

## **My Sister 157**

Chapter 157 THE CHAMPIONS

SERAPHINA'S POV

The echoes of the horns reverberated through my entire body as the thunderous voice wasted no time in announcing:

“And the champions of the Latent Spark Trials are—OTS Team One!”

The cheers that followed rattled my bones.

My team erupted in stunned cries, and for one heart-stopping second, it felt as though my soul had lifted from my body. Like I was floating high, high above, watching this—this impossible thing—happen to someone else.

We'd...won.

I knew we'd been the first team to pass the last Trial, and, technically, I'd known what that meant.

But knowing was one thing. Hearing it broadcast to the world was something entirely different.

The central screen blazed with our images—us, battered and bruised, crossing the portal in slow-motion replay.

I hugged my arms around myself, unable to tear my gaze from the footage. Objectively, I knew it was us up there—sweat, blood, terror, and all. But the spectacle had stripped away the raw edges, turning us into something unrecognizable. Heroes. Champions.

The next words followed, grounding me to the present.

“In second place is Cypress Vale pack!”

A ripple of applause carried through the crowd, celebratory but not quite as resounding as the ovation we’d just received.

The image of their team replaced ours on the central screen. They were drenched in sweat. Parts of their uniforms were singed from the heat of their Arena. Still, they stood tall and proud, their talisman glinting at Alpha Thomas’ neck like a spoil of war.

I thought back to the first time they’d arrived at the hotel, when I’d checked them in, nervous at their commanding presence. They’d seemed untouchable.

But I—we—had surpassed them. Elation ballooned in my chest—a blazing, undeniable pride in myself and my team.

“And finally, in third place: OTS Team Two!”

Gasps rippled through the rest chamber.

Jessica’s team had clawed their way to victory by the thinnest margin.

The screen showed a brief replay of their battle against their Gatekeeper Boss in Stormridge Arena, neck and neck with Seabreeze.

The final moments showed Jessica’s last-ditch grab for the talisman, her team’s breathless dive through the exit, Seabreeze hot on their tail.

Conflicting emotions swirled in my stomach.

On one hand, I was glad that OTS teams had claimed two of the winning slots. On the other hand, I was bitter that it had been Jessica’s team that claimed that victory.

And above everything, triumph blazed through me—I was so fucking happy I’d beaten her.

I could still picture the smug tilt of her mouth when she’d strutted into the restaurant the night after the first challenge, claiming she would lead OTS to first place.

The image of her clutching a bronze medal while my team and I wore gold was so deliciously satisfying I almost felt guilty. Almost.

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The next hour blurred into a dizzying parade of celebration.

Still clad in our battered Arena gear, streaked with half-frozen sweat and crisscrossed with fresh bandages, the OTS staff swept us from the rest chamber and down marble halls that gleamed beneath crystal chandeliers.

The scent of polish and fresh parchment lingered in the air as we were led into the grand hall, which had been transformed for the awards ceremony.

Flags from every competing pack, including OTS, hung in neat rows along the walls.

Dozens of cameras lined the stage, their red recording lights winking like watchful eyes. Rows of spectators filled the mezzanines above, buzzing with chatter and applause.

We stood at the center, spotlights blinding, hearts pounding.

And then Lucian appeared.

He strode from the crowd with the effortless confidence of a man who owned the room.

His silver suit caught the glow of the lights, crisp and immaculate, his every step deliberate.

My heart jolted at the sight of him, a longing ache breaking through my composure.

Gods, I'd missed him. I hadn't realized just how much until he was right in front of me.

I had so much I wanted to say to him—tales of the Trials, the hundreds of questions that had surfaced during.

But for now, I just greedily drank in the sight of him, making up for all the time I hadn't been able to see him.

"Congratulations, champions," Lucian said, his voice carrying its usual smooth authority.

His gaze flickered over our battered, bruised faces, and when it landed on me, warmth softened his eyes. I felt an answering heat bloom in my cheeks, all the way down to my toes, and my pulse quickened.

“You’ve not only surpassed expectations—you’ve shattered them.” His beam was brighter than all the spotlights shining over us. “I am proud to extend this victory to you—and to OTS.”

He raised a hand, and on cue, attendants strode forward, bearing the prizes on polished trays.

First came the medals—gold, silver, and bronze disks etched with the OTS crest, strung on ribbons of deep midnight blue.

They caught the light as Lucian himself placed them around each champion’s neck, before pressing a thick envelope in their hands.

When he stopped in front of me, his lips twitched like he was holding back a face-splitting grin.

The pride shining in his eyes nearly buckled my knees, and for a moment, I had to lock my legs to keep standing.

