

My Sister 121

Chapter 121 SCHEDULED DOSE OF POISON

SERAPHINA'S POV

I could tell Judy was still wound tight long after we'd left the hotel.

She walked stiffly beside me all the way to OTS, her jaw clenched, shoulders hunched as though Brynjar's shadow still lingered at her back.

"Come on," I said gently, catching her wrist before she could retreat into the building and probably wallow in the dorms. "We're not ending the night like this."

Her wide, uncertain eyes flicked to mine. "Sera, I—"

"No arguments." I tugged her down a side street, toward a small café that stayed open late for students and guests alike.

The glow from inside spilled across the pavement, warm and welcoming. "You need something sweet after a bitter experience like that." I shot her a smile, which she reluctantly returned. "My treat."

We slid into a booth by the window. The scent of baked bread and caramel clung to the air, calming and indulgent.

Judy hesitated only a moment before ordering a slice of chocolate cake so rich it looked sinful. I went with my actual favorite dessert—strawberry cheesecake, light enough to keep the heaviness of the evening at bay.

For a while, we ate in silence. The sugar did its work, loosening the knot of tension between us.

When Judy finally set her fork down, her hands shook faintly.

“Thank you,” she murmured, not looking at me. “If you hadn’t shown up tonight—if you hadn’t stepped in—that would have gone horribly wrong. Brynjar would’ve had his way, and I would’ve been disqualified. Everything I worked for would’ve been gone.”

I hated how right she was. No one was standing up for her when we walked in. Sure, Brynjar was an asshole, but he held more power than Judy, and that was what people only ever really saw.

I leaned forward, placing a hand over hers. “You held your own in there; that was pretty impressive.”

She scoffed self-deprecatingly. “I was terrified,” she confessed. “I was truly considering cutting my losses and just accepting the blame so that the nightmare would end.” She shook her head. “That bastard really had me believing it was a mistake to have ever joined OTS.”

“Hey,” I said softly, but firmly enough to hold her gaze. “You fought hard to be here. You earned this chance, Judy. Don’t let anyone—least of all a brawn-for-brains like Brynjar—make you believe otherwise.”

Her throat bobbed as she swallowed, eyes glistening. “My family...we’ve never had much. Omegas in our pack are always expected to bow, to serve, to fade into the background. But if I perform well in this tournament, even if I don’t win, it could change things for them. Give us a little more standing. Maybe my younger brother won’t get pushed around at training. Maybe my mother won’t have to work herself to the bone.”

Her words pierced me, sharp and familiar. That desperate hope, I knew it intimately. “Then we’ll make sure you get that chance,” I said quietly. “No one is taking it from you.”

She looked up then, and for the first time since Brynjar, the faint smile that flickered across her lips was genuine.

But it didn’t last. Her expression grew conflicted, and she pulled her hand out of mine, twisting her napkin between her fingers.

“I need to confess something.”

I tilted my head, leaning back. “Go on.”

“Back when you first arrived,” she said haltingly, “I thought you didn’t deserve to be here. I thought you’d gotten in because of connections—because of Lucian, or the Lockwoods, or the Blackthornes.

Jessica and her group..." She hesitated, guilt flashing across her face. "They made you out to be arrogant. Useless. And I believed them."

A familiar sting cut through me, but I kept my face neutral.

"But after today," she rushed on, "after seeing how you handled Brynjar, after watching the way people listened to you... I realized they were wrong. You—" She faltered, cheeks flushing. "You draw people in without even trying. You effortlessly command respect. Even without a wolf form. That's...magnetic. And rare."

Heat rose to my cheeks despite myself. Compliments still sat strangely on my shoulders, especially when they caught me off guard. "Judy..."

She shook her head firmly. "I mean it. You saved me tonight. And you didn't even have to."

Her head dipped. "I'm sorry for judging you without knowing you."

"Hey."

She looked up, and I held her gaze, something soft blooming in my chest. "Maybe you had the wrong impression before. But you're willing to see past that to the real me." I smiled. "That matters more."

The air between us shifted, lighter, warmer. A seed had been planted—one that could grow into something stronger than mere acquaintance.

For the first time, I thought of Judy not just as another student or an ally by circumstance, but as a friend.

