

My Sister 292

Chapter 292 MY DECISION

KIERAN'S POV

The message arrived while I was reviewing a trade route dispute I'd already read twice without absorbing a single word.

'Can we meet at noon? The café near the park.'

I stared at the words longer than necessary, thumb hovering uselessly over the screen.

My heart stuttered—a sharp, disorienting hitch, as if I'd misstepped on a stair I'd taken a thousand times before.

My chest constricted in that familiar, dangerous way, hope tangled tightly with fear.

Ashar stirred immediately, a low, restless presence unfurling through my chest.

'This is it,' he rumbled, voice rough with anticipation. 'Her answer.'

"I know," I murmured, not quite believing the words.

I composed a reply, erased it. Tried again, erased that too. Each attempt felt more inappropriate than the last.

'Looking forward to it.' Too eager.

'I'll be there.' Too cold.

In the end, I settled for something simple.

'Of course. See you then.'

I set my phone down and slumped back, exhaling hard as my heart hammered out a wild, uneven rhythm.

Noon.

I checked the time.

I had a little over two hours.

I spent all of it preparing.

I showered longer than usual, lingering beneath the spray as if the heat could scald the nerves out of me. I shaved carefully, dragging the blade slowly along my jaw, checking and rechecking the mirror, desperate to find any flaw I might have missed.

I cycled through shirts—twice, then a third—while Ashar watched through my eyes, openly amused by my indecision.

‘You look like a pup before his first hunt,’ he said.

“This isn’t a hunt,” I muttered aloud, fingers tightening around my collar as I adjusted it for the fifth time.

‘No,’ Ashar agreed. ‘It matters more than that.’

“Helpful,” I muttered.

‘But true,’ he replied. ‘Go bring our mate home.’

I drew in a shaky breath and reached for my coat.

The flowers were a last-minute decision.

I'd told myself I wouldn't. That the fireworks had already been too much. That any grand gesture risked feeling like pressure.

Yet, I found myself at the florist anyway. Found myself repeating the order I made weeks ago.

"I'm guessing she loved it the last time?" the owner said, smiling as she handed me the bouquet.

I took it carefully. "I actually don't know," I admitted. "I hope so."

A flicker of confusion crossed her face, but she masked it with commercial politeness. "Well, I'm sure she'll love it this time."

The smile I managed felt more like a grimace. "Here's hoping."

The café was already busy when I arrived.

The large coffee-bean-shaped clock on the wall read 11:30.

I chose a table by the window—too exposed, maybe, but I didn't want corners today. Didn't want shadows.

I arranged the bouquet beside the empty chair, fussing with the stems just to keep my hands busy.

My leg jittered under the table until I braced my hand on my knee to force it still.

This was absurd.

I was an Alpha—someone who'd stared down rival packs, forged truces in blood, sent men into battle. Yet now, my heart fluttered like a teenager's on a first date with his crush.

In some ways, maybe it was.

Celeste and I had never had this.

Our relationship had been easy. Too easy. It had unfolded the way everyone expected it to—smiles and shared glances, hands finding each other naturally, a path laid out so clearly I barely had to choose it.

There'd been no nerves. No anticipation sharpened by uncertainty. No sleepless nights replaying conversations in my head.

What I felt now was nothing like that.

With Sera, every moment felt precious. Fragile. Terrifying. Like something sacred I could ruin with one wrong word.

Ashar stirred again.

'She's coming.'

I felt it a second later—a shift in the air, subtle but undeniable, like the world rebalancing around a new center of gravity.

Then Sera stepped through the door.

And everything else fell away.

I let myself watch her in the split second before she noticed me, the rest of the world fading to a blur.

Sunlight caught in her hair, brightening the pale strands into something almost luminous. Her expression was calm, serene, like she'd made peace with whatever choice she'd made.

Something inside me unfolded, raw and aching.

Ashar's satisfaction rolled through me, deep and warm.

'Our mate is stronger,' he murmured.

Her gaze met mine, and I forgot how to breathe.

