

My Sister 192

Chapter 192 TRUE EMOTIONS

KIERAN'S POV

I woke up gasping.

The dream chased me awake, clinging like a fever—Sera by a bonfire, wearing a crown of pale blue flowers glowing under the moonlight, Lucian leaning in to kiss her.

The fire had roared like it was blessing them, and her smile...gods, her smile. It lashed through me, raw and searing like acid on exposed flesh.

A heavy, hollow ache radiated through my chest. For a moment, I thought it was just the dream's echo, but then the familiar sting from my ribs made me wince.

I pushed the blanket aside and sat up, rubbing at my chest where the bandages hid the fading mark of Ashar's fury.

Not fading fast enough.

He was punishing me. I knew it.

The injuries from that night in the forest should've healed a long time ago. Every other wound had—or at least the visible ones.

But the ones hidden under my clothes, the worst ones—my wolf had slowed their healing. He made sure I felt them every time I moved or fucking breathed.

As if the ache in my heart wasn't enough.

I'd tried to reason with him at first. Technically, he was the one who'd lost his mind, destroyed the forest surrounding our territory, and almost killed our Beta, so I didn't deserve to suffer the aftermath.

But Ashar was neither speaking nor listening.

Ever since that night, he barely stirred except when I needed strength for Daniel's training or necessary pack business.

The silence between us was heavier than any roar.

Tonight, that silence was even worse, closing in and intensifying the anguish I was in.

I dragged a hand through my hair aggressively, as if I could push away the remnants of the dream from my mind.

But the images stuck: Sera's laughter, the way she looked at Lucian—light, unburdened, free. All the ways she had never looked at me.

Guilt quickly stabbed on the heels of my jealousy.

I'd spent years being a dampener on her happiness. What right did I have now to feel pain when she finally was?

I fumbled around for my phone, and when I finally found it, the glowing screen showed 2:07 am.

Shit. Still hours before anyone but the night shift guards stirred.

The night pressed like a weight. I tried lying back down, but each time I closed my eyes, I saw that bonfire again, saw Lucian's hands on her.

So finally, I stood, grabbed a hoodie from the chair, and slipped it over my head, careful not to stretch the injured side too much.

The cool fabric brushed against the bandages, and I hissed.

Ashar's voice flickered faintly. 'Let it ache.'

I froze. It was the first sound from him in days, more sensation than voice. But when I reached out, he was gone.

"Asshole," I muttered.

My steps carried me almost unconsciously down the hall—toward Daniel's room.

I didn't question my need to see him. I just knew that the sight of my son would give me some comfort.

The door creaked when I pushed it open.

Daniel was asleep, one arm thrown over his head, the other curled around his stuffed wolf. His hair stuck up in messy tufts, and for a moment, I just stood there watching him breathe.

So much of Sera in him—the same calm expression, the same way his lips twitched slightly when he dreamed.

Even when he was awake, too. He had her smile, her quiet strength, the stubborn glint in her eyes...

Maybe that's why I'd come. Other than the fickle bond, the verity of which was tenuous at best, Daniel was the only thing left that tethered me to Sera, and the desperate urge to be by her side hurt almost as much as my ribs.

I sat on the couch by the window and exhaled slowly. The moonlight slanted through the curtains, casting an ethereal glow on Daniel.

I didn't intend to sleep, but exhaustion crept in while I watched over my son and, at some point, I must have dozed off.

When I opened my eyes again, the room was brighter, streaks of morning light cutting through the blinds.

"Dad?"

"Hey, bud," I rasped.

Daniel sat up, squinting. "What are you doing here?"

I rubbed at my eyes. "Couldn't sleep."

He blinked, processing. "So...you decided to camp in my room?"

His sleepy tone was so genuinely confused that I almost laughed. "Something like that."

He tilted his head. "You look weird. Are you sick?"

"No," I said. Then, after a pause: "Just needed to see you."

His brow furrowed slightly, like he wasn't sure what to make of that. "That's something Mom does, you know? Watching me sleep."

My lips curved despite myself. "Yeah." I leaned forward, elbows on my knees. "I used to do it all the time when you were little, you know. Anytime pack business got a little too heavy to bear, I'd come into your room and watching you sleep always calmed me down."

Daniel's brows shot to his hairline. "Really?"

I chuckled. "Is that so unbelievable?"

He shrugged one shoulder. "I'm not sure which, though. You admitting that you're a little creeper like Mom,"—I rolled my eyes—"or you expressing emotion at all."

That gave me pause.

