

My Sister 138

Chapter 138 ANOTHER LECTURE

SERAPHINA'S POV

The last shard gleamed faintly in the fog like it had been waiting for us all along.

My fingers brushed the rough, moonlit stone as I pulled it free from the root where it was wedged.

A tremor passed through me—not from the effort, but from what it meant.

We had done it.

The final advancement slot was ours!

For a heartbeat, none of us spoke. There was just the sound of our ragged breathing, the hiss of mist curling low around our boots, and the glow of the shard's faint shimmer in my palm.

Then Judy laughed—loud, fierce, joyous. She grabbed my arm, shaking me so hard the shard nearly slipped from my fingers.

“We did it! We actually did it!”

Finn exhaled like he’d been holding his breath for hours, his shoulders easing at last.

Even Talia let out a little squeak, covering her mouth as though laughter might be too indulgent—then giggling anyway.

Even Roxy couldn’t hide the spark in her eyes. Her lips twitched, and though she tried to suppress it, her posture relaxed and her gaze softened—a reluctant but undeniable joy.

I closed my fist around the shard, drawing strength from its cool weight as I chuckled. “Let’s get to the finish line before one of you collapses from excitement.”

We half-ran, half-stumbled through the fog toward the clearing where the finish markers blazed.

The moment we stepped past, a blaring announcement confirmed what we already knew: “Team Seven—advancement confirmed. All slots are now filled.”

Cheers broke from my team. Relief rolled through me like a wave, washing away the dread and doubt that had shadowed every step.

An attendant pressed thin silver badges into our hands, each engraved with the OTS insignia and the numeral 9—our new team designation for the next round.

Mine sat heavy on my chest when I pinned it to the jacket Lucian gave me. I brushed the fabric reverently, imagining the smile he would give me if he were standing before me.

Gods, I missed him. And Maya. They would both be so proud.

Judy twirled her badge on the chain like a medal. "We earned this." She squealed. "Damn right we did!"

Surprisingly, Roxy didn't snap at her for being loud. She only muttered, "We'd better," though I caught the faint curve of her mouth.

Talia clutched her badge close, eyes shining, and then she surprised me by suggesting, "We should...we should celebrate. Together."

Judy immediately latched onto the idea. "Yes!" She clapped her hands together excitedly. "Let's all go out to dinner!"

I smiled faintly. "Yeah, that sounds nice."

Again, Roxy surprised me when she didn't protest. "As long as it's not whatever sludge the cafeteria tries to pass off as stew."

Talia's face brightened. "I know a place! It's quiet, affordable, and—" She flushed at the sudden attention, ducking her head. "And the food's amazing. Please, let me take you."

It wasn't just excitement in her tone—it was pride. Like offering us this restaurant was offering a piece of herself.

I glanced at the others, then nodded. "Lead the way."

The restaurant was tucked off a side street, lanterns glowing warm against the cool night.

The scent of sizzling meat and herbs hit us before we even stepped inside, rich and mouthwatering.

After the suffocating damp of the woods, the heat and spice felt like stepping into another world.

We crowded into a wooden booth, badges still gleaming on our chests.

Plates arrived soon after, steaming with roasted fish, spiced rice, and broth so fragrant even Roxy's scowl melted into a grudging nod.

“Not bad,” she muttered, then—after a bite—added with a smile, “Not bad at all.”

Talia’s cheeks glowed pink, delight spilling out of her in laughter. “Food is a passion of mine, but I don’t really have people to share it with.” Her smile dimmed a little. “Back home, my brothers would tease me. They made fun of me for eating too much. That’s why I...” She gestured at her round frame, faltering.

Silence settled, not cruel but heavy.

“OTS is different, though,” she rushed to add with a shy smile. “No one cares about my weight, only that I pull it on the sparring mat.”

I reached over and squeezed her hand. “As it should be.”

Then Judy leaned forward, stabbing a piece of fish with her chopsticks. “Screw your brothers,” she declared. “And whoever else made fun of you. Their loss. They were properly bitter because they had no one to lead them to the joys of good food.”

Finn lifted his glass. “To Talia. May her taste always guide us.”

The toast earned a round of chuckles and lifted the shadows from Talia’s face.

The conversation shifted, loosening with every bite as everyone told their own stories.

Judy shared how she'd joined OTS after being overlooked for her pack's combat division, repeating what she'd told me about how much she wanted to make her family proud and give them a good standing in their pack.

As tall as he was, Finn seemed to shrink when he spoke. "I was always smaller than everyone else. Too wiry to be picked for sparring. And my wolf—" He shrugged. "They said I looked more coyote than wolf. Not...noble enough."

There was no bitterness in his tone, only a quiet acceptance. But it scraped at me, the cruelty of those who dismissed strength just because it didn't match their mold.

