

My Sister 51

Chapter 51 MUSCLE MEMORY

The morning air was unusually gentle, a soft breeze whispering through the trees as sunlight filtered down in patches through the leafy canopies overhead.

It was the kind of weather that made you think—just for a second—that the world wasn’t such an awful place.

And maybe that’s why I left my car keys on the entryway table and decided to walk all the way to OTS headquarters instead.

I needed the air. I needed the silence between steps. I needed the distance—from the house, from Lucian’s worried gaze, from Maya’s comforting lies, and most of all, from the echo of my own mind.

I couldn’t shake off my dream. It clung to me like that fog that veiled my wolf. My fingers kept twitching like the aftereffects of something slipping through them.

But I held on to the promise. Soon. Soon, I’d be with my wolf.

The sidewalk curved lazily through the residential blocks, winding past low hedges and quiet homes. Most of the neighborhood was still asleep or just stirring. There was peace in that—mundane, simple peace.

I knew a part of me should be wary, remembering the last time I'd gone for a walk and gotten a silver bullet to the heart for my troubles.

But the black car slowly inching down the road behind me—courtesy of Kieran, no doubt—was equally annoying and comforting.

I was halfway through the neighborhood when I heard it.

A child's shout—sharp and startled—followed by the unmistakable screech of tires.

My heart kicked into a gallop, my maternal instincts perking up like an antenna.

The street ahead split at an intersection. I rounded the corner just in time to see a little boy—couldn't have been more than seven—stranded in the middle of the road.

He stood frozen, a crumpled soccer ball by his foot—staring wide-eyed at the delivery van barreling toward him.

The driver was honking and swerving, but it was too fast—too close.

Without thinking, I ran.

My sneakers pounded the pavement, bag forgotten somewhere on the curb. The world narrowed to the sound of my breath and the boy's wide, terrified eyes—dark, just like Daniel's.

Every muscle in my body screamed at me to move faster, and I did, letting the spike of adrenaline overrun the fear.

I reached him just as the van skidded.

Arms around his tiny torso, I twisted, hauling him to the side. I didn't have time to gauge the momentum—I just reacted, pivoting on instinct to shield his body with mine.

We hit the ground hard, my shoulder taking the brunt of the fall as I curled around him.

The van missed us by inches. I heard the tires screech again, the frantic slam of brakes. Then a second noise—heavier, faster, nearer.

A flash of movement above me.

Someone else had leapt between us and the van.

The impact didn't come from the vehicle but from a body, broad and solid, planting itself like a barrier. The van clipped him on the arm as he pivoted, using his body to shield mine.

Kieran.

He hit the ground beside me with a low grunt, grimacing in pain.

For a moment, none of us moved.

The boy sobbed against my chest, limbs trembling. I was breathing so hard it hurt.

Then I heard Kieran curse under his breath. "Shit. That arm's going to bruise like hell."

I looked at him, still cradling the boy, too stunned to speak. His chest was rising fast, jaw clenched, the sleeve of his jacket torn and darkened with blood.

"What the hell are you doing?" he snapped, eyes blazing as he sat up, wincing.

I blinked. "What—?"

“You don’t have a wolf!” he spat. “What if that van hit you? What if you broke something? What were you thinking, throwing yourself out like that?”

I pulled the boy tighter, shielding him from Kieran’s raised voice. “I was thinking he was going to die if I didn’t do anything.”

“There are other people, Sera!” he thundered.

“Where?!” I snapped, glancing around the now-empty street. “Where the fuck are they?”

His eyes narrowed. “You don’t have to play hero every damn time. You’re not indestructible.”

“And you are?” I shot back, gesturing to his bleeding arm. “You didn’t hesitate either.”

His expression twisted, like the words physically offended him.

“I am an Alpha,” he growled, his eyes flashing. “I have a wolf. You don’t.”

“I have training.”

“Oh yeah?” He scoffed. “They train you to run into fucking vans at OTS?”

“No,” I clapped back, “it seems that pleasure is only reserved for training in NightFang.”

“Ben!” a shrill voice echoed down the street.

“Mommy,” the boy sobbed.

