

My Sister 152

Chapter 152 ASHAR

SERAPHINA'S POV

If you ever need a textbook definition of irony, here's one: last night, when I faced the bear, I had wished for Kieran's presence.

Now, he was here. But it sure as hell wasn't to protect me.

The moment my gaze locked on Ashar atop the jagged stone, a surge of emotions rose within me.

Not just awe—though the sheer magnitude of his presence demanded that.

Not just fear—though my pulse tripped violently at the sight of him.

It was...something else. Something raw. Elemental. Difficult to quantify.

My chest tightened as though invisible chains yanked taut. They pulled me toward him—even as they tore me apart from myself, all at the same time.

His coat shimmered like liquid sunlight caught in snow, each ripple of muscle beneath that fur announcing lethal grace.

And his eyes—gods, his eyes. They were fixed on me, pinning me in place like a moth fixed to a collector's board.

I'd always known them to be dark, but now they shone like molten gold, piercing straight through me as though he could see every thought I dared to think.

And then, absurdly, my heart ached. Not just from the threat before me. No, this ache came from something deeper, something that reached into old scars I'd worked so hard to forget.

"Sera," Judy said quietly, carefully. "Is that who I think it is?"

I gave the barest of nods. "Ashar," I whispered, though my voice—and its tremor—carried loud and clear. "Alpha Kieran Blackthorne of Nightfang pack."

The title settled over us like a storm cloud, and the gravity of what we were facing made my knees wobble.

Behind me, my teammates shifted nervously, boots crunching against the snow. Finn's breath came out ragged, Talia gulped audibly, and Roxy—well, she wasn't one to hide her nerves behind silence.

“Fuck me sideways,” she muttered, squinting at Ashar. “Of all the damn Alphas they could’ve thrown at us...they sent him?” She shot me an accusing look. “Wanna tell me again that Lucian doesn’t have it out for us?”

I might have pointed out more irony that Roxy had once thought Lucian was shifting things in my favor, and now, she thought he was doing the exact opposite.

But I was too busy trying to figure out how the fuck we were going to pass this final challenge.

“Quiet,” Judy snapped, but her voice lacked its usual steel. Her hand gripped the hilt of the dagger at her belt, her knuckles white.

Ashar’s growl rolled across the plain like thunder. Deep. Resonant. A warning. The sound made the hairs on my arms rise, made my blood sing with equal parts terror and something else I didn’t have the luxury of examining right now.

‘Focus, Sera.’ Alina’s voice was steady, leaving no room for fear. ‘This isn’t about you. This is about survival.’

I forced air into my lungs. “We can’t stand here all day quaking in our boots,” I said, the words scraping past the lump in my throat. “Form up.”

Judy exhaled, reaching out with her free hand to squeeze my shoulder firmly. “Call it out, Sera.”

I shot her a grateful look.

“Judy, flank right. Roxy, flank left. Talia, Finn, take rear guard.”

They moved instantly, taking their positions with a precision that made me proud.

I strode forward, Ashar’s gaze tracking my every move.

The two talismans gleamed at his throat, silver catching in the pale sun like an unreachable star.

But we’d come this far. We would go all the way.

“On my mark,” I whispered, my gaze never leaving Ashar’s.

“Now!”

The first clash was chaos.

Ashar moved like no wolf I’d ever seen—faster than thought, stronger than reason.

Roxy lunged first, her blade flashing in the light. He barely shifted, his massive paw batting her aside as if she were a child's toy.

She crashed into the snow, her breath exploding out of her.

"Roxy!" I called, but then Ashar was on me.

Golden fur blurred, claws arced. I ducked, rolled, felt the snow burn cold against my cheek as his strike missed me by inches.

I scrambled upright, pulling a dagger of my own from my thigh holster. When I aimed for a talisman, he twisted away, jaws snapping so close to my arm I felt the heat of his breath sear through my jacket.

Judy tried next, throwing her dagger with surgical precision. Ashar leaped, catching the weapon between his teeth.

One jerk of his neck and it went flying, disappearing into the distance. Judy stumbled back, eyes wide.

Finn and Talia advanced together, weaving in and out with impressive speed, but one sweep of Ashar's tail knocked them both sprawling into the snow.

It wasn't a fight. It was decimation—only without blood. At least, I hoped.