“I haven’t done that in a while,” I said quietly. “Expressed my true emotions, I mean.”

“Is that an Alpha thing?” Curiosity shone in Daniel’s wide, impressionable eyes. “Is it because expressing emotions is weak?”

I shook my head so hard my neck cracked. “Absolutely not. It’s the opposite, really. Keeping things in is what makes you weak. It separates you from the people who care about you.” I sighed. “It makes you an island.”

He yawned and rubbed his eyes. “Are you an island, Dad?”

A painful breath lodged between my aching ribs.

“I—” I ran a hand through my hair, gathering my thoughts before presenting them to my intuitive son. “I don’t want to be anymore,” I admitted.

Something softened in his face. “You’re being weirdly honest this morning.”

I managed a faint smile. "It's this new thing I'm trying out. So I don't have to be an island anymore."

"Does this have anything to do with Mom?"

I froze. So. Fucking. Intuitive. "Why would you think that?"

"I heard you two a little that day in the driveway," he confessed, his voice suddenly small.

Guilt twisted in my chest. "You heard that?"

"Some of it." He picked at a loose thread on his blanket. "You sounded...sad. And Mom was upset."

I looked away, throat tightening. "She was."

He studied me for a while, like he was trying to measure the weight of my silence. "Why did you do it?"

"Do...what?"

He shot me a very adult look that said, 'Don't bullshit me.'

I sighed. "It's...complicated."

It was a shitty answer, but I didn't have the words to explain to my nine-year-old why I'd left his mother only to turn around and realize she was the one thing I wanted the most in the world.

"You want her back, don't you?"

The answer was immediate. "Yes."

"Even though she doesn't want you back?"

I swallowed. "Even then."

"So..." He frowned. "Are you gonna try to win her back anyway?"

I hesitated. "Would that make you upset?"

He thought about it for a beat and then swung his legs over the edge of the bed. "I don't think so. But I won't help you either."

That made me smile, a sad, crooked thing. “Fair enough.”

“I love Mom more,” he said matter-of-factly, “but I don’t hate you. You messed up, yeah, but you’re not a bad dad.”

My chest ached again, but this time for an entirely different reason. “You think so?”

He shrugged. “Mom says you try hard. And that you love me a lot. That’s what matters, right?”

For a moment, I was speechless. Knowing Sera never spoke ill of me to our son—when she had every reason to—scraped me raw.

“I feel like I failed you,” I said quietly, my head dropping. “Both of you.”

“I didn’t like it when you missed my PTC. Or when you were dating Aunt Celeste. But...I think you just got lost.”

He rose from the bed and padded over on his bare feet to the couch. He perched on the edge and ran a tiny hand through my hair affectionately. “I like it that you’re trying to find your way back.”

I reached out and, ignoring the sharp agony of pain, pulled him into my lap. I returned the gesture by brushing my hand through his hair. "You're too smart for your age."

He grinned sleepily, his eyes glowing. "Mom says that too."

Of course she did.

We sat there in companionable silence for a while. The morning light grew warmer, touching the edges of his desk, the pile of books by the window, yesterday's training gear slung haphazardly at the other end of the bed.

"I'm going to try to win her back," I said finally, more to myself than to him. "But I'll also respect what she wants. If her happiness doesn't include me..."

After everything that had happened, no matter how much I wanted it, I wasn't sure if love was possible again between me and Sera. But I would settle for penance.

"...then I'll learn to live with that."

Daniel's smile carried a twinge of pity. "You mean it?"

The words forced themselves out. "I do."

He nodded, then hopped off my lap.

I watched, curious as he rummaged through his bedside drawer until he found a black marker. “Then you need this.”

“What’s that?”

“Hold still.” He grabbed my hand, uncapped the marker, and drew carefully on my skin—a little crescent moon curved around a five-pointed star.

“There,” he said with satisfaction, holding it up to inspect.

I blinked at the simple symbol, and my breath caught.

That shape. The interlocking lines of the star. The curve of the moon.

“What is it?”

“Mom’s lucky charm,” he said proudly. “Grandma showed it to me. She taught it to me so I could have good luck in my training. And now you have the blessing of the Moon Goddess and all the stars in her sky.”

For a moment, the room tilted. My vision tunneled around that tiny, inked mark on my hand.

“Dad, you okay?” Daniel asked.

I nodded slowly, though my pulse was thundering in my ears. “Yeah. Just...it looks familiar.”

He shrugged. “Maybe you’ve seen it before?”

“Maybe.” My voice came out rough.

No. Not maybe.

Definitely.