



## AIDEN

My skin felt hot.

There was an insistent, tearing pain in my stomach.

Something was wrong with me.

My vision blurred and I shook my head, trying to see clearly through the swirl of colors made by the spinning dancers.

*Where is Sienna? I need to find my mate.*



Stumbling a bit, I pushed my way through the crowds.

Another wave of nausea seized me.

My breath came in short gasps.

*I have to get out of here.*



Chapters



Display



Unmute



Comment



React



I was almost to the door when the music from the orchestra cut off, leaving sudden silence...

I turned to see Josh standing on the raised stage.

He had a microphone in one hand and with the other he was gesturing for the musicians to clear off the platform.

Then he turned to the watching crowd with a boyish grin.

“Welcome, everyone, to this year’s annual Yule Ball,” he said.

My pulse was thudding heavily in my ears, and my vision was increasingly fuzzy around the edges.

*What is going on?*

Josh continued, “I know I’m keeping everyone from enjoying the party, but there’s something important that I need to say.”

Now all eyes were turning toward my Beta

as he confidently paced the stage.



UNLIMITED



as he confidently paced the stage.

“This Pack has a problem, and I think everyone in this room knows what it is,” he said.

“For too long, we have strayed from the traditions that make us the Pack we are.

“For too long, we have watched as the leadership of this Pack, *our* Pack has dismantled the cultural identity that we have held dear to our hearts!”

I struggled to understand what Josh was saying through the waves of wrenching pains that were now coursing through my arms and legs.



“I have been Aiden Norwood’s friend for more than twenty years. So, you know that I am telling you the truth when I say that our current Alpha has failed in his duty.”

What? My mind as spinning.

What was he saying?

Josh was working himself to a fever pitch



Josh was working himself to a fever pitch.

“I stand before you today, my fellow wolves, to say that I no longer have faith in the leadership of Alpha Norwood.”

His eyes gleamed wildly.

I finally understood.

My friend had betrayed me.

*Josh? No. Don't do this.*

Don't make me kill you.



“I challenge Aiden Norwood for the right to lead the East Coast Pack the way we have led it for generations!”

“I challenge him to combat for the title of Alpha.”

So be it.

## **JOSH**

There was a collective gasp at my words. My



eyes went to Gregory Singh.

He gave me a single nod, barely moving his head at all.

Relief washed over me.

Everywhere heads swiveled to Raphael Fernandez, where he stood separate from everyone else on the far wall of the room.

Having the Alpha of the Millennium here for this moment had also not been part of the plan.

His face was thunderous.



But he knew pack law better than anyone.

It was rare these days, but tradition was strong.

If the majority of the members approved a challenge to the standing Alpha, it had to be allowed.

I held my breath.



“AYE!” a voice rang out.

“Challenge!” called another.

One by one, the members of Gregory Singh’s faction voiced their approval of the challenge.

More than half.

Now, like spectators in a tennis match, all eyes turned toward Aiden.

He stood proud and tall as he walked to the stage, but I could see that he was sweating profusely.

*I always knew he was weak.*



I still felt a tremor of fear as I took in the furious look on his face.

And there was something else there, something that looked terribly like disappointment.

He climbed the short stairs, stumbling a bit on the last one.



Aiden turned to face the waiting crowd.  
They stared back at him implacably.

“I accept the challenge,” he said loud  
enough for everyone to hear.

“You’ll die for this Josh,” he whispered only  
for me.

Then he exploded into a raging whirl of  
fangs and claws and shaggy black fur.

I shifted into my own wolf form just in time  
to brace myself for his attack.

## SIENNA



I watched helplessly as Aiden and Josh fell  
savagely on one another.

The sound of snapping jaws and panting  
breaths echoed through the vast ballroom.

Encircling the stage on three sides were the  
members of the East Coast Pack.

Who had just approved this challenge.



I wanted to gouge the eyes out of every one of their skulls.

Aiden had the advantage in size, but Josh was quick and agile.

His pale blonde wolf snapped at Aiden's ankles, but Aiden shook him off, snarling menacingly.

Then his front leg seemed to give out, and he staggered to one side.

Fear had wrapped itself around my gut like an iron fist.



“Is Aiden feeling okay?” Michelle appeared at my left.

I was so focused on the vicious battle happening on the stage that I barely even registered her presence until she spoke again.

“Josh is going to kill Aiden you know,” her voice dropped to the barest of whispers. “I’ve already made sure of that.”

“You were right, Sienna, wolfsbane is way





too dangerous to keep around.”

I turned to look at her, eyes wide with shock.

I was surprised I was still able to feel shock after everything that had happened tonight.

This revelation, on top of everything else, was too much.

