

## **My Sister 198**

Chapter 198 QUITE A PHILOSOPHY

SERAPHINA'S POV

I woke to sunlight spilling softly across my face and pooling on the pillow, warm and golden.

Alina stirred inside me, her presence a low hum that felt alive beneath my skin—calm but electric.

'You feel that?' she asked, voice smooth as silk against my thoughts.

'Yes.' I smiled, stretching lazily. 'It feels incredible.'

She purred in quiet satisfaction. 'Our bond strengthens with every sunrise.'

It was true. I could feel it—the subtle strength in my limbs, the heightened awareness that shimmered at the edges of my senses. The air seemed clearer, sharper. I could feel Alina's heartbeat, steady and strong, moving in perfect rhythm with mine.

When I sat up, I caught my reflection in the mirror across the room. My eyes looked brighter, faintly glinting with silver where before there'd only been cerulean—Alina's touch.

The light faded soon after, but the euphoria lingered as I freshened up and got ready, wondering what today had in store for me.

By the time I made it to the dining hall, the place was already buzzing with the morning rush.

Long tables lined the space. Sunlight spilled through high arched windows, illuminating everything. The air was rich with the smell of roasted coffee beans, warm bread, and crisp apples.

It was easy to pick Sabrina out of the crowd. She was halfway through a plate piled high with eggs and toast, gesturing animatedly to a trio of Omegas who were clearly trying not to laugh at her dramatics.

She spotted me at almost the same time, and her face lit up. “Sera! Over here!”

More than a couple of heads turned in my direction at her outburst, but I didn’t feel the need to shrink under their curious gazes.

“There she is!” She beamed as I lowered myself into the empty seat beside her.

“Hi.” I smiled, nodding in greeting to the Omegas.

“So,”—Sabrina nudged me, her eyes glinting mischievously—“you disappeared for a long while last night.”

Before I could come up with some sort of flimsy excuse, the low timbre of a familiar voice reached me from behind.

“Morning, Sera.”

Lucian.

My pulse stuttered, then regained its rhythm as I turned. There he was: hair perfectly styled in his signature bun, sleeves rolled to his elbows, his usual composure softened by the warmth of the morning light.

I thought of last night, of the revelations and confessions, and felt...peace. After the ups and downs of our relationship, it felt like we'd reached a comfortable plateau, and we could just...be.

“Morning.” I smiled softly.

“Morning, Sabrina,” Sabrina chimed sarcastically. “Morning, Hannah,”—she stretched her hand towards the Omega with a dark pixie cut and brown eyes—“morning, Teagan”—blond curls, blue eyes—“morning, Jack.” Brown hair, blue eyes.

Lucian rolled his eyes, sliding into the seat across from me. “Morning, Sabrina,” he said, in a high-pitched voice, mimicking his sister. “Morning, Hannah. Morning, Teagan. Morning, Jack.”

The Omegas laughed, inclining their heads in respect, and it shocked me how...normal it was for the Alpha and his sister to have breakfast with the lowest members of the pack.

Lucian reached for the coffee pot, and when his reach fell short, I picked it up and passed it to him.

“Thank you.” His smile caught me off guard. It was so carefree, so relaxed.

I lingered over his laid-back posture, observing the easy set of his shoulders and how he cradled the coffee cup, almost lazily.

His clear, peaceful gaze met mine. Something in his demeanor had shifted between last night and now.

“Well, well.” Sabrina placed her elbows on the table and propped her chin on her hands. “What is this new energy between you two?”

“Don’t start,” Lucian warned, but she only smirked.

“So no one’s going to explain exactly what happened last night?” Her smirk widened. “A little birdy saw you both by the Moonlit Spring. Another one saw you both returning late...suspiciously glowing.”

Lucian arched a brow. “Glowing?”

“Her, not you,” Sabrina said sweetly. “I bet you looked as broody as usual.”

“Ouch,” he deadpanned, but was clearly fighting a smile. “You wound me.”

