

My Sister 160

Chapter 160 SHEER INJUSTICE

CELESTE'S POV

I'd never hated the sight of a smile more in my entire life.

My team had come in dead fucking last, barely crossing the exit zone before time ran out, battered, bloodied, and humiliated.

And Ethan—our fucking Alpha—instead of directing his fury at the one responsible for our failure, he'd smiled at Elara with something dangerously close to approval.

"You led well," he said, pride infused in every word. "Win or lose, you upheld Frostbane's honor and spirit."

Those words struck me worse than any of Ashar's blows.

Elara, propped up on a bench in the resting room with her ribs bound, still managed a satisfied smile. "Thank you, Alpha."

That look, so smug, so self-assured, was like a knife twisting in my chest. She'd stolen everything from me—my command, my authority, my rightful place as fucking champion.

And my own brother praised her for it.

I clenched my jaw, hands balled into fists at my sides, as the medics wove quietly between the teams, kneeling with their packs and carefully tending wounds and distributing bandages to those slumped on benches or sprawled on the floor.

The sterile scent of herbs and salves made me sick. I could still taste the iron of blood in my mouth, and the ache in my ribs throbbed with every shallow breath.

But it wasn't pain that made my hands shake.

The central screen glowed red through the haze of my anger, and the sight of the gold medal twinkling around Seraphina's neck made me want to burn the building—hell, the whole fucking world—to the ground.

One of the medics—a worthless Omega—crouched before me, holding out a small box of tinctures and gauze. “Lady Celeste, if you'll just hold still—”

I slapped the box from his hands. Its contents clattered across the stone floor, rolling and scattering like broken teeth.

Gasps erupted around us.

The Omega recoiled, stunned, his wide eyes shimmering with hurt. "M-my lady—"

"Don't touch me!" I snapped, rising unsteadily to my feet.

The movement sent sparks of pain arcing down my side. The thought that it was Kieran himself who had inflicted this agony made it hurt ten times worse.

"I don't need your pity ministrations," I hissed down at him. "What I need is justice."

"Celeste," Ethan snapped.

His Alpha tone cracked like a whip across the air, but it only stoked the fury bubbling in my gut.

"Aren't you the least bit pissed?" I whirled on him, the world swaying for a heartbeat before righting itself.

Confusion furrowed his brows. "What are you on about now?"

I stabbed a finger at the exit. "I'm talking about the blatant fraud we witnessed out there!"

The murmurs thickened.

Across the chamber, I saw the members of OTS stiffen. Their uniforms gleamed, pristine compared to our ragged, snow-crusted gear.

Two of the top three placements, snatched by their people—inferior Omegas and deficient outcasts.

It was so ridiculous I could laugh. Fate wasn't so blind, so derelict that it would let this joke of an injustice occur.

It was clear to anyone with a working pair of eyes that the Trials had been cleverly scripted for their glory.

"Fraud?" Ethan's voice dropped, dangerously low.

"Yes!" I threw my arm toward the OTS groups. "Two of the top three—two!—and we're supposed to believe that's coincidence? That's skill? Don't be naïve, Ethan. They've been favored from the start. The judging, the challenges—it's all been stacked in their favor."

One of the OTS members, a tall male with an angular jaw, stepped forward, his grey eyes flashing. "Careful, Frostbane."

“Or what?” I spat. “You’ll cheat louder? Gods, you people couldn’t even be fucking subtle about it!”

A ripple of outrage surged through the room.

“You dare insult the LST’s integrity?” another snapped—a brunette woman whose voice carried the weight of authority. “Every result was reviewed by a council of impartial elders—none of whom bear any allegiance to OTS. Every second of the challenges was broadcast for all to see. The entirety of the Trials was transparent.” Her hazel eyes narrowed. “If you cannot accept your failure, then choke on it silently. Do not smear our honor.”

“You wouldn’t know honor if it clawed your throat out,” I hissed.

Ethan’s hand clamped around my arm, tight enough to bruise. “Enough.”

