

## My Sister 276

### Chapter 276 BEGINNER'S LUCK

#### SERAPHINA'S POV

The days leading up to Christmas melted softly into one another in a way that was strangely therapeutic.

I threw myself into training with Corin whenever we could catch a spare moment.

Not the dramatic, breakthrough-heavy kind, just steady cultivation: breathing with the tides, quiet exercises in control, learning how to hold my awareness without letting it spill everywhere.

It was exhausting in a way different from physical effort, leaving my head pleasantly hollow and my senses sharper, but it grounded me.

For the first time, this new part of myself felt like something I was working with, not something waiting to ambush me.

Despite the brief, charged moment of our introduction, Alpha Brett and I didn't interact much afterward.

Not out of avoidance—just circumstance. He gravitated naturally toward Maris, his attention orbiting her with an ease that spoke of long familiarity and deeper devotion.

Wherever she went, he followed half a step behind or ahead, attuned to her moods, anticipating her needs without ever hovering.

Their bond wasn't loud or performative, and that gentle subtlety made it all the more beautiful to watch.

It existed in the small things—the way Brett automatically took Maris' mug when it was empty and refilled it without asking, the way she leaned into his side when she laughed, the way his gaze softened every time she spoke, as if the world came into focus only when she was in it.

The kids, predictably, adored him.

When she wasn't glued to my side, Dora followed Brett around like he was a living fairytale, endlessly curious and utterly enamored.

Reef kept inventing new tests of strength and courage for Brett, who met each challenge with a playful grin and mock-seriousness, as if earning Reef's approval was a quest in itself.

Even Kai, reserved as ever, seemed to relax around him, watching Brett with the quiet assessment of someone deciding whether a man was worthy of trust.

Brett passed, unequivocally.

On one golden afternoon, with the sea sparkling like scattered glass and the breeze tinged with salt and citrus, someone suggested a game of beach volleyball.

Shoes were abandoned in untidy piles, and the net went up quickly, stakes hammered into the sand—notably nowhere near the shore.

Brett and Maris paired up without discussion.

From the first serve, it was obvious they'd done this before. Not necessarily volleyball specifically, but moving together, reading each other's cues, covering each other's blind spots.

Brett's hits were powerful and precise, while Maris was fast, agile, and deceptively strategic, placing the ball just out of reach with wicked accuracy.

They dismantled Reef and Corin's team with alarming efficiency.

Reef stared, scandalized, hands on his hips. "That's not fair."

Brett grinned, wiping sweat from his brow. "What's not fair?"

“You’re cheating,” Reef accused. “You’re too synchronized.”

Maris laughed, brushing sand from her hands. “That’s called teamwork.”

“No,” Reef insisted darkly, eyes narrowing as he looked between them. “That’s called being mates.”

Corin barked a laugh. “He’s not wrong.”

Another point was scored—Brett spiked the ball cleanly past Corin, who dove too late, laughing even as he face-planted into the sand.

Reef groaned loudly. “Uncle Corin, you’re dragging us down.”

Corin froze mid-stretch. “Excuse you?”

“You heard me,” Reef said, pointing accusingly. “If you had a mate, you’d be better.”

Corin snorted and flicked Reef lightly on the forehead. “You are vastly overestimating the bond between mates. Mating doesn’t make you an automatic athletic genius.”

Reef scowled, rubbing his forehead. “Then get one and prove me wrong.”

Laughter erupted across the beach—Selene nearly doubled over, Adrian chuckling as he shook his head. Even Brett looked amused, brows lifting as he glanced between Corin and Reef.

“That’s not how it works,” Corin said, still smiling.

Reef crossed his arms. “Then you’re doomed to lose.”

“I am not doomed,” Corin shot back.

“You are,” Reef insisted. “Unless...” His eyes darted suddenly to me, lighting up with inspiration. “Unless you team up with Aunty Sera.”

Every gaze swung my way.

I nearly choked on my coconut water.

“What?” I sputtered.

Kai, who had been watching the exchange with quiet calculation, tilted his head. “It’s not a bad idea,” he said thoughtfully. “You and Uncle Corin work well together.”

I blinked at him, still wary of their earlier teasing. “Based on...?”

He shrugged. “Vibes.”

Selene laughed outright. “Well,” she said, clapping her hands together. “That settles it. New teams.”

“Hold on,” I protested. “I don’t play volleyball.”

Corin glanced at me, brows lifting. “You don’t?”

“No,” I said flatly. “I don’t do competitive sports.”

He smiled—slow, amused, and entirely unhelpful. “I’ll teach you.”

The calm assurance in his tone made it harder to argue.

“Come on, let’s show these bond-blinded show-offs that you don’t need a mate bond to dominate.”

So there I was, barefoot in the sand, heart thumping with a wild blend of nerves and excitement as I faced Maris and Brett across the net.

The kids immediately picked sides.

Dora cheered for everyone, loudly and indiscriminately. Reef declared himself Team Underdogs and stationed himself behind us, shouting advice that ranged from mildly useful to completely unhinged.

Neri clapped politely, singing little encouragements under her breath. Kai watched intently, arms crossed, as if this were a tactical exercise.

Corin moved closer to me, lowering his voice. "Okay. First rule—don't overthink it."

I huffed. "That's rich, coming from you."

"Trust me," he said. "Watch the ball. Read their movement. I'll handle positioning."

"And if I mess up?"

He glanced at me, mismatched eyes steady. "Then we adjust."

There was something grounding about that.

The serve came fast. Maris sent the ball sailing toward us, a clean arc cutting through the air.

I reacted on instinct, diving forward and bumping it upward—too high, too loose.

“Mine,” Corin called calmly.

He moved with the easy flow of water, smooth and sure, setting the ball up for me with effortless precision.

“Now,” he said.

I swung.

My swing was far from graceful, but it sent the ball sailing over the net, making Brett lunge to keep up.

Reef whooped. “She did it!”

From there, something clicked.

Corin coached constantly, but never loudly—small cues, hand gestures, murmured instructions timed perfectly.

Beneath it all ran that familiar undercurrent of shared awareness, the subtle psychic alignment we'd cultivated in the water.

I sensed his presence without needing to look, anticipated his moves, and found my timing falling into place almost without thought.

Maris and Brett still had the edge in raw experience, but we matched them point for point, rally after rally, stretching the game out as it intensified.

Sand flew. Laughter rang out. At some point, Brett wiped out—I'm guessing he wasn't that mad about it, judging by how wide his grin was at the sound of Maris' delighted laughter.

At one point, the ball veered wildly toward the edge of the court.

I sprinted and leapt, barely saving the ball, sending it arcing just high enough for Corin to finish the play with a sharp, decisive spike.

The kids erupted, wild with excitement.

Selene and Adrian watched it all from a distance, seated on a driftwood log, her phone raised and angled toward us, capturing the chaos with an indulgent smile.

The wind tugged at her hair, sunlight catching in her eyes as she recorded moment after moment—laughter, triumph, the simple joy of it all.

When the final point was scored—Maris barely missing a save by inches—the game dissolved into applause and playful groans.

Reef dropped dramatically into the sand. “I take it back,” he declared. “Uncle Corin isn’t doomed.”

Corin laughed, offering me a hand. “See?”

I took it, breathless and grinning. “Beginner’s luck.”

“Hardly,” he said.

As the group dispersed—kids running off toward the water again, Selene calling after them to stay within sight—I lingered, watching Maris and Brett stroll together along the shoreline, hands intertwined, their silhouettes easy and unguarded against the sunlit sea.

A gentle warmth settled in my chest.

And I couldn't help thinking that maybe this was what peace looked like.