

## My Sister 282

### Chapter 282 TIME TO GO HOME

SERAPHINA'S POV

Seabreeze did not let go easily.

I'd known my time here was finite, but that didn't soften the ache when the end finally arrived.

The final days blurred together, a bittersweet rush of tender moments.

Corin was relentless but kind, pushing me through variations of psychic exercises until my head buzzed and my limbs felt like jelly attachments.

By then, he'd stopped hovering, stopped correcting every breath and every misstep. He only intervened when I genuinely lost my footing—psychically or otherwise.

"The rest," he told me one morning as we stood barefoot at the edge of the water, foam licking at our ankles, "you'll have to do on your own."

I glanced at him sideways. "That's it? No ominous warnings? No cryptic prophecy?"

The corner of his mouth twitched. "You'll hear enough of those without my help."

He handed me a small, smooth stone, pale and veined faintly with blue. Warm. Steady.

"In the midst of the storms of the Ethereal Sea, be a rock. Sturdy. Unmoved."

I closed my fingers around it, smiling softly. "Thank you, but I prefer to be a tree."

He arched a brow. "Want me to uproot a palm tree and fold it into your suitcase?"

I laughed, the roar of the waves drowning out the sound.

"Thank you," I said sincerely. "For...everything."

His gaze lingered on me a moment longer than usual—careful, searching—but he only nodded. "You did the work, Sera. I just pointed at the tide."

"And made sure I didn't drown."

He smiled. "You call me if you ever need anything. And I mean anything."

I cocked my head. "Even if I like, forget my keys?"

He rolled his eyes, a smile playing on his lips. "I can't wait to go back to training in peace and quiet."

"Oh, please," I nudged his shoulder. "You'll miss the company."

He looked down at me, and his smile melted into something soft and tender. "You know what? Yes. Yes, I will."

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The children were another matter entirely.

They followed me everywhere those last days, like I might evaporate if they let me out of their sight.

Dora insisted on packing with me, her tiny hands placing each item in my bag with exaggerated, solemn care.

Reef lingered in doorways, feigning indifference but watching every move I made.

Neri cried twice: once loudly, once in silence, both times trying to be brave.

"I wish you could stay for Christmas," Kai said hopefully, arms folded like he could will it into existence.

Selene watched from the doorway, expression soft but resolute. "Sera's son is waiting at home to spend Christmas with her. You wouldn't want to be separated from your family on Christmas, would you?"

Dora sniffed. "You'll...come back, right?"

I crouched in front of her, brushing my thumbs beneath her eyes. "I'll visit so often you'll be sick of me."

"That's not possible," Reef declared.

I smiled at him. "Wanna bet?"

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I left Seabreeze two days before Christmas, laden with gifts—shell bracelets, woven scarves, hand-carved trinkets, books on sea myths—for my loved ones back home.

The transport Selene arranged was discreet and efficient, a sleek black vehicle waiting at the edge of the beach.

The children clung to me until the last possible moment, arms wrapped around my waist and shoulders, as if their grip alone could anchor me there.

"I'll come visit," I promised for what felt like the hundredth time, pressing a kiss into Dora's hair, then Neri's. "And you're all welcome to visit me too."

"You mean it?" Reef asked, his grip tightening.

"I mean it," I said softly. "You and Daniel will get along like a house on fire."

His eyes lit up, and mine widened. "That is in no way an invitation to set any houses on fire."

That drew a watery laugh out of him.

Corin hung back, giving the kids space, his hands tucked loosely into his pockets. When they finally—reluctantly—peeled away, he stepped forward and pulled me into a brief, careful hug.

“Call,” he murmured.

“I will,” I promised.

Afterward, Maris pulled me in a firm, full-bodied hug. “Good luck with everything, Sera.” She pulled back and winked. “You and your friend.”

I chuckled, squeezing her arms. “Thank you”

Over her shoulder, Brett caught my eye from where he stood a few steps away, hands folded loosely in front of him.

He didn’t intrude, just met my gaze and offered a small, steady smile and a knowing nod.

I returned it, raising my hand slightly in a mock toast.

Last was Selene.

She drew me into her arms with the kind of embrace that felt less like a farewell and more like a benediction.

“I still wish you would make your home here,” she said softly. “But I hope...whatever you do next, you found what you were looking for.”

I leaned back just enough to meet her eyes, emotion pressing thick behind my ribs.

