

## **My Sister 181**

Chapter 181 TRUTH OR DARE

LUCIAN'S POV

I hadn't slept in two days.

Not that anyone could tell; over time, I'd become adept at masking exhaustion, shielding it behind a practiced façade.

But when I saw Sera standing at the edge of the campsite, frozen in shock at the sight of me, I knew no amount of composure could disguise what was written all over me.

There was that wall between us now; I could feel it as surely as the fire's heat against my skin—almost as if it had been fortified.

Yet beyond the distance, what struck me hardest wasn't hostility. It was her calmness, unsettling and serene.

It wasn't anger. It wasn't resentment. It was something colder, quieter.

Acceptance.

She'd already accepted my absence before I could even process what it meant. When Judy pulled her aside earlier, I didn't need to hear the words to guess the conversation.

And when Talia obliviously paired us together, Sera's decision to stay—to work with me—felt both like mercy and punishment.

I knew what she was doing—keeping the peace, trying not to ruin the experience for everyone else.

That was Sera: endlessly selfless and considerate, even to her own detriment.

Still, her willingness to stay lit a dangerous, fragile spark inside me. Hope.

As we worked side by side, I let myself imagine, just for a heartbeat, that nothing had changed between us. That the silence was companionable instead of strained.

The fire hissed as fat dripped into the flames; laughter rippled somewhere behind us. I almost believed we were fine—until her hand reached for the stack of napkins teetering near the edge of the table.

Before I could think, my hand shot out, steadying the stack. Our fingers brushed.

We both froze.

“Here,” I said stiffly.

Her eyes flicked up, startled, like she hadn’t expected me to speak at all.

“Thanks,” she murmured, taking the napkins.

“Anytime,” I managed softly.

She offered me a small smile—barely there, brief—and yet it hit me like a jolt to the chest.

It wasn’t forgiveness. But maybe...a truce.

For the first time in days, I felt like I could breathe.

But that fleeting, delicate moment unlocked something I’d kept tightly guarded.

The memories slipped through before I could stop them—back to the exhibition hall, to the words that shattered everything.

My first instinct was to regret telling her the truth.

But deep down, what I really regretted was not telling her sooner.

I'd been blind. Arrogant. Convinced that by controlling what she knew, I could control what hurt her. That ignorance could shield her from pain. But all I did was rob her of choice.

Sera never needed saving. She needed honesty. Transparency.

And by denying her that, I became exactly what I'd despised in Kieran. Different sins, same result—the loss of her.

The thought sat heavy in my chest. I wished I could go back, rewind everything, fix us before we ever broke.

But I couldn't. So I clung on to the only thing left—that fragile, dangerous feeling. Hope.

Because the alternative—the idea that she was truly gone from my life—was unbearable.

I'd finally understood it now: I didn't want Sera for her bloodline, or because she fit some idea of what I thought I needed.

Back in that exhibition hall, my confession had been born of desperation—a reckless attempt to keep her from walking away.

But in the silence that followed, in the nights when missing her hollowed me out, I realized something else.

I hadn't lied.

I loved her.

Somewhere along the line—I couldn't say when—I'd truly, truly fallen for Sera.

I wouldn't push, not until she was ready. But I wouldn't walk away either.

And I would never stop trying to become someone worthy of her choosing.

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By nightfall, everyone lounged around the campfire laughing over half-burned marshmallows and melted chocolate.

Halfway through eating, Roxy sat up and declared mischievously, "Let's play Truth or Dare!"

Judy groaned. "What are we, Roxanne, college kids?"

"Funny you should say that, Judith," Roxy said, pulling a rectangular box from behind her. "Since I got this from my youngest brother, who is, in fact, a college kid."

She opened the box. "This isn't some amateur hour game. This box has curated cards. Challenges, punishments, the works."

Sera arched a brow. "That's...elaborate."

"Thank you," Roxy said proudly.

"That was so not a compliment." Judy rolled her eyes.

"Oh, come on," Roxy kicked her. "We're doing this, and it's going to be fun."

Amidst half-hearted groans, the circle formed around the fire, faces glowing orange in the firelight.

I sat across from Sera, close enough to feel her presence, far enough to keep the fragile peace between us intact.

Roxy grinned devilishly. "Okay!" She set the box down. "The instructions are simple: the bottle lands on you, you pick a card. One side has a dare, the other a question. You spin, you pick, you suffer. No exceptions!"

She stabbed a finger at me. "Not even you, Alpha. You're one of us tonight."

I chuckled, tipping my head. "Noted."

The bottle clinked as it spun across the uneven ground. When it stopped, it pointed straight at me.

Roxy snickered. "Perfect."

I sighed as all eyes turned to me expectantly.

Roxy pushed the box towards me. "Take it away, Alpha."

I exhaled softly and reached in, picking out the first card my fingers brushed.

I drew it out and skimmed the words on the surface. And froze.

“Well?” Talia pressed, eyes bright with curiosity.

“Lemme see.” Roxy grabbed the card out of my hand before I could react.

Her eyes darted across both sides of the card and flared. “Oh.”

“What does it say?” Judy asked.

“Kiss the person you find most attractive in the group, or”—she flipped the card—“reveal your deepest regret.”

Sera’s breath caught.

Awkward silence blanketed the group. They all knew what had happened between Sera and me, I was sure of it now.

Sera stared resolutely at the flames, pretending not to notice the eyes flicking between us. In the glow of the fire, I could see color rising in her cheeks.

The game was silly, juvenile, and someone of my pedigree had no business playing it.

But I also had no business being on the camping trip. I'd abused my power as the founder of OTS to invite myself as an opportunity to see Sera.

I swallowed, my gaze lingering on her longer than it should have.

There was a time I wouldn't have hesitated. A time when I would've taken the dare just to make her flustered, just to see her try to hide that shy smile behind her hair.

But that time was gone.

And this, I realized, was another opportunity.

So I cleared my throat. "Truth."

Sera finally looked at me then. Just a glance—but it was enough. There was a faint crease between her brows, something unreadable flickering behind her eyes.

Relief, maybe. Or curiosity.

“Alright, then,” Roxy said, a little subdued. “Make it good. What’s your deepest regret, Lucian?”

Even the fire seemed to quiet, crackling low and steady. The group shifted, glances passing silently as they waited for me to answer.

I could’ve given a joke. Something safe. Something detached.

But after everything, the thought of pretending again made my chest ache.

So, I didn’t.

“My deepest regret...” I began, my voice rougher than I intended, “was not being honest when it mattered.”