

## **My Sister 25**

Chapter 25 BROKEN PROMISES

SERAPHINA'S POV

I stared down at the text I had sent Kieran this afternoon after Miss Brenner's phone call.

'Daniel's PTC at six.'

And his reply: 'I know. I'll be there.'

I'd dreaded seeing him again after the kiss, a knot of unease and discomfort pulling at my stomach.

I should have saved myself the mental energy—the parent-teacher conference was nearly over, and Kieran still hadn't shown up.

I kept glancing at the door, waiting—fucking praying—he'd walk in at the last second, his usual scowl in place, ready with an apology.

But the door stayed closed. His seat next to me remained empty. And every tick of the clock only made the hollow pit in my stomach grow deeper.

I pulled out my phone again and called him for the fifth time. Straight to voicemail. No message. Just that cold, empty beep.

Miss Brenner had asked me for the sixth time if my 'husband' was coming, and I'd told her: "He's just running late; five more minutes" six times.

I couldn't sit in that uncertainty any longer, so I called Gavin. If anyone knew where Kieran was, it'd be him.

"Hey, Gavin," I said, keeping my voice steady.

Like the rest of Kieran's pack members, I didn't have much of a relationship with Gavin, but unlike the rest of them, he'd never shown hostility to me—at least not outwardly.

"Sorry to bother you. Do you know where Kieran is?"

There was a pause, just long enough to set me on edge. "Yeah," he finally answered. "He's... out. With Celeste."

My heart dropped. Celeste. Of course.

I took a deep, calming breath. "Okay, thanks, Gavin," I said, forcing my voice to be steady.

I ended the call and stuffed my phone back into my purse before I threw it across the room in frustration.

"Mrs. Blackthorne?"

I looked up and forced a smile when Miss Brenner smiled down at me and asked the same question for the seventh time. "Can we expect Mr. Blackthorne soon?"

She'd had her one-on-one with all the other parents and students in Daniel's class, and now it was just me and her in the classroom.

I gave her an apologetic smile. "I'm so sorry for keeping you waiting, but it turns out that my—" I caught myself. "Daniel's father won't be able to make it."

"Oh. I hope there's no problem?"

There was—named Celeste.

I shook my head. "Oh, no. He just got too caught up with work."

"Right." She nodded. If she could sense my sour mood, she made no indication. "Well, shall we begin?"

"Yes." I took a deep breath. "Let's."

"How is Daniel, by the way?" she asked. "The whole class misses him."

"He's doing well, thank you. He has a tutor who comes in every day, so he's up to date with his school work."

She nodded. "Good. I have no doubt that he'll do well and will be up to speed by the time he returns. Do you have any idea when that might be?"

I pursed my lips. "No. Soon, hopefully."

"Okay, then. Well, let's dive deeper, shall we?" She looked through a file in her hand. "Academically, Daniel is excelling. He's reading above grade level, his math skills are strong, and his writing shows real thought and creativity."

My next smile was genuine. "He's really a brilliant boy. He always pushes himself."

She smiled. "It shows. He's also extremely kind and demonstrates a great deal of emotional intelligence for his age. He always raises his hand, helps his classmates, and volunteers to lead group projects. He's respectful, empathetic, and very self-motivated."

Pride swelled in my chest like a balloon—and was immediately deflated by the fact that Kieran wasn't here to hear all the amazing things about our son.

"One thing, though," Miss Brenner added. "Has Daniel been going through any... changes lately?"

I stiffened slightly. "What do you mean?"

"Well, for the past few days before he left school, he seemed more... withdrawn. Children are sensitive and are very attuned to their environment, and changes within that environment can affect them."

Once again, I asked myself if getting divorced was the right thing to do, especially for Daniel. The thought of my baby being affected by Kieran's and my separation made my heart ache.

"I'll pay more attention to his well-being," I said thickly. "Thanks for pointing it out."

Miss Brenner smiled kindly. "Of course. As you know, we usually have a segment where our students share their thoughts about the academic experience, and since Daniel's not physically here, could we video call him?"

My heart lit up with the usual happiness when I was about to see Daniel. "Yes, of course."

I pulled out the encrypted phone and video-called Daniel.

I set up the phone between us, and my heart skipped a beat when the screen lit up with his bright, expectant face.

"Mom!"

I beamed. "Hi, baby."

His gaze shifted, and he waved, his smile widening. "Hi, Miss Brenner."

