

My Sister 136

Chapter 136 LITTLE MISS I'M-THE-STRONGEST-HERE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The fog thickened as we pressed deeper into the Misty Woods, clinging to my hair and saturating my clothes until every step felt heavier than the last.

My lungs drew in air that should have burned or muddied my senses, but the fog slid past me like it didn't quite know what to do with someone who was half-empty. No wolf to drown, no heightened senses to dull—just me, raw and bare.

Take that, fate.

Unfortunately, the others weren't so lucky.

As harmless as it had been at first, the longer we stayed in the fog, the more it affected my Omega teammates.

Judy's eyes kept flicking almost erratically, straining to pierce the haze, while Talia stumbled on roots hidden under the gray carpet of air.

Finn's voice wavered as he spoke lowly. Still, surprisingly, he led us, occasionally pointing to faint imprints on the ground, guiding us with the sharpness of someone obviously used to watching and paying attention when others rushed ahead.

And Roxy was still gone.

For now, I told myself not to think about her. She was a distraction best left to stew.

We had our mission—three shards, a finish line, and a ticking clock—and like I'd told the rest of the team, I was sure we would find her again.

We broke into a clearing where the ground sloped into a marsh, stagnant pools reflecting what little light filtered through the fog.

"There it is," Finn said, pointing ahead.

I followed his line of sight, and sure enough, a glow pulsed faintly between the trees. Hope surged through me.

"Let's—"

But before we could move, we heard it: thrashing.

“Help! Get me out of here!”

Roxy.

Never thought I’d hate being right.

I rushed forward, skidding to a halt at the water’s edge. The smell hit me first—rot and damp earth—and I might have laughed at the sight before me if it was anything but funny.

Little Miss I’m-the-strongest-here was waist-deep in muck, one arm hooked desperately around a protruding root.

Every time she thrashed, the swamp pulled harder, dragging her down with greedy hands.

“Gods,” Judy muttered, rolling her eyes. “Of course.”

Talia’s face paled. “I-if she sinks any lower, she won’t be able to breathe.”

Finn scanned the area, his voice calm but strained. “The mud’s thick—if anyone goes in, they’ll get trapped too.”

Lovely.

Before I could form a plan, a metallic crackle cut through the fog, and a voice boomed across the woods, carried by invisible speakers.

“Attention competitors. Six teams have successfully completed the challenge. Three advancement slots remain.”

The words hit like ice shards on my skin. Six teams had finished. That left us competing for scraps.

“Shit,” Judy echoed my thoughts, spinning toward me. “We haven’t even found the second shard; we don’t have time for this.”

I looked at Roxy, then back to my team.

I knew what they were thinking: leave her, cut our losses, push ahead before it was too late. Logical. Efficient. Survival at its most ruthless.

But dammit, I wasn’t built that way.

I crouched low, eyes locked on Roxy's panicked face. "You're a bitch," I said. "But you're not dying here. Hold still."

Her teeth snapped together in what was probably more embarrassment than pride. "Don't—don't act like you care. You'll only slow down your precious team if you waste time on me."

But beneath her abrasive words, I caught the flicker of terror she couldn't hide. She didn't want to be left alone. No one ever did.

"Finn," I barked, pulling a coil of rope from our supplies, "find me a sturdy trunk"—I tossed one end of the rope at him—"and secure a knot. Talia, Judy, stay ready—if she slips, you help me pull."

They hesitated, and I snapped, "I would do the same for any of you. We're a team!" My tone left no room for debate as I glared at each one of them, making it clear I expected them to act. Now.

Judy muttered a curse but grudgingly obeyed, stomping over to stand beside Talia. Finn's hands steadily tied a loop, his fingers moving with quick precision.

"On three," I called, tossing the rope toward Roxy. "One. Two. Three!"

She lunged, fingers scraping over the wet coil. For a sickening second, it slid through her grasp. Then she clamped down, knuckles white, body jerking against the marsh's greedy suction.