“More than I could have ever hoped,” I said honestly.

Her smile trembled. She brushed her thumb over my cheek once, then stepped back.

And after one last goodbye wave, I entered the car and closed the door.

As it pulled away, Seabreeze shrank in the rearview mirror, its vast skies and salt-laced air pressing against my chest like a held breath.

I’d set out in search of who I really was, and stumbled upon truths I couldn’t have conjured in my wildest dreams.

But now, it was time to go home.

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In hindsight, maybe the whole independent thing wasn't always a good idea.

Lucian had offered his private jet for my return, but no, I decided to finish the trip the way I started: on my own.

Boy, did I fucking regret it.

As if the Christmas rush wasn't bad enough, weather delays stacked one on top of the other until the airport became a purgatory of blinking lights and strained voices.

By the time my plane finally took off on Christmas day, after a cumulative whopping thirty-six-hour delay, the sun was already sinking and spilling gold into the slate-colored clouds.

My foot bounced nonstop throughout the flight. I checked the time again and again, my heart racing as the minutes slipped away.

I had promised Daniel I'd be home before Christmas, but now it felt like only a miracle could get me to him before midnight.

The wheels slammed onto the runway, rattling my teeth. By the time we taxied to the gate, my promise felt like sand slipping through my fingers.

One more agonizing hour at baggage claim, and I was ready to drop to my knees and shake my fist at the navy sky.

When I finally got my bags, I ran.

Past signs, past fellow weary travelers, past the ache in my lungs and the burn in my legs. I burst through the arrival doors—and stopped so abruptly someone nearly crashed into me.

Daniel stood just beyond the barrier.

For a heartbeat, I couldn't breathe.

He was taller, his frame all sharp lines and subtle strength. His hair was longer, curling at the nape of his neck. But his eyes—those dark, earnest eyes—were exactly the same.

“Mom!”

The world narrowed to that single word.

He barreled into me with all the force of a boy who'd spent weeks holding himself together.

I let my bags fall and dropped to my knees as his arms locked around my neck, my face buried in his shoulder.

I breathed him in: soap, cotton, and the faintest hint of cedar.

“I missed you so much,” he choked, voice cracking straight through me.

“I’m here,” I whispered into his hair. “I’m here, baby. I’m so sorry I’m late.”

His grip tightened, as if afraid I might disappear. My hands trembled as I clung to him, fingers digging into his jacket, anchoring myself to the solid, miraculous reality of him.

When I finally pulled back, his cheeks were flushed, eyes shining. “You promised,” he said fiercely.

“I know,” I said. “I tried.”

“And you’re here.” He grinned. “Just like Dad said you’d be.”

Only then did I look up, and a lump formed in my throat.

Kieran stood a few steps back, hands loose at his sides, posture relaxed in a way I didn't remember him ever managing before.

He looked...different. I wasn't quite sure how to qualify it except that he looked more like the boy I met in the trees all those years ago.

The sharp edges of his presence remained, but they no longer felt...weaponized.

"You didn't have to come," I said, voice barely above a whisper.

Christmas in Nighthfang was a big deal. The fact that the Alpha and heir weren't present was an even bigger deal.

"I wanted to," Kieran replied, his voice warm and steady. "And Daniel needed it."

The bond stirred, a familiar flicker, but it didn't seize me like it once had. It rested there, warm and present, no longer demanding or forcing anything. Just...acknowledging.

"It's good to see you, Sera," he added, eyes filled with a tenderness that made my breath hitch.

I rose, Daniel's hand in mine. And maybe it was the exhilaration of being reunited with my baby or the joy of Christmas, but the smile I gave Kieran was genuine, and my words were sincere.

“It’s good to see you, too.”

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The drive was subdued but not strained. Daniel filled the space easily, chattering about training mishaps and inside jokes, his hand firmly wrapped around mine the entire time.

As the car pulled into my driveway, something in my chest tightened.

The house seemed smaller than I remembered—quieter, as if it had been holding its breath in my absence.

The porch light was off, the windows dark.

I pictured the inside: cold corners, untouched furniture, faint traces of footsteps that had not crossed the floors in weeks. A place waiting, maybe even resenting me for leaving.

“I hope it’s not too—” I began, the word ‘dusty’ hovering on the tip of my tongue as I opened the door and the lights exploded on.

“SURPRISE!”