

My Sister 223

Chapter 223 STAY WITH ME

KIERAN'S POV

Fear chilled my spine deeper than the rain as I carried Sera, every effortless step a reminder of how limp she was in my arms.

Her head lolled listlessly against my chest as I ran, but the rest of her body was still—unnervingly so.

Despite the chill in the air, she was burning up, and she'd never looked more fragile in that moment.

I wondered if, even through her fog of unconsciousness, she could hear my heart hammering, panic pumping ice through my veins.

No. Nononono.

This—whatever the fuck this was—couldn't be happening.

One moment, I'd been comforting her. For the first time in almost forever, her guard had dropped around me. The next...this.

‘Please,’ I panted desperately, ‘just hold on.’

Terror propelled me faster than I’d ever run in my life, Ashar’s strength surging through me like borrowed fire.

In no time, I stumbled onto my porch and kicked open the front doors of the Alpha residence, water splattering across marble.

‘GAVIN!’ My voice was a hoarse roar. “GET ME A HEALER, NOW!”

My Beta appeared instantly, eyes widening when he saw Sera in my arms. We’d been having a pack meeting when Margaret had called me, even more frantic than she’d been about Celeste, and I’d left it all behind to look for Sera.

Gavin didn’t waste time with questions—just snapped orders to guards already scrambling ahead of us.

I didn’t go to the guest rooms. I didn’t take her to the infirmary in the annex. I didn’t even take her to her former room.

I carried her straight to my room.

Placing Sera on my bed without her conscious consent felt wrong, especially since this was her first time here after ten years of marriage.

But reason had blasted out of my head the moment she'd slumped into my arms.

She looked so small on the wide expanse of my bed, and a sound that was half helplessness, half frustration tore out of my throat.

I pulled wet hair from her cheeks, thumbs brushing skin too hot to touch. Heat radiated from her, as if she was burning inside out.

"Sera?" My voice cracked. "Come on. Open your eyes."

Nothing.

"Sera, please." Moisture trailed down my cheeks, and I had no idea if it was a tear or water dripping from my hair. "Please wake up. I can't lose you like this. I can't lose you at all."

Nothing.

I dropped my forehead onto hers and took a shuddering breath.

No. No. No.

It absolutely couldn't end like this. Not now. Not when I'd barely begun to chip away at the mountain of amends I had to make.

The healer arrived minutes later, moving quickly despite her age, silver hair pulled into a neat knot at the nape of her neck.

Fiona was one of the pack's most esteemed healers, respected not just for her expertise but for the calm assurance she brought to every room.

Even now, the tight grip of fear around my throat eased ever so slightly.

Fiona took one look at Sera lying unconscious on my bed and paused, her expression softening with quiet concern.

"Oh, child," she murmured, voice low and steady. "You've endured something fierce, haven't you?"

Her hands were gentle but sure as she set down her satchel on the nightstand.

"Alpha," she said with a respectful nod, already rolling up her sleeves, "tell me everything you observed before she collapsed."

I swallowed hard and forced myself to speak evenly. “High fever. Sudden loss of consciousness. No visible wounds. She was in the rain for a long time before.”

Fiona nodded, face composed, all business. “Good. Let me examine her.”

She took a step towards Sera, and the growl that tore out of my throat caught us both by surprise.

She adjusted her glasses as she studied me wanly. “May I touch her, Alpha?”

I exhaled and inhaled deeply, hoping the cool air would stoke the fire in me. “Of course.”

She nodded once and approached the bed. She pressed fingers to Sera’s temples, then her throat, then laid both palms over her sternum as a dull, pale glow seeped into her skin. It flickered—unstable, like it couldn’t find a pathway to her.

After several attempts, the glow died entirely.

Fiona’s expression darkened.

“What is it?” I demanded.

“She’s burning up from the inside,” the healer murmured, confirming my fear. “A fever beyond natural origin.”

My jaw tightened. “Spell? Curse? Poison?”

She shook her head. “No. This is internal. Something awakened—or snapped loose—and her body can’t regulate it.”

I swallowed, eyes locked on Sera’s trembling eyelids.

“What do we do?”

Fiona hesitated.

“Speak,” I growled.

Finally, she sighed. “In cases like this...a mate bond would stabilize her—share the pain, dampen the overload, allow healing through shared vitality.”

My heart kicked painfully. “And if she’s...unmated? Unmarked?”

She gave a sympathetic shrug. “Then all you can do is cool her physically and hope her willpower carries her through.”

I ran a hand through my damp hair. “Fuck,” I cursed. “There has to be something else we can do.”

