



MONICA

“Can’t you just see it, Curtis?” I said, pacing across my small office.

This place was tiny, and I was *not* going to stay here much longer.

As soon as I could, I was going solo.

And taking Curtis with me. At least until he was no longer useful.

“I wonder how long it will take for the offers to start rolling in,” I said. “WolfWideNews. InfoWolves. Hell, before too long we could have our own channel!”



“I still don’t like that we stole the journal from that healer,” Curtis said nervously.

Ugh. He was always so damn twitchy. I’d never met a more submissive wolf.

Normally, it worked well for my purposes. But occasionally, I did wish he would grow a pair.

“Who cares, Curtis? No one is going to be looking at us. They’ll be too busy watching the celebrity breakup of the century! And then we’ll be off to the big leagues!”

Curtis shrugged, chewing on his lip like a scared toddler. His eyes flicked to mine, and then hurriedly away.

I loved that he was afraid of me. It was such a turn on.

I sauntered over to him and ran my finger down the front of his shirt.

“You know better than to question *me*, Curtis,” I said into his ear.

“We took the journal. The proof is right there. The Alpha’s little bitch will go down. Charlotte can go back to skimming off the top. I get what I want. It’s all going perfectly.”

Curtis groaned as I settled my hand on his groin and gave it a squeeze.

“So there’s nothing to worry about. We’ve won.”

“But it could still go wrong!” he protested. His face was screwed up in a very unattractive pout.

“Nothing is going to go wrong,” I said. “Just keep doing exactly as I say, and we’ll be rich.”



I gave his half-flaccid member another squeeze through his pants.



Curtis gave a low, pleading whimper.

I chuckled low in my throat and began unbuckling his belt.

The door of my office slammed open, almost shattering the clouded glass.

I whipped around to see who it was.

Ah, Sienna.

And her pathetic little frenemy.



“You dirty thief!” Sienna cried.

Curtis went pale and backed away from my hand on his crotch.

“You think you can get away with this? If you try to give that file to Raphael, I’ll tell him you stole it from Hanh!”

“And he’ll rip your head from your shoulders!” Michelle added.

It was adorable, the way they thought they could dominate me.

As if I hadn’t planned for every single possibility.

“Do you have proof that I stole anything?” I asked her, my voice sweet like sugar.

“You wouldn’t have any evidence if you hadn’t!” she returned hotly.

“Ah, yes, I’m not saying I don’t have the evidence. But do you have any proof that I was the one that took it?”



She stared at me.

“I could have found the journal lying open on the desk, in which case it’s not stealing to look at it.”

“But that—”

“Or I could have received it from an anonymous source that was concerned about the future of the East Coast Pack.”

“But you didn’t!” Sienna said. Her face was nearly the color of that frightful red hair.

“You stole it from Hanh’s office!” Michelle said. I glared at her.

Ungrateful tramp. I give her the closest thing she’ll ever experience to fame, and this is how she repays me?



Oh well. She was never more than a pawn in my schemes, anyway.

And pawns are dispensable.

“But as I said, you have no proof. No security footage. No witnesses. Nothing.” I’d made sure of that.

Because Sienna did have a point. If Raphael ever found out about my occasional lack of... journalistic integrity, it would mean serious trouble.



But you can’t make an omelette without breaking some eggs, and you can’t get to the top of the pack without taking a few risks.

I didn’t let my smile waver for an instant. “I think we’re done here. But you girls are cute. Real cute.”

Sienna shot me one glance of pure hatred, then allowed Michelle to pull her away.

“We aren’t finished here,” she spat at me.

The door slammed shut behind her.

“Oh, but we are finished. Or at least you are, Mrs. Norwood.”



I turned back to Curtis. “Now, where were we?”

JOSH

The drive home was a bit of a blur.

All I wanted was to get home to Michelle.

Honestly, I couldn’t believe I was alive.



I had come to on the floor backstage, several stagehands clustered around me.

“What happened?” I asked as I ran a hand over my throat.

The skin on my neck was smooth and unblemished. I sagged with relief.

I hadn’t been bitten.

“There was a man—or—like, twins? Or triplets?” one of the techies said as she helped me sit up.

“Sheila and I thought it was Ramon,” said another techie. “He’s our Phantom. These dudes were dressed just like him.”

“Help me stand,” I said.

“We need to call the cops!” someone said.

“We’re supposed to be live in twenty minutes!”
said the female stagehand.

“So what, Sheila? A man was just attacked!”

I held up a palm. “No, she’s right. The show must
go on.”

*And the cops aren’t going to do anything other
than delay me.*

I’d gotten on the road and driven back to
Mahiganote as quickly as I could.



Konstantin must have been interrupted before he
could bite me. I had no memory of him in my
mind—or my dreams.

Fear had an iron grip on my heart. I needed to
check on Michelle. To make sure that my mate
was okay.

But when I got home, she wasn’t there. A note on
the bedside table told me she was with Sienna.

A wave of exhaustion flowed over me, and I
collapsed in our bed.



The next morning, I headed for the Pack House, only to be accosted by Elijah, my assistant, the moment I arrived.

“Beta Daniels, I need to update you immediately,” he said.

Frowning, I was going to lead him into my office when I spotted a beautiful woman with black hair and purple eyes strolling down the hall.

