

My Sister 2

Chapter 2 COLD AND EMPTY

SERAPHINA'S POV

The fragile silence was shattered as a piercing cry echoed down the sterile hallway.

"Papa! Where are you?"

Every head turned in unison. My stomach plummeted as Celeste came into view—her golden hair whipping behind her, cheeks flushed from running. Her eyes were rimmed with tears, but her beauty remained utterly breathtaking.

After ten years, my sister's sudden appearance struck me like a physical blow.

I almost instinctively turned to Kieran, whose mouth had fallen open, staring at Celeste like she was a dream he was scared to wake up from. The raw longing in his eyes was enough to answer the question that had haunted me for a decade: his heart had never been mine.

"Tell me I'm not too late," Celeste begged, her voice breaking. When no one answered immediately, her knees buckled.

Kieran moved faster than any werewolf had a right to. He caught her before she hit the ground, cradling her against his chest as my mother and brother descended into the huddle. Their tangled limbs and shared sobs painted the perfect family portrait—one I'd never been part of.

The thought clawed at my throat. I'd lost my father too. Didn't I deserve to mourn?

But this was Celeste's world. It always had been. From the moment she'd taken her first steps, everyone had watched her, admired her, loved her. As Celeste shone, I became a shadow.

And now, as her whimpers filled the room, I might as well have been invisible.

The exit beckoned. Better to leave with what little dignity remained than wait for their inevitable rejection.

Not a single head turned as I slipped away.

My tears had dried by the time I reached home, leaving salt tracks on my cheeks. But the hollow ache in my chest? That felt like it would linger forever.

My first stop was Daniel's room to check up on him.

I was surprised to see light under his door, and when I pushed it open, I found my nine-year-old curled into himself, knees drawn to his chest like a tiny fortress against the world.

"Mommy?" His voice was too small, too knowing.

I perched on the edge of his racecar bed. "Sweetheart, why are you up?"

He worried his lower lip between his teeth. "Something's wrong with Grandpa Edward, right?"

The air left my lungs. How did I tell this bright-eyed boy that the man who'd taught him to track deer just last summer was gone? I smoothed his pajama-covered knee. "Honey, there was... an incident tonight. Grandpa got hurt—"

"He died." Daniel's whisper held an eerie certainty. "Our bond... it broke."

My hand stilled. At nine, he shouldn't have been able to feel the pack bonds severing. Yet here he was, demonstrating the very wolf-sensitivity I'd spent his lifetime praying he'd inherit.

Relief warred with awe—he wouldn't be like me. Wouldn't bear the shame of being the Alpha's defective child, a werewolf whose wolf never manifested.

"Come here, my brave boy." I gathered him close, breathing in his scent of maple syrup and childish sweat. However much I regretted that disastrous Blood Moon Hunt, I'd never regret the miracle it gave me.

Daniel was the one pure thing in my life—the only heart that loved me without conditions.

As I tucked the spaceship-patterned blanket around his shoulders, he turned those soulful eyes on me—Kieran's eyes in miniature.

"You and Daddy will always be here, right?"

The question lanced through me. I feathered my fingers through his hair, just like I had when he was a baby fighting sleep. "Oh, my love..."

How could I explain that his father had never truly been mine to keep? That the way Kieran had looked at Celeste tonight—like the sun had risen after a decade of darkness—was a look he'd never once given me? That their embrace in the hospital corridor had been more intimate than any he and I had shared in ten years of marriage?

"Mommy's not going anywhere," I promised, pressing a kiss to his furrowed brow. "Your daddy and I love you more than anything," I whispered. "Nothing will ever change that."

His sleepy smile gutted me. "Night, Mommy."

"Sweet dreams, my heart." I kissed his forehead, lingering a moment too long before slipping out.

The kitchen's fluorescent lights buzzed as I rummaged through the fridge. Glass bottles clinked—then froze mid-reach at the sound of the front door.

Kieran. Home already.

I'd expected him to stay all night at the hospital, comforting her. Reconnecting with her.

He moved through the darkened house like a shadow, his broad shoulders filling the kitchen doorway. Moonlight caught the sharp angles of his face as his gaze swept over me—empty. Always empty.

The refrigerator hummed between us as he reached past my shoulder. His cedar-and-rain scent enveloped me for one treacherous heartbeat before he withdrew, cracking open a water bottle.

"Did you... want something to eat?" My voice sounded too small in the silence. "You missed dinner."

Nothing. Just the working of his throat as he drank, the corded muscles flexing beneath stubble I'd never been allowed to touch. The crushed plastic hitting the recycling bin made me flinch.

He braced himself against the countertop, head bowed like Atlas bearing the world. I knew this dance by heart—ten years of speaking to a ghost.

"I'll just..." I edged toward the doorway.

"Seraphina."

My name in his mouth was always a shock. Like being doused in ice water.

I turned slowly. Moonlight carved hollows beneath his cheekbones, his expression unreadable as ever.

"We need to talk."

The quiet words sent a bolt of dread through me. His grip on the counter turned his knuckles bone-white.

No preamble. No softening. Just Kieran's brutal efficiency, as always.

"I want a divorce."

Ten years. Ten years I'd waited for this axe to fall.

Funny how it still cut like a surprise.