

My Sister 149

Chapter 149 SNOWFIELD

SERAPHINA'S POV

The final challenge.

The air itself carried a weight that morning—heavy with expectation, anticipation, the unmistakable tang of nerves sharpening every inhale.

I remembered back when the LST had seemed like some far-off mountain I couldn't possibly climb.

And now here I was, standing at the base of the last summit.

The Path of the Great Wolf.

One last obstacle. Two days. One of three wild terrains.

The officiant's voice rang across the stone platform, each nugget of information hammering anxiety further into my pounding heart. "Each team has been randomly assigned to one of three simulated wildernesses—Snowfield, Lavaland, Stormridge. Within each lies a Gatekeeper Boss. They will be the final test of your worthiness. Each of them, portrayed by a powerful Alpha, bears a talisman around their neck. Your goal is not victory in combat. It is cleverness. Speed. Unity. Locate the Gatekeeper Boss

and claim the talisman. Reach the endpoint before forty-eight hours run out. The first team to pass this challenge wins the Latent Spark Trials.”

The crowd roared from the stands. They were loving the Trials—the spectacle of wolves pushed to their limits, of rank and strategy colliding in brutal landscapes.

Oh, what I would give right now to be a spectator instead of a participant.

Judy’s shoulder brushed mine, steady and grounding. Finn stood at my other side, and I could practically hear the gears in his head turning. Roxy cracked her knuckles, as usual, looking far too eager for a fight. Talia stood quietly, but her eyes darted between her teammates like she was drawing strength from proximity.

“Snowfield,” the officiant called out. “OTS Team One, Team Frostbane.”

My stomach twisted.

But I wasn’t even surprised in the least. Of course, my team would be paired with Celeste’s. What other outcome could there possibly be?

A ripple of whispers tore through the spectators. They knew what this meant. My history with Celeste was no secret, especially after the encounter that had followed the last challenge.

This had become more than OTS versus Frostbane.

This was now Sera versus Celeste.

Lovely.

Celeste's smug face appeared across the platform, framed by golden hair that caught the sunlight like it was spun to blind.

She strutted forward with Elara and the rest of her team in tow, cockiness infused in every step.

They aligned next to us. Elara gave me a curt but friendly nod, and I returned it before turning to my team.

Around us, the officiant continued to announce which of the remaining teams would end up in which Arena, reiterating each assignment as he did so.

"We've had several trials thrown at us, and we've survived them all, okay?" I said, adding as much confidence into my voice as I could. I met each of their gazes firmly, surely. "This one isn't going to be any different."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that." Celeste's voice carried just enough volume to slice through the chatter around us

I sighed. Here I thought the last humiliation she'd faced would deter her from making another pass at my team.

But I guess a snake just couldn't resist spewing venom wherever it could.

I turned, and her lips curled as her gaze locked onto me.

I mirrored her sneer. "Yes, Celeste? Any juvenile jab you'd like to direct towards me or my team?"

Judy snickered as Celeste bared her teeth. "I'm just glad you and I are finally pitched against each other. I'll prove to everyone once and for all why I'm superior to you. I'll show the world why I'm the perfect Luna for Kieran."

Unbidden, my mind dredged up memories of last night—me and Kieran swaying in each other's arms, the feeling of wholeness that had enveloped me, the emptiness that had hollowed me out when I curled into my empty bed.

But Celeste's words themselves were stale. Same taunt, same old wound she couldn't stop poking at.

And with the gravity of what was to come, I refused to waste energy on her recycled barbs.

I squared my shoulders, meeting her gaze with cold indifference. “Celeste, I’ve never opposed your claim—in fact, I’m pretty sure I’ve told you that you and Kieran are perfect for each other. And honestly? Your shit’s getting old and repetitive. Maybe find a new opener next time. Or better yet, just leave me the fuck alone.”

Her eyes flared, the mask of smugness cracking just enough for me to savor.

Before she could retort, Elara tugged on her elbow. “I swear to the Moon Goddess herself, don’t fucking test me today, Celeste.”

Celeste gaped at Elara. “How dare—”

“I’ll see you on the other side, Sera.” Elara winked at me and then dragged Celeste away to the opposite entrance to Snowfield before I could hear the end of her enraged outburst.

Roxy let out a low whistle. “What that bitch needs is a leash.”

Judy grinned. “And a muzzle.”

Finn cracked a smile, and even Talia giggled softly.

I didn't have time to examine the feelings that churned in my stomach as the officiant's voice echoed with ominous finality.

"All teams, prepare to enter your Arenas."

The Snowfield Arena was authentic as fuck—tall pines draped in frost, snow crunching deep beneath our boots, the wind slicing across the air with a mournful howl that had me imagining frost ghosts floating around us.

I'd had to switch out Lucian's gift for the specialized clothing we'd been given—a fitted thermal bodysuit, a parka with a fur-lined hood, gloves, and insulated boots.

It should have been enough, but as we stepped into the Arena, I realized we'd been given the bare minimum.

