

My Sister 162

Chapter 162 MAGICAL GLUE

SERAPHINA'S POV

For a moment, the world stilled between them—the hum of engines, the rustle of night air, even Daniel's small hand in mine.

All that existed were the two outstretched arms, the two contrasting gazes—warm and searing.

I felt like I was at a proverbial crossroad, as if the choice before me carried far more weight than just deciding whose car would take me home.

Dammit, I should have just brought my own car. In hindsight, walking to OTS so the fresh morning air could calm my nerves before the final challenge had been a stupid idea.

I stood frozen, indecisive, for way too long.

And then Daniel tugged lightly at my hand and tilted his head toward his father.

“Can we go home first, Mom? I have one more surprise for you.”

And just like that, the decision made itself.

I smiled, despite the tension crackling in the air like lightning poised to strike.

“Okay, baby.”

I turned to Kieran. “We’ll ride with you.”

I gave Lucian an apologetic smile, worried he’d feel rejected. As much as I wanted to spend time with him after being apart for so long, Daniel was always my priority.

Lucian’s smile didn’t slip, but I caught a quick flicker of disappointment—his eyes suddenly cooler—making my chest ache with guilt.

“I guess I’ll see you at the party,” he said smoothly, lowering his hand.

“It was nice to properly meet you, Sir,” Daniel said, smiling warmly at Lucian.

Lucian’s grin broadened. “Call me Lucian.”

“Lucian,” Daniel echoed brightly, and I was pretty sure the sound of grinding gravel came from Kieran’s clenched jaw.

When Lucian looked at me again, he winked, and the tight knot in my chest loosened slightly. We would see at the party. We would talk, and everything would go back to how it was before the Trials.

Right?

We didn’t quite move until Lucian’s car disappeared from the parking lot.

“Well,”—Kieran cleared his throat, his hand still outstretched, his expression still unreadable—“shall we?”

It was driving me a little crazy that I couldn’t clearly tell what he was feeling. But that didn’t stop me from trying.

It wasn’t triumph I saw in his expression. Not satisfaction either. More...off-kilter? Like the ground beneath him had shifted, and he didn’t quite trust its steadiness anymore.

Or maybe I was just projecting my own feelings.

“Yeah.” My hand tightened around Daniel’s. “Let’s go.”

The drive home was mostly silent, save for Daniel humming softly in the back seat. His contentment filled the small space, warm and alive. For once, silence between me and Kieran wasn't heavy and stiff with tension.

When we pulled up to my driveway, I half-expected awkwardness to greet us. But Daniel burst through the door with enough excitement to overshadow any negative feelings.

"Home!" he gushed as he twirled around in the foyer.

The sight of him filled my heart to the point of bursting. He'd only lived here a few weeks before moving to Kieran's island, but the fact that he saw this as a homecoming made my eyes brim with tears of joy.

"Come on, Mom!" he said, tugging at my wrist. "You can't wear that to your own party!"

Kieran's low chuckle followed us from behind. "He's right," he murmured, voice carrying that deep timbre that always managed to unsteady me.

I shot him a look over my shoulder and paused, raising a brow. Not at Daniel's suitcase, which he was dragging behind him, but at the garment box clutched in his other hand.

He held it out to me solemnly, like an offering to a god. "Daniel picked it out himself."

I blinked. “I-I don’t understand.”

“Grandma Leona took me shopping,” Daniel explained, taking the box from Kieran and handing it to me with a lot less reverence. “It’s your celebratory dress!”

My breath caught.

“Danny, you shouldn’t have—”

“Oh, just open it!” he said enthusiastically.

Laughing, I accepted the box. Slowly, I opened the lid—and stilled.

Inside lay a gown that was nothing short of breathtaking: black satin so smooth it caught light like liquid ink, threaded with delicate gold filigree that shimmered at the hem and neckline.

The contrast was both regal and understated, like something carved from the union of night and light. Matching heels—sleek, gold-strapped—sat nestled beneath a layer of soft paper.

I pressed a hand to my mouth. “Oh, baby.”

Tears burned behind my eyes before I could stop them. I reached out for him, but he ducked, laughing. "Enough hugging! We need to get ready."

I laughed softly, the sound breaking through my chest. "Bossy little Alpha."

He tilted his chin proudly. "I just want everything to be perfect."

I knelt, drawing him into a quick hug anyway, and kissed his forehead. "Thank you, my love."

When I looked up, my gaze met Kieran's over Daniel's head.

'Thank you,' I mouthed.

He shrugged, but his eyes softened. "I didn't buy the dress."

My smile softened. "Not for the dress."

The gown fit like it had been made for me. The bodice hugged enough to accentuate without restraining or aggravating my bruised ribs. The skirt fell in liquid folds, brushing the floor and parting at my thigh in a modest slit that hinted rather than revealed.

When I looked in the mirror, I almost didn't recognize myself.

The woman staring back wasn't the same Sera who had walked into the Trials. She wasn't the trembling girl who had loved and lost and broken herself trying to be enough.

She looked...transformed.

Like she'd walked through fire and came out radiant.

An excited knock pulled me away from my introspective moment, and when I opened the door, I gasped.

