

My Sister 50

Chapter 50 THIN HOPE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The door clicked shut behind us, muffling the distant hum of engines and the chatter of a party happening down the block.

My heels, still damp from the koi pond, left faint prints on the wooden floor as I stepped into the dim stillness of my living room. I didn't bother turning on the lights. I didn't want to see myself.

Lucian lingered near the door, his shirt soaked through, his tie long discarded. Water dripped from the ends of his hair. Maya was beside me, close but not crowding, her expression unreadable in the low light.

Just like the tense car ride, no one spoke.

I stood there, cold and raw and fraying at the edges, like if one more thing touched me, I might splinter. My arms wrapped around myself instinctively.

Lucian broke the silence first. "I'll grab you a towel."

I offered him a soft smile. "Thank you. There's a linen closet down the hall."

He nodded and disappeared down the hall. Maya led me gently to the couch, her hand warm on my elbow. I sat, or maybe collapsed. The cushions gave under my weight like a quiet sigh.

She knelt in front of me, hands resting on my knees. "How do you feel?" she asked gently.

I scoffed quietly, my teeth chattering slightly. "Cold. Fraught."

She squeezed my knee. "You did nothing wrong."

I shook my head. "Yeah...apparently."

I'd spent the last ten years blaming myself, believing I was the Big Bad in Celeste and Kieran's story. But now...

I'm still not sure I even understand what happened. Thought I did. For years, I thought I knew.

Lucian returned with towels and a blanket. He wrapped the blanket around my shoulders without a word and handed Maya a towel, which she began using to squeeze the water from my hair.

"I believed it was my fault," I said, voice hollow. "That I drank too much. That I kissed him first. That I...ruined everything."

Maya's hands stilled. She met my gaze. "It wasn't you."

"But—"

Lucian sat beside me, close but not quite touching. "It's evident that, from what we all heard, things about that night were manipulated," he said, running a towel through his hair. "It seems to me, Sera, that you were more a victim than anyone else."

I sighed, clutching the blanket tighter. "Celeste sent that message, I know she did. And Kieran..."

I turned to Maya, eyes stinging. "Can I borrow the stone? If I can just get them to sit down, we can—"

She hesitated. Then shook her head—slowly, regretfully. "It's not what you think."

I blinked. "What do you mean?"

"It's not magical," she admitted, retrieving the smooth stone from her clutch. "I bought it at a market. It's just a polished rock."

“What?”

“I’m a purple octopus with two heads.” She squeezed the stone and it glowed.

My breath hitched. “What the hell, Maya?”

She winced. “I’m sorry. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision. But you saw how easily Emma folded. Kieran, too. The confession was real, even if the method wasn’t.”

I shook my head. “You don’t know that. You can’t know that if the truth stone wasn’t real.”

My head dropped, too exhausted to summon anger. Disappointment settled over me like fog. “I just wanted something real.”

Maya’s features softened. “I know. And I’m sorry. But Sera... Why would he say those things if they weren’t true? You saw how rattled he was. You have the truth. Or at least the beginning of it.”

Lucian’s hand found mine, grounding. “Kieran admitted that you weren’t to blame. Celeste can deny it all she wants, but anyone with a working pair of eyes could see that she’s not as innocent as she claims.”

I closed my eyes. The fire of that night still burned behind my eyelids. The sharp scent of pine. The music from the party echoing faintly behind me. The buzz of alcohol dulling my senses. The vibration of my phone when the message came through.

“She said she needed to see me. That she needed me. I didn’t know...” My throat tightened. “Could it have been a trap?”

“If it was, it must have backfired. I can’t imagine she would have sent you to that room, knowing Kieran was there.”

Maya gently rested her hand over my heart. “Sera, I promise you, tonight was just the beginning. The truth will come out and you’ll be vindicated.”

I exhaled shakily. “What if... What if it changes everything? What if I don’t like the truth?”

Lucian spoke, his voice steady. “It doesn’t matter what changes. This”—he pointed between the three of us—“will never change.”

“Yeah,” Maya chimed in. “Good luck getting rid of me.” She dug her nails into my knee not painfully. “I’m like a fucking leech.”

I let out a watery laugh, sniffing.

A silence settled over us—not uncomfortable, just thick with things unsaid. The weight of the past. The fragility of healing. The three of us sat there, wrapped in damp clothes and unravelling truths.

Eventually, Maya stood. “I’ll make tea.”

She padded into the kitchen, and Lucian helped me pull the blanket tighter around myself. “You don’t have to do anything tonight,” he said. “Just be.”

But I didn’t know how to just be. My mind was splintered with questions, with moments replaying in a different light.

I heard the kettle boil. The scent of chamomile drifted in.

Lucian kissed my temple before rising. “I’ll bring it in. You rest.”

When they were gone, I sank deeper into the couch, cocooned in thick fabric and thin hope.

I didn’t remember falling asleep.

The forest was shrouded in mist, so thick it clung to my skin like sweat. The air buzzed with something ancient. Familiar.

I stood barefoot on damp earth, surrounded by towering trees. They loomed like sentinels, silent and patient.

And then I saw her.

A wolf stood at the edge of the clearing, the shifting shadows coloring her grey and silver. Her eyes met mine—brilliant, knowing.

My breath caught. “It’s you.”

She didn’t speak aloud, but her presence filled my mind like light spilling into darkness.

‘It’s me,’ she clarified.

I took a slow step forward. “Are you... Are you really mine?”

I felt warmth envelope me. ‘We are each other’s.’

I blinked. “But I’ve never felt you. Not like the others do. I thought I was broken.”

The wolf padded forward, her movements fluid and graceful. The fog seemed to move with her, so I still couldn’t make out her features.

‘You were never broken. I was...repressed.’

My voice trembled. “How? Why?”

‘That truth lies just ahead. But you had to come to me first.’

Her form shimmered in the fog. “This is not the first time we’ve met. You saw me once—long ago. But you were too young, too fragile to remember. You locked the memory away.”

“Why now?” I asked.

“Because you’re ready.”

My heart flipped. “I don’t feel ready.”

“And yet here you are.”

I looked at her, lightheaded from the clarity cutting through me. “Will I ever feel you? Hear you when I’m awake?”

The wolf’s eyes softened.

‘Soon. When the final chain is broken. When everything covered by fog has been unveiled.’

The mist began to rise. The forest peeled away.

‘We will meet again.’ Panic zinged through me as her voice began to fade away. ‘And next time, you won’t wake up alone.’

“Wait—”

But I was already slipping.

My eyes opened to soft light. The candle Maya had lit on the side table was burned down to its last inch. I sat up slowly, heart pounding, breath shallow.

It hadn't been a dream. Not really.

She had come back.

And for the first time in my life, I felt the echo of something fierce and unbroken stirring inside me.

I wasn't alone.

Not anymore.