

My Sister 9

Chapter 9 SADISTIC BASTARD

SERAPHINA'S POV

The coldness wasn't unfamiliar.

But there was an underlying tension that was new—tight, uncomfortable.

Still, I plastered a smile on my face when Daniel asked me to pass the syrup and kept it on when Kieran asked me to pass the butter. I clamped my mouth shut as father and son conversed animatedly.

I would always be grateful that whatever animosity Kieran carried for me never spilled over to our son. So even if he never loved me, I could rest assured that he loved Daniel.

I couldn't remember the last time we'd had breakfast together, and doing it now, after we were divorced, was not only ironic but just plain ridiculous.

Although I would admit—to myself only—that watching Kieran devour the pancakes and eggs I'd made with gusto slightly appeased the anger and irritation I felt earlier.

When breakfast was over, Daniel rushed upstairs to get ready for school, rebuffing my offers for help. "I'm nine!" he called over his shoulder as he went. "I don't need my mommy to dress me."

I might have laughed if Daniel's refusal of my offer didn't mean I was stuck stewing in the tension between Kieran and me.

I cleared my throat and stood, reaching for Daniel's empty plate. Kieran moved too, faster than I, and grabbed it.

I shot him a questioning glare.

"You shouldn't be doing dishes with your injured arm," he said, taking my plate out of my grip before I could protest.

I raised an eyebrow, watching Kieran move to the sink, wondering what the hell had gotten into him.

This was the man who'd never enjoyed a meal I cooked. Who'd never spared a thought for who cleaned up afterward.

The only conversations he'd ever initiated were curt notifications about when he'd be taking Daniel to family gatherings—ones I was never invited to.

I'd grown accustomed to his indifference. To being a ghost in my own home.

Yet now, after our divorce, here he stood in my kitchen, scrubbing dishes like our earlier argument had never happened?

The kitchen bled into the dining space, one smooth line from marble island to wooden table, and I sank back into my chair, watching Kieran's back as his hands moved in the sink, making quick work through soapy water.

It was a surreal sight. A version of him I'd never seen.

The muscles beneath his t-shirt shifted and rippled as he moved, and I couldn't help but stare. At four inches over six feet, he towered over almost everything and everyone, and his body was covered with taut muscles, chiseled to perfection—a living monument to Alpha perfection.

I'd dreamed of this once. A normal domestic scene: wife cooking, husband cleaning, maybe me slipping arms around his waist, and he'd turn, landing a kiss—

When I heard Daniel bounding down the stairs again, I averted my gaze, feeling my cheeks burn like I'd been caught doing something bad.

Kieran wasn't mine to look at anymore—not that he'd ever really been in the first place.

"I'm ready," Daniel announced, shouldering his Pokémon backpack.

I smiled at him and stood up from my seat. "Come o—"

"I'll take him to school."

A large puff of frustration left my mouth in the form of air as I turned to Kieran. "I'm perfectly capable of driving my son to school," I said, forcing my voice to stay steady and calm.

"I know," he said. "But you should be resting, not overexerting yourself."

I blinked. Since when did he care? For ten years, Kieran had barely acknowledged my existence—now suddenly, he was all up in my business?

"Dad's right," Daniel piped up, coming to me. He wrapped an arm around my waist, and I automatically rested my chin on his head. "Go get some more rest, Mom."

I exhaled. "Fine."

I looked at Kieran and forced out a "Thank you."

He nodded once.

After they left, I took a shower, painkillers, and then crawled into bed. But sleep wouldn't come. My mind kept averting to my eventful morning—until Kieran's infuriatingly considerate behavior hijacked my thoughts again.

Stop. I shook my head sharply, gaze landing on Lucian's parting gift.

The contact card lay on the side table—an invitation.

I grabbed my phone and typed into the search bar: Out of the Shadows.

The first result was a website, and when I clicked on it, I was bombarded with a slew of information. My curiosity was piqued as I read through. Founded ten years ago, OTS had rapidly grown into something of a haven for werewolves like me—wolfless, weak, outcasts.

There were pictures, a virtual facility tour, and testimonials from wolves who had benefited from the organization's generosity.

Something ballooned up in me as I drank in all the information—hope. A sense of purpose I hadn't felt in forever.

So I copied the number on the card to my phone and sent out a message.

'Hi Lucian, It's Sera. I've considered it; I'd love a tour sometime.'

"And finally, this is the Sparring Arena," Lucian said, waving his arm around the room with a flourish.

Slowly, I spun, taking in the large circular space.

We were at the final spot on the tour of the OTS headquarters. We hadn't bothered with the administrative wing of the building. "Boring numbers and papers, nothing fun there," Lucian had said.

Then he'd shown me the several training facilities they had. He showed me the Core Pit, a sunken arena with natural stone walls for climbing and leaping, as well as logs, builders, and weighted chains for resistance training.

