

## **My Sister 104**

Chapter 104 A FEW COWS

SERAPHINA'S POV

After that lovely interaction in the locker room, I threw myself into training.

I wasn't stupid enough to think that would be the last I heard of Jessica or the whispers, and I was determined to be able to put my money where my mouth was.

So I pushed myself, harder than usual. By the time we were done, every ounce of strength had been wrung from me, leaving my body humming with fatigue—but my mind was still taut with the restless need to keep going.

But as I pushed myself up, ready to go another round of drills, Maya the Tormentor disappeared, and I got my best friend back.

And then she suggested we go on a shopping run.

I was just happy to see a smile that wasn't immediately followed by, "Good. Now run that again a hundred times," so I didn't hesitate.

She bounced on her toes as if she hadn't just run drills in the sun all morning, her braided ponytail swinging like she was part of a commercial.

I envied that boundless energy. My own legs felt like lead.

“Retail therapy,” Maya declared. “It’s the only cure for aching muscles and bruised egos.”

I arched a brow at her. “There it is.”

She shot me a ‘who, me?’ look, and I rolled my eyes.

“Nothing happens in OTS without you knowing, Maya. I wondered why you didn’t bring it up during training.”

She shrugged. “I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

I snorted. “Yep, sure.”

I stopped and pointed a finger at her. “But for the record, my ego is perfectly intact, thanks.”

She grinned, patting my arm. “That’s my girl.”

We stepped out into the warmth of the evening air, and she took a deep breath. “Now, what store do you want to hit first?”

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One thing about Maya: no matter what she did—whether it was training drills or gossiping or shopping—she did it thoroughly.

She tugged me through the mall like a force of nature, and if I didn’t know better, I’d think the trial had a shopping challenge and this was another form of training.

One minute she had me shrugging into a sequined jacket under too-bright lights, the next slipping oversized sunglasses onto my face, cackling when they slid down my nose.

We sampled lipsticks, debated handbags, laughed until our sides hurt at Maya wobbling in a pair of ridiculous boots.

By the time we flopped onto a bench near the food court, arms weighed down with more of Maya’s bags than mine, I caught my reflection in a shop window—a light sheen of sweat from exertion, cheeks flushed from laughter.

I looked...alive.

That was when Maya pulled out her phone, eyes sparkling like she'd been saving a secret all along.

"Yes! It's finally out."

I glanced over curiously. "What?"

She showed me the screen. It was a compiled list of "top contenders" for the tournament—their names ranked, their profiles written like celebrity athlete bios.

It was arranged in descending order, and my eyes skimmed over the first few until they froze on one name.

Seraphina Blackthorne

A sudden churn tightened my stomach, the pretzel I'd snacked on earlier threatening to claw its way back up.

"Maya," I whispered. "Why am I on this?"

Her smile was pure sunshine. "Because you're incredible, duh. Your training records aren't a secret. Your stats are phenomenal for your progress level. It would be criminal for you not to be on it."

I wanted to argue, to say this must have been some kind of mistake, and I wasn't as great as everyone thought.

But...

Would it be so bad for once to believe that I was actually capable of something? I'd put in the work, I was determined, and deep within, I knew: I no longer felt like the weak, defenseless Sera who let the world walk all over her.

So yeah, maybe I belonged on the list, along with the best of the—

My eyes snagged on another name—at the top of the list—and the taste in my mouth soured.

Of course

Jessica Kilorn.

I swallowed and forced my voice to stay casual. "You know her, right?" I dropped Maya's phone on the table and idly tapped the screen. "Jessica?"

Maya's expression soured immediately, her nose wrinkling as if I'd mentioned something rotten. "Unfortunately."

"That bad?"

"She's...talented," Maya admitted reluctantly, grabbing her phone and glaring at it.

"Strong. Sharp. You wouldn't know she's an Omega with how fierce she is. People like her win these tournaments because they have the stamina and the bite. But no, we don't exactly braid each other's hair. She's...competitive."

Competitive was a generous word. I thought back to Jessica's razor-edged smile, the way she'd tried to cut me down in front of everyone.

Maya caught my expression and rolled her eyes, softer now. "Hey. Don't let her get in your head. Notice how I didn't want to talk about the locker room incident? She is so not worth the headspace."

I shrugged. "Maybe, but—"

"No maybes and no buts," Maya cut in.

She squeezed my hand with a reassuring grin. "I don't care what position she is on a stupid list. You are already my champion."