"Oh, look at you!"

Daniel beamed, adjusting the gold accent cuffs on his black blazer.

"Mom!" His eyes widened. "You look amazing!"

“Thanks to you, my love.”

“Do you like it?” he asked, as he gestured to his cufflinks and matching gold bowtie.

I laughed. “I love it, hon.”

He held out his arm for me, all formal and adorable. “Shall we?”

I reached back in and grabbed my clutch before leaning down to slip my arm through his. “We shall.”

It was a little awkward walking down the stairs due to our height difference and my heels, but I cherished every step.

“Dad!” Daniel called out. “Come see!”

My breath caught when Kieran stepped into sight.

He had on the same black suit and black shirt he’d been wearing earlier, but the tie was a new addition. Black, threaded with thin gold stripes that shimmered just like the trim of my dress and Daniel’s bowtie.

Our son waved his hand around with a flourish, grinning mischievously. “Ta-da! We match!”

Kieran rubbed the back of his neck, smiling awkwardly. “It was his idea.”

My answering chuckle was just as awkward. “Yeah, I figured.”

I didn’t want to examine too deeply what that meant. Was Daniel’s heart still set on us being a family? Did he want us back together so desperately that he’d orchestrated this?

“You look...” Kieran’s words tapered off, like he couldn’t find the proper adjective. “Phenomenal,” he settled on an exhale.

I didn’t fight the smile that pulled on my lips at the compliment, and I noted with a twinge of pride that my heart didn’t ache.

In another life, when I’d been a different Sera, that comment would have carried me high into the clouds.

This—this picture we painted was what I wanted all those years of distance and indifference.

A father, a mother, and their son standing in the glow of the foyer light, like a true family.

Not the word, not the performance of it—but the warmth of belonging, of being seen and held and known.

But I was not that Sera anymore, and the chance to be that kind of family was long gone.

I hated more than anything to disappoint Daniel, but matching outfits was not a magical glue that would fix the shattered pieces of a marriage that had never really been whole to begin with.

But for my son, for the only thing that mattered to me, I would raise my chin high and play whatever part he wanted me to. If only for tonight.

And if, as we stepped out into the cool night, a quiet warmth—the illusion of something whole—settled in my chest, I let it linger.

Just for tonight.

KIERAN'S POV

I couldn't quite name the feeling that tightened in my chest as I watched Sera descend the stairs, Daniel's small hand looped confidently through hers.

The soft gleam of gold along her dress caught the stair light, rippling like flame against the black fabric.

It was a quiet, devastating picture—one of ease, of grace, of a beauty I'd never let myself appreciate.

Moments like this could have happened a hundred times over during our marriage, and yet they never had.

I'd chosen silence over laughter, distance over warmth, control over connection. I'd told myself it was duty that bound us, not affection. That loving her wasn't necessary to keep the peace. That indifference was safer.

But watching her now, radiant in the glow of our son's joy and her victory, I felt the weight of every missed moment. Every meal eaten apart. Every one-sided conversation I'd cut short. Every intimate moment I let grow cold.

In another life, maybe this would've been our normal. Her smile wouldn't have carried that soft wariness. Daniel's laughter wouldn't sound like a fragile miracle. We wouldn't be standing in the house she bought to get away from me.

As we drove toward the venue, Daniel filled the car with unbroken chatter, his voice bright with the kind of excitement that made me wonder what separate infinite power pack he ran on.

Sera listened with rapt attentiveness, her head constantly tilted towards the back seat, her lips curved in a smile that begged me to park the car so I could stop and stare.

She asked him questions, laughed softly at his stories, and I found myself joining in once or twice before realizing I didn't know when I'd last heard us sound like this—like a family.

No—I remembered. On the island, when it had been just us, another fleeting moment that was already a fading memory, out of my grasp.

As our laughter bounced off each other, tangling into a beautiful symphony, I could imagine, for a brief, painful second, that this was how things might have been if I hadn't pushed her away.

The thought twisted in my chest.

What would have changed if I'd met her halfway instead of standing behind my walls of arrogance and anger?

If I'd let myself see her—not the idea of her, not the guilt and obligation she represented—but the real woman who'd stood by my side, beautiful and bruised and brave and far too patient with me?

My hands tightened on the steering wheel. All too familiar regret sat like a stone behind my ribs, heavy and immovable.

There was no undoing the past, no reclaiming the years I'd wasted acting like I didn't care.

And yet, sitting beside her now, hearing Daniel's laughter fill the car like light, I couldn't help but wish I'd tried harder.

That I'd fought for this—whatever this was—before I had so recklessly let it go.

Before I could follow the thought to its end, the venue lights came into view, spilling golden across the pavement.

Music drifted through the night, blending with laughter and the clinking of glasses. I slowed the car, the illusion breaking piece by piece.

And then I saw him, and it shattered altogether.

Waiting casually by the entrance, one hand in his pocket in a sharp, bespoke navy suit, stood Lucian Reed.

My stomach tightened. The fleeting warmth of the drive dissipated, whatever fragile fantasy had existed was gone, and all that remained was the sharp, brutal truth: we were no longer a family.

And it was all my fault.