I chuckled, shaking my head. “You’re both ridiculous.”

“Maybe,” she said. “But seriously, you dipped in the Moonlit Spring.”

I exchanged a look with Lucian and remembered his warning about backlash, my brow furrowing with concern as I turned to Sabrina. “Is that okay?”

“Of course it’s okay!” Sabrina gasped. “Did it work?” she asked eagerly. “How did you feel?”

I grinned. “Amazing.” And before I could stop myself, I added, “I grew claws.”

To some, it might not have sounded like much of an achievement, but it meant the world to me—and obviously to Sabrina too.

She squealed loud enough to attract more attention and threw her arms around me. “Oh, Sera, that’s amazing!”

I laughed, accepting her embrace. “Thank you.”

She pulled back, but held onto my hand, squeezing tight.

“I couldn’t have done it without help,” I said, glancing at Lucian, who was smiling at us softly. “Lucian’s training and the Moon Dew Nectar—they made all the difference.”

He immediately shook his head. “You’re giving me too much credit. You did the work, Sera.”

I shrugged. “Maybe. But it helped having someone who believed I could.”

For a heartbeat, something unspoken passed between us—a quiet understanding neither of us needed to voice.

Sabrina, predictably, didn’t miss it. “Okay, what is happening here?” she demanded. “This energy is way too wholesome for breakfast.”

I laughed, and at that moment, Alpha William slid into the seat beside her, his coffee in hand and a curious glint in his eye.

“Morning, everyone.”

Sabrina perked up. “Willy, perfect timing. Things were just getting interesting.”

Lucian groaned. “Can we please change the topic?”

“But this one is so juicy!” Sabrina whined.

I laughed as one of the Omegas—Teagan—leaned forward, smiling shyly. “Actually, Sera, if you don’t mind, I was hoping you could tell us a bit about how you won the LST.”

“Yeah,” Hannah chimed in. “I heard rumors that you passed the Misty Woods because your team was filled with Omegas and...you.”

William chuckled, leaning back in his chair as he stirred his coffee. “Ah, the Misty Woods,” he said with an amused glint in his eyes. “I know a wolf or two that still chafe at its memory.”

He pointed his spoon at his brother. “Bob is still convinced you rigged it on purpose to help OTS.”

Lucian sighed good-naturedly, rubbing the back of his neck. “You know I didn’t.”

William nodded. "I know." He shrugged. "I guess we're to blame for not being as clever as Sera in finding the antidote to survive the Snowfield."

My cheeks warmed as my fingers toyed with the rim of my cup. A memory flickered—Alina's voice whispering directions in my head that night, guiding me to the heat-berries through the darkness.

But I kept that detail to myself. I knew she didn't mind my inner circle knowing of her existence, but I doubted she'd appreciate me sharing that information with the breakfast table.

I leaned forward. "Actually, Lucian, I've been meaning to ask. In the Misty Woods, it felt like you favored us, but in the Snowfield, it felt like you were out to get us. Why?"

Lucian's expression shifted—his tone thoughtful, eyes distant with memory. "The LST was something Zara and I first envisioned years ago."

My chest tightened faintly at her name, but it quickly loosened when I noticed the ease with which Lucian spoke it, without the ache that used to shadow his voice.

"It sounded ideal in theory," he continued. "An equal test of strength, strategy, and teamwork."

His gaze turned introspective. "But when it was implemented, I realized how flawed it was. Higher-ranked wolves dominated easily. For Omegas or those without wolves, it wasn't just a competition. It was a wall, a reminder of what they lacked."

Sabrina frowned. "That doesn't sound fair."

"It wasn't," Lucian said simply. "The gap was too wide. Even with the later changes—more emphasis on intelligence and teamwork—the power imbalance persisted. It made victory nearly impossible for anyone from the OTS teams. So I had to even the playing field."

