

My Sister 452

Chapter 452 PERFECT MASK

SERAPHINA'S POV

I heard every word.

Every voice in the room carried clearly, every shift in tone, every subtle change in posture and scent—nothing escaped me anymore. Not with what I had become. Not with the way my mind had learned to stretch, to listen, to see.

And yet, I couldn't focus on any of it.

"...the northern border remains vulnerable if we don't reinforce the—"

"—we can allocate additional patrol units, but that will stretch—"

"—Marcus' movements suggest—"

The discussion flowed around me, Alphas speaking in turn, some calm, some sharp, all of them engaged in the strategy that would decide what came next.

I should have been anchored in it.

I should have been leading beside Kieran, weighing every word, reading every intention, shaping the direction of the room the way I had done just yesterday.

Instead, all I could see was a dark, cramped closet, my little sister folding herself into it, her arms wrapped around her knees, her breathing uneven and shallow like she was being strangled from within.

My chest tightened.

I forced my gaze forward, keeping my expression neutral and posture composed as Alpha Idris spoke.

Luna.

That was what they saw.

Not the storm inside.

“She’ll be fine,” Kieran murmured beside me, putting a hand over mine.

I hadn't realized my fingers had curled so tightly against the wood my nails were in danger of chipping.

I exhaled slowly.

"I know," I replied just as softly.

And I did.

I'd calmed Celeste. Anchored her. Held her until the trembling had eased and the sharp edge of her fear had dulled.

I'd used just enough of my power to coax her into sleep and put a minor, temporary block to keep her from dreaming.

But now she wasn't the only one with a terrible memory burned into her mind.

The corridor.

The shadow.

The damn scent.

My gaze drifted again—across the long table.

To him.

Thomas Bane sat three seats from the end, posture straight yet relaxed, his expression composed in that placid, unassuming way that had likely earned him his reputation.

Gentle. Measured. Reasonable.

He was speaking now, his voice calm and steady as he outlined a potential supply route that would minimize exposure to Marcus' operations.

His logic was sound. His tone was amiable. There was even a faint warmth to it—an ease that made people listen.

That made people trust him.

If I didn't know, if I hadn't seen for myself, I would have believed him a saint, and not the monster who had condemned my sister to the hell that had broken her.

My fingers tightened against the table again.

I could feel it—the pull.

That familiar thread of power coiled just beneath the surface of my awareness, responding to the sharp spike of anger that flared every time my gaze landed on Thomas.

It would be so easy to reach. To slip past his defenses the way I had with Celeste.

To see. To know.

Why?

My jaw clenched so hard it ached, the pressure traveling up into my temples.

No.

Not like this.

Because I knew myself and my power well enough now to understand what would happen if I tried.

I wasn't calm. I wasn't in control of the part of me that would need to be steady, precise, careful.

I was furious.

And if I stepped into his mind like this, if I saw that moment from his perspective, I wouldn't just observe.

I would react.

And I would do terrible, irreversible damage.

And no matter what he had done, we needed answers, not a broken mind.

Not yet.

"Luna Seraphina?"

The sound of my name pulled me back sharply.

I blinked, my focus snapping forward as I realized the room had gone quiet, and several expectant pairs of eyes were on me.

Kieran's hand brushed against mine again.

"What are your thoughts?" Alpha Callister asked, a repetition, most likely.

I held his gaze for a second, reaching into his mind to pull out the last thing he'd said.

Then I spoke.

"The route is viable," I said, my voice steady. "But it relies too heavily on predictable movement. If their network is as adaptive as we believe, repetition becomes a liability."

A few heads nodded, Thomas included.

"Agreed," he said easily. "Which is why I suggested—"

I tuned him out. Not entirely; just enough to keep from unraveling.

The meeting continued.

Plans were refined. Assignments were made. Timelines were discussed.

And through it all, I watched him.

Not openly. Not in a way that would draw attention.

But enough to catalog every shift in his expression, every subtle change in his posture, every interaction he had with the others.

Nothing.

Not a single crack in his perfect mask.

