

My Sister 151

Chapter 151 WHISPERS IN THE DARK

SERAPHINA'S POV

"Sera! Where the hell are you?"

It felt like an eternity had passed before Judy's voice rang through the trees, ragged and sharp with worry.

Another echoed after it—Roxy, more irritated than worried. "If you went and froze your ass off out here, I swear—"

"I'm here!" I called, voice cracking.

My throat still burned, and I wasn't sure if the tightness in my chest came from lingering panic or the wave of emotions that surged when I heard Alina.

My legs wobbled as I scrambled down the ridge, breath fogging thick in the frigid air. Every step, every handhold, felt like clawing out of my own grave.

By the time I reached the others' flashlights flickering weakly between the trees, my arms trembled from the firewood load I had regathered.

Most of it had gotten too wet to be much use in a fire, and I cursed myself for ultimately letting my teammates down.

Judy nearly tackled me. “Gods above, Sera—you had me thinking—” She broke off, eyes flicking to the bloodied scrapes on my palms, the wood cradled against me like a life buoy.

“What happened?”

“I’m fine,” I lied, forcing a shaky smile. “Just took longer than expected.”

Roxy crossed her arms. “And what was that longer route, through the underworld? You look like you saw a ghost.”

I held my tongue. I couldn’t tell them about the bear without telling them how I’d escaped—and that meant revealing Alina’s existence.

Not yet.

“Let’s get this wood burning before you all turn into ice sculptures, hmm?” I said, starting the walk back to the cave.

“Yeah,” Judy agreed. She reached out and took some of the wood from me. “Finn and Talia aren’t doing too good.”

I winced. “How bad?”

She and Roxy exchanged a look that knotted guilt and worry in my stomach.

“Let’s just hurry,” Roxy muttered.

The journey back to the cave was shorter than I remembered, and I was grateful for it. All the way back, I stayed alert, my gaze darting through the trees for any sign of the bear.

But thankfully, we reached the others without incident.

“Fuck,” I whispered.

Finn and Talia were tangled together. Their skin had paled to an icy blue, and I couldn’t tell whose violent tremors were running through whom.

I’d dallied too long; if we didn’t warm them soon, the cold would take them before morning.

We immediately set to work, and in no time, a fire crackled to life inside the cave, flames licking hungrily at the wood I'd stacked.

Smoke curled toward the rocky ceiling, where it slipped into unseen vents as the light bathed us in a fragile glow.

But fragile was the word—because even pressed close to the flames, Finn and Talia's violent shovers barely subsided.

Their bodies shook in jerks, like puppets with frayed strings. Judy rubbed Talia's hands between hers, muttering words I couldn't hear.

Roxy threw up her arms. "This is insane. Lucian had to know Omegas wouldn't survive this setup. What the fuck was he thinking? Making us fight frostbite instead of finding a talisman?"

The crack of her voice struck a chord. Because a part of me had wondered the same.

"Roxy," Judy snapped, "don't start."

"Don't start? Look at them!" Roxy pointed at Talia, then Finn. "We're supposed to be proving worthiness, not crawling into shallow graves! You really think this wasn't stacked against us from the start?"

Silence. Her words echoed off the cave walls.

I clenched my hands into fists in my lap. "That's enough, Roxy."

Her head whipped toward me, defiant. "Tell me I'm wrong, Alpha-born. Tell me you don't see it too."

I met her glare with a steadiness I didn't feel. "I see my teammates freezing. And right now, arguing isn't going to keep them alive. Remember the first challenge? Remember how we felt invincible while the stronger wolves were brought to their knees by the mist? I didn't hear you complaining then."

Roxy's mouth opened, then closed. She muttered something under her breath but turned away.

"Everything in these Trials is for a reason," I added quietly. "Trust that." At least that was what I was trying to do.

That was when Alina stirred inside me, her voice brushing against the edges of my mind like velvet. 'Deeper in the cave, Sera. There's something there that can help.'

My breath caught. 'What?'

'Fruit. Hard and small, clinging to vines. They've been placed here for you. For wolves who can't withstand the cold the way you can. Find them.'

I didn't hesitate. Judy and Roxy frowned up at me as I shot to my feet. "Stay here. Keep the fire fed."

I grabbed my backpack. "I'll be right back."

"Seriously?"

"Again?"

I nodded. "I'm not going out this time, I'm going in."

Roxy arched a brow. "And that's supposed to be better?"

I crossed my arms. "Would you rather freeze to death?"

Roxy turned back to the fire. "Have fun."

