



Sienna



Aiden and I were wrapped in each other's arms, splayed across the rug in our bedroom. We were butt naked, just as we'd been for the past three days. Or was it four?

Honestly, the only way I'd been keeping track of time was by the number of times we paused our sex-fest to gulp some food down. By my estimation, it was six.

But truth be told, neither of us had really been hungry for food.

Unless it was peanut butter on Aiden's body or whipped cream on mine, the food we consumed didn't taste like anything. It was like eating cardboard.

Because the only thing we were hungry for was each other.

Anything else just wasn't satisfying.

So we ate for survival, but we consumed each other for satisfaction.

Aiden slid his fingertips down the length of my arm, causing goosebumps to pop up. "Aiden, stop. I have no more energy."

He laughed. "I thought you'd never say that. I've never seen you move so much. I've never heard you scream so loud," he continued, nuzzling his nose into my ear.

"Yeah, well. That's all thanks to you."

"No," he said, moving his fingertips to my stomach. "It's all thanks to the little one."



"Do you think it's over? Do you think we're finally safe?" I asked him, genuinely wondering what the answer was. The praze had been amazing. It had been life-changing, and that was no exaggeration.

But I didn't think I could do it anymore.

Not right now, at least.

I needed to rest.

And I definitely needed to shower.

Aiden pulled my face closer to his so our noses were touching. I tried to push away. "Aiden, I haven't brushed my teeth in three days," I argued.

But he kept me there, staying just as close. "You think I care?"

"I love you," I told him, meaning it a million

times over. He kissed my forehead and stood up, lowering a hand to help me off the ground.

I took it, immediately feeling my legs cramp up as I got to my feet.

But I didn't have time to dwell on the ache, because Aiden was pulling me into him. Not in a lustful way but in a tender one. "I love you, Sienna Mercer-Norwood. Always and forever."



"Always and forever," I echoed. "I like that."

"Now, let's get our asses into a shower, yeah?"

"Please."

We were laughing our way into the bathroom when there was a knock on the front door. "You turn the water on so it'll get hot. I'll go see who it is," I instructed him.

I padded into the living room, grabbing a blanket to wrap myself with as I approached the front door. I peeked through the window and saw Michelle, her face pale, mascara running down her cheeks. I threw the door open.

"Michelle! What's wrong? Are you okay?!"

I saw her try to get words out, but nothing escaped her lips. She just broke down, more tears falling down her face, her whole body shaking.

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I grabbed her, pulling her inside and leading her to the couch.

Once she was seated, I ran to the kitchen and grabbed her a glass of water and then returned to the sofa. “Drink,” I said, handing her the glass.

She looked up at me, her eyes bloodshot, and she brought the glass to her lips. After she swallowed, I took the glass and put it on the coffee table.

“Now, tell me, Mich. What is it? What happened?”

“Konstantin...” she got out, before another sob took over her body. I moved closer to her on the couch, wrapping an arm around her. “He... h-he appeared—”

“He’s *here*?!” I demanded.

She nodded, and then she shook her head.

“Well, yes, but... but I don’t think it was really him. Just a projection of him. Oh, Sienna, I don’t know. I don’t know! But I saw him, he was there, right there in front of me...”

“Where?”

“In my bedroom. I broke Josh’s watch, and there



was this... this black gooey stuff behind the face of the watch, and when I picked it up, the goo burned my wrist. See!”

She held her wrist in front of me, and it was bright red.

“What was it?”

“I have no idea. And then, after it burned me, I dropped the watch and this... this steam came out! And he was in the steam!” Michelle’s eyes were so wide, so full of conviction, that I had to believe her.

I knew she was a drama queen, but she wouldn’t lie about this.



It was too important.

“Do you think I’m crazy? I just ran out of the house. Josh asked what happened, but I just... I needed to come talk to you. You’re the only other one whose mind he entered, Si.”

I hugged her. “You’re not crazy. I believe you.”

“Do you still... do you still think about him?”

“Konstantin?”

She nodded.



“Yeah. All the time. What he did to me... the power he has to dive inside your thoughts, your memories, and just... manipulate them. That’s the scariest thing in the world.”

“What if Josh and Aiden didn’t kill him?”
Michelle whispered.

“What if he’s still out there? I mean he has to be, right? If he were dead, he wouldn’t have appeared in the watch stream. Even if it wasn’t his physical body, Sienna, it was him. I’m sure of it.”

“I believe you,” I told her again, stroking her hair. I didn’t think I’d ever seen her look so afraid. And the truth was I was afraid too.

I was petrified.



Konstantin hadn’t just dropped into my mind and messed around. He’d put my best friend into a coma. We all knew how powerful he was, how much havoc he could wreak. And he clearly wasn’t done with us.

