

My Sister 81

Chapter 81 SEASICK

SERAPHINA'S POV

I should have known my plan wouldn't survive first contact with reality.

It lasted through the six-hour flight to Nassau, which I spent on the opposite side of Kieran's private jet, as far away from my ex-husband as I could get.

Even with the distance, Kieran's presence was heavy but contained—controlled, like a predator sizing up its prey, except I wasn't prey.

I had Daniel on my mind, the island ahead, and the tiny spark of warmth from Lucian's kiss still lingering in my chest.

But everything went to shit after we touched down in Nassau and transitioned onto Kieran's yacht, Ashar's pride, and I realized something new about myself: I get seasick.

The yacht looked like something out of a glossy magazine spread—sleek, ivory-white hull gleaming beneath the noon sun, its polished chrome railings winking like jewelry against the endless sweep of ocean.

Even from the dock, it was impossible not to be impressed. The vessel stretched long and graceful, like a predator of the sea, and once inside, I'd glimpsed plush interiors: wide sofas upholstered in cream leather, thick carpeting underfoot, and dining tables that looked more suited for banquets than travel.

Kieran might not have been one for lavish or opulent parties, but there were definitely some luxuries he indulged in.

But no amount of luxurious comfort could save me.

Not an hour after boarding, the sea turned against me. The gentle rocking that had seemed pleasant on shore morphed into a nauseating rhythm that churned my stomach with every rise and fall.

My head spun, my skin went clammy, and all the grandeur of polished wood, glittering chandeliers, and panoramic windows blurred into a haze of misery.

I had never been on a ship before. If I had known seasickness was this vicious, I would have begged to travel another way—by air, by land, fuck, I would have walked if I had to.

Anything but this endless, nauseating bobbing.

What unsettled me most, though, wasn't the sickness. It was Kieran.

Because he didn't leave me to suffer. He didn't sneer, didn't mock, didn't ignore me the way the Kieran I remembered from our marriage surely would have.

Instead, he...took care of me.

He held back my hair when I doubled over the basin and attempted to vomit all my internal organs. He steadied me when I stumbled, his arms like iron bars of strength I hadn't asked for but clung to anyway.

He pressed a cool cloth to my forehead, brushed strands of sweat-damp hair away from my face, and murmured low words of comfort I couldn't quite catch over the roaring in my head.

And when the ship's doctor brought medicine—bitter chalky tablets that turned to paste on my tongue—Kieran was the one who insisted I swallow them.

"Take it, Sera," he said, voice brooking no argument, though his hand on mine was steady, not harsh.

I tried to protest, some small, stubborn flicker inside me refusing to surrender to his authority, but my body betrayed me. Weakness made me pliant.

When he pressed the cup of water to my lips, I drank. When he guided me back toward the bed in the private cabin, I let him.

My cabin was decadent. Wide enough to shame most hotel suites, its walls paneled in rich walnut, its king-size bed layered with silk sheets in a muted cream.

The windows stretched floor to ceiling, offering a view of the ocean rolling endlessly into the horizon. It should have felt like luxury. Instead, it felt like a trap—soft, but suffocating.

Kieran lowered me carefully onto the bed, his hand still cradling my arm as though afraid I'd collapse again.

"You need rest," he said. His voice was quiet, but there was something in it I couldn't name. Not command, not irritation.

Concern.

I stared at him, hazy from nausea and medication, wondering if I was hallucinating.

In ten years of marriage, I had never received such a thing as concern from him.

Not when I burned with fever. Not when I wept alone in our cavernous house. Not when loneliness and despair had threatened to eat me alive.

And yet, here he was—our divorce finalized, our lives unstitched—sitting by my side as if I were the most precious thing in the world to him.

It was almost laughable. Overwhelmingly cruel.

“You’ll feel better after you sleep,” he added, and when I didn’t immediately close my eyes, he sighed and brushed his thumb across my knuckles.

