

My Sister 8

Chapter 8 OUT OF THE SHADOWS

SERAPHINA'S POV

"Hi, Sera."

His voice was deep and smooth, mildly amused—maybe because I was staring at him with my eyes popping out of my head.

When I didn't move or say anything, he chuckled, the sound rumbling in the space between us. "I see I must have caught you at a bad time. I'll just—"

He turned to walk away, and I gasped out of my frozen state. "Wait!"

He turned back, an eyebrow raised.

"It's... you."

His lips twitched. "Lucian Reed." He stretched out the tattooed arm to me expectantly.

On autopilot, I reached out with my uninjured arm and took his hand. It was large and warm and swallowed mine. "Seraphina Bl—" No, not Blackthorne—not anymore. Not really Lockwood, either. Besides, he already knew my name.

"Uhm... come in, please." I stepped out of the doorway and gestured into the house.

"Thank you," Lucian said as he crossed the threshold. He towered over me, almost as tall as Kieran, and I took an instinctive step back.

"Th-this way."

I led him to the living room and gestured for him to sit in the armchair.

He sat in it as if it were a throne, and something told me he could drop into a pile of mud and make it look regal.

His head swiveled, taking in the living room—the flowery wallpaper, the mismatched couches, and oddly matching side tables.

"Your home is lovely."

I couldn't tell if he was being sarcastic, but I waved the comment away. "It came like this. I just moved in."

As soon as I said the words, I dropped my gaze. Why was I telling this stranger my business?

"How are your injuries?" he asked, nodding toward my bandages.

My fingers brushed over the surface. "They'll heal. I—" I swallowed. "Thank you. I should have said that the moment I opened the door—thank you so much for saving my life."

Lucian grinned, a full-toothed smile that made him look less intimidating.

"You're very welcome, Sera."

I worried my lower lip between my teeth. "Can I ask, though... why did you do it? Everyone was protecting what mattered to them; we don't even know each other."

He shook his head, his smile fading into something softer. "You may not know me, but I know you."

He slipped a hand into his pocket and then stretched it to me. My eyes scanned the contents.

"'Out of the Shadows,'" I read out loud, looking up at Lucian in question.

"I'm the Alpha of the Shadowveil Pack in the south," he said.

"And the president of—" I glanced at the card again. "'Out of the Shadows.'"

Lucian nodded. "It's a relief organization dedicated to helping wolfless and vulnerable wolves—Omegas, outcasts, rogues." He shrugged. "If a wolf needs help, OTS is there."

Well, that explained a lot.

"That's..." Noble, impressive, awe-inspiring. For someone who had spent her whole life being ridiculed and cast aside for being wolfless, it was a dizzying relief to find out that there was someone out there—a whole ass organization—who cared that much for my kind.

"You said you knew me," I said. "How?"

Lucian leaned in, bracing his elbows on his thighs. "I did some business with your late father—my condolences, by the way."

I shrugged, ignoring the twinge of pain in my chest. It felt strange and uncomfortable receiving condolences for a man who'd hated me up until he drew his last breath.

"But there was another reason why I attended his funeral," Lucian continued.

I cocked my head, frowning as he said, "I heard Edward Lockwood's eldest daughter was wolfless."

I could almost hear my mental walls slamming up, iron gates locking.

"What is this?" I hissed. "Were you targeting me? Did you save me so you could—"

"I saved you because you were in danger," Lucian said simply. "And I'm here to check up on your well-being."

"Are you checking up on all the other wolves you saved?"

"No," he answered honestly.

"So... why me?"

"Because I want you to join my organization."

I blinked. "What?"

He nodded. "You're an Alpha's daughter, an Alpha's sister, and an Alpha's wife—"

"Ex-wife," I corrected immediately.

Something twinkled in Lucian's eyes as he nodded. "Forgive me—ex-wife. Either way, I believe your identity and experiences could inspire many werewolves facing similar... disadvantages." It was a kinder word than the ones I'd heard my whole life: disability, problem, impairment.

I snorted. "I'm not role-model material."

Lucian raised a brow. "I'd say you've built quite a life for yourself and your son, even in light of your family's antagonism and recent divorce."

"I—" It was slightly unsettling how much this stranger knew about me.

"The point is, Sera," he said, "I find you inspiring, and I know many others would, too. OTS is more than a relief organization. We also offer the... tools every wolf needs. We can train you, make you strong in your own right, so you never have to rely on someone else to save you."

