

## **My Sister 35**

Chapter 35 THAT WAS STRENGTH

SERAPHINA'S POV

Kieran's behavior had been a dizzying cocktail of infuriating and befuddling since we got divorced.

Today was worse. It rattled me down to my core. Jarred me in a way I couldn't understand.

The way he'd looked at me in the meditation circle, how he gripped me, his wolf rising to the surface like Ashar was trying to speak for him—only for him to pull away and walk back to her.

I didn't know what that meant. I didn't want to.

As the door to the Moon Hall shut behind us, I leaned against the wall, forcing calming breaths. In and out. In and out.

Lucian must have sensed the spiraling questions in my mind, the jumbled emotions running through me, because he leaned in, voice smooth and steady. "Sera? Are you okay?"

I looked up at him, blinking like I was seeing him for the first time.

"I... felt her," I whispered, still in awe. The feeling had already faded, and the memory was getting hazy with every passing second. But there was no denying it—I had a wolf. Lost, hidden. But there.

He smiled, tucking a loose strand of hair behind my ear. The action was oddly intimate, and my breath hitched in response.

"We should celebrate," he declared. "Let me take you out to dinner."

I frowned. "I lost her almost immediately. I'm not sure there's anything to celebrate."

He shook his head. "Are you kidding me? That was immense progress. That you were able to sense your wolf on the first try is amazing, Sera!"

I felt my lips twitch. "So you think I'll be able to sense her better as time goes by?"

He nodded. "Definitely."

I let the smile show. "Yeah, dinner sounds nice."

He grinned. "I'll pick you up at six." He winked before turning and heading back down the hall.

When he disappeared around the corner, I turned toward the door, wondering if Kieran and Celeste were still in the Moon Hall.

The look on his face flashed in my mind—dazed, baffled, flustered—and I shook my head. Whatever that was... I was done being entangled in Kieran/Celeste drama.

Four hours later, I was spread-eagled on the mat in the training room, soaked in sweat and ruining the day Maya Cartridge was born.

"Well, look who's getting stronger," she mused, dropping to the mat next to me and crossing her legs.

"Oh, is that what this is?" I wheezed. "'Cause I could have sworn I was dying."

"Are you kidding me? You breezed through that last drill almost as fast as I do."

I let out a breathless laugh as I sat up. "I felt my wolf today during meditation."

Maya's eyes widened. "That's amazing, Sera!"

She leaned forward and pulled me into a hug. "I knew you could do it."

I laughed, leaning into her embrace. "I didn't take you for a hugger."

"I'm full of surprises, babe," she said, pulling away.

I chuckled. "Lucian is taking me out to dinner to celebrate—no, stop that."

I rolled my eyes as Maya wiggled her eyebrows suggestively. "Oh, is he now? A romantic, candlelit—"

"As friends," I emphasized. "To celebrate today. I was gonna ask if you wanted to come."

After what she'd insinuated earlier and that brief tender moment out in the hallway, I needed her presence at dinner as a buffer. Because rumors didn't rise out of nothing, so if people thought Lucian and I were a thing, then that had to mean he...

"Can't, babe, sorry."

I groaned. "Maya..."

She chuckled. "It's not even about you and Lucian." She lowered her voice. "I kind of have to lay low for a while. Can't be seen out in public, especially not with you two."

I cocked my head. "Huh?"

She leaned over and patted my cheek affectionately. "All in good time, babe. I'll explain in good time."

I looked at her in confusion. "Right."

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We avoided Luna Noire like the plague, opting for a cute little restaurant in Beverly Hills. It was beautiful, with a touch of vintage charm—the kind of place where conversations floated low, and candlelight softened the atmosphere.

"Maya told me about this place," Lucian ventured. "She comes here a lot. She lives close by."

I eyed the candles and subtly rolled my eyes. "Of course she did."

Dinner with Lucian wasn't anything we hadn't done before. Yet, everything felt... different tonight.

Lucian was charming and warm as always, but something behind his eyes had changed. Maybe it was me—replaying Maya's words in my mind: 'You can't tell me you haven't noticed how he looks at you.'

Or maybe it was him—leaning closer than usual, pouring my wine without asking, that almost imperceptible breath he caught every time I smiled.

The warm atmosphere shifted when Lucian looked over my shoulder and frowned. "Isn't that your brother?"

I turned in my chair and bit back a curse. It really was Ethan standing at the door. He was talking to the Maître D at the entrance, his hands waving animatedly like he was describing something.

"Is there any place we could go in this city without running into a member of your family?" Lucian said. There was teasing in his tone, but I didn't even have it in me to laugh at the joke.