I turned to Elijah. “Why the hell is Eve Knox here? Is Raphael Fernandez here too?”



“That’s what I needed to tell you,” Elijah hissed. “You’ve been gone for two days! The Alpha of the Millennium is here. Along with the leader of the Canada Pack.

“Alpha Norwood has been looking for you everywhere. He’s pissed.”

I could feel my blood begin to boil, but then as I glanced at Eve again, I caught my breath.

Without another word to Elijah, I marched over to her.

Eve Knox was a vampire—not a *vampyre*. Vampires were born. Vampyres were made.



But that still meant she might have more insight into the insanity of the past few days than I could hope to learn by myself.

“Excuse me, Ms. Knox?” I said, mustering my most charming smile.

Her violet gaze flicked over me. Those eyes freaked me out, but I tried not to let it show.

“You’re the ECP’s Beta,” she stated.

“Yep,” I said with a smile. “Beta Josh Daniels.”



“Would you be so kind as to step into my office for a moment?” I asked. “I have a question that, I think, maybe only you can answer.”

When we sat on my couch, I told her everything about the hunt for Konstantin.

“Aiden’s so sure he killed Konstantin,” I said to her. “I haven’t told him about yesterday yet, but I bet he won’t believe me. He’ll think I didn’t see what I saw.”

Eve gazed at me, her face impassive. Goosebumps raised along my arms.

“But I did see what I saw, Ms. Knox. Konstantin was there, but there were at least three of him.”



She still didn't say anything.

“And I know the set was full of mirrors, okay? I get that it must sound like... like maybe I was wrong...”

As I spoke, I realized how ridiculous all of this had to sound. But Eve's eyes were alert and fixed on me.

“What else was in the stone box grave?” she asked.



“Uh...” I closed my eyes, trying to bring it to mind. “Pottery. Some... uh... leather pouches. A bow with feathers—I mean, it was pretty old...”

Eve nodded. “The leather pouches suggest that it was probably a sorcerer. What the people of that time would have considered a shaman.”

My face slackened. “He stole the bones of a sorcerer?”

Another nod. “And with the bones of a sorcerer, you can do a lot of things. Cast a lot of different kinds of magic.”

“You can use them like an ingredient? In spells?”

“That's right,” she said. “Which could be the explanation for what you saw, Beta Daniels.”



“You’re saying he really did duplicate himself? That the person Aiden killed wasn’t the real Konstantin?”

Eve held up a hand. “I didn’t say that. I don’t know. But I’m saying it sounds possible.”

I blinked at her.



She sighed. “There is magic that would allow the person using it to transform victims into... simulacrums of himself—clone-like copies, if you will. And with Konstantin’s ability to dominate minds...”

“I fucking knew it,” I said, leaning back and pressing a hand to my mouth.

Eve eyed me. “I’d get some sort of confirmation, though,” she said. “Because right now, this is all conjecture.”

Shit, I thought.

She was right.

SIENNA

That night, Michelle and I went to the Mahiganote cemetery.

The moon was bright, and it only took a few minutes to find the grave we were looking for.

I hadn't been here in so long. Too long.

I reached out and ran my fingers over the engraved letters of her name.



"I wish you could have known her," I said to Michelle as we stood together in front of Emily's tombstone.

"Nah, I was a total bitch back in high school. None of you would have hung out with me," Michelle said soberly.

She looked over, and I saw that her eyes were shining in the moonlight. "Not that I've been much better lately. I'm so sorry, Sienna."

I shook my head. If I had learned anything, it was that forgiving yourself for your past was the only way to move forward.

I wasn't going to let the tragedies that Emily and Michelle had endured weigh down on me anymore.

It was time to let go.

The instant I willed this upon myself, I felt the burden I'd been carrying for so long finally lift off



my shoulders.

I felt rejuvenated... free.

I smiled at Michelle. "Let's just try to be better to each other from here on out."

"Promise," she replied.



We embraced in front of Emily's grave, and in the quiet cemetery, I thought I could feel my friend smiling down on us.

Afterward, freezing in the winter air, Michelle and I went back to my hotel room, where we stayed up half the night, just talking.

No makeup crews. No cameras. No live audience.

Just my friend and I, trying to rebuild our cracked relationship.

We hashed out everything.

All of our faults and triumphs and failures and worries.

All while I waited on a precipice, wondering if Monica Birch was really willing to go this far to get what she wanted.



Aiden knew everything. He'd wanted to come and be with me, but I'd asked him to stay at the Pack House. Close to Raphael Fernandez, in case something happened.

So Michelle and I were alone, sitting on my hotel bed and remembering how to be friends again.

Sometimes I cried. Sometimes Michelle cried.



After a few hours, we were both wrung out and completely exhausted.

I didn't know where our friendship would go from here. There were a lot of hurts to heal—on both sides of the fence.

But at least we were working together.

We debated what to do about Monica Birch until the wee hours of the morning.

Our plan was resting on shaky ground.

Who knows if we will be able to pull it off?

And if I failed... if Aiden was somehow forced to put me aside and take another "official" mate...

We refused to talk about that.



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We refused to talk about that.

It was the one thing left unsaid.

As if to speak the terrible words would breathe life into the idea.

The next morning, I was summoned to the Pack House to meet with the Alpha of the Millennium.

Next Chapter