I yanked at his grip, twisting my arm, but his hold was unyielding. When I couldn’t break free, I settled for a glare.

“Enough? You should be furious! You should be demanding answers, not standing here like some spineless diplomat. Frostbane was humiliated out there. I was humiliated!”

“You humiliated yourself,” Elara muttered, not looking up as her bandages were tied.

My head snapped toward her. “What did you just say?”

“You heard me.” Her gaze stayed steady, unflinching, even as her knuckles whitened on her knee. “You wanna know why we lost, Celeste?” She leaned in, still seated. “It wasn’t because the other teams were better. Not because anyone cheated. And certainly not because of judges.”

She pointed a finger straight at me. “We lost because we were slowed down by the deadweight on our team. Take responsibility for once in your cushioned life.”

Crimson bled into the edges of my vision and, with a snarl, I lunged forward, determined to scratch Elara’s eyes out.

“Celeste!” Ethan barked.

His Alpha command froze me mid-step, his nails digging painfully into my arm as he yanked me back.

My brother’s eyes blazed, his face tight with fury. “When I say that’s enough, I fucking mean it, Celeste. You will not disgrace our name further.”

I gaped at my brother disbelievingly, my anger drowning out the pain of every other injury on my body—including the one his grip was currently inflicting.

Ethan didn't wait for a response and turned to the OTS members watching. "On behalf of Frostbane, I apologize for her behavior."

The OTS members still bristled, but some of the tension bled from their shoulders at his words.

I, however, was trembling from head to toe.

Apologize? For me?

The rage scalded me from the inside. My throat burned, and tears pricked at the corners of my eyes—not from regret, but from the sheer injustice of it all.

I would not be made the villain. Not here. Not while Sera's name was on every tongue, her praises echoing from every corner.

"Fine," I bit out. "If no one else will demand proof, then I will." I raised my voice. "I want the surveillance footage reviewed."

Ethan groaned. "Celeste—"

"No!" I rounded on him, ignoring the warning edge in his tone. "Don't you dare try to silence me again. If there's nothing to hide, then there's no harm in transparency. I refuse to swallow humiliation without answers."

“So fucking dramatic,” Elara mumbled. I chose to ignore her this time, clenching my fists so hard I was in danger of breaking my fingers.

“Very well.” The authoritative woman from earlier gave a curt nod. “The footage will be displayed.”

In a matter of minutes, the central screen in the resting area switched from Sera’s sanctimonious press conference to scenes from the Trials.

I watched, my breath shallow, as image after image unfolded.

Our team flailing against Ashar: Callum’s axe skidding off golden fur, Lisa dragging Dylan out of reach, Elara’s blade striking again and again with relentless grit. And me—at the edge...strategizing.

Then it shifted—another projection, another team.

Sera’s

The chamber hushed as the images played: Seraphina leading her ragtag group of lowlifes across the Snowfield, small against the vast plain, yet unyielding.

Her voice carried commands sharp as any Alpha's. She didn't falter, didn't waver, even without a wolf to anchor her. Her teammates followed her without hesitation, their coordination fluid, their trust absolute.

My shallow breaths ceased altogether as I watched, enraptured.

I thought for sure when the second attempt came and they went in with fucking make-shift smoke bombs, they were done for.

But then, through the haze, Seraphina emerged—a lone figure sprinting toward the golden beast.

As if suddenly possessed with something unseen, her movements grew impossibly sharp, dodging, weaving, rolling beneath his claws. And then—reckless, impossible—she leapt.

Gasps echoed in the chamber as the image showed her clinging to Ashar's mane, straddling the Alpha of Nightfang himself.

His body bucked, every ripple of muscle threatening to unseat her, yet she somehow held on.

And then her hand closed around the talisman.

The chamber erupted in applause, scattered cheers of admiration. Even the members of the other packs looked begrudgingly impressed.

Bile rose in my throat.

“This proves nothing,” I shouted, cutting through the noise. “You all see what I see, don’t you? Kieran let her win.”

