

My Sister 155

Chapter 155 WATCH AND LEARN

CELESTE'S POV

Every step of this cursed Trial had been an exercise in frustration.

If I had known better, I would have studied my teammates in preparation for the LST. Learned who these nobodies I'd been saddled with were—their strengths, their flaws, the chinks in their armor.

But I hadn't. I simply assumed my presence, as their Alpha's sister, would be enough; naturally, I thought they would orbit me, pulled by my gravity as the moon pulls the tide.

I'd been wrong.

Each of them grated at me in their own way—Callum's brash temper, Lisa's cutting remarks, Dylan's passive aggressiveness, Elara's blatant dismissal.

What galled me the most was the realization that they didn't admire me. They didn't respect me. Fuck, they barely even acknowledged me.

Sure, I had been away from the pack for ten years and barely knew them, but that should not have fucking mattered. They should have instantly warmed up to me and treated me like the royalty I am.

And I should have been the leader of the team.

Not fucking Elara.

Worst of all? She had made it her mission to undercut me at every opportunity.

Every time I thought of the way she'd belittled me in front of Sera's team, anger rose so potent and vile in my throat I thought I was going to throw up.

I blamed Ethan.

He'd been adamant against my joining the LST, but I would be damned if I let Sera draw any more attention by participating in the trials.

I'd managed to convince him, but he'd violently slammed the door on my claim to leadership, refusing to budge on the matter.

No, fuck his sister. He'd rather give the role to his worthless Gamma, who, for some unfathomable reason, hated me.

She had never been warm towards me. Where my pack had adored me while growing up, all I'd ever gotten from Elara were cold shoulders and blank stares.

The infuriating part? She'd redirected all that warmth to fucking Seraphina of all people.

And even now, when my sister used her underhanded favors to get through the Trials, what did Elara do? She flocked straight to Sera's side, like a moth to a flame.

And I was left out in the cold.

Well. Elara would regret it. Every shitty member of this shitty team would regret it.

Once the Trials ended, I would have a word with Ethan. Despite the presently rocky state of our relationship, I knew my brother still valued me. He wouldn't hesitate to dismiss Elara once I explained how divisive and cruel she had been, how she had schemed to tarnish my image among the others.

No one crossed Celeste Lockwood without consequence.

But first—victory.

Sera's pathetic little team was somewhere in this vast expanse of snow, and I would beat them to the Gatekeeper Boss if it were the last thing I did.

With any luck, though, they would freeze to death before they even had a chance to try.

We topped a ridge of stone and snow, the air thin and sharp enough to sting my lungs. And there he was.

Golden fur gleaming beneath the sunlight. Eyes like molten amber. Muscles coiled, tense, so majestic, my eyes hurt.

Kieran.

My heart jolted.

For a moment, I forgot the chill in my fingers, the ache in my legs. He looked magnificent in Ashar's towering form, the very image of strength and authority.

Delight sent a thrill down my spine.

This was it—my chance to prove myself!

Surely, surely, Kieran wouldn't make this difficult for me.

I was his future Luna, the love of his life. Surely he wouldn't savage me here in front of the others. No, he would hold back. He would let me shine.

And when my hands closed around that talisman at his throat, I would be the hero of our team.

Elara would choke on her disdain, and the others would regret their animosity. They would finally see me for what I was.

Luna material.

"Is that—?" Callum whispered.

"Yes," I breathed, unable to keep the delight from my voice. "Alpha Kieran Blackthorne."

Lisa groaned. "Great. Just great."

I rolled my eyes as a wave of unease rippled through my team. Small-minded fools. They didn't understand that this was opportunity disguised as challenge.

I straightened my shoulders, adjusted the collar of my coat, and marched forward with renewed determination. “Stand back. I know how to handle him.”

Elara grabbed my arm, her iron grip stilling me. “Excuse me, where the fuck do you think you’re going?”

“He’s my fiancé,” I declared proudly. “They might as well have handed us the talisman on a silver platter.”

