

My Sister 128

Chapter 128 UNCHARTED TERRITORY

SERAPHINA'S POV

The OTS hall had been gorgeously transformed. Silken banners cascaded from the rafters, catching light from the chandeliers above so that everything shimmered with a faint golden glow.

The air thrummed with conversation, a low hum of power and politics interwoven with laughter, glasses clinking, and the weight of eyes that seemed to evaluate everything at once.

Guests poured in steadily—Alphas in tailored suits, Lunas draped in masterpieces of curves and contours, allies and rivals mingling under one roof.

And at my side, Lucian.

I slipped my hand into the crook of his arm, pulse steady despite the cloud of expectation hovering over the room.

The necklace he'd gifted me two nights ago rested cool and solid against my collarbone, its pendant a reminder with every subtle shift of movement. His grandmother's legacy—meant for the woman who was worthy to stand beside him.

Tonight, I had to live up to that.

Lucian's voice was steady as he guided me through the hall from one introduction to another.

"Seraphina Blackthorne," he said with quiet pride, his hand never straying far from mine. "My partner."

I greeted each Alpha, Luna, and dignitary with measured grace. No fumbling, no shrinking.

My words didn't feel like scraps of forced politeness or nerves, and their appraising gazes didn't burn the way they used to; they didn't make me want to shrink and hide away.

Instead, I met them evenly, a faint smile tugging at my lips when someone's gaze lingered too long on the pendant.

I felt poised. Not exactly perfect, but composed, confident, and tonight, that was enough.

Then, from the crowd, a figure emerged who made Lucian still beside me.

Tall. Broad-shouldered. Dark hair threaded with faint silver, though his face bore only a few years more than Lucian's.

His presence drew attention like gravity itself, though it was less sharp than Lucian's controlled authority and more...rooted, like an oak tree.

"William." Lucian's voice carried both surprise and warmth.

The man smiled faintly as he approached, his gaze flicking once to me, then down to the pendant around my neck.

He stopped short, his brow raising in something that looked very much like shock.

I tensed. "Is...is something wrong?"

The man—William's eyes snapped up to mine, and his expression softened almost instantly. "Not at all. Only...that necklace is not given lightly."

His mouth curved into something between a smile and a knowing smirk, that faint surprise still lingering. "He must love you deeply."

The word struck me harder than I expected. Love.

Lucian had spoken of wanting me. Of choosing me. Of wanting me by his side. But love? That was completely uncharted terrain.

My pulse faltered, and for a beat I forgot how to breathe.

Also...who was this man to make such an observation?

Before I could speak or ask my question, Lucian smoothly interjected, ignoring William's comment.

"Sera, I always intended for you to meet my brother," he said, his hand resting lightly at my waist as his gaze cut to William. "But OTS has been demanding, and LST even more so. William came tonight to support me—and to meet you, Sera."

Brother.

I blinked, suddenly seeing the resemblance.

Lucian's piercing navy blue gaze softened in William's eyes, but their bone structure was similar, the way they carried themselves, the quiet intensity in the set of their jaws.

"It's an honor," I said, inclining my head.

"And mine," William replied, his smile warm and disarming in a way that instantly put me more at ease.

A flurry of movement caught my attention, and Lucian's head dipped toward a flustered-looking Omega, whom I recognized as the one overseeing catering services for the gala.

Lucian nodded once and turned back to me and William. "If you'll excuse me,"—he gave me an apologetic smile—"there's an urgent matter I have to attend to."

William smiled. "I'll keep your...partner company, don't worry, brother."

Lucian's touch lingered on my waist as he slanted an incomprehensible look at his brother. And then his touch disappeared as he followed the Omega into the hall.

My side suddenly bereft, I became aware of how quickly the crowd could close in when I was alone.

William must have sensed it, and he effortlessly slid to my side, taking Lucian's place.

He offered me a glass of wine from a passing tray and a reassuring nod. "I'm sure he won't be long. In the meantime, I'll keep you company."

I accepted the glass, fingers curling around the stem. "Thank you."

William's smile was calm, reassuring. "You're handling yourself well tonight. Most would feel cornered, standing at the forefront of an event like this."

I exhaled softly, amused. "I suppose that means I'm hiding my nerves better than I thought."

"Or," he countered gently, "you're steadier than you give yourself credit for."

A smile tugged at my lips. "You sound practiced at putting people at ease. Very like your brother."

He seemed pleased at that and raised his glass in mock-toast. "That is a high compliment."

For a moment, silence stretched comfortably, then curiosity pulled at me. "Will you tell me what he was like? Before OTS? Before"—I waved around the glamorous hall—"all this?"

