

My Sister 273

Chapter 273 FATE OR CHOICE?

SERAPHINA'S POV

Selene's gaze stayed fixed on the horizon for a long moment after her last words.

She leaned back in her chair, the wood creaking softly beneath her weight. For a heartbeat, she looked younger—less Luna, more woman remembering something she'd once survived.

"It was my coming-of-age ceremony," she said. "The night the pack formally recognized me as an adult. As...eligible."

I pictured it instinctively: firelight, ritual markings, the weight of expectation pressing in from all sides.

"I knew Adrian was planning something," she continued. "He was terrible at hiding it. Disappearing for hours. I'd catch him practicing speeches he pretended weren't speeches. I pretended not to notice, but I did."

Her lips softened into a wistful curve. "I was excited. Nervous. Hopeful."

I swallowed.

“When the midnight bell tolled, tradition dictated that I follow my mate’s scent,” Selene said. “You don’t question it. You don’t hesitate. You trust the pull.”

She exhaled slowly. “So I followed it.”

A charged silence stretched between us, thick with anticipation.

“And it led me,” she said, voice hardening, “to Barry.”

The name landed like a shattered plate.

“He was the Alpha of a neighboring pack,” Selene went on. “Powerful. Arrogant. Loud about it. He’d mocked me openly for years—said a daughter couldn’t inherit leadership properly, that my father was wasting his legacy on sentiment.”

My fingers curled tighter around the cup.

“I remember standing there, staring at him, thinking there had been a mistake,” she said. “That the bond would correct itself. That if I waited long enough, Adrian would step out of the shadows and laugh and tell me it was a joke.”

She shook her head. "But the pull didn't waver."

"What did you do?" I asked softly.

"At first?" Selene gave a short, humorless laugh. "I considered defying it outright. I'd always been stubborn. Always believed everything in life was a choice."

Her gaze drifted. "But the mate bond is...convincing. It's not loud or aggressive. It presses. It reasons. It makes you believe that what it wants is what you want."

My breath caught. Convincing. The mate bond was definitely convincing.

Selene took a sip of her coffee, then set it aside, forgotten.

"So I resigned myself to it," she said. "I convinced myself that if that was what the Moon Goddess wanted, I could learn to be happy with Barry."

Even I could taste the bitterness in those words.

"Our engagement was swift. Politically celebrated. Personally suffocating." Her jaw tightened. "Barry liked to remind me that I was lucky. That a powerful Alpha-to-be like him had chosen me—a half-breed."

I flinched.

“But the night before the wedding,” Selene continued, voice low, “I caught him with a maid.”

The atmosphere changed, charged with something sharp and uneasy.

She shook her head and said flatly, “So unoriginal.”

Her eyes darkened as she continued. “He didn’t notice me at first. He was too busy boasting to her about all he planned to do once we were bonded.”

My heart sank.

“He spoke about usurping my father. Exiling my family of ‘aberrations.’ Absorbing our pack under the guise of unity.” Selene’s hands clenched in her lap. “I listened until I couldn’t anymore.”

“And then?” I whispered.

“And then I made myself known—and I rejected the bond.”

Even knowing the outcome, the words sent a shock through me.

"The pain," Selene said, closing her eyes briefly, "was unlike anything I'd been prepared for. It felt like tearing my heart out of my chest with bare hands. But clarity came with it. A kind of...rightness."

Her eyes opened, blazing. "I would rather suffer than spend the rest of my life tethered to a monster."

I let out a breath I hadn't realized I'd been holding.

"I doubt Barry even registered the pain." She shrugged. "What he couldn't stand was the humiliation. And he nearly killed me for it."

A sick twist coiled in my stomach.

"I was too weak to fight for myself, still reeling from the agony of having my soul ripped in half. But then Adrian intervened."

Something fierce and proud seeped into her tone. "He was a Beta. No official title, no bond advantage."

She smiled, sharp and bright. "And he beat Barry."

I felt my own lips curl.

"He shouldn't have been able to," she said. "But he refused to lose. For me." Her voice softened. "For us."

