

My Sister 64

Chapter 64 POWDER OVER A BRUISE

CELESTE'S POV

Kieran's words echoed in my mind even after he walked away, slamming the terrace door behind him.

'You humiliated yourself tonight.'

I stood there for a long moment, stunned, the cold air licking at my bare shoulders. The applause from inside had faded, replaced by a low hum of music and chatter.

My special night was still unfolding, and here I was, left out in the cold.

Kieran had never spoken to me like that before, and the sting was worse because I never expected it.

I thought he'd stand beside me tonight, like he always used to—like he promised to.

And yet...

He looked at me like I was the problem. Like I'd committed some kind of grave sin for wanting to have a perfect night to celebrate our love.

How dare he insinuate that I don't care about him?

If he didn't like his outfit or my decorations, then he should have said something. Wasn't that what couples did?

They communicated and they faced issues together.

I took a deep breath, forcing the flash of anger and irritation to subside.

Kieran had spent the last ten years married to a snake he didn't love; I shouldn't blame him if he didn't know how to communicate.

I'd fix it. I wouldn't let the damage Sera had done to him ruin my happiness. I was done letting her win.

So I gathered my breath once more, and then opened the terrace door and stepped inside. I found Kieran near the bar, his hand wrapped around a tumbler of whiskey.

I fought the urge to roll my eyes. I threw him a lavish party filled with the elite of the elite, and he chose to sulk at the bar?

But I slapped on a smile and headed to him, slipping into character. I could still salvage tonight. All was not lost.

He didn't look at me as I approached, didn't acknowledge me at all.

"I'm sorry," I whispered, voice barely audible beneath the music.

He didn't answer. But he didn't walk away either.

I stepped closer, brushing my fingers against the fabric of his sleeve. "You're right, baby. I went too far."

He finally looked at me, brows raised.

"I just...I've been trying so hard." My voice cracked, perfectly timed. "This is the first big thing I've put together since I came back. I wanted it to be perfect. For us."

Kieran looked away, jaw tense.

"I haven't been sleeping," I said softly. "I've barely been eating. I've been so obsessed with making sure everything comes out perfect, and I guess I got a little carried away."

His prolonged silence gave me space to add more.

“I didn’t know the full details about the incident with the Omega, I swear. The maids must’ve misunderstood my desire for perfection and thought I wanted things stricter than I actually did. It’s not what I intended.”

Kieran ran a hand down his face, sighing, and that small flicker of emotion—that weariness—was all I needed.

“I’m sorry,” I said again, placing my hand gently on his arm. “And about Sera...” Oh, this one would be hard. “This wasn’t about hurting anyone. It was about healing. I guess I just... went about it the wrong way.”

Kieran looked at me then, and there it was—guilt lingering in the corners of his eyes. He remembered that I wasn’t cruel—I was sweet, lovely Celeste.

I was the victim in all this. I didn’t deserve his ire.

“I shouldn’t have snapped at you,” he murmured, his voice low.

I blinked rapidly, letting my expression twist into wounded gratitude. “I snapped at you, too, and I’m sorry.”

I moved closer, suppressing a smirk when I saw a cameraman take a picture out of the corner of my eye.

“I’m just trying, Kieran. That’s all I’ve ever wanted—to make things right.”

He nodded, the tension in his shoulders softening. “I’m sorry, too. And I appreciate what you tried to do tonight.”

I smiled, leaning in to kiss his cheek. For a moment, it felt like the rift between us had been patched over.

Not healed, no. But masked. Smoothed. Like powder over a bruise.

We stood together in silence, side by side, and when someone called our names from across the ballroom, he reached for my hand without thinking.

And I smiled. Not from joy—but from victory.

SERAPHINA’S POV

Only when we reached the hallway outside the ballroom did the pressure of Lucian's hands on me dissipate.

I sagged against the cool wall, the pounding in my ears slowly quieting. Lucian stood beside me, arms crossed, face unreadable as he glanced at me sideways.

"Thank you," I whispered, my voice cracking with emotion.

He didn't reply at first, just reached into his coat and handed me a folded handkerchief. "Hey, I did promise to keep you from throwing a punch, and it looked like it was coming."

I laughed breathlessly, taking the handkerchief. "I'm sure her media crew would have loved that."

"You don't owe them a performance. Let them choke on their illusions."

I let out a shaky breath, the burn behind my eyes spilling over.

Lucian didn't try to comfort me with platitudes. He didn't ask if I was okay or tell me to pull myself together.

He just stood there, patient and unwavering, offering comfort in his silence as muffled music and chatter floated through the closed doors.

