

Michelle

Josh and I gave each other a look at the dinner table. The kind only couples who are extremely in sync can manage.

The near-telepathy of lovers.

We probably shouldn't be here for this, right?
Josh nodded to Rowan, this mysterious bearded stranger, who was sitting at the end of the table.

I don't know Josh, I said with a grimace. We should probably stay to support Sienna. She needs us right now.

Okay. Josh nodded. But if it gets too personal...

A hundred percent agree. I nodded in return.

I thanked God I had a mate who was on the exact same page as me. But I wondered how Sienna was dealing with the fact that this guy was claiming to be her *dad!*

It felt so soap opera. Like, where was this



guy last year? This would've made for a great episode of *Real Mates of the East Coast Pack!*

Sometimes, as terrible as that show was for everyone involved, I had to admit I missed it. The spotlight had been addicting.

But not nearly as rewarding as it was to be close with Sienna again. Our walk along the trail had really loosened me up and made me feel more like myself again.

I was even eating Josh's chicken. Which, by the way, was terrible.

"So?" Sienna asked Rowan, arms folded. "Are you going to talk or just sit there?"

I looked at him. Something about the bearded man's presence seemed...unnatural. Not quite werewolf. Not quite human. Then what was he?

And why did he have no scent?

"Years ago, Sienna," Rowan began, "Vanessa, your mother, fell in love with a man who was neither wolf nor deity. He was something in between. And his powers, when matched with hers, brought into this world a child unlike any before."

"The not-wolf, not-deity is *you*, I assume?"



Sienna asked curtly. “This isn’t storytime, Rowan. You don’t have to speak in third person.”

“Fine, me,” Rowan said with a nod. “And you were the child, Sienna. You were special and, if we were not careful, potentially a danger to those around you.”

“So you recruited Konstantin to help,” she said, filling in the blanks. “I know this part. I saw it with my own eyes. The vampyre showed me. The runes. The attempts to unlock something inside me.”

“He was tricking us, though,” Rowan said with a nod. “Your mother caught on to his ploys and came up with a way to protect you forever. But...it would mean we’d never get to see you again.”

I looked at Josh again. His eyes were wide.

Learning more about the vampyre who had tortured all of us made being in the middle of the strangest family reunion ever worth it.

“Of course, he killed her when he discovered what she was up to.”

“I saw that too,” Sienna said, coolly. “When are you getting to the point?”



“You don’t know the other half of the story,” Rowan said, voice dripping with regret. “Why I...why I stayed away.”

“Does it really matter?”

“To me, yes. Because there’s not a day that’s gone by for the past twenty-one years that I haven’t missed you, Sienna.”

I gave Josh a look again. *Time to go now?*

He shook his head. *Not yet. Not until we learn everything about Konstantin.*

“Vanessa, your mother,” Rowan continued, “it was her idea to sever our mating bond. In order to protect you from Konstantin. To make your location a mystery from then on forth. But, by doing so, we upset the natural order of our universe.”

“What do you mean?” Sienna asked with a frown.

“The deity of balance, Llinos, intervened. She...incarcerated me. Trapped me in time and space until...eight months ago.”

“What changed?” Sienna asked. “Why’d she let you go now?”



“When Konstantin found you, when he entered your mind, he rendered our sacrifice void. His abuses, *all of them*, allowed for my return.”

Rowan’s eyes flicked toward me then my wrist. I instinctually covered it with a sleeve. I was surprised he knew that I’d been involved, as well.

“Which brings us to here and now...” Rowan said. “I’ve been waiting to meet you. I wasn’t sure how to...introduce myself. If I even should. Only when your life was threatened, when you suffered this loss, did I decide to emerge.”

“A family tragedy always brings out the weirdos,” Sienna said with a scoff.

I was surprised by how rude Sienna was being.

But then again, I’d never been abandoned by a not-wolf, not-deity father who showed up twenty-one years later with some crazy story.

“So I understand...” Aiden said, looking perplexed. “You’re saying that Sienna is...not fully wolf? Then what is she?”

Rowan looked down, clearly ashamed. A big revelation was coming.



