

## **My Sister 268**

Chapter 268 THE SEALING

MARGARET'S POV

The dial tone droned on.

Steady. Impersonal. Unforgiving.

I stared at the dark screen of my phone, my fingers still curled around it as though if I held on long enough, the call might resume on its own.

As though Seraphina might sigh, call my name the way she used to when she was small, and give me one more chance to find the right words.

The sound finally cut off.

The silence that followed was heavier, more suffocating than the dial tone itself.

I lowered the phone slowly, my hand trembling despite years of discipline and posturing that should have taught my body better.

For a long moment, I simply stood there in my room, staring at nothing, my reflection faintly visible in the glass wall overlooking the moonlit garden.

I had done it again—pushed Sera away.

The realization struck with dull, familiar pain, like pressing on a bruise you believed no longer existed, only to find it still tender beneath the surface.

I closed my eyes.

The sealing had been necessary.

That truth anchored me, as it always had. No matter how often guilt gnawed at the edges of my resolve, no matter how vividly Seraphina's young face haunted my dreams, that single fact had never wavered.

Necessary.

And yet.

Memory surged without invitation, dragging me backward more than two decades, to a time when necessity had not yet entered my vocabulary.

Sera had been six.

Too young to understand why her mother hovered, why her father's gaze tracked her every movement with quiet vigilance.

I knew, now, as an adult, she believed her father and I had always harbored contempt for her. But that was never true.

Even the difficulty of her birth—the agony, the blood, the terror, my own brush with death—could not diminish the joy that flooded us when we first held her.

She had been worth every moment of it.

She had been...everything.

My firstborn. My daughter.

In my bloodline, daughters carried weight. Meaning. Power.

We traced ourselves through the women, through their resilience and quiet dominion, through the way they shaped the world without ever needing to announce it.

And Sera had fit so perfectly into that expectation.

She was healthy. Bright-eyed. Curious in a way that delighted rather than exhausted. She laughed easily, loved deeply, and had a way of drawing people toward her without trying.

Servants adored her. Elders smiled indulgently at her questions. Even Edward—stern, austere Edward—always melted when she slipped her tiny hand into his.

She was perfect.

Until she wasn't.

The first incident had been easy to dismiss.

A tantrum, we told ourselves.

We were overreacting. A bad dream spilling into daylight.

The second was harder.

The third sent a cold thread of fear curling down my spine.

Things broke around her.

Not always visibly. Not always dramatically. Sometimes it was a headache so sudden and severe that she collapsed, screaming.

Sometimes it was a servant fainting when Sera cried too hard.

Sometimes it was pressure—an unseen force that thickened the air, made my skin crawl, and set every instinct on edge.

At first, we tried to help.

We chased every remedy—ancient tomes, modern experts, called in owed favors—relentlessly, desperate for hope.

We framed her peculiarity as delayed wolf emergence, as an anomaly that would correct itself with time.

It didn't.

It escalated.

The power, whatever it was, manifested in bursts that left Sera pale and trembling, her small frame buckling under the force of what surged through her. Each episode arrived sooner, struck harder.

Once, she stopped breathing.

I still remembered collapsing to the floor, cradling her limp body, screaming for healers, for anyone, for something to fix what was so terribly wrong with my baby girl.

Edward's face haunted me—ashen, stricken with a terror I had never seen in him.

The realization came slowly, and after we almost lost her more than once, we could no longer deny it.

This wasn't a gift that could be trained.

It wasn't something that could be guided gently into control.

It was too much. Too dangerous. Too hungry.

Fate had not blessed us with a powerful daughter.

It had marked us with a curse.

We resisted that conclusion with everything we had because accepting it meant acknowledging the next step.

And that step was unthinkable.

'If the girl walks the path she was born for, she will be hunted. Danger will greet her at every curve of the road. If she remains ordinary, she will live.'

She had to live. She had to.

So we did it: the sealing.

Even now, the mere thought of the word churned my stomach.

But when Catherine arrived—grave, composed, eyes sharp with an understanding that went far deeper than ours—she confirmed what we had been desperately avoiding.

If we did nothing, Sera would die.

Not immediately. Not cleanly.

But eventually.

Her body would fail under the strain. Or she would draw attention she could not survive. Or the power itself would consume her.

The sealing was the only path that led to a future where she lived.

Even if that future was...smaller. Ordinary.

I moved towards the drawer beneath my desk and unlocked it, retrieving the old frame I never let myself look at for too long.

The day before the ritual, we gave Sera everything.

Edward and I planned it carefully—a perfect day, crafted down to the smallest detail. No lessons. No expectations. Just laughter and sunlight and the illusion of normalcy.

We took her to the cliffs, let her run wild until her cheeks glowed and her hair whipped into knots. We gorged on sweets and took silly photos.

One of them sat now in my hands.

I stroked a trembling finger along the edges of the frame, worn smooth with time.

In the photo, we stood entwined—Sera perched in Edward's arms, my own wrapped around them, all of us beaming at the lens.

It was the happiest day of our lives.

And the last before everything changed.

The ritual itself was mercifully hazy in my memory. Some wounds the mind refuses to reopen fully.

But I remembered the aftermath.

Sera woke confused. Quieter. Diminished.

And to protect the secret—to ensure nothing stirred the sealed power—we had done something else.

A choice I still struggled to justify, even now.

We put Ethan and Celeste's memories to sleep.

Not erased. Just...tucked away. Their memories of Sera's episodes softened, blurred into hazy recollections of sickness and frailty.

Enough to keep them from asking the wrong questions. Enough to keep Sera safe.

From that day on, she was unremarkable. Ordinary.

We kept her close. Sheltered. Watched.

And she lived.

She struggled, yes. There were moments of friction, of resentment, of pain. And I told myself they were preferable to a grave.

At least she was alive.

That conviction had carried me for more than twenty years.

But since that day in the library, doubt had begun to seep in.

And now, tonight...

She'd found the Origins Archives Room.

She had broken the seal.

The force we'd worked so hard to bury was no longer slumbering.

Worse still, she sounded...well.

Stronger. Brighter. More herself than she had ever been.

The plan had veered off course.

Dangerously.

And Edward—

I pressed my fingers to my lips, stifling a sob as his face surfaced in my mind.

Months before his passing, he had broached the subject so carefully I'd pretended not to understand. Suggested, obliquely, that perhaps the time had come to reconsider old decisions.

I had shut him down. Told him it was too late, too dangerous. That reopening those wounds would only bring pain.

Now, I wondered if he had sensed what I could not. If he had felt the world shifting beneath the safety net we had so carefully woven.

I set the photo aside and began to pace, my steps restless and uneven.

I had promised Seraphina the truth.

I would not fail her again.

If answers existed, they lay with Catherine.

She had performed the sealing. She had understood its cost and risks. She knew exactly what had been taken.

Luckily, she was in the Maldives with Celeste. Perfect coincidence.

I would go ahead of schedule.

Not just as a mother visiting her daughter, but as a woman ready at last to face the consequences of her own choices.

The past had been buried for decades.

But now it was stirring.

And I would meet it head-on.

