

## **My Sister 328**

Chapter 328 MAYBE, MAYBE, MAYBE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The words landed between us like a physical blow, so strong I actually stumbled back a step.

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

For a long moment, I couldn't breathe.

The cicadas faded to a dull hum, the world narrowing to the space beneath the tree and the man standing a few feet away from me, looking as though he'd just torn his own chest open and offered me the heart beating inside.

"I don't—" My voice faltered. I swallowed and tried again. "What do you mean?"

Kieran took a breath, slow and steady, as if bracing himself for the weight of what he was about to unearth.

"There was a park in the neutral zone," he said quietly. "I was a child—six or seven, maybe. I'd run away after a fight with my father." His jaw tightened at the memory. "I fell. Hurt myself. I was angry and scared. And then a little girl found me."

Something stirred at the back of my mind. Not a memory exactly—more like a pressure, a soft knock against a door that had been sealed for far too long.

“She had pale hair with a ribbon in it,” he continued. “Mud on her dress because she willingly sank to the ground next to me. She laughed when I told her to go away.” A faint, broken smile crossed his face. “She took my hand and drew something on my palm: a crescent moon surrounding a five-pointed star.”

My pulse stuttered.

“She told me it was a blessing,” he said. “That it would help me heal faster. I thought it was dumb.”

His eyes lifted to mine. “But I never forgot it. I never forgot her. I carried that memory like it was...proof that the world could be kind.”

My heart began to pound, harder and harder, as fragments rose unbidden from somewhere deep inside me.

The smell of wet grass. Mud squishing beneath brand new shoes. A boy with scraped knees and too much anger for such a small body.

‘I don’t want a handkerchief. It hurts.’

'If it hurts, you can draw this.'

I pressed my hand to my chest, breath shallow. "I—I remember the park," I whispered. The words surprised me as much as they did him. "Not clearly. Just...pieces. I remember a boy crying. I remember thinking he looked lonely."

Kieran stilled.

"I never knew who he was," I went on, my voice trembling now. "I never even thought about it until...gods, it's like that memory just slipped away."

Kieran nodded. "It faded, reformed itself until..."

He looked away, throat bobbing with a hard swallow.

"I thought it was Celeste," he said hoarsely. "Years later, I saw the same symbol on her school bag. Same surname. I convinced myself it was fate. That she was the girl."

Regret flooded his expression, raw and pained.

"By the time I realized the truth, it was too late. I'd already built my life on the wrong memory."

Silence stretched between us, thick with everything that had been exposed.

I expected anger to rise. Resentment. Something sharp and righteous.

Instead, my chest ached with a bittersweet heaviness that threatened to fold me in half.

“We had identical school bags,” I rasped, barely recognizing my voice. “Hers was blue, mine was pink. Celest woke up one morning and decided she preferred mine, and nobody stopped her when she took it.”

I let out a harsh breath, running my hand through my hair. “Fucking hell.”

Kieran flinched. “Sera, I know you’re angry—”

“Angry?” I hissed. “I’m livid!”

His face crumpled, and his head dipped. “I understand. I’m so sorry—”

“Not at you,” I interrupted softly.

His head snapped up, tentative hope flashing in his eyes. "Not me?"

"All this time," I murmured. "All these years..." I shook my head slowly. "Fate can be so cruel."

All the fight drained out of me, and I sank back to the ground, leaves fluttering up at the impact.

"If just one thing had been different," I mumbled, staring down at my lap. "If the seal hadn't caused me to be hidden away. If it hadn't muddled my memories. If I'd stood up to Celeste and taken my damn backpack back."

My throat tightened as I looked up at him. The dappled sunlight haloed his figure so he looked like something ethereal.

"Maybe you would have seen me. Maybe it would have been you and me from the very start. Maybe..."

I dropped my head, choking on all the maybes.

Maybe, maybe, maybe.

Kieran sank to his knees before me, hands clenched at his sides.