The cold hit instantly, biting at every patch of exposed skin, sinking through the thick layers of our clothes like knives of ice.

Our breaths misted in front of us. Even with Alpha bloodline coursing through me, the chill scraped at my bones. For Omegas like the rest of my teammates, this terrain was punishment incarnate.

The advantage we'd enjoyed in the first challenge had turned around to bite us in the asses.

"Fuck." Roxy shivered violently. "Whose genius idea was it to turn us into popsicles?"

I shot her a look that said, 'Not now.'

She shot me a look that said, 'Yes, now.'

"The Frostbane pack is filled with your Alpha-born sister, a Gamma, and other high-ranked wolves," she snapped. "They're going to traipse through this challenge while we fucking freeze to death."

I nodded. "Good. Get angry. That'll keep you warm. That'll help us find the Gatekeeper Boss quickly."

She frowned. "Was that sarcasm, Alpha-born?"

I rolled my eyes, adjusting the straps on my pack. "Let's just get moving. We need to generate body heat before we start thinking strategy."

"Yeah," Judy chimed in, rubbing her hands together. "Move your legs, Rox, not your mouth."

Roxy rolled her eyes but huddled closer as the five of us headed deeper into the Arena.

Hours bled together in a blur of trudging footsteps, half-formed clues, and white silence broken only by our shivering breaths.

We managed to find faint traces of paw prints—massive, deliberate, left by whatever Alpha was playing Gatekeeper here—but following them only led us deeper into disorientation.

By the time dusk fell, fatigue had muted Judy and Roxy. Talia stumbled more than once, her lips tinged blue, and I swore I could hear Finn’s bones clattering together with every move.

We couldn’t possibly go any further.

“There,” I pointed toward a cave mouth tucked beneath a snow-heavy outcrop of stone. “We’ll shelter there.”

No one argued as we changed direction.

Inside, the air was blessedly still, though the cold still clung like a second skin.

We all collapsed to the ground, our misted breaths of exhaustion mingling.

"I'm fucking numb," Roxy declared.

Talia hugged her legs to herself, violent shivers wracking through her body. Wordlessly, Finn moved close to her and wrapped his arms around her.

She stiffened for a heartbeat before she sighed and snuggled into him.

"Now I'm nauseous," Roxy muttered.

I rolled my eyes, tossing my backpack at her. "Here, you're in charge of our rations."

"We need warmth," she said, rummaging through the bag, "not food."

Judy snatched a pack of beef jerky from Roxy's hand. "Don't eat then. I'm curious to see if you'll starve or freeze to death."

"I'm not curious about your death. It's obviously strangulation by my hand," Roxy retorted.

Judy reached out and hugged Roxy. "Sera was right," she sighed. "You have so much anger in you that you're a walking toaster."

Roxy rolled her eyes, but shifted closer to Judy. "Shut up," she mumbled half-heartedly.

I laughed softly, snagging a pack of beef jerky for myself.

Silence fell on us, punctuated by the chattering of my teammates' teeth.

Worry gnawed at my insides. We'd barely made it twenty-four hours, and my teammates were practically out of commission.

If I didn't act, we'd never survive the timer, let alone find and outsmart the Gatekeeper Boss.

"I'll get firewood," I announced.

Roxy sighed, untangling herself from Judy. "Let's go."

I shook my head, rising to my feet. "I'll go alone."

Judy frowned. "Sera, that's not a good idea."

“I’m the only Alpha-blood here. The cold won’t knock me out the way it will you.” I forced a reassuring smile.

They looked poised to argue again, but I shut them down. “I won’t be long, I promise.”

I held up my wrist where my communication band glinted. This was the first time we were given something like this; that had been my first clue that this Arena would be the most brutal yet.

“If anything goes wrong, I’ll contact you or the judges or someone.”

“And what if we can’t get to you in time?”

I didn’t let myself dwell too long on that. “You all just stay alive, okay?”

I didn’t give them a chance to reply before I stepped out.

The forest outside was eerily still.

Snow muffled my footsteps as I moved between the pines, scanning for fallen branches. I gathered what I could, snapping brittle limbs and stacking them under one arm.

I didn't want to venture too far from our shelter, but I needed enough wood to last us through the night and provide a strong enough flame to thaw the chill that had settled in their bones.

The deeper I went, the darker it grew. The light bled out into a violet twilight, shadows stretching long and strange across the snow.

And then I felt it—a prickling at the nape of my neck.

Slowly, I turned, heart thudding hard enough to echo in my ears.

I couldn't see what the danger was, but I could feel it like an instinctive awareness. My eyes strained as I surveyed my environment, struggling to make out what it was.

There—a shift between the trees. A shadow too fluid, too deliberate to be just the wind or snow.

“Who's there?” My voice came out steady, though my pulse was anything but.

No answer. Just the faint crunch of snow under a heavy weight.

My senses sharpened, pulling in every detail: the faint exhale of breath, the low growl vibrating in the distance.

Fear froze the blood in my veins, colder than the snow.

I was not alone.