

My Sister 131

Chapter 131 FRAGILE AND SOLID

SERAPHINA'S POV

The hall still hummed with noise long after Lucian's announcement. Excited murmurs collided like sparks from flint, igniting speculation in every corner.

"The Moon Dew Nectar...could it be real?" someone called out, their tone half awe, half disbelief.

"The Moon Dew Nectar doesn't exist," someone else barked, disbelief curling through his tone. "It's folklore."

"No, I've read papers on it," another insisted, breathless. "The plant's real. The recipe? Lost centuries ago."

"How could OTS possibly have it?"

"Or...is this all a clever trick?"

Speculation tangled with awe until the whole place was a fever dream.

I didn't need heightened hearing to catch the words: impossible, fabricated, mythical, priceless.

The voices around me tangled together—awed gasps, suspicious whispers, greedy mutterings.

My hands fisted the fabric of my dress harder than I intended, my knuckles whitening. This was no ordinary prize.

It was more than glory, more than wealth. Whoever claimed it would wield a miracle.

Lucian stood tall before the case, his expression carefully composed but unmistakably proud.

His dark suit caught the gilded light, his presence commanding the entire room. "Doubt," he said smoothly, his voice carrying with the authority of a born Alpha, "is natural. But truth does not need belief to exist."

A murmur rippled again, skeptical yet attentive.

And then—because of course Lucian would leave no room for doubt—he lifted his hand.

The massive screen behind us flickered to life.

The image sharpened into the face of a man even I recognized—a pharmaceutical master, gray at the temples, with a reputation untouchable in the werewolf world.

His work in medicine and elixirs was often called revolutionary, his name whispered with reverence like an incantation.

“Master Qadir,” Lucian introduced. “A name that requires no embellishment in our world. He has examined and authenticated the elixir personally.”

The man adjusted his silver glasses and nodded into the camera. “Yes,” he said plainly. “And what OTS has unveiled is no counterfeit. I have examined samples of this elixir personally. The Moon Dew Nectar is real.”

Gasps swept the room anew, this time edged with exhilaration. Skeptics fell silent, their folded arms loosening.

And then the hall erupted.

Some cried out in wonder, others muttered feverishly, while a few still shook their heads, stubbornly unwilling to accept what their eyes and ears told them.

But it no longer mattered. Lucian had brought forth an unimpeachable authority.

I found my pulse racing, heat crawling up the back of my neck.

The weight of the prize pressed down on me, heavier than expectation. I wasn't just competing for prestige now.

This was about legacy, salvation, hope—for so many. For myself.

And yet, despite the knot of nerves in my stomach, a strange fire lit inside me. Excitement. Determination.

As though the Nectar itself was daring me: come and earn me, if you are worthy.

When the evening's formalities finally drew to a close, Lucian was at my side almost instantly, his hand finding the small of my back with the kind of easy claim that made warmth dart up my spine.

"Come with me," he murmured, steering me gently but firmly away from the dispersing crowd.

His pace carried me out of the grand hall and onto a private terrace tucked along the hall's edge.

Cool night air swept against my skin, carrying the faint perfume of roses from the garden below.

Above us, strings of lanterns glowed like captive stars, their light softening the world into something almost intimate.

“Your expression betrays you,” Lucian said softly as we walked toward the railing, his tone teasing but edged with something cautious. “You’re still thinking about it.”

“How could I not?” I glanced up at him, my voice low, almost reverent. “The Moon Dew Nectar—it’s the stuff of myths. Logically, it shouldn’t actually exist. Yet here it is.”

I shook my head. “It’s so surreal.”

Lucian chuckled indulgently. “It’s actually not that unbelievable. The formula was not...mine to begin with.” His tone carried a note I rarely heard from him—a wistfulness, threaded with something close to...grief. “It was entrusted to me. By someone I once knew.”

There it was again—that shadow, flickering across his expression before he mastered it.

I tilted my head, curiosity sparking. “Someone you knew?”

His lips pressed into a thin line. “She shared with me the basics. But the attempts to replicate—hundreds of them—failed. It was only after tireless trial and error that we achieved success.”

“She?” The word slipped out terser than intended.

A faint smile curved his mouth, not quite reaching his eyes. “A friend.”

A friend. Yet the soft longing in his tone betrayed more. I caught it, tucked it away in the back of my mind for examination later.

Still, before I could probe further, he deflected, leaning closer. “Tell me honestly, Seraphina. Do you resent me for not giving the Nectar directly to you?”

The question disarmed me. My breath hitched.

For a moment, I imagined it: me, healed, whole, powerful beyond my wildest imaginations.

And yet—I shook my head slowly.

“No. I understand. Something that precious...you can’t just give it out recklessly. Too many others need it too. I’d rather earn it. That way, it’s mine—rightfully.”

Lucian's gaze deepened, heat and admiration mingling in the pools of his eyes. "I have no doubt that you will win it."

