

My Sister 164

Chapter 164 JUST A GAME

DANIEL'S POV

After being apart for so long, all I wanted to do was stay by Mom's side.

But as we got to the party, I realized I couldn't do that tonight. Tonight, she wasn't just my mom; she was a winner. A champion. And I couldn't be prouder.

She looked so happy—laughing with her friends, her eyes shining in that way that made everything feel brighter.

I stood at the snack table, my paper plate forgotten, watching people greet her with hugs, congratulations, and excited questions about the Trials.

I was so glad to see her this way. Most of my life, at parties like this, she always stayed in a corner, quiet and alone, and I'd always hated it.

I loved my mom, and even though I wanted to be by her side forever, I was so happy she'd made new friends. Her circle was growing, and people were seeing her for the wonderful person she'd always been.

Dad, on the other hand, was not having as much fun as Mom was.

I watched him at the bar, his back hunching and his eyebrows scrunched together like they did when he was thinking hard. I could see it in his eyes, a pain I didn't understand, whenever he looked at Mom.

Like now.

I wondered if he regretted the divorce. Especially since Aunt Celeste seemed like the worst person in the world.

I would have liked my parents back together, but if Dad only wanted Mom now that she was popular, I wasn't sure about it.

Uncle Ethan appeared near the snack table, holding a plate stacked with cupcakes. He smiled widely at me.

"Danny-boy!" he called. "You look like a little Alpha tonight."

I grinned, hopping excitedly. "Uncle Ethan!"

He bent and ruffled my hair. Why did adults like doing that so much? "You see your mom over there?" He nodded toward her, his tone softening. "She's glowing."

I puffed up a little, proud. “She always glows.”

Ethan laughed. “That she does. You get your charm from her, I think.”

We shared a grin, and he handed me one of the cupcakes. The frosting was gold, sprinkled with tiny silver flakes that glittered under the lights.

As we ate, I saw his mate, Aunt Maya, dragging Mom toward the dance floor with Mom’s other friends. Mom was laughing so hard her cheeks had gone pink.

I’d just met Aunt Maya when I first landed a few hours ago. She and Uncle Ethan came to pick me up, and she seemed like a lot of fun. Anyone who was good to my mom was a hero in my eyes.

Uncle Ethan clapped his hands suddenly. “Come on. This party’s boring. Let’s find something more our speed.”

I followed him eagerly toward the game area—a section tucked away near the back of the hall with big screens, couches, and consoles.

There were a few older kids from the families of the partygoers and even some adults already playing, but when they saw Ethan Lockwood, they moved aside instantly. Everyone liked him.

He winked at me and tossed me a controller as he set up Dragon Blight III: Firestorm Quest. “Ready to lose?”

I gasped dramatically. “You’re going down, Uncle Ethan!”

The match began—bright flashes, loud music, characters shouting battle cries. My fingers flew over the buttons.

I’d played this game nonstop almost every day and was badass at it, but Uncle Ethan was fast, too fast.

“No fair!” I complained when he won the first round. “You cheated!”

“I’ve been playing video games for years,” he teased. “You’ll need backup if you want to beat me.”

I crossed my arms. “Mom’s busy.”

“Then call your old man. He used to be my partner in crime, remember?” Ethan chuckled, clearly trying to sound casual. “You two against me.”

I hesitated. Lucian had joined Dad at the bar. They looked...tense.

Even from across the room, I could tell something wasn't right. Their shoulders were stiff, their faces unreadable. They looked like the dragon riders facing off just before the battle started.

They needed a distraction before they started fighting and ruined Mom's party.

So I headed for them. "Dad! Lucian!"

They looked surprised to see me, and it felt like I'd caught a glass cup just before it fell and shattered.

"Uncle Ethan and I are playing video games," I announced. "You both have to join us!"

"Video games, huh?" Dad chuckled.

I nodded. "Yeah! Me, Lucian, Uncle Ethan, and you!"

I saw the surprise on Lucian's face. Dad and Uncle Ethan, too.

I hadn't had a chance to hang out with Lucian yet. I knew he liked Mom, and Mom liked him, so I needed to know what kind of person he was before they got any closer.

“Sure.” He smiled. “Why not?”

“Well,” I heard Uncle Ethan murmur as we headed back to the game corner, “this should be interesting.”

