

My Sister 45

Chapter 45 NO. FUCKING. WAY

KIERAN'S POV

By the time Celeste returned from the bathroom, her face was flawless again—lipstick and mascara reapplied, eyes dry, every trace of what had happened earlier buried beneath powder and poise.

But I saw it.

The slight quiver of her mouth as she smiled too brightly, turning to say something to the small crowd she brought back out with her.

The sight of her friends made my stomach clench with something that felt an awful lot like panic. But I didn't understand why—the feeling was needless.

Celeste was going to be my future Luna, and the whole world would know, so why was the idea of this... display putting me off so badly?

I rolled my shoulders and steeled myself. I was going to do this—no matter how I felt about it—for Celeste.

I thought of the tattoo on her arm, of the marks they covered, and guilt swam through me, overpowering the panic.

Celeste had always despised pain. A papercut made her recoil; even faded scars ruined the perfection of her designer dresses. Yet she'd hurt herself many times—deliberately—in the past years. For my mistake.

The thought lodged in my chest like shrapnel. How deep must her despair have cut to make pain feel like an escape?

I'd hurt her enough and couldn't afford to do that anymore.

So I put on my best smile as she neared and slid her arm through mine, resting her head against my shoulder.

"Kie, darling," she crooned, practically vibrating as she handed me a champagne flute. "You remember my friends?"

No, I absolutely didn't. It was only the brunette in front, wearing a red strapless dress, who looked vaguely familiar—I wanted to say Elaine?

Celeste began to point them out. "Emma, Abby, Marcia, Yasmine, and Davina."

I gave them a charming smile, and they dissolved into giggles. "It's lovely to meet you all."

"So," Emma—not Elaine—said, smirking suggestively, "is it official? Are you two finally back together?"

I felt Celeste's head shift, and I looked down to see her looking up at me expectantly, her eyes sparkling. I smiled. "Yeah, we are."

They erupted into ear-splitting squeals, and it took all my willpower not to cringe.

"Oh, thank the gods," Abby said. "We were beginning to worry you'd let her win."

Her.

Sera.

I barely contained the grimace threatening to twist my features.

Davina chuckled, murmuring behind a champagne flute, "Once bitten, twice shy. I'm sure Alpha Kieran won't let that shameless sister ruin things a second time."

They laughed. Celeste joined in.

My jaw clenched, and I looked down at my drink to mask the storm brewing behind my eyes.

Was this how they talked about Sera when she wasn't around? Seeing the way Celeste spoke to her earlier, they probably did this when she was around, too.

It felt wrong, letting that kind of talk go unchallenged. But after what just happened, after the promise I'd made, I couldn't come to Sera's defense. Not now. Not in front of her friends.

"Are you two planning to announce anything soon?" Marcia asked with a sly smirk. "Should we start planning the wedding?"

My heart jackknifed at her words, and panic flared, making it difficult to breathe. Difficult to form an answer.

Thankfully, someone else spoke.

"Oh, they just got back together," Abby said. "Let them enjoy their reunion. Besides,"—she nudged Emma with a wink—"they're likely in no rush since Ethan hasn't married his Luna yet."

"Actually," Celeste countered, her voice softening a little as she looked at a blushing Emma. "Ethan recently found his mate."

I saw Emma's face fall in the split second before my gaze snapped to Celeste. She looked up at me and shrugged. "He didn't tell you?"

No, he didn't. I was as shocked as the rest of Celeste's friends.

Definitely not as devastated as Emma, though.

"What?" Her voice wobbled, her hands clenching her champagne flute a little too tightly.

Celeste shrugged. "I'm sorry, babe."

"Who is she?"

"I haven't met her. Don't know who she is."

Emma scoffed, her shock and devastation giving way to something ugly. "This is ridiculous," she sneered. "Ethan's not going to marry some random woman he just met and make her his Luna."

I opened my mouth to say something, to tell her that Ethan would absolutely do that—he was traditional right to his core and had been waiting his whole life to meet his fated mate—but I was beaten to it.

"Of course I would."

The voice cut through the group like a knife through butter, and all heads turned.

Ethan stood at the entrance to the garden, one arm wrapped around the waist of a stunning woman whose confidence radiated through the air like static.

She looked vaguely familiar, and I narrowed my eyes, trying to figure out where I knew those daring eyes and self-assured smirk from.

The silence that followed his announcement was sharp. Celeste stiffened beside me.

And in that moment, I knew this night wasn't done unraveling.

MAYA'S POV

"You tore the slit higher," Ethan accused as we stepped out of the car.

"It got caught on your belt," I shot back, adjusting my thigh-high slit, which was now hip-high, a direct result of him brutally shoving the dress to my hips.

He ran a hand through his hair, still slightly tousled from my handling. "If you hadn't refused to change—"

"I told you," I said, cutting him off as my heels clicked across the pavement, "this dress makes me feel powerful. Not my fault if you can't handle it."

He groaned under his breath and followed, his hand at my lower back as we walked into the gala. It was too late for subtle entrances—we'd already missed most of the formalities.

My eyes scanned the room. I spotted Lucian in the middle of the room, surrounded by men in suits hanging on to his every word. I did another once-over but couldn't find Sera.