"Idiots," Judy said flatly. "If they can't see the amazing value you bring, that's on them."

Finn's mouth curved slightly, gratitude flickering in his gaze.

Roxy was next. Or should have been.

But she just toyed with her cup, eyes darting between us, lips pressed tight.

Judy nudged her. "Your turn. What dragged you to OTS?"

Roxy's jaw clenched. I saw the hesitation in her eyes, the flicker of...fear?

I frowned, surprised. I knew that Roxy and Jessica had joined OTS together, but that was the extent of my knowledge.

But it seemed that Jessica's shadow loomed even here, binding Roxy's tongue.

Before any of us could pry an answer out of her, a sharp burst of noise split the air—the clatter of boots, the sharp ring of laughter at the entrance.

All our heads turned in its direction, and I rolled my eyes.

Jessica.

She strode in with her team flanking her like a queen with courtiers. Her piercing gaze swept the room, and when it landed on our table—on Roxy—it hardened into a frown.

“Well, well.” Her heels clicked across the floor as she approached. “Roxy. What a surprise.”

Roxy stiffened, her knuckles whitening around her cup.

“When you ignored my text to hang out, I didn’t think for the life of me it was because of…” Jessica’s eyes slid across the rest of us, dismissive. “...them.”

Roxy’s head dipped, and I couldn’t stop my eyes from widening at the sudden act of submission.

“I’m sorry,” she said with uncharacteristic meekness. “I haven’t been with my phone all day.”

Jessica’s scoff was almost...pitying.

“I can’t imagine what an awful day you’ve had, Rox. You must have suffered terribly, dragging these deadweights all the way to advancement.”

Her teammates snickered on cue, voices dripping venom.

“Had to have been luck.”

“They won’t last another round.”

“Losers dragging losers to the finish line—pathetic.”

I was used to condescending barbs, and they all bounced off my skin like rubber pellets. But I couldn't say the same for my team.

For Talia, who shrank into herself. For Finn, whose expression shuttered. For Judy, who tensed like she was preparing to leap across the table.

And for Roxy, who slammed her palm down with a crack, rattling the dishes on the table. "Shut the fuck up!"

For an instant, pride surged in me as the Roxy I knew surfaced. But then Jessica's eyes narrowed, cold and lethal, pinning Roxy in place.

And Roxy shrank. Shoulders hunching, glare faltering, her defiance withering under the weight of Jessica's dominance.

"Yikes," Jessica laughed. "Not you cowering. You're spending too much time with the weak, Roxy; that shit rubs off on you."

My chest burned as I rose, my chair scraping harshly against the floor. "That's enough, Jessica."

Her gaze snapped to me, disdain curling her lips. "Oooh, Seraphina." She cocked her head to the side and widened her eyes. "Am I getting another lecture?"

Damn right, she was.

“You’ve completely forgotten the point of this trial,” I said, voice steady though my pulse thundered, “The LST wasn’t made for us to claw at each other. It was made to raise OTS higher. To prove that the weakest of us can stand with—or against—the strongest in any pack. You’re an Omega,”—I swept my hand toward my team—“just like them. Why you feel the need to lord over your equals is beyond me.”

Her smirk faltered, ever so slightly.

“You want to mock us?” I pressed, stepping closer. “Fine. But remember this: of all the OTS squads, only two remain. Yours. And ours. That means our duty isn’t just to ourselves—it’s to OTS. And I’ll be damned if I let you drag its honor through the mud because of your overinflated sense of self.”

For a moment, silence stretched taut as a bowstring. Jessica’s jaw tightened, and I could see anger bristling through her like a storm.

Her team shifted behind her, glancing at themselves uncomfortably. I arched a brow, waiting for a comeback.

Finally, she leaned in so close I could smell the mint on her breath. “The only team dragging OTS’s name through the mud is yours,” she sneered. “But don’t worry, OTS will win.”

She leaned back and folded her arms. “But it will be my team that leads us to victory.”

Judy snorted, and Jessica shot her a sharp look.

Judy smiled and gave her the middle finger salute.

Jessica rolled her eyes and, with a sharp turn of her heel, snapped, "Enjoy your tiny win while it lasts. The real victory will be mine."

Her team followed in her wake, leaving the sting of her words behind.

None of us moved till the door swung shut behind them.

Then, I turned back to my squad.

"We made it this far," I said quietly, shooting each of them a confident smile. "And we'll go further. Together."

Judy grinned fiercely, lifting her glass in the air. Finn met my eyes and gave a quiet, confident nod. Talia's eyes glistened, and she blinked away tears, her smile wide.

Even Roxy, though silent, sat up straighter and met my gaze with a flicker of respect, her posture no longer withdrawn.

And despite Jessica's taunts and barbs, my faith that we could win only grew stronger.

After all, winning wouldn't be any fun if there was no one's face to rub it in.