Mireya hadn't broken.

She had grieved at the news, but she hadn't unraveled.

It spoke less to her relationship with Olivia and more to the fact that, after being forced to suppress her emotions for so long, this had become her default setting.

And I was worried.

Since we returned, she hadn't eaten or slept, as if not trusting her new freedom or my promises of safety.

"Mireya," I started. "I think—"

“I should leave.”

I paused, caught off guard. “What?”

“I need to leave,” she emphasized.

I took a gentle step closer. “Mireya, I don’t know what you’ve been through, but believe me when I say you’re safe here, I swear.”

Her gaze held mine, sharp and assessing, as if measuring the truth of that statement rather than simply hearing it.

“I know,” she said. “That’s exactly the problem.”

I frowned. “What do you mean?”

She exhaled, slow and controlled, as if steadying something beneath the surface before letting it show.

“If I stay any longer,” she said, “I make this place a target.”

My frown deepened. "I don't understand."

Her hand lifted, fingers brushing against the side of her neck, just below her ear.

I followed the movement and, for the first time, saw it.

A faint mark, barely visible beneath the line of her hair. Not a bruise. Not a scar.

"What is that?" I asked.

Mireya's hand dropped.

"A precaution," she said.

I stepped closer, narrowing the distance between us until I could see it more clearly.

There was a...wrongness to it. A subtle distortion in the air around it, like something unseen, something alive, was coiled just beneath the surface.

“That’s not a precaution,” I whispered. “That’s a leash.”

“Damian put it on me,” Mireya explained. “Said it would help him find me if I ever succeeded in escaping.”

A chill slid down my spine.

“Why didn’t you mention this earlier?”

She exhaled. “Honestly, part of me still can’t believe any of it actually happened.”

I swore softly, scraping a trembling hand through my hair.

“How does it work?” I asked.

“It tracks me,” she said. “Distance doesn’t matter. Time doesn’t matter. If I stay in one place too long...” She hesitated.

“He’ll find you,” I finished.

“Yes.”

“And you think leaving is the solution?”

“I think staying puts all of you at risk.”

“And leaving exposes you,” I countered. “If he’s going to find you anyway, better he finds you behind a veritable fortress.”

Her brows furrowed. “I don’t understand. Why do you keep courting danger on my behalf?”

I shrugged. “When I know why, I’ll let you know.”

“You don’t understand.” She shook her head. “He won’t stop. Not just because I’m his mate.”

The word sat wrong in the air. Twisted. Contaminated. How could someone do to their mate what Damian did to her?

“But because I know things,” she continued. “About his operations. His system. His...partners.”

And suddenly, Mireya was interesting for a whole other reason.

“Then you’re not leaving,” I said.

Mireya shook her head. “That’s not your decision.”

“Need I remind you that I practically own you?”

She flinched, and my eyes widened.

“Shit, I’m so sorry,” I rushed to say. “I didn’t mean it like that. I would never try to own you or control you, I swear.”

I sighed. “I just want you safe.”

She pursed her lips, not meeting my eyes. “Yeah, well, you’ll be the opposite of safe if Damian finds me.”

“Okay,” I said. “How about this? You let us try to solve the...tracker issue. And if we can’t, then you can leave. I won’t force you to do anything you don’t want to.”

She eyed me warily. "Solve it...how?"

"Show me," Alois said.

Mireya stepped forward and tilted her head, exposing the mark.

Alois moved closer, his expression sharpening as he examined it, his fingers hovering just above her skin without quite touching.

For a moment, he said nothing.

"Well?" I asked.

He exhaled. "It's not simple."

I didn't expect it to be.

“What is it?”

“Witchcraft,” he replied.

Kieran’s expression darkened. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

“This isn’t random,” Alois continued. “The structure, the binding, the layering of the spell work...” His gaze flicked to mine. “It shares the same origin as one I’ve encountered before.”

I frowned. “Where?”

“Lucian Reed.”

I froze, my jaw unhinging. “Lucian has witchcraft?”

“From his maternal side,” Alois confirmed. “I imagine it’s a secret he keeps close to the vest.”

Kieran scoffed. “One in a thousand.”

I pressed two fingers to my temples. At every given moment, a hundred things fought for headspace. I didn't know how much longer I could compartmentalize.

I hadn't had time to fully unpack how I felt about Lucian's letter, and now was sure as hell not the time.

"Okay. Lucian's...history aside. Is there anything you can do about Mireya's mark?"

Alois straightened, his hand lowering as he stepped back.

"I can suppress it," he said. "Temporarily."

Mireya stilled. "Suppress?"

"Dampen the signal," he clarified. "Make it harder to track. Slower. Less precise."

"But not remove it," I said.

He shook his head. "No. Only a full-blooded witch can perform a spell that powerful."

He turned to Mireya. "Who did this to you?"

“A woman,” Mireya answered.

That drew all of our attention back to her.

“Can you describe her?”

“Not very well. She had silver-ish hair, and she wore a long green dress. But she wore a mask, so I couldn’t see her face.”

My pulse quickened as I reached into my pocket, pulling out my phone, scrolling quickly before turning the screen toward her.

Catherine’s image stared back.

“Do you think it was her?”

Mireya leaned forward, studying the image.

For a moment, she didn’t speak, and my pulse kept racing, the anticipation flooding my veins like adrenaline.

Then she shook her head.

“No.”

Kieran frowned. “You’re sure? You said you didn’t see her face.”

Mireya’s gaze didn’t waver from the screen.

“I’m sure. The woman was younger.”

I glanced at Alois, who was frowning.

“You’re certain?” he asked.

Mireya nodded.

Alois exhaled slowly, his expression darkening.

“If there are other witch factions involved,” he said, more to himself than to us, “then this becomes a lot more complicated.”

“When has it not been?” I said with a resigned sigh.

“True,” he agreed. “But it may be larger than we anticipated.”

“How large?” I asked.

Alois shook his head. “There’s no way to know. Witches don’t operate as we do. They don’t follow a unified structure. They fragment. Divide. Align and realign based on interests, power, resources.”

“And you’re saying there could be more than one group working with Damian,” Kieran said.

“If we’re counting Catherine as one, then...yes.”

“Lovely.”

I exhaled slowly, forcing my thoughts into order.

“Then we find them. We need to take out anyone that’s even remotely connected to Catherine and Marcus.”

Alois shook his head. “That’s not simple.”

“Nothing is.”

“Only werewolf royalty can locate witch settlements,” he said. “Only they have a chance in hell of controlling them.”

The words stilled the room.

For a moment, no one spoke.

Because we all knew what came next.

“The royal line fell,” Kieran said.

“Officially,” Alois replied.

I arched a brow. "Unofficially...?"

"There have been rumors that—"

"Surely we're not going to start basing our operation on rumors," Kieran cut in, voice tense.

I turned to him. "If there's even a chance that—"

"There's no chance," he snapped. "The royal line went extinct ages ago. We need to find another way."

I frowned. "Why are your hackles up?"

A muscle ticked in his jaw. "I just don't want us to waste our time chasing ghosts."

I held his gaze for a beat longer than necessary.

"Right," I said slowly, drawing the word out.

I didn't push any further.

Not yet.

But whatever that reaction was, it wasn't just about wasted time.

And I had every intention of finding out why.