

## **My Sister 57**

Chapter 57 A CLEAN SLATE

KIERAN'S POV

I saw the first charge on my phone just as I was unlocking the car.

Then the second.

And the third.

By the time I slid into the driver's seat, my black card had racked up more activity than it usually saw in a month.

My phone kept vibrating as transaction notifications rolled in—one from a luxury boutique downtown, another from a high-end floral shop, then a long, confusing list of vendors ranging from party decorators to candle artisans.

I gripped the steering wheel with one hand and scrolled with the other, trying to make sense of the mess. Makeup counters. Custom stationery. Caviar. A damn harpist.

What the actual fuck?

My mind flashed immediately to Celeste.

She'd only just moved in, and already, she was treating my card like it had no limit. Which—technically—was true. But even I was alarmed by the rate at which she was burning through my resources.

It was cumulatively more of my money than Sera had spent in the decade we were married—and all those expenses were for Daniel.

I wasn't a man prone to panic, but when you see your card hemorrhaging that fast, your mind jumps to the worst.

Maybe Celeste had had another episode. Maybe this was her way of trying to cope. Maybe—

I cut the engine and sped home, tension coiling in my chest. The usual guilt, anger, and frustration from my encounter with Sera lingered, but it was buried beneath the gnawing sense that something was off.

This wasn't normal behavior—even for Celeste.

I parked outside the house and immediately noticed the difference.

Balloons.

Actual. Fucking. Balloons.

Tied to the front porch columns like we were prepping for a baby shower.

“What the hell?”

I pushed open the door, and my house was...gone.

In its place was a riot of soft pastels, cloying floral scents, and piles upon piles of shopping bags from every store imaginable. I had to step over a pink box labeled “party favors” just to get into the foyer.

“Celeste?” I called out.

“In here, darling!”

I followed the voice, past more bags and shoe boxes and a suspicious number of throw pillows littering the hallway like breadcrumbs.

My living room had been turned into what looked like the aftermath of a beauty pageant. Ribbons and fabrics draped from curtain rods. A giant, glittering “C” balloon hovered near the ceiling like an ominous omen.

Celeste stood in the middle of it all, her hands on her hips, wearing a silky peach robe and sipping a green smoothie with a straw shaped like a flamingo.

“Kieran!” she beamed. “You’re just in time. I need your opinion—do you prefer roses or peonies for the centerpieces?”

I stared at her. Then the room. Then my phone, which buzzed with yet another charge.

“You went shopping,” I said flatly.

I’d been gone less than an hour. Less. Than. One. Hour.

“Oh, babe, I went curating. These things aren’t just purchases, they’re investments into our shared future.”

I stepped forward, ignoring the glittery chaos. “Celeste, what is all this?”

She blinked, setting her smoothie down on a side table that wasn't mine. "I want to host a small party. To officially announce that we're back together. And what better way to do that than to throw a tasteful, elegant soirée that will rival Lucian Reed's gala?"

I rubbed my jaw, scrambling for what to say. This morning, she drank bleach, and now, she was planning a fucking party?

My silence stretched long enough for her to cock her head.

"Is there a problem?" she asked, her voice tightening just a fraction.

I scanned the room again, and my chest constricted. There was too much. Too much color, too much clutter, too much Celeste. My house had been stripped of anything remotely mine.

"Where's Daniel's painting?" I asked suddenly.

"What?"

"The finger painting he made—the one that used to hang over the fireplace."

Celeste waved a manicured hand. "Oh, that old thing? I had it moved to the garage. Didn't match the new aesthetic."

My mouth opened, then closed again.

“And the photos?” I walked over to the bookshelf in the corner of the living room. “Where’s the picture of Daniel’s kindergarten graduation? Or the one of him in the wolf onesie?”

Celeste shrugged. “They’re in a box. Somewhere safe. I needed the space for more recent memories.”

Sure enough, the shelves now featured curated portraits of her—Celeste at a gala, Celeste on a beach, Celeste with me from ten years ago, before everything fell apart.

Like she was trying to erase every year that had passed between then and now.