The true extent of her betrayal hit home.

It ripped me apart with sadness, but simmering just below was swiftly rising anger.



I felt my Deity energy rise to the surface, crackling the air with tension.

*I was going to destroy this hateful bitch and her vile mate and anyone who stood in my way.*

An ear-splitting roar came from the stage and I turned back to see Aiden bleeding heavily from a long gash in his thigh.

I turned back to Michelle. “What happened

... ..”



to fair!?”

She shrugged. “Maybe I had to tip the scales a bit.”

I still couldn’t believe that these callous words were coming from someone I had trusted.

Someone I had loved.

“All these years, Sienna, you’ve ignored me. You’ve pushed me to the side again and again. Remember how you had Real Mates cancelled just as people were starting to notice me! Remember Konstantin!”



*All too well.* I cringed.

“Michelle, all of this was years ago...”

But Michelle was no longer paying attention to me. She was focused on the brutal fight between the wolves on the platform.

Leaving her behind, I raced to the edge of the stage.

The thick, coppery scent of blood almost

The thick, coppery scent of blood almost made me gag.

Aiden was struggling to climb to his feet.

Josh didn't give him the opening. His pale wolf barreled into Aiden, knocking him onto his side.

Aiden lashed out with pointed fangs and locked his teeth around Josh's ankle.

Josh snarled and turned to snap at Aiden's locked jaws.



With a burst of violent energy, Aiden reared his massive head, pulling Josh off his feet.

Then he hesitated.

Just for a moment.

It was all Josh needed.

The pale wolf regained his footing in the blink of an eye.

Before Aiden could react, Josh was on him.



He leapt, knocking Aiden to the ground before he had a chance to defend himself.

Josh locked his teeth around the shaggy black throat and gave a low, sustained growl.

My heart stopped.

*This can't be happening.*

Aiden thumped his wolf tail twice on the wooden platform, then went limp.

Admitting defeat.



## JOSH

*I won.*

I'd defeated Aiden Norwood.

I was the new Alpha of the East Coast Pack.

I shifted back into my human form, not bothering to hide my nudity.

The ballroom was silent.



Aiden Norwood lay beaten before me.

My new Pack bowed their heads,  
acknowledging me as Alpha.

Power sang through my veins, so intense it  
made my head whirl.

*I won.*

After everything, all the pain and confusion  
and death.

“I hereby...claim the position...of Alpha.” I  
panted to the rafters, addressing my Pack for  
the first time.

They waited, silent, at my command.



*Show them how a true Alpha leads his  
wolves.*

“And as my first act, I have decided to spare  
the life of Aiden Norwood.” I nodded toward  
the semi-conscious wolf at my feet.

A murmur went through the crowd at my act  
of mercy.



I found Michelle's eyes, wide with shock and anger.

We hadn't discussed this.

I had always been hesitant about killing Aiden. The bonds of brotherhood were broken beyond repair, but he was still my oldest friend.

I decided to be gracious.

"Aiden Norwood," I proclaimed, "you are from this moment on banished from this Pack under pain of death."

## SIENNA



The gathered men and women were utterly silent after his words.

Ignoring his look of triumph, I pushed past Josh and rushed to Aiden's side.

He was still in wolf form, breathing shallowly and bleeding from half a dozen cuts.



The wound on his leg was the most concerning—it had already stained the fur around it a dark crimson red.

“Aiden? Aiden you have to get up! We have to go!”

I had no idea how much wolfsbane Michelle had given him, but he was clearly in desperate need of a Healer.

I had to get him to Jocelyn as soon as possible.

I shook him again.

Aiden roused from his daze.



He staggered to his feet.

I shifted into my own wolf, destroying the last dress my sister had designed, and braced myself against Aiden’s heavy frame, propping him up as we made our way out of the ballroom.

No one said a word.



It was as though we had ceased to exist.

I cast one final backward glance toward Josh.

The new Alpha.

Michelle had joined him on the platform.

She was completely naked.

Together, they held hands as the Pack bowed once more before them.

Then they both shifted into their wolves.

Josh positioned himself behind his mate.



His pale blonde fur was still speckled with Aiden's blood.

With a howl, he mounted her in full view of the Pack.

She howled as well and then others began shedding their finery, shifting until the cavernous ballroom was full of baying wolves.





I looked at my mate.

I had no idea how Aiden was still conscious,  
but he returned my terrified look.

In his pained eyes I saw the same thought  
that was screaming through my own mind.

We still had each other.

We had to get to Rowan.

We had to get out of here.

We ran out of the Pack House and into the  
forest.

A chorus of wolfsong echoed at our heels.



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series?

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Next Chapter