“What are we going to do?” Michelle asked. She looked like a child.

“We’ll talk to the boys. And then we’ll make a plan.”

“I feel like we’re in danger. I can sense something

bad about to happen.”

“Don’t worry, Michelle, okay? I promise you’re safe now. We’re here. *I’m* here. I’m not going anywhere. We just have to stay honest with each other. We have to tell each other everything that’s happening so we can stay on top of it.”

Michelle nodded. “For sure. Honesty, open communication always.”

She took a breath, looking at her feet, and when she looked back up at me, I could see something other than fear in her eyes. Something more like vulnerability. “I’m sorry, Si.”

“For what?” I asked softly.

“For revealing your big secret. For hogging the attention. For us not... for us not really getting to talk since I woke up and everything. I just... I came to, and I saw everyone had been living their lives while I was in a coma, you know? Just going on like nothing had changed. It seemed... so unfair.”

I took her hand and squeezed. “It’s okay, Michelle. I understand—”

“No, it was selfish of me. Beyond selfish. I don’t want to feel so distant from you, I want us to be able to lean on each other. To talk to each other about the real stuff again.”



“Of course, we can do that,” I assured her. “You’re my best friend, okay? And I never got the chance to really thank you.”

“Thank me?”

“You were only in Konstantin’s warpath because you followed me to the hotel, right? You were trying to protect me. And he found you, and he hurt you. If you hadn’t been such a good friend...”

Michelle looked at me for a second, and then she started nodding.

“Well, we’re both here now. We’re both okay. Better than okay. You’re *pregnant*, Jesus,” Michelle exclaimed, pulling me into a hug.



“I’m sorry I stink,” I mumbled into her hair, remembering the shower I was supposed to be taking.

“Yeah, you smell like a German sex club on a Monday morning,” she responded, pulling away with a scrunched nose. We both burst out laughing.

“You go shower. I’m gonna get out of here and go find Josh before he has a heart attack.”

Jocelyn





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Chapters

“Hello?” I asked, peering my head through the crack in the doorway. “Georgia?”

Georgia appeared, pulling the door wide open and smiling at me. She was the head counselor at the Healers’ Retreat, but there was nothing intimidating about her at all.

Everything from her chocolate-brown eyes to the soft laugh lines on her face conveyed warmth.

“Jocelyn, dear. Come in. Please.” She motioned for me to sit on the worn-in leather sofa, and she took a seat in the armchair across from me. “Thank you for coming.”

“Wendy said it was urgent?”



“Yes. Wendy’s been telling me how wonderful you’ve been doing here, how quickly you’re recovering. That’s excellent, Jocelyn. Really very nice to hear.”

I smiled. “Thank you.”

Georgia inched forward on her chair, positioning her body so it was leaning forward, closer to me.

“But I’m afraid your time here at the Retreat is over. You practiced a healing ritual while you were on the grounds, is that correct?” she asked.



The words didn't sound harsh or patronizing at all. She was just looking for confirmation.

I knew I couldn't lie to her. So I bowed my head, looking at the floor. "Yes."

"You know the rules here, Jocelyn. I'm afraid there's no other way."

"So that's it?" I asked, looking up at her. "I'm out? What if I'm not fully recovered? Wendy said it could take months and that I might not be able to heal to my fullest powers if I leave too soon—"

Georgia sighed. "I am sorry, Jocelyn. Really I am. But you can't stay here. You performed a ritual, and that's prohibited. So you must go."

I took a deep breath and then let it out. After a few seconds, I nodded, looking her right in the eye. "I understand."

I stood up, and Georgia rose too. When we got to the door, she pulled me into a hug. "I wish you the best, Jocelyn," she said as she let me go.

Nina



Look, I liked my job at the Healers' Retreat. It was a good job. The people treated me well here like I was more than just a werewolf with a checkered past.



No one called me *the rogue* here.

Here, I was just Nina the cook.

I chopped vegetables, I cooked meat, hell, sometimes I even got creative and made a new dish or two. It wasn't difficult work, but it was rewarding, in a weird, low-stakes sort of way.

I was heading to the kitchen, getting ready to start preparing the ingredients for dinner, when I saw Jocelyn march right by me from the other direction.

She had her head down. She looked upset or determined.



Her backpack was slung over her shoulder, and she didn't even look up when she passed me. I didn't think I'd ever seen her look so down, and I'd definitely never seen her walk through a hallway and ignore the other people inside it.

My curiosity got the best of me, so I pivoted and started walking in the same direction as her.

I kept enough distance between us that she wouldn't notice, but when she got to the front door and walked outside, I had to make a decision.

My shift started now. And it was a good job, really.

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But it was *Jocelyn*.



And she was almost gone, almost disappearing around the corner.

I took a deep breath, weighing my options.

And then my feet started to move.

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