

## **My Sister 201**

Chapter 201 CANDLELIGHT AND NOSTALGIA

SERAPHINA'S POV

I kept my gaze on Daniel.

It was safer that way.

The one time I met Kieran's eyes, I felt that stupid fucking feeling, like a magnet dragged too close to its twin.

I guess I should have realized that, with Alina's increased strength, the so-called bond between me and him would yank harder.

Faking indifference was harder than I thought. But dammit, I tried.

Now that Lucian knew the truth between me and Kieran, the last thing I wanted to do was rub our relationship (for lack of a better word) in his face.

After everything he'd done for me without expecting anything in return, the least I owed him was respect.

So, I forced myself to keep my attention firmly where it belonged: on my son.

It was pretty easy.

Daniel was so animated as he chattered happily about his training, complete with wild hand gestures and little sound effects.

His enthusiasm was infectious. The joy I felt at the sight of him spread through me like wildfire.

"I can't believe you learned grounding that quickly," I said, cupping his face in my hands.

He puffed his chest proudly. "Grandpa said I was a natural! He said wolves who can focus like me make good leaders someday."

I smiled. "You're going to be an amazing leader, there's no doubt about that."

From the corner of my eye, I saw Kieran's fists clench. Before I could read too much into the tension radiating off him in waves, Daniel leaned in and pressed his lips to my ear.

"Mom?"

I lowered my voice. "Yes, baby?"

"Your energy feels different." His little brows furrowed as if searching for the right word. "Stronger."

I exhaled. Of course he noticed.

"It's Alina," I whispered for his ears only. "She's growing stronger."

Daniel let out a loud gasp of delight before he remembered that Alina was supposed to be a secret.

Sure, Lucian knew about her already, but Kieran didn't. And I was going to keep it that way.

Daniel lowered his voice again. "That's awesome!"

I laughed softly. "Yeah, it is."

"And it's perfect. So we can celebrate at dinner."

"Dinner?" I echoed.

“Yeah!” His eyes sparkled as his voice rose so that everyone could hear. “Dad already made restaurant reservations! He said it’s a special welcome-home dinner.”

I turned to Kieran. “You did?”

He shrugged, his gaze more intense than the nonchalant gesture. “I thought you’d like to spend some more time with Daniel.”

I pursed my lips. It was Daniel’s idea to pick me up from the airport, and dinner was for Daniel?

Did he think I was born yesterday?

“It’s just dinner,” he added softly.

Except nothing with Kieran was ever just anything.

I hesitated. Part of me wanted to decline, to invent an excuse about unpacking or rest.

But Daniel’s excited face, those hopeful eyes, made resistance impossible.

I turned to Lucian, who had stood quiet and watchful behind me all this time.

Before I could form words, he smiled gently. "Go."

I exhaled. "Thank you," I whispered, hoping he could see the overwhelming gratitude I felt. "For everything."

He stepped forward then and wrapped an arm around me in a loose embrace. I was hyperaware of Kieran's gaze burning into my side, but I returned Lucian's hug.

It lasted all of five seconds, but when he let go, my cheeks were lightly flushed.

"I'll call you," he said.

I nodded.

And when I turned back to Kieran and Daniel, Kieran looked like he was having an aneurysm.

"Alright," I said softly. "Dinner it is."

Daniel's cheer was instantaneous. "Yes!"

Kieran's lips twitched, though his hands stayed clenched into fists.

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I'd expected the ride to be filled with Daniel's excited chatter, but as soon as we began moving, he leaned his head against the window and closed his eyes.

I sincerely doubted he was sleeping.

I sat with my hands folded tightly in my lap, trying not to feel the weight of Kieran's presence beside me.

We drove facing the sunset. Pink and gold hues poured through the windshield.

My mind drifted back to Shadowveil—the crisp air, the howls beneath the moon, the chill of the Moonlit Spring.

That sense of belonging still lingered under my skin, pulsing in my veins.

“Did you enjoy your time there?” Kieran asked suddenly.

I turned to him, taken aback. “What?”

“Shadowveil.” His tone was casual, but his knuckles were pale where he gripped the wheel. “You seemed...different when you stepped off the plane.”

I studied him carefully. “It was peaceful. Inspiring.”

He gave a stiff nod. “That’s...nice.”

I didn’t respond. There was nothing to say.

When the car finally pulled to a stop, I blinked in surprise.

The restaurant sat on a quiet stretch of beach.

Strings of lanterns swayed above, their golden light flickering on the whitewashed walls. Curling vines framed the railings. Beyond, the ocean stretched, its waves pale under the dying sun.

Recognition hit me like a cold slap.

