

My Sister 40

Chapter 40 UNDER THE FULL MOON

SERAPHINA'S POV

When I got home, I dropped the shopping bags on the living room floor and sank into the couch, the ache in my muscles nothing compared to the dull throb in my chest.

I stared blankly at the ceiling, still tasting the bitter aftertaste of the brief encounter.

I inhaled deeply, then exhaled through my nose. I wasn't going to let Kieran and Celeste continue living rent-free in my head tonight. Not when I had better things to occupy my mind.

I grabbed the encrypted phone from my purse and tapped the screen.

Daniel answered almost immediately, his bright face filling the display.

"Hi, Mom!" he beamed, and just like that, the heaviness in my chest lifted.

"Hey, sweetheart," I said, sitting up straighter. "How are you?"

"Good!" he chirped. "Today, I stood on the surfboard for one whole minute!"

I smiled. "Oh. I'm proud of you, just promise to always be careful, okay?"

He nodded. "I will."

"Hey, guess what?" I asked, grinning.

"What?"

I grabbed the bag of the video game and lifted the case into view, as if it were a treasure. "Tada!"

His eyes lit up. "You got it! There was only a limited release."

I nodded. "Yep! I got the very last one."

Daniel let out a whoop so loud I had to lower the volume. "That's insane! You're the best, Mom!"

I preened. I could feel his joy rushing through me as if it were my own.

I tilted the phone so he could see the other things I bought. "I also got you a bunch of stuff I know you'll love."

"Thanks, Mom!" He grinned. "Did you go shopping again with your new friend?"

"Not today," I said, turning the phone back to me. "She's busy tonight..." I leaned in and whispered, as if we were sharing a fun secret. "Dating."

Daniel wrinkled his nose dramatically. "Gross. But okay."

I laughed. "It won't be so gross when you're a little older and you start dating, too." The thought of Daniel—all grown and independent, building a life outside of me—made my heart clench.

He paused, and when he spoke again, his tone was careful, deliberate. "Do you want to date too?"

The question came out of nowhere and caught me off guard. "Daniel..."

"It's okay if you do," he said quickly, looking suddenly older than his nine years. "I don't want you to be alone."

"I'm not alone. I have you."

He rolled his eyes, but a soft smile played on his lips. "You know what I mean, Mom. I want you to be happy. And if Dad can date..." His face scrunched again. "...her. Then you can date too."

I was stunned speechless for a few seconds. "You really don't mind?" I really thought having his two parents dating so soon after getting divorced would affect him.

He shrugged, casual but serious. "You deserve someone who makes you laugh and remembers your birthday and tells you you're beautiful all the time—even when you're wearing those weird face masks at night."

I blinked. "You remember those?"

"Mom, you scared me half to death the first time."

I snorted and wiped at my eyes.

Daniel grinned. "I just want you to be okay. Especially when I'm not there."

I couldn't speak for a long moment. My voice would've cracked. My son—the same one who used to cling to my side like a barnacle—was growing up into someone kind, thoughtful, and wise in ways that made my heart ache and swell all at once.

"I love you, baby," I whispered, pressing a kiss to the phone screen.

"Love you too, Mom."

While I put the groceries away and made dinner, our conversation played in my mind. I had to admit, it was a little freeing to know I had Daniel's blessing, should I ever decide to date anyone.

And that train of thought inevitably led me to reminisce on my earlier conversation with Maya. 'I'm just saying, you and Lucian would make the most adorable couple.'

Maybe, just maybe...

I had just finished clearing up after dinner when my phone buzzed. My heart skipped a beat when I saw the caller ID.

Lucian.

I hesitated for a heartbeat before answering. "Hey, Lucian."

"Hey, Sera. Do you have any plans for tonight?"

I swallowed, leaning against the sink. "Uhm, no. Why?"

I could practically hear the smile in his voice as he said, "The moon's in full glow."

I blinked, then glanced out the kitchen window. Silver light spilled across the deck.

"I was just going to go to bed early," I admitted.

