

My Sister 229

Chapter 229 HAPPY BIRTHDAY

SERAPHINA'S POV

I woke up before sunrise on Daniel's birthday.

The house was silent in the blue-gray pre-dawn. I lay still, staring at the ceiling, reality pressing in.

Daniel's birthday.

The day of his heir ceremony.

My baby was officially stepping into his new role as heir of the Nightfang Pack. The thought was bittersweet, and part of me wanted to crawl under the covers and will this day away.

But I couldn't. Today wasn't about me or my fears.

So I slipped out of bed and padded down the hallway to Daniel's room. His door was cracked open, just enough to let in the hallway light, and I eased it open without knocking.

He was still curled under the blankets, hair a messy halo, one arm dangling off the edge of the bed, breathing soft and steady.

My heart clenched painfully. Where did all those precious years go?

My mind reeled at the fact that my baby was suddenly ten. It seemed just yesterday he needed me for everything, and now, with each year, that need slipped away, leaving me both proud and unmoored.

I sat on the edge of the bed and smoothed a hand over his hair.

“Danny?” I whispered.

He stirred but didn’t wake.

I leaned down and kissed the crown of his head, whispering against his skin, “Happy birthday, my love.”

His lashes fluttered, and he blinked up at me with sleepy confusion. Then his lips curved into a slow, crooked smile.

“Morning, Mom.”

Something in me softened and splintered at the same time.

I knew I was probably being dramatic, but I could've sworn he looked older. Not in a drastic way, just a subtle change that said childhood was already slipping through my fingers.

"You have a big day ahead of you." I forced a smile. "You should get out of bed and get ready while I make breakfast. Your favorite."

"Chocolate pancakes?" he asked, instantly more awake.

"With strawberries and whipped cream," I affirmed.

He grinned and pushed himself up to sit, hair sticking in every direction. He leaned his head onto my shoulder. "Thanks, Mom."

I wrapped my arms around him and closed my eyes for a second, memorizing the warmth of his body against mine.

Ten years had vanished in the blink of an eye; another ten would slip by just as quickly. My baby would be a man. An Alpha. He would no longer fit into the crook of my arm.

"Don't you dare cry on my birthday," Daniel mumbled when I couldn't hold back a sniffle.

I let out a watery laugh. He pulled back, gave me a half-fond, half-exasperated look, and cupped my cheeks as I smiled.

“I’m not crying. It’s a big day, and I’m so proud of you.”

He grinned, dropping his hands. “I’m proud of me too.”

I laughed, ruffling his hair. “Go on, birthday boy. Brush your teeth before your breath knocks someone out.”

His eyes twinkled. “Oh yeah? Like this—aahhh.”

I squealed, pulling away as he opened his mouth and blasted stale morning breath in my face.

His laughter bounced against the walls, music to my ears.

We left just before ten.

Daniel bounced into the passenger seat, high on anticipation and excitement.

The road stretched ahead, sunlight filtering through palm trees waving in the morning breeze. LA was awake now—bright, loud, chaotic.

An exact mirror of the state of my mind.

I gripped the wheel tighter, energy simmering beneath my skin—subtle but present, like a low electrical hum I couldn't shut off.

I should've grown used to it over the last couple of days, but I just couldn't. Not when the gravity of what it meant constantly pressed down on my shoulders.

“You look like you're thinking really hard.”

I blinked, Daniel's voice bringing me back to the present.

“Do I?”

“Yeah.” He shrugged. “Are you worried about the ceremony? Because you shouldn’t be. Dad and Grandpa walked me through everything, like, four million times.” He rolled his eyes. “I think I could do it in my sleep.”

I let out a soft breath. “I know you’ll do great, baby. That’s not what I’m worried about.”

“Then what is it?”

I stared straight ahead. The answer clogged my throat.

Everything else.

The bond.

The past.

The future.

The fact that I felt like my heart was being pulled in two different directions.

I forced a smile. “Just tired.”

“Mom.”

His tone was flat. Disbelieving. His gaze pierced through with as much intensity as his father’s.

I nudged his shoulder lightly. “Don’t worry about me today, baby. This is your day. Focus on you, okay?”

