

My Sister 256

Chapter 256 TOO STUBBORN TO DIE

SERAPHINA'S POV

Agony had a sound.

A blinding, deafening crack that split the world open and swallowed everything.

When the light finally receded, when the pain tapered from an all-consuming inferno to a dull, distant tremor, I resurfaced into my body like something dragged up from the depths of a frozen lake.

My eyes snapped open. A ragged gasp tore from my throat as I lurched upright—

Only to immediately collapse back against something soft.

My vision spun as I blinked furiously. Sweat slicked every inch of my skin, plastering my damp clothes and hair to my body and forehead.

My limbs were heavy as stone, rattling with aftershock. My heartbeat thundered, as if it were still chasing the remnants of terror.

I didn't stop blinking until the room settled into focus.

Not the Starlight Hallway.

Not the star-forged realm that had torn me apart and stitched me back together in ways I couldn't even begin to comprehend.

This was...wood. Walls of weathered timber. A cramped space. A single lantern flickering faintly.

The oddly soothing scent of sage and wood varnish lingered in the air.

Elias' cabin.

I knew it instantly, though everything felt slightly distorted.

No, that wasn't the word.

Magnified—yes, that was it.

As if I were seeing through newly polished glass. Colors blazed brighter. Shadows stretched deeper. The world itself rang louder.

My senses thrummed with a clarity so sharp it caught my breath.

I'd never felt this awake.

Or this hollowed out. Like...like my insides had been scraped clean.

Yet deep in my chest, beneath the exhaustion and the fading echoes of agony, something pulsed—steady, luminous, whole.

Where my body felt emptied out, my spirit felt...full.

Alina stirred within me, stretching languidly, as if rousing from a centuries-long slumber. Her presence radiated warmth, a dense, comforting weight pressed against my ribs.

'I can feel it,' she murmured. 'Something opened. Something realigned.'

A tremulous breath slipped from my lips.

“What...what happened?” I whispered.

A throaty laugh answered from somewhere to my right.

“You happened,” Elias said, tone dry as sun-bleached bone.

I turned my head—too quickly. The motion sent a sharp stab of pain lancing behind my eyes. I winced, clutching my temple.

When the fog of pain cleared, my gaze settled on Elias where he sat beside a small table, sipping from a wooden cup as if we were simply sharing afternoon tea.

Wait...

The slight chill in the air. The song of the birds.

It was morning.

I’d been inside the Origin Archives—or at least unconscious—for a full day and night.

Elias' expression teetered between annoyance, disbelief, and reluctant amusement.

"You really are Edward's daughter," he said. "Charging headfirst into death like a newborn calf who's never met a tiger."

I shot him a feeble glare and tried to sit up; nausea churned in my gut, forcing me back down. "Is that supposed to be a compliment?"

He snorted. "It's supposed to be an observation. And a warning." He gestured loosely toward me. "That thing you did—the cleansing, the restoration—it kills a great many Alphas. Incinerates them. And you just...did it."

I pressed a trembling hand to my chest. Each breath sent a ripple of heat down my spine. My muscles felt alien, over-sensitized, too alive, as if my body was reshaping itself to fit someone new.

"What did I unlock?" I breathed. "What changed?"

I needed to know. I needed to understand what that star—my star—had shown me. What part of me had been missing all this time.

And most importantly...

Had the...whatever anguish I'd gone through worked?

I reached for the moment the light devoured me, for the memory that had begun to surface—but a spike of pain pierced my skull, so fierce my vision flashed white.

My back arched on the bed as a raw groan ripped from my throat.

“Ah-ah.” Elias lifted a finger. “Don’t try to reach beyond your limits. Not unless you’re a glutton for pain.”

I collapsed back, moaning into the pillow Elias had wedged beneath my head.

He sighed as if I were a particularly bothersome student. “I don’t know what you unlocked. Only that you did. I felt the magical field shift the moment the Hallway released you. You shed something—and gained something else.” His gaze sharpened. “But the side effects of spiritual cleansing are severe. You need time for your body to adjust before the effects fully set in.”

“But—”

“No.” The word cracked through the cabin like a snapped branch. “If you push before you’re stable, you’ll undo everything you just suffered for. You would do well to add patience to your many strengths.”

Dejection tugged at me, heavy and frustrating.

“But I need to know—”

“And you will,” Elias cut in. “Eventually. Take a moment to bask in your fortune. Most who attempt to cleanse their spiritual wounds end up charred husks or drooling idiots with half a brain.”

I wrinkled my nose. “Lucky me.”

He smirked, sipping his tea. “Ungrateful child.”

I harrumphed, folding my arms with petulance I couldn’t quite suppress.

Alina brushed soothingly through my mind. ‘He’s right. I can feel it—your power has shifted. But it’s still settling. We just need time.’

“Time,” I echoed softly.

As if I hadn’t already spent a lifetime waiting.

Ever since Alina woke up in the Snowfield, since I dipped in the Moonlit spring and took the first sip of Moon Dew Nectar...

All that had passed was fucking time.

But my frustration was weak, barely formed. Because underneath it, I felt the faintest hum of something inside me that belonged to me. Something strong. Something true.

After a long stretch staring at the wooden beams above, strength seeped back into my limbs. My breath evened. My heart slowed from a wild gallop to something almost steady.

I pushed myself upright and this time, stayed upright.

Elias watched me with mild disapproval but didn't stop me.

"How long have I been out?"

"Of the Origin Archives? Only a few hours," he said. "Most people stay unconscious for days after a spiritual scourging. You're either remarkably resilient or just too stubborn to die. I'm betting on the second."

I rolled my eyes, but a reluctant smile tugged at my lips. "Thank you. For letting me rest here."

He waved a hand carelessly. “Don’t thank me. Thank the Archives for spitting you back out before you melted into the floor and joined the constellations in the Starlight Hallway.”

Comforting.

I swung my legs off the bed and stood, testing my balance. My body obeyed—unsteady, but functional.

Just then, something thumped onto the floor in front of me.

I startled, eyes snapping down.

My bag.

Actually...all of my bags.

My purse. My coat. The small suitcase and duffel I’d left behind at the institute lodgings. Everything I owned from my stay here lay in a loose, unceremonious heap at my feet, as if I’d been evicted mid-recovery.

On top of it all sat a single envelope.

Plain, thick. My name scrawled across it in neat, looping script.

I frowned, looking up.

Elias had dropped his cup on the table, arms crossed, expression unreadable in that irritatingly calm way of his.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“Did the Starlight Hallway scour your mind so hard that you don’t recognize your own belongings anymore?”

This time, my glare was stronger even as unease curled low in my stomach. “I mean, why does it look like I’m being kicked out?”

He snorted softly. “If Alois wanted you gone, you’d already be halfway down the mountain wondering what you did wrong.”

That didn’t reassure me nearly as much as he seemed to think it should.

“Alois?”

Elias's gaze sharpened slightly. He tipped his chin at the envelope.

"The director has a message for you," he said. "He has...an errand to entrust you with."

I blinked. "An errand? After I almost died?"

Elias shrugged. "You didn't die. That's good enough for him."

I scoffed, staring at the envelope again, its importance suddenly far heavier than mere paper deserved.

"What kind of errand?" I asked.

Elias's mouth twitched—not quite a smile. He stood, a hand rubbing his bad knee idly, and stepped aside, gesturing toward the door with a subtle tilt of his head.

"Get dressed," he said. "You're done resting."

I swallowed, fingers closing around the envelope at last.

Whatever Alois wanted from me next—if my life’s recent pattern was any clue—it would be anything but small.