

## **My Sister 213**

Chapter 213 SO CLOSE

SERAPHINA'S POV

By the time we left the rink, the air had cooled for the evening. The parking lot lights glimmered against the polished hoods of parked cars, and a gentle breeze teased strands of my hair.

Daniel bounced between us, his cheeks still flushed from the game, his grin brighter than the neon glow of the café sign.

"That was awesome!" he declared for what must've been the fifth time, playing hopscotch on the thin line between exuberance and chaos. "Did you see that last move, Mom? Dad passed the puck and—boom! Goal!"

Kieran chuckled from beside me, and I was a little too aware of his warmth sinking into my side.

"I did," I said, my grin almost as wide as Daniel's. "You were super impressive, baby."

Maxwell's laughter boomed from behind us. "You two make quite the team," he said, catching up with Noah and Zach in tow. The boys looked winded but grinning, their hair sticking to their foreheads.

"Honestly, I should've known better than to underestimate a Blackthorne duo."

“Don’t be too hard on yourself,” Kieran replied easily, extending his hand. The earlier tension I’d noticed when he first met Maxwell seemed to have dissipated on the ice.

“You and your boys held your ground. Those twins have quick reflexes. You train them yourself?”

“Every weekend,” Maxwell said, pride edging his tone. “But Daniel here might just outshine us all one day.”

Noah and Zach exchanged glances, their smiles faltering just a fraction. There was a faint stiffness to their shoulders—something I might not have noticed if I hadn’t spent years hiding my own, subtle, quiet hurts.

Daniel, oblivious as ever to envy, grinned brightly. “You guys were amazing too! We should play again. Maybe next weekend?”

For a heartbeat, the twins hesitated. Then Noah nodded quickly. “Sure. That’d be cool.”

Zach mirrored the nod, though his tone came out a little forced. “Yeah, totally.”

Maxwell gave Daniel an approving pat on the head. “You’ve got good sportsmanship, kid. Keep that up.”

Then he turned to me. “And you’ve got quite a son, Seraphina.”

“Thank you,” I said, my smile softening. “He’s my whole world.”

Kieran’s gaze flicked toward me then, brief but weighted. Before I could read further into it, Daniel tugged on my sleeve, instantly refocusing my attention.

“Mom, can we invite Dad to dinner?” he asked. “To thank him for playing with me.”

I hesitated.

Dinner. With Kieran. After the way he’d smiled at me on the ice—after that brief, foolish hope that had made my heart stutter.

Did I not just say I was wary of more family outings?

But then Daniel gave me that pleading, hopeful look that could melt steel.

I sighed, defeated. “All right. But we’re not eating out. I’ll cook.”

Kieran arched a brow. "Cook? You sure about that?"

No, I wasn't sure about that. What the hell was I doing inviting Kieran to my home to cook him a meal?

But instead of backtracking, I shot him a look. "Do you want to eat or not?"

Say no. Say no. Say no.

He pursed his lips and gave a curt nod. "I'd love to."

Wonderful.

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Home was warm when we walked in, the faint smell of cinnamon lingering from the morning's tea.

Daniel dashed upstairs, still buzzing with post-game energy. "I gotta go shower!"

"You don't have to run!" I called after him.

“Too late!” came his muffled voice, already distant.

I exhaled a quiet laugh, shaking my head as I headed for the kitchen. “I don’t know where he gets his energy from.”

Kieran followed and paused at the doorway, watching me with an unreadable expression. “He gets it from you.”

I blinked at him. “From me?”

“Yeah.” His voice dropped slightly, softer. “The way you cheer for him, the way your energy and light fill a room—it’s contagious. Undeniable.”

The compliment caught me off guard. I turned to the fridge to busy my hands—and hide the flush in my cheeks—bringing out the vegetables I’d prepped earlier and the other ingredients for dinner.

Kieran didn’t say anything after that, and I could almost pretend he wasn’t in the kitchen. Except that was impossible.

He was still standing at the doorway, but his presence filled the entire room like a steadily inflating balloon.