"Hello, dear. It's good to see you. Everyone misses you in class."

"I miss them—" His gaze shifted to the space beside me, and his smile froze. "Where's Dad?"

My heart cracked at the way his voice wavered. "Sweetie, he had to work. He's really sorry he missed this."

The words tasted bitter in my mouth. I didn't want to have to cover for Kieran like this. He should have shown up for his son.

But my anger wasn't important right now.

What was important was the way Daniel's face crumpled with confusion and hurt.

"He promised," he whispered, his voice shaking with too much fury for a nine-year-old. "This morning, after breakfast, he promised he'd come. He said he wouldn't miss it for the world."

I guess Celeste was more than the world.

I reached for words, anything to patch the wounds I could already see forming. "He didn't mean to break his promise. He just—" I sighed. "Things came up."

But Daniel had already stopped listening. His chin trembled slightly before he looked away. "He's a liar," he muttered, angrily swiping at his cheek.

My heart completely broke at the tears spilling down his cheeks. "Danny—"

He shook his head obstinately. "I'll never forgive him."

"Honey, please don't be mad. Miss Brenner is telling me some amazing things about your school work and—"

"I don't care," he said. "What's the point of working hard to make Dad proud if he won't even show up?"

I choked back a rogue sob. "Oh, baby. I'm proud."

He smiled softly, but it didn't reach his eyes. "Thanks, Mom. Bye, Miss Brenner."

"Dan—"

The screen went blank.

I sat back in the chair, numb and burning at the same time. I'd worried about how our divorce affected Daniel, worried I'd inadvertently hurt my son.

But it was Kieran who had initiated the break. He was the one who broke his promise to our son.

He chose Celeste over Daniel.

"Mrs. Blackthorne—"

I gathered my things. "Thank you, Miss Brenner. I think we're done for the night."

Daniel's teacher sighed. "Children look up to their parents and—"

I shook my head, cutting her off. "I'm not the one who needs to hear that. I showed up."

My steps faltered as I walked out of the school—and saw him.

Kieran.

He was rushing toward me from the parking lot, looking disheveled—messy hair, wrinkled dress shirt. What the hell had he and Celeste been up to?

His eyes widened when he saw me, an apology written all over his face.

I huffed and forced my legs to move, intending to walk past him. But he caught my arm, turning me around to face him.

"Sera—wait—I'm sorry."

I glared at him, fury rising like wildfire. "You're sorry?"

He ran his hand through his hair, further mussing it up. "I—I lost track of time. I was with Celeste and—"

I couldn't help it—I laughed. It was either that or scream in the parking lot of an elementary school.

"Of course you were with her. You weren't just late, Kieran. You chose not to be there. You chose her."

"It wasn't like that," he said, face twisting in frustration. "I didn't mean—"

"I don't care what you meant," I snapped. "All that matters is what happened, and what happened is that you didn't show up for your son. There was an exhibit of projects. Daniel made the cutest birdhouse. His teacher sang his praises. And you weren't there. He worked himself to the bone to make you proud—and you couldn't even show up."

Kieran looked like he wanted to argue—like he had a thousand excuses just waiting to pour out. But I didn't give a fuck.

"He cried," I continued, my voice sharper. "You promised him, and he trusted you; he believed in you. And now he's saying he never will again. Do you know what that means? What that does to a child?"

Kieran stepped forward, his face set like stone. "It won't happen again."

I stared at him, feeling like I was looking at a stranger.

The Kieran I knew was honorable, a man of his word.

This man, who kissed his ex while prancing around with her sister and then broke promises to his son...

I didn't know him.

"You say that now. But what happens the next time Celeste calls? What happens when you two eventually get married and have a child?"

The words caused an inexplicable ache in my chest, but I shoved that feeling aside and focused on my anger. "How far will Daniel fall on your list then?"

His jaw clenched. "Don't say that."

"I will. Because it's the truth, and someone has to say it. You already made your choice. But I swear to you, Kieran—" I stabbed a finger in his chest, and his eyes darkened.

"If you hurt Daniel like this again, I won't stay still. I will take him, and we'll go, and you will never see him again."

Kieran looked like I'd dropped a flash grenade in front of him, and for once, he was silent—no comeback.

Because he knew I meant it.

Daniel was the one thing in the world I didn't take lightly, and I would be damned if I let anybody, least of all Kieran and fucking Celeste, break my baby's heart.