

## My Sister 62

### Chapter 62 AN AMBUSH

"I don't know about you," Maya said as we turned back to our table, "but that feels like the second sign that we shouldn't be here. It's only been thirty minutes and—"

"Sera!"

I froze as the third sign headed in my direction.

"Seraphina, darling," my mother called, sweeping forward with the same grace she'd wielded at every charity gala, every fund-raiser, every glistening pack event.

Gone was the fragile widow who had brutally lost her husband, and in her place was the former Luna of Frostbane—graceful, elegant, regal. Every bit Celeste's mother.

Her arms wrapped around me before I had a chance to back away.

"Mother," I said stiffly, returning the embrace because I had no choice. I hadn't held my mother in years, and it was as uncomfortable and unfamiliar as hugging a mannequin.

The scent of her expensive perfume clung to me even after she stepped back, and the smile she gave me was as bright as the chandeliers hanging overhead.

“Oh, you look so beautiful tonight,” she gushed, her eyes trailing over me appraisingly. I knew what she was doing—looking for flaws as usual.

“I’m so glad you decided to come after all,” she added.

I tensed, but forced a smile. “How could I not after you so desperately guilt-tripped me?”

Her smile tightened ever so slightly. “Now, now. Let’s not make a scene—or at least not another one.” She glanced behind me pointedly, and I knew she’d seen what happened with Imani.

Her hand smoothed over my arm as if I were a pet she was reassuring in public. “This is an important night for all of us—especially for Celeste. She’s worked so hard to make everything perfect. It would be a shame if it were...disrupted.”

“And here I thought you asked me to come to fulfill Father’s dying wish,” I replied sweetly. “Silly me.”

“I did.” Her smile didn’t falter, but I saw the tiny twitch at the corner of her mouth. “So let’s not ruin this occasion with old grudges, hmm? You wouldn’t want to disappoint your father...”

The unspoken last part of the sentence hung in the air between us like a poisonous cloud. Again.

Because I'd spent my whole life disappointing my father. Again and again and again.

"What old grudges?" I tilted my head, my chest tightening. "You mean my whole family treating me like I was less than my whole life? You mean being cajoled into attending this party that's basically to flaunt Celeste's superiority as if that's some kind of secret?"

My mother's smile slipped. "This is what I mean. Do you have to be so delicate? This is Celeste's chance to finally have the happiness you robbed her of for ten years, so—"

"Margaret." Kieran's deep voice cut through the tension.

She turned to him and her smile returned as if it had never left. "Oh, Kieran! You look dashing!"

She was right. He stood stiff in a tailored ivory suit that shimmered faintly under the chandelier light. The lapels were trimmed with a fine gold thread that matched the elaborate cufflinks at his wrists and the gold pocket square. His hair was swept back with clinical precision, not a strand out of place.

Dashing, yes. But too polished, too pristine. It looked as if, like every part of tonight, Celeste had taken over, and Kieran hadn't had a say in his own appearance.

I'd never seen Kieran—dominating, confident, self-assured Kieran Blackthorne—look so out of place before.

He gave my mother a tight smile, completely ignoring me. “We’re starting,” he said.

“Oh yes!” My mother practically glowed. “My speech!”

He placed a hand on her lower back and led her away.

She gave me one last look, and I caught it loud and clear—the unspoken warning veiled as maternal concern.

I knew that look. I’d grown up under its weight. It said: Behave. Don’t you dare step out of line.

I pursed my lips and looked away—and caught Kieran’s gaze.

It was brief, only for one tense heartbeat, and his eyes were unreadable, his whole face expressionless. As if he’d built a mental cage and locked himself behind it.

I felt Maya’s warm hand on my back as I turned to her and Lucian. “You good?”

I nodded, reaching for my champagne flute. “Yeah. Sure.”

“We can still leave if you want—”

A wave of gasps rippled through the crowd, and we turned to just in time to see a set of glass doors open on the second floor, and Celeste stepped out onto the top of the stairs like a queen descending into her court.

The room held its breath.

She glowed, I’ll give her that. Every part of her screamed, ‘See me!’

Gold from head to toe, hair curled into immaculate waves, a tiara of tiny diamonds balanced on her head like some deranged prom queen fantasy.

