

My Sister 12

Chapter 12 UGLY DARKNESS

SERAPHINA'S POV

It took every ounce of dignity and self-respect I had not to cower and shrink under the cold disdain in Celeste's eyes as they roamed over my body, her glossy lips twisting in disgust.

"Wow, Sera," she sneered, shaking her head. "What the hell was I worried about?" she said, almost to herself.

I folded my arms, bracing them around me like they could shield me from the interaction to come.

"What can I do for you, Celeste?" I asked, my voice measured, flat.

She cocked her head. "You're not going to invite your little sister into your new home? How is life as a divorcée, by the way?"

I clenched my jaw, bracing my feet at the doorway. "It's my rest day, Celeste. You interrupted a fabulous nap, and I'm sure you didn't come all this way to sneer and wrinkle your nose. So, what do you want?"

"I wonder about it a lot, you know?" she said.

I frowned. "What?"

"What could you have possibly done to trick Kieran into bed with you that night? How did someone as fundamentally unattractive as you pull that off? How much did you fuck with his brain that he lost all common sense?"

I closed my eyes, breathing through my nose. I was so not in the fucking mood for this.

"Goodbye, Celeste."

I grabbed the door and tried to close it, but Celeste braced her foot between the door and the frame.

"Stay away from him," she hissed.

I looked up at her. "Who?"

"Kieran," she spat. "Who else?"

I sighed. I was way too tired and sleepy for this bullshit. "In case you didn't get the memo upon your return, Celeste, Kieran and I are divorced. Surely, he mentioned that to you."

"And yet, you're still going around, shamelessly seducing him like the slut you are."

I froze, waking up a little. "Excuse me?"

Celeste's face morphed into something ugly and vicious. "He came back to the training room covered in your stink. You thought I wouldn't find out that you're still thirsting after my man?"

The sheer absurdity of her accusation left me momentarily speechless. Kieran had tried to kiss me, and somehow, I was the villain?

"He left you, Sera," Celeste continued, each word a sharp-edged blade designed to cut.

"He never wanted you ten years ago, and he doesn't fucking want you now. Look at you and look at me—do you really think he'd choose an ugly, wolfless slut over me, the woman of his dreams?"

She stepped closer, and her jasmine perfume wrapped around me like a poisonous fog.

"You're nothing, Seraphina," she hissed. "Do you hear me? Nothing."

"You have no wolf, no job, and now, no husband. You will never amount to anything."

"Your destiny is to sit on the sidelines forever and watch me rightfully take my place—as Kieran's mate, his wife, his Luna."

I'd be lying if I said those words of hers didn't sting me deeply. I'd spent a lifetime hearing these.

Wolfless. Weak. Unworthy.

Decades trying to outrun it. But after that night, I became a sinner forever. Never deserving of any mercy.

I'd groveled for scraps of their approval. Played the obedient wife. Swallowed all the accusations. Even voluntarily walked away from my marriage, thinking distance might dull the ache.

But none of it mattered.

Here stood my sister, on my doorstep, oozing that same venomous smile she'd worn when she'd "accidentally" exposed my lack of a wolf to the entire pack.

Memory fragments burned behind my eyelids:

*Mother turning away as the pack youths "tripped" me into mud;

*Father's dismissive snort when I begged for training;

*Ethan's indifferent eyes when his friends cornered me in the woods;

*Celeste's laughter when her minions pulled my hair hard...

Leaning against the doorframe, I squeezed my eyes shut. The ugly darkness I'd kept caged for years rattled its chains.

Why was I always the one begging? What sick part of me kept letting them win?

Years of fury, humiliation, and swallowed pain erupted in a single breath. When my eyes snapped open, I gave a dark smirk at her.

"You're right," I said sweetly. "You're his dream woman. And yet..." I let my smirk sharpen as I went in for the kill. "For ten years, it was my bed he came to, not yours."

The effect was instantaneous. Celeste flinched like I'd slapped her—I considered doing that too, but my arms ached too damn much.

"The trick I played must have been a damn good one," I continued, enjoying the way she seemed to crystallize on my doorstep. "I must have fucked with his brain so good, he couldn't go a day without fucking me."

The look in her eyes—horror and disgust—didn't hold me back but stoked the darkness inside. I tilted my head. "Tell me, have you two even slept together yet?"

Her flawless porcelain features cracked. I smiled more evilly. "So that means you don't know about the adorable little birthmark on his left butt cheek. Or the way his voice breaks when he—"

"You bitch!" Celeste seethed, and I could almost imagine steam coming out of her ears.

