

My Sister 332

Chapter 332 HIS HEART ON HIS SLEEVE

SERAPHINA'S POV

I followed Kieran up the short stone steps and into the cabin, the door creaking softly as he pushed it open ahead of me.

Warmth wrapped around me as soon as I stepped inside, lingering in the wooden walls and the low glow of the lamps. The cabin was open but felt intimate, the living space flowing easily into a small kitchenette, all wood and stone softened by use rather than polish.

A couch sat near the hearth with a throw draped over one arm, and the faint scent of cedar and old firewood hung in the air. It felt lived-in, quaint, and unexpectedly charming.

I stepped fully inside, taking in the way the windows framed the dark forest outside like a painting, making it feel like a fairy tale.

Kieran hesitated, hands sliding into his jacket pockets in a way that felt oddly...boyish.

He glanced around, then back at me.

"I had plans," he said with a meek shrug. "I was going to come up earlier. Clean, set things up properly. Maybe flowers." He nodded at the bag of leftovers in my hands. "Freshly made food."

He let out a half self-deprecating huff. "But since this turned into an ambush date, this is...well, this is it."

I took a step towards Kieran, a soft smile playing on my lips. "It's perfect."

His brows knit together, disbelief flickering across his face, mouth tense. "It's haphazard, careless. You deserve—"

"Honesty," I said, stepping closer. "Transparency."

I placed a hand on his chest; his heart hammered beneath my palm, sending a thrill through me.

"There were a lot of things I wanted from you during our marriage," I said, looking up at him. "But do you know what tops the list?"

"What?" he asked, his voice suddenly hoarse.

"You. Stripped of all affectation."

His brows furrowed. "I don't—"

My smile widened. “I love seeing you unsure and flustered.” I shrugged. “There’s something about the big bad Kieran Blackthorne worrying about flowers for a date that’s...cute.”

He exhaled sharply, the tension in his shoulders easing. Then he placed his hand over mine, pressing it gently against his chest.

“I,” he murmured, his voice dropping an octave, “am not cute.”

An involuntary shiver darted down my body. Kieran’s thumb pressed against the inside of my wrist, and I was certain he could feel the frantic leap of my pulse.

His gaze dropped—not away, but to my mouth—and stayed there a heartbeat too long.

I felt it then—the pull. The unmistakable moment where the air between us tightened, charged with something neither of us could deny.

He leaned in just enough that I could feel his breath brush my cheek. Close enough that my body responded instinctively, my fingers curling slightly against his chest.

For one suspended second, I was certain he was going to close the distance.

Then he stopped.

I watched the effort it took—his jaw tightening, his breath drawing deeper as he forced himself back by an inch that felt like a mile.

His hand slowly slipped from my wrist, the movement careful and deliberate, as if it cost him something.

“Okay,” he said, clearing his throat. “Then...uh.” He gestured toward the counter. “Wine?”

A breath whooshed out of me, and I wasn’t sure if it was relief or frustration. “Yes, please.”

He moved into the kitchenette, the familiarity of his movements betraying how often he’d been here. He poured carefully, then handed me a glass.

I took it, my fingers brushing his.

The contact sparked, not as overwhelming as the bond, but just as dizzying.

I lifted the glass and took a small sip.

The wine was warm with oak, and something darker beneath it, and it easily slid down my throat, taking the edge of my nerves with it. My shoulders loosened, the tight coil in my chest easing.

Then, softly, music drifted through the room.

I froze, body snapping still, heart squeezing painfully tight as the low, familiar melody unfolded gently and took me back—back to a bar several months ago.

“Lillian’s song,” I whispered.

“It greatly shames me to admit that I don’t know what your favorite song is,” Kieran said, a faint smile tugging at his mouth as he watched me over the rim of his glass. “I intend to take my time learning every single thing about you that I can. Until then...I hope this is enough.”

My breath caught.

The song swelled, familiar beats aligning with a memory I’d tried very hard not to revisit too often: dim lights, sticky floors, laughter hanging in the air like smoke.

His hands at my waist. Mine on his shoulders. The way the world had narrowed to the space between us, and I’d been reminded of all the ways I’d once yearned for Kieran’s affection.

And now, here he was with me in a cabin in the woods, wearing his heart on his sleeve, his hand outstretched toward me.

“Dance with me?” he asked softly.

I glanced at his hand. Then up at his face.

“Yes,” I said without hesitation, setting my glass down next to his on the counter.

His fingers closed around mine gently, reverently, and he drew me into his arms.

The embrace was warm in a way that had nothing to do with body heat. His hand settled at my waist, solid and sure, while the other kept mine anchored between us.

My free hand found his shoulder, fingers curling into the fabric of his jacket.

We swayed slowly, unhurried. No choreography. No performance.

The cabin seemed to fade around the edges, the walls retreating as the moment expanded. My breathing synced with his without effort.

For a brief moment, my mind reached backwards.

I remembered the other dance—the other time I'd been held by him—and how it had nearly undone me.

How his touch back then had felt like something dangerous, something I wasn't meant to want, let alone enjoy. I'd been swept up in sensation and the terrible tug of war of longing and hurt.

This was not that.

Kieran's hand at my waist was steady, firm, but not possessive. His other hand held mine lightly, not guiding me so much as matching my movement, as if we were meeting each other halfway with every step.

Before, I'd been consumed by the dance. By him. My heart had raced as though it were trying to outrun consequence, as though the moment might collapse if I examined it too closely.

Now, my breathing was even. My thoughts were clear.

I didn't feel like I had to fight against anything—not the years we'd lost, not the mistakes we'd made, not the long distance we'd had to cross to arrive here.

All of it existed quietly in the background, acknowledged and no longer sharp enough to wound.

The music carried us, gentle and unhurried, and I let myself sway with him without bracing for the moment it would end. I didn't cling. I didn't fear. I simply allowed the closeness, the warmth, the calm certainty of his arms around me.

I rested my cheek against his chest, listening to the steady beat beneath my ear.

'This,' I thought. 'This is what it feels like when nothing is being taken from you.'

As the song neared its end, the final notes lingering like a held breath, Kieran's movements slowed even further, as if he were trying to memorize the feel of me in his arms.

The music faded.

I tilted my head up slowly, and the look in his eyes stole the air from my lungs.

Yearning, raw and unguarded, burned there, barely contained beneath restraint so carefully maintained it hurt to witness.

His jaw was tight, his breath shallow, like he was holding himself back by the thinnest of threads.

“Sera,” he murmured.

My name sounded different in his mouth now. Not a claim. Not a plea.

A question.

He hesitated, just long enough for me to see his longing overwhelm his restraint.

“Can I...” He swallowed. “May I kiss you?”

Maybe it was the wine, or the warmth of the cabin, or the quiet seclusion of it all, or the way the world beyond those walls felt very far away.

Maybe it was the heat of his body, or the electricity running through my veins, or the vulnerability in his eyes.

Whatever it was, it blasted the definition of ‘slow’ right out of my mind.

“Yes,” I whispered.

And when he leaned in, slow and careful, giving me every chance to change my mind, I realized, dimly, beautifully, that for the first time in a very long while, my heart wasn't bracing for hurt.

It was leaning forward.