He continued, "I had to look differently at what strength really means. Through experimentation, we discovered something interesting: Omegas, while not as strong physically, have a higher resistance to certain elements. Their genes adapt faster to strain and toxicity. That resilience became the key to optimizing the first challenge: the Misty Forest."

William nodded in begrudging admiration.

Lucian inclined his head. "I wanted the Trials to measure endurance and adaptability, not just brute force. The forest tests instinct and clarity—qualities every wolf, ranked or not, should develop."

Sabrina's face lit up. "That's actually brilliant."

William gave a low hum of approval. "That's quite a philosophy, Lucian," he said, the corner of his mouth lifting slightly. "Most Alphas wouldn't bother to look at things from that perspective."

Lucian's lips quirked, but there was humility in his eyes. "I can't take all the credit," he said simply. "If it weren't for Sera, I wouldn't have gotten here."

I blinked, warmth creeping up my neck. “Me?”

He nodded once, steady and sure. “You. And others, of course—Maya, Jessica, the OTS teams—but you...” His gaze lingered, holding mine. “Watching you train, going over your numbers was inspiring. Technically, you should be weaker than an even an Omega. But you never trained like it. You made me look at things differently. You reminded me what strength looks like when it’s not loud or obvious.”

My throat went tight. I didn’t know what to say to that—not when his voice carried so much sincere admiration it almost hurt to hear.

Sabrina grinned, her gaze darting between us. “That is literally so cute I could throw up.”

Lucian rolled his eyes, but his smile didn’t fade. “I’m serious,” he said, still looking at me. “For a long time, I thought leadership meant always having the answers. But lately...” He exhaled slowly, his expression softening. “Lately, I’ve realized it’s about listening to the people who make you question your own.”

The quiet that followed wasn’t awkward. It was warm, full—like everyone could feel the weight of what he meant.

Something inside me shifted then, small but profound. Lucian’s words made me realize that we weren’t standing on Zara’s legacy anymore.

She'd laid the foundation, sure, but Lucian—and every trainer and trainee he'd encountered over the last ten years had built something different. Something living, beautifully evolving.

And I was a part of that.

And now, it no longer felt like I was competing with Zara's memory.

That was the peace I noticed in him, the lightness. Zara's shadow was gone.

And when our gazes locked, there was gratitude in Lucian's eyes.

I smiled. "I think Zara would have been proud."

He exhaled slowly, nodding. "Yeah. I think she would."

Sabrina wiped a pretend tear from her eye. "Okay, this is officially too emotional for breakfast. Can someone pass me the honey before I cry into my coffee?"

That made everyone laugh, and the tension lifted instantly.

The rest of breakfast passed with lighter topics—stories from past tournaments, pack gossip, and Sabrina’s dramatic retelling of a prank gone wrong.

As breakfast wound down, chairs scraped and laughter faded into the corridors. One by one, the others drifted off—Sabrina last, of course, tossing a mischievous wink over her shoulder as she left.

Lucian and I didn’t move. We stayed seated until the table between us was quiet, scattered with empty cups and sunlight.

When we were the only two left on the table, he smiled at me. “How do you feel?”

“Good,” I breathed, “really good.”

He nodded. “Good enough to go for a run?”

I blinked. “A...what?”

He explained, “The pack is going for a run this evening.”

My heart skipped. “Like an actual pack run?”

He nodded, his grin widening.

My hand pressed against my chest, and I asked in disbelief, “You’re inviting me to run with your pack?”

He chuckled. “Yes, Sera, I’m inviting you to run with my pack.”

My breath hitched. “But—”

“You don’t need to be able to Shift to feel a pack bond,” he preempted my protest. “All you need to do is run.”

My mouth opened and closed, but I couldn’t form words.

“I know this is an experience you’ve dreamed of for a long time. And it will be good for Alina, too,” Lucian added. “What do you say?”

Alina stirred excitedly inside me, her energy surging in a dizzying rush. ‘Yes, yes, yes!’

My grin was so wide my jaw ached. “I’d love to.”