I'd always thought Kieran underestimated me, never saw me for what I was truly worth. I might have done the same to him.

Every movement he made now was a brutal reminder: this was the Alpha of the Nightfang Pack. The leader who commanded armies. The wolf who'd crushed enemies and carved fear into legends.

And I—what was I compared to that? A tiny candle flickering in the snow.

Ashar leapt again, his shadow blotting out the sun, and I braced for impact. My body crashed against the ice as his paw slammed into my side.

Agony ricocheted through my ribs. My dagger skidded from my grasp.

The world tilted, pain screaming in my bones. My vision blurred with white and gold.

"Sera!" Judy's voice, raw with panic, but distant, fading.

Ashar loomed above me. His golden eyes locked on mine, fierce, ruthless.

For a pounding heartbeat, I lay there, helpless underneath him. I was taken back to the moments just after he rescued me from the rogues. He'd cared for me then, licking my wounds whole.

This was not that Ashar.

This was the Gatekeeper Boss. And I was nothing against him.

Then, with a final rumbling growl, he stepped back. As though to say: Try again. If you dare.

We did not dare.

At least not yet.

We regrouped in the shelter of a snowdrift, each of us battered, bruised, and thoroughly humbled.

Roxy's lip was split and bleeding, Judy cradled her arm, wincing with every movement. Finn limped heavily, and Talia wheezed with shallow breaths.

I cradled my ribs, the sharp pain slicing through every inhale.

Unlike the other Trials, we weren't merely tested, we were being destroyed.

"Gods," Roxy gasped, wiping blood from her chin. "He's not just trying to stop us—he's crushing us. You don't think—" Her eyes flicked to me, sharp and accusing. "You don't think he's...venting? On us? Because of you?"

The words hit harder than Ashar's paw. My chest clenched.

"Roxy." Judy's voice was fierce, commanding. "Not another word."

"No, let her," I whispered hoarsely.

I couldn't lie that I hadn't thought the same. Hadn't I felt the weight of that gaze and fury linger longer on me than anyone else?

Lucian had been so bent on making things fair so I would not be seen as favored, but had he forgotten that the pendulum could swing the other way?

What was Kieran even doing here in the LST anyway? Was that why he'd been in OTS the other day?

I shoved all those thoughts and questions away.

All that mattered now was overcoming the obstacle before us.

Finn spoke up then, voice strained but steady. “It doesn’t matter. Remember the rules. We don’t have to defeat him. We just need the talisman.”

Talia nodded weakly, clutching her side. “Which feels pretty impossible right now.”

Finn’s gaze slid to me. “But you know him, Sera. Better than any of us. You’ve seen him fight before, right? There must be something—a tell, some sort of weakness.”

The weight of their expectation pressed down on me heavier than Ashar’s weight.

I closed my eyes. Reached back into memory. Nights in the Lockwood courtyard, where Ethan and Kieran had sparred for hours while I watched from the shadows, unseen.

I remembered the way Kieran always moved with deadly precision, his strikes calculated and exact. The way Ethan, with all his remarkable skills, tried to break through his defenses, but Kieran never gave an inch. Never slipped. Never faltered.

"I..." My voice cracked. I shook my head. "I don't know."

Disappointment etched into their faces, clear as day.

Roxy scoffed. "Figures."

Judy glared at her, but said nothing. Silence stretched heavy between us, filled with exhaustion and despair.

I stared at the snow, shame burning hotter than the agony in my ribs. They needed me to be more—a leader, a warrior. And I was still just...less.

'Sera.' Alina's voice pulsed through my mind, warm and steady.

My heart lurched. 'Alina?'

'I think I know a way.'

Hope sparked. 'You do?'

My gaze flicked toward Ashar, still prowling the stone formation with predatory patience, waiting for us to dare approach again.

‘How?’ I whispered inside myself.

‘Trust me,’ Alina murmured, her voice like a balm against my raw, frayed spirit. ‘He’s not invincible. No one is. Let me guide you. Together, we can find the opening.’

My breath caught. My chest thudded with something I couldn’t name.

Hope. Fear. And beneath it all...a trembling, dangerous yearning. For what? I had no fucking clue.

Regardless, I steeled myself. ‘What do I have to do?’