

My Sister 439

Chapter 439 OUT OF SYNC

“ZARA’S” POV

I hadn’t seen Lucian in days.

At first, I told myself it didn’t mean anything.

He was always busy. Always moving, always planning. Always carrying something heavier than he ever let anyone else see.

Even when he was with me, sometimes his attention drifted. His eyes went distant, like he was listening to something only he could hear.

But this felt different.

Because even when he wasn’t there, I could feel him.

Or at least...I used to.

Now, that connection felt thinner. Fainter. Like a thread stretched too far, fraying at the edges in ways I didn't understand and couldn't fix, no matter how tightly I tried to hold on.

We had spoken a few times—short calls, careful words. His voice was quieter than I remembered, flatter, like something had been pressed down on it.

“Are you alright?” I had asked the last time.

A pause—just long enough to make unease stir inside me.

“I'm fine,” he had said.

I knew he wasn't.

But when I tried to reach for the reason—when I tried to grasp what had changed, what I had done—there was nothing there.

Just...gaps. Fragments.

That same empty, sliding feeling that had followed me ever since I woke up in this body.

I pressed my fingers to my temple, closing my eyes as I sat at the edge of the bed, trying—again—to push past that barrier in my mind.

There had to be something.

Something I said. Something I did. Something that made him look at me differently.

Because he had, I remembered that at least.

But every memory slipped, gone before I could hold onto it.

My hand dropped back into my lap, fingers curling into the fabric of my dress.

I hated this.

I hated the way my thoughts felt incomplete, like pieces of something larger that refused to fit together no matter how many times I turned them over in my mind.

I hated the way time moved strangely here—too fast in some places, too slow in others, like it wasn't anchored to anything real.

Most of all, I hated this body.

My fingers tightened unconsciously, nails pressing into my skin as I looked down at my hands.

They didn't feel like mine.

They responded as they were supposed to. Nothing was visibly wrong, nothing that should have made me feel as if I were wearing something that didn't belong to me.

And yet, there was a disconnect—like I was always just out of sync with my own body.

I lifted my hand slowly, turning it over, watching the way the light caught against my skin.

Smooth. Unmarked. Perfect.

Too perfect.

A flicker of something passed through my mind then, so fast I almost missed it.

Rougher hands. Scarred knuckles. A faint, jagged line along the wrist—

I blinked, the image dissolving before I could grasp it, leaving behind nothing but a faint echo that made my chest tighten.

I swallowed, forcing the thought away, pushing it down into the same place all the other fragments went when they didn't make sense.

Because thinking about it too much only made the feeling of wrongness worse, and I couldn't afford that.

Not when this body was the only thing keeping me here.

The only thing keeping me with him.

If I lost it, I wouldn't be able to stay by Lucian's side. I would lose my mate again.

My chest squeezed painfully at the thought, a surge of desperation and fear clawing its way up.

No.

I couldn't let that happen.

No matter how wrong it felt.

No matter how much I hated it.

I would endure.

For him. For us.

A soft knock at the door pulled me from my thoughts.

I straightened instinctively, smoothing my expression before calling out, "Come in."

The door opened, and my caretaker, Marie, stepped inside, her movements quiet and graceful, her gaze lowered just enough to be respectful without seeming timid.

"Miss Zara," she said gently. "It's time."

I stood and crossed the room toward her, even as something inside me protested against the familiar routine.

“Any discomfort today?” she asked as she guided me toward the chair near the window.

“No,” I answered automatically.

It wasn’t entirely true. There was always discomfort.

It just wasn’t the kind I could explain.

She nodded as if the answer was expected, and began preparing the injection with efficient, practiced movements.

The vial caught the light as she lifted it, the liquid inside a pale, almost iridescent silver.

Stabilizer.

Maintenance serum.

Different names for the same thing.

The thing that kept everything steady. That kept me alive.

“Hold still,” she murmured.

The needle slid into my arm with a sharp, familiar sting, followed almost immediately by a spreading warmth that seeped into my veins.

Then—

The world shifted.

It wasn't physical. Not exactly.

It was more like...

Layers.

Something sliding over something else.

My breath caught as the sensation deepened, my fingers tightening against the armrest as fragments—sharp, disjointed, too vivid to ignore—flashed through my mind.

Night.

Cold air biting against skin flush with anger.

Footsteps—hurried, uneven—echoing down an empty street, the sound of them too loud in the silence that followed a storm of raised voices and slammed doors.

A voice—mine, but not—still ringing in my ears. “I need space.”

The words felt final. Burning. Irrevocable.

Movement.

A shadow peeling away from the darkness ahead.

Several shadows.

