

My Sister 7

Chapter 7 ROCKY RELATIONSHIP

SERAPHINA'S POV

"Mom!"

Daniel unfolded himself from Christian Blackthorne's lap and raced to me as soon as I stepped in through the front door.

I exhaled, catching his body against mine in a one-armed hug. I pressed his head against my chest, feeling his little heart thunder against me.

He was fine; he was safe. My family had failed me in countless ways, but at least they'd protected him. I was so thankful for that.

"Hi, baby," I whispered into his curls.

Daniel pulled back and eyed my injured arm, wrapped in bandages and a sling, his face tightening. "You're hurt." His voice wobbled.

I shook my head, cupping his cheek to pull his gaze away. "It's okay, my love." I pressed his head against my chest again, kissing his hair. "I'm okay."

He clutched onto the fabric of the shirt I'd borrowed from a nurse, and the shudder that ran through him seemed to reverberate through me.

"It's okay, Mom." His voice was muffled. "I'll take care of you."

I closed my eyes as a tear slid down my cheek. "I know you will, baby." My strong, beautiful boy who loved me in a world where no one else did. "We'll take care of each other."

"Is this how you conduct yourself?" Leona's voice sliced through the moment. "Entering my home without so much as an acknowledgment?"

I looked up. The Blackthornes sat entwined on the couch, Leona's glare as sharp as ever. Once, that look would've sent me scrambling to apologize, to prove myself worthy. Yet now, looking between Leona and Christian, I waited for that pathetic part of me that always sought their validation to flare up. But—nothing.

No fear. No anger. Just hollow acceptance. The chaos of today had changed something. It felt like a switch had been flipped inside me, and I just... didn't care anymore.

This family had drained me dry, and I was done bleeding for them.

I ruffled Daniel's curls. "Go say goodbye to your grandparents, hon," I said, my voice steady.

Daniel's arms reluctantly dropped from around my waist, and he moved to Leona and Christian.

I tried not to notice how Christian's arms circled Leona's waist—how natural their affection was. A lifetime ago, I'd foolishly dreamed Kieran might one day hold me like that.

The memory almost made me laugh.

After Daniel had hugged his grandparents, I took his hand and walked out of the house wordlessly and—

Speaking of sights that stung my eyes.

Kieran's familiar black G-Wagon was in the driveway. He was at the passenger side, and I watched as he grabbed Celeste's tiny waist and helped her out of the car.

Bracing her hands on his shoulder, she looked up at him with adoration, and he looked at her with a tenderness he'd never once shown me.

I waited for jealousy and bitterness to pull in my belly, but again—that nothing feeling. Just a dull ache behind my eyes.

"Is she why?"

Daniel's quiet voice stopped me cold. I turned to see my son staring ahead—at Kieran and Celeste—stonily, his dark eyes narrowed. "Is she the reason why Dad is leaving us?"

I inhaled sharply. Celeste had left before Daniel was born, and he'd never met her. I wondered if any of my parents had told him about his aunt—the one whose man his mother allegedly stole.

At that moment, Kieran and Celeste saw us. A muscle ticked in his jaw, and his hand dropped from around her waist. A brief expression crossed Kieran's face, and I must have been hallucinating from my painkillers because it looked a little bit like... guilt?

I remembered the question I'd asked Kieran when he dropped the divorce bomb.

"It's because of Celeste, isn't it?"

"No," he'd lied. "Of course not."

I forced a smile, cupping Daniel's chin. "No, baby," I lied, my voice too bright. "Of course not."

The words tasted like ash. I hated lying to my son, but even more than that, I hated the idea of him getting hurt in any way. Whatever rocky relationship Kieran and I had was between both of us. I didn't want to expose Daniel to any unnecessary drama.

Daniel's shoulders relaxed. He believed me—for now.

"Come on." I took his hand, steering us away.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Daniel lift his hand in a small wave to Kieran. I kept walking, but the weight of someone's gaze burned between my shoulder blades—

Hot enough to scar.

"Are you okay, Mom?" Daniel asked, tugging the thick duvet over my shoulder. "Do you need anything else?"

I smiled. He'd meant it when he said he'd take care of me—opening doors, helping me take an awkward, clothed towel bath, and even putting a bowl of mac and cheese in the microwave. It was cold in the middle, but I devoured the whole thing like it had five Michelin stars.

"Just one more thing."

I pulled the duvet open, patting the space beside me. Daniel grinned and, with a half-hearted eye-roll, climbed in. We hardly ever slept in the same bed anymore on account of Daniel being "way too old for cuddling."

As far as I was concerned, such a thing wasn't possible. As long as I was alive, he was my baby and would always be the perfect age—and size—for cuddling.

I gingerly draped my injured arm around his waist, and he cradled it in his arms. "Does it still hurt?"

I tucked his head under my chin. "Not when I'm with you."

There was a soft silence in which Daniel idly trailed a finger over the bandage. "Mom?" he said quietly after a while.

"Hmm?"

"When I grow up... when I get my wolf, I'll protect you. I promise."

My throat constricted with emotion, and I closed my eyes tightly against the tears that immediately swam to the surface.

Behind my eyelids, the faces of my so-called family flashed—my mother's performative grief, Kieran's infuriating indifference. Ten years I'd wasted trying to earn their love. Ten years of begging scraps from people who'd gladly watch me starve.

But then—

A rogue's fangs. A shadow leaping between us. Strong arms lifting me, the press of a tattoo against my cheek.

The nurses' giggles when I'd asked about my savior: "Oh, that Alpha? He carried you in like you were made of glass."

An Alpha who protected the weak. He'd saved many other wolves in the attack—mainly Omegas.

That only opened up a myriad of questions. The strong usually didn't bother with the weak, especially since I didn't know him from anywhere. So, who was this Alpha with a thing for weak wolves?

"Whoever he is... I hope I get to thank him someday." My fingers brushed the bandages on my arm. "For protecting the wolfless, defenseless little Sera."

Daniel was still sleeping when I woke early the following morning. I scoffed slightly, affectionately stroking his hair.

"Too old for cuddling my ass," I murmured. He was wrapped around me like a baby koala.

My muscles ached, and my back stung like a bitch. Still, I dragged myself to the kitchen, grabbed a box of Hungry Jack, and began putting breakfast together.

I'd barely plated the first pancake when there was a knock on the door.

I glanced at the clock—six-thirty. Not only was it early, but it was also unusual, considering we'd just moved to this house, and I couldn't think of anyone who would visit us at this time.

Kieran, maybe, but—

I laughed softly to myself at the ridiculous thought.

When I opened the door, however, the laughter died in my throat.

Standing before me, his broad shoulders filling the entire doorway, was a man I'd never met. What stunned me, however, was the shocking sense of familiarity I felt at the sight of him.

I squinted against the early morning sun, which shone in my eyes and darkened his features. As if he noticed my discomfort, he shifted, blocking out the sun, and I could suddenly see him clearly.

Jet black hair pulled into a man-bun at the nape of his neck, dark blue eyes like an evening sky, a strikingly handsome face, and—

I gasped as my eyes dropped down—to his right arm. To the swirling sleeve of black ink covering it.

It was he: the Alpha who saved my life.