

My Sister 146

Chapter 146 PERFECTLY IN SYNC

KIERAN'S POV

At this point, Sera was probably convinced I was stalking her. And, with how we kept running into each other in the most unlikely places, I wouldn't blame her.

To be clear, I wasn't.

Byron was an old friend. He'd been pouring me drinks long before I was Alpha, long before I thought myself untouchable.

He also didn't know the details of who I was, and something about the anonymity always lifted a weight off my shoulder when I was with him.

When he invited me to his bar's anniversary celebration, I told myself I'd show up, shake his hand, maybe buy him a congratulatory drink, and leave.

I wasn't in the mood for crowds or chatter, not with the gravity of the responsibilities I'd accepted at the LST, and my head buzzing with conflicting thoughts and emotions.

And not when Celeste had returned home last night from the last Trial in a foul mood—even more so than usual.

She'd spent the entire day slamming doors and muttering angrily about "insolent leaders" and "unworthy rivals," whatever the hell that meant.

Usually, I would have sought my peace and quiet at Luna Noire, but tonight, I felt the need to be far removed from everything wolf-related.

Which was ironic, seeing as even the human world was immersed in OTS and the LST.

Byron spotted me the moment I walked in. His dark hair had more grey now, but his brown eyes still carried that familiar gleam of mischief as he sidled next to me.

He clapped a heavy hand on my shoulder. "Been a while, old friend. Finally decided to crawl out of your cave, eh?"

"I don't live in a cave," I muttered.

"You might as well," he chuckled. "Come on, sit. Have a drink. You look like you need it."

He wasn't wrong.

I let him usher me across the room to a seat tucked in the corner where the shadows were thick enough that I could barely make out the other patrons, and they couldn't see me. Just what I wanted.

He slid me a glass of scotch before I could even order.

"On the house," he said. "And lose that scowl. You look like you've been chewing glass all week. Tonight's about fun, Kieran. Leave whatever responsibilities you have and lighten up."

Easier said than done.

Byron didn't push, though—he never did. It was one of the reasons we'd stayed friends for so long despite our differences in age and species.

He kept the drinks coming and the conversation easy, until I felt some more of the tightness in my chest ease.

For a moment, the role I would have to fulfil tomorrow ceased to exist. The ire and angst waiting for me at home faded away. Intrusive thoughts of a certain cerulean blue-eyed enigma slipped from my mind.

And I could just...be.

But Byron had other ideas.

“Come on,” he announced after about half an hour, standing as he threw back the rest of his whiskey.

I arched a brow, nursing my third glass of scotch. “Excuse me?”

He grinned and leaned forward, gripping my forearm. With a firm pull, he tugged me out of the booth.

He was surprisingly strong for a man in his mid-fifties, and although I could have easily resisted him, my curiosity let him continue pulling me.

And then, before I could process what was happening, he steered me toward the stage and nudged me firmly, leaving me facing the crowd.

“What the fuck, Byron?” I snarled lowly.

He ignored me and began talking into the mic.

“Twenty years ago today, my wife and I opened the doors of this very bar,” he started with a fond smile. “And the reason we picked this day is because it was also our tenth wedding anniversary.” He chuckled. “We figured—why not celebrate both at once? A marriage and a bar. She always said they were both about love, trust, and a bit of stubbornness to see them through.”

My chest clenched when his smile wavered just slightly, touched with memory, before he straightened.

“So every year on this night, I like to raise a glass to my Lillian and to all of you who’ve kept this place alive with laughter and stories. And as tradition goes—this is the part you’ve been waiting for—it’s time for our anniversary raffle draw. Let’s see who’s walking away lucky tonight!”

My brief moment of sentiment faded away, and I rolled my eyes, debating walking right off the stage.

As soon as Byron started calling out other winners of the raffle draw to join us on stage, my gaze fixed on the exit, and I was two seconds away from making a run for it when I heard her name.

“Seraphina Blackthorne!”

My breathing stilled. Surely I’d heard wrong. He couldn’t possibly have said—

“Seraphina Blackthorne,” Byron repeated. “Where’s our lucky winner?”

The lights in the bar were dimmed. The spotlights on the stage made it hard to see the crowd, but even then, my eyes found her, like a magnet to shillings.

She sat at the bar, looking as startled as I felt, and hesitated for the barest fraction of a second. But then the crowd's applause and whistles and the gentle nudge of the bartender pushed her forward.

She moved through the crowd like a vision conjured by the gods. The lights bounced off her pale hair, setting it off in mesmerizing red and blue hues.

Thanks to her training at OTS, her figure had toned considerably, and the romper she wore showed it off like a fucking prize.

It took all of my willpower to shove away thoughts of my hands on that body—in my battered car, on the yacht, on the floor of the villa.

'Get it together,' I chided myself.

And then she looked up, and our gazes collided.

Her steps faltered, those gorgeous eyes widening.

For a heartbeat, the bar disappeared, and we were the only two people in the room, in the whole damn world.

Just like when I'd run into her in the OTS cafeteria, there were a hundred things I wanted to say to her.

And just like then, I knew nothing I could say would matter. Not anymore.

Boundaries.

For a moment, I thought she'd turn on her heels and leave. That would have been the sensible thing, the thing she'd been trying to do for the months since our divorce—keep her distance, keep me at arm's length.