The gesture was so gentle, so startlingly intimate, it felt like a wound opening.

And then his phone rang.

The sharp sound cut through the quiet of the cabin, shattering the strange, fragile stillness between us.

Kieran stiffened. His gaze flicked toward the bedside table where the device buzzed insistently, screen flashing with a name I didn’t need to see to recognize.

Celeste.

I felt it like a punch to the gut.

He’d made me leave my phone back in LA and warned me not to give anyone the number of the encrypted phone—for Daniel’s safety.

And yet...

Kieran didn't move at first. His jaw tightened, his hand still warm around mine. For a heartbeat, I thought he would ignore it—that he would stay.

But the ringing continued, as insistent and demanding as Celeste herself.

Finally, with a muttered curse under his breath, he eased my hand back onto the sheets and stood. His expression was unreadable, but I could feel the tension radiating off him in waves.

"I'll be right back," he said, and it sounded like a promise I wasn't foolish enough to hold on to.

He left the cabin, closing the door behind him, and the silence that followed was deafening.

I should have let myself drift into the medicated haze, let sleep claim me, and wash the sickness from my body.

But instead, I found myself pushing weakly upright, straining to hear through the thin barrier of the door.

And I heard everything.

Kieran's voice was low at first, clipped in that way he spoke when he was dealing with unpleasant business.

"Celeste," he said, by way of greeting, and he must have put the phone on speaker because though I couldn't hear her words clearly, I could hear the sharpness of her tone, a barrage of sound that spilled through even the wood and metal.

And then, I pushed myself out of bed and shuffled closer.

"How's the trip going?"

"Good. We're on the yacht now."

"Ashar's pride..." Her voice trailed off wistfully. "I haven't been on it yet."

"You will soon. I'll take you anywhere you want to go, just you and me." Kieran's voice sounded cold and distant, not like he was promising the love of his life a romantic cruise.

Celeste's voice sounded lighter. "Good, I can't wait."

A loaded pause.

And then: “Are you keeping your promise?”

“Yes.” Kieran sounded like he was gritting his teeth.

“Really? You’re keeping your distance from her?”

I didn’t need to wonder who ‘her’ was. Celeste’s cold disdain said it all.

And then came the lie.

“Yes,” Kieran said. “We’re keeping our distance. I haven’t seen her since we boarded.”

The words landed like ice in my chest.

Celeste’s laughter rang faintly, pleased, smug. I imagined her—perfect hair, perfect smile, perfect ambition—reclining somewhere with a glass of wine, secure in the knowledge that Kieran Blackthorne belonged to her.

“That’s good,” her voice carried faintly. “I just hope Sera and Daniel’s...complication is resolved soon. When you come back, we’ll finally officially get engaged. I can’t wait, Kieran. I want children—several. Daniel will love being a big brother, don’t you think?”

My stomach, already unsettled, lurched violently. Not from seasickness this time.

At first, Kieran said nothing.

“Kie?”

Then, a harsh chuckle that sounded like it had been wrenched from him. “Yeah, I can’t wait.”

I pressed a hand to my mouth, bile burning the back of my throat.

So this was what we had come to. This was what our fractured, bitter history had led me back to: lying in a bed on his ship, listening to him promise a future with someone else.

I wanted to hate him. I wanted to despise him with the kind of fury that burned clean through the bones.

But beneath the anger was something softer. Something far more dangerous.

It hurt.

It hurt that for the first time, he had touched me with care, and yet his heart—or whatever passed for it—was already spoken for.

It hurt that after all the years of indifference, now he suddenly looked at me as though I mattered, only to step outside and prove I didn't.

I sank back against the pillows, closing my eyes tight as tears threatened. The medicine blurred my edges, pulled me under, but not fast enough to drown out the echo of Celeste's voice.

"Several children," she had said.

The words rang in my skull as the ship rocked me into fitful sleep, the ocean's endless sway as merciless as the words I had overheard.