My steps carried me to the fridge, desperate to find some anchor—some relic of the life I’d built outside of this glittering hallucination.

Gone.

The report cards Daniel had proudly pinned up with his SpongeBob-shaped magnets—gone.

The fridge was empty save for a single menu taped to it: “Celeste’s Dinner Party Planning Schedule.”

I stared at it in disbelief.

"I just thought it was time for a refresh," Celeste said behind me. "A new Chapter. New memories. A clean slate."

A clean slate.

As if my son wasn't part of my story. As if Sera had never existed.

I didn't know what bothered me more—that she'd done it so casually, or that I hadn't noticed how much of Sera and Daniel existed in my home until it was suddenly all gone.

"Celeste..." I turned to face her. "You can't just erase everything."

"I'm not erasing, Kie. I'm evolving." She sauntered toward me, hands running along my chest. "Isn't this what you wanted? A new start? We've both made mistakes, but this—this is us rebuilding."

I looked down at her perfectly made-up face, no trace of her supposed mental instability.

She was beautiful. Impeccable. Devoted, in her own warped way.

But she wasn't home.

"You didn't ask," I said quietly.

She blinked. "Ask what?"

"Before moving everything. Before redecorating my life. Before deciding to throw a party. You. Didn't. Ask. Me."

Her brows furrowed, but she held on to her smile. "I didn't think I needed to. We're together now."

"Are we?" I asked before I could help myself, and the question tasted bitter on my tongue.

She stepped back like I'd slapped her. "I moved in, Kieran. I'm planning our future. You said yes."

"I said yes to us living together, to giving you a place to recover," I corrected. "Not to hosting a goddamn summit."

The temperature in the room dropped. Her smile disappeared like a switch had been flipped.

"I see," she said coldly. "Still dancing to Seraphina's tune, then?"

I clenched my jaw. "Don't, Celeste. This has absolutely nothing to do with Sera."

"Oh yeah? Because when she moved in ten years ago, you were more than happy to let her ingratiate herself into your life."

"It wasn't like that! Sera never—"

She crossed her arms, her eyes narrowed. "Go ahead, Kie, compare me to Seraphina."

"Don't." My voice cracked like a whip, and she flinched.

I exhaled shakily, turning away. My fingers twitched with the desire to punch something. Preferably the gaudy fucking balloons.

But I didn't.

Instead, I walked to the staircase and looked up toward the second floor.

“What are you doing?” she snapped.

“I’m going to bed,” I called out. “I’m exhausted.”

“But we were going to have dinner.”

“Order something.” I didn’t turn back. “You’ve already proven yourself an expert at that.”

I climbed the stairs, my boots thudding against the wood.

The hallway upstairs had also changed. Her perfume clung to the walls. Her robe draped over the banister. My bedroom door was open, revealing a new set of bedsheets—silk, pink, expensive.

On the nightstand was a candle that smelled like pomegranate and vanilla.

I walked into Daniel’s room next.

And exhaled with relief.

She hadn't had time to touch his room.

His racecar bed with the spaceship sheets, the train track that wound through his room, his toys, books, framed photos of us—they were all there.

I stepped into the room and sat on the edge of the bed, gently running my hands over his sheets. He hadn't slept in this room in a long, long time, but I could almost convince myself that I could feel his warmth all around.

I pressed a hand over my mouth and groaned.

What the fuck was I doing?

How had I gotten here?

Divorcing Sera had been the inciting incident. I'd thought it was the right thing to do, the only way to move forward.

I'd thought the love I had for Celeste was the most important thing in the world.

But now...

Sera had morphed into a complete stranger. Daniel was miles away. My home was...gone.

My phone buzzed again. Another charge. Another indulgence. Another thing I'd have to pretend didn't make me feel like I was suffocating.

I shifted and curled up on Daniel's duvet, greedily inhaling the faint traces of his scent that remained.

I was an awkward fit on his bed, my long legs dangling over the edge.

And that's how I fell asleep—uncomfortable and uneasy, feeling like a stranger in my own home.