William's chuckle was low and warm. "Lucian doesn't talk much about the past, does he?"

"Not really," I admitted. "He's always so focused on what's ahead."

"He's been that way for as long as I can remember," William mused. "But once, even though he wasn't the first son, he was the prime candidate to lead our family's pack. Everyone expected it—he was smarter, stronger, more ambitious than most—even me—then."

I tilted my head, intrigued. “And yet he didn’t?”

William’s eyes softened, his tone contemplative. “He chose his own path instead. Strayed for a while, lost his way, but ultimately...his destination didn’t change. He still sought to lead. To build something of his own. Shadowveil is impressive, but I think OTS is his truest expression of that.”

I let the words sink in, slowly swirling the wine in my glass.

I was surprised to hear that Shadowveil hadn’t been Lucian’s birthright, but honestly, I wasn’t surprised that he’d walked away, carved something new, forged his own vision.

It fit him. He was too scrupulous, too uncompromising to inherit someone else’s mantle.

“Was he always this composed?” I asked, my curiosity growing.

William barked out a laugh. “Composed? Hardly. He was a wild child—mischievous, impulsive. He and our little sister Sabrina were constantly at each other’s throats. Always brawling, always competing. We thought the roof might cave in some days.”

I laughed with him, the image too surreal to hold in my head.

Lucian—the man who barely flinched at chaos, who could calculate ten steps ahead in a single breath—once an unruly boy throwing fists with his sister?

The thought left me marveling. And wondering if I would ever be privileged to see that side of him.

“He doesn’t look it now,” I murmured.

“No,” William agreed, smile softening. “But that spark is still there. Controlled, directed. He’s only more dangerous for having tamed it.”

Before I could respond, movement from the corner of the hall caught my attention.

A woman approached—tall, elegant, with hair the color of gilded bronze and eyes like jade. Her dress clung to her figure in strategic places, and her Alpha aura wafted off her like perfume.

Her smile edged in challenge before she even opened her mouth.

“Seraphina Blackthorne,” she greeted, though her eyes slid briefly to William—recognition flickering in her gaze—then back to me. “I’ve heard quite a bit about you.”

“Have you?” I asked carefully, straightening.

“Oh yes.” Her lips curved. “I’m Helen. An old...acquaintance of Lucian’s.”

The pause before the word ‘acquaintance’ was telling.

William stiffened almost imperceptibly beside me. His voice was low, a murmur meant only for me.
“Translation: She pursued him once. He rejected her.”

My stomach tightened. Lovely.

Helen’s eyes glinted. “I couldn’t help but notice the necklace.” She tilted her head. “A bold gesture. But words and gifts can be deceiving, don’t you think? Perhaps we should test how well you fit Lucian’s world.”

I frowned. “Test?”

She gestured toward the far end of the hall, where an entire section had been cordoned off from the main throng of mingling guests.

Silken ropes marked the boundary, beyond which the mood shifted from formal elegance to something more playful.

There, attendants moved between clusters of guests as they tested their skills at various diversions: a table laid with strategy games, a dartboard gleaming under lantern light, even a sparring ring where a few young warriors circled each other under watchful eyes.

But the centerpiece was the row of archery targets set up against a reinforced backdrop. Bows of polished wood and quivers of feather-fletched arrows were neatly arranged on display, gleaming under chandeliers.

The sharp twang of bowstrings occasionally pierced through the hum of music, followed by the scattered applause of onlookers.

Helen's eyes flicked deliberately toward the targets. "A friendly game," she said smoothly, though her tone left no doubt she meant anything but. Then her smile sharpened, wicked with challenge. "If I win, you leave Lucian."

The bluntness, the sheer audacity of it, took my breath for a moment. "E-excuse me?"

Then, colder: "If you refuse, well...I doubt Lucian would want such cowardice around him."

I wanted to laugh at the absurdity. I wasn't here to play childish games of jealousy.

But my gaze flickered around, and I noticed the gathering crowd, the watching eyes. The weight of OTS's reputation pressed in, and I knew refusal wasn't so simple.

I'd been officially introduced as Lucian's partner; if I backed down, it wouldn't just be my pride that suffered—it would be Lucian's standing.

I straightened, meeting Helen's eyes evenly. "And if you lose?"

Her smile faltered just a fraction. "I won't—"

I took a step forward, voice steady. "When you lose, you'll accept a condition of my choosing."

Murmurs rippled nearby, attention sharpening, anticipation coiling in the air. Helen's smile returned, sharper now, almost hungry.

"Agreed."

I held her gaze, my pulse steady despite the storm beneath my skin.

Let her think me a coward. Let her think me unworthy.

I'd show her—and everyone watching—exactly how wrong she was.