

My Sister 450

Chapter 450 FOLLOW THE SCENT

SERAPHINA'S POV

I was really beginning to hate mornings.

For a long moment, I didn't open my eyes, desperate to cling to the warmth cocooning us for a while longer.

I was aware of Kieran before anything else—his arm heavy around my waist, his breath warm against the back of my neck, the steady, grounding presence of him pressed along the length of my body.

The sheets were tangled low around us, the air still carrying the faint heat and scent of everything we had shared hours before. For once, my mind wasn't racing ahead to the next problem, the next threat, the next decision waiting for me.

It was quiet.

Peaceful.

Dangerously easy to stay.

I shifted, and his hold tightened instinctively, a low, half-asleep sound rumbling in his chest.

“Don’t,” he murmured, voice rough with sleep. “It’s too early for the world to start demanding things.”

A soft huff of laughter slipped out of me. “If only the world cared.”

“It should,” he muttered, burying his face against my shoulder. “I’m Alpha.”

“Mm.” I turned in his arms and tapped him lightly on the nose. “You’re also about to be very late.”

His eyes snapped open.

“What time is it?”

I pushed myself up onto one elbow, glancing toward the window where sunlight had already begun to spill in far more generously than it had any right to. My stomach dropped.

“Later than it should be.”

Kieran swore under his breath, already sitting up. He raked a hand through his hair as the weight of duty settled on his face, eyes sharpening with reluctant resolve.

“The meeting,” he groaned.

“Yes,” I replied, swinging my legs off the bed, reaching for the nearest piece of clothing—Kieran’s shirt. “Tardiness on our first alliance strategy meeting is not a good look.”

“Damn it.”

There was no real panic in his tone, but urgency crackled in the air, chasing away the remnants of peace and blissful intimacy.

Kieran disappeared into the bathroom with a muttered comment about needing two minutes.

We had just barely crossed the line between rest and responsibility when a sharp, frantic knock broke through the air.

I jerked toward the sound.

It wasn’t the polite, measured kind of knock that came with formal summons or routine communication.

Another knock followed immediately, louder this time.

It was urgent. Desperate.

My heart skipped.

“Who the hell is that?” Kieran called out from inside the bathroom.

“I’ll get it,” I said quickly as I buttoned his shirt, fingers working faster than my thoughts could keep up.

I crossed the room in a few quick steps and pulled the door open.

My brows shot up to my hairline.

Celeste stood there, her chest rising and falling too quickly, her eyes wide and twitchy in a way that sent a sharp spike of alarm through me.

“Cel—”

She slipped past me so fast I barely had time to register it, brushing against my shoulder as she rushed into the room like something was chasing her.

“Celeste—wait—what’s wrong?”

She didn’t answer. Didn’t slow down.

She went straight for the far side of the room, yanked open the closet door and slipped inside, slamming it shut behind her.

I stood there, stunned into immobility.

Kieran stepped out of the bathroom, hair damp, a towel wrapped around his waist, his expression shifting from irritation to confusion as he took in the scene.

“Did I just see Celeste run into our closet?”

I didn’t answer immediately.

Because something else had risen in my mind.

Something I hadn't thought about in years. A memory I didn't even realize I had.

Small hands clutching at hanging fabric.

Wide, frightened eyes.

A dark space.

A hiding place.

My chest tightened.

"Yes," I said quietly. "She did."

Kieran frowned. "What the hell?"

I crossed the room slowly, my pulse steadying not from calm but from recognition.

I had seen this before. I knew what this was.

I stopped in front of the closet door and rested my hand against it.

“Celeste,” I called out softly.

There was no answer, but I could hear her harsh, stuttered breaths.

“Hey,” I murmured, gentler now. “It’s me.”

I opened the closet door.

She had curled into herself in the corner, arms wrapped tight around her knees, her body trembling in a way she was clearly trying—and failing—to control.

For a moment, my throat closed, and tears burned hot behind my eyes, a helpless ache of memory crushing me.

Something about the way she had folded into herself, the way fear had stripped everything else away, made her look small. Like the little girl I always found huddled behind coats in the closet when she was scared.

I crouched down slowly.

“Hey,” I said again, softer this time.

Her head lifted, her eyes locking on mine, raw and glassy, and my breath stuttered at what I saw there.

Raw, unfiltered terror.

“It’s okay,” I murmured, reaching for her. “You’re okay.”