SERAPHINA'S POV

By the time I reached the café, my nerves had settled into something strangely calm.

Not peace exactly. More like resolution. The kind that comes after a long internal argument has already ended.

I felt steady in my body, aware of each step, each breath, the quiet hum of morning life unfolding around me.

The decision had already rooted itself deep inside me, solid and immovable. What remained was the harder part: honoring it without flinching.

The café buzzed with life as I entered, sunlight pouring through wide windows to gild the polished tables. The scent of coffee and sweet pastries curled around me, a gentle embrace.

A bell chimed overhead as I stepped inside, my gaze sweeping across the room.

My gaze found Kieran a split-second later, his presence tugging at me with a familiar gravity.

The moment our eyes met, something passed between us—recognition, tension, hope.

Alina stirred within me.

‘Are you sure about this?’

I exhaled. ‘Are you?’

'I'm with you, Sera. Whatever you decide.'

With that, I closed the distance between us. Kieran stood, a bouquet cradled in his hands.

As I drew near, my steps faltered.

Then I froze altogether.

For a heartbeat, the world narrowed to color and scent.

White lilies. Pink carnations. Wrapped in soft ivory paper. Tied with a pale blue ribbon.

'I hope these bring as much beauty to your day as you bring to my world.'

The café dissolved around the edges as realization struck, swift and undeniable.

I looked up slowly.

Kieran was watching me with careful intensity, hope and nerves braided together so tightly it made my chest ache.

“You...” I started, then stopped.

His jaw tightened almost imperceptibly.

“You sent the flowers in Seattle,” I whispered.

I’d been right. I couldn’t believe I’d been right.

Kieran nodded once.

“Why...” I swallowed past the lump in my throat. “Why didn’t you sign the card?”

He exhaled, rubbing the back of his neck in a way that was painfully human. “I thought if you knew it was from me, you might reject it...and the others.”

“The others—” My eyes widened. “All that free stuff in the café and markets and shops—that was you?”

A crooked, self-conscious smile tugged at his mouth, his skin flushing. "I just...wanted you to have a good time."

I slumped into my seat, stunned by the realization.

"The Lunewing butterflies," I whispered, almost to myself. "You sent those, too." Not a question.

Kieran slid into the seat opposite me, setting the flowers on the table next to me.

"I'm sorry if I overstepped," he murmured, fingers pressed tightly together.

"No." I shook my head, still feeling numb. "I just..." I exhaled. "I can't believe that was all you. I can't believe you—"

"Would be capable of something like that?"

I reached out, my fingers brushing the petals.

We weren't touching, but a fragile, dangerous warmth spread through me, the echo of the bond stirring in response, tugging on my heartstrings. Tenderness, sneaking in when I least expected, slipping past my defenses in a single unguarded moment.

It was the seaside restaurant and necklace and fireworks all over again.

This man had paid attention. Had noticed. Had learned my preferences quietly, without demanding anything in return.

He had tried, in his own way, to make me feel seen—even when we were miles apart.

“Thank you,” I said sincerely, then set the flowers aside, resting them carefully against the chair leg. Out of sight.

A waitress appeared; we ordered.

The moment stretched.

When the coffee arrived, I cupped the mug in my hands, letting its warmth anchor me.

Kieran waited.

Didn’t rush me. Didn’t fill the silence.

That alone made this harder.

Finally, I drew in a slow breath.

“Kieran,” I said. “I’ve...made my decision.”

The café didn’t quiet. The world didn’t pause.

But something inside him did.

I felt it in the way the air shifted—a subtle tightening, the instinctive awareness of a predator who sensed the ground changing beneath his feet.

His shoulders squared, bracing.

“I’m listening,” he said.

“I’m grateful,” I began carefully. “For the flowers. For Seattle. The fireworks, the restaurant, the necklace. For everything you’ve done to try and make things right.”

His fingers curled loosely around his cup. "But."

"But," I echoed softly.

I forced my head to lift, forced our eyes to meet.

And then I forced the words out.

"I can't accept the bond."