

Mia
UM, HELLO SIENNA

Mia
GOOD MORNING GIRL



Mia
Your fav girls are just popping in to say....

Mia
WERE NOT OVER THAT YOUR PREGGERS!!!

Erica
AAAAAAAAA

Erica
You left so quick after we found out we didn't get to say CONGRATS

Michelle:
i echo the girls

Michelle:
we need a celebration

Mia
Is everyone thinkin what Im thinkin?!?!

Erica
🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔

Erica

Erica



Mia

Lol EXACTLY Erica



Mia

Baby

Mia

Freaking

Mia

SHOWER

Michelle:

shower!!!

Michelle:

YAAAAS

Michelle:

im so on board

Michelle:

sienna?

Michelle:

are u there?



Erica

Helloooo Sienna???

Mia

Guys shes probably just busy being PREGNANT



Sienna

My phone buzzed beside me on the passenger seat, and once it started vibrating, it didn't stop.

I could see my girlfriends' names popping up on the screen, one after another, but I didn't have it in me to read the texts.

I knew what it was going to be about.

And I still wasn't over what had happened last night.

After Jocelyn told Aiden and me that we'd done it—we'd created a new life, and it was growing inside me—we had agreed to keep the news to ourselves.

Not forever, obviously, but just until we were certain that there would be no complications.

It's not that I was paranoid or anything. I didn't think anything bad was going to happen to me or Aiden or the baby.

I just didn't want to make a big deal out of anything until we were absolutely positive everything was good.



So Aiden and I decided we'd wait two more weeks until the baby was at the eight-week mark before we told anyone.

But Michelle clearly wasn't interested in that plan.

I don't know how she found out.



Maybe she overheard Aiden and me talking about it at the restaurant, although we tried to be super quiet about it.

Or maybe Josh overheard us talking in Aiden's office at the pack house.

Either way, I wasn't exactly surprised.

If there was anything Michelle was good at doing, it was finding things out and turning the attention to her. And last night at our anniversary party, she'd done both.

So, yeah, I was a little rattled.

Unlike her, I didn't like having all this attention on me. Especially since it was so unexpected.

I parked the car and grabbed my phone, turning it off before I even read the texts. It had been buzzing all morning. I got calls from my mom, Selene, and even Jeremy before I stopped looking at the screen.

Before I dealt with anything or anyone, I needed coffee. And then I needed to be alone so I could figure this out in peace.

I scuttled into the coffee shop, praying that no one

I knew would be inside. I knew I couldn't deal with any sort of excited interaction right now.

I exhaled as I pulled the door open and saw a few teenagers but nobody else.

"A large vanilla latte," I ordered, smiling at the barista at the counter. I paid, and as I waited for my drink at the other side of the bar, I couldn't help but wonder if I was overreacting.

It wasn't like anyone was doing anything wrong.

They'd found out good news about Aiden and me, and they loved Aiden and me, so of course, they would be trying to congratulate us, trying to celebrate.

That was a normal instinct.

Even for Michelle!

Her actions might not have stemmed from an attention-seeking place. Maybe she was just genuinely happy for me, her supposed best friend, and wanted to make sure everyone else showered me with the same love.

Maybe everyone was right. We should be happy.

No, we should be ecstatic.

We should want to celebrate.

We should want to talk about it nonstop.

But you were ecstatic, I reminded myself. Yesterday. Before everyone else found out.



I sighed, thanking the barista and grabbing my drink before heading back out the door. My head was spinning. I didn't know what to think.

All I knew was that, today, I needed space.

A lot of it.

Josh



I stood in front of Aiden's desk, trying to make him listen. And not just his fake Alpha *I'm-listening* bullshit.

I needed him to *really* listen.

But deep down I knew it wasn't working. I could see his eyes glazing, his fingers drumming on his knees under the desk.

I felt like I'd been standing here, in this same position, gesturing in the same ways at the same things, a million times in the past few weeks.

But it was because he wasn't taking me seriously.

"Aiden. I'm begging you. Focus on what I'm saying for *three goddamn seconds*."

"Josh, I've been listening to you for a month. I heard you. Konstantin's still out there, he's a threat to us. But I'm telling you, you're getting in your own way. This is self-sabotage. We destroyed him. You need to let it go—"

"But that's the thing! We didn't! The artifact he stole from the museum, the bone of the allosaurus, it enabled him to make clones of himself. We

it enabled him to make clones of himself. We didn't kill him, Aiden. We killed a clone that *looked* like him."

Aiden looked me in the eye, but I could tell he wasn't buying it. *Fuck*. I didn't know how much clearer I could make it.

"Josh, a ton of stuff, a ton of drama, has happened to all of us in the past year. I get it. But I don't think creating this... this theory is going to help anyone—"

"You remember Eve? Raphael's mate?"

Aiden nodded. "Of course. The woman with purple eyes."



"Right. I talked to her when she came to the Yule Ball. She's a vampire, and she knows all about vampyres and what their powers could be."

"Where are you going with this, Josh?"

I took a breath and then spoke the next words clearly, so he'd have no trouble understanding me.

"I sent her all my information and she told me that vampyres who have that bone have the power to turn anyone into a reflection of themselves. They can drain them and then, *bam*, transform them into a clone. It's that simple. The marrow in the bone unlocks the power."

