

My Sister 167

Chapter 167 VALUABLE LESSONS

LUCIAN'S POV

Dinner was supposed to be easy.

A quiet, celebratory meal after a long couple of weeks—something that might bridge the subtle distance I had sensed between Sera and me.

The restaurant's lighting was soft, golden, warm—the kind designed to buffer harsh edges. Gentle music played in the background, and the low murmur of conversation filled the air.

The scent of roasted herbs lingered, mingling with the clink of cutlery and the flicker of candles, giving the whole place an easy, inviting calm.

But none of that could hide the restlessness in Sera's eyes, and as I watched her from across the table, I realized I had my work cut out for me. Steak and potatoes weren't a strong enough bridge.

The last couple of times I'd eaten out with her, she'd been ravenous due to her rigorous training schedule.

Now, though, she hadn't touched much of her food, just prodded at it absentmindedly, her thoughts clearly miles away.

Daniel was seated beside her, digging into his food with the enthusiasm she lacked and talking animatedly about the amusement park and all the rides he and Kieran went on.

Every few sentences, Sera smiled and murmured something appropriate, but I could see the tension pinching the muscles at her jaw, each fake laugh a little too brittle.

Dinner with Sera was light, fun, comfortable, warm. Not...this.

Finally, I set my utensils down. "You don't like the food?" I asked lightly, though my voice came out rougher than intended.

Her head lifted. For a heartbeat, her expression was blank—like she'd forgotten where she was. Then she blinked and shook her head. "No, no. It's fine, really. I think I'm just...tired."

A lie, and a poor one at that.

I leaned back in my seat, studying her. The faintest flush rose on her cheeks under my scrutiny. "You sure?"

Her eyes flickered to Daniel and then back to me. "Positive," she said quickly. "I just need a minute." She pushed back her chair and stood. "Excuse me."

She didn't wait for a response before walking away.

I watched her retreat toward the restroom, her steps surer than when we'd first met. Every instinct in me wanted to go after her, but I held back.

I knew it was too soon to tell definitely, but it was undeniable that something had shifted since the Trials ended.

She'd always been reserved, a little careful and withdrawn, but she'd begun to loosen up around me—smiling more easily, teasing, letting her laughter slip through unguarded.

But now, the warmth she used to show me had cooled, replaced by this polite, distant kind of civility that I didn't know what to do with.

"Lucian?"

Daniel's small voice broke my thoughts. I turned to find him staring at me curiously, spoon of mashed potatoes in hand.

"Yes?"

“You’re thinking really loud,” he said seriously, and I almost laughed despite myself.

“Am I?”

He nodded gravely. “Mom does that too sometimes.” He shook his head. “Adults think a lot.”

“Right.” I cleared my throat. “So...how was your day today? What was the amusement park like?”

Daniel snorted. “So that’s it.”

My brows lifted. “What do you mean?”

He shrugged, shoving the spoon into his mouth. After he swallowed, he said, “You want to know if something happened between my mom and dad today, don’t you?”

I froze. “What makes you think that?”

“I’ve been talking about the amusement park all night. You don’t want to hear more about that.”

I let out a soft huff of air, leaning back in my seat. “You’re perceptive for your age.”

Daniel shrugged. "I sense things."

I felt the corner of my lips quirk up. Daniel really was a marvel. I was sure that when people looked at him, they attributed his remarkableness to Kieran.

But I knew the truth.

I knew whose bloodline fed the strength and intuition young Daniel possessed.

"Alright then," I said, half-amused, half-wary. "So tell me—how was the park today?"

His grin faltered slightly. "It was awesome. Really." He fidgeted with his spoon. "But Mom didn't go on many rides with Dad and me, and she looked...well, like you." He shrugged. "Like she was thinking too much."

The words tugged at something sharp inside me. "I see."

"But," he continued, meeting my gaze again, "if you're trying to find out if something weird happened between them, you can just ask her yourself."

I blinked, caught off guard by the bluntness. "Excuse me?"

"Grandpa says grown-ups waste time by pretending not to care when they actually do," Daniel said matter-of-factly. "You like her. That's not a secret. If you think there's something off between you two, then face it head-on before it's too late."

The silence that followed was deafening.

