

My Sister 311

Chapter 311 CHECKMATE

KIERAN'S POV

"When Seraphina came to Nightfang," Father continued, "Edward was under a lot of scrutiny. His honor and legitimacy were questioned. Some of this was due to wild, baseless rumors. Much stemmed from the fact that he had a wolfless daughter—who had slept with her sister's beloved."

Ice slithered down my spine, and my hand curled into a fist in my lap.

"Edward was very reticent, and I suspect even Margaret never fully knew what was going on in his mind. But, recently, some of his actions have become clearer and clearer to me."

"Like what?"

My father didn't turn to me. He kept his gaze on the lowering moon through the window, his mouth thinning. "Publicly distancing himself from Sera was the only way he saw to quiet the inevitable uproar."

I felt a slow, sick twist in my gut. I would never, never put mundane things like legacy and honor before Daniel's well-being.

As if my father could read my thoughts, he chuckled bitterly.

"Many thought him a cruel father to have cast aside his daughter so easily. But he never cast her aside. Not truly."

He shook his head. "I didn't realize it until it was too late, but he trusted me. I was his closest ally. He must have trusted that leaving her in my pack, in my care, would keep her safe. That she would be protected. That whatever he could not give her openly, she would find here."

My jaw clenched.

"And instead," Father said, voice trembling ever so slightly, "she endured years of subtle cruelty. Coldness. Disregard. All while I told myself it was not my place to interfere in your marriage. You were Alpha now; these trifling matters were yours to handle."

Shame burned in my chest.

"I let her suffer," he said simply. "And in doing so, I betrayed Edward's trust."

Silence hung in the wake of his words, thick and brittle.

"I didn't know you felt that way," I said finally. "About Edward. About...all of it."

The words felt insufficient the moment they left my mouth.

Father exhaled slowly through his nose, the sound barely audible. "Neither did I," he admitted. "Not fully. Not until tonight forced me to look at it without the luxury of distance."

"I...I know you feel indebted to Edward, but you can't blame yourself for everything that went wrong between Sera and me."

His gaze flicked to mine. "Is that so?"

"I mean it," I said. "I was her husband. She was in my care, not yours. I was the one who drew the line. I was the one who chose distance. I exiled her from our marriage long before she ever walked away from it."

Sera might have been telling the truth; she might have left all my sins in the past. But they would never not burden me. The guilt would never not corrode me from within.

Father rose then, coming around the table with measured steps. He stopped beside me and, to my surprise, placed a hand on my shoulder.

The gesture was awkward, gentle, and so out of character it left me momentarily off balance.

"I taught you to be steadfast," he said quietly. "Unyielding. Decisive. I made you an Alpha before you were allowed to be anything else." His jaw tightened. "I rushed your growth. Demanded strength without teaching you to tend to the fractures it creates."

His hand lifted, then settled again, firmer now. "That failure is mine. You will not carry the consequences alone."

A lump formed in my throat.

"For all my insistence on discipline," he went on, "I offered you little guidance in matters of the heart. I treated emotion and vulnerability as a liability rather than skills to be honed. And yet," he added, a faint note of something lighter threading through his tone, "when it came to Daniel, you did better."

A startled breath left me.

"I watch you," he said. "You're a true father to that little boy. You listen. You adapt. You learned when to be firm and when to yield." His eyes softened. "You didn't raise him as I raised you, and at ten, he's already greater than either of us could ever hope to be. He's definitely more well-rounded than I am."

A reluctant smile tugged at my mouth despite the weight of my father's words. "I can't take credit for that."

"Oh?" His brow lifted.

“Sera,” I said simply. “She set the example. Patience. Consistency. Unconditional love and support. I learned by watching her.”

Father let out a low, thoughtful hum.

“Even without being a silver wolf,” he said, “she is a remarkable woman.”

A remarkable woman who, unfortunately, had been cursed to live in a world surrounded by blind fools.

“We blinded ourselves,” he went on, again displaying the eerie ability to read my mind.

His gaze met mine, and this time there was no Alpha there—just a man reckoning with himself.

“I don’t know the depth of the dynamics between you both,” he said, “but if love remains, don’t let it go. Fight for it till your dying breath.”

My breath caught.

“Boldly,” he added, his voice hardening a fraction. “Without fear or restraint. Do not leave any regrets.”

The words struck deeper than any reprimand he'd ever given me.

I looked down at the chessboard.

For the first time since we'd begun, I truly saw it.

The pieces. The tension. The space I'd left unclaimed while circling the same old defenses.

I reached forward and captured his bishop with my pawn. "Checkmate," I exhaled.

Father's eyes widened, his expression barely changing, but the surprise was clear in the tilt of his brow.

Then he let out a soft, incredulous burst of laughter and squeezed my shoulder.

"About time."

CHRISTIAN'S POV

The study felt emptier after Kieran left.

Not in the physical sense—the chessboard remained, pieces scattered mid-reckoning, the window open to the night air—but in the way spaces do when something long held finally loosens its grip.

I remained where I was for a moment, staring at the board.

He'd seen it. The move. Not just on the board, but in life.

That alone eased something tight in my chest.

We all had our transgressions to atone for. But the first step was acknowledgement.

"Well," a soft voice, as familiar as my own breath, drawled, "I see you decided to try tenderness for once."

I turned as Leona stepped from the adjoining sitting room, arms folded loosely across her chest, eyes bright with quiet amusement.

"I'm tender."

She snorted, an uncharacteristic sound no one but me would ever hear her make.

“You’re about as tender as a cactus.”

I huffed. “And what does that say about you, who loves a cactus?”

She moved closer, barely sparing the chessboard a glance as she settled in my lap. “What can I say? Tough and prickly has a certain...appeal.”

I chuckled and slid my arm around her waist, pulling her snug against my chest.

We stayed like that for a while, and I reveled in the warmth and peace only she could give me.

Then, her voice broke the silence. “You didn’t tell him.”

I pulled back slightly to meet her eyes. “Tell him what?”

“That a silver wolf can rechoose her destined mate.”

Ah.

I leaned forward again, pressing my forehead against her shoulder. “No.”

Her fingers threaded in my hair, and a small sigh of contentment slipped past my lips. “Why?”

“For several reasons,” I said calmly. “None of them rooted in manipulation.”

Firm but gentle, she gripped a handful of my hair and tilted my head upward until our eyes met, her expression unyielding.

“Sera is not just a silver wolf. She is Edward’s daughter.”

Leona’s expression softened. “Yes, you’ve affirmed her lineage already.”

“We already failed her once,” I continued. “I will not burden her again by forcing the weight of fate on her.”

“But Kieran—”

“Must prove his love without the safety net of destiny,” I finished. “As it should be.”

Leona was quiet for a moment.

“She loved him deeply once,” she said.

“I know,” I replied.

Neither of us spoke out loud about the part we played in ruining that love.

“And she walked away anyway.”

“Yes.”

“That takes courage,” Leona murmured. “Especially when rejecting fate itself.”

“Exactly,” I said. “Her refusal wasn’t rejection of him. It was a refusal to be loved only because she was meant to be.”

She leaned forward, pressing our foreheads together. “Do you think he can win her back?”

“If his love is true, his actions will speak for him.” I allowed myself a small, hopeful smile. “And may the goddess bless their reunion.”