

My Sister 327

Chapter 327 IMPENDING DOOM

SERAPHINA'S POV

Ethan's door opened before I'd finished knocking.

"Sera?" He blinked, surprise rippling across his face before his features tightened with concern. "Hey."

"Hi," I said, my voice wavering thinner than I meant, betraying nerves I tried to mask.

"What are you—" He stopped himself as his eyes swept my face, and then he stepped aside. "Never mind, come in."

I offered a brittle smile and followed him in. "Thanks."

Ethan raised a brow at something behind me. "Oh, look who has her own escort."

The car from Nightfang idled quietly in the driveway outside.

I shrugged. "Kieran insisted. You know...with the rogue attacks and all that."

I didn't mention that Kieran wanted to drive me himself, and this was the compromise we settled on.

Ethan nodded. "Good. If he let you out on your own after all that, he would have me to contend with."

I rolled my eyes. "Please, you're too busy with your engage—"

"Is that Sera?!"

Thundering footsteps echoed through the house, and before I could brace myself, Maya's body slammed into me. "Hi!"

"Whoa!" I laughed, catching her around the waist. "You're injured, you shouldn't be body slamming anyone."

"Are you kidding?" she said, pulling her shirt down to reveal her shoulder.

The bandage she'd worn yesterday was gone, replaced by faint puckered pink skin where the injury had been, and Maya rolled her shoulder with a proud, defiant grin.

"Say what you will about the mate bond, that thing should be bottled up and sold in hospitals."

“Oh?” Ethan said, sidling up to his mate. “It’s no longer ‘a gross infringement on your autonomy?’”

She swatted his chest. “Shut up.”

Her engagement ring glinted in the morning light, and I smiled. “You two make me sick,” I said good-naturedly.

Maya grinned, leaning her head against his chest. “Good. Suffering builds character.”

Ethan snorted, then looked at me again—really looked this time. His amusement faded, brow furrowing. “Okay. Jokes aside, you look...wrecked.”

“I do not,” I said automatically.

Maya lifted her head, eyes narrowing in that way that meant she’d already clocked everything I was trying to hide. “You didn’t sleep.”

I hesitated a beat too long. “I—”

“You swallow that lie back down,” she snapped.

I bit back a groan. It was both amazing and annoying how well she knew me.

I sighed. "Not much, no."

The mood shifted instantly. Maya's hand slid into mine, grounding and warm. Ethan's mouth set in a thin line as he gestured down the hall with a tilt of his head.

"Living room," he ordered.

Maya was already leading me before I could protest.

The living room was flooded with soft morning light, the curtains half-drawn. It was the perfect blend of Ethan and Maya—pristine but lived-in, sharp lines softened by small, careless details.

I took it in absently, aware in the back of my mind that this was my first time here.

Maya nudged me onto the couch and sat beside me, close enough that our knees touched.

Ethan disappeared into the kitchen without a word and returned moments later with a steaming mug.

“Coffee,” he said, pressing it into my hands.

I wrapped my fingers around the mug, clinging to its warmth as if the heat could hold me together.

Maya studied my face. “If you tell me you didn’t sleep because you were up all night feeling guilty about hurting me, I swear I’ll—”

I shook my head. “No, it’s not that.”

Ethan sank into the armchair beside me and leaned in. “Then what is it?”

I took a sip of coffee, savoring the burn as it spread through my throat and into my belly.

“I...I called Mother last night,” I said. “Told her about my Shift.”

They listened as I recalled the call—Mother’s odd behavior, and how I couldn’t stop worrying about her.

When I was done, Ethan leaned back and exhaled, running a hand across his jaw.

“You don’t need to worry about Mom, Sera,” he said.

My brows knitted. “I don’t?”

He shook his head. “She went to the Maldives with a security team led by Jonathan. And as soon as I heard about the storm, I sent another team of my own to bring them back.”

I froze. “Them?”

“Mom and Celeste.”

The coffee turned heavy and sour in my stomach, a queasy weight pressing inside me.

A slideshow of confrontations flipped through my mind, and I ducked my head, staring at the surface of the dark liquid. “Right.”