When he draped the medal around my neck, he leaned in, almost imperceptibly. The baritone of his voice rumbled through me. “I knew you could do it.”

His warmth was only there for a split second before he pulled back and moved to Judy at my side.

But it lingered with me. My heart fluttered. I gripped the thick envelope he pressed into my hand—a cash reward, weighty and substantial. But it was nothing compared to the weight of his faith in me.

I looked out into the crowd, at all the faces—strange and familiar—celebrating me now that I'd won.

But Lucian... He'd celebrated me from the beginning. He'd seen what I was capable of before anyone else.

And honestly, that felt as valuable as all the prizes I was being bestowed with.

After the medals, two attendants carried a reinforced chest between them, its polished surface inlaid with moonstone ornamentation.

They set it on the velvet-draped table at center stage, and when the lid was lifted, the crowd gasped as though a constellation had been unveiled.

Five vials of Moon Dew Nectar glimmered within, soft radiance spilling like moonlight across the hall.

My breath lodged in my throat.

Alina had said she didn't have much of her strength now. Perhaps the Nectar was the last push she needed to resurface.

The possibilities spun around me in a dizzying whirlpool.

It was all happening too fast—Alina’s emergence, winning the LST, acquiring the Moon Dew Nectar.

Each miracle pressed against the other until I couldn’t tell where one ended and the next began.

Only the hard, fast thrumming of my heart told me that I wasn’t dreaming; this was all overwhelmingly real.

Again, Lucian extended the prizes himself. This one, only for my team—the champions.

He placed each individual vial into its own chest.

“Use it wisely,” Lucian said as Judy reverently accepted the chest. “Both the wealth...and the power you’ve earned.”

Roxy muttered under her breath, “Damn right we will.”

Lucian smirked faintly, as though he'd heard her, then turned to me. "And to you, Seraphina Blackthorne." His hand was warm as he pressed the small chest into my hands. "Your leadership made this possible."

I bowed my head, pulse racing wildly as I beheld a literal miracle. "It wasn't just me. We all fought for this."

Lucian's smile deepened, knowing. "Modest, as always. I can't think of anyone more deserving."

I looked up at him, and finally, he let his smile slip free, wide and unguarded. He took my hand and held it up. "Behold!" his voice boomed. "The champions of the Latent Spark Trials!"

And the applause that erupted around us was not nearly as loud as my pounding heart.

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The ceremony gave way to a press interview, and suddenly, we were surrounded by reporters. Cameras shoved close, recorders hovered near my lips, and questions fired at us like arrows.

"Miss Blackthorne, how did your team achieve such flawless coordination despite your differences and weaknesses?"

“What will you do with the Moon Dew Nectar? Will you accept the rumored offers from investors willing to pay millions?”

“What does this victory mean for wolfless wolves across the packs?”

The questions overwhelmed me. Flashing lights blinded me.

But I answered each with a calm I didn't quite feel.

To the first, I praised my teammates for their resilience and courage.

To the second, I denied any temptation of selling the Moon Dew Nectar, reaffirming that some treasures weren't meant to be bartered.

To the third, I said simply: “This isn't just our victory. It belongs to every wolf who has ever been cast aside, underestimated, rejected. I hope this shows them their worth doesn't vanish because someone else failed to see it.”

I felt the effect my words had on the room, felt the admiration and respect surge towards me like a tide.

And then the questions got deeper.

“Seraphina, how did it feel to face Alpha Kieran of Nightfang in battle?”

“We know he’s your ex-husband; do you believe he let you overpower him?”

My instincts screamed to recoil at the mention of Kieran, but I forced my breathing steady.

“I assure you, Alpha Kieran showed no favors to my team in the Arena.” I lifted the hem of my shirt to show the bandage cinched firmly over my bruised ribs. “Does this look like favoritism to you?”

I didn’t know if I was defending Kieran’s or my own honor; either way, every insinuation that I’d won by anything more or less than my own merit made my blood boil.

The press was relentless.

“And what about your relationship with Lucian Reed? It’s no secret that the two of you are quite...close.”

Irritation warred with my joy. “The LST was as transparent as glass. You all watched the footage, the majority of it live.” I lofted my chin. “You tell me at what point it looked like I carried favor from Lucian Reed or anyone else.”

“And how do you feel about the tension between you and Celeste Lockwood, especially since her team did not win?”

I bit back a sigh. But the questions kept coming, an unabated flood of inquiries. Some were flattering, some cutting, some eager to drag my private wounds into the public light.

I kept my answers poised, inviolate. I would not let them see the bruises of my past—only the steel I’d forged from them.

This was no longer a battlefield of claws and blood—it was a battlefield of words.

I’d won one. I wouldn’t lose the other.