I slowly rose to my feet, helping the boy up with me. “Go,” I said gently, nudging him toward the sidewalk where a woman—his mother, from the way she was crying and sprinting—was running over. “Go on, hon. You’re fine.”

The boy bolted. I watched until he was in her arms, wrapped tight as she sobbed and kissed his hair over and over again. Relief bloomed in my chest.

Then I turned back to Kieran.

He was standing now, arm cradled against his side, his expression caught between fury and disbelief.

“You really think this is about training?” he asked, voice low.

“Yes,” I said, rising too. “OTS has taught me how to assess risk, how to move under pressure, how to protect people. I knew I could reach him. I trusted myself.”

He let out a bitter laugh. “That van would have pancaked you two if I hadn’t gotten here in time. So maybe you reached him, but you better tell Maya to open the curriculum on getting out of the fucking way afterward.”

Anger, hot and sharp, raced through me. “Fuck you.”

He arched a brow. “Is that how the kids are doing gratitude these days?”

I rolled my eyes. “What are you even doing here?”

My gaze darted to the parked black car, and I scoffed. “Of course.”

“Why were you fucking walking?” he snapped. “Have you forgotten what happened the last time you went for a walk?”

My eyes widened mockingly. “Why? What happened last time I went for a walk?”

A muscle flexed in his jaw. “You’re unbelievable.”

“Ditto.”

I walked past him, crossing the empty street. When he didn’t follow me, I turned and glared pointedly at his arm.

“You coming or are you content to bleed all over the curb?”

He finally looked down at his arm. “Shit,” he muttered again, wincing as he pulled his sleeve back.

“It’s a ten-minute walk,” I muttered, leaning down to grab my bag, wincing when my bruised shoulder protested. “Come on.”

Kieran was blissfully quiet as we walked back to my house, but I could feel the anger and indignation oozing off him as sure as I could feel the warmth of the sun.

Whatever.

I unlocked the door and walked inside, not looking back to watch him cross the threshold.

“Sit,” I said, pointing to one of the chairs in the foyer.

I was upstairs and back down with a first aid kit in less than five minutes.

“Let me see,” I said, crouching down before Kieran.

He hesitated, then held still as I gently peeled back the fabric.

The scrape was bad but not deep. Already bruising. “I need to clean this and bandage it.”

“I’ll live,” he said. “Wolf healing, remember?”

I shot him a glare. “Good for you,” I said as I tugged out an antiseptic wipe and dabbed gently at the scrape.

He hissed, recoiling slightly, and I snorted. “What’s the matter, big bad Alpha?”

He glared and said nothing.

I finished wrapping the makeshift bandage around his arm. “There.”

He didn't thank me. Just flexed his fingers once, testing it.

I stood and stepped back.

Silence stretched between us as he stood, towering over me.

"Don't ever do something that unbelievably stupid again," he commanded, voice low.

I grit my teeth. "You don't get to tell me what to do. You're not my husband, and you sure as hell aren't my Alpha."

His eyes flashed, darkening with anger, and I stiffened as I felt that familiar aura extend from him. "Don't you fucking dare," I hissed. "Aura or not, I will scratch your fucking eyes out."

He blinked, and I felt the power recede.

"Sera," he said, voice low. "What happened to you?"

"Excuse me?"

He shook his head. "This isn't you. The Sera I know isn't reckless, defiant, antagonistic—"

My sharp bark of laughter cut him off. "Oh, please, like you ever knew me. What if this is who I really am? What if I refuse to keep shrinking to make other people comfortable? I'm done making myself small so I don't ruffle your fucking feathers."

His gaze locked on mine, filled with disbelief and incredulity. "Then maybe Celeste was right."

I stiffened. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means," he said coldly, "maybe you really are the perfect little actress. Hiding your claws behind that wide-eyed innocence. Always playing the martyr."

My mouth fell open. "Excuse me?"

He stepped closer, eyes burning. "You made everyone at the gala believe that you were the victim. Sweet, quiet Sera. The one everyone overlooked and wronged. And now? Now you're standing here pretending to be fearless, invincible—even when you could've gotten yourself killed. Choose a fucking personality, Seraphina, and stop fucking with everyone's heads."

At this point, it was practically muscle memory, the way my hand flew up to strike him across the cheek.