

My Sister 93

Chapter 93 GRIEF AND DUTY

SERAPHINA'S POV

After that day, an unspoken truce seemed to settle between Kieran and me, both of us wordlessly agreeing on one thing: distance.

We were careful with each other, deliberate, like rival soldiers who'd stumbled too close on a battlefield, retreating to their lines with weapons lowered but hands still tense on the hilts.

We fell into a strange rhythm—not the comfortable kind that soothed, but one strung taut, like a bow pulled back too far.

He no longer hovered around me or cornered me against walls and counters. No longer lingered behind me with that charged silence that made the air feel too tight.

And I no longer felt the burn of his gaze when he thought I wasn't looking. At least, I told myself I didn't.

And in truth, I clung to that distance as much as I resented it.

Because it was safer. For me. For him.

For my baby boy, who only ever wanted his mother to be happy.

My injury healed pretty quickly, and soon, I was back on my feet.

I spent most of my days with Daniel—morning walks on the beach (steering clear of bushes and the ocean), watching them from a safe distance as Kieran taught Daniel surfing techniques, hovering nearby while he had his lessons with his tutor.

And then, one morning, a week later at breakfast, Daniel said, his mouth smeared with mango, “Mom, now that you’re all better, can we go on a family adventure?”

His eyes shone, wide and expectant. The kind of look that made me feel like I could build an entire world with my bare hands if only it would make him smile.

“A family adventure?” I repeated, setting down my fork.

He nodded, curls bouncing. “I could plan it. We could explore the reefs, or go fishing, or sail to another island, or go on a hike, or build a bonfire on the beach, and sleep under the stars, or—”

“Slow down!” I laughed. His joy was infectious, warming the morning air more than the Caribbean sun streaming through the windows.

For a moment, the tension that had ruled the villa felt distant, banished by nothing more than my son's unfiltered joy.

Kieran, who had been quietly sipping from a mug at the other end of the table, gave a low chuckle but said nothing.

That's how he was when the three of us were together—he didn't speak unless he was spoken to. Like he was always watching our interactions from outside a window.

"Dad, what do you think?" Daniel asked, bouncing in his seat excitedly. "You'll come with us, right?"

Before Kieran could answer, his phone buzzed against the polished wood of the table.

A shot of irritation went through me that he had his phone when I couldn't, but it was quickly replaced by curiosity when he glanced at the screen, and his expression hardened.

He stood, turning and moving a few steps away before answering. His voice dropped low, clipped. "Hey, it's early. What's up?"

I tried—and failed—not to look at him, noting the way the muscles of his shoulders locked, the way his grip on the phone tightened, the flex of his jaw as he gave sharp nods and quick mumbles.

Then he turned around.

My heart skipped a beat, and I couldn't tear my gaze away quickly enough.

My brow raised when I saw that he was walking towards me.

He handed the phone to me, his expression unreadable.

"Sera," he said, voice clipped. "It's Celeste. She wants to speak with you."

My stomach dropped. "Celeste?"

I didn't know what surprised me more, the fact that it had been Celeste on the line and he'd looked so...uncomfortable—or that my sister wanted to talk to me.

His fingers brushed mine as I took it, and for a fleeting instant, I thought I saw a storm gathering behind his eyes again.

But then he stepped back, arms folding across his chest, as if insulating himself from whatever was coming.

I stared at the phone in my hand, bracing myself for...what? I didn't know.

I pressed the phone to my ear. “Celeste?”

Her voice came through soft, almost sweet, which in itself put me on edge. “Sera. I thought it best to call Kieran since I knew you didn’t bring your phone to the island.”

My chest tightened. “What do you want?”

She exhaled heavily. “It’s Mom. She’s been hospitalized. The doctors say it’s serious. You should come.”

My grip on the phone slackened. “Hospitalized?”

“Yes.” Celeste’s tone sharpened, though she cloaked it quickly in what sounded like feigned sympathy. “I wouldn’t be calling otherwise. I thought, despite everything, you’d want to know. She’s still your mother, isn’t she?”