“I’m afraid there isn’t,” Fiona said with the same graveness used to deliver a death sentence. “I’ll prepare tonics. But understand, Alpha...” She hesitated, probably wary of my wrath. “Tonics won’t solve this. They’ll only buy time.”

She cleared her throat and turned to Gavin, who’d been standing at the doorway the whole time. “Get some ice and fill a bathtub. We need to...”

I tuned the world out as movement erupted around me. The urgency blurred as my focus narrowed to the woman in my bed, panic turning numb.

Footsteps. Orders. The metallic scrape of a basin. I heard Gavin barking instructions at one of the guards, their hurried boots thundering toward my ensuite. Buckets sloshing. Ice cracking as it hit porcelain. The sound echoed like distant thunder.

But it all felt far away—like I was sinking underwater.

An eternity later, a hand landed on my shoulder.

“Kieran.” Gavin’s voice cut through the fog.

I blinked, jerking back to the present.

“We need to move her into the bath,” he said softly.

“No.” My voice was low, raw. “Not we. Everybody get out.”

Gavin sighed. “Kieran, we should—”

“Get. Out.”

I didn’t take my eyes off Sera as more movement ensued and the door finally clicked shut behind us.

I stood there, breathing hard, knuckles white where they gripped the sheets.

Heat rolled off her in waves, filling the room so completely it was like breathing through a smothering veil.

Then I snapped into action. I slipped an arm beneath her shoulders and another under her legs, lifting her carefully from the bed.

Her head lolled against my shoulder, breath shallow and hot against my skin. She whimpered—soft, barely audible—and the sound nearly shattered me.

“It’s okay,” I whispered into her hair. “I’ve got you.”

I carried her into the ensuite, brushing the wall with my shoulder to turn on the warm, low lights.

The massive sunken tub in the corner, slush and shards of ice floating on the surface, stared back at me like an answer I dreaded.

I set Sera gently on the small chaise beside the vanity, propping her head with a rolled towel so she wouldn’t slump. She looked wrong here—ashen, vulnerable, stripped of her fire.

I brushed a soaked strand of hair from her face. Her skin was nearly scalding under my palm.

“I’m going to cool you down, sweetheart,” I murmured. I knew she probably couldn’t hear me, but I needed to believe she could. To believe she was still with me.

I checked the water temperature with my hand.

Freezing. Good.

My fingers moved to her clothes, trembling—not out of desire but dread. I’d never actually undressed her before, and this wasn’t the way I imagined doing it if we ever reconciled.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered. “I’d never do this if there were another way.”

With slow, deliberate movements, I peeled off her soaked clothes piece by piece—shirt, jeans, underwear now damp with sweat rather than rain. I folded each item and set it aside instead of letting it fall to the floor.

Sera shivered, even burning, as the cooler air hit her.

I stripped next, shedding the remnants of my own clothes with fingers that felt clumsy and cold. The room felt cavernous, too quiet, save for the harsh sound of my own breathing.

Now, bare in my arms, I lifted Sera carefully, cradling her against me, and stepped inside the tub.

The shock of cold water hit instantly—biting, punishing. The kind of chill that tore the breath out of your chest and made every nerve scream awake.

My muscles locked, lungs seizing, but I didn't loosen my hold on her.

I lowered her slowly into the water, keeping one arm behind her back and the other hooked beneath her thighs so she stayed upright.

Her skin steamed where it met the water, and she let out a soft sound of pain—barely audible, but real, alive.

"I know, I know," I whispered, bringing her closer, pulling her half-onto my chest so her face stayed above water. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Just stay with me."

I lowered myself fully into the tub with her, cold slicing through me like knives. My body adjusted slowly. Sera shook violently against me, heat bleeding into the water so fast it almost felt warm around where she lay.

Every instinct screamed to pull her out, wrap her in blankets, hide her somewhere safe. But right now, warmth was the enemy.

I pressed my temple against hers, water dripping from my hair onto her cheeks.

"Come back, Sera," I breathed. "Fight. You've fought through much worse."

Her eyelashes fluttered, but she didn't wake.

I tightened my arms around her, drawing her fully against me, skin to skin, back to chest, her heartbeat faint but there. I could feel it—weak, erratic, fighting.

"You don't get to leave," I whispered, my teeth chattering. "Not like this. Not now. Not when I finally—"

The words stuck in my throat.

I swallowed them, pressing my lips to her temple instead, breath shaking with the weight of everything unsaid.

"I'm here," I murmured into her hair. "Open your eyes, please."

Her head fell against my shoulder again, fragile and warm even in freezing water.

I closed my eyes.

And held her tighter.