

## **My Sister 193**

Chapter 193 THE WRONG MEMORY

KIERAN'S POV

The memory hit so far out of left field, I might have stumbled if I hadn't been sitting.

A park in the neutral zone came into focus—mid-morning after a night of rain. The air was cool and bright, and dew clung to the grass, silvering the blades like frost.

I remembered how it had soaked through my pants as I sat there, my knees scraped and bleeding from a fall that had hurt less than the sting of my father's words.

He'd yelled again—something about control, discipline, appearances. I was barely seven years old; I didn't care about any of that, didn't understand what it meant for my small shoulders to carry the weight of being an Alpha's heir.

So I'd run away.

I ran until my lungs burned, wanting to prove that I didn't care, that I could disappear from his world entirely.

But children never get far on wounded pride. I'd tripped over a tree root, hit the dirt, and stayed there—I had no idea for how long—mud streaking my palms, tears mixing with the taste of salt and soil.

The sound of laughter had startled me. Light, musical. A girl's.

When I looked up, she was standing a few feet away, her shoes sinking slightly in the wet grass.

Her hair was pale—almost white in the sunlight—and tied with a ribbon that had come loose. She couldn't have been more than five or six, wearing a pink dress that looked far too fine for running through muddy parks.

She blinked at me, frowning with concentration.

“Are you hurt?”

I sniffled, wiping my mud-streaked hand across my cheeks. “Go away.”

She...laughed.

It was such a soft, bright sound that I forgot that I was supposed to be mad at the world.

And then she stepped closer to me and dug a small handkerchief out of her pocket and held it out.

“Here,” she said with the calm authority of someone used to fixing things.

I glared at the handkerchief, at her, at everything. “I don’t want a handkerchief. It hurts.”

Instead of leaving, she crouched down until we were eye level, her knees pressing into the mud without hesitation.

“If it hurts,” she said matter-of-factly, “you can draw this. It helps.”

Without asking my permission, she took my hand in hers and upturned it. I didn’t breathe as she began to trace a pattern in the mud on my palm.

A crescent moon first, then a star nestled inside it—five points, careful and deliberate.

I sniffled. “It’s dumb.”

“It’s lucky,” she corrected, brushing a strand of wet hair from her cheek, smearing mud in the process. “Now you have the blessing of the Moon Goddess and all the stars in her sky. It means you’ll heal faster.”

Her eyes lifted to mine, clear and serious in a way that made her look older than her years.

Then she smiled—sudden, bright, stunning.

It hit me like sunlight breaking through clouds. In that moment, I believed her. I believed in the little moon-and-star symbol, in her certainty, in everything.

Before I could make my voice work, before I could ask her name, a sharp voice called from across the park. “Miss Lockwood! Your father will be furious at your muddy clothes!”

The girl’s eyes widened, and she let out a small gasp that turned into laughter.

“Oops!” she whispered, springing to her feet. The hem of her dress was splattered with dirt, but she didn’t seem to care.

She waved once, quick and carefree. “Bye!”

And then she was gone, running toward a waiting nanny with her ribbon streaming behind her like a strip of pink smoke.

That was it—just a fleeting meeting, ten minutes at most.

But I'd carried it with me like a secret tattoo, etched somewhere beneath the skin where even time couldn't erase it.

When I saw the same mark almost ten years later on the edge of Celeste Lockwood's school bag, I'd been stunned.

I thought it was fate, a sign.

The same symbol, the same last name. The memory reshaped itself—Celeste must have been the girl.

But now...

Now Daniel's inked mark burned on my skin, and my mind refused to settle.

Sera had created that symbol.

Sera.

I looked at Daniel, who was carefully recapping his marker. "Did your grandma ever tell you where your mom learned it?"

He shook his head. “She said Mom made it up when she was little. Why?”

The smile I forced felt more like a grimace. “No reason.”

He grinned, satisfied with his work. “Now we both have it. That means we protect her together, right?”

I stared at the mark again, the lines blurring slightly as memories tangled. “Right.”

“Okay, I gotta get ready for training.”

I barely registered his words. I stayed seated, the weight of the past pressing against my ribs.

It was that encounter, that memory of innocence and hope, that drew me to Celeste.

But what if she’d only reminded me of someone else? Someone I never even gave a second glance.

Because if Daniel’s words were true—if Sera was that little girl—then every choice I’d made since had been built on a lie.

My chest throbbed, sharper this time, the wound under the bandage pulsing in protest.

Daniel leaned forward and tapped my knee. "Dad?"

"Hmm." I blinked.

He eyed me suspiciously. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine," I said quickly. "Go on, get ready. We'll head out soon."

His eyes narrowed, but he didn't press anymore. He turned and headed into the bathroom.

When the door shut, I let out a long breath, pressing my palm over the mark again.

The ink was still fresh, faintly smudged from the cold sweat that had broken out all over me.

My skin tingled, remembering the faint touch of that little girl's hand decades ago as she drew on my palm.

'You have the blessing of the Moon Goddess and all the stars in her sky.'

She'd said it with such conviction.

And now her son had redrawn it for me, echoing her words.

Fate had a cruel sense of humor.

I leaned back against the couch, closing my eyes.

I could almost hear Sera's voice—the way she said my name now, cold but steady. The way she couldn't look at me that day outside her door when she said some wounds weren't meant to heal.

She'd found her peace. Somewhere in Shadowveil, she was happy.

And I was here, struggling to breathe against the piercing agony of too many years wasted chasing the wrong memory.