

My Sister 29

Chapter 29 NAUSEATINGLY LOVELY

KIERAN'S POV

I stared at the read receipt, wondering why the hell I had sent the message in the first place.

I knew there would be no typing bubbles, no reply.

Why would there be? Did I really expect a birthday greeting and those three meaningless words—Hope you're well—to fix it all?

After what I said to her, after what I did, how could that ever be enough?

Every time I closed my eyes, I saw her face—not the hardened Sera who'd pushed me away these past months, not the defiant woman who'd looked at me with ice in her gaze.

No, that day, she looked...wrecked. Shattered in a way I had never seen before—not even when I asked for a divorce or when we had to send Daniel away.

And it had been my doing.

Celeste's reddened cheek. Her tear-streaked story. They'd ignited a rage so blinding I hadn't stopped to question. Hadn't considered that there might be another side.

I'd stormed into Sera's home and—god—I'd unleashed. Every cruel word was a weapon wielded for Celeste's sake.

I deserved that second slap. Deserved far worse.

But nothing had prepared me for the pain in Sera's eyes. It truly cut. The way each word had trembled as she fought to keep herself together. The way she'd said she'd rather have been with any strangers that night instead of me.

The door slamming in my face had been the wake-up call I needed. In that moment, I'd understood exactly how far I'd fallen. But when I raised my hand to knock again—to beg forgiveness—the sound of her sobs through the wood stole all my courage.

Those broken, gasping cries hurt more than any physical blow ever could.

'Coward,' my wolf Ashar sneered at me.

The days bled together, each one heavier with regret. Today—her birthday—had been my flimsy excuse to reach out.

I stared at my screen, and even though I knew it was no use, I waited.

Even a 'Go to hell' would have sufficed. It would have given me something—an opening. The chance to say the one thing I hadn't had the decency to say that day: I'm sorry.

But the screen stayed dark. Nothing came.

Fine then.

I didn't deserve an easy way out anyway. I'd berated her physically; it was only right that I apologize physically.

The thought of seeing Sera again made me restless as I got into the car. I didn't even know what I planned to say—if anything at all could reverse those awful, ugly things I'd said.

I tried to practice on the drive over, but by the time her house came into view, my mind was still a blank slate.

I was about to pull into her driveway when my foot slammed the brake.

A familiar Aston Martin was pulling in ahead of me. I watched, tense, as the engine shut off and Lucian fucking Reed stepped out of the driver's side.

I gritted my teeth, irrational anger tightening my muscles. The guy was everywhere, like a fly buzzing around Sera.

He walked over to the passenger's side and opened the door with a flourish, bowing slightly.

My breath hitched as Sera exited the car, and her musical laughter floated in the night air, a startling contrast to those gut-wrenching sobs I couldn't get out of my head.

I heard my wolf, Ashar, murmur, 'What do you know? Lucian makes her laugh; you make a cry.'

I rolled up my window to mute the sound.

Sera's arms were full of flowers, little gifts, and pastries wrapped in bright cellophane. Her cheeks were flushed, and I desperately wanted to blame it on the cold, but it was a warm evening.

And that smile she fixed on Lucian—genuine, unguarded, radiant—hit me like a punch to the chest.

I hadn't seen her smile like that in...fuck, ever.

I watched as Lucian stretched his arm out, relieving some of the load in her arms.

No wonder she looked so happy. She'd celebrated her birthday; he'd probably done that for her. Something I never once did in the ten years we were together.

They walked side by side to her door, smiling at each other. They formed a nauseatingly lovely picture, and I felt something ugly twist in my gut—jealousy, bitterness, that ever-present regret.

'This is good, isn't it?' I heard Ashar whisper. 'It's what you want, right?'

Ashar was all the best parts of me—powerful, honorable, noble. I doubt he approved of my extremely errant human nature.

And as usual, he was right. This was good. It was for the best.

Sera had found someone else. She could finally move on—she deserved to.

And it would make it easier for me to commit to Celeste. No lingering complications. No tangled past.

So why did it feel like something in my chest was tearing? Why did every fiber of my being revolt at the idea?

I was trying to make sense of it when I heard a knock on my window. I flinched, caught off guard.

Lucian.

A growl built up at the back of my throat as he gestured for me to roll my window down.

I gritted my teeth as he leaned down through the opening, folding his arms on the window ledge.

“She had a good birthday today,” he said calmly. “She said she can’t remember the last time she had a good birthday. Don’t ruin that.”

My jaw clenched, and Ashar chafed. Who the hell was Lucian to dictate what I could or couldn’t do with Sera?

I felt my hackles rise. I didn’t give a fuck that he was an Alpha. I was—

“Let’s have a drink,” he said suddenly.

I blinked, surprised. There was no smugness in his voice, no challenge. Just...an offer.

I don't know why I said yes. Maybe I wanted to feel like I still had some kind of control. Maybe I wanted to size him up.

Or maybe I just didn't want to go home—back to my thoughts.

We ended up at Luna Noire again, seated at a private booth at the back, reserved for Alphas. The crowd was thin today, the atmosphere subdued in a way that perfectly reflected this unorthodox meeting.

I nursed my single malt scotch the same way he did his vodka on the rocks. Neither of us took a single sip, and I suspect it was for the same reason—neither of us was willing to let our guard down around the other.

"You don't like me," Lucian said plainly, leaning back in his seat, surveying me with dark, calculating eyes.

I snorted. "No shit."

He smirked, but his eyes held no mirth. "I don't like you much either. But I respect what you meant to Sera."

Meant. The tense of that word unsettled something inside me.

Without another word, Lucian brought out his phone, tapped on the screen, and pushed it towards me.

I looked down at the footage playing—grainy at first, then clearer.

Sera. Training.

Sparring, running drills, practicing strikes. Her form improved with every clip. And the way she moved—focused, determined—it caught me off guard.

She looked... confident. Powerful. Nothing like the timid, fragile woman I'd convinced myself she was.

"You all made her feel like she was broken," Lucian said quietly. I couldn't tear my gaze away from the woman—the stranger—I was watching. "Like she was weak and worthless. You punished her for a mistake she didn't make alone."

Something clenched in my chest. "That's none of your business."

"Oh, but it is," he said smoothly. "Everything that concerns Sera is my business now."

I stared at him, fury coiling low in my gut. Did this bastard really think he had any claim over her? I hadn't forgotten his declaration—his intent to pursue her. But from what I'd seen, Sera hadn't fully accepted him yet.

Though I wasn't sure how long that would last.

I took a sharp swallow of whiskey, letting the burn down my throat smother the violent thoughts rising in me. I had Celeste. Why the hell should I care which man Sera chose?

"Get to the point."

Lucian leaned forward, his voice dropping. "If you still care about her, Kieran—and I suspect you do—let her go. Stop reopening her wounds just because you don't know what to do with your own guilt."

My hand clenched around my glass. I wished he wouldn't talk to me like that—so patronizingly. It made me want to shatter my glass against his temple.

More than that, I wished his words didn't...make sense.

I glanced at the footage that was still playing on Lucian's phone as tension coiled in my body.

Everything I'd discovered about Sera since we got divorced—her successful writing career, the backbone she'd apparently always had, this...strength—led to one crushing conclusion.

I'd held her back all these years.

I was more than her ex-husband and the father of her son, more than a part of her past. I was an anchor that had only ever dragged her down.

And now that I was out of her life, she was flourishing.