

My Sister 18

Chapter 18 HOSPITAL BUDDY

SERAPHINA'S POV

Some might call it pathetic—a grown woman curled up in her child's bed, drowning in his scent like some lovesick omega.

Fuck them.

I spent the night in Daniel's room, burrowed in his blanket, inhaling his scent, and trying not to dissolve into a messy puddle of tears.

I'd gotten a clipped text from Leona when they landed at the private island. Due to the strict communication rules that served to keep Daniel safe, we couldn't schedule a call ahead, and I was informed that I'd hear from them when it was secure.

Part of me thought they were going a bit overboard, but I was also grateful they were going overboard. Anything to protect my baby.

I rolled out of bed, squinting against the morning sunlight streaming through the parted windows, and trudged to the bathroom, where I took a quick shower.

I didn't want to go anywhere, but I had a follow-up appointment at the hospital, and the sooner I got the all-clear, the quicker I could return to training and get strong enough to hold my own against the bastards who wanted me dead.

I changed into a pair of jeans and a loose shirt and threw my hair up in a messy ponytail. I was hungry but felt too depressed to cook anything, so I grabbed an apple from the fridge.

I bit into it as I opened the door—and slammed right into Kieran's chest.

"What the—" The apple slipped from my mouth and fell. "Shit!"

He moved faster than was humanly possible and caught the apple in his hand.

He held it up to me. "Here."

I blinked up at him and made no move to take the apple from his hand. "What—" I paused, chewed the piece of fruit in my mouth, swallowed, then continued, "—the hell are you doing here?"

"You blocked me," he answered, his tone accusatory.

I nodded. "Yeah, I did. Because normal people stop calling after the fifth time of being ignored, but you—"

I frowned, my eyes taking him in from head to toe. He was wearing the same black jeans and navy T-shirt he'd been wearing yesterday at the airport. His hair was tousled, a little flat at the back, and his under-eyes were dark.

I glanced behind him, and sure enough, his Escalade was parked beside my sedan.

I frowned at Kieran. "Any answer other than 'no' is fucking ridiculous, but did you sleep in your car—in front of my house?"

He shrugged, taking a bite out of my apple.

My eyes widened. "Hey!"

"I handed it to you; you didn't take it," he said, chewing nonchalantly.

I huffed. "I don't have time for this, Kieran. I have a—"

"Doctor's appointment. I know." He nodded towards his car. "Come on, I'll take you."

My eyes blinked, struggling to process this bizarre reality. Had I woken up in some alternate universe? Since when did my estranged ex-husband give so much damn about me?

First, the hospital vigil, then camping out in my driveway, and now this—playing chauffeur to my check-up?

What the hell had gotten into him?

We'd spent ten years as strangers in a marriage, and he was barely tolerating my presence. Now suddenly he wanted to act like some model co-parent? Like all those years of icy resentment and deliberate indifference never happened?

While Daniel was here, I might have cooperated for his sake. But with him away from home? I wasn't in the mood to play house.

The last thing I needed was another deranged Celeste showing up at my doorstep, leaving me so rattled I'd make reckless choices that may cost my life. And the thought of being in an enclosed space with Kieran for any amount of time made my stomach churn with something that wasn't hunger.

I shook my head. "Stop offering me rides. I'm capable of driving myself."

He frowned. "Have you forgotten that there's a target on your back?"

I gave him a sarcastic smile and tapped my chest lightly. "How could I? Besides,"—I pointed to the familiar black car parked opposite my house—"your security team has been watching me like a hawk. I don't need you to accompany me."

He rolled his eyes. "Sera—"

"If I wanted a hospital buddy, I'd call Lucian, okay?"

Kieran tensed, and I flinched when he squeezed the apple in his hand so tightly, the poor thing crumpled to nothing, juice trailing down his arm and dripping to the floor.

He tossed the carcass away and fixed his eyes on me, anger rippling off him in waves—anger, and...the sudden pressure in the air as his control snapped.

Even without my wolf, I felt it. That primal alpha energy rolling off him in waves, thick enough to taste. Anger. Frustration. And something else that made my human instincts scream to either run or...

I swallowed hard. Damn him.

"You're a dick," I muttered, brushing past him before my body could betray me further. At least he'd had the decency to nudge rather than command—though the effect was annoyingly similar.

"Pick that up," I said, toeing the destroyed apple. "It'll bring flies to my porch."

I didn't look back at his expression.

The old me—the meek, obedient wife—would never have spoken to him like that. But the woman I was now? She needed this small act of rebellion. Needed to push back, if only to prove to myself that the traitorous flutter in my chest meant nothing.

As I suspected, as soon as Kieran closed the door behind him, his spacious car suddenly felt like we were compressed into a tiny clown car, and the only air available to breathe was his own.

The hospital was about a twenty-minute drive from my house. Around minute five, I commented, "I thought you preferred the G-Wagon. Why have you been driving this one around?"

