

My Sister 284

Chapter 284 MERRY CHRISTMAS

SERAPHINA'S POV

My hand tightened around Daniel's just enough to anchor me as he tugged me those last few steps forward—right into the space between Kieran and Lucian.

I felt it immediately.

The air there was...different. Not charged in the explosive, volatile way I braced for, but taut. Like a rope pulled tight between two immovable points.

I had noticed earlier—had been quietly astonished, really—that Lucian and Kieran were occupying the same room without circling each other like wary predators.

That they were capable of standing within arm's reach without dominance flaring.

But now, standing close enough to feel the gravity of both their presences pressing in, I sensed the truth was far more complicated.

Whatever conversation they'd been having before Daniel intervened hadn't been pleasant.

And I knew without either of them saying a word that I was at the center of it.

Kieran stood to my left, posture rigid, hands clenched into fists at his sides. Lucian stood to my right, expression composed, eyes unreadable in that coolly self-possessed way of his.

They both looked at Daniel when he slipped his other hand through Kieran's fist.

"Dad," he chirped, "it's time."

The tension dissipated instantly.

"Time for what?" I asked, my pulse jumping when both intense gazes fell on me.

"The surprise," Daniel stage-whispered, eyes sparkling. "The real one."

I blinked. "There's more?"

He grinned up at me, eyes bright with barely contained excitement. "You'll see. Come on!"

He tugged again, this time toward the sliding doors that led out to the balcony.

I didn't miss the brief look Kieran and Lucian exchanged.

It wasn't friendly.

But it was...civil.

A truce, thin as ice.

They followed.

The balcony doors slid open, letting a surge of cold night air wash over us. Beyond, the world was swallowed in pitch-black, the sky a fathomless navy that seemed to devour every trace of sound and light.

Everything outside felt...suspended, as if the night itself was holding its breath.

Daniel stepped forward eagerly, nearly bouncing on his toes. "Okay," he said. "Everyone, look up."

Everyone gathered behind us, craning their neck in obedience.

I squeezed Daniel's shoulders as I looked up, unsure of what I was bracing for.

Daniel lifted his hand.

"Three," he said solemnly.

My heart stuttered.

"Two."

Kieran shifted beside me. I felt it rather than saw it—a subtle reorientation of his attention, as if he were bracing too.

"One."

The sky exploded.

Light tore through the darkness in a burst so sudden I gasped, breath catching in my throat.

Color bloomed overhead—brilliant whites and deep blues unfurling across the darkness, swirling like ink blossoming in water.

Fireworks.

Not the chaotic, overlapping kind meant to overwhelm. These were deliberate. Measured. Each burst timed perfectly with the next, painting the sky in sweeping arcs and precise shapes.

Someone behind me whooped.

I barely heard them.

My gaze was locked upward as the display unfolded—blue sparks curling inward, gathering, shaping themselves with impossible precision.

My breath left me in a soundless rush when I recognized the picture.

A crescent moon, sketched in glowing blue light, delicate and exact. Curved protectively around a five-pointed star.

My lucky charm.

My fingers trembled as they tightened around Daniel's hand.

"Oh," I whispered. "Oh, gods..."

The fireworks continued, radiating outward from that central symbol in a cascade of shimmering blues and silvers.

The small crowd behind us erupted into applause and laughter, but it all sounded distant, muffled, as if I were underwater.

I bent down, pulling Daniel into a tight hug. "This is incredible," I breathed into his hair. "Thank you, baby. H-how did you know about my lucky charm?"

He hugged me back, voice dropping to a whisper meant for my ears alone.

"It wasn't me," he said.

I pulled back, startled. "What?"

He glanced up at the sky, then over at Kieran, who stood just behind us, gaze fixed upward, expression unreadable in the shifting light.

“Dad planned it,” Daniel said quietly. “All of it.”

I turned slowly, heart pounding so hard I was sure everyone could hear it.

As if he could sense my gaze, Kieran looked away from the sky, and our eyes met.

The fireworks reflected in his gaze, softening the dark obsidian into something warmer. Tender.

“Merry Christmas,” he said softly.

That was it.

No speech. No explanation. No attempt to take credit.

Just those two words, offered like something precious.

My chest cinched so tight I couldn't breathe.

The tenderness in his eyes made something flutter low in my belly. And with it came the ache.

Because as much as this moment moved me, as deeply as I could sense the thoughtfulness behind it, it also forced me to confront a truth I'd spent years circling without coming to terms with.

This was what Kieran Blackthorne was capable of.

I didn't think he knew what my favorite food was, but somehow, he knew about my childhood lucky charm and displayed it in the sky for me?

And then there was the seaside dinner and moonstone necklace from my book. Abandoning his pack on Christmas to be here.

This depth. This care. This grand, meticulous attention to detail when he chose to give his heart fully.

And in ten years of marriage, he had never loved me like this.

Never planned something just to make me smile. Never looked at me like I was worth the effort of wonder.

The realization lodged in my throat, jagged and heavy.

I blinked rapidly, forcing the sting back, even as the final fireworks faded into drifting sparks that dissolved quietly into the night.

Applause broke out again. Cheers. Whistles.

I barely heard them. I was too busy trying to hold myself together.

Maya was the first to notice.

She appeared at my side like a force of nature, wrapping an arm around me with exaggerated cheer. "Okay! That's enough emotional damage for one evening," she announced loudly.

"Fresh Christmas cookies are ready, and if we stay out here any longer, someone is going to freeze to death and ruin my hosting record."

She leaned in closer, voice dropping just enough for me to hear. "Stay back. Take a breath. Before you implode."

Grateful didn't even begin to cover it.

She herded everyone back in with practiced efficiency—Roxy complaining theatrically, Finn laughing, Daniel already talking a mile a minute about the fireworks.

The balcony gradually emptied.

I lingered a moment longer, my hands still trembling with the aftershocks.

I didn't trust myself to meet Kieran's gaze again—not when it carried a loaded vulnerability I didn't think I could survive.

Lucian stayed back with me.

"You alright?" he asked quietly.

I nodded, even though my throat was still tight. "Yeah. Just...processing."

He studied me for a moment, then reached into the inner pocket of his coat.

"I also have something for you."

He held out a small box—unassuming, dark wood polished smooth.

“It’s no firework surprise,” he added, as if anticipating comparison. “But I made it myself.”

I offered him a small smile as I opened it. “Then I’m sure I’ll love it.”

Inside lay a simple bracelet—smooth beads interspersed with faintly glowing runic threads, the craftsmanship subtle but elegant.

“A meditation bracelet,” Lucian explained. “It’s meant to help stabilize mental fluctuations. Encourage deeper rest.”

My chest tightened again, but this time the ache was softer.

“I remember you mentioned in the group chat that you weren’t sleeping well lately,” he continued. “I thought this might help.”

“You actually made this?” I whispered.

He nodded. “I did.”

I swallowed hard. "Thank you."

I slipped it onto my wrist, and the moment it settled against my skin, I felt it—a gentle warmth, a subtle grounding sensation that eased the constant hum at the back of my mind.

Lucian watched me with quiet satisfaction. "How does it feel?"

"Steady," I admitted. "Calming."

He smiled faintly. "Good."

I met his gaze, something heavy and sincere rising in my chest. "You always seem to know exactly what I need."

"Someone should," he said simply.

The sounds of laughter and clinking dishes drifted out from inside the house—warm, alive, full.

I glanced down at the bracelet again, fingers brushing over its smooth surface.

The bracelet quieted the restless hum in my mind, but deep within, a crescent of light still curved around a shimmering star—no longer in the sky, but etched into memory.