

My Sister 187

Chapter 187 ONE DAY AT A TIME

SERAPHINA'S POV

Even after Maya's car pulled away from the hotel parking lot, the glow of the chandeliers still lingered in my mind like a dream I hadn't fully woken from.

More specifically—Kieran's face.

And the way his voice had sounded when he said, 'I'm grateful... For you, being his mother.'

It wasn't just sadness. It wasn't just guilt. It was something raw, vulnerable, like he was revealing broken pieces of himself. Pieces I'd never known existed.

I turned to the window, pressing my temple against the cool glass as the city lights streaked by like blurred constellations.

I had walked away. Calmly. Dignified. I hadn't cried. I hadn't yelled. I hadn't wavered.

I should've felt victorious.

So why did a small, traitorous part of me ache at the memory of that desperate hope dying in his eyes when I pulled away?

“Okay,” Maya said after a few minutes of silence, her tone deceptively casual. “I really, really want to give you time to pan out this brooding music video vixen you’re playing at. But I’m scared that if you go too deep into your head, I won’t be able to get you out.”

I blinked, dragged from my spiraling thoughts. Maya was driving with one hand, eyes cutting to me in suspicion.

Her other hand lay palm open on the console between us.

I didn’t even have to think about it before I slid my palm against hers and intertwined our fingers.

“I’m fine,” I lied.

“Bullshit,” she replied cheerfully, squeezing my hand. “Your ‘talk’ with Kieran lasted a little too long for a quick chat but too short for hate sex. Start talking.”

I gaped at her. “Why would hate sex even cross your mind—actually, never mind.”

“So?” she pressed, glancing at me again. “What happened?”

I sighed.

I wanted to talk—not just about Kieran, or the brief Lucian sitrep I gave Judy, but everything.

The whole mountain of emotional warfare.

The longer I kept it in, the more my chest felt like it was filling with cotton and fire all at once.

And there was no one I wanted to hear it more than ‘Almighty Maya Cartridge.’

And because Maya was Maya, she knew when to push. And when to wait.

Tonight, she waited—until I started talking.

And talking. And talking. And talking.

I told her everything. I told her about the family amusement park. I told her about dinner with Lucian, the conversation after, the conversation at the OTS exhibit.

I told her about my mother's house. I told her how Kieran had shown up outside my house afterward, heart on display. His desperate confession, his apology, his claim of a mate bond I didn't want to acknowledge. I told her about my rejection. The way I'd walked away without looking back.

Then I told her about tonight.

How he had looked tired and wrung out. How he didn't try to make me forgive him. How he'd spoken with so much weight in his voice it made my bones feel heavy.

And then, because I'd turned on a faucet and I didn't want to close it until the tank was empty, I told Maya about Alina.

From how she saved me from the bear in the Snowfield Arena to how she'd told me I couldn't be sure about Kieran until I could Shift.

By the time I finished, relief softened my voice, exhaustion and catharsis blurring together.

The car had stopped. The lights of the Blackthornes' mansion glinted in the near distance.

"Damn," Maya exhaled. "Okay. That's...a lot."

“Yeah,” I sighed, “tell me about it.”

With our intertwined hands, she yanked me toward her, wrapping her free arm around my shoulders.

I closed my eyes and melted into her embrace, inhaling her familiar comforting scent. After unloading everything, I felt so light, like I would float away if she weren't holding on to me.

Finally, she pulled back, but still held on to my hand.

“First of all,” she began, her voice uncharacteristically thick with emotion. “I am so fucking happy your wolf is here.” She gave me a watery smile. “Took her long enough. Lazy bitch.”

‘I am not lazy,’ Alina muttered in my mind, indignant. ‘She’s lucky I like her.’

I smiled. “She likes you. Begrudgingly.”

Maya gasped dramatically, pressing a hand to her chest. “I am honored. Nyra says she can't wait to meet her.”

I choked out a laugh. There were so many joys out there I had yet to experience with my wolf and my family. Gods, I couldn't wait.

'Soon,' Alina promised quietly.

"And it goes without saying that I won't tell a soul about her existence until she's ready," Maya vowed.

I smiled. "Thank you."