“Pull!”

The rest of the team joined in as the rope strained, biting into my palms as the swamp tried to claim Roxy.

Judy’s muscles bulged, Talia whimpered but dug in her heels, Finn angled the rope around the trunk for leverage.

My heart pounded, my arms screaming with effort, until at last Roxy’s body broke free with a wet, sucking sound.

She collapsed onto solid ground, coughing, smeared from shoulder to toe in muck. For a long moment, none of us moved, breaths ragged in the choking fog.

Then Finn stiffened. His gaze darted to the right, toward the faint shimmer we had seen beyond the marsh. “The second shard—it’s gone.”

My eyes widened as I searched for the glow, but it had vanished.

Judy swore viciously. “That was it. Gone. Gods damn it!”

Talia’s shoulders slumped. “The other shards are in the opposite zone, and we’ll never make it there in time to find two.”

Their despair pressed heavy in the air, gnawing at the strands of fragile unity we had left. For a heartbeat, even I felt it—the crushing weight of inevitability. We were too late.

But surrender wasn't an option.

I straightened, wiping muck from my hands. "We're still breathing. That means we still try. The other shards are across the woods. Longer route or not, we move."

Judy opened her mouth, then shut it again, jaw clenched. Finn gave a single, steady nod. Talia bit her lip but whispered, "Okay."

Behind us, Roxy staggered upright, eyes blazing. "You guys really are stupid, you know that?"

I arched a brow. "Excuse you?"

She wiped a sleeve across her face, then reached into her mud-soaked bag and rummaged blindly. After a while, she pulled out a glowing fragment of stone, slick with swamp water but unmistakable—the second Moonstone Shard.

My breath caught. "You had it?"

She shrugged, her voice trembling. "I grabbed it before I..." She glanced at the swamp and shuddered. "Another team was close, I thought they'd take it from me, so I ran. Then...well..." She gestured at the swamp.

The others stared in stunned silence.

Judy finally barked out a laugh, sharp and delighted. "You almost drowned sitting on the damn thing?"

Color flared in Roxy's cheeks. "Shut up. You guys were the ones who risked the whole damn challenge to get me out."

"Yeah," Judy snorted. "Pretty stupid of us."

Roxy scoffed and said nothing.

But something shifted in that moment.

The tension that had crackled between us since the start softened. Just a little.

And just like that, Roxy wasn't a rival or a burden now. She was a teammate, mud-stained and stubborn, but ours.

I met her gaze. “We’re not done yet. Two down, one to go. Together.”

Roxy held my stare for a long, bristling second. Then she gave a sharp nod.

We set off again, forging toward the far side of the woods. Every step sucked at our boots. Branches clawed at our clothes. But the fog no longer felt as suffocating.

We had momentum. We had a chance.

—Until we stumbled upon our next obstacle.

A faint rustle, too deliberate to be wind, brushed against my ears. I froze, raising a hand for silence.

The others stilled, eyes wide, listening. The sound came again—a shift of leaves, the crunch of weight on damp soil.

We weren’t alone.

Judy’s hand slid to the knife at her belt as she whispered, “Another team.”

Talia's breath quickened. "What do we do?"

Combat wasn't against the rules. In fact, the history of the trials was painted with blood—teams sabotaging each other, brutally clashing to secure their advancement.

If another group thought we were weak, they wouldn't hesitate to strike.

"Lay low," I whispered, motioning them behind the thicker brush. "The fog will hide us. Wait for them to pass, then we move."

But then the figures emerged from the fog.

At their head strode a tall man with broad shoulders, his gait commanding, his presence sharp enough to penetrate through the mist.

The silver in his dark hair glinted even in the fog, his jaw set in grim determination.

Recognition crashed into me like a blow, and I hesitated, not knowing whether to feel comfort or stay on guard.

Would I get William Reed, Lucian's brother, or Alpha William, leader of Ashveil pack?

Friend or foe?