I hadn't realized I'd been holding my breath until I exhaled slowly. "You're...unusually insightful."

He tilted his head. "I'm just saying you should talk to her. Pretending everything is fine doesn't fix it."

A humorless smile curved my lips. "You sound like someone much older than nine."

He shrugged and scooped another spoonful of mashed potatoes. "I feel much older than nine."

Before I could respond, Daniel leaned forward, his tone turning serious again.

"I'll tell you something, Lucian," he said quietly. "I'll always stand on my mom's side. Always. All I want is for her to be happy. So if you ever hurt her, I won't forgive you."

His dark eyes narrowed, and for a moment, I was back at the bar staring down Kieran. “And I’ll hurt you back.”

For a moment, I just looked at him. His small face, his steady gaze—the calm, grounded strength that could not be taught.

I could see the future in him—the power, the resolve, the natural authority that would one day make werewolves and humans alike bow their heads in respect.

“You’re going to be a great Alpha someday,” I said finally, my voice lower, more earnest than I’d planned.

Daniel’s chest puffed out a little, a proud smile breaking through the tension on his face. “Of course. I’m going to make Mom proud. I won’t let her down.”

I smiled faintly. “Good. Then we have something in common.”

He blinked. “Huh?”

“I don’t plan to let her down either.”

That earned me a thoughtful look—skeptical, maybe, but not unfriendly. Then, after a pause, he extended his hand toward me in a closed fist.

“Promise?”

My hand hovered halfway before I froze.

The gesture was so simple, so childlike—and yet it knocked the air from my lungs.

Because it wasn't just a child's promise.

It was something Zara used to do. The same playful oath she'd insisted on when we were younger, when we were building the future out of our shared dreams.

Before...everything.

Daniel frowned slightly, shaking his fist lightly. “You're supposed to bump it.”

“I...” My throat tightened. “I know.”

It wasn't special. A fist bump was one of the most common gestures ever.

Yet.

That was when Sera's voice cut in—gentle, lilting, but with that soft command she didn't even realize she had.

“What are you two conspiring about?”

We both looked up. She stood at the edge of the table, her hands folded neatly in front of her. There was less tension in the lines of her body, but her gaze darted between us with faint suspicion.

Daniel grinned. “We were making promises.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Promises?”

“Yep.” He turned to me and stage-whispered, “He was about to promise not to break your heart.”

“Daniel,” Sera chided, her tone half-amused, half-mortified.

I couldn't help it; I laughed. “That's...accurate enough.”

Her eyes flicked to me, her expression uncharacteristically guarded, as she slid back into her seat. “You two have been bonding, I see.”

“I’m learning valuable lessons,” I replied lightly. “Your son is an exceptional conversationalist.”

She sighed, but her lips curved slightly despite herself. “I can only imagine what kind of lessons those were.”

Dinner continued after that, though the tension between us hummed quietly beneath the surface.

The drive back was quiet for a while. Exhausted after his eventful day, Daniel dozed in the backseat, his head tipped against the window.

The silence was filled with my thoughts, looping endlessly between what-ifs and regrets, gathering like a storm I could no longer outrun.

And when I pulled up to Sera’s driveway, I decided that I wouldn’t wait a second longer. It was now or never.

The engine was still idling when I turned to her. “Can we talk?”

To my surprise, she didn't hesitate. "I was going to ask the same thing."

I left the engine and AC on as we stepped out stealthily, careful not to wake Daniel, and made our way toward her porch.

We sat on the step, just close enough that our clothes brushed together and I could feel her warmth.

The night was quiet, save for the hum of crickets and the low rumble of my engine. The distant glow of city lights bled into the sky, but a smattering of stars was still visible.

It was a beautiful night, and I wished more than anything that we didn't need to have this difficult conversation.

Sera wrapped her arms around herself, though it was a warm night.

I hesitated, my eyes skimming over her outline, like I was memorizing her. "You've been...distant. More than usual. I can't tell if it's because of the Trials or something I've done."

She sighed softly. "It's not about what you've done, Lucian. It's about what you haven't said."

My pulse kicked up. "Meaning?"

Her voice lowered, calm but sharp. "Meaning you've been keeping something from me."

She turned to me then, and nothing could have prepared me for what she said next. "About your mate."