Celeste didn’t hesitate.

The second my arms opened, she moved into them, gripping me tightly, her fingers clutching at my shirt like she used to do forever ago.

“I smelled them,” she whispered, her voice shaking. “Sera, I—”

I tightened my hold on her, one hand coming up to cradle the back of her head the way I used to.

“It’s okay,” I murmured into her ear. “You’re safe. I’m here.”

Behind me, I could feel Kieran's presence shift, his confusion giving way to something sharper, more alert.

"What happened?" he asked, his voice soft but edged.

Celeste shook her head against me, her breath hitching.

"I didn't mean to go near reception," she choked out, the words tumbling out. "I was just passing through; I was going to Mireya, and then—"

Her grip tightened so much a button on the shirt popped.

"The scent. I know it. I know it, Sera. I remember—"

"Okay," I said gently, pulling back just enough to look at her. "Look at me."

Her eyes flickered up to mine.

"You trust me, right?"

I expected her to hesitate. So much had happened between us; there was so much bad blood that I didn't think we could ever get over it.

But she nodded immediately, her wide-eyed gaze never leaving mine.

"Then let me see," I said, my voice steady despite the pressure building in my chest.

There was fear in her gaze again.

But there was something else, too.

Determination. Trust.

"Okay," she whispered.

I shifted, adjusting my hold on her, grounding both of us before I reached inward, toward that familiar, intricate thread of ability that had become second nature.

"Stay with me," I murmured.

Then I let myself in.

Her mind opened to me more easily now than it had in the beginning, the resistance that had once been there softened by trust, by repetition, by the slow rebuilding of everything Catherine had tried to break.

Memories flickered.

Disjointed at first.

Blurred edges.

Emotion without clarity.

I moved through them carefully, guiding, steadying, separating what was real from what had been planted.

“Focus,” I whispered. “Follow the scent. Follow the moment.”

A corridor rose around me with eerie precision, as though I had stepped into the center of a memory already in motion, the details sharpening layer by layer until I was no longer just sensing it, but seeing it.

The Vesper Grand Hotel.

I stood there as a silent observer, as though I were watching a film I could not interrupt, could not rewind, could only follow.

Celeste moved through the space ahead of me, her focus fixed on the man walking away from her—Brett.

I didn't need her thoughts to understand what drove her forward. It radiated from her in sharp, unfiltered waves: confusion, disbelief, indignation.

'Alpha.'

The word lingered in the air, heavy with implication, though she didn't fully grasp it yet.

Everything else faded as she followed him.

The person walking beside him became nothing more than a blur at the edge of her awareness, dismissed without thought, without scrutiny.

But while Celeste's attention stayed locked ahead, mine did not.

I saw it—what she hadn't.

A presence, tucked just beyond the reach of the golden light, where the corridor dipped into shadow between two sconces.

Watching.

Waiting.

My breath slowed, instinct sharpening as the realization began to take shape.

The elevator doors began to close at the far end of the corridor, Brett disappearing behind them, taking Celeste's focus with him.

The figure in the shadows moved.

They stepped forward just as the last sliver of the elevator doors sealed shut, slipping cleanly out of concealment like they had been waiting for that precise second.

For her to be alone.

Celeste didn't turn. Didn't sense it. Her awareness was still anchored in the space Brett had occupied, in the words he had left behind, in something far more immediate in her mind than the danger rising behind her.

And that was all it took.

The distance between them closed in a matter of seconds.

The memory surged and blurred as Celeste's fear spiked, threatening to fracture the clarity, but I held on, anchoring it just a moment longer.

Because I needed to see.

I needed to know.

The figure shifted just enough, turning slightly as they closed in, and the light finally caught them—enough for recognition to slam into me like a physical force.

My breath caught as the realization took hold, locking everything else in place.

I'd chalked Celeste's kidnapping to be Catherine's doing, a long game she'd played to put Celeste at her mercy.

Even if that were still true, this wasn't some faceless operative. It wasn't some nameless pawn in Catherine's game.

It was—

I pulled back abruptly, the connection snapping as I sucked in a sharp breath.

Celeste gasped, her body jerking as she came back to herself, her fingers still gripping my shirt.

Kieran crouched beside me. "What did you see?"

I turned to him, and I knew my expression had changed, because his eyes darkened instantly.

My voice was low, steady in a way that felt at odds with the storm rising inside me.

"I need to call Corin."