

My Sister 166

Chapter 166 FAMILY OUTING

SERAPHINA'S POV

If someone had told me three months ago that I'd end up at a family amusement park with Kieran Blackthorne, I would've laughed them straight into the next moon cycle.

And yet here I was—surrounded by shrieking laughter, spinning rides, and the sugary, buttery scents of cotton candy and popcorn—watching my ex-husband and our son argue over how many rounds they would go on the roller coaster.

It was surreal. Almost painfully so.

This wasn't something I would have agreed to normally, but last night, after I answered Kieran's call, he'd sounded so...soft, his voice lightened by something I couldn't name.

And then he'd given me the best news I could have asked for: Daniel didn't need to return to the private island anymore. He could stay here with me indefinitely.

I'd been so ecstatic on hearing the news that I hadn't even hesitated before saying yes to celebrating.

Somehow, that had turned into this—a family outing. The first in...ever, I think.

Now, instead of giving myself over to the experience, I found myself debating the wisdom of my decision.

Gods knew what Kieran and Celeste's relationship was like now, after what had happened, and Lucian and I still hadn't had a moment to sit down and talk.

But Daniel's grin—the pure, unfiltered joy lighting up his whole face—made all those doubts quiet down.

For him, I could endure anything.

Kieran, on the other hand, looked infuriatingly at ease.

He was wearing a navy and grey button-up shirt, rolled casually at the sleeves. The wind continually swept through his hair, playing with his curly strands.

He looked...different. Carefree. Lighthearted.

Meanwhile, I was here, overthinking everything, while he radiated a calm as deep as a monk's. The contrast irked me.

So I resolved to be the same. I would stop worrying and just let things unfold. I could be carefree too, dammit.

I turned my attention to Daniel, who was bouncing on his toes as the coaster came to a stop. “Mom, we’re going twice! You should come too!”

I smiled, waving the ice cream cone he’d abandoned after one lick. “I think I’ll sit this one out, sweetheart. Someone has to make sure your ice cream doesn’t melt.”

In truth, my ribs were taking their sweet time recovering, and every move hurt. But I didn’t let it show. I refused to be a dampener on my son’s perfect day.

He grinned, satisfied enough, and tugged his dad toward the roller coaster line. Kieran glanced back at me, and our eyes met for one quick second before he looked away.

It was nothing. Could barely be described as eye contact. Still, I had to immediately lower myself onto a bench thanks to my wobbly knees.

I refused to read too much into my reaction and focused on them.

Father and son. Laughing. Teasing each other. Having a blast.

I held my thoughts in check for all of six seconds before they went off-leash, taking me back to last night. The matching outfits. The playful harmony in the car. And...now.

For a fleeting, delusional second, I could almost believe the divorce never happened. We were still married. But...happily.

The past ten years were nothing but a bad dream. I hadn't cried myself hollow on several nights. My husband only ever had eyes for me.

I knew it was an illusion. I knew it was silly. I knew I should stop before the quiet ache shifted—first into longing, then into a hope that would devastate me.

Yet.

"Excuse me," a voice said softly, saving me from my thoughts.

I turned. A she-wolf stood hesitantly nearby, clutching a stroller. Her eyes were bright, nervous. "I'm sorry—are you... Seraphina Blackthorne? The LST champion?"

My first thought was that she had the wrong person.

My second thought was: Holy shit, that's me.

The smile I gave her probably looked incredulous. "Yes, I am."

Her face lit up with awe. "Oh, Goddess—I can't believe it's really you. Would you mind if I took a picture? You've...you've inspired me more than I can say."

The sincerity and awe in her tone filled my chest with warmth. "Of course," I said, rising. She pulled out her phone for the photo. I stepped beside her, smiling to myself when I noticed her hand trembling slightly.

"Thank you," she whispered after the click.

"Oh, it's nothing."

"No," she shook her head, a whisp of hair falling over her eyes. "I mean...for everything. For your story."

My brows knit as she tucked the strand of hair behind her ear, continuing, "I was married off to forge pack alliances, and my husband..." Her eyes suddenly filled with tears, and she blinked furiously to keep them at bay. "He wasn't kind. He hurt me a lot."

My stomach clenched violently. For all Kieran's shortcomings, he never once raised his hand against me.

And I knew that was the bare minimum, but I would always be grateful for the surety I had that he would never hurt me.

Ashar in the Snowfield Arena did not count.

"I—I used to think I'd never get out," the woman continued, her voice thick with emotion. "I stayed because I knew I couldn't go back to my old pack, and I thought no one would accept me or my child if I left. But then I was at the charity gala where you gave your first speech. It really moved me. Since then, I started following your story."

Her voice wavered, and a tear finally slipped down her cheek. "It gave me courage unlike anything else. I filed for divorce last month. I got a small apartment for rent with my savings, and I'm...I'm going to join OTS."

My throat went dry. "That's...incredible," I managed, genuinely. "You're so brave."

She shook her head quickly, wiping the tears. "No, you are. You showed me that even when the world takes everything, we can rebuild our lives. Thank you, Sera."

I was speechless. Dumbstruck.

The only thing I could do was pull her into a hug and fight a groan when she squeezed me tightly enough to break my bruised ribs.

Long after she left, I stood there, staring at the space she'd occupied.

The sounds of the park rushed back around me—music, laughter, the clang of machinery—but my thoughts were miles away.

My story...

Everything I'd gone through had given someone the power to leave her abuser and turn her life around.

