

My Sister 211

Chapter 211 PERFECT TIMING

SERAPHINA'S POV

The shouting grew clearer once we stepped outside, where the grassy patch by the curb had become an accidental stage.

Maxwell stood at its center, shoulders drawn tight beneath his rolled-up sleeves, jaw clenched and eyes wild as he fought—and failed—to stay calm over the piercing wails of the crying child.

A woman clutched her son a few feet away, murmuring something between comfort and indignation.

And on Maxwell's other side were Noah and Zach, both flushed and trembling, their golden retriever crouched low, shivering with its ears flattened.

Daniel tugged at my sleeve. "What's going on?"

"I'm not sure yet," I murmured, scanning the scene.

But even from here, I could read the shape of it—the tightness of Noah's grip on the leash, the defiance stiffening Zach's small frame, the weariness pulling at Maxwell's stance.

“Apologize. Now,” he commanded, the words sharp enough to make passing pedestrians slow down, their attention drawn to the spectacle.

He was seconds away from losing his temper. I felt it prickle on my skin, a charged heaviness in the air—the same warning I’d known as a child, sensing my father’s wolf simmering just beneath his scolding.

And the twins—gods, they were just scared.

I sighed, stepping forward. “Stay here, baby.”

Daniel nodded, his eyes glued to the scene.

By the time I reached them, Maxwell’s voice had dropped into that dangerous calm superior wolves used when words were the last barrier before exerting dominance.

“Noah. Zach. I won’t ask again.”

“Dad, it wasn’t Bobby’s fault!” Noah cried, voice cracking as he wrapped his arms around the dog’s neck. Tears streaked down his cheeks, blotching his freckled face.

“Yeah!” Zach barked, planting himself like a shield between his brother and father. “He didn’t do anything!”

“Your dog scared my son!” the woman snapped, glaring at the twins. “He could’ve been hurt—”

“Ma’am,” I interjected gently, raising a hand. “Maybe let’s take a breath before anyone gets hurt for real.”

Maxwell turned at the sound of my voice. Surprise flared in his eyes, quickly replaced by raw relief, and he sagged a little as he exhaled and stepped back. “Seraphina. Sorry. This...got out of hand.”

“Yeah,” I said softly. “I can see that.”

Bobby whined, pressing closer to Noah’s leg. He was enormous for a retriever, but the way his body trembled, his eyes darting from face to face, made him look utterly defenseless—not aggressive, just overwhelmed.

I crouched down in front of the dog, holding my hand out for him to sniff. He whined softly, pressing his nose into my palm. “Hey, boy. You okay?”

His tail thumped weakly once.

“See?” I said, glancing up at the woman. “He’s gentle. Just scared.”

Her son hiccupped through his tears, his hands twisting in her coat as he half-hid behind her. “I...I just wanted to pet him.”

“He grabbed Bobby’s ear really hard,” Noah spat. “Bobby thought he was being attacked.”

His mother turned her frown down to her son. “Is that true, Cam?”

Cam’s face turned red. “I just wanted to play,” he mumbled, sniffing.

“How about I pull your ears and see how much you—”

“Zach.” Maxwell’s warning growl shut his son up.

I nodded, my voice softening. “Bobby didn’t mean to hurt anyone—he was just startled.” I turned to Cam. “I’m sure you didn’t mean to hurt him either; you have to be careful not to play too roughly. Okay?”

Cam sniffed and gave a short nod.

I turned to Noah and Zach. “Next time, try to explain the situation calmly before going straight to yelling, okay?”

Zach crossed his arms. “She yelled first before we could.”

Fair point.

“Alright,” I said. “Everyone got scared, everyone overreacted. How about we start fresh? The important thing is that no one’s hurt.”

For a moment, the air between us held still—the kind of fragile pause that could tip either way.

Then, slowly, the woman knelt beside her son, gently coaxing him forward with a hand on his back. “Would you like to say sorry?”

After a hesitant pause, Cam mumbled an apology.

Noah followed suit, whispering one too as he hugged Bobby’s neck.

Zach muttered something resembling “sorry,” but it came out more like a growl.

Still, it worked. The woman relaxed, thanked me, and led her son away.

I rose and brushed the grass off my knees. "Crisis averted."

Maxwell let out a slow breath, rubbing the back of his neck. "The pup whisperer strikes again. You make it look so easy."

I laughed softly as Daniel came up to join us, hands shoved into his pockets, eyes darting between the retreating mother and the twins.

"Everything okay?" he asked, a little breathless.

"Handled," I said, resting my hand on his shoulder. "No blood, no lawsuits."