Conflicting emotions tore through me at once.

Anger—still simmering, because, more than my mother, Margaret Lockwood was the woman who had turned her back on me, who had stood idly while I was treated like gum under everyone’s shoe, who had chosen convenience and appearances over her own daughter.

And grief—unspoken and unacknowledged, because no matter how many ways she failed me, she was still my mother. I'd already lost my father without reconciliation, without goodbye.

"Thank you for telling me," I managed stiffly.

Celeste's pause was deliberate, letting the silence weigh down the line before she spoke again. "Of course. She's been asking for you; I hope you'll come quickly. For her sake."

"I'll come," I whispered, surprising myself with the certainty in my voice.

"Good." And because she was Celeste Lockwood, she couldn't resist adding a petty, spiteful barb.

"Besides, I think you've spent enough time on that island playing House with my man. It's time to come home now, don't you think?"

I hung up without another word.

I lowered the phone slowly. My breath felt shallow, like the air itself resisted entering my lungs.

"What happened?" Daniel asked, his little face creased with concern

Kieran's jaw flexed. He reached for the phone, pocketing it without a word. His shoulders looked even heavier than moments ago, as though Celeste's venom clung to him too.

I forced a smile that trembled at the edges. "Grandma Margaret is...sick. She's in the hospital."

Daniel blinked, processing, then looked up at me with those earnest eyes that always saw more than I wanted him to. "What happened?"

I shook my head. "I'm not sure yet, I'll have to see for myself."

He stiffened. "You're...leaving?"

The guilt grew, a choking grip around my throat. "Oh, baby..."

His mouth turned down, uncertain. "But what about our adventure?"

The ache in my chest spread, sharp as glass. I reached across the table, cupping his cheek. "We'll still have it. Just a little later, alright? We have our whole lives to have adventures."

He nodded, though disappointment lingered in his eyes.

Kieran cleared his throat. "We'll leave tomorrow." His tone was businesslike, stripped of any softness.

I turned to him. "You don't have to come with me."

A muscle in his jaw ticked. "I'm going with you." That was it—final, no room for argument.

And just like that, the decision was made.

We were going back.

Daniel sat quietly on my bed as I packed.

I wanted to say something, help him feel better about my sudden departure, but I was too busy slipping in and out of my own head.

Images flickered unbidden: my father's final moments, the chance I never got to receive his forgiveness, to be his daughter.

Would I lose my mother the same way? Would I carry another regret carved into my bones forever?

Yet beneath the guilt, a darker voice whispered: 'Why should you go at all?'

This was the woman who looked through me as though I were invisible, who let Celeste bask in all the sunlight while I was left to rot in the shadows.

Who, just a couple of weeks ago, had publicly shamed me for Celeste's benefit.

Did she deserve my presence now, when her body was weak and her pride fractured?

I pressed my palms to my eyes. The ghost of an instinct stirred restlessly inside me, urging compassion.

A mother was still a mother. And if I didn't go, and she died, I knew the regret would eat me alive.

"Mom?"

I snapped back to the present, dropping a shirt into my suitcase.

Daniel's lips were pursed as he looked at my suitcase.

“Yes, love?”

“You’re really going, aren’t you?” His voice cracked, raw and small.

I nodded, heart twisting. “I have to, sweetheart.”

He studied me, searching my face for what I didn’t know. Then, softly: “You’ll come back, right?”

Tears burned the backs of my eyes. I pushed my suitcase aside and crouched, pulling him into my arms. “Always. No matter where I go, I’ll always come back to you. You’re my home, Daniel, remember?”

He clung to me fiercely, his little fingers digging into my shirt. For a moment, I almost broke. Almost told Kieran to fly back alone while I stayed here, where my son’s laughter was.

But grief and duty are cruel twins, and they drove me onward.

When I finally let Daniel go, his face was blotchy with unshed tears, but he gave me a brave nod. “Okay. Then go. Take care of Grandma. But don’t forget what I said, Mom. I want you to put yourself first. I want you to be happy.”

His words pierced me deeper than he knew.