I didn't have a good relationship with the full moon. It was a monthly reminder of what I lacked. When I was young, I would curl into bed and stuff a pillow over my face, trying to muffle the sounds of my pack howling in the distance as they ran together.

He hummed. "Well, Ilsa recommends running under the full moon to help reconnect with your wolf."

I raised a brow. "She does?"

"And I'm sure the presence of an Alpha with you will help immensely," he added, quoting Ilsa.

I laughed, a little breathless. "Now, why would you want to shackle yourself to boring mortal flesh when you can unleash your wolf for the night and run with your pack?"

"Nothing's boring with you, Sera."

The teasing lilt in his voice was gone, replaced by something that warmed me. "You really want to?" I asked.

"I can't think of anything I want to do more."

The cool night air hit my lungs like a balm. The world was quiet, the forest whispering around us as Lucian and I jogged side by side under the glow of the full moon.

I'd never run under the full moon before, and I didn't know if it was a result of my session with Ilsa or if it was something I could have always felt if I'd run in the past, but I felt something stir.

My connection to the moon goddess wasn't strong, but tonight, it felt like she was taking note of me, acknowledging my existence.

And Lucian was right—his presence was an immense help. I could almost imagine I was running with my pack. I could pretend like I hadn't been excluded from bonding activities like this my whole life.

For the first time in forever, I didn't feel like an odd piece of a puzzle never made for me. I felt... whole.

After a while, we slowed, breath misting in the night.

Lucian turned to me. "You're glowing."

I braced my hands on my knees. "That," I panted slightly, "is called sweat."

He chuckled, the sound like a warm breeze in the quiet forest.

I smiled, then straightened, looking up at the moon, letting it bathe my face in silver.

"I haven't felt this grounded in a long time," I murmured. "Connected."

I turned to Lucian. "Thank you for this."

He smiled. "Anytime. And maybe, one day, we won't have to do this in 'boring human flesh.'"

The thought of one day being able to run under the full moon in wolf form made my heart race. I wondered if my wolf could sense me now. Was she proud that I'd stepped out under the full moon?

"There's something else," he added after a beat of silence. "You know the charity gala I'm hosting?"

"The one where I'm supposed to give a speech as the trainee representative, and that you spent a ridiculous amount of money to clothe me for?"

He chuckled. "The very same."

"As the host, I'm supposed to open the first dance," he continued. "With a partner. Would you do me the honor?"

My stomach flipped.

"The opening dance?" I echoed. "You want me to do that with you?"

He nodded.

"Lucian..." I swallowed. "Only mates do that."

He shrugged. "That may be tradition, but I don't particularly care for tradition."

It doesn't matter. All the attendees would see us and they'd think we were...

I hesitated. "I don't know how to waltz."

"I'll lead," he said, smiling faintly. "It's actually quite easy."

I shook my head, unsure whether to laugh incredulously or panic. "What if I step on your feet?"

"Then I'll consider it penance for all I've put you through during training. You're the only one in the world I want to have that dance with, Sera."

I studied him. His expression was open, patient. Not demanding. Not entitled.

Just... hopeful.

My heart was doing a weird fluttery thing in my chest, and I knew why—Lucian's question, the way he was looking at me, the way he always looked at me.

At this point, I could no longer deny it—I liked Lucian. A lot. The kind of 'a lot' that made my stomach twist when he looked at me for too long or said my name like it was precious.

Yet, something held me back.

Despite Daniel's blessing and Maya's encouragement and the affection that was so apparent in Lucian's eyes... I didn't feel ready.

Not yet, at least.

And I didn't want to ruin this easy, comfortable rhythm we had—the friendship I hadn't known I needed until he gave it to me.

So I gave him a steady, neutral answer. "I know how important this event is to OTS," I said, picking at invisible lint on my leggings. "I'd be honored to help."

Lucian smiled, his voice gentle. "We don't have to label anything, Sera. I just want to share the evening with you. We'll go slow. No pressure."

"Yeah," I exhaled, my nerves easing slightly. "We can do that."

No pressure.