

## **My Sister 26**

### Chapter 26 FAILURE OF A FATHER

#### KIERAN'S POV

I didn't expect Daniel to shut me out so completely.

Three calls ignored. Twelve texts left on read. Each unanswered attempt carved deeper into my chest. I felt the distance like a physical ache—it was cold, sharp, brutal.

I'd always believed myself a good father—present, devoted, enough. But now, I wasn't so sure.

"He'll never trust you again."

Sera's words haunted me, razor-sharp and unforgiving. Worse because they were true. I'd crushed a child's fragile faith beneath my boot like discarded trash.

When my phone finally rang, Mother's voice held none of her usual warmth. "Your son cried himself to sleep, clutching that robot model he wanted to show you."

I flinched. "You sound just like Sera."

"Good," she hissed. "That girl should've chewed your ear off for what you did."

If I needed more proof that I had epically fucked up, that was it.

My mother had spent a decade sharpening her contempt for Sera. When even Sera's greatest enemy took her side, I hadn't just failed as a father.

I had become the very weakness I'd spent a lifetime despising—A coward behind his excuse.

My excuse for letting my son down was flimsy at best, absolutely ridiculous at worst.

I'd been out with Celeste. Forgetting the responsibilities in my life, like a teen lacking a fully developed frontal lobe.

I'd been so desperate to mend what I'd broken between us, to prove I could still be the man she once wanted. So when she begged me to take her to Six Flags Magic Mountain, I went like an obedient mutt instead of the Alpha I was supposed to be.

When she snatched my phone and tucked it into her purse—"No distractions, Kieran. Just us."—I didn't challenge her.

And when I finally realized how late it was, when she pouted and asked me to drive her home first instead of rushing to Daniel's school, I fucking agreed.

Sera was right. I'd chosen Celeste over Daniel.

I'd upgraded from shitty ex-husband to shitty father.

I'd forgotten the one thing that should have been carved into my bones—my son. My brilliant, kind-hearted boy who still looked at me like I hung the moon, even when I didn't deserve an ounce of his faith. And I'd shattered him. Made him cry.

The self-loathing clung to me like the stench of blood after a hunt.

After an eternity of my mother's scolding—"You're lucky he's even willing to speak to you"—she finally relented. Played mediator. Convinced Daniel to give me one last chance.

I clung to that opportunity like a drowning man clings to driftwood.

Then the screen flickered to life, and the moment I saw his face, it felt like I'd taken a soccer ball to the chest.

"Danny," I exhaled, running a hand over my face.

He wouldn't look at me. His gaze fixed somewhere over my shoulder, on the painting behind me—the one of the mountain range he'd always loved.

"Hi." Flat. Empty.

My chest caved in. He used to light up when he saw me. Now I'd drained that light dry.

I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Bud, I'm so sorry. You have no idea how much—"

"Was it because of Celeste?" His voice was sharp. Too sharp for a nine-year-old.

Ice flooded my veins. Had Sera twisted his mind against me? Against Celeste?

"Danny, whatever your mom told you—"

"Mom didn't say anything." His glare finally snapped to mine. "She never does. But I saw it myself. Yesterday. On the video call. That woman was sitting in our kitchen like she owned it. You were with her, right? That's why you didn't go to my school."

My jaw worked soundlessly—a damned Alpha rendered speechless by his own pup. There was no defense, no excuse that could dull the betrayal in his voice.

"I don't like her, Dad." His gaze locked onto mine, eyes burning with conviction.

"Daniel." I dragged a hand down my face. "If you'd just give her a chance—"

"No." He shook his head firmly. "I don't want her around us. Around me."

That stubborn set to his jaw? That was me. The same unyielding pride that had once made me challenge my father's orders. Except Daniel wasn't just stubborn—he was right.

And I was the one who'd lost his way.

"She's family," I rasped.

"No." His voice dropped low, eerily mature. For a heartbeat, it felt like he was the Alpha, and I was the pup being put in my place.

But I was still his father. He needed to understand.

"Listen to me, son." I forced steel into my voice. "Celeste and I are together. It's serious." A pause, then the blow I'd hoped to deliver gently: "One day, I'm going to marry her. She'll be your stepmother."

His breath hitched. Guilt ripped through me—this wasn't how he should've found out. I'd wanted to ease him into it, let him adjust.

Instead, I'd gutted him.

Silence. Then, so quiet it shattered me: "What about Mom?"

The question knocked the air from my lungs. I could still taste Sera on my lips. I'd kissed her. Held her like she was still mine. But that... was just another mistake.

"Your mom and I are divorced, bud."

"You could fix it." His voice cracked. "You could go back."

Did I want? The truth was a living thing, clawing behind my ribs. I thought about her constantly—the scent of her skin, the way she'd gasped when I kissed her.

"No." I clenched my fists. "We won't."

"But why?" His small hands balled into fists. "Mom's awesome. Why don't you love her?"

"I do—"

"Not like how you do to Celeste." The way he said her name was a curse.

I stared at him, struck dumb. Since when did my nine-year-old understand this better than I did?

"Mom always put us first. Even you."

Each syllable was a condemnation, peeling back the lies I'd told myself. Sera had sacrificed everything—her pride, her happiness, her very breath—for this family. While I'd been blind to it. Worse, I'd expected it. Took it for granted.

"Nobody can take her place!" His voice cracked with a rawness. "She will never be my mom!"

The screen went black before I could respond.

Silence.

The kind that comes after a gunshot.

I sat there, hollowed out, Daniel's accusations echoing in my skull. He was right. I'd treated Sera like a discarded toy—something to be consumed and forgotten the moment Celeste, my shiny new obsession, came back into my life.

I never even considered the damage it would cause, the people I would hurt.

A knock.

Celeste slipped in before I could answer, her jasmine scent flooding the room. My muscles locked.

"How'd it go?" She perched on my desk, all sympathy.

"He hates me." The admission tasted like blood.

Her pout was practiced. "Oh, Kieran, he's just a child—"

"He looked at me like I was a stranger." Like I'd become one.

She slid into my lap, fingers tracing my neck where the mating mark should be. I let my hands settle on her hips out of habit, but my skin prickled—wrong, wrong, this was all wrong.



"Is Daniel why we haven't...?" Her breath was warm against my jaw.

I stiffened.

The truth?

No. The reason lived in the way my pulse didn't stutter when she touched me. In how my wolf stayed dormant in her presence. In the dreams where another woman's eyes haunted me.

But I couldn't say that. So I nodded.

Celeste's lips brushed my cheek—a claim. "I'll make him love me. We'll be perfect."

Her certainty should've comforted me. Instead, my gut twisted.

Because Daniel's hatred wasn't just childish resentment. My son was extremely intuitive—the kind that sensed rot beneath pretty surfaces.

Maybe his fury was from something deeper.