

## **My Sister 194**

Chapter 194 MOONBATH WISH

SERAPHINA'S POV

I dreamed of firelight.

The bonfire crackled as it had last night, gold and amber shadows flickering across faces I barely registered until one came into sharp, intimate focus. Lucian.

His gaze was steady, calm, gentle. He leaned closer, and the hush of people laughing somewhere behind us faded like smoke.

'May I?'

His warmth skimmed my skin as he leaned in. I knew what came next—

But then things shifted.

His features blurred, shifting into something equal parts familiar and strange—sharper cheekbones, a broader jaw, darker eyes shadowed in regret.

Recognition jolted me, an electric shock racing through my veins: Kieran.

Suddenly, the emotions hit different—raw, aching, tangled with years of hurt and yearning and what-ifs.

My chest tightened. I tried to pull away, to reject the dream's cruel fusion, but I found myself leaning in instead, pulled by a force I had no control over.

Kieran's lips brushed mine with a desperate, longing intensity, and my body's roaring response felt like betrayal.

To the memories I built my resolve on. To the fragile distance I was fighting so hard to maintain.

He pulled back, thumbs resting on my throbbing lips.

'Sera,' he whispered—and I jolted awake.

For a moment, I couldn't place where I was. I lay staring at the ceiling, heart hammering as breath scraped my throat.

Then the details returned—the softness of the guest bed, the faint scent of chamomile tea Sabrina had left on the nightstand, the muted hush of morning before the pack stirred.

It had just been a dream. A stupid, disorienting, emotionally manipulative dream.

I pressed a palm over my fluttering chest.

I was stressed enough while I was awake; I had no business going through this tug of war while I slept.

The kiss with Lucian had been nothing more than the night's atmosphere—a moment born of warmth and vulnerability and firelight.

And Kieran? There was no future there. No possibility. Not when the wounds still bled beneath frail bandages slapped over them.

I forced myself to sit up. The chill of dawn crept across my skin, and I welcomed it, letting it chase the residual warmth from the dream.

By the time Sabrina knocked and poked her head in with a bright, "Morning! Sleep well?" I'd already showered, changed, and braided my hair.

"I did, thank you," I lied, adjusting the cuff of my shirt as though fidgeting could fix the leftover static under my skin.

She stepped in without waiting for permission. “Lucy’s busy all day with prep for the Moonbath Wish Ceremony,” she informed me with a glint in her eyes. “So you have me today again.”

I smiled. I didn’t know what it was about me that attracted the peppiest golden retriever companions. But I wasn’t complaining.

“Come on.” She stretched a hand out, bouncing on her heels excitedly. “We need to prepare your ceremonial attire.”

I followed her down the hall, each of her excited steps steadying me. “So, what’s the Moonbath Wish Ceremony?”

“It’s one of the most sacred traditions of the Blue Moon festival. Zoe still swears it’s why she finally Shifted after being blocked for months.”

My steps faltered. “What?”

Sabrina’s smile was kind instead of pitying.

“The ceremony takes place at the Moonlit Spring,” she explained as we walked, tucking her hands into her jacket pockets. “Everyone wears plain robes—no ornaments. Then we gather and give thanks for the Moon Goddess’s blessings.”

Her voice lowered a little, taking on a quiet reverence. “When the full moon hits its highest point, the ones who haven’t found their wolf yet, or those still carrying deep wounds that hinder their transformation, step forward. They shed their robes as symbolism for leaving behind everything that weighs them down, and walk into the water.”

She glanced at me, a small smile playing on her lips. “The moonlight does the rest. They stand there, waist-deep, eyes closed, and make their wish. When they emerge, we wrap them in these thick blankets, woven from the Blue Moon fibers. It means rebirth. A fresh start.”

“Wow.” I exhaled. “That sounds...” I had no words.

“Yeah.” She nodded as we stopped in front of a door. “I used to think it was dramatic, but when I first watched the ceremony, just witnessing people walk into that water—some shaking, some crying—I felt something. Like hope wasn’t just a cruel joke.”

“And does it work?” I asked softly.

She shrugged. “That means different things for different people. No one knows what you wish, so only you can know if it comes true.”

With that, she pushed the door open.

In a quiet preparation room lined with hanging cloths of various shades of moonlight white, we met two elders who greeted me with serene nods.

They spoke softly as they guided us through the selection process of simple ceremonial robes woven from flax-like fibers, loose and plain.

“You will wear this tonight,” one elder explained. “Barefoot, with your hair unbound to symbolize groundedness and surrender. No jewelry, no adornments.”

“You will not be stepping into the spring,” another elder continued, fastening the belt around me with graceful movements. “But your presence still matters. Observers carry the wishes in silent witness.”

For some reason, that information lodged in my throat. But I ignored it. It was an honor even to be allowed to witness sacred pack tradition like this. I wouldn’t be greedy.

After preparations, Sabrina tugged me outside where the whole pack seemed to hum with quiet purpose, the air simultaneously thick with anticipation and calm.

