

## **My Sister 111**

Chapter 111 REDEMPTION ARC

SERAPHINA'S POV

Ethan's grip wasn't rough, but it was firm, unyielding.

Rain streaked down his face, making his expression hard to read. For once, though, there was something softer in his eyes—hesitation, maybe even regret.

"I'll drive you home," he said simply.

The offer stunned me more than my mother's slap, more than Celeste's accusation. For a moment, I just stared at him, blinking water from my lashes.

Something twisted in my chest. Old wounds and fresh ones colliding. I wanted to tell him to let go, to leave me in the rain, to let me dissolve until there was nothing left.

I yanked my arm back. "No, thank you." My voice came out sharper than I meant, but I didn't soften it.

"If you're planning another lecture, Ethan, don't bother. I'm not in the mood. And if you try anyway, well—" I gave him a look that was equal parts warning and promise, "—I can fight back now."

He didn't flinch. If anything, he looked...almost amused. "I don't doubt it," he said. "Maya never stops praising you. Says you're her most outstanding student. If anyone can take me down these days, it's probably you."

I blinked, caught off guard by the lack of sarcasm. His tone was matter-of-fact, not mocking.

Still, I folded my arms. "Then all the more reason for you to step aside. Go back to Celeste. She's the one lying in a hospital bed, not me."

"I know she'll be fine," he said without hesitation.

The certainty in his voice startled me, and I arched a brow. "You sound very sure for someone whose sister just got hit by a car."

"I'm sure," he said again, this time more quietly, so I had to strain to hear him over the pouring rain.

Then his gaze cut back to me, unwavering. "And for what it's worth, I don't believe you pushed her."

The words hit me like a blow. Not because I needed his validation—I didn't, not anymore—but because it had been so long since anyone in that family had believed anything I had to say.

I tried to laugh, but it came out brittle. “That’s perfect then. That undoes all the years of scorn and disdain.”

He didn’t rise to the barb. Instead, he just nodded toward his car parked at the curb. “Come on. The state you’re in—you shouldn’t go home alone.”

I swiped a wet clump of hair from my face. “I’m fine.”

“You’re not,” he said gently.

“Maya will kill me if I let you walk home in the pouring rain. And…” He hesitated, as though swallowing something difficult. “It’s my duty. As your brother.”

The word brother stuck in my ears like a burr. My brother.

When had he ever acted like one? Why was he now choosing to stay by my side instead of Celeste’s after all these years?

My instinct was to refuse, to walk into the rain and prove I didn’t need any of them.

But my body was betraying me—my legs were shaky, my chest tight.

The cold was already seeping into my bones, and the thought of standing on a curb waiting for a cab in this storm suddenly felt unbearable.

“Fine,” I muttered, brushing past him toward his car. “But if I even smell a reprimanding speech, I’m throwing myself out of the door.”

He chuckled. “Then you and Celeste can be roommates.”

I spun around and shot him a look, and he immediately clamped his mouth shut, his lips twitching from the effort.

I turned away before he could see me fight my own smile.

The interior smelled faintly of leather and something familiar. Maya, I realized with a grudging smile.

I slid into the passenger seat, dripping rain onto the floor mat. Ethan got in on his side, started the engine, and instantly turned up the heat.

“Here,” he said, handing me a thick sweatshirt from the backseat.

I took it gratefully and pulled it on, hugging my arms around myself.

For a while, the only sound was the swish of wipers cutting through the storm.

Then Ethan reached forward and fiddled with the knob of the stereo. Moments later, music filled the space, soft at first.

I frowned. It was...familiar.

The melody filled the car, soft and melancholy—echoing from some distant memory. Gentle guitar picking, a tender voice that had seemed to understand everything I couldn't say aloud.

Not exactly what I'd choose now, but the kind of thing I used to play late at night, headphones clamped over my ears, letting the melodies carry away the restless hum of my own thoughts.

I glanced at him. "Really? You listen to Fleetwood Mac?"

His mouth twitched, not quite a smile. "I wasn't sure what you liked anymore. Paxton mentioned you used to listen to this. Thought it was worth a try."

That stopped me. Paxton—our old butler.

He'd been one of the few constants in the Lockwood Manor, growing up. One of the few people who showed me kindness in the quiet, unnoticed small ways that mattered. Who didn't treat me as less-than.

My throat tightened. "That was a long time ago."

"I know." Ethan's hands tightened on the wheel. "After the..." He cleared his throat. "...cinnamon raspberry incident, I've been trying to remember things. Trying to see them differently."

I gave a short, humorless laugh. "What's this, some sudden bout of brotherly guilt? Or are you just hoping that if you play the right song, I'll march back into that hospital room and apologize to Celeste?"

His head turned toward me briefly, his expression unreadable in the glow of the dashboard lights. "No," he said, firmly. "That's not it."

I snorted. "Sure, okay."

"I'm serious, Sera." His voice had an edge now, not sharp but intense, like he needed me to hear him. "I've started to realize how many mistakes I made. How much I let myself be blinded. We're brother and sister, and we've spent so many years acting otherwise. I don't want to spend whatever time we have left resenting each other."

Something in me twisted at the sincerity I thought I heard there. But I shoved it down. "So what, this is your redemption arc? Tell me you believe me now, and all is forgiven?"

“I don’t expect forgiveness,” he said. “I don’t even know if I deserve it. I just...” His jaw tightened, his gaze fixed firmly on the road.

“I know you—I know you think I don’t, but I do. And sure, lately you’ve changed. You’ve become reclusive, difficult, even sharp-edged, but you’ve never been cruel. You would never hurt someone on purpose.”

My eyes narrowed. “Do you hear yourself? If I’ve become sharp-edged and difficult, it’s because you all made me that way.”

He nodded. “I won’t argue that. But what I said stands. You would never hurt anyone, Sera. That isn’t you.”

The words made me want to look away, but I couldn’t. My chest hurt, like he was prying open a wound I’d buried under scar tissue.

“You really think that?” My voice was low, harsh. “That I’m incapable of cruelty? You literally just said I changed—you can’t tell up to what extent. You’d be surprised what someone can learn to stomach when they’re pushed far enough.”

Because here’s the deep, unnerving truth: If I’d been standing in front of Celeste at that moment, and I’d seen the car rushing down the street, I don’t know that I wouldn’t have pushed her.

I didn’t know what to do with that.

He shook his head. “Not you. Some things don’t change, Sera. Not the core of who we are. I remember you refusing to eat chicken for weeks because you saw one killed in the yard. You cried yourself sick over it. That’s not someone who would shove her sister into the path of a car.”

The memory hit me like a sucker punch, vivid and embarrassing. My younger self, devastated over something so small.

I felt exposed, as if he’d reached in and dragged out a version of me I hadn’t allowed myself to remember in years.

“Maybe that girl’s gone,” I whispered.

“Maybe she’s not,” he said quietly.

Silence stretched. The wipers squeaked back and forth. My reflection in the rain-streaked window looked pale, tired, unrecognizable even to me.

Part of me still wanted to lash out, to accuse him of ulterior motives, to spit that I wasn’t stupid enough to fall for a change of heart this late in the game.

But another part—smaller, quieter—just felt tired. Too tired to keep sorting through the sincerity and the lies.

So I leaned my head back against the seat, closing my eyes. "Whatever, Ethan. Believe what you want. Right now, I just want to get home."

"Then that's what we'll do," he said, and for once, he didn't push further.

We drove the rest of the way in uneasy quiet, the storm softening to a drizzle outside, and I could almost imagine that it was a reflection of the ease in the atmosphere between us.