By the time the meeting adjourned, my head ached.

Not from the discussion—from restraint.

From the constant pressure of holding myself back from doing something I would regret.

The room began to empty, Alphas rising, voices lowering into quieter conversations as they filtered out in small groups.

Thomas stood as well, exchanging a few final words with one of the others before turning toward the exit.

For a brief moment, his gaze met mine.

There was no recognition. No flicker of guilt. No sign that he knew I knew.

Just calm, respectful acknowledgment, like we were nothing more than allies in the same room.

He inclined his head. Then he left.

I didn't realize I'd been holding my breath until it left me in a harsh, shaky exhale, my shoulders sagging with sudden relief and fatigue.

"He's good," Kieran murmured, wrapping his arms around me in a steadying hug I desperately needed.

Too good.

Corin and Brett arrived not long after the meeting, and we didn't waste time.

The core group gathered in one of the smaller strategy rooms—doors closed, wards reinforced, privacy absolute.

Kieran stood at the head of the table. I remained at his side.

Ethan leaned back against the wall, arms crossed, his expression already dark with anticipation. Maya sat near the corner, silent but alert.

Alois stood slightly apart, his sharp gaze flicking between each of us.

Corin entered first. Brett followed close behind him.

The moment the door shut behind them, the tension spike in the room was palpable.

“What’s going on?” Brett asked, his gaze moving between us.

Corin’s eyes met mine, and in one second, a wave of information flowed into my mind.

The conversation in the car.

The trip into Brett’s mind.

The proof of his innocence.

I released a small breath. I didn’t know how I would take it if Brett had had a hand in Celeste’s abduction.

“Sit,” I said.

Brett hesitated for half a second before obeying.

“I’m going to tell you something,” I continued, my voice steady. “Something unpalatable.”

His brows drew together, but he nodded. "Okay."

I held his gaze. "Thomas kidnapped Celeste."

Silence.

It expanded and settled over the room, a heavy, suffocating blanket.

Brett blinked.

Once.

Twice.

Then he let out a short, disbelieving breath.

"What?"

"It's not a guess," Corin added, his tone even. "Sera saw it. In Celeste's memory."

Brett's eyes widened, disbelief warring with something sharper.

"That's not—" he started, then stopped, dragging a hand through his hair. "That doesn't make any sense. Thomas wouldn't—he's not—"

"He did," I said quietly. "He waited until she was alone. Just as you left the hotel, he took her. It was planned."

Brett's jaw tightened, and his eyes dropped to the table.

For a long moment, he didn't speak.

When he did, his voice was lower. Rougher.

"You're sure?"

"Yes."

Another silence, longer this time.

Then, a slow exhale.

“Fuck,” he muttered under his breath.

He leaned back in his chair, staring up at the ceiling.

“He knew I had come to LA the day before,” he whispered as if talking to himself. “We were supposed to meet at the bar for a drink, but I got there early and saw Celeste being accosted by some males. After I saved her and she passed out, I sent him a message that I had to take care of her. After I left her at the hotel, I called him, but he told me he had something urgent to attend to and we couldn’t meet up.”

“I imagine delivering Celeste to the traffickers was pretty urgent,” Maya bit out.

“I don’t—” Brett shook his head as if he was trying to shake the information out of his ears. “I don’t understand why he would do that.”

“Neither do we,” Kieran said. “We intend to find out.”

Brett’s gaze dropped back down.

There was something different in it now.

Not disbelief.

Something harder. Resolution.

“What do you need from me?” he asked.

I stepped closer to the table, my fingers resting against its surface as I met his gaze.

“He doesn’t know that we know,” I said. “That’s our advantage.”

“We draw him out,” Kieran said, “find out his truth.”

“And then?” Brett asked.

“He kidnapped my sister,” Ethan growled. “He will pay.”

I kept my gaze on Brett.

“Can you do this?” I asked softly.

This wasn't an interception mission. This meant turning against someone he had trusted, someone he had called a friend.

Brett held my gaze as he nodded.

“Yeah,” he said, no hesitation or doubt to be found. “I can.”