Judy shot me a wary glance, and I returned it with a confident smile before I turned and headed deeper into the cave.

It narrowed as I pushed deeper, the walls glittering faintly with ice-crusting veins of stone. My breath echoed back at me, the sound unnervingly loud.

‘How much further?’ I asked Alina, a little wary.

I couldn’t lie to myself—after relying on only my instinct for so long, it was hard now to trust another voice in my head. It was hard not to feel like I’d lost my mind, chasing whispers in the dark.

‘Trust me, Sera,’ she said gently, like she could feel my uncertainty. ‘I would never steer you wrong.’

I took a deep breath, cold, damp air filling my lungs. ‘Right. Okay.’

‘Just a little more—there.’

A cluster of vines clung stubbornly to the cave wall, their roots snaking from some unseen crack.

Nestled among them were berries, a deep violet-black, their skins glistening with frost. They looked like night trapped in fruit.

'Cold-resistant fruit,' Alina murmured. 'Bitter, but their heat lingers once eaten. Enough to keep your teammates alive.'

I tore them free with trembling hands and stuffed as much as I could into my pack.

When I returned, Roxy let out a sigh like she'd been holding her breath. "Good. I was not going to come after you this time."

I snorted. "I adore you too, Roxy."

She scoffed as I upturned the bag of berries onto a flat slab of stone by the fire.

"What the hell is that?"

"Cold-resistant fruit," I answered. "It'll keep us warm."

Her brows shot to her hairline. "And where did you find them?"

I sat back on my haunches. "Deeper in the cave."

“Seriously?” She snatched one up, turning it in her fingers suspiciously. “And you just happened to know they’d be here? What, you holding out on us for dramatic effect?”

Her tone was accusing, half a laugh, but sharp-edged.

I met her stare evenly. “I thought Lucian wouldn’t make the terrain impossible for Omegas. I took a chance.”

The lie tasted bitter, but I couldn’t offer them the truth just yet.

Judy nudged Roxy’s shoulder. “Shut it. We need all the help we can get, or we’ll be dead before sunrise. Now eat.”

Grudgingly, Roxy popped one into her mouth. She made a face like she’d bitten into soap but chewed anyway.

“Gods, that’s vile.”

“Then spit it out,” Judy retorted, already feeding one carefully to Talia.

Roxy swallowed hard. “Not a chance. If this keeps me alive, I’ll eat a thousand of them.”

By the time the fire dwindled to glowing embers, the fruits had worked their strange magic.

Color had crept back into Talia's face, Finn's teeth had stopped clattering, and Roxy—well, she still complained about the taste every chance she got, but her body was no longer shaking.

Relief eased some of the tension strangling my chest. I sat back against the stone, exhaustion pressing down like a heavy blanket.

And even through that exhaustion, I felt Alina.

A constant presence now, warm and quiet in the back of my mind.

'Sleep, Sera,' she whispered, soft as a lullaby. 'I'll be here when you wake. I'm not leaving again.'

Tears pricked my eyes, but this time they weren't born of terror but from fierce, aching hope. I closed them, surrendering to rest.

When dawn came, I stirred to the brittle crackle of splitting ice. My eyes flew open to pale shafts of light spilling into the cave.

The weight in my chest lightened as I realized Alina was still there, her steady hum twining with my thoughts.

‘Good morning, skeptic,’ she teased.

I nearly giggled.

We packed quickly, wolfing down the last of the fruit. No one complained about the taste now.

With their bodies steadier, my teammates moved like warriors again—not Omegas on the brink of death, but wolves ready to fight.

That renewed hope carried us farther than I could have hoped for.

The cold no longer clouding our minds, clues we couldn’t decipher before seemed clearer.

Paw prints. Disturbed snow. Markings carved into stone trees like runes left behind by some ancient claw.

Step by step, the trail sharpened.

Until finally, the forest opened into a vast plain of white. At its center rose a massive formation of stone—like the bones of a mountain thrust through the snow. Jagged, looming, intimidating.

We stopped at the edge, breaths steaming.

“There,” Judy whispered, awe tinging her tone.

Roxy whistled low as her gaze followed Judy’s. “Well, guess we’ve found our Gatekeeper Boss.”

Perched on the highest stone like a creature born of fire and snow was a wolf. Colossal. A coat that shimmered like gold under the pale sun.

His eyes burned, fierce and unyielding, fixed on us with predatory calm. Around his neck gleamed the talisman—fang-shaped, silver, shining.

Recognition struck me, stopping my heart.

Ashar.

Kieran's wolf.