

Selene
SIENNNAAAAA

Selene
I'm with mom

Selene
We wanna do a Mercer girls day

Selene
Come ova!!!

Mom
Hi Sienna, this is mom. Selene's right! We'd love to spend time with you.

Sienna
Hi guys



Sienna
I can't rn, I'm at the pack house

Selene
You're working?!?!!

Selene

It's the weekend!

Mom

Sienna, this is mom again. I don't like that you're working so hard.

Selene

Seriously, girl

Selene

You need to CHILL

Sienna

I really can't right now

Sienna

I'm sorry

Sienna

Love you both



Selene

Ohhhh no

Selene

You don't get off the hook that easily



Selene

Seriously, Si, I'm worried about you

Mom

This is mom again, Sienna. I'm worried too! You barely said 10 words at the baby shower.

Mom

(Still mom) you need to lighten up! Enjoy the pregnancy! Have a girls day!

Sienna

PLEASE

Sienna

Some serious stuff is happening!

Sienna

I can't leave!



Sienna

I'll call you later

Selene

Sienna. You sound stressed.

Selene



1:50 PM



Selene

Stress is NOT good for the baby!!!

Selene

Do you hear me?

Mom

Your sister's right!

Mom

Stress = sad baby



Sienna

Ugh.

I threw my phone back into my purse, sick of the passive-aggressive storm of texts Mom and Selene were sending me. Like, it was enough already!

I got that they didn't like the way I was acting, the things I was doing.

They'd made that quite clear.

But I was in the middle of a literal showdown at the pack house, between my mate and the rogue wolf that came back to town for some reason, and I couldn't exactly leave to do face masks!



“I can’t talk to her.” Aiden was still seething. The *her* being the rogue wolf, Nina, who was still sitting on the bench outside Aiden’s office.

“You can,” Jocelyn replied, her tone as soothing as ever. “You just need to open your mind to the possibility of forgiveness, of understanding. I know you’re capable of that, Aiden—”

“I’m NOT! Not when it involves a person who put my family, my pack, in danger!”

I saw Jocelyn glance at Nina. I tried to figure out their relationship, the reason why Jocelyn was trying so hard to help her, and that gl



There was love between them.

Jocelyn was in love with her.

I grabbed Aiden’s arm. “Hey,” I said softly into his ear. “Let’s take a walk, you and I. Let’s calm you down. Yeah?” He darted his eyes at me, and I could see him instantly relax.

“Yeah,” he replied, grabbing my hand and pulling me down the hall.

I turned back to Jocelyn before he could pull me beyond her. “Give me a few minutes, but then come meet us out back, okay? We’ll be by the edge of the forest,” I said softly, so only she could hear.



She nodded at me, and I could see the appreciation on her face.

But I got it.

Sometimes we did crazy things for love.

“Can you *believe* this?!” Aiden demanded as we walked out of the pack house, stepping on the pavement outside. “The nerve of that... that bitch!”

“Aiden,” I said to him, pausing and looking deep into his eyes. “I need you to give her a chance to explain, okay?”



“WHAT?”

I took a deep breath. “Jocelyn has a connection to her. She sees something we don’t. And I trust Jocelyn. She’s the best healer I know, okay? So if Jocelyn is asking you to give the girl a chance, to let her explain, you have to.”

“I *have to*?! I’m the Alpha here, Sienna.”

“You might be the Alpha, but she’s the healer. She’s *our baby’s* healer. And we need her right now more than we need your pride.”

Aiden looked at me, really looked at me, and I could see the rage in his eyes turning to confusion. Confusion and then resignation. He blinked heavily, and then he wordlessly squeezed my hand.



I took that as an, *okay, Sienna.*

We started walking ahead again, in silence, until we reached the edge of the forest. “You can do this, Aiden,” I assured him, smoothing the collar of his jacket. “I know you can. You’re the kindest, fairest man I’ve ever met.”

“She put us in danger, Sienna—”

“And she might’ve had a damn good reason.”

Jocelyn

I waited a few minutes like Sienna had asked me to, and then I grabbed Nina’s hand and pulled her out of the pack house. We walked through the courtyard and then started for the trail that led to the edge of the forest.

“He seems angry enough to feather a chicken,” Nina murmured from beside me.

“Sienna’s talking to him right now.”

“Jocelyn, I meant what I said before,” Nina interrupted me, pulling my body closer to hers.

She wrapped her arms around my waist so our faces were practically touching. “I don’t care how angry Aiden is. I don’t care what he does to me. He can pull my feathers right out. As long as I get to spend more time with you, I’m happy.”



Even though I should've been worried about her words, freaking the hell out at them, instead I was reeling with joy. With euphoria, even.

Because no one had loved me like she was loving me—not ever.

She was willing to sacrifice herself, to put herself through pain, to endure whatever it was the Alpha would deem sufficient punishment, in order to be near me. To be *with* me.

I kissed her.

Tenderly at first, and then it grew more passionate.



More urgent.

Before we lost ourselves in the fire that was building, I pulled away. “I’ll be right there, the whole time. I’ll do whatever I can,” I told her.

She nodded. “I know you will.”

When the clearing at the edge of the forest came into view, so did Sienna and Aiden. I could see them standing close together, looking right at each other like they were in their own world.

I want that, I thought before I could stop myself.

