

## **My Sister 13**

Chapter 13 YOU'RE SAFE NOW

KIERAN'S POV

I hated this feeling—the way my world tilted every time she bled and I wasn't there to stop it.

"Sera?!" My roar echoed through the phone. "Sera, answer me!"

Nothing. Just that horrifying thud after her slurred, "I think I've been shot."

The anger I'd felt moments earlier—when Celeste called sobbing about Sera's taunts—evaporated. In its place: wildfire panic, scorching through my veins.

I was out the door before my chair hit the floor. The tracking app on my phone—the one I'd kept active post-divorce, despite every logical reason not to—led me to Griffith Park. I drove like the hounds of hell were chasing me, cursing Sera's stubbornness for moving so damn far away.

What followed was a nightmare in fragments:

Blood. So much blood, pooling beneath her as I pressed my hand to the silver bullet wound still pulsing in her chest.

Speed. The longest thirty minutes of my life, her labored breaths the only sound in my car as I ran every red light.

Waiting. Pacing the OR hallway for five fucking hours, her dried blood cracking on my knuckles.

Relief. The surgeon's words—"Grazed her heart... no fatal damage... and the surgery was a success."—nearly brought me to my knees.

Now, forehead pressed to the ICU glass, I watched the machines breathe for her. The urge to shatter the window warred with the need to fall apart.

"Her recovery now solely depends on her strength of will."

I slid to the floor instead, Sera's cut-up clothes clutched in my fists. The scent of her blood—fear, pain, copper—seared my lungs.

Again. I'd failed her again.

Two attacks since our divorce. Two times I hadn't been there.

She was Daniel's mother. My responsibility, even if she wasn't my wife anymore. I should've assigned guards. Should've—

A shudder racked me.

Should've done a lot of things.

An unfamiliar ringtone shattered the silence—Sera's phone, buzzing from the bag of her bloodied clothes.

I fished her phone out, and my heart dropped when I saw the caller ID.

"Mom!" Daniel gasped when I answered.

I pressed the heels of my palms to my eyes, swallowing back a curse.

"Hey, Champ," I strained out.

Daniel paused for a beat. "Dad?"

I exhaled. "Hey. How's camping going?"

"Okay," he said slowly, tightly. "We're back—where's Mom?"

I looked over my shoulder at my son's unconscious mother.

"She's occupied right now, Danny."

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you in the hospital?"

I froze. Daniel's perceptiveness was sometimes eerie.

"Dad?" Daniel pressed when I didn't answer. His voice trembled when he spoke again. "What happened? Is Mom okay? Is she hurt again?"

I exhaled. I couldn't bring myself to tell my son what had happened to his mother. The horrific details sat on the tip of my tongue and refused to fall out.

"Your mom is fine," I lied.

"Then where is she? I want to talk to her."

"Not right now, hon. She... she's on a trip."

"Without me?" The betrayal in his voice gutted me.

"Last-minute thing," I backpedaled. "She left her phone by accident."

"Is it a training trip?"

I jumped on the escape. "Yes! You know how hard she's been training. She's gone on a training trip."

"Oh." A skeptical exhale. "Then why are you at the hospital? Are you hurt?"

I shook my head. "No, bud, just some routine checks. Don't worry about it."

"Right." He didn't sound convinced.

"So when is Mom coming back?"

"Soon, bud. But are you okay with staying with Grandma and Grandpa for a little while longer?"

"What about school?"

I paused. If Sera had been shot in the open park in broad daylight, there was no telling what other dangers were lurking around my family. I would be damned if someone else I lo—

If someone else close to me got hurt.

"How would you like a break from school, Champ?"

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SERAPHINA'S POV

Consciousness returned in layers of agony.

My eyelids felt like they'd been superglued together, my mouth felt dry and sandpapery, there was an itch under my right foot that was driving me crazy, and... oh yeah—the god-awful, brain-fogging bitch of a pain that weighed on my chest.

I woke up with a gasp, but that only tripled the pure agony radiating through my torso from where I'd been—

Oh gods. I'd been fucking shot.

"Shit, Sera?"

That voice—rough with exhaustion, thick with relief—tugged my attention sideways. It took monumental effort, but I turned my head just enough to see—

"K—?"