Hands—strong, unyielding—closing around my arm, yanking me backward before I could react.

A sharp gasp tore from my throat as my body twisted, instinct kicking in too late, adrenaline flooding my veins as I struggled against a grip that didn't budge.

“Let go—!”

The protest cut off.

Pain exploded at the back of my neck, followed by a dizzying rush that sent the world tilting sideways.

The street blurred.

The shadows swallowed everything.

And just before the darkness closed in completely—

I sucked in a breath, my chest rising sharply as the fragments vanished as quickly as they had come, leaving nothing behind but a lingering sense of displacement.

Marie didn't react. Her expression remained calm and composed as she withdrew the needle and pressed a small pad of gauze against my skin.

"All done," she said softly.

I nodded, forcing my breathing to steady, even as my mind raced.

That memory hadn't been mine.

The voice hadn't been mine.

The hands hadn't been mine.

The feeling hadn't been mine.

And yet it had been inside my head.

I swallowed, my gaze dropping to my arm where the injection had been.

This wasn't the first time.

There had been others—brief flickers of moments that didn't belong to me.

I had never said anything because I knew that if I did, they would take this body away. Start all over again.

And I couldn't let that happen.

"Miss Zara?"

I looked up.

Marie was watching me, her head tilted, concern flickering across her face.

"Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," I said quickly.

Her gaze lingered for a moment longer, searching, as if she could see something beneath the surface if she looked hard enough.

Then she nodded.

“Lady Catherine is waiting for you.”

“Waiting?” I repeated.

“That’s right.”

I frowned slightly, pushing myself to my feet as unease curled low in my stomach.

“Why is she—”

The door opened before I could finish.

Catherine stepped inside, her presence filling the room effortlessly, as composed and immaculate as ever.

“Because I have something special planned for you today,” she said, her voice smooth, almost warm.

I turned toward her fully, my unease sharpening.

“Special?”

Her lips curved into a small, knowing smile.

“You’ve been doing very well,” she continued, stepping closer, her gaze sweeping over me in a way that felt...assessing. “Better than expected, in fact.”

Something in the way she said it made my chest tighten.

“Thank you,” I mumbled.

She hummed softly, lifting a hand to brush a strand of hair back from my face, her touch light, almost affectionate.

“Come,” she said. “We don’t have much time.”

“For what?” I asked.

Her smile deepened. "You'll see."

The unease in my chest grew sharper, heavier, even as I nodded and allowed her to guide me out of the room.

We didn't go far. Just down the corridor, into another room I hadn't been in before.

It was larger and brighter. Two mirrors lined the walls opposite each other, reflecting the space on itself in endless repetition.

Clothing racks stood along the other side, filled with garments in shades of white and silver, their fabrics shimmering under the light.

I stopped just inside the doorway.

"What is this?" I asked.

"A fitting room," Catherine said simply.

"For what?"

“For you.”

Before I could respond, two attendants stepped forward, their movements quiet and efficient as they began selecting items from the racks.

I stiffened instinctively, a flicker of discomfort rising.

“I don’t understand,” I said, my gaze shifting back to Catherine.

“You don’t need to,” she replied smoothly. “Just trust me.”

Trust.

The word settled uneasily in my chest.

Was being dependent on someone the same as trusting them?

I nodded anyway.

The attendants guided me toward the center of the room, their hands gentle but firm as they began adjusting my clothing, removing what I wore and replacing it piece by piece.

They moved around me with quiet precision, fixing my hair, adjusting the fall of the dress, applying makeup in precise, elegant strokes, stepping back and forth again until everything was exactly as they wanted it.

I stood still through it all, my reflection staring back at me from the mirrors.

Unease twisted itself into dread, icy and hollow.

Because the person looking back at me didn't feel like me, not even in the way this body usually didn't feel like me.

I frowned, tilting my head as I studied my reflection.

Same pale blonde hair. Same cerulean eyes.

But...

There was something about it. Something I couldn't quite place.

“Perfect,” Catherine murmured behind me.

I turned, meeting her gaze through the mirror.

“What is this for?” I asked again.

This time, she didn’t deflect.

Her smile was soft. Satisfied.

“I’m taking you to see someone,” she said.

My pulse skipped. “Who?”

Her gaze lingered on me for a moment longer, something unreadable passing through her eyes.

Then she answered: “Someone important.”

A strange chill slid down my spine as I looked back at my reflection.

At the way I had been dressed. The way I had been shaped into something I didn't fully understand.

The thought slipped through, quiet but undeniable.

This wasn't just for me. It was for whoever I was about to meet.

And I had the distinct feeling that they weren't meant to see me at all.