No. It couldn't be.

My heart thudded hard against my ribs. This wasn't just any restaurant. It was the one I'd written about in my first book, *The Sound of Midnight Waves*.

The dream date scene, where the heroine sat beneath strings of lanterns that swayed in the sea breeze while her love confessed everything he'd never dared to say before.

The resemblance was uncanny. The angle of the patio, the curve of the railing, even the soft golden glow of the lights matched perfectly.

What the hell?

I glanced at Kieran, who was already unbuckling his seatbelt, expression unreadable.

A dozen emotions tangled inside me—shock, confusion, something dangerously close to hope.

Was this for real? Had he really read my book?



“What?” he asked, his tone even, though something flickered behind his eyes.

“I—” I shook my head.

No.

There was no way in hell. I was doing that thing again—reading too much into nothing. “Never mind.”

I stepped out, and the sea breeze caught my hair, blowing wisps in my face. Daniel stirred in the back seat, rubbing his eyes and smiling sleepily as he took my hand and I helped him out.

The three of us walked toward the glow of the lanterns, the evening slowly deepening around us.

And though I tried to steady my heart, I couldn’t help but wonder—if this was coincidence, or fate...or Kieran’s way of rewriting a story that had already ended.

A part of me was numb as a waiter led us through the restaurant, her soft-heeled steps clicking against the polished wood.

Daniel's hand was warm in mine, his excitement bubbling. "This place is so pretty," he whispered, eyes darting to the lanterns, the flickering candles on every table, the endless view of the sea.

"Yeah," I murmured. My voice sounded wrong even to my own ears—thin, fragile. "It is."

But the moment we stepped onto the terrace, I knew.

The layout. The scent of sea salt and vanilla candles. The faint music drifting from the small quartet tucked near the corner. All of it was too familiar. Identical.

I'd written that specific scene on the night of our first anniversary in a blur of foolish hope.

Kieran hadn't been home, so I'd gone into Daniel's room, watching him sleep in his cot as I poured out every fierce wish, every hope onto the page.

Intermittently, I glanced at the door, wishing with all my heart that my estranged husband would show up and pour out his heart, just like the hero in the novel.

He hadn't, of course. He never did.

And now, nine years later, I was standing inside my own fiction—with the man who'd made sure that fantasy never became reality.

Kieran had reserved a table at the terrace edge—the exact spot from the scene. My stomach twisted.

Daniel grinned. “This doesn’t look like the places you usually pick, Dad.”

Kieran glanced down at him, a faint smile tugging at his lips. “No?”

Daniel shook his head. “You like places with dark walls and quiet music. This one feels different.”

Different.

Yeah. That was one word for it.

“What do you think of it?” He was talking to Daniel, but his gaze drifted to me.

I avoided it as I sat, the chair creaking softly beneath me. My pulse hammered in my throat.

“I like it,” Daniel continued, looking between us. “It feels like we’re on vacation.”

"I'm glad," Kieran said softly, still looking at me.

That look—steady, weighted, searching. It was too much. Did he really know what this restaurant represented? Or was it all just a cruel coincidence?

I busied myself with the napkin on my lap.

"Mom, what do you think?" Daniel asked.

I met Kieran's gaze for half a heartbeat before looking away. "It's lovely," I said, my voice cracking slightly at the end.

Daniel didn't seem to notice. He was too busy studying the menu.

Kieran leaned back slightly, eyes still on me. "The seafood here is supposed to be really good. You always liked—"

"I don't," I interrupted quickly. "Not anymore."

He blinked, surprised. "You don't?"

“No.” I traced the rim of my glass with my fingertip. “I got food poisoning from bad shrimp four years ago and swore off seafood. But you wouldn’t know anything about that.”

I hadn’t meant for the words to carry so much bite. Oh well.

Daniel spoke up, blissfully unaware—or just good at ignoring the tension. “Can I get steak, Mom? Medium rare?”

“You can get whatever you like,” I said, my tone instantly lighter.

He smiled, flagging down the waiter with an enthusiasm that made my chest ache. I envied his ease, his pure joy at something as simple as dinner by the sea.

I wished I could slip into that innocence again, forget all the layered meanings twisting through this moment.

But my gaze kept flicking back to Kieran. The way the sunset caught on his profile. The faint line between his brows, always there when he was holding something back.

He looked older than I remembered—in a way that wasn’t about age, but about the weight of years.

For the umpteenth time, I wondered if he realized how cruel this was.

Because this—this wasn't romantic. It wasn't a gesture of love or reconciliation. It was salt in an old wound, dressed up in candlelight and nostalgia.