Elara scoffed. “You think that matters here? What—you’re just going to waltz over to him and he’ll give it up? How dense are you?”

I fought the urge to slap the look of contempt off her face. “Watch and learn.” Bitch.

I wrenched free of Elara’s grip and strode ahead, each crunch of my boots into the snow a declaration of certainty.

“Kieran!” My voice rang clear across the expanse, crisp as the cold.

I lifted my chin, letting the wind whip strands of hair around my face in what I imagined was a rather striking picture. “It’s me, baby.”

For the briefest heartbeat, his golden gaze flicked toward me. Recognition—surely, that was recognition—lit in those molten eyes.

“Kieran,” I said again, softer this time, taking another deliberate step forward. “There’s no need for this charade. Just let me take the talisman, babe.”

Ashar’s massive form shifted, muscles tightening. The ground trembled with the subtle scrape of his claws on stone. His breath billowed in hot clouds that rolled toward me like a warning.

Still, I pressed forward. Kieran would never hurt me. “I’m your future Luna,” I reminded him sweetly. “Imagine the honor I’ll bring to us when I win the LST.”

That was when the growl came. Low, reverberating, so deep it rattled my bones.

The hair on my arms stood on end. Ashar’s lips peeled back, revealing fangs longer than my fingers.

My steps halted.

The growl rose into a snarl as he lunged, faster than my eyes could follow. The sheer force of his ascent knocked the air from my lungs, though he hadn’t yet touched me.

But he would be on me in an instant, claws gleaming, teeth flashing—

I was shoved sideways, sent sprawling into the snow.

Elara stood in my place, braced, eyes blazing. “Are you insane?” she shouted at me, even as she parried the strike with her blade. Sparks flew where steel met claw. “He was about to rip you in half!”

“He wouldn’t have!” I cried, scrambling upright, but my voice cracked around the edges.

My heart was hammering in my throat, traitorous and loud. Kieran would never hurt me...right?

“He would have,” Elara snapped. “You fucking idiot.”

Ashar reared back, roaring, and the rest of my team rushed in.

Callum charged first, his axe gleaming as he swung at Ashar’s flank. The wolf batted him away with a single sweep of his paw, sending him crashing into Lisa, who cursed as they both tumbled into a snowdrift.

Dylan circled warily, shooting darts in quick succession, but they bounced harmlessly off that gleaming hide.

Elara was everywhere at once—blocking, dodging, countering—her movements sharp and efficient, her face set in grim concentration.

And me?

I hung back. Just for a moment. Just long enough to catch my breath. Regroup. Strategize.

As my teammates' ragged gasps and furious yells filled the air, I waited for the perfect opening. A Luna must be cunning as well as strong, after all.

This wasn't cowardice—it was strategy.

Ashar struck again, faster than any of them could track. Callum went down hard. Lisa barely rolled away in time. Dylan's jacket was torn open with a single swipe, vicious claws barely missing skin.

And through it all, Ashar's eyes remained cool, impersonal. He wasn't even looking at me anymore.

Didn't he see? Didn't he understand?

This was supposed to be my triumph. My vindication!

Still...maybe he was only pretending. After all, he had a reputation to uphold and couldn't be seen so obviously playing favorites.

Perhaps, at just the right moment, he would falter—allow me to strike, to seize victory.

Yes. That was what this was—a performance. It had to be.

I darted forward then, teeth gritted, hands reaching out to him. “Kieran!” I shouted, pouring every ounce of command and desperation into my voice. “Yield it to me!”

His head whipped toward me and our eyes met.

I exhaled. “That’s right, baby. Let me—”

Ashar’s massive tail whipped sideways, slamming into my ribs. The world spun as I was flung through the air and landed hard on my side. Pain ripped through me, sharp and hot, stealing my breath.

I gasped, coughing, tasting blood.

When I lifted my head, Elara was glaring at me across the battlefield. “Stay back if you’re going to be fucking useless!” she barked, before turning to drive her blade into Ashar’s leg.