Heads whipped toward me, and their attention sent a thrill through me.

“Kieran held back,” I pressed on. My heart hammered, but my voice stayed steady. “Look at his movements. Notice how he struck her compared to us—it was softer, slower. He—he practically gave the talisman to her. Don’t you understand? She has it because he handed it to her!”

“Oh my fucking gods!” Elara shot to her feet then. “Give it a rest, would you? Don’t you get tired of the sickening sound of your whiny voice?”

“Screw this!” I snapped, heading for the exit of the resting chamber. “I’ll hear this from the horse’s mouth.”

I was going to look Kieran in the fucking eyes and have him explain why he’d handed my victory to my nemesis.

“Celeste!”

I ignored Ethan's call, shoving loiterers that stood in my way.

And then I saw him. No—they.

Near the far wall where the victorious gathered with their families, Kieran stood with them. With her.

Sera's team flanked him, grinning, their wounds bound but their joy bared. And in the middle, beaming with a light so blinding it made my eyes hurt, was Daniel.

Their son stood pressed against Sera's side, holding one of Kieran's hands, as the camera lights flashed in quick succession.

The sight lanced through me. Kieran's arm rested lightly around Daniel's shoulders, his hand a half-centimeter away from Sera's. His expression was soft, pride shining openly in his eyes.

Daniel said something excitedly, and Kieran looked at Sera. I could tell from this distance that they were staring into each other's eyes—and I felt the urge to gouge out both of their eyeballs.

My voice tore from me before I could leash it. "You see! Look at him! Smiling with them, standing with her—you expect me to believe he didn't throw the fight?"

Kieran's head turned. Slowly, his eyes found mine across the room. His brows arched in clear surprise.

"Go on," I hissed, stalking toward them. "Admit it!" I glared at Sera, wishing all the hate and anger I felt toward her could solidify into a javelin straight through her heart. "You let her fucking win!"

I whirled on Kieran, fighting the urge to smack the look of confusion off his face. "My question is: Why?" Tears blurred my vision. "Why would you hand her my victory? Why the fuck would you choose her over me?"

When Kieran finally spoke, his voice was as cold, and the chill spread to his eyes.

"I don't know what you're on about, Celeste, but I was fair as the Gatekeeper Boss. I did not hold back against either of the teams I faced. Seraphina earned her victory. Accept it."

"No!" I stumbled forward a step, pain flaring in my ribs as I shoved his chest.

He didn't budge, but he pushed his son behind him, as if I were a danger to the little twat.

"Don't lie to me. Don't you dare lie to me—"

Ethan's hand clamped around my arm again, dragging me back. His face was hard as stone, his voice pitched low enough that only I could hear. "Enough, Celeste, for gods' sake. Stop this before you shame us beyond repair."

“I—”

“Look around,” he hissed.

And I did.

Everywhere, eyes. Press, warriors, healers, strangers.

Gazes sharp, judging, weighing me as if I were a pound of salmon on a scale.

This—this wasn’t the attention I liked.

Not when they had all made up their minds. They believed the version of the truth they’d been given and held on to it with iron fists.

If I screamed, if I ranted, if I hurled every ounce of my truth at their feet—it would not be Sera who suffered. It would be me.

I swallowed, bitter and choking.

My knees wobbled as I drew in a shuddering breath. Then, with a tremble in my voice, I forced out, “I...I just wanted to make you proud.”

My gaze darted toward Kieran, shimmering with tears I summoned on command. “I gave everything, and it wasn’t enough. I don’t understand what I did wrong.”

I could see why Sera had played the victim card so often for so long. It was sweet. Empowering in its own way.

Just like in the hospital after the car accident, like all the times I’d reprimanded him for choosing Sera over me, Kieran would come to me. He’d hold me. He’d soothe the ache he’d inflicted and apologize for it.

But...

He lingered longer than he should’ve. He only looked at me—cold, distant, unyielding—like Ashar had on the Snowfield.

And that was a defeat worse than anything else I’d faced.