Kieran joined her then, stepping to her side as they formed a blindingly stunning picture. I saw Celeste’s vision come to life—a queen with her king.

I had to grudgingly admit—they fit.

More than he and I ever did.

Her eyes met mine across the room—and she smiled.

Not kindly. Victoriously.

A queen staring down at her vanquished opponent.

But I straightened my spine and tipped my chin up, returning the icy smile.

It widened when Celeste's expression flickered and she looked away.

The clinking of silver against crystal brought a hush over the crowd, and our attention shifted to my mother, who stood at the center of the stage, flanked by a spray of white orchids and golden lights.

"Good evening, dear guests," she began, her voice brimming with maternal pride. "What a blessing it is to gather tonight to celebrate love that has endured storms, time, and distance. To celebrate fate finally fulfilling its promise."

I gripped my glass a little tighter.

"As many of you know, Kieran and Celeste's bond was not always an easy one. Life took them down separate paths,"—she actually looked at me, in case anyone was in the dark about the 'separate paths'—"but true love always finds its way back."

I felt Maya tense beside me. Lucian raised an eyebrow.

My mother smiled up at Celeste and Kieran. "They were always destined to stand beside each other. And despite all the challenges, the truth of their bond has prevailed."

I didn't need to look around to know people were glancing at me. Her words may have been wrapped in silk, but the barbs underneath were loud and clear.

This wasn't a celebration. It was a coronation—and I was here as a prop, the defeated opposition.

Why the fuck had I come? Was I truly this masochistic?

"Now, with the past behind them, and nothing left in their way, they are finally ready to embrace the future the Moon Goddess had always intended. Let us welcome the new couple and give them our full support, our unwavering blessings."

Celeste and Kieran descended the stairs to resounding applause.

Celeste's smile was unsettlingly radiant, her gown shimmering as though it, too, demanded attention. Kieran looked...dutiful, his expression carved from stone.

They climbed the dais, perfect and poised, and Celeste gave our mother air kisses. The genuine, proud smile Margaret gave Celeste had me looking away.

Not once, in my whole life, had my mother looked at me like that.

"Thank you, Mother," Celeste said, her voice delicate, sweetened with artificial humility. "I couldn't have asked for a more supportive family. And thank you, everyone, for being here tonight. It means the world to us."

She turned toward Kieran and brushed a kiss to his cheek. The crowd ate it up, and it seemed like I was the only one who noticed the tension in his shoulders.

"But tonight is not just about love. It's about healing, and moving forward, and I can't do that just yet."

I frowned. What was she playing at?

"Because there's one person whose blessing I haven't yet received. One that would make this union truly whole."

Then she looked straight at me.

No. Nononono. She wouldn't.



This was low, even for—

"My sister, Seraphina."

A collective hush fell.

My blood ran cold as all eyes turned to me.

The spotlight shifted like a physical weight landing on my head.

My heart pounded, but not even from surprise. I should have seen this coming.

Celeste never passed up an opportunity to perform. This was it—why she'd invited me to her stupid party.

She wasn't going for subtle victory, no, she was going to make me kneel before her—metaphorically, albeit—and use my own voice to declare her winner.

I was going to be sick.

I don't know why, but my gaze shifted to Kieran. His expression was still unreadable, but there was a tightening around his mouth and eyes.

Did he know she would do this?

"Seraphina," Celeste said sweetly, her eyes glinting. "Would you grant me this wish?"

The silence stretched. The air felt too thick to breathe. My hand trembled slightly around the stem of the glass.

My mother's voice drifted from the edge of the stage, coaxing, patronizing. "Sera, darling, don't keep us waiting."

An ambush. That's what this was, and I'd been foolish to walk into it with my eyes wide open.

What had I expected from a union of the two packs, the two families, that had betrayed and hurt me and ruined my life?

Did I think this night would end with me unscathed?

“Sera?” There was a sharp undertone now to my mother’s voice. “Won’t you bless your sister’s union?”

Trapped. I was trapped.

If I ‘blessed the union’, Celeste won. If I didn’t, I would further paint myself the villain in their story, standing in the way of their happiness.

My mouth felt as dry as sand as my lips parted. “I—”