Soon, the four of us were seated. Dad took the controller beside Uncle Ethan and sat next to me. Lucian sat on my other side.

“Two versus two,” Uncle Ethan said, grinning.

“I call Daniel,” Lucian said immediately, slinging an arm over the back of my chair. “We’re the champions tonight.”

I giggled. “Yeah!”

Dad raised an eyebrow. “That’s not how it works, Lucian. You can’t just—”

But Lucian had already chosen the game mode and handed me the second controller. “Too late.”

Dad raised an eyebrow, and that pained look was in his eyes again. Did he not like me hanging out with Lucian?

Well, if he hadn't divorced Mom, she wouldn't have met him, and we wouldn't be here, now would we?

Uncle Ethan burst out laughing. "Guess we're teammates again, Kieran. Just like old times."

Dad sighed, but a small smile tugged at his mouth. "Let's make it quick."

The first round began, and I immediately realized why Uncle Ethan was so confident. He and Dad moved in perfect rhythm—like they could read each other's minds.

Every time I thought I'd landed a hit, Ethan blocked it while Dad attacked from the other side.

"Unfair!" I yelled, laughing so hard I could barely see the screen.

Lucian leaned closer. "Don't worry, champ. Let them think they've got it."

His voice was calm, steady. Like a teacher explaining something to his student. Then he showed me how to time my strikes better, when to dodge, how to spot an opening.

"Watch this," he murmured.

I watched as he baited Uncle Ethan into a trap, then launched a combo that sent both their dragon riders flying off the cliff.

We won.

I jumped up, throwing my hands in the air. “Yes! We did it!”

Lucian laughed, holding up his palm for a high five. I smacked it with a grin. “Told you we’d win!” he said.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Dad watching us. Not angry, not even upset—just quiet.

His mouth twitched in what looked like half a smile, but his eyes...

This time, I didn’t understand the look in them.

Uncle Ethan nudged him. “Hey, don’t look so serious. It’s just a game.”

Dad’s shoulders relaxed only a little. “Yeah. Just a game.”

We kept playing after that. The matches turned fierce—each side trading wins and losses. Everyone laughed, even Dad, eventually.

At one point, I caught sight of Mom across the room. She'd turned around just as Lucian and I high-fived again.

Her expression was soft, her eyes warm, as if she was seeing something that made her happy in a quiet, secret way.

And that's all I ever wanted—for Mom to be happy.

I was super sleepy by the time I curled into bed next to Mom.

I knew I still had my room right across the hall, and I was too grown to be sleeping with my mommy. But I didn't care.

I'd missed her too much, and I just wanted her arms around me for as long as possible.

She curled around me, her arms tight like she was scared someone would pull me away from her.

I held her just as tightly.

“Are you tired, Mom?” I asked softly. “You’ve had quite a day.”

Even her smile was tired. “You could say that.”

I yawned. “You did amazing.”

Her lips curved tenderly. “You think so?”

“I know so.” I looked up at her. “I’ve always known so.”

She laughed quietly and kissed my hair.

I loved it when she did that. It made me feel precious. I hoped she knew how precious she was to me, too.

“Did you have fun tonight?” she asked softly.

“Mhm.” My eyes were already half-closed. “We played games. Me and Lucian beat Dad and Uncle Ethan.”

Her brows lifted slightly, but she smiled. “Did you now?”

“He’s really good. He taught me how to dodge.”

She brushed her thumb over my cheek. “Sounds like you two made a good team.”

“Does that make you happy?”

“Everything you do makes me happy, baby,” she answered immediately.

She always said cheesy things like that, but I loved it.

The last months living on Dad’s island with Grandma and Grandpa hadn’t been awful. But it had felt like a part of me wasn’t on that island.

But here, now, in Mom’s arms—my home—I finally felt whole.

That's when I sensed it.

A faint shimmer of energy brushed the air around us. It wasn't loud or flashy, just... warm. Nice.

I'd smelled it earlier today, faint and almost impossible to notice—something new in her scent. But also weirdly...familiar.

I smiled drowsily, nestling closer. "Congratulations, Mom."

"Thank you, baby. You don't know how much it means to me that you were there to celebrate with me today."

"Not about your win," I said, pulling back to look at her.

"Congratulations on finally getting your wolf."