

## **My Sister 427**

### Chapter 427 THE AUCTION

#### SERAPHINA'S POV

The corridor leading down to the auction chamber narrowed with each step. The air thickened as we descended, pressing against my lungs, as if I were suffocating.

By the time we reached the last landing, my legs felt leaden, as if I'd hiked a hundred miles.

The doors opened without a sound.

The room within wasn't large, not in the way I had expected. It wasn't a grand hall filled with glittering lights and polished excess. It wasn't designed for comfort or spectacle.

It was built like a pit, tiered downward in concentric rings that forced every eye toward the center. The stone underfoot was dark, uneven in places, as if worn down by more than just time.

Iron fixtures lined the perimeter, bolted directly into the architecture, some still bearing restraints.

The audience remained in shadow, identities obscured, reduced to silhouettes and glints of movement. But the stage's center was exposed under a stark, unforgiving light that erased softness and magnified flaws.

The scent hit me next.

Fear. Sweat. Blood that had been cleaned but not forgotten.

My fingers tightened in Kieran's as we stepped forward, our cloaks blending us into the movement of others filtering into the space.

No one spoke above a murmur. No one lingered. There was an understanding here that didn't need to be explained.

"Stay close," Kieran murmured.

"I'm not going anywhere," I replied, my gaze already moving, taking everything in, mapping exits, counting bodies, assessing threat.

Maxwell had entered separately. For all intents and purposes, we didn't know each other.

A figure stood at the center of the pit, dressed in black, face concealed behind a smooth, featureless mask. Their presence dominated the room effortlessly.

The crowd settled.

No announcement. No flourish.

The first “lot” was brought out.

No attempt had been made to hide what had already been done to him.

His shirt hung in torn strips. Dried blood marked where skin had split and poorly healed. One arm hung oddly at the shoulder, the joint slightly off, like it had been dislocated and forced back without care.

My stomach tightened at the sight.

A low voice echoed from somewhere unseen, layered and distorted enough that it felt less like a person speaking and more like the room itself choosing to communicate.

“Opening bid.”

A handler stepped forward and, without warning, drove a boot into the back of his knee.

He dropped, the kind of fall that jarred through bone.

“Stand,” the masked figure commanded.

The man hesitated—just for a second—and that second cost him.

The chain snapped tight, hard enough that his shoulders jerked back, forcing him upright by pain alone.

A low murmur rippled through the crowd.

Not discomfort.

Interest.

That was when I understood what was going on.

The suffering wasn't incidental; it was part of the demonstration.

The bidding started.

At first, it sounded normal—numbers, increments, controlled escalation—but it didn't stay that way.

"I'll take him at that price," one voice called lazily, "if he still has fight in him."

A blade appeared in the handler's hand and sliced cleanly across the man's forearm.

He sucked in a sharp breath, body locking.

"Move," the bidder added.

The man moved.

Too slow.

The handler struck him across the ribs with the flat of the blade, forcing a reaction.

This time, he moved faster.

The bidder hummed. "Acceptable."

The number doubled.

Another voice cut in.

“I want him conditioned first.”

A pause.

Then, almost conversationally: “Break his dominant hand.”

The handler grabbed the man’s wrist and twisted.

A wet, sharp crack echoed, quickly followed by a raw, blood-curdling scream.

And the room...leaned in.

The cruelty wasn’t hidden.

It was performed.

Measured. Offered up as proof.

Not just of what the “lot” could endure, but of what the bidder was willing to demand.

The price climbed.

Not because of the man.

Because of them.

Because each person competing wasn't just offering wealth. They were revealing appetite.

The more specific the demand, the more interest it drew.

The more inventive the cruelty, the more valuable the lot became.

By the time he was sold, the man barely remained upright, and no one in the room cared whether he would survive what came next.

The next lot was a woman.

Unlike the man, she was relatively clean, but her clothes were basically rags, and she was all but naked.

“She hasn’t been properly processed,” the masked figure said.

The word made my stomach churn.

A bidder stood this time instead of raising a paddle.

“I don’t want her damaged,” he said. “I want her trained from baseline.”

A handler stepped forward.

Paused. Waiting.

For instruction. For interest. For someone to define the terms.

“She holds eye contact,” a second bidder said, eyeing her. “Let’s see if she keeps it.”

The handler’s hand came up, lightning fast, and struck her across the face.

Her head snapped to the side.

She didn’t fall. Didn’t cry. Didn’t look down.

Slowly, deliberately, she lifted her gaze again.

The bids climbed again.

Not for who she was.

For what they could turn her into.

“I want exclusivity.”

“I want compliance.”

“I want her broken.”

Each statement peeled back another layer of what this place was.

By the time the third lot was brought out, the pattern had locked into place with brutal clarity.

This wasn't about money. The currency here was alignment.

How far you were willing to go. How precisely you could define suffering.

How comfortably you could stand in it—and ask for more.

This wasn't something we could win.

Not without becoming exactly what they were looking for.

And that wasn't a line I would cross.

Not even for answers.

A slow, fierce anger began to build beneath my ribs.

One day.

The thought came unbidden, but it didn't feel like a passing impulse.

It felt like a promise.

One day, I would burn this entire system to the ground.

Not just this room. Not just this inn.

All of it.

Every hidden network that fed into something like this.

Every person who enabled it.

Every structure that allowed it to exist.

I exhaled slowly, forcing the heat of it down, compressing it into something I could carry without letting it show.

Not tonight.

Tonight, we needed information.

But we weren't getting it this way.

Kieran shifted beside me.

"We're not going to get access through this," he said, his voice low.

"I know."

"We leave?"

The word sat between us.

Leave. Empty-handed.

After coming this far.

After getting this close.

My gaze flicked toward the stage again, where another transaction was concluding, the masked figure already signaling for the next lot.

Frustration coiled tight in my chest.

"I hate walking away empty," I murmured.

"I hate you staying in a place like this longer than necessary," Kieran replied, his tone even, but there was something beneath it that I felt rather than heard.

I glanced at him, catching the set of his jaw, the tension in his shoulders that he wasn't letting spill over.

"Come on," I said quietly. "Let's go."

The masked figure raised a hand.

“Next.”

Two handlers emerged from the shadows, guiding someone between them.

A young girl. Omega.

I paused, half-standing, my attention snagged.

The first thing I noticed was that she wasn't broken, not in the way the others had been.

There were marks on her wrists where restraints had been too tight, a faint bruise along her cheek, but her clothes were intact, her spine was straight, her chin lifted just enough to suggest defiance rather than submission.

The second thing I noticed was that the room barely reacted.

If anything, there was a flicker of disinterest.

“Opening bid,” the voice announced.

The number was...low.

Lower than anything that had come before.

I frowned.

That didn't make sense. She was indubitably the best-looking lot that had come out.

No one reacted.

No paddles raised.

No voices requesting cruelty.

Just silence.

I glanced around, scanning the tiers.

“Why aren’t they bidding?” I murmured.

Kieran’s eyes narrowed as he followed my line of sight. “I have no idea.”

My pulse picked up.

There was something about this lot that the buyers didn’t want anything to do with.

I looked back at the girl.

Her gaze moved across the room, not pleading, not searching for help.

When her eyes passed over me, they didn’t linger.

But something in them shifted.

Recognition?

No.

Instinct.

The same one tightening in my chest.

'Take the opening.' We'd become so aligned that Alina's voice sounded exactly like my inner thoughts.  
'Now.'

I didn't give myself the chance to second-guess or hesitate.

I lifted my paddle.