

My Sister 324

Chapter 324 A STORM

SERAPHINA'S POV

At first, when Mother's face filled the screen, all I could do was stare at her.

At the familiar curve of her cheekbones, the loose braid over one shoulder, the faint lines at the corners of her eyes that had deepened over the years.

She looked...tired. Not the pleasant, sun-warmed tiredness one would associate with the Maldives, but something tighter. More apprehensive.

"Hello, Mother," I greeted.

I had no idea why I was nervous, but my palms were sweating so hard I had to grip the phone tighter to keep it from slipping out of my grasp.

Her lips twitched into a barely there smile that somehow made her look even more strained.

"Seraphina, hello."

Then her gaze shifted to Kieran behind me.

Some of the tension in her expression eased.

“Good,” she said, relief threading through her voice. “You’re with Kieran.”

I frowned, feeling a pang of curiosity at the subtle change, wondering what about Kieran’s presence softened her so quickly.

Kieran inclined his head in a respectful greeting. “Hello, Margaret.”

She nodded back, a flicker of gratitude passing through her eyes that I didn’t quite know how to interpret.

Behind her, pale morning light filtered through gauzy curtains. The sky outside was bright, washed clean in that way tropical mornings were.

It was almost surreal to know that, while night wrapped around Nightfang, Mother was already well into her day.

I hesitated, then asked, “Did you...get my message?”

Her brows creased. "Your message?"

My frown deepened. "You didn't..." I swallowed. "I guess it didn't go through."

She studied me more closely now, the warmth in her expression giving way to something sharper. Attentive. "What message, Sera? What happened?"

I drew in a slow breath. "I went through my first full Shift."

For a moment, Mother simply stared at me, as if the information was taking a little too long to process.

Then her eyes widened, disbelief flashing across her face before something softer took hold.

"You did?"

I nodded.

Her smile came slowly—small, but genuine. Pride smoothed the tight lines around her eyes, loosening something in her voice.

“I’m very happy for you, Sera,” she said quietly. “That is...significant progress.”

Warmth spread through my chest, surprising me with its intensity.

“Thank you,” I said. “I—there’s a lot I don’t understand yet, but—”

“You don’t need to,” she interrupted gently. “Not all at once.”

I swallowed. “Yes, I’m sure. But, Mother, there’s a lot that I have to ask you. Ethan gave me your diary and—”

“Yes, dear, I’m sure you have many questions, but...” Her gaze darted to something off-screen before returning to me. “Now is not the time.”

Why? Is Celeste calling for you?

I bit back the catty reply and asked, “Okay, then, when will you be back?”

Her gaze drifted off-screen again, like she was watching out for something. “I won’t be able to return anytime soon,” she answered.

The words landed heavier than I expected, disappointment and confusion twisting together inside me.

“Oh,” I said. “I—I thought—”

“There are...complications,” she said, her voice measured. “I have to stay longer than I planned.”

Kieran shifted beside me, his presence steady, grounding. From the corner of my eye, I saw him looking down into his phone, fingers flying rapidly over the screen.

“Right,” I said, forcing calm into my voice. “I just thought—I hoped you could shed some light on—”

“I have to go now, Sera,” Mother said. “And for now, it’s best if we limit calls. Short check-ins only.”

A thread of unease slid down my spine.

“Why?” I asked. “Is something wrong?”

Her smile tightened. Her eyes darted back and forth again. “Nothing you need to worry about.”

That answer did nothing to reassure me.

“Moth—”

“Seraphina,” she said firmly, and there it was: that tone she used when she’d already decided something and didn’t want to be challenged. “You’ve done the right thing reaching out. I’m proud of you. But right now, your focus needs to be on stabilizing yourself. The moon will watch over you.”

I glanced at Kieran, then back at her. “I just want to understand what’s happening to me.”

“And you will,” she said softly. “In time.”

Her eyes flicked to the side again, sharper this time. Alert.

“I have to go,” she said abruptly.

Panic edged into my voice. “Mother, wait—”

“Sera,” she said, more gently now. “I love you.”

The words stunned me into silence.

Then the screen went dark.

I stared at my phone long after the call, my faint reflection visible in the black glass. My heart beat too fast, my thoughts tangling into something uneasy and unresolved.

“That was...strange,” I murmured.

Kieran exhaled slowly beside me. “It was.”

I looked up at him. “Did she seem flustered to you?”

“She seemed afraid of being overheard,” he said carefully.

That sent a chill through me. “Overheard by who?”

He shook his head. “I don’t know.”

I swallowed. “And what was all that about her not being able to come back and to limit calls?”

I was expecting another 'I don't know,' but Kieran said instead, "There's been news." He waved his phone by way of explanation. "A storm system hit the Maldives a few days ago. It disrupted flights, communications. Some areas were without power entirely."

My chest tightened. "A storm?"

He nodded. "From what I read, it's passed now. But the damage lingered. Delays, outages. It would explain why she can't return yet, and why she's limiting calls."

Relief and concern warred inside me.

"That makes sense," I said slowly. "She probably didn't want to worry me."

"Likely," he agreed.

Still, the image of my mother's tense expression lingered, feeding a restless worry that tugged at the edges of my thoughts.

I lowered my phone, fingers tightening around it. "I hope that's all it is."

"So do I," Kieran said quietly.

We stood there in silence for a moment, the moonlight brushing over us both. Our conversation from earlier seemed light-years away, and I was about to suggest we head back in when he said, "There's something else."

I turned to him. "What is it?"

"My mother spoke to me earlier."

I stiffened. "About me?"

"Yes." He paused, choosing his words carefully. "She's concerned. Not just about your wolf—but about your psychic abilities."

I swallowed. "That's fair."

"Father shared the details of Margaret's influence, but if she can't return soon," he continued, "your training can't simply...stop."

"And Leona thinks...?" I prompted.

"She thinks the anchor for your psychic abilities may be the same as your wolf's," he said. "The moon."

My breath caught. "You think they're connected?"

"It's a safe conclusion," he replied.

I thought of the way my powers surged under moonlight. The way my first full Shift had aligned so perfectly with its peak.

What had Codex said he saw around me? Moonlight-spectrum interference.

And that Silencer in Seabreeze had said mockingly, 'The moon-touched girl returns.'

"Yeah," I said softly, almost to myself. "That makes sense."

"As Luna," Kieran went on, "my mother has years of experience drawing strength from lunar cycles. Rituals. Grounding practices. She won't replace your mother, but she could help guide you in that aspect. At least until Margaret can return."

I studied his face, and something about the mix of concern and certainty there eased any reservations I might have had.

“I’d like that,” I said.

His shoulders relaxed. “Good.”

I glanced down at my phone again, unease curling low in my gut, the weight of unanswered questions tightening my chest.

I couldn’t reconcile the joyful woman Catherine had shown me playing on the beach with the tense woman I had just spoken with.

“I just hope Mother really is only dealing with a storm,” I said softly. “And not something worse.”