Pack members moved with excitement, some carrying crates of dried herbs, others plaiting long ropes of plant fibers that Sabrina explained would later be dipped in symbolic oils.

Conversations were soft, reverent, even in their casualness.

Sabrina and I joined in where we could—tying bundles of herbs, sorting candles, fetching jars of oil.

It felt good to move, to be useful, our quiet laughter blending easily into the rhythm of the pack's preparations.

Too soon, the sun dipped lower, painting the valley gold, and a soft bell rang from somewhere near the cliffs.

Sabrina glanced up at the sky, then at me. "It's time."

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As dusk bled into indigo, I changed into my robe, unbraided my hair, and we joined the slow procession toward the Moonlit Spring nestled deep within a valley I hadn't yet seen.

Lanterns lined the forest trail, their glow trembling like fireflies. I trailed behind Sabrina, the hushed conversations blending into the sound of water rushing somewhere far below.

Ahead of me, people spoke in whispers:

"Are you excited for Claire to go into the spring tonight?"

"Definitely. She's waited three years for this."

“Alpha said the moon will be especially clear—good omen.”

Their quiet hopes wove into the air like fragile threads.

The valley opened before us with breathtaking serenity. The spring lay at its heart, a pool of dark, still water reflecting faint silver even before the moon had fully risen. Smooth stones encircled it, worn by countless ceremonies.

The pack members arranged themselves in a wide circle, barefoot, draped in robes identical to the one I wore.

The air seemed thicker here, almost as though the silence carried weight.

Sabrina leaned close. “You okay?”

I took a deep, long breath. “I’m fine.”

We took our places among the observers.



I noticed Lucian standing across the circle, hands clasped behind his back, moonlight highlighting the edge of his profile. I couldn't read his expression, but something about his posture suggested he was waiting for something unseen.

When he finally looked up, his eyes brushed mine like a soft, unspoken question. My dream—Kieran's face—flashed in my mind.

I turned away first.

Then the chanting began—low, rhythmic, a gentle hum of gratitude and yearning.

My breath slowed without conscious effort. Lanterns were dimmed until only moonlight and the reflection on the water guided the night.

As the moon climbed higher, bathing the valley in silver, the first volunteer stepped forward—a young man whose shoulders trembled.

He paused at the water's edge, fingers nervously tugging at the belt of his robe before letting it slip from his shoulders, revealing brutal scars across his back.

A hush fell.

No one averted their gaze. But no one looked with judgment either.

He stepped into the spring.

Ripples fanned out around him, swallowing his gasp as the cold hit. He moved slowly, purposefully, until the water reached his waist.

Then he tilted his head back, eyes closed, as his lips moved in a silent plea.

People around us breathed quietly, some whispering prayers, others watching with silent tears gathering.

I didn't know if he would emerge changed, but the courage it took just to stand there, completely vulnerable and exposed, felt like an offering to something greater than any of us.

When the young man emerged, shaking, an elder stepped forward with a blanket woven from the Blue Moon fibers.

She wrapped him gently, as though cradling a newborn—a symbol of a brand new rebirth.

One by one, others followed.

A girl who looked no older than fifteen. A warrior who walked stiffly, jaw tight with suppressed emotion.

A woman who broke into tears before even reaching the water, whispering apologies to the sky as though begging the moon to forgive her for an unknown sin.

Each story unfolded without words, yet I felt it as if it were written on my soul.

And still, I remained outside the water.

More entered the spring as time slowed, and I found myself exhaling slowly into the quiet, the ritual beginning to tug at something within me.

When the last participant finally emerged from the water, the chanting eased into silence like a breath exhaled after holding it for too long.

Elders stepped forward with small clay cups filled with herbal tea infused with Blue Moon.

When I accepted a cup, the steam curled faintly into the night air, carrying notes of mint and something faintly sweet.

Participants wrapped in blankets now sat among us, sharing the circle as equals. Conversations were minimal, spoken in low voices.

The transition from sacred stillness to quiet warmth felt natural, like a slow sunrise.

Sabrina cupped her tea and whispered, "This is the part I like best. When everything is soft again."

I sipped mine. The warmth slipped through me, easing tension I hadn't realized had lodged in my ribs.

Around us, a few soft laughs fluttered like birds returning to a tree after a storm had passed.

I lingered in the quiet comfort of being surrounded by others who carried burdens yet dared to hope for change.

Eventually, people began to leave in pairs or small groups, their voices hushed with quiet contentment.

Sabrina nudged me with her shoulder. "Want to head back?"

"Go ahead," I said, my voice nearly a whisper. "I'll stay a bit longer."

She studied me briefly but nodded without prying. "Don't fall in," she teased gently before drifting away with others.

I walked toward the edge of the spring, where the moon's reflection quivered slightly across the water's surface. The ripples left by the last participant had faded, the mirror now still—perfect.

I crouched down and trailed a fingertip just above the surface, not quite touching it. The chill radiated upward, almost inviting.

If I stepped in, what would I even wish for?