Because he was right. Was there a tracking chip in my neck I didn't know about?

"Let's just turn around," I said, still glaring at Ethan. "Maybe he won't see—"

Ethan looked up and stiffened, his eyes meeting mine.

"Lovely," I muttered, turning away.

'Ignore me,' I prayed fervently. 'Ignore me like you've done in the last ten—'

"Sera?"

I exhaled sharply and looked up, not bothering to force a smile. "Ethan."

His eyes narrowed in suspicion. "What are you doing here?"

I waved to Lucian, to our steak dinner. "Performing open-heart surgery, obviously."

He rolled his eyes. "Very clever."

I rolled mine, too, pushing my seat back. "I'm going to the bathroom."

Hopefully, Ethan would miraculously vanish by the time I returned.

As I walked past him, I said, "Feel free to make yourself scarce by the time I—" I let out a surprised gasp as Ethan grabbed my arm with an urgency that shocked me.

My eyes widened as he leaned in and sniffed my neck. "What the hell?"

"Where have you been?" he asked sharply, his eyes snapping to mine. "Who were you with?"

"Excuse me?"

Lucian rose from his seat, and his voice cut in, cool and calm. "Ethan, let her go."

But my brother's grip only tightened. There was something feral in his eyes. What scent on me was making him this way?

"Tell. Me," he ground out.

"Where she goes or who she spends her time with is none of your business, Lockwood," Lucian said, his voice firmer.

Ethan's gaze snapped to him, and he growled, sounding more agitated than usual. "It is when it involves my sister."

The audacity stunned me, and I ripped my arm out of his grasp. "You're unbelievable. You've ignored me for years, and all of a sudden, now you care?"

"I care about who's around you," he said, eyes flicking back to my neck. "She must have hugged you for the scent to stick like that. Who were you with?!"

What the fuck?

The only person who had hugged me today was Maya, and what the hell did that have to do with Ethan?

He leaned forward again as if to grab me.

But before he could touch me, I shoved him back with all the strength I could muster.

His eyes flared as he stumbled backward, feet lifting off the ground for a heartbeat before he crashed into the empty table behind him.

My eyes widened, too, at the fact that I'd just sent a full-grown Alpha flying when opening a jar of pickles was my Achilles heel.

Ethan stared at me with shock, and I looked down at my hands in equal measure.

My pulse thrummed, my breath caught. I was buzzing.

"What. The. Fuck. Sera?" he snapped, straightening. The entire restaurant was watching us, intrigued by the spectacle we were making.

"You are one of four people who have absolutely no right to pry into my life. You're not my brother, and nothing—abso-fucking-lutely nothing—I do concerns you. Next time you see me in public, I'd thank you kindly to mind your fucking business."

Ethan's mouth opened—then closed. He inhaled sharply, and I saw his wolf flare in his eyes. His jaw clenched, his eyes darkened, and he turned on his heel and left.

I stood there long after Ethan disappeared through the doors. Long after our spectators returned to their meals.

Lucian didn't speak for a long beat. He simply placed a hand gently on my arm.

"I'm fine," I whispered. But I was shaking—this time from something else.

"I felt her," I said, turning to him. "My wolf—It was faint, but... she stirred when I pushed him."

I looked down at my hands in awe. "That was strength."

Lucian beamed, proud. "Now that is worth celebrating."

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We left the restaurant and went to a bar about ten minutes away from what Lucian pointed out was Maya's apartment building.

Alcohol flowed freely, with Lucian calling toast after toast. My cheeks flushed warm, and the adrenaline had softened into something almost giddy.

I hadn't drunk like this in a long time, and I felt deliriously happy.

"Okay," Lucian chuckled, taking my glass from my hand. "I think it's time we cut you off."

"No," I whined, holding my head up with my hands; it felt too heavy to hold on my own. "We're celebrating."

"Let's not overdo it, yeah?" he said, brushing hair away from my cheek. "I have a feeling that when it comes to you, we'll have more reasons to celebrate."

"I don't get it," I mumbled, my words slurring. "Why do you treat me so well? What do you get out of this?"

Lucian didn't answer right away. He leaned back, studying me with a look that made my stomach flutter—or maybe that was the alcohol.

I blinked once, twice, but the edges of the world had started to blur. The background of the bar melted into something syrupy and drowsy.

My head dropped to the side, and the last thing I felt was Lucian's hand—steady, careful—catching my head before the darkness swept me into sleep.

And, through the haze, I heard the words but barely comprehended them. "I want you as my Luna."