The kitchen shrank with him in it. The air thickened. When he moved, his scent curled around me almost as tangibly as physical touch.

"Need help with anything?" he asked.

I shook my head, setting veggies on the counter. "No, I've got it."

"Come on, it's the least I can do."

He moved to the sink, rolling up his sleeves, the flex of his forearms catching my eye before I could chide myself for staring. He started rinsing the plates I'd set aside from breakfast.

"I said I've got it," I repeated, firmer this time.

He glanced over, lips twitching. "Relax, Sera. It's just washing dishes."

"That's not the point." My voice came out sharper than intended, and I snatched the soap-slick plate out of his hand.

He paused. "Then what is?"

“That—” I started, but words failed me.

The real reason—the way my pulse quickened this close to him, the way my heart seemed to forget every lesson it had learned about moving on from him—wasn’t something I could say aloud.

Kieran turned the faucet off and faced me, drying his hands slowly. His eyes searched mine, and I couldn’t bring myself to meet his gaze. “You’re tense.”

“I’m fine,” I said, too quickly.

He stepped closer. The space between us thinned to a breath. His voice was a low caress against my skin. “You’re not.”

I opened my mouth to protest, to tell him that I wasn’t cursing myself for inviting him to my home, to deny that my body was having an inexplicable, maddening reaction to his presence.

But then he reached out, and his fingers brushed my wrist. “Sera—”

A zing of electricity, almost as painful as it was dizzying, shot through me, and I stumbled backward, the plate in my hand slipped out of my grasp.

“Damn it—”

Before it could shatter, Kieran’s lightning-fast reflexes kicked in, and his hands shot out.

One caught the plate.

The other wrapped around my waist to steady me.

For a suspended second, everything else fell away.

The hum of the refrigerator. The patter of the shower upstairs. The low wind outside the windows. It all faded until there was only him.

His hand was like a brand on my lower waist, burning a hole straight through me. His skin was warm, his breath close. I could feel the faint tremor of restraint in the way he held himself still against me.

My heart stuttered.

“Th-thanks,” I whispered, my voice thinner than air.



Kieran didn't answer right away.

His dark gaze flicked from my eyes to my mouth, then back. The look in them was a slow, deliberate undoing—the kind that didn't need words.

Unbidden—out of fucking nowhere—a shiver of need ran down my spine.

It was as if my body had separated from my mind, leaving all my reservations and inhibitions behind.

I leaned closer. Just a little. Just enough for my chest to brush against his. Enough for the warmth of his breath to ghost against my lips.

The familiar heat, the pulse of recognition—mate or no mate bond—still lived there. Under my skin, rushing through my veins, buried under layers of denial.

We were so close. All I had to do was tilt my chin up, and our lips would meet. The kiss would be explosive, I knew. Terrifying in its intensity.

And gods help me, I wanted it.

Why couldn't I have it? What was stopping me now from closing the hairbreadth distance between us and—

A door slammed upstairs, and it was like my senses snapped back into my body, and sharp panic drowned out all else.

I pushed Kieran away. Harder than I meant to.

He jerked back, his body hitting the edge of the counter with a muted thud. "Ow."

My breath hitched. My pulse roared like a wild animal. "Kieran!" I stepped forward immediately, my eyes wide. "I—I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

He winced, one hand pressed against his chest. "It's fine," he grunted.

But it wasn't. He wasn't.

I frowned, taking in the pain that tightened his features. I knew I was getting stronger by the day, but that shove should not have hurt an Alpha, especially not one as powerful as Kieran Blackthorne.

"Kieran," I said softly, hesitantly reaching out for him. "Is there something wrong?"

Something like panic flashed in his eyes, and he made to move away. But I caught his wrist, pulling it away from his chest.

He groaned again, and every alarm bell in my head rang in a frenzy.

Before I could wonder what the fuck I was doing, my hands were gripping the hem of his shirt.

His eyes widened. “Sera, don’t—”

I yanked his shirt up and gasped.

“What the hell?!”