

## **My Sister 428**

Chapter 428 THE LOT

SERAPHINA'S POV

At first, nothing happened.

Then the silence broke, splintering into low voices that rose and tangled into something sharp, edged with disbelief.

“What is she doing—”

“—is she insane—”

“That one—?”

The murmurs spread in uneven waves across the tiers. Shadows shifted as bodies leaned forward, interest sharpened not by cruelty this time, but by disruption.

I didn't lower my paddle.

At the center of the pit, the masked figure stilled.

The handlers hesitated as well, their grip on the girl tightening as if waiting for instruction that hadn't come yet.

Beside me, Kieran went very still, his jaw tightening; his hands curled on his knees, betraying tension.

"Sera," he said under his breath, his voice low enough that it barely carried past me. "What are you doing?"

I didn't look at him.

Truth? I had no fucking idea what I was doing.

But for some reason, instead of dissuading me, the uproar only cemented my decision.

"Trust me."

Now that I was really listening, the room told me everything it hadn't before.

“...that’s her—”

“—does she not know—”

“No one touches that one—”

The words slipped through the noise in fragments, but they were enough.

The realization assembled itself from the whispers’ tone, the room’s tension, the absence of appetite where there should have been plenty.

My gaze stayed on the girl.

On the way she stood—unbowed, untouched in ways that didn’t make sense in a place like this.

On the way the handlers weren’t hurting her. Not like the others.

This wasn’t just another lot.

She was part of the show.

No—worse.

She was a constant.

Displayed. Circulated. Offered.

And never taken.

No one was bidding, not because she lacked value.

Because claiming her would cross a line none of them were willing to touch.

And I had just stepped directly over it.

The distorted voice echoed again, though this time it carried something different beneath the modulation.

“Opening bid acknowledged.”

The masked figure inclined their head, as though reassessing something.

“Do we have...confirmation?”

It wasn't directed at me.

It was directed at the room.

At the invisible structure that governed this place.

At whoever was truly in control.

The tension coiled tighter.

I straightened my arm, holding my paddle high above my head in emphasis, and leaned forward enough to make my voice carry.

“I've placed my bid.”

The ripple of whispers sharpened again.

“She doesn’t know—”

“She has to know—”

“Or she’s dead.”

Kieran’s hand brushed mine, not stopping me, not pulling me back, but there—grounding, steady, ready.

The auctioneer—if that was what the masked figure was—shifted their weight, recovering with practiced ease.

“Perhaps,” they said smoothly, “our bidder is...overly eager. It would not be the first time someone mistook the nature of a lot.”

A few low chuckles followed that, thin and humorless. Almost...nervous.

I let the silence stretch just long enough to make it clear I understood exactly what they were offering. An opening, a way out. A chance to retract without consequence.

Then I shook my head. “No mistake.”

The murmurs rose, sharper, louder, no longer bothering to stay contained.

“She’s pushing it—”

“—someone stop her—”

“—does she think she’s untouchable?”

The handler’s grip on the girl cinched again, but she didn’t flinch.

Her gaze flicked toward me, and through her blank face, I tried to gauge what she was feeling.

Fear? Hope? Relief?

The masked figure stepped forward.

“You understand,” they said, voice still smooth but edged now, “that certain...pieces are not typically acquired through standard bidding procedures.”

There it was: The warning, wrapped in civility. The line, drawn without being spoken.

“I don’t recall any stated restrictions,” I said evenly. “Or is this an auction that only pretends to follow its own rules?”

A shift in the room—not loud this time, but deeper. More ominous.

Kieran’s presence at my side hardened. His body leaned toward me, gaze sweeping for threats—protective, on edge. Not intervening, but ready to defend if necessary.

The masked figure did not move.

For a moment, I thought they might push back. Might shut this down altogether.

Instead, they spoke.

“Rules,” they said, almost thoughtfully. “Are...flexible. Contextual.”

“Then consider this context,” I replied, my voice steady, unhurried. “I placed the opening bid. No one else has contested it.”

I swept my gaze across the tiers.

No paddles raised.

No voices spoke.

I looked back at the center.

“So unless there’s another buyer,” I continued, “this lot is mine.”

The words settled into the space between us as the tension stretched.

Then stretched further.

And in that space, I made my decision fully.

No backing down.

Whatever this girl was tied to—whatever she belonged to—I was not stepping away.

Not after seeing what this place was.

Not after understanding what she represented.

If this was a line, then I would erase it completely.

The masked figure exhaled slowly.

“Very well.”

A beat.

Then, louder:

“Sold.”

The word cut through the chamber, clean and final.

I lowered my hand.

Beside me, Kieran let out a breath I hadn't realized he'd been holding. His posture loosened, relief flickering across his face.

"Well," he murmured, "so much for incognito."

"My bad," I murmured.

"Next," the masked figure said, turning back to the crowd.

"I'd like to pay for my lot and leave now," I called out.

Another ripple went through the crowd, and the masked figure turned back to me.

"It's customary to wait till the auction is completed."

I shrugged. "Rules are flexible, right?"

Another tense silence ensued, and I bet if I could see their eyes, they would be blazing.

“Very well.” I could have sworn they were gritting their teeth.

The handlers moved immediately. One of them approached us, head inclined.

“Payment.”

I reached into my cloak, already prepared, and handed over what was required without hesitation.

The handler accepted it with a short nod.

“Follow.”

I didn’t look back, didn’t give the room the satisfaction of seeing anything in my expression.

Kieran fell into step beside me without a word.

Behind us, the auction resumed.

Just like that.

As though nothing had happened.

As though the line I had crossed had never existed at all.