Ashar stepped out of her blade's path and simultaneously lowered his head, slamming it hard into her chest. I heard her brutal exhale as she was tossed into the air and landed in a heap next to Callum.

Useless.

The word echoed, louder than the growls, louder than the clash of steel and roar of fury.

My hands curled into fists. I wasn't useless. I wasn't.

And I would prove it, damn it!

"Enough," I gasped, rising on shaky legs. My hands trembled, but I pressed them to my chest as though in a heartfelt plea.

I knew how to play this game. If strength failed, there was always emotion. Kieran loved me. Surely he couldn't stand to see me hurt.

"Kieran—please." My lower lip wobbled. Tears filled my eyes, just enough to make them glassy. "It's me."

Ashar's ears flicked. His great head tilted, just barely, as if listening. Encouraged, I pressed on.

“You don’t have to keep this up. We’ve fought so hard already. Just let us pass. Let me... let me prove myself.”

‘Hand me victory,’ I thought desperately. ‘Crown me in front of them all.’

But Kieran’s—no, Ashar’s—eyes remained cold. Impenetrable.

He did not lower his guard. He did not relent.

In that moment, the truth pricked sharp: Kieran wasn’t indulging me. He wasn’t favoring me. He was treating me as nothing more than another challenger to be crushed.

A sour feeling tightened my stomach. I recognized it—it had been growing more and more lately, festering, yawning deeper with each dismissal, each rejection from Kieran.

Hate.

Behind me, Elara let out a furious hiss.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” she spat, pushing herself up with a pained groan. “You’re begging him? That’s your plan?”

"It's strategy," I snapped, whirling on her. "Do you think raw force will work? We've been throwing ourselves at him for minutes, and look at us—bleeding, bruised, exhausted! This is the smarter way."

"Pathetic is what it is," Callum muttered.

"Tell me about it," Lisa agreed.

Dylan's mouth was set in a grim line, his silence was worse than insults.

Then Elara's voice sliced through, cool and cutting. "If groveling is what it takes to win then I'd rather forfeit now."

I flinched. "What?"

"You heard me." Her eyes burned, hard and unwavering. "If we have to scrape our dignity in the snow to move forward, then maybe we don't deserve to. Frostbane doesn't beg."

"Who are you to say what Frostbane does?" I snapped.

"I am my pack's Gamma."

“And I’m—”

“Yes, the Alpha’s sister,” she countered, her tone bored. “Sister. Daughter. Future Luna. Trust me, we remember all the ways you’re related to Alphas from the six hundred times you mentioned it. I suggest you tattoo it on your forehead and save yourself precious saliva.”

Dylan disguised his laughter with a cough.

Anger tightened my chest, making it hard to breathe.

“You’re doing it again!”

Elara raised a brow. “Doing what?”

“Undermining me!” I shot back. “You’ve been doing it from the start. You love to see me humiliated.”

Her lips curled. “You humiliate yourself well enough without my help.”

I saw red. My nails bit crescents into my palms.

But before I could retort, Elara delivered the final blow.

“Take a proper look, Celeste.” She stabbed a finger over my shoulder. “There’s only one talisman left around his neck.”

My head whipped back, and my heart stuttered. She was right. Each Gatekeeper Boss bore two talismans, and only one glinted around Ashar’s neck.

“That means Seraphina’s team has gotten theirs,” Elara hissed. “You think they acquired it through groveling?”

She didn’t pause for an answer. “No. I’m pretty damn sure she fought until her last breath. That’s the spirit of Frostbane. Something you clearly don’t understand.”

The name hit me like a slap.

Seraphina. Always Seraphina. Even here, even now, she overshadowed me. Her performances had everyone whispering—Sera the survivor, Sera the underdog, Sera who led without a wolf.

And now Elara dared to invoke her against me?

I wanted to scream. To claw the smirk from Elara's lips, to demand she choke on her loyalty to the sister who was stealing my light.

But instead, I stood frozen, fury boiling beneath my skin, while Ashar's growl rumbled across the field.

The battle was not over. But I'd already lost.