"Shit," I murmured, reaching for my phone in my purse.

I saw the missed call and voicemail and sighed. It probably came in while Ethan and I were going at it in my driveway.

I pressed the phone to my ear and played Sera's voicemail. When it was over, I closed my eyes and groaned. "I'm such a piece of shit."

Ethan's hand clenched around my waist, and there was an instinctive reaction between my thighs even though I'd spent the better part of the last hour with him pounding between them. "Why would you say that?"

"I missed my friend's speech," I said, narrowing my eyes at him. "I blame you."

He arched a brow. "Me?"

I nodded, my gaze drifting down to his crotch. "You."

"If you'd changed like I so kindly asked, I wouldn't have lost control."

I snorted. "Kindly asked, my ass. You demanded I change, and when I pointed out that you might be an Alpha but you don't control me, you lost your shit and fucked me against the steering wheel of your car to 'assert your dominance.'"

He smirked, his eyes darkening with the memory. "Yeah. Well,"—he pulled me closer—"you weren't exactly resisting."

I rolled my eyes and pushed away from him. "I need to find Se—"

He pulled me back, his hand splaying against my bare back. "You're not leaving my side. That dress is a magnet, and I'll be damned if all these greedy males think for even one second that you're single."

I snorted. "Whatever. Let's go find my friend."

True to his word, Ethan stayed glued to my side as I moved through the ballroom, trying to find Sera. He growled at every male who even glanced in my direction—which was all of them.

To be honest, I've always been put off by possessive, jealous behavior, but somehow, on Ethan, it was almost... adorable.

Especially since I, too, growled at every female who ran their appreciative eyes over him.

When I ascertained that Sera wasn't in the ballroom, we stepped out through the back. I wouldn't put it past my new friend to be hiding in the shadows after rocking the spotlight.

We followed the cobblestone path, my head on a swivel, looking out for Sera. I debated calling out her name, but the night was so peaceful and still, I didn't want to interrupt it.

Then Ethan inhaled sharply. I turned to him. "What?"

He was staring ahead of us, his brows furrowed. "I think that's Kieran and Celeste."

I frowned. Those names sounded eerily familiar.

He turned to me and beamed. "Come on, I'll introduce you to my sister and best friend."

I huffed. "I need to find my friend first."

He kissed the side of my hair. "I promise we'll find your friend and I will apologize properly for making you miss her speech, but my sister is right here, please let me introduce you to her."

I sighed. "Fine."

He guided me towards the small gathering at the end of the path we were on. As we moved closer, I could hear snippets of their conversation.

"Who is she?"

"I haven't met her. Don't know who she is."

"This is ridiculous. Ethan's not going to marry some random woman he just met and make her his Luna."

I stiffened, realizing they were talking about us.

Ethan's hand tightened around my waist, and his voice rang out into the night, a sweet, sweet melody.

"Of course I would."

I smirked as all heads turned to us. I surveyed the crowd of gawkers, taking them all in, reveling in their shock.

Then I froze.

My eyes narrowed at the blonde with her arm looped around a tall, dark-haired man. "You," I hissed.

"You," she sneered. Her eyes flicked above me. "Ethan, tell me this isn't who I think it is."

I frowned, my gaze snapping up to meet Ethan's. "You know her?"

He looked confused as he looked between me and Satan's apprentice.

"Maya, this is my sister, Celeste."

My eyes almost fell out of their sockets as I turned back to the icy bitch.

No. Fucking. Way.

Ethan grinned, oblivious to the silent murder radiating between us. "Celeste, this is Maya Cartridge, my mate. She's also an elite OTS combat trainer. And she's going to be overseeing your training from now on."

Celeste's face twisted like she'd bitten into a lemon. "You have got to be joking."

I chuckled bitterly. "Of course you're a lost cause who needs extra training."

Her cold eyes flashed. "Absolutely not. I'm not training under her."

I gritted my teeth, pieces of a puzzle clicking in place to form a picture I didn't like. If Celeste was Ethan's sister, then—

"Reject her!"

I blinked. "Excuse me?"

Celeste ignored me, glaring at Ethan. "Reject her right this instant! I won't have this... this bitch as my sister-in-law!"

"What the fuck, Celeste?" Ethan said.

"You need to reject her, Ethan." Her voice pitched. "Now!"

"No."

He didn't even flinch. Didn't hesitate.

Celeste's mouth opened in shock. Her nostrils flared. "You expect me to accept this? Her?"

"Looks like you don't have a choice," I said sweetly, enjoying the way the vein in her forehead bulged. The rest of the crowd was watching us in stunned silence.

"Ethan and I are mates, sweetie." I stroked a hand down his chest. "And you could throw all the bitch fits you want, and that's not going to change."

She opened her mouth, no doubt to spew more bullshit, but a soft, hesitant voice cut her off.

"Maya?"

I turned, and my eyes widened. "Sera," I breathed.

Her wide eyes darted between me and Ethan, taking in our embrace, and she gulped. "He's your mate?"

And the pieces of the puzzle clicked into place. If Celeste, Sera's sister, was also Ethan's sister, that meant—obviously, dumbass—that Ethan was Sera's brother.

My mate had been one of the people who'd hurt my new friend.