I cocked my head. "What's wrong? Can't handle the truth? Ten years is a long time, Celeste. You'd be surprised what can happen in a decade—"

"Shut up, you vicious bitch!" She clapped her hands over her ears, tears spilling down her perfectly contoured cheeks. "How dare you?! You stole those ten years from us! This is all your fault!"

The way she sobbed—raw, ugly, childish—suddenly reminded me of her as a newborn. How she'd wailed until I rocked her to sleep in the nursery, her tiny fingers clutching mine. How I'd sneak her extra desserts when Mother wasn't looking. There was a time I'd have burned the world for her.

When did we become this? Knives drawn, aiming for the softest parts, not caring if the other bled out.

"Celeste—" My momentary triumph curdled into guilt. But she had spun on her heels, her ponytail whipping viciously behind her.

I bit back a groan as she stormed down my driveway in six-inch Manolos. In the mix of everything, it was easy to forget that Celeste, too, was a victim of what had happened between me and Kieran ten years ago.

But she just made it so damn hard to feel any lasting remorse towards her. Every single person thought she was a better match for Kieran and didn't hesitate to voice their opinions.

I'd accepted it all years ago. I'd kept my emotions locked away—until that night.

I might have done wrong once. But haven't ten years of silent suffering been penance enough? I gave him the divorce. I returned him to her. I had done everything to atone for my sins. Now, all I wanted was peace.

Was that too much?

With a tired exhale, I stepped back into the house and closed the door.

I trudged back upstairs, my legs heavy and the bitter aftertaste of my words to Celeste rank in my mouth. Some battles weren't worth winning.

I sat at the edge of the bed but didn't lie back down. As tired as I was, I was no longer sleepy.

My gaze brushed over my laptop on my nightstand, and a tired smile pulled at my lips as I reached for it.

Sure, I might never measure up to Celeste. I may never have her effortless charisma or glamorous career, but despite the steady antagonism I faced, I had made something of myself.

The screen of my laptop lit—a silent reminder of the one thing I'd built for myself in the past ten years.

Romance author.

The irony wasn't lost on me. Ten years of crafting love stories while living in a marriage devoid of it. No one knew. No one cared.

I'd planned to work on my next book today—a rare free weekend—but Celeste's venom had left me restless, my skin crawling with unspent fury.

I needed to clear my head. So I headed into the shower, letting the hot water wash away the nastiness of Celeste's visit. Dressed in soft joggers and an old hoodie, I slipped outside, desperate for air.

Although it was still morning, the LA sun shone brightly over the quiet Los Feliz neighborhood. I tilted my head up for a moment, letting the bright rays warm me. The sidewalks were damp from the early-morning sprinkler systems.

As I walked to the end of Fern Dell Drive, the houses began to thin out. A couple of joggers passed me, earbuds in, lost in their private worlds. The entrance to Griffith Park appeared like a shift in temperature. The sidewalks turned to packed dirt under my feet, and the smell of flowers and wet leaves hung thick in the air. Tall trees arched close, filtering in the light.

Birds chirped in the branches overhead, a melodic song that pulled a wistful smile out of me.

I climbed onto a small wooden bridge that crossed the creek and stopped in the middle, leaning on the railing. I closed my eyes and took slow, calming breaths, inhaling the clean air and calming myself.

My hard-won tranquility was shattered when my phone started blaring, a shrill sound that cut into the quiet of the morning.

I huffed, fishing it out of my pocket.

I rolled my eyes when I saw the caller ID.

What now?

"Hell—"

"What the fuck, Sera?" Kieran snarled down the line.

I pulled the phone away, wincing slightly. "You're going to have to be more specific," I said dryly.

"What the fuck did you say to Celeste?"

I snorted. Of course, she'd gone running to him, no doubt leaving out all the unflattering details that didn't favor her, once again painting me as the villain.

If she'd gone to him first before coming to me, then maybe I wouldn't have had to say—and hear—such ugly things.

I ran my hands through my hair, feeling my earlier exhaustion return with a vengeance. "Listen, Kieran—"

I heard the sound first—a sharp, explosive crack that shattered the quiet morning. Then I saw the birds take to the sky, screeching wildly.

Then I felt it—pain. Red-hot agony, unlike anything I thought was possible.

"What was that?" Kieran's voice sounded like it was coming through a vacuum—muffled and distant.

My head dropped slowly, and for a second, I couldn't put the pieces of the puzzle together, couldn't reconcile the sound of the gunshot with the pain, with the blood seeping out of the hole in my chest.

"I think I just got... shot?" I mumbled, my words slurring as the pain spread from my chest to every part of my body.

"Wha—"

My knees buckled, and I crashed to the floor as the world around me turned black.