"Okay," Maya sniffed. "Secondly, Lucian—I'm so sorry, babe. I met him way after Zara; I had no idea."

"It's okay," I nodded. "We're fine now. We're friends."

She winced. "But Team Lucian...?"

I chuckled softly. "That's on the back burner for now."

She nodded. "Yeah, okay, I can respect that."

And then she fell silent. I did too. Because I knew what the third point was.

I didn't know what I expected. Maybe a firestorm of profanity about Kieran's audacity. Maybe she'd reverse the car and drive back to have his face meet her fists.

When she finally spoke, her words came carefully. "You know, if you had told me all this before I met Ethan—pre-mate bond—I'd have gladly run Kieran over with my car. Twice."

My lips twitched as she continued. "But now...I kind of get it. Not that I forgive him, because I don't. But..."

She took my other hand in hers. "Sera, mate bonds are...terrifying. Even the good ones. The pull is beautiful and brutal all at once. I've felt Ethan's fear of losing me, and it's like watching him drown and not being able to breathe myself either. If Kieran really believes you two are mates, then I can only imagine the pure anguish he's going through at your rejection."

My chest tightened.

Maya squeezed my hands. "But that doesn't mean you owe him anything, Sera. Not now, or ever. No one but you can ever know the full extent of heartache he caused you over the decade of your marriage, so no one but you can decide if or when you ever want to open your heart to him."

My vision blurred with tears, and I leaned in, closing my eyes. "So...you don't think I owe the bond something?"

She leaned in too and rested her forehead against mine. "Nothing's set in stone," she said softly. "You're allowed to live in the now. You don't need to decide on Kieran. Or your future. Or legacy. Not tonight. Not tomorrow. You take whatever you can one day at a time."

I let out a shaky breath as a single tear slid down my cheek.

Maya smiled, soft but fierce, as she reached out and wiped the tear away with her thumb. “And remember—I’m on your side. Always.”

“Even if ‘your side’ means dancing barefoot on hot coals or telling an Alpha to shove his bond up his ass. I’ll even happily flatten him against asphalt under my tires if you please. Got it?”

A quiet laugh escaped me. “Got it.”

The lightness of unloading onto Maya faded when, later that night, I sat Daniel down at the kitchen island and placed the small black velvet box on the table between us.

His brows lifted. “What’s that?”

“Kieran—your dad—asked me to talk to you about something,” I said slowly. “It’s about...an heir ceremony.”

Daniel blinked. "Like...for me?"

I nodded. "When you turn ten. But, Daniel, listen." I took his hands in mine. "You don't have to do this. Being heir means serious responsibility. And a lot more training than what you're already doing. You're still a child—you don't have to shoulder anything yet."

He stared at me for a long moment.

Then his lips curved into something soft and bright. "Mom...I know I'm still little. But I've always wanted to get stronger. I want my wolf. But even before then, I want to be able to protect you. And other people too."

A surge of pride warred with trepidation, twisting my heart until it hurt.

"But..." He hesitated, then glanced at the box. "If I accept...will I have to go away again?"

"Probably for some time," I whispered, the rest of my insides twisting at the thought of being away from my son when he had only just come back. "You'll have to go through a period of rigorous secluded training with the pack elders and warriors."

Daniel went quiet.

Then he exhaled slowly. "I'll train hard. Really hard. So I can come home sooner."

My lips trembled. I saw the decision in his eyes, and it took everything in me to trap the sob building at the back of my throat.

I pulled him into my arms and kissed the top of his head. "I'm proud of you, baby," I whispered feverishly against his curls. "So, so proud."

"You sound sad, too," he mumbled, his warm breath brushing against my neck.

I sniffed. "That's because I'll miss you so much."

His hands wrapped around my waist, and I felt my shirt dampen. "I'll miss you too, Mom."

'We'll still feel him,' Alina murmured. 'Even from far away. Our pup will always echo through our bond.'

Her words soothed me—but I didn't know if it was enough.

I closed my eyes, pressing my forehead against Daniel's soft hair as we both silently cried.

He'd made his decision, chosen his course.

And the best thing I could do for him was not pack snacks or drive him to training.

It was to let him go, trust him enough to follow the path he was born to tread—even if it took him away from my arms.