But she didn't. She squared her shoulders, lifted her chin, and stepped onto the stage.

A dozen emotions warred inside me—relief, dread, hunger, guilt.

I clenched my fists and tried to remember what it meant to breathe.

The first challenges were harmless enough—icebreakers and party games disguised as competitions—a trivia round, a quick-fire reflex test where you had to slap a button before your opponent.

Sera and I were on opposite ends of the stage, and none of the challenges required us to get closer.

She played along with more enthusiasm than I'd expected, her laughter low and sweet—each one loosening more easily than the last.

The crowd adored her, and I could barely focus on my tasks. This wasn't the Sera who once shrank into herself; she seemed larger than life now as she engaged and competed.

And reminded me that she'd become a completely different person.

Eventually, the games whittled us down. Two people were knocked out during trivia, and another couple failed spectacularly at the reflex test.

That left six competitors: one older married couple, Sera and me, and a pair of college kids who looked like they might suffocate and drop dead if they couldn't touch each other.

Byron grinned, clearly delighted by the lineup. "And now, the final challenge! A battle of teamwork, trust, and quick thinking! And we're going to pair up!"

My mouth dried up.

The pairing was automatic. The older couple held hands, and the girl instantly wrapped her arms around her boyfriend's neck like a koala.

Which left me and Sera.

I saw her spine stiffen, noticed her hands trembling at her sides as Byron gently placed a hand on her back and eased her towards me, throwing me a wink over her head. The bastard.

The stage crew wheeled out a large contraption that looked like a cross between a balance beam and a puzzle board. Colored tiles lit up across its surface, glowing in random sequences.

“Here’s how it works,” Byron explained. “Each pair must cross from one end to the other by stepping only on the tiles that light up in their sequence. But”—his grin widened—“the sequences are mirrored. That means each partner will see a different pattern, and you’ll have to call out instructions to guide each other across. One wrong step, and it’s back to the beginning!”

The crowd whooped. I swore under my breath.

“Of course,” I muttered. “A trust exercise.”

Sera shot me a sideways glance. “Think you can manage that?”

She’d said the words lightly, but they carried a heavy undertone that I felt deep in my chest.

Trust.

That was a phenomenon I'd never once related to Sera. After all, how could you trust someone you never even let yourself know?

"What about you?" I asked lowly. "Think you can trust me?"

Her eyes flicked up to mine, and my breath caught at the sheer intensity of raging emotions that shone in them—betrayal, hurt, detachment.

"What do you think?" she said softly.

I dropped my gaze, a lump forming in my throat.

Before either of us could say anything else, we were ushered onto the contraption.

The tiles pulsed beneath our feet, glowing faintly. The crowd counted down. Three. Two. One.

And the floor lit up.

“Sera—two steps left,” I called out immediately, spotting her sequence.

She moved without hesitation.

“Forward one,” she announced. “Then right.”

We moved in tandem, voices low but firm, calling out corrections as the pattern shifted. The college kids faltered halfway, one of them tripping the reset alarm.

The married couple shouted at each other so loudly and chaotically that the crowd erupted in laughter.

Sera and I, though—we moved like... Like one. Perfectly in sync.

Her voice was confident, precise, never wavering.

My body responded before my brain caught up, trusting her instructions implicitly. And when I called the path for her, she followed without a flicker of doubt or uncertainty.

We reached the final stretch neck and neck with the married couple.

My pulse thundered. One wrong call, and it was over. I knew this was just a silly game I shouldn't even have been playing to begin with, but it now felt like the stakes were higher than anything I'd ever done.

"Diagonal!" Sera shouted.

I lunged, caught my balance, and yelled, "Two steps forward!"

I looked back just in time to see her step onto the last tile. The buzzer blared.

The crowd exploded.

We'd won. By the barest margin, but still, we'd done it. Together.

Sera's eyes found mine, and triumph lit her face. Bright, unguarded. Beautiful.

My lips parted; blood roared in my ears, adrenaline and something...acute flooding my veins.

My hands shook from the effort it took not to pull her into my arms and spin her in the air.

And then Byron returned to the stage, carrying a small velvet box. His voice carried over the cheers. "Well done, well done! Our winners tonight: Seraphina and Kieran Blackthorne!"

My heart jackknifed. The way he'd introduced us—like we were still married, like we still belonged together...

Gods, there was no way to quantify how that felt.

Byron opened the box to reveal a necklace—a delicate silver chain, a pendant shaped like a teardrop with a deep blue stone at its heart. Even from here, I could appreciate the craftsmanship. Precious.

"This," Byron said, his voice softening, "belonged to my late Lillian. She loved this piece more than any other, wore it to every anniversary dance we ever had. Tonight, in her memory, I'd like our winner"—he nodded toward Sera—"to wear it."

Sera froze, her face flushing as she stared at the necklace in awe. "I...I can't."

Byron chuckled. "You can. If I knew my Lillian, she'd be smiling right now, happy to see it shine again." He pressed the box into Sera's hands. "And I have one more request."

Her brows lifted, her gaze skeptical. "Which is?"

"That you wear it while dancing to Lillian's favorite song," Byron said simply. "With Kieran."