But then I saw Nina as she peeled ahead, not



slowing down one bit. And realized that in this rogue wolf—in this courageous, bold, downright crazy woman—I'd found it.

I hurried to catch up to her, and as we got closer to them, they looked up at us. Sienna smiled.

“Hi, guys,” she greeted. “We’re going to give this another shot. We both know that anybody Jocelyn supports has passed a hard enough test already, so we’re open to listening. Right?” she asked, directing the question at Aiden.

Aiden nodded tersely.

I turned to Nina. “Take it away.”



Nina

With the eyes of three of the East Coast Pack’s most important leaders on me, I felt the pressure. But I was the type of person who thrived under pressure.

Give me a high-stakes situation, and I’d complete the mission like a goddamn superhero.

“I came into your pack with the intention of betraying you,” I told them, beginning the plea that would determine my fate.

“I’m not going to lie about that. I’m not going to lie about anything, actually. Like I told Jocelyn, I want to get everything out into the



Jocelyn, I want to get everything out into the open. Whatever you choose to do to me, I'll understand."

Aiden didn't smile, didn't show any sign of being receptive to what I was saying. Instead, he just pursed his lips and said, "Keep talking."

I sighed. "Before I came to the pack, I was a rogue wolf. That part is true. And I stole something... from someone extremely powerful. Someone who I should've known better than to mess with. After she found out, I was under her captivity. Whatever she asked of me, I had to do."



I turned to Jocelyn, and she gave me a reassuring nod. So I kept going.

"She ordered me to come here. We faked my injuries, and Jocelyn healed me... and I got to know her. I got to fall for her," I added, my eyes still on the healer.

It was fucking true, too.

Her beauty, her kindness—I'd never seen anything like it before. It drove me crazy. She was so strong and yet... so vulnerable. And I was so completely in love with her.

"But I used that to help me. I took whatever I could. Information, opportunities to eavesdrop and find out more."

"What were you after?" Sienna asked. The



question wasn't rude, but it also wasn't kind. It was direct, in a no-bullshit kind of way. So I thought I'd give her the same respect back.

"You," I said. "My mission was to kill you."

He lunged at me before I could see him coming.

His hands pounded against my face, his body tackling me to the forest floor.

We rolled for a few seconds, his hands grabbing at my hair, my face, my neck, but I didn't feel any pain.

I didn't really feel anything.



Jocelyn

The second Aiden leaped onto Nina, tackling her, I felt the trapped feeling you get when you're in a nightmare wash over me. But it wasn't just a feeling that I could acknowledge and release, exchanging for the will to act instead.

No, this feeling was binding.

"NO!" I tried to scream as I watched Aiden hold Nina to the ground, restraining her arms above her head, punching her right in the cheek. "NO!"

But nothing came out.



No words, no sounds.

I tried to move my feet, to fly over to them, to separate them, but my body was stuck to the ground. I was frozen.

What is happening?

What the hell is happening?!

I tried over and over to move, to scream, but it was like I was no longer a part of this world. The world was going on around me, but I was trapped here, watching from afar.

And then it dawned on me.



All the warnings Wendy had given me about leaving the Healers' Retreat before I was ready, about my spirit not being fully restored...they weren't just figments of her own paranoia.

They were real.

And because I hadn't taken them seriously, I'd walked the person I was in love with into a fist-fight with an Alpha.

But I couldn't save her.

No, all I could do was watch.

Sienna



I didn't know where to look.

Aiden was on top of Nina, fighting her—I could tell he wasn't thinking. The second she admitted she'd been here to kill me, he'd lost it.

His brain no longer existed.

It was replaced by a mess of rage.

He'd do anything to protect me, that much was clear.

But I couldn't stand to see him destroying a rogue wolf. Even if what she'd said was true, even if she did have plans to kill me before, she'd come to apologize.



Jocelyn vouched for her, and I had more faith in Jocelyn's read of people than I did my own.

I looked at Jocelyn.

She was standing in the same spot, her legs straight, her mouth slightly ajar. Her eyes were wide as can be, staring straight at the fight, unblinking.

She looked like she was shocked frozen.

I heard Aiden growl from on top of Nina and turned back to see she was biting into his arm. *He isn't going to react well to that.*

"AIDEN!" I cried, running over to them



“STOP IT! STOP FIGHTING!” I demanded.

But they just kept going.

“Jocelyn?” I cried, looking at her for help. But she didn’t even blink.

I tried to grab Aiden’s back to pull him off Nina, but he just kept flailing. He was way too strong, too manic, for me to interfere.

But as I saw him lay into Nina, as I saw the desperation in her eyes turn to resignation, the blood on her face pouring down, I became consumed with the need to act.



I couldn’t stand idly by.

I needed to defend the defenseless.

So I just... shifted. Without thinking about it, without giving my body the okay, it just shifted of its own volition. I immediately sprang over to them, pulling Aiden off of her.

And the second he looked at me, seeing me in my wolf form, I felt another sharp pain in my belly.

Like before, only one hundred times stronger.

I shifted back the next second, and then I collapsed to the ground.

All of the energy inside me was gone.



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I had nothing left to give—nothing left to use.

And as my eyes closed, as the pain continued to intensify, the only thing flooding through my head was what the creepy healer had told Aiden.

“Something... was... off...”

Next Chapter

