

My Sister 85

Chapter 85 LIKE A FAMILY

SERAPHINA'S POV

I woke to the muted hush of the ocean. The sound was steady, rhythmic, as though the entire island breathed in and out in sync with me.

For a moment, I lay still on the wide, soft bed, the gauzy curtains swaying with the salt-tinged breeze that slipped in through the open balcony doors.

Beyond them, Musha Cay glowed with early sunlight, the horizon painted in coral and rose.

Daniel's laughter from the night before lingered in my head, clear and bright like windchimes.

The memory pulled me upright, shoulders heavy with sleep yet warmed by the thought of spending the day with my baby.

Dinner last night had been...awkward—Kieran's parents trying too hard to make small talk, Kieran himself brooding behind polite restraint.

The only light—as usual—had been Daniel, chattering about surfing, about the villa, about how much better coconuts tasted here than anywhere else in the world.

If Daniel was happy, then I was happy. That mantra had carried me through worse nights than last.

Still, the air in the dining room had been thick, and I had felt Kieran's eyes on me too many times, a heat that pricked the skin at the nape of my neck.

I'd forced myself to focus on Daniel's joy, telling myself that his smile mattered more than my discomfort.

I slipped from the bed, pulling a silk robe around me, its fabric cool against my skin as I headed into the bathroom. After a shower, I braided my damp hair loosely over one shoulder and changed into pale blue linen shorts and a white loose blouse before stepping out into the hall.

The villa was extravagant in every corner—polished teak floors, whitewashed walls, orchids blooming in vases—but its beauty didn't hide the coldness that lingered in its halls.

"Where's Daniel?" I asked one of the Omegas, a young woman who carried a tray of fresh fruit past me.

She smiled, bowing slightly. "At the beach with Alpha Kieran, Ma'am. They went out just after sunrise."

Something inside me flickered—equal parts relief and unease. Daniel was safe, yes, but with Kieran.

If I wanted to spend any time with my son, I'd have to spend time with his father, too.

Lovely.

I followed the winding path lined with hibiscus until the sand warmed my feet. The morning light glittered across the sea, waves rolling in a hypnotic rhythm.

Then I saw them.

Daniel, standing unsteady but determined on a surfboard, Kieran steadying him with a firm hand on his back.

Daniel whooped with laughter as he wobbled, nearly falling before regaining his balance. Kieran laughed too, the sound startlingly warm, echoing across the water.

I froze at the edge of the palms, my breath caught. They looked...like a family.

I should have felt nothing but gladness, but envy twisted sharp in my chest. Not of Daniel's joy—that was mine, too—but of the ease Kieran seemed to find with him.

The ease he'd never had with me.

Daniel spotted me first. "Mom!" His voice cracked with excitement, his arm shooting up in a wave that nearly toppled him into the surf. "Come see! I'm showing Dad my surfing moves!"

Someone needed to come up with a different term for kids to refer to divorced parents. Hearing Daniel call us 'Dad' and 'Mom' as if we were one happy family scraped raw at me.

Kieran turned then, his gaze meeting mine across the water.

For a heartbeat, the world narrowed to just his eyes, the memory of his mouth on mine on the yacht still seared into me.

I tore my gaze away, forcing a smile as Daniel hopped off the board and splashed toward me.

"You have to try," he insisted, water streaming off him as he tugged my hand. "Come on, Mom, you'll love it. I can teach you!"

I laughed, though my stomach fluttered with nerves. "You? Teach me?"

"Of course," Daniel said proudly, puffing up his chest. "Dad says I'm a natural."

Kieran's voice carried over the waves. "He's not wrong."

I ignored the way my skin prickled at his carefree tone and allowed Daniel to drag me into the surf.

The water surged cool around my ankles, then my knees.

I bit back my fear of water, trying to focus on the wet sand beneath my toes, the sound of Daniel's voice, and Kieran's presence—however uncomfortable—behind me.

Anything other than the vast body of water that stretched endlessly before me.

Daniel pushed a smaller board toward me, one clearly sized for beginners.

"Okay, Mom," he said, earnest as a little soldier, "you have to lie down first. Like this." He demonstrated with exaggerated seriousness, then popped back up. "And when the wave comes, you push up with your arms and stand. Easy."

"Easy," I echoed, though I doubted it.

Daniel beamed and glanced back at Kieran. "See? She'll get it. She always does. Mom's the best at everything she does."

Something in my chest softened at his faith in me, even as heat coiled low when I caught Kieran watching.

His expression was unreadable, but I felt it—his attention, his awareness of me in the water.

I tried, failing spectacularly the first time, the board tipping sideways and dunking me into the surf.

Daniel's laughter rang out. "You're supposed to stay on top, Mom!"

"I gathered that," I sputtered, pushing my wet hair out of my face with a nervous laugh. I was fine; I couldn't drown in such shallow water.

I was fine. I was fine. I was fine.

Kieran's voice came closer now, calm and instructive. "Shift your weight to the center. Don't fight the wave—ride with it."

I didn't look at him, but I listened.

Little by little, I improved. My arms ached, my legs trembled, but I was determined to get this right—if not for anything, then for Daniel.

And when I finally caught a wave and managed to rise halfway before tumbling, Daniel cheered as though I'd won a medal.

"You did it!" he shouted, clapping. "See, Mom? You're amazing!"

And for a fleeting moment, I believed him.

But the ocean evidently did not share the same sentiment.

I didn't see the larger wave coming until it reared up, shadowing the water around me. Panic flickered, but I tried to follow Daniel's instructions, pushing up onto the board.

The force of it hit harder than I expected, slamming into me, knocking the breath from my chest. The world turned into white spray and salt.

"Sera!"

"Mom!"

I surfaced once, gasped, then the next surge dragged me under. My lungs burned, limbs thrashing against the pull.

A familiar terror stole over me in the spinning blue—an old memory of pain, of surrender.

‘Not again! Not again!’

Then hands gripped me, strong and unyielding—nothing like the cruel hands that had once shoved me under.

I clung to them like life rafts.

I thought I heard Daniel shouting, but everything was muffled, distant. My chest ached. Darkness crept at the edges of my vision, muted my hearing.

“Sera!” Kieran’s voice was raw with urgency. “Stay with me—Sera, open your eyes!”

I couldn’t.

The world tilted again, and then sand pressed beneath me. Large, warm hands cradled my face, water dripping onto my skin.

“Mom?” Daniel’s voice broke, panicked. I felt his little hand on my arm. “Dad, do something! She’s not breathing—give her mouth-to-mouth!”

His plea sliced through me, even in the haze.

I wanted to open my eyes, to tell him not to be afraid. But all I could do was drift while Kieran cursed under his breath.

For one suspended moment, I felt the ghost of his breath near mine, the charged hesitation of his lips hovering just above.

Daniel’s voice trembled again. “Please, Dad! Save her!”