His name dissolved into a pained groan and a throbbing in my chest that was not worth it.

"Hey, hey, it's okay." His voice was a caress against my throbbing muscles, softer than I'd ever heard it.

Kieran Blackthorne knelt beside my bed, my hand clutched between both of his. His lips brushed my knuckles, his exhale shuddering like he'd been drowning. Dark circles bruised his eyes. His hair stood in chaotic peaks, as if he'd spent days dragging fingers through it.

He looked wrecked.

"That's it," he murmured. "Thank you for waking up."

The crack in those last words would've made my eyes widen—if they didn't weigh a thousand pounds each.

Between the bullet wound and Kieran's inexplicable bedside vigil, I wasn't sure which was more shocking.

The door opened then, bringing in external chatter from the hospital corridor before it faded as the door closed.

A man in a white coat smiled kindly at me from the doorway. He had a name tag on, but I couldn't read what it said.

"Mrs. Blackthorne"—he beamed at me—"well done."



Huh. "Miss—" Once again, my tongue hadn't quite woken up, and I couldn't correct his mistake.

Kieran didn't either.

"You were quite lucky, Seraphina," the doctor said, adjusting his clipboard. "That silver bullet should have killed you. But without a wolf's accelerated metabolism, the poison spread more slowly. What would've slaughtered a full-blooded werewolf merely... severely wounded you."

I mentally scoffed at the irony that the inhibition that had been a source of pain and ridicule my whole life had saved me.

The doctor moved closer and began performing routine checks—flashing a light into my eyes, checking my blood pressure and oxygen saturation, and performing a number of other procedures I was too tired to follow.

"Everything looks good," he declared when he was done, and Kieran exhaled in relief.

"The hard part's over," the doctor continued, "but your human biology means a longer recovery. No wolf healing for you."

I managed a faint nod. I was alive by some miracle. No way was I going to bitch about the fact that it would take me a while to heal.

The fog in my brain was beginning to clear slowly but surely, and the gravity of the situation fell heavily on me.

Someone had shot me. With silver.

This wasn't random violence.

Kieran's warning after the rogue attack echoed in my skull. I'd been naive to think my family's disdain would protect me.

A tremor wracked my battered body.

"Hey." Kieran's hand enveloped mine, his thumb brushing my knuckles. "You're safe now. I'm not going anywhere." His jaw clenched. "This won't happen again."

I arched a brow—Why the sudden protectiveness?

He gently, tenderly brushed my hair back from my forehead. "I'm not letting my son grow up without his mother," he said tightly.

A fleeting pang went through me at the mention of Daniel. How was he? Was he hurt? Did he know I was hurt?

"Sera." Kieran's voice cut through my spiraling thoughts. "That mind of yours is working overtime. Stop. Just rest. I'm here." He shook his head. "I don't want you to worry about anything, okay? Just rest. I'm here."

But why? The question burned behind my lips.

The doctor—who I'd almost forgotten—chimed in. "Mrs. Blackthorne, you need serious recovery time. Your husband hasn't left this room in forty-eight hours, so you're in good hands."

My eyelids finally cooperated, flying open. Husband? Two days?

"I—"

"She'll rest now, Doctor." Kieran's tone brooked no argument. "Thank you so much for everything."

The doctor nodded. "Don't hesitate to alert the nurses if you need anything."

Once we were alone, I opened my mouth and forced out the dry, cracked words: "You're... not... my husband."

Kieran rolled his eyes.

"All your identification documents still read Seraphina Blackthorne, so..." He shrugged.

Dammit! I'd dragged my feet on changing the name because even though I knew I was no longer a Blackthorne, I didn't feel like a Lockwood either.

"Don't... have to stay," I rasped.

His grip tightened around my fingers. "Try and make me leave."

I wanted to argue—assure him that hospital security would keep me safe—but the few words I'd said had drained me, and Kieran's hand was so warm and comforting around mine.

"That's it," he murmured, stroking my head, "Sleep, Sera. I'll be here when you wake. You're safe now."

Against all logic, against the terror of being hunted, his presence anchored me. For the first time in years, I didn't fear the dark.

Because the devil himself was keeping watch.