The words cracked something open in me, ease spilling in where nerves had been gnawing.

“Besides,” she added with a wink, “you have the best trainer in all of OTS. The finest, most beautiful, lethal—Lucian!”

I raised a brow. “Huh?”

When I realized that she was looking over my shoulder, I turned around and familiar warmth soothed my stomach.

Lucian was walking towards us, and even in jeans and a dark shirt rolled at the sleeves, he carried himself like a man carved from authority.

“Perfect timing!” she squealed, rising from her seat.

Then, with exaggerated nonchalance, she tapped her phone. “Ethan just texted me, he needs me. Guess I’ll have to ditch you guys.” She pouted. “What a tragedy.”

“Maya—” I started, but she was already kissing my cheek, whispering, “You’re welcome,” before flouncing out with a wink, barely staggering under the weight of her bags.

That left me with Lucian, his eyes warm as they swept over me. “Well,” he chuckled, “I was going to take you both out for dinner, but I guess it’ll be just you and me?”

I nodded, smiling as I stood. “Yeah.”

He crooked his elbow, and I slipped my arm through, leaning against him as we walked out of the mall.

“Maybe this time, we’ll get through the entire date without being interrupted.”

I laughed, leaning against him. I think my favorite thing about being with Lucian was how...natural it felt.

“Fingers crossed.”

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Lucian chose the restaurant—soft lighting, intimate tables, scents of roasted herbs and freshly baked bread curling through the air.

I settled into the cushioned booth across from him, picking at the menu until Lucian leaned forward, eyes glittering with mischief.



“So, have you reached the stage of training where your appetite is as big as a few cows?”

My head snapped up, startled into laughter. “Cows?”

He shrugged. “It’s inevitable. You burn calories all day, you gain muscle, your metabolism spikes, you turn ravenous.”

I grinned, leaning back. “What’s the matter? You worried this meal will drain your entire fortune?”

“Possibly,” he deadpanned, though the curl of his lips betrayed him. Then he leaned forward. “But for you, it’ll be worth it.”

I made a face, even though my lips were stretched. “Ugh, I’d better not order anything with cheese. There’s enough of it on this table.”

Lucian’s whole body shook with his laughter, and it felt like I could get full on the sound alone.

Half an hour later, the food arrived, and Lucian was proven right.

I hadn’t realized it till the food was before me, but I was voracious.

I ate with a surprising vigor, feeling like I was pouring water into a basket. When I finally took a break and came up for air, I found Lucian's gaze lingering on me.

Heat rose in my cheeks. There were certain disadvantages to feeling comfortable with someone.

Without a word, he leaned across the table, thumb brushing the corner of my lips. The contact was featherlight, yet it sent a shiver coursing through me.

"I'm not a child anymore," I murmured, embarrassed by the way my skin burned.

"No," he said softly, eyes never leaving mine. "You're my hard-found treasure. And treasures are to be cherished carefully."

His thumb, still slick with the gravy he'd brushed from my lips, hovered for a breath before he drew it into his mouth, slow and deliberate.

And every coherent thought blasted out of my mind.

But later, when the plates were cleared and the air between us had settled into something comfortable, I found Jessica's name slipping into my mind again, like a thorn pressing against my grey matter.

‘Our Alpha...’

“Lucian,” I said quietly. “Can I ask you something? About your pack.”

Given the...suspicious outcome of Maya’s and my “harmless” cyber stalking, I expected Lucian to lock up at the mention of his pack.

But he didn’t hesitate, didn’t flinch or deflect. His voice was calm, natural. “What do you want to know?”

I blinked. I’d braced myself for more of a resistance, and now felt like I’d forcefully slammed into a door that was already ajar.

“What...what do they think of me? Of this?” I gestured vaguely between us.

He leaned back, expression thoughtful. “My people support me. They’ve seen what I’ve built, how I lead. Of course, some of them are already aware of you—unofficially.”

Then he leaned forward and took my hand in his. “And when I make it official, I know they’ll support us.”

I swallowed, thinking of Jessica’s disdain. “Are you sure?”

He smiled, his thumb swiping across my knuckle reassuringly. "I want you to meet them."

The knot in my chest loosened. "Really?"

"After the LST," he said firmly, as if it were already decided. "I'll invite you formally. You'll love it there. And they'll love you."

And despite my less-than-stellar track record with packs, despite the sharp poison of Jessica's words, something in me dared to believe him.