

My Sister 322

Chapter 322 WHAT-IFS

KIERAN'S POV

Of course, Ethan had my full permission to propose at Nightfang.

There was never any real question about that. After everything that had happened—the blood spilled on our soil, the way he'd torn through fear itself to keep Maya alive—they deserved a happy ending. Or happy beginning.

Still.

Watching it unfold made something shameful and ugly rise like bile in the back of my throat.

We gathered in the courtyard as dusk softened into evening, the air cool and clear, lanterns already lit along the stone paths.

The hot air balloons Daniel and I had worked on all day—mainly to keep us (i.e., me) distracted from worrying about Sera—hovered beyond the treeline like patient sentinels, their colors muted now in the deepening blue of the sky.

The sea of curious eyes parted to reveal the woman of the hour.

Maya's movements were cautious, her shoulder bandaged heavily beneath a loose shawl, her steps measured, but her chin was lifted, her eyes bright, defiant in the face of pain.

Ethan stood waiting at the center of the courtyard, hands clasped tightly in front of him, shoulders squared like he was facing an adversary rather than the woman he loved.

His aura was a storm of nerves and devotion, radiating outward in waves even the least sensitive wolf could feel.

When Maya finally reached him, Ethan's breath left him in a rush so audible it drew a soft laugh from her.

"You look like you're about to pass out," she teased weakly.

"I might," he admitted. "But that's not the point."

He dropped to one knee, and the courtyard went utterly silent.

I heard Maya's breath hitch as Ethan opened the small box, the simple and elegant ring catching the lantern light.

“Maya,” he began, voice steady despite the tremor in his hands. “I didn’t plan it this way. I wanted music. And candles. And time. But I don’t regret choosing you; not now, not ever. You are my mate. My partner. My home. Forever. Will you marry me?”

For a heartbeat, the world held its breath.

Then Maya laughed, a broken, breathless sound that turned into sobs as she nodded.

“Yes,” she said fiercely. “Yes, you idiot. Of course I will.”

Ethan surged to his feet and caught her carefully, mindful of her injury even as he wrapped her in his arms.

She clung to him, forehead pressed to his chest. Laughter and tears mingled as the courtyard erupted into cheers and applause.

Joy rolled through Nightfang like a living thing.

And I felt it.

But that ugly feeling still crept in, insidious, tinting my vision green.

Envy.

Not bitter or resentful. Just a small, aching awareness of what I could have had.

My gaze drifted without conscious permission.

To Sera.

I hadn't noticed when she stepped out, but now she was all I could see.

A wave of relief crashed over me, threatening to send me to the ground. It took all of my willpower not to dart across the field and take her in my arms and make sure she was okay.

I clenched my fists and planted my feet and forced myself to just...watch.

She stood a few steps back from the crowd, hands folded loosely in front of her, her expression soft and radiant as she watched them.

Her smile was genuine and warm, full of happiness for her friend and brother.

But her eyes...

Her eyes held something else.

Longing.

For a moment, I was dazed—caught in a dangerous spiral of what-ifs.

What if she hadn't been sealed and had been allowed to flourish?

What if I hadn't mistaken her for someone else all those years ago?

What if I hadn't been blind in all the moments that mattered most?

Could we have courted properly?

Would I have proposed in a similar fashion?

Would she be my mate, my partner, my home, forever?

As if sensing my gaze, Sera turned her head, and our eyes met.

The noise around us faded, the celebration dulling to a distant hum as something unspoken stretched taut between us.

Ashar stirred, not gently.

‘It isn’t too late,’ he snapped, voice low and insistent. ‘Stop mourning ghosts.’

I moved before I could overthink it.

I crossed the courtyard and stopped at a careful distance from her.

“Hey. How are you feeling?” I asked quietly.

She blinked, then smiled faintly. “A little sore. A lot embarrassed.” Her lips curved. “And...grateful. I heard you saved me—again.”

I shook my head. "It was nothing."

"It wasn't nothing. In fact, I think you should start me on a tab."

I huffed a quiet laugh. "At this rate, you'd go bankrupt."

She...laughed. A soft, breathless sound that made my heart kick hard against my ribs. "You're that confident that you'll always be there to save me, huh?"

"Yes," I replied without hesitation. "I will always, always be there for you, Sera."

Her smile faded ever so slightly, her eyes locking with mine, and I hoped she could see the sincerity there.

For a breath, the air between us sparked—something hot and dangerous and achingly familiar.

"Mom!"

Daniel's voice cut through the moment as he barreled toward us, eyes bright, cheeks flushed with excitement.

"You're awake!" He wrapped his arms around her waist. "Are you okay?"

Sera bent down to hug him, the tension between us breaking. "I'm okay, baby."

He huffed. "The first rule of training is not to overexert yourself to avoid burnout. How hard did you work that you passed out for almost a full day?"

Sera blinked, momentarily caught off guard by being scolded by a ten-year-old. "I'm sorry," she said finally, ruffling his curls. "It won't happen again."

He hugged her again. "I'm just glad you're okay and that Aunty Maya recovered from her accident quickly."

The way he said it...

I could have been reading too much into it, but Daniel was borderline clairvoyant himself. I wouldn't put it past him to have seen through the story we gave him so that he wouldn't worry about Sera.

When I tuned back into the conversation, the subject had changed.

"Did you like the balloons?" Daniel was asking Sera. "I helped!"

“They’re gorgeous,” she told him.

I watched her smile at our son, at the celebration unfolding around her, and I pushed that ugly feeling down, down, down, and just tried to enjoy the moment.

SERAPHINA’S POV

Nightfang was still running high after Maya and Ethan left.

The afterglow of joy from the proposal lingered like the echo of laughter in a room long after the doors had closed.

That night, I tucked Daniel into bed in his room, smoothing his hair back as he curled beneath the blankets.

“Mom?” he murmured.

“Yes, baby?”

“When Uncle Ethan officially marries Aunty Maya,” he yawned, “does that mean I’ll get a cousin?”

I smiled and pressed a kiss to his forehead. "I think that's very likely."

He hummed contentedly. "Good. I want cousins. I'll be much older, but then I can teach them a lot of things...and...we can...still...pl..."

And just like that, he was out.

I lingered a moment longer, watching his chest rise and fall, before I placed one more kiss on his forehead and quietly closed the door.

The corridor outside was empty, but it wasn't quiet.

Sound drifted in from the other wing: muted laughter, the clink of glasses being cleared away, footsteps moving in loose, unhurried patterns.

Someone was recounting a story—likely the proposal—voice animated even through stone walls, and another voice answered with an indulgent laugh.

I walked slowly, letting the rhythm of my steps match the ebb of it all. My wrist ached faintly where the transformation-restricting bracelet rested, the metal cool and unyielding against my skin.

Every time my fingers brushed it, I was reminded how close the day had come to ending very differently.

Blood.

Screams.

And then—balloons, laughter, vows.

I told myself I should be grateful. Relieved. Happy for Maya and Ethan.

I was all of those things, but the rapid swing from horror to celebration had left my emotions scrambled.

There was a restless ache I couldn't quite shake—the lingering awareness of how thin the line had been, how easily joy could have been disaster.

And no matter what anyone said, it would have been my fault.

I felt wound tight, coiled, as if my body was still waiting for the next impact even as the world around me exhaled.

I considered going for a walk, letting the night air burn the excess adrenaline from my veins.

When I reached the door to my guest room, my steps slowed—and then stopped short.

Standing just outside my door, fist raised, frozen mid-knock, was Kieran.