“She’s been away long enough—they both have been,” Ethan said, his voice careful. “It’s time they came home.”

“Of course.”

“And,” he added, “with our engagement party coming up, the whole family has to be present.”

My neck felt stiff as I nodded. “Naturally.”

Ethan hesitated, then sighed. “Sera...I’m not trying to defend Celeste or any of her...less than pleasant actions, but maybe with the seal broken...things might improve between you two. We know for a fact that it affected me, so maybe—”

Maya cut him off with a scoff. “You can’t be serious.”

“What?” he asked, looking genuinely confused. “I’m not saying everything is automatically fixed.”

“No,” she said calmly. “But comparing your relationship with Sera to hers and Celeste is like comparing a crack in concrete to the Grand Canyon.”

He exhaled. “I know, I’m just saying maybe—”

I lifted a hand. “It’s okay.”

They both turned toward me.

“When I reclaimed the Lockwood name,” I said, “I knew reconnecting with Celeste was a part of it. Of course, I hope the unseal helps her. If it...softens her countenance towards me, I’d be glad for that.”

I met Ethan’s gaze, steady and unwavering. “But if it doesn’t,”—I straightened my shoulders, voice firm—“I’m no longer the Sera who shrinks herself to keep the peace.”

He nodded once. “Fair.”

Maya smiled softly. “More than fair.”

The smile I forced didn’t fool either of them, but they were nice enough not to point it out.

When I left later that afternoon, the sky had shifted into that hazy, sun-warmed blue that always made Los Angeles feel deceptively gentle, like nothing truly bad could exist beneath it.

Back at Nightfang, training resumed as scheduled.

The transformation-restricting bracelet was gone from my wrist, its absence immediately noticeable.

There was no muted drag on my senses, no dull pressure holding something vital at bay. And the sweet, sweet sound of Alina's voice.

When I shifted through the basics, my body responded more readily than it had the day before, muscle memory slotting into place.

The Shift came easier and cleaner now, with the edges less jagged and the internal balance more familiar.

Like me, Alina was determined not to lose control ever again, and we took every step carefully.

Still, focus was a struggle.

My thoughts kept drifting—sliding unbidden toward Mother's tense expression, toward the reality of Celeste's imminent return, looming over everything like a shadow I couldn't quite outrun.

This time, when Kieran suggested a break, I didn't object.

Christian excused himself, but Kieran lingered as I moved to the tree that bore Daniel's tree house.

I settled against the broad trunk, the bark warm against my shoulder, cicadas humming lazily in the distance. The familiar wooden supports cast long, dappled shadows across the ground.

“May I?” Kieran asked softly.

I nodded, not looking up.

He settled beside me, and it was all I could do not to lean into his warmth.

For a moment, we just sat there, the silence easy in a way it hadn’t always been.

A chilled can of soda was pushed into my line of sight.

“That was a good session,” he said.

I snorted, taking the can from him. “You mean, for someone who went off the rails last time?”

He chuckled. “Well, yeah. But also, for someone who was distracted throughout.”

I let out a huff of air. “Was it that obvious?”

He shrugged. “To anyone paying enough attention to you.”

His words made my stomach flutter, but it wasn’t enough to drown out the cold sense of impending doom.

“Are you still worried about Margaret?” Kieran asked.

“Celeste is coming back,” I blurted.

I had no intention of telling him, at least not like that. But the bomb had been dropped, and the silence that followed pressed down, carrying the same terrible weight of the words that caused it.

Now that the words were out, I couldn’t hold back the thought pressing against my mind.

The last time Celeste had returned after a long absence, everything had fallen apart.

‘I want a divorce.’

The ache flared, sharp and hot. Not just jealousy or fear—this was the pain of knowing exactly how easily the past could repeat itself if given the slightest opening.

How easily the delicate balance Kieran and I maintained could topple.

I stood abruptly, my movements jagged, a defensive shield snapping up between us.

“I should go,” I said. “I—Daniel will be wondering where I am.”

“Sera.”

Kieran stood as well.

I took a step back, the words tumbling out faster now. “It’s fine, really. I’m the one who broke the bond. You don’t owe me—”

“The only reason I ever chose Celeste was because I thought she was you.”