"Really?"

He nodded. "If my friend were here, I know she would want someone like you to have the Nectar. Integrity and bravery—she prized those above all else."

The words struck me like a bell, echoing in my chest.

Not only was I now carrying Lucian's confidence, but the conviction of someone I had never even met.

And then, as if sensing the weight of my nerves, Lucian took my hand. "I have something for you."

He gestured toward a chair near a table draped in silver cloth.

Upon it sat a long, elegant box, its surface etched with faint designs that glimmered in the lantern light.

"What's this?" I asked cautiously as he led me towards it.

“A gift,” he said, his voice lower now, carrying that elusive softness I liked to think he reserved just for me.

I exhaled. “You’ve already given me so much, Lucian.”

He smiled. “Then consider this a reminder.”

“A reminder?”

“Due to a...conflict of interest, I can’t have any contact with you during the LST. I don’t want to jeopardize your victory with false accusations or speculations.”

“Oh.” And even though he was still in front of me, I felt a pang of his absence resonate within me.

“But,”—he raised our joined hands and kissed my knuckles—“even if we won’t have contact during the trials, you are never alone.”

My pulse quickened as I slowly lifted the lid with my free hand.

Inside lay an outfit folded with meticulous care.

With trembling hands, I unfolded it, and my breath caught. I could tell it was tailored for me, down to the last seam.

Midnight-dark fabric kissed with threads of silver, cut sleek and strong, meant not just to flatter but to empower.

It was beautiful, yes, but more than that—it felt like armor woven from his belief in me.

“Lucian...” My voice faltered. “You had this made for me?”

His lips curved, but the gleam in his eyes was what stole my breath. “For you. To wear when you step into the trials. So that when you walk into that Arena, you’ll know I am with you—even if I cannot be at your side.”

I swallowed hard against the tightness rising in my throat. My fingers brushed the fabric, trembling faintly.

“You didn’t have to—”

“I did,” he interrupted gently. “You’ve carried so much. Tonight, I wanted to give you something that carried you in return.”

The night air pressed cool against my cheeks, but my chest was unbearably warm. For a moment, words failed me, tangled in gratitude and something I couldn't describe.

I gently set it down into the box and reached for him—

A cough broke the moment.

I startled at the sound, the thread of intimacy between us snapping as my head whipped toward the balcony's entrance.

Maya stood there, one hand half-raised as if caught mid-apology, her cheeks tinged pink.

Her dark curls framed her face wildly, and her ever-present air of mischief softened the awkwardness of her intrusion.

"Sorry, sorry!" she said quickly, her grin both sheepish and unrepentant. "I wasn't spying and I didn't mean to intrude—well, not on purpose."

I exhaled, half-relieved, half-annoyed.

My heart was still racing from Lucian's words, and now I had to shove all that tangled emotion aside.

“Maya...” I tried to sound reproachful, but it came out more weary than anything else.

Lucian arched a brow, leaning back with an almost amused sigh. “You have an uncanny talent for interruption.”

“Part of my charm,” she shot back, unabashed.

Then her attention swung fully to me, her eyes lighting up. “As a judge, I also won’t be able to have any contact with you during the LST.”

My eyes widened. “You too?”

She crossed the terrace with brisk steps, then clasped my hands dramatically in hers. “You’re going to crush them, Sera. Absolutely obliterate the competition. And I brought...a gift of my own.”

Lucian’s lips twitched. “Oh, Goddess. Spare us.”

Maya ignored him. With a flourish, she pulled a tiny pouch from her pocket, scattering a few glittering pebbles onto the table between us.

They caught the lantern light, shimmering iridescently.

I blinked. "What are these?"

"Moonstones. Charged under the last full moon. Totally legitimate werewolf good-luck charm." She winked. "Don't ask me where I got them; my sources are top secret."

My lips twitched. "The flea market?"

"Shush," she laughed.

Then she arranged the stones into a crooked circle, muttered something that might have been half prayer, half joke, then grabbed my wrist and pressed one into my palm. "There. Now you've got the blessing of fate itself. Guaranteed victory."

I laughed, curling my fingers around the stone. "Maya..."

"I know, I know. You love me," she declared, beaming.

I shook my head as more laughter bubbled from my lips. She wasn't wrong.

The three of us lingered there, the moon's glow spilling across the terrace, quiet and steady.

I looked at them—two of the most important people in this strange new Chapter of my life—and something inside me settled.

“I’ll try,” I said softly, breaking the silence. The words felt both fragile and solid, like glass forged into steel, but it bore the weight of their faith in me. “I don’t know if I’ll win, but I’ll give everything I have. I promise.”

Maya squeezed my arm, grinning. “That’s the spirit.”

Lucian’s gaze lingered on me, unreadable but searing all the same. “That’s all anyone can ask of you. And it will be enough.”

Under the silver wash of the moonlight, I breathed in deep, letting the night carry my vow into the dark.