Daniel’s eyes narrowed like he wanted to press further, but the Nightfang pack house came into view and diverted his attention.

The large fortress buzzed with activity as we drove through the grand gates, where ‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DANIEL!’ banners swayed in the breeze.

Pack members hurried by, setting up food tables, decorations, chairs, and inflating bouncy houses.

I parked near the entrance. Daniel hopped out before I fully shut off the engine.

Chuckling, I stepped out of the car—and froze.

The moment my feet touched the pack grounds, I felt it: Ashar's power, Kieran's presence. As if the weight and magnitude of the Alpha's power were embedded in the soil itself.

And then I saw him.

Kieran stood near the main hall entrance, speaking with Christian and Gavin.

He wore a black button-up, tailored slacks, no tie, sleeves rolled to his forearms. Simple. Clean. Powerful.

As if he sensed my presence as acutely as I sensed his, he turned, and his eyes found me instantly.

Relief washed over his expression so visibly it made my chest tighten.

He turned, abruptly cutting off his conversation, and began to walk towards me. My breath hitched as the bond tugged like a magnetic thread between us, strong enough to be slightly painful.

I looked away.

Daniel slid up to me, and I arched a brow. I thought he'd have run off by now. But he gave me a warm, all too knowing smile and slipped his hand into mine.

And then, when Kieran stepped closer, Daniel latched onto his hand too.

“Hey, bud,” he said, looking down at our son, affection shining in his eyes. “Happy birthday.”

Daniel beamed. “Thanks, Dad.”

And then Kieran looked at me, and my heart tripped.

“It’s good to see you,” he said quietly. His voice was rough, like he meant more than the words allowed.

We hadn’t seen each other since I walked out of his room the other day, and good was not the word I would have used to describe seeing him again.

Devastating, disorienting, heart-wrenching, were good candidates.

I nodded once, not trusting my voice around him.

The party that afternoon wasn't formal. All the rituals were reserved for the evening ceremony.

Kids—some from Daniel's class, others from Nightfang and Frostbane, even Noah and Zach—spilled across the courtyard chasing each other in wolf-tag as parents clustered by food tables chatting, one eye on their wards.

Daniel tore around with his friends, laughing, wild, free.

Watching him like that—unburdened, joyful—made the tight fist of worry inside me unclench.

Time was going by fast, yes. But if I worried too much about that, I would miss amazing moments like this.

Today was a celebration, and I would ruin it if I spent it in my head.

I didn't notice someone approaching until a woman's polite voice cut in.

"You must be Daniel's mother."

I turned to see a well-dressed woman around my age holding a plate of hors d'oeuvres.

I smiled politely. “Yes. I’m Seraphina.”

“Nice to meet you,” she said warmly. “I’m Helen. My son Leo is in Daniel’s grade.”

She pointed, and I followed the direction of her finger until I spotted a boy with dark curls racing after Daniel.

“Ah, yes.” I nodded, even though I barely recognized the kid. “He seems sweet.”

Helen smiled brighter. “I just wanted to thank you for having us.”

“Oh, it’s a pleasure,” I replied.

“And also, I must say,”—she leaned in conspiratorially, like we were two friends sharing a secret—“this is the first time I’m seeing you and your husband together. You two look amazing together.” She winked. “Very well matched.”

My smile froze.

I inhaled slowly, tamping down the sting of her words.

“Oh, there’s a misunderstanding,” I said evenly. “Daniel’s father and I are divorced.”

Helen’s eyes widened, color draining from her face. “Oh—oh gosh, I’m so sorry. I didn’t realize. I just...from the way he looks at you, I never would’ve guessed.”

Heat crawled up my neck, sharp and uncomfortable.

“It’s fine,” I said, forcing a smile to ease her obvious discomfort. “People assume.”

She nodded quickly, apologized again, and retreated into the crowd.

I exhaled, running a hand through my hair.

‘From the way he looks at you...’

I shook my head as if that could stop her words from burrowing deeper.

My gaze roamed over the crowd, trying to pick out Maya or Lucian or even Ethan, but it seemed all my guests were running behind time.

I turned, ready to find a corner to hide in—preferably one where another presuming parent wouldn't find me—when a firm hand closed around my wrist and yanked me away.