I glanced down at the card in my hands—then back at Lucian.

He smiled kindly. "You don't have to decide right now. Take some time to think about it."

I nodded slowly. That, I could do.

"Thank you," I said softly.

"You already said that."

I laughed softly. "Yeah, but..." No one had ever asked me to belong to something. Even my pack and family, with whom belonging should have been automatic, hadn't wanted me. But here was Lucian, who'd sought me out, who wanted me to be a part of something. It sounded almost too good to be true.

"Well," Lucian said, pushing himself to his feet, "I should get going."

I stood, too, and walked him back to the door.

"I hope you say yes," he said as he opened the door. "I think this will be really good for you."

I smiled hesitantly. "I'll consider it."

He shot me one last smile before leaving.

Sighing, I leaned against the door, staring at the contact card in my hands. "'Out of the Shadows,'" I whispered. What would that be like, I wondered. If the organization was filled with wolfless wolves like me, I'd be among my kind, so to speak. Could it be possible? Could I find a community that—

A brusque knock on the door startled me.

Smiling, I opened it. "Did you forget some—"

Kieran glowered down at me, and it was like a bubble burst over my head, showering me with reality. So much for thinking his visiting me was ridiculous.

"What are you doing here?"

Kieran turned, and I followed his gaze to see a dark red Aston Martin pull out of my driveway. He must have encountered Lucian outside.

"What was he doing here this early?" Kieran hissed, turning back to me.

A strange emotion zinged through me, one I'd never felt with Kieran before—irritation.

"How is that any of your business?"

He stepped inside and walked past me into the living room, his head darting around. "Hey," I called after him. "You can't just—"

"Did he sleep here?"

I blinked. "Excuse me?"

"Did he sleep here?" Kieran repeated, like my question was one of confusion and not of indignation.

I scoffed. "Do you need a dictionary?" I asked.

"What?"

"Because you clearly need to be reminded of the meaning of 'divorced.' Nothing concerning me is your business anymore, Kieran."

He hadn't cared about anything pertaining to me over the decade we were married. How dare he attempt to show an interest now?

His dark eyes flashed. "I may not be your husband anymore," he snarled, "but I will always be the father of your son, and you can't be bringing strange men into my son's home when—"

"Oh, but it's okay to go around flaunting your rekindled relationship with Celeste in front of Daniel?" I didn't know why I was so pissed. It wasn't like Lucian had actually slept over, or I'd done anything wrong. But that was the thing—either way, it was not Kieran's business. Not anymore.

"You're a lot of things, Kieran, but I didn't realize you were a hypocrite."

His eyebrows furrowed so deeply, they almost merged into one. "Excuse me?"

I pointed to the door. "There! You're excused."

Kieran let out an incredulous scoff. "I don't know what has gotten into you lately, but this isn't you, Seraphina."

I let out a sharp bark of laughter. "And how am I?" I asked. "How am I, Kieran? Because I can assure you, you don't fucking know me. You never did. In fact, I think this is the longest fucking conversation we've ever had."

Kieran took a step forward. "I—"

"Mom? Dad?"

Kieran and I turned to see Daniel at the foot of the stairs, rubbing his eyes.

"Baby!" I gasped, sidestepping Kieran to go to him.

His curls were sticking around every which way, and I gently ran a hand through them. "Did we wake you?"

He shook his head. "Your phone alarm, for school."

I glanced at the clock—seven a.m.

"Right."

Daniel looked over my shoulder and gave Kieran a toothy grin. "Hi, Dad."

I stiffened slightly when Kieran stepped toward us, suddenly smiling brightly. "Morning, Champ."

He waved a book I hadn't noticed in his hand earlier. "You forgot this in my office last time you did homework. Figured you needed it for school."

Daniel reached out and took it. "Thanks, Dad." Then he sniffed once and turned to me, his eyes widening in delight. "Are you making pancakes?"

I nodded.

Daniel bounced on the balls of his feet. "Can Dad come to breakfast?" He turned to Kieran. "Dad, can you come to breakfast?"

Absolutely fucking not. "Danny, I'm sure your father—"

"Would love to," Kieran said.

Our eyes met over Daniel's head, and something crackled in the air between us, volatile and precarious. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but I suddenly didn't have an appetite.