Kieran's jaw briefly clenched. "It's getting cleaned. Your..." He glanced at me from the corner of his eye before continuing. "Your blood stained the backseat."

I nodded. "Right."

There was silence for one more minute before I said, "Thank you."

Kieran looked at me properly then, surprise blanketing his features. I cleared my throat. "The doctor said if I hadn't gotten to the hospital as soon as I did, I might not have lived, so...thank you."

He nodded.

The rest of the drive was quiet and slightly less tense.

The appointment went well.

The cardiologist, whom I'd finally identified as Dr. Trumann, carried out a series of basic checks, inspected the wound and removed my stitches, switched up my medication, and happily informed me that everything looked good and I was healing nicely.

Kieran was leaning against the wall opposite the doctor's office when I walked out. His head was hung low, and I had to clear my throat twice before he jolted, obviously startled awake.

I cocked my head. "Why on earth did you sleep outside my house last night?"

He frowned, and I could have sworn his neck flushed red. "You had me worried when you didn't pick up my calls."

"What does that have to do with—"

"Sera!"

I turned towards the sound of a voice, and my face lit up. "Abby!"

She threw her arms around me, careful not to squeeze me too tightly. "Oh, it's so good to see you up and about," she gushed.

I smiled. "Thanks to you."

Nurse Abigail had helped treat me when I'd first come to the hospital after the rogue attacks, and she'd been on night duty during my stay after getting shot. She always brought me banana pudding from the cafeteria, and when I couldn't sleep on most nights, she would stay up with me, discussing the most mundane things.

Kieran hovered awkwardly while we caught up.

"Pain?"

"Almost entirely gone."

"Aches?"

"A little, but I've been doing those stretches you taught me."

"Sleep?"

I shrugged. "Meh."

She laughed and gave me one last hug. "I have to go now, but it was so good seeing you, Sera."

I beamed. "You too."

She backed away, waving animatedly, and I laughed, mirroring her gesture.

When she disappeared round the corner, I dropped my arms and turned to Kieran. The frown on his face had my smile slipping. "What?"

He opened his mouth as if to answer, but immediately shut it. "Nothing, come on."

I followed him back out. His head was on a swivel like he was looking out for potential threats, and I noticed he walked right next to me at a weird angle, like he fully intended to put his body between me and another bullet.

The drive back home was silent, and when Kieran parked in front of my house, I wasted no time in unbuckling myself.

"Thank you," I mumbled.

"Sera."

I turned to him. "Yes?"

He looked like he was warring with what he wanted to say, but finally, he spoke. "I don't get it."

I felt like I would regret my question. "Get what?"

"You were so friendly with that nurse at the hospital. You're the most amazing mom to Daniel and Lucian..." His jaw flexed. "You treat him like he's a fucking rockstar."

I raised a brow. "Your point?"

"Why are you so mean to Celeste?"

I couldn't help the snort that escaped me. There it was. That same tired refrain.

"What, are we in kindergarten now?" I met Kieran's gaze head-on, wrapping my bitterness in layers of sarcasm. "Celeste's dad wants to know why the mean girl in her class is yanking on her pigtails?"

Kieran's face tightened. "It's not funny."

"No, it is. And you know what else is funny?"

"What?"

"The fact that—" I caught myself in time. I could tell Kieran everything—from Celeste showing up at my door and practically calling me a slut to threatening to take my son away from me while I was on fucking life support.

But what would be the point? They never listened to me.

Every damn time Celeste and I clashed, I was automatically the villain. Her words were gospel. Her actions beyond reproach. While I—the pathetic, wolf-less reject—was forever scheming to hurt their precious princess.

No matter what I said, Kieran would only be on Celeste's side. He would never believe that she could be the bad guy—not the perfect love of his life.

"Forget it," I mumbled, opening the door. "Tell her to stay out of my way, and I'll stay out of hers. Everyone's happy then."

"Wait."

I groaned. "What now?"

He rolled his eyes and reached into the backseat. His hand reappeared with a box. "It's an encrypted phone for communicating with Daniel. The number is already there. If you use your phone, you run the risk of having Daniel's location traced."

"Oh." I reached out and took the phone. "Thanks."

He nodded. "You have another appointment next week, right?"

I exhaled, clutching the phone box to me. "Listen, Kieran, you don't need to do all this. Your security detail hot on my ass is enough."

He shook his head. "I promised Daniel that—"

"Well, Daniel's not here. And he's the only thing that tethers us together anyway."

Something like hurt flickered across his face. "Sera—"

I opened the door. "You have Celeste now. We hurt her in the past; you don't want to hurt her anymore, do you?"

He frowned. "Of course not, but—"

"Then we agree. Bye, Kieran. Thanks for the ride."

I shut the door before he could say anything else. This was how it had to be. We'd gotten divorced for a reason, and with Daniel gone, we had no other reason to be in each other's space.

It was best for everyone if Kieran and I kept our distance. And if my chest ached at the thought, it was probably because I was still healing from the bullet wound.