"I'm so sorry, Sera," he whispered.

"I know," I replied. And I did. If I doubted anything, Kieran's remorse wasn't one of them.

I looked up at him and offered a small, sad smile. "In a way, you were a victim, too. I can't imagine how it feels trapped in a marriage to someone else when you're convinced your heart belongs to her sister."

He shook his head. "I feel like I've had a bag over my head for the last ten years and I'm seeing clearly for the first time."

I exhaled. "Better late than never, right?"

The cicadas swelled again as evening crept closer, the light filtering through the leaves shifting from gold to amber.

Kieran drew in a shaky breath, then lifted his gaze to mine with a kind of fragile determination that made my chest ache all over again.

"Sera," he said. "I have a million and one things to make up for, and I don't want to dwell any longer on maybes. Is there...is there any way you'd be willing to give me—give us—a second chance?"

The question hung in the air, vulnerable and terrifying in its simplicity.

My heart lurched.

A whirlwind of emotions surged through me all at once: longing, fear, tenderness, grief, love.

And beneath it all, the hopeful, dangerous desire to say yes.

Before I could gather myself, Kieran shifted closer, his voice low and urgent. "I know the bond is broken. I know I lost the right to ask for anything. But I want to do it right with you, Sera. I want to take all the chances I missed with you. You are the only woman I want. Bond or no bond."

Something flickered then, so faint I almost missed it—a subtle pull, like the echo of a heartbeat that wasn't entirely my own.

The severed bond between us stirred, yearning, as if it remembered what I had tried so hard to forget.

My pulse thundered in my ears.

Memories flashed through my mind in rapid succession: the nights spent alone, the quiet endurance, the pain of loving him when he couldn't see me.

And then, more recent moments. His steady presence during my first Shift and every moment since then. The way he'd stepped back without question when I broke the bond. The honesty in his voice now, stripped of pride or command.

I wanted to agree. Gods, I wanted to.

But fear coiled just as tightly around my heart.

What if this was another trap laid by fate? What if rushing forward only led us back into the same cycle of obligation and heartbreak?

Kieran must have sensed my hesitation. His shoulders slumped slightly, resolve giving way to restraint.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I shouldn't have pushed. I don't want to corner you into anything. I—"

He started to rise.

On instinct, I reached out and caught his hand.

The contact sent a jolt through me, and he stilled, eyes widening as if he felt it too.

“Kieran,” I said, my voice steadier than I felt.

I took a breath, drawing courage from somewhere deep inside me—the same place that had survived years of suppression and come out the other side stronger.

‘Alina,’ I asked silently. ‘What do you think?’

‘You know what I think,’ she answered softly. ‘But that doesn’t matter. This is all you, Sera. Follow your heart.’

I swallowed hard. I knew what my heart was saying. So I shut down my brain, the part where the fear was lodged, and said, “I’m willing to give us another chance.”

Kieran’s breath hitched. Cautious hope flared in his eyes.

“But...not the way we did before,” I continued. “I don’t want to rush into another marriage. Or another obligation. I want us to...date. Properly. To choose each other, every step of the way, without fate or duty forcing our hands.”

I managed a small, tentative smile. “Let’s take it slow.”

For a heartbeat, he just stared at me.

Then joy broke across his face like dawn.

“Yes,” he said, voice thick. “Yes. As slow as you want. However you want.”

Relief and happiness surged through me all at once, dizzying in their intensity.

Kieran didn't hesitate this time. He pulled me to my feet and wrapped his arms around me, pulling me into his chest with a heady mix of passion and care that told me he understood exactly how precious this moment was.

I leaned into him, resting my forehead against his shoulder as his chin dipped toward my hair.

I breathed him in—the warmth of his skin, the clean scent of cedar and pine—and felt my body answer without hesitation, without fear.

There were no bonds tugging at us. No invisible chains or expectations hanging over our heads. No weights of past mistakes dragging us down.

And it was perfect.