“I should’ve known she’d do something like that,” I muttered after a while, dabbing at my cheeks. “I walked into that room like a lamb to the fucking slaughter.”

“But she didn’t win,” Lucian said. “If she were truly victorious, she wouldn’t need to humiliate you to prove it, and you didn’t give her what she wanted.”

“Yeah,” I exhaled. “Thanks to you.”

“It was my immense pleasure.” He gave a mock bow, and a ghost of a smile tugged at my lips.

“I can’t believe you did that.” I shook my head. “You’re going to be known in all the media outlets as The Clumsy Alpha.”

He wrinkled his nose. “Damn, I hope they got my good side.”

I smacked his shoulder lightly, laughing. “Lucian!”

He caught my hand and interlaced our fingers. “It was worth it,” he said, his eyes softening.

His hand around mine was warm, and instinctively, I leaned into him. “Do you wanna get out of here?”

“Sera!”

Maya came bounding down the hallway, breathless and glowing, champagne glass in hand. “Holy shit!” She turned to Lucian. “First of all, Lucian, that was inspired! Did you see Celeste’s face?!”

I snickered as she laughed, hopping excitedly. “I am so sorry to interrupt, but I had to tell you before I exploded.”

Lucian raised an eyebrow, but Maya grinned, unfazed.

“I just came from the back garden bar,” she said, barely able to contain herself. “And people are not happy.”

I blinked. “About what?”

She leaned closer, giddy. “About her—fucking Celeste. A bunch of the guests are complaining. They’re saying the arrangements were all about flaunting wealth. Like—someone actually said they didn’t fly out here to admire fucking centerpieces. They wanted a real celebration, not a royal display.”

My lips twitched despite myself.

“And get this,” Maya added, eyes gleaming. “Some are even wondering if Kieran was behind all this. Like, his taste is being questioned. People think he’s gone soft. Or worse—vain.”

Lucian chuckled. “Sounds like the court of public opinion is shifting.”

I shook my head, my amusement suddenly fading. Of course this wasn’t Kieran’s taste, and now Celeste was even ruining his reputation with her gaudy showcase.

“Come on, Sera,” Maya said, nudging me, noting my change in demeanor. “You won tonight. They saw what she was really like. You didn’t even have to say a word.”

“I’m tired, Maya.” I sighed. “I didn’t come here to win. I came here because I was guilted into it. I’ve fulfilled my role. That’s enough.”

Lucian’s gaze flicked to me, something unreadable crossing his face.

“I’m leaving,” I added. “You’re both welcome to stay, but I’m done.”

Maya shook her head. “Didn’t I say we should leave earlier? I’m with you, babe—”

“There you are,” a deep voice interrupted.

Ethan.

He strode toward us, adjusting the cuffs of his designer jacket, looking annoyed, as if the very air around him wasn't meeting his standards.

"Where the hell have you been?" he said to Maya. "I've been looking for you all night."

She arched a brow. "I've been with Sera and Lucian. Where have you been?"

Ethan exhaled in a huff. "I told you that Celeste prepared a separate seating arrangement for her family. Do you realize how it looks that you weren't there?"

I wasn't even surprised to hear that—of course, no one expected me there. So much for reuniting the family.

Maya's grin faded instantly. "Ethan—"

"You just disappeared. I've been talking to people alone—everyone asking about my newfound mate. You didn't even answer your phone—"

"I told you, I was with my friends," she snapped. "Gods, Ethan, it's a party, not an exhibit. I thought Celeste was the only one interested in flaunting her mate tonight."

Ethan clenched his teeth. "Let's. Go," he said quietly.

Her eyes narrowed. "I'm not leaving my friends."

"And what about me?" he snapped.

"You're a big boy," she snapped back. "I'm pretty sure you attended tons of parties before we met, so—"

I stepped between them before the brewing argument could spiral. "Maya," I said gently, placing a hand on her arm. "It's okay, stay with him. I'll head out."

"But—"

"Lucian will take me home,"—I turned to him—"right?"

Lucian gave her a slight nod. "Safely. I promise."

Maya hesitated, her frustration evident, but I squeezed her hand and smiled. "You've done more than enough for me tonight. Go."

She shot Ethan a warning glare before walking ahead of him a few paces down the hall. He didn't even spare me a glance as he went after her.

I caught the beginning of another argument as the door closed behind them.

Lucian and I were alone again.

"Shall we?" he asked, offering his arm.

I took it without hesitation.

As we walked into the cool night air, I realized something strange: I didn't feel victorious or vindicated. I didn't feel angry anymore either.

For the first time all evening, I wasn't playing a role. I wasn't the reluctant guest, or the discarded wife, or the pawn in a game I never agreed to.

I just felt...free.