If Kieran and I hadn't gotten divorced...

Would I have joined OTS? Would I have worked my ass off to get stronger? Would I have found the courage and tenacity to lead my team to victory?

Would I have ever become this—this paragon?

No.

I glanced at the dripping cone in my hand, then at the ride. Kieran and Daniel had climbed off, both flushed and beaming.

For a moment, the contrast between past and present was almost dizzying.

The shirt Kieran wore was unfamiliar. It wasn't one of the ones I used to fold neatly into drawers, desperately inhaling his scent because I was so starved for attention.

And that alone said enough.

We weren't who we'd been before.

He wasn't mine.

And I wasn't his.

We'd never really belonged to each other in the first place.

We were just Daniel's parents now.

It was just like I'd said to Kieran all that time ago at the park: if he could learn to respect my new life, I could learn to respect his. And we could peacefully co-parent without hurting each other.

That had to be enough.

Still, as they came closer, Kieran's eyes caught mine with an unspoken pull that didn't do good things for my resolve. This time, when my knees wobbled, I locked them in place.

"Did we make you wait too long?" he asked, voice threaded with warmth.

"Not at all." I smiled at Daniel, careful not to meet Kieran's gaze too long. "You both looked like you were having fun."

Daniel grinned, his cheeks flushed. "It was so cool, Mom!"

"Here," Kieran said, reaching out for the ice cream cone, "this is all melted. Let's get another—"

As his hand wrapped around the ice cream cone, his fingers brushed mine, and we both froze.

A spark shot through me, so sudden it nearly made me drop the cone. Heat flared under my skin, raw and alive.

I heard a whimper. In my mind—restless and...needy.

‘Alina?’

There was silence.

‘Alina,’ I pushed. ‘Are you okay? What was that?’

‘Nothing.’ Her tone was...startled, unlike her usual composure. I could practically feel her fidgeting.

I blinked, trying to steady my breath, to will away the tremor that still lingered between my fingers.

When I looked up, Kieran was staring at me too—eyes dark, stormy, confused. For what felt like an eternity, neither of us looked away.

And then Daniel tugged his father’s hand excitedly. “Dad! There’s the bumper cars! Can we go?”

The tension broke like glass.

Kieran cleared his throat. Withdrew his hand. “Sure, bud. Go ahead. We’ll catch up.”

Daniel darted ahead, blissfully unaware. But I could feel Kieran's gaze still on me, concentrated and burning as sunlight through a magnifying glass.

"Seraphina," he started, voice barely above the noise. "That—did you feel that—"

"I'm not sure I know what you mean," I cut in gently, proud of myself when my voice didn't shake.

I wasn't lying. I didn't know what he meant. Because I didn't know what that was. But I would be damned if I investigated.

Kieran hesitated, his jaw flexing. I could see the war in his eyes—the part of him that wanted to push, to know, fighting the part that finally understood that he wasn't entitled to anything that concerned me.

For a second, I thought he'd let it go.

But then he stepped closer. Close enough that I could smell cedar and rain wind.

Close enough that I was terrified he would hear the sound of my heart thundering.

"Do you ever think," he murmured, voice roughened, "that maybe this is how things should've been?"

I stared at him, stunned. Why the fuck would he ask me that?

“Don’t do that,” I rasped.

“Do what?”

My words came out sharper than I intended. “Don’t read into anything. This is just a day out with our son—nothing more. Who cares how things should have been? This is how they are now.”

His throat bobbed. “Right.”

But the way he said it told me he didn’t believe it. Not entirely.

He reached for my hand again—deliberate, sure—as if he’d decided that clarity was worth any consequence.

A small, involuntary sound escaped me, half a breath, half a warning.

I didn’t know what I would do if he touched me and that spark flared again.

I held my breath just as his fingers grazed mine—

“Mom! Lucian’s here!”

The ludicrous sentence snapped me back to reality.

I turned, startled. And sure enough, there he was.

Lucian stood a few paces away next to Daniel, a lazy half-smile curving his mouth, his hands tucked casually in his coat pockets.

His gaze flicked from me to Kieran. And that smile hardened.

“I hope I’m not interrupting,” he said smoothly.

I blinked twice, but the image didn’t disappear. “How did you know—”

He waved my question away before I could complete it.

"I made dinner reservations for us," Lucian announced, eyes gleaming. "A private celebration, if you will. Is that okay?"

Daniel's face brightened instantly. "For all of us?"

Lucian glanced at Kieran again, and I didn't miss the tightening around his eyes. "Well, I don't know if your father—"

"That's fine," Kieran cut in. I could feel his energy shifting—cooling, withdrawing. His hands were firmly by his side. "I'll sit that out, thank you."

They shared a look that made me feel like a bone between two Alpha dogs.

Lucian offered his hand to Daniel. "Come on, champ. There's a table waiting with your name on it."

Daniel grabbed it happily. "Bye, Dad! You'll come next time, right?"

Kieran's smile didn't quite reach his eyes. "Sure, buddy. Have fun."

Lucian looked at me expectantly. "Sera?"

I blinked. “Yeah, uh...sure. Let’s go.”

For some reason, my feet were heavy as we walked away. And when I stopped to dump the melted ice cream into a trash can, it took every ounce of willpower I possessed not to glance back.

But it didn’t matter that I didn’t look.

I could feel Kieran’s gaze lingering—like the last trace of a storm that hadn’t decided whether to fade or return.