

My Sister 19

Chapter 19 A DEAD PLANT

SERAPHINA'S POV

As soon as I closed the door behind me, I rushed to the couch and unboxed the phone Kieran had given me.

Sure enough, there was one number saved in the contacts, and I initiated a FaceTime call, my hands shaking with anticipation.

It rang twice, and a gasp tore out of me when Daniel's face filled the screen. "Mom!"

"Oh, my baby!" I clutched my chest, feeling like my heart was going to break free of my ribcage to go to him.

He gave me a toothy grin, showcasing his canines that were still growing out slowly after falling out a month ago. I didn't know if it was the ache of missing him, but he looked so young, and all I wanted to do was reach through the phone and hold him in my arms.

"I miss you," he declared.

"Oh, I miss you, too," I said, forcing tears back down my throat.

"How's the island?" I asked to distract myself.

Daniel's eyes danced with glee. "Oh, Mom, it's huge!"

I laughed. "Yeah? You like it?"

He nodded. "There are two pools in the house, and I can see the ocean from my window. Grandpa said when the tide is right, he'll show me how to catch a wave."

I worried my lower lip between my teeth. "Is that safe, though?"

He snorted. "There's like fifty guards here, Mom." He rolled his eyes, flopping onto a bed. "And they follow me everywhere. I can't get a snack without an escort."

I laughed, refraining from telling him that security guards wouldn't be able to save him from a bad wave on the surfboard.

"Well, it's all for your own—"

"Where's Dad?"

I blinked, caught off guard. "What?"

He sat up, his eyebrows knitting together. "At the airport, he promised me he wouldn't leave your side if I went."

That must have been what Kieran whispered to Daniel at the airport. I fought the urge to roll my eyes. What was Kieran thinking, making that kind of promise to our son?

"Listen, sweetie," I started carefully. "Your Dad and I are—"

"Is he going to make her his Luna?"

I froze. "What?"

"Is Dad going to marry Celeste and make her his Luna?" Daniel repeated, his voice wobbling slightly.

He only called her name, not with any title. I wasn't sure whether I should correct that manner. Celeste would join Kieran's life officially one day, and I didn't want my boy to be blamed for such a tiny thing.

But back to the point, Daniel had inherited the worst of both Kieran's and my stubborn streaks. Once he dug his heels in, not even an Alpha command could shake him loose.

I took a deep breath. "Where did you hear that, honey? Did someone say something to you?"

I swear, if Celeste had been running her mouth in front of my son—

"I see her and Dad together," he said, his voice losing its luster. "And they're always hugging. Plus, I heard Grandma say she was tired of being Luna and couldn't wait to give it to someone else."

My mouth dropped open, but no words came out.

I was appalled that Kieran had been so careless in displaying his rekindled relationship with Celeste in front of Daniel and that Leona had been so crass as to have him overhear that.

Daniel sighed when I didn't speak. "So I guess you and Dad aren't getting back together?"

"I—"

"I don't want Dad to marry her, Mom. I want you to get back together. I want you to be his Luna."

I could feel the tears I'd struggled to keep at bay pushing against my blockades, and I knew the dam would burst any second.

"Hon," I choked out. "I forgot, I have to... get to training. I'll call you back later, okay?"

He frowned. "Mom?"

"I love you," I said in a broken whisper before hanging up.

I tossed the phone away from me and dropped my head into my hands.

Funnily enough, the tears were suddenly nowhere to be found. It was like they'd dried up, leaving my insides arid, empty, desolate.

For the first time since the divorce, I wondered if I'd made a mistake. I thought we'd gone through the whole process as amicably as possible, and Kieran and I had been civil with each other, at least in front of Daniel.

The last thing I wanted was to hurt my son, but was that what we were doing?

I mean, I wasn't the one who initiated it, but should I have fought harder? Should I have done more to keep my marriage intact?

I scoffed at that thought.

What more could I have done? Over the last decade, I'd done everything in my power to turn lemons into lemonade.

As soon as we got married and I moved into Kieran's home, we'd slept in separate rooms. I'd tried to move into his room to foster some kind of intimacy, but I was shut down with a frigidity that made sure I never attempted that again.

I tried to dress sexily around the house, hoping he could start to see me as less of a prison and more of a woman, but he never even looked my way.

And on the nights when he needed physical gratification, he would come to my room, climb into bed with me, do what needed to be done, and leave. He never kissed me, never even fully took off my clothes, never spent the night.

The sex was transactional, like a chore to tick off his list. And, of course, he always used a condom. God forbid I had one more child to further tether him to me.

But I got over the feeling of being used, and I figured if we couldn't be proper lovers, we could be good friends—but even that had been an exercise in futility.

I cooked Kieran's favorite meals only to have them go bad because he ordered takeout instead. I tried to get involved in pack activities but was shut down at every turn. I even learned everything I could about Formula One racing so we could talk about it during the Grand Prix, but as soon as I entered the living room, he would stand up and go to his room to watch it there.

No matter how much you water a dead plant, it won't miraculously come back to life. So I stopped trying. I retreated into myself, wrote my books, and lived in a silent hell for ten years.

But was my freedom worth it if my son was getting hurt in the process?

I wasn't given a chance to answer myself because my doorbell rang at that moment, stopping me from wallowing further in my anguish.

I sighed as I drew up from the couch and headed to the door. I really hoped it wasn't Kieran; I wasn't in the mood for any more—

"Oh." I blinked at Ethan.

"Hi," my brother exhaled.

I straightened my spine. "Can I help you?"

His jaw flexed, his entire body stiff and tense. "Mom has been trying to reach you," he said flatly. "You haven't responded, and she's worried."

A sharp bark of laughter slipped out of me. "How nice of her to finally worry about me after ignoring me for ten years."

His thick eyebrows furrowed. "Sera, she's your mother—"

"A fact she's only remembering now." I chuckled dryly. "If I'd known this is what it took, I would have gotten shot years ago."

Ethan's eyes flared. "Seraphina!"

I rolled my eyes and stepped back from the door. "Bye, Ethan."

Before I could close it, he braced a large hand against it and pushed, leaving me no choice but to keep the door open.

"What the hell has gotten into you, Sera?" he asked, his voice hard, his blue eyes glacial. "We're a family; why have you been treating us like this?"

My eyes widened, and an incredulous sound fell from my agape mouth. "Why am I treating you like this?"

I stepped forward. "Do you remember back at the hospital, right after Dad died, when you, my fucking brother, swore to rip away whatever scrap of happiness I clung to?"

His face drained of color. "Sera, I was... I didn't—"

A bitter laugh tore from my throat. "Turns out, you succeeded."

"Daniel is my only happiness." I gritted my teeth. "And now, because of the goddamn threat you brought to my doorstep, I had to send him away just to keep him safe."

"So tell me, Ethan—what's next?"

"Sera, I—I never meant—"

"Save it," I said sharply, slapping away his hand that held the door open. It dropped to his side without a fight.

"You all should just continue doing what you've done for the last ten years. I'm not your sister, Ethan, and I am not that woman's daughter. I have no intention of changing that—not now, not ever."

"Sera—"

"Goodbye," I said firmly and slammed the door in Ethan's face.

For a moment, I stood in front of the door, unmoving. I didn't know why. Was I waiting for Ethan to knock again, demanding to reconcile?

After a full minute, I scoffed, wiping away a lone tear that had managed its way out of my eyes. It was one thing that he'd even visited my home, but expecting Ethan to fight for me?

Not in a million years.

And maybe that was for the best. Trying to reconcile with my family was like trying to make Kieran love me. Like watering a dead plant—futile and useless.