Then there was the Moon Hall, where the wolves who could Shift practiced restraints and meditation techniques to help them control their powers. There was an intricate outdoor obstacle course with trees, rocks, and trenches designed for both humans and wolves.

There was even an underground den lined with moss, heated dens, and fire pits for resting, healing, and mental recovery.

Overall, it was the most impressive building I'd ever been in. Making Lucian Reed the most remarkable person I'd ever met for thinking to do this for a group of people that the world had written off.

Like the general design of the OTS headquarters, the Sparring Arena was a sleek, open-air space reinforced with steel and obsidian. Lucian explained that the padded floor absorbed impact while embedded sensors tracked movement and force.

He pointed out transparent barriers that rose around the perimeter, allowing spectators to watch without interfering.

"Does that happen often?" I asked. "Spectating." I imagined a roaring crowd, cheering people on as they fought to the death like gladiators.

Lucian shrugged. "It's mainly to track progress for feedback."

I exhaled. "This all so... overwhelming."

Lucian chuckled. "That's because you've never been in an actual training facility, have you?"

He was right. I'd never trained before. My pack completely ostracized me for not having a wolf. Of course, I was never part of pack runs, and no one was willing to help me train in other aspects.

"Is yours different?" I asked.

He nodded. "OTS has the largest training facility in Los Angeles. And since it's located in neutral territory, many wolves from other packs train here. Our trainers are equipped to teach even the most feeble werewolves."

I swallowed tightly, feeling that hope rise higher. "So, there would be someone willing to teach me?"

Lucian's smile was soft, kind. "I would teach you personally."

I snorted, rolling my eyes.

Lucian took a step forward, and my amusement faded as I craned my neck back to keep his gaze. "I'm serious, Sera."

My eyebrows furrowed. "But... why would you? You're an Alpha. Don't you have more important things to do?"

His lips twitched. "Important? Yes. More important?" He shook his head. "Nope."

"Oh." I'd spent my whole life being the less important choice, so I was thrown a little off-balance.

"What do you say?" he asked. "Ready for your first lesson?"

I absentmindedly rolled my left shoulder. It had been a week since the rogue attack, but my injury had healed nicely. The stitches were out, and other than the occasional annoying ache, I was as good as new, more or less.

Training with Lucian would ensure I was never put in a vulnerable position where I could be injured again.

"Yeah," I exhaled. "I'm ready."

Lucian Reed, the Alpha who saved weak wolves and paid them home visits, was kind, gentle, and warm.

Lucian Reed, the trainer, was a sadistic bastard.

"Stop, stop!" I panted, holding a hand out as my knees buckled, sending me to the floor.

Lucian paced in front of me, his combat boots thudding against the padded floors of the private training room.

The Arena was for sparring, but OTS had hundreds of private training rooms, each divided by sliding one-way glass doors where one-on-one training took place. It was where Lucian had made me regret ever being born.

"Get up, Seraphina," Lucian said. His voice was unrecognizable—hard, merciless. "You have more fight in you."

"No," I wheezed, my hands trembling as I doubled over and tried not to throw up. "I don't."

It had started with simple tasks—posture, stance, and how to make a proper fist. It had quickly escalated to suicidal drills—wall sits, burpees, bear crawls, push-ups, planks, and the absolute fucking bane of my existence: controlled fall and recovery, which essentially required me to throw myself down on the mat and pop back up with the speed that made me breathless and nauseous.

I felt Lucian crouch down before me, and I half-panted, half-growled. "I swear, Lucian, if you make me—"

I looked up to see him smiling down at me, the murderous trainer mask dissolved.

"I expected you to tap out half an hour ago," he said, his voice dripping with pride. "I'm impressed, Sera. I knew you had it in you."

And even though Lucian was blurring at the edges, there was a suspicious ringing in my ears, and it felt like my heart was pounding in my belly, pride flooded my veins.

"You. Suck," I panted.

He tilted his head. "So you don't want hot packs?"

My hands gave out, and I rolled, sprawling on my back. "No, please."

The workout clothes Lucian had supplied me were soaked through and through, and every muscle in me screamed in agony, but I'd never felt so... elated.

Lucian's face loomed over me, inverted, as he braced his hands on both sides of my head.

"This is just your first session," he said. "Imagine how strong you'll be after several."

I grinned, looking into his twinkling blue eyes.

I imagined it, and a rush of adrenaline flooded me. The idea of not being weak, fragile, or useless.

"What the fuck!"

The sliding glass wall was dragged open, and I sat up like a spring, my head bumping Lucian's on the way.

"Ow!"

He cupped my face, pressing his hand to the spot that had made contact. "Are you okay?" he asked, wincing.

"I—"

A menacing growl pierced the air, and I glanced to the left, in the direction of the intruder. My words died in my throat.

Standing in front of me, in the space between the two training rooms, was Kieran, his dark eyes pitch black with rage.