The victory, she told me, had ignited conflict between the packs. Her wedding venue had turned into a battlefield. Blood had been spilled. Threats exchanged.

Barry had retreated—but not surrendered.

"And that's when Adrian decided he couldn't leave it unresolved," Selene said quietly. "He planned to assassinate Barry under the cover of night. End it permanently."

My pulse quickened. "Did he?"

"No," Selene said. "Because I found out."

She huffed a laugh. "He argued with me. Told me I deserved a better Alpha. That the pack needed stability. He knew Barry would never back down after suffering humiliation not once but twice. He knew the consequence of what he wanted to do was death, whether he won or not. And he was willing to make that choice for me."

“So what did you do?”

“I chose him,” Selene said simply.

She lifted her chin, as if reliving the moment and reiterating that she had no regrets. “Under the moonlight. I marked him myself.”

The image unfurled in my mind: defiance, devotion, and the power of choice woven into something fierce and unbreakable.

“My father was furious,” Selene added dryly. “Called me reckless. Foolish. Said love didn’t make leaders.”

I leaned. “So?”

“So I proved to him that what Adrian and I had was much more than love. In Seabreeze, if an Alpha is not born into the title, he has to go through a series of trials to prove himself.”

My smile widened. “And Adrian passed.”

Selene nodded, her cheeks dimpling. “Every single one. And then, together, we defeated Barry and absorbed his pack.”

Her lips curved, softer now. "Shortly after that night, I found out I was pregnant with Kai." She shrugged, easing back into her seat, stretching like a cat that got all the cream. "I guess you can say we lived happily ever after."

The weight of the story settled over me, heavy and luminous all at once.

I sat back, stunned. "I always thought...your bond with Adrian. I assumed it was fate."

Selene shook her head. "The Moon Goddess doesn't always make perfect matches," she said. "She gives possibilities. We decide what to do with them."

Her gaze sharpened, intent and piercing. "I trusted my choice. And I was right."

Something inside me shifted at her words.

It was a lot to take in.

I thought of Maxwell and Willow—fated, inevitable, and yet broken in the end. But then there was Selene and Adrian, who had chosen each other without prophecy or certainty, and who still stood unshaken.

What did that say about the bond itself? Was it truly infallible, or had we simply convinced ourselves it was, because believing in fate was easier than trusting our own choices?

And if that was true...

What did it mean for me? For the decision waiting at the end of this journey?

Fate—or choice?

A sudden burst of high-pitched shouting from inside the house shattered my thoughts.

“He’s here!” Reef’s voice carried through the open doors as Dora shrieked with delight. “He’s here, he’s here!”

Selene rose smoothly to her feet, a smile already tugging at her lips. “That would be Maris. She left early yesterday to bring her mate home for Christmas.”

I trailed Selene inside, where the house thrummed with excitement. Children thundered down the hall, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to reach the entryway.

Maris stood just inside the threshold, travel-weary but glowing.

Beside her was a man who looked utterly at ease in the chaos.

He was tall and broad-shouldered, built with the kind of strength that spoke less of brute force and more of long familiarity with it.

He stood with an easy, almost careless posture, yet a quiet authority radiated from him, drawing attention without ever asking for it.

Honey-brown eyes crinkled as Dora barreled into him at full speed.

He caught her without missing a beat, scooping her up with practiced ease as if this were a ritual long rehearsed.

“There’s my favorite hurricane,” he said warmly.

She squealed as he spun her around, his laughter rumbling low and warm as he set her down, and then ruffled Reef’s hair and greeted Kai with a clasp of forearms that spoke of mutual respect.

Then his gaze lifted and landed on me.

Something flickered there—recognition, sharp and fleeting, like a memory brushing past without fully forming.

My steps slowed.

We stared at each other for half a heartbeat too long.

“Hello,” he said at last, offering a hand. “You must be Seraphina.”

His voice was polite. Controlled. But his eyes...his eyes searched mine as if he were looking for confirmation of something.

“I am,” I replied.

His smile deepened as his warm hand closed around mine.

“Brett.”