When we finally parted ways outside the café, she hugged me briefly. “Thank you again, Sera,” she whispered before hurrying off with renewed determination in her step.

I lingered in the night air, smiling faintly to myself. But the warmth didn’t last.

Because that’s when I heard her voice.

“Touching.”

My blood chilled. I turned, and there she was—my scheduled dose of poison, before I could even be bothered to miss her: Celeste.

CELESTE’S POV

Do you know how fucking humiliating it is to look for your partner, and the first place you can think to search is where his ex-wife works?

I didn't know what I would do if I found Kieran in the hotel where Sera was working, but I certainly didn't bargain for that nauseating spectacle where my scheming sister once again managed to convince a group of people that she was worth shit.

For years, Sera had been nothing more than a ghost trailing behind me, silent, invisible, desperate for scraps of attention.

I had been the sun—golden, adored, untouchable.

And now? Wolves who should have sneered at her weakness hung on her every word. And the weak and useless with which she should have been ostracized now looked at Sera like she was the moon incarnate.

It made me sick.

When she turned toward me, her eyes were sharp, wary. As if she expected my attack.

"Celeste," she said flatly. "I would ask how you're faring since your little accident, but it turns out I don't care."

I narrowed my eyes. I didn't even want to think about how spectacularly that plan had crumbled.

I'd expected carnage in the wake of my accident. Sure, my mother turning on Sera, willing to hit her, was satisfying, but seeing Kieran block her, watching Ethan run after her...

I put the images out of my mind because if I thought about them too much, I would lose my shit and start screaming in front of this café.

Instead, I folded my arms, painting my lips into a smile as I steered the topic away. "That was quite impressive in the lobby. You've certainly changed, sister. But you've had ten years to practice, haven't you? Ten years studying the art of seduction? Because look at you now—every stray mutt within a ten-mile radius is suddenly under your spell."

I couldn't even tell if the jab landed because she didn't flinch. Infuriating.

Instead, she stepped closer, her voice low, edged with something that made the fine hairs at my nape stir. "Unlike you, Celeste, I don't need masks. People trust me because I'm real. Because I treat everyone with genuineness. Something you never quite mastered."

I clenched my jaw. She was supposed to break under my words, not throw them back in my face.

"Keep telling yourself that," I spat back. "Just because it fits so well, you've forgotten you have a mask of your own on?" I scoffed. "One day, Sera, I will rip that shit off and everyone will have proof of your—"

"Speaking of proof..." She leaned in, her breath ghosting my cheek, and her eyes glinted with menace that caught me off guard. "I have that." Her lips curled. "Proof that your little stunt—the self-staged

attack—was nothing more than a performance. If I wanted to, I could reveal to the world tomorrow that their precious Princess Lockwood is nothing but a conniving bitch.”

My chest constricted.

It had all happened so fast; she couldn't possibly have proof that I threw myself in front of that car—the car which Abby was driving at the perfect speed to make sure I wasn't too gravely hurt.

Sera was bluffing—she had to be.

But...

My entire world was built on their trust, their adoration. If that cracked—if she exposed me—

She smiled then. A cold, dangerous thing that sent a shiver down my spine. “And the best part? Everyone believes me even without the proof. It wouldn't take much to show them the truth about you. Especially since this isn't even the first time you acted like a bitch, would it?”

My nails bit into my palms. Rage boiled under my skin, thick and choking. How dare she? How dare she think she could threaten me?

I wanted to spit back, to remind her she had always lived in my shadow, that she always would. That wouldn't change after all this time.

But even as I opened my mouth, dread gnawed at the edges of my fury.

Because I had seen it tonight, hadn't I? The way the crowd watched her. The way even wolves from other packs tilted their heads toward her voice.

If she kept this up, if she kept growing, it wouldn't stop at Kieran and Ethan. The day would come when the whole world believed her over me.

Never. I would not allow it. I would rather die.

Or better yet, kill her.

"Celeste?" A man's voice—familiar, unwelcome.

The sound froze me, cooling my fury into fear.

Sera's eyes darted past me, curious. I watched them widen in recognition, and my heart jumped into my throat when she tilted her head respectfully and said, "Alpha Thomas."

Shit, shit, shit.