I saw Aiden's phone light up on the desk, vibrating with a new message.

Don't answer it, Aiden.



Come on.

Be a good friend.

Be a good Alpha.



But then his eyes shifted down, and his hand reached for the phone. I sighed, closing my eyes. This was hopeless.

Aiden

I knew Josh was going to be pissed that I checked the incoming text, but I couldn't ignore it.

Sienna had left the house before I got up this morning, and after the way last night went, I was worried about her. She hadn't answered any of my calls this morning, so I needed to make sure she was okay.

I exhaled, seeing the messages were from her. I grabbed my phone off the desk.

Sienna

Hi, sorry I didn't answer this morning

Sienna

Really just needed space

Aiden

Space from what?

Aiden

Me?



Sienna
No not just you

Sienna
Idk

Sienna
It just feels like everyone knows everything

Sienna
You know? Do I sound crazy?

Aiden
You could never sound crazy.

Sienna
I think I just need to be alone for a while

Aiden
How long?

Aiden
Can I come to you?

Sienna
Aiden

Sienna
I just said I needed to be alone

Aiden
Where are you?



Sienna
Aiden

Aiden
Where?

Sienna
By the Water

I stood up, pocketing my phone and grabbing my coat off the back of the chair.

“Oh, we’re done here?” Josh asked me, clicking his tongue.

I could tell he was pissed, pissed that I wasn’t taking his concerns as seriously as he thought I should be, pissed that I’d read my phone during the meeting.

But it didn’t stop me from walking around the desk. “Sorry, Josh, I have some personal stuff going on right now.”

“Yeah, okay. Let me know when you want to start being an Alpha again.” I was at the door when I heard him say that, and I whipped around, jutting my finger at him.

“You need to watch yourself, do you understand me? You’re still my Beta, and you are still following *my* orders.”

“I’ll gladly follow your orders when they take into account the *legitimate danger* our pack is in—”

“*Wrong*,” I snapped back. “You’ll gladly follow my orders no matter what you think of them. Now, get the hell out of my office,” I told him as I turned on my heel and stormed down the hallway.

Maybe I was being harsh.



Maybe my Beta was just trying to help.

But honestly, Josh’s feelings weren’t my priority right now.

My pregnant mate, sitting all alone, upset—she was my priority.

And I didn’t care who I had to piss off to get to her.

Sienna

I was at my gallery for a few hours, sitting alone in my office, but the silence there became claustrophobic. I needed space, but I didn’t want to feel stifled. I needed fresh air, ambient noise.

I needed to feel like I was a part of the world still, just without the threat of anybody talking to me.

So I came to the river.

I used to come here a lot more before Aiden and I started seeing each other, but ever since I got the gallery, it was easier for me to draw and paint there.

I shook my head at myself.



Since when had I become someone who did things because they were *easier*? Drawing, painting—it used to be about release. Now, it was about efficiency?

Who had I become?



I dragged my pencil across the pad in my lap, sketching the trees. The sounds of the water and the chirping birds reminded me that life was continuing on, as per usual.

With or without my pity-party, the river would keep moving and the birds would keep singing.

That was when I heard a branch snap behind me. I whipped my head around, not sure who or what I'd find, but then exhaled, seeing Aiden.

"Hi," he said, coming to sit next to me on the rock. He was wearing faded jeans and a black jacket, looking every bit the effortlessly cool Alpha. While I felt like the lamest, most overly dramatic girl in the world.

"Hi," I said back.

He put a hand on my knee, gazing deep into my eyes. "What's wrong?" he asked, and the earnestness in his voice made me feel safe.

Like I could tell him anything and he wouldn't judge me.

"I don't know... I don't know why I'm reacting this way. I know it's good news, and we should want to share it with everyone, and we should want to celebrate. But it just feels... overwhelming. Like it's too much."



“Sienna, there’s no right or wrong way to react—”

I looked at him, biting back tears. “I just don’t want to get my hopes up. I don’t want to allow myself to get excited and then...”

“And then what?”



“And then have it all taken away.” He grabbed my hands, pulling me closer to him.

“It’s not going to be taken away—I won’t let that happen, all right? It’s you and me forever. You’re my mate. And you’re carrying our child. You’re growing another life, for us. That’s all that matters.”

“You make it sound so easy,” I told him.

“Because it is easy. Anything you need, I’m here for you, do you understand that? You’re my world, Sienna. And this little thing inside you, that’s my world now, too.”

I looked at him, saw the kindness in his eyes, and knew he was right. It was me and my mate against the world, and that made it okay. That made it feel normal.

“Feel however you want to feel,” he whispered into my ear. “Escape if you need to escape. But know that I love you. No matter what.”

Rowan

I was across the river, but I saw them clearly. My vision hadn’t lost any of its strength over the years.



Rowan



I was across the river, but I saw them clearly.
My vision hadn't lost any of its strength over the
years.

I tried to do the right thing.

I tried to leave them alone. To let them live their
lives, uninterrupted. I gave them space for eight
months, but one morning I woke up, and like a
magnetic force was pulling me, I found them.

And I watched them.

And now, I was addicted to it.

I couldn't stop.

I couldn't look away.

I knew, deep in my heart, as I watched them
embrace by the river, that this wouldn't be the last
time I watched them.

That maybe next time, I'd do even more...

Next Chapter