Maxwell huffed out a quiet laugh, his shoulders finally relaxing. "Thanks to you. Seriously, you've got a gift."

I shrugged bashfully.

"I owe you for saving me from public humiliation," he insisted. He glanced at the restaurant behind us. "We must have interrupted your lunch, please allow me—"

I waved his offer away before he could fully make it. “That’s not necessary.”

“Let me at least buy you tea or something,” he insisted. “There’s a place a few blocks down—”

Zach groaned dramatically. “Tea’s boring.”

“Yeah,” Noah agreed, tugging at his father’s sleeve. “Can’t we get something fun? Like ice cream?”

He shot them a look. “I wasn’t offering you two. You’re lucky you’re not grounded.”

“Oh, boo.” Noah rolled his eyes.

Maxwell sighed, looking heavenward. “You see what I deal with?”

I laughed. “Actually, ice cream sounds divine.”

That earned a cheer from all three boys.

The café nearby was small but lively—chalkboard menus, sunlight pouring in through wide windows, the smell of espresso and vanilla.

Daniel and the twins pressed against the glass freezer, arguing over flavors.

“Chocolate,” Noah said with authority.

“Mint,” Zach countered.

Daniel crossed his arms. “Cookies and cream is the best.”

Maxwell huffed. “You three know that you can order individual flavors, right? Nobody’s forcing you to share a cone.”

I snorted.

When the sugar was finally distributed and temporary harmony restored, the group drifted outside again, where the noon sun hung high in the sky.

Across the street, a small sports complex hummed with activity, and through the large window, we could see kids darting across an ice rink in bright jerseys.

Zach's eyes lit up instantly. "They're playing hockey!"

Noah licked his ice cream and grinned. "Cool! Dad, can we play?"

Daniel perked up. "You play hockey?"

"Of course we do," Zach said proudly. "Dad taught us."

"I attempted to teach them," Maxwell corrected. "Mostly they just weaponize the sticks."

Daniel's eyes gleamed. "My dad taught me, too."

Noah scoffed. "I bet we're better players than you."

Daniel's eyes narrowed. "You'd lose that bet."

"Oh yeah?" Zach piped in. "Let's see then."

I blinked. "Huh?"

“Let’s have a match!” Noah declared. “Us versus you.”

Maxwell frowned. “Two against one is hardly fair.”

Daniel looked up at him. “Will you play with me?”

“No,” Zach snapped. “He’s our dad, not yours. Play with your mom.”

I laughed, shaking my head. “Hold on, I’ve never even held a hockey stick in my life. I’m more of a cheer-from-the-sidelines type.”

“Then you’ll learn!” Noah said. “You can be on Daniel’s team.”

Maxwell looked mildly horrified. “Absolutely not. She could break something.”

“Confidence inspiring, thank you,” I muttered, rolling my eyes.

“Mom?” Daniel turned to me and held his hand out. “I need your phone.”

I frowned. “Why?”

“Come on!” He shook his hand impatiently.

I sighed, handing him the phone. “Fine. But what could you possibly want with my phone?”

He grinned instead of answering, thumbs flying across the screen. “You’ll see.”

Before I could pry further, he darted toward the rink entrance, the twins hot on his heels.

Maxwell and I exchanged a half-fond, half-exasperated look that said, ‘We’re not stopping this, are we?’ and trudged after them.

Inside, the rink buzzed with life—kids wobbling over the ice, music thumping faintly through the speakers, the chill air fogging our breaths.

“Dad, we have to rent gear,” Zach announced.

“Right away, Your Highness,” Maxwell deadpanned.

We followed the kids to the rental counter, where a tired attendant barely looked up from her clipboard as the twins launched into rapid-fire requests for helmets, sticks, skates, and “the cool kind of gloves.”

As we waited, their chatter filled the air—plans for team names, rules that kept changing every thirty seconds, and plenty of trash talk. We paid, grabbed the skates, and found a bench near the side of the rink.

Within minutes, the boys were half-armored, faces flushed with excitement. “Ready?” Noah asked.

Daniel craned his neck towards the door. “I just need a minute.”

A pang went through me. Was he stalling because he was wary of playing against the twins?

“Maybe I can find a coach or staff to join your team, Danny.”

He shook his head. “No need. I have backup arriving any minute now.”

I frowned, but before I could press him for more information, the sound of hurried footsteps echoed from the lobby—brisk, uneven, almost urgent.

I turned in time to see the doors swing open, and my heart vaulted to my throat.

Kieran stumbled in, wind-tousled and a little out of breath, a leather jacket thrown hastily over a dark shirt. His wide-eyed gaze swept the rink until it found me and Daniel.

Daniel's grin split wide. "Perfect timing."