Josh shot me a look. *Okay, now I think we leave.*

While it pained me to miss out on the action, in this case, I knew Josh was right. This was a family affair for Sienna, Aiden, and Rowan alone.

Josh and I stood up at the same time as I took my friend's hand. "Si, text me when you guys are done. We're going to go get some rest."

"You don't have to leave," Sienna said. But I just squeezed her hand, and this time, it was us friends who shared the psychic look. *Yes, I do.*

Sienna nodded and turned to Josh. "Thanks for cooking, Josh."

"Next time I'll try to make the chicken less...crispy," he said, shaking his head.

Then Josh took my hand and we left the house, only breathing when we were finally outside. For the first time, I had to admit I was looking forward to *not* knowing something.

Aiden

I was surprised by how much of the story my mate seemed to know already. Most of this was news to me.



I knew, of course, that Sienna had explored some strange corners of her past during her “sessions” with Konstantin.

But I’d never known about these *runes* or Sienna being a *special* child. What did any of that mean?

“Tell me,” Sienna said, hungry for answers herself. “Tell me what I am. Why you’re really here.”

“Yeah, what are you talking about?” I asked Rowan.

“Aiden,” Rowan said, “I am sorry for your recent loss. If anyone knows what it’s like to lose a child, it’s me—”

“Yours isn’t dead, though, is it?” Sienna asked.

“Will someone please tell me what’s going on?” I asked, growing frustrated.

“When I found out that Sienna was pregnant, I wanted to come see you both and warn you immediately.”

“Warn us about what?”

Sienna turned and, for the first time since we’d begun to speak with Rowan, softened. She



took my hand. It was like all the pieces were starting to click into place for her.

“Aiden, remember how I told you...we didn’t lose the baby because I shifted?”

“Yes, I still don’t understand what you meant...”

“She meant,” Rowan said, “that she was going to lose the baby one way or another. Her body would never have been able to bring a life into this world.”

I stood up with a start, the chair skidding back a few feet. I was beginning to feel dizzy. Like the room was spinning around me.

“Aiden...” Sienna said, worried.

“Hold on a second,” I said, raising a hand to my forehead. It felt like it was throbbing. Like I was suddenly feverish. “You’re saying... Our baby...why?”

Rowan looked forlorn and unable to spell it out. It was Sienna who stood up and took my hands, tears in her eyes.

I had no idea what she was going to say next. What could she possibly say to explain this?!



Sienna

I had been dreading this moment since I'd first spoken to Aiden's mother, Charlotte. She was the one who told me what she'd discovered about my true parentage.

About Rowan and his deity-like powers.

About what my body was and *was not* capable of.

I'd been wrestling with the epiphany ever since, uncertain how to categorize it or what it meant for the future between me and my mate.

After all, Aiden was an Alpha. And an Alpha needed pups to continue his lineage. Would he still love me, would we still be a family...if we could never be more than two?

"Sienna, what is he saying?" Aiden asked, panicking. "What's going on?"

Sienna sighed. "There are some beings so powerful they are stripped of the ability to procreate. Bringing another life into the world would throw off the balance of the universe."

"Llinos would never allow it," Rowan said with a nod. "Not after the circumstances surrounding Sienna's birth."



“But that means...” Aiden began. But he couldn’t continue.

Because if he were to say the words out loud, that would make them real.

That would mean he’d have to live with that truth for as long as he lived.

I could see the wheels turning. I could see it was going to destroy him. But I had no choice but to come clean.

“That’s right, Aiden,” I said, nodding, tears beginning to form in my eyes. “I’m so sorry.”

This was worse than a miscarriage. This was worse than a violation by an evil vampyre. This was worse than all the secrets of the past combined.

Because this was supposed to be our future.

“Don’t say it,” Aiden whispered.

“I have to, Aiden,” I said. “You have to hear it. Because it’s the truth.”

Then, finally, as tears streamed down my cheeks, I told Aiden what I’d been hiding. I confessed, knowing we would never be the same. I damned us both.



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“Aiden,” I whispered. “I can’t have children.”

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