

My Sister 232

Chapter 232 SAFE SPACE

SERAPHINA'S POV

Daniel's laughter rang through the courtyard like sunlight, bright and warm, as he tore into another gift with unrestrained excitement.

For the first time since I stepped out of that suffocating walkway, my frantic heartbeat finally settled.

Not fully—there was still a tight coil of emotion lodged beneath my ribs—but at least I wasn't seconds away from breaking in half.

If that conversation had happened before—years ago, when I still lived under the same roof as Kieran, but was lonelier than I'd ever been—I would've been too tired to argue. Too numb. Too used to swallowing every splinter he gave me with a brave smile.

Back then, his distance was predictable. His coldness was routine. Fighting was futile.

But now?

Now everything was different.

The irony?

It was the bond that had changed me.

Not just physically—though that was obvious. My senses were sharper, my strength steadier, my endurance growing by the day.

But the emotional shift...that was the part no one warned me about. Every feeling was amplified, distilled into something sharper. Acute. More impossible to ignore.

Things that once barely pricked now stabbed.

Things I could once shrug off now lingered like thorns under skin.

Kieran's words from earlier—"How can you be so cruel?"—still rang in my ears.

Another version of me—the me from fucking last week—would've scoffed, thrown his words away with a bitter laugh, and kept walking.

This version of me?

Every syllable felt like sandpaper dragged across my heart.

And the worst part, the part I hated the most, was the growing awareness of him. The way my emotions tangled with his through the bond.

The way my chest still ached when I remembered the look on his face, the helplessness in his voice. The sincerity. The guilt.

The longing.

I couldn't stop resenting him. It would never be that easy.

But I also couldn't stop loving him.

Both truths lived inside me, hollowing me out from opposite ends.

And it made me wonder...

Did he feel the same?

Was the bond puppeteering every emotion he thought he had?

If his obsession—his desperation—was nothing more than biology forcing him to want me, then that was cruelty on a whole different level.

And after years of longing for Kieran, I didn't want a version of him tied to me only because fate said so.

A loud gasp dragged me back to the present.

"Oh my gosh—Grandpa's sword!"

Daniel held a wooden training sword above his head like it was a treasure looted from an ancient temple.

It was faded with age—the polish worn, the grip wrapped with old leather—but the ecstasy in his eyes made it glow like it was forged from gold.

Daniel darted forward and threw his arms around my mother's waist. "Thank you, Grandma!"

My mother bent, wrapping her arms around Daniel. "You're very welcome, darling. Your grandfather would have wanted you to have it."

I inhaled slowly, acknowledging her presence for the first time today.

I hadn't spoken to her. Not since that day. Not since those words. '...you were destined to live an ordinary life. Mundane. Unremarkable.'

But now she stood there, her arms around my son, smiling at him warmly as if someone had prophesied to her that he was destined for greatness.

Her gaze lifted and found mine.

Guilt. Regret. Hope.

I looked away.

Not today.

This wasn't the moment to reopen wounds. I forced myself to focus instead on Daniel's beaming face as he swung the little sword like a knight saving the world.

The gifts began to dwindle, and the children started drifting toward cupcakes and lemonade. Daniel suddenly frowned.

"Wait." He counted again. Then again. His eyebrows knitted as he turned to me. "Mom? Where's your gift?"

Dozens of eyes shifted to me.

I smiled, slow and secretive.

"I didn't bring it in a box."

His brows drew deeper. "Then where is it?"

"It's a surprise," I said, lowering my voice like we were conspiring. "Just for you."

His excitement nearly launched him off the ground. “Can I see it now?”

“You tell me. Are you done here? All gifts opened?”

He nodded so fast, his face momentarily blurred. “Yes! Let’s go!”

I chuckled, leaning down. “But first...”

I pulled a black bandana from my pocket. “I have to blindfold you.”

He blinked. “Seriously?”

“Do I need to gift you a dictionary and read you the meaning of surprise?”

“Fine,” he groaned dramatically, but the smile fighting its way onto his face betrayed him.

He turned around, and I tied the cloth gently around his eyes.

“Mom,” he snorted. “I can still smell where we’re going.”

“You can smell the whole forest, baby,” I countered. “You’ll survive the suspense.”

I was aware of Kieran watching us—trying to appear neutral but failing miserably—with a soft, aching look that pierced too deep.

When I was done tying the blindfold, I tugged on Daniel’s hand. “Come on.”

We slipped into the forest behind the pack house. The shift from noise to quiet hit instantly.

Shadows played between trees, sunlight dripping through leaves like spilled gold. The air smelled of damp earth, cedarwood, and the lingering sweetness from all the sugary treats Daniel had consumed.

“Mom?” Daniel whispered. “Where are we going?”

“Shh. Almost there.”

The path curled around thick brush until we reached the clearing.

An ancient oak tree stood at the center—massive, sprawling, older than the pack house itself. Its branches twisted like arms reaching toward the sky, sturdy and welcoming.

And nestled perfectly among them—

The treehouse.

Small enough to be cozy, large enough for a boy whose energy could power a small village for a year.

The wooden planks were sanded smooth, stained a soft honey-brown. A tiny porch extended from the front, and a rope ladder hung from one side.

A small lantern swung in the light breeze, catching the sun.

“Okay,” I whispered, stepping behind Daniel. “You can take it off.”

His hands flew to the blindfold, tugging it off in one motion.

His breath caught.

Then he dropped the cloth.

“Mom.” His voice cracked. “Is that...is that...?”

I nodded, throat tight. “It’s yours.”

He didn’t speak.

Didn’t move.

Just stared at the treehouse with wide, trembling eyes.

I knelt beside him. “I know one day you’re going to be a big bad Alpha with vast territories under your control, but this,”—I waved towards the treehouse—“is your first.”

His head whipped toward me. “Is it really all mine?”

“All yours,” I said, smiling. “I bought the land from your grandpa.”

I spent a substantial chunk of my winnings from the LST, but it was so worth it.

“This space belongs to you and only you. No one—and I mean no one—can enter without your permission. Not me, not even Alpha Kieran or former Alpha Christian.”

Daniel’s lips parted slightly, eyes shining.

“You make the rules,” I continued softly. “If you need quiet, if you’re upset, if you’re tired of being strong or brave or responsible—this place will always be your safe space. And when you’re inside, always remember how much I love you.”

His chin wobbled.

I reached out, brushing a curl from his forehead. “Happy birthday, baby.”

The emotions finally overwhelmed him.

With a choked breath, Daniel launched himself at me—arms squeezing tight around my neck, face buried into the space between my shoulder and collarbone.

I wrapped both arms around him, pressing my cheek against his temple. His small body trembled with soundless, overwhelmed sobs he desperately tried to hold back.

“Thank you,” he whispered fiercely against my skin. “Mom...this is the best gift ever.”

My throat tightened. I kissed his hair, breathing him in.

“Only the best for my baby,” I murmured.

He stayed like that for a long moment, letting the weight of being a growing Alpha melt into the arms of his mother.

My boy.

My whole world.

When he finally pulled back, wiping furiously at his eyes, he pointed at the treehouse with shaky excitement.

“Can I...can I go inside?”

I smiled. "It's your territory, little Alpha. You don't need my permission."

He grinned, chest swelling proudly, and bolted up the rope ladder with renewed joy.

As he disappeared inside, his laughter echoing through the branches, I stood beneath the ancient oak and let the moment settle deep into my bones.

This—this peace, this happiness—this was why I'd endure every storm the world threw at me.

This was why I'd keep fighting.

For Daniel.

For myself.

And maybe—one day...

For the version of love I deserved.