

AIDEN

If he fucking hurts her, I'll...

My car swerved on the icy road as I sped toward Sienna's gallery.

It was the first place she'd go if she needed space.

She had to be there.

But what if I was too late? What if he had control over her like he did Michelle?

No, there was no way.

Sienna was strong. She'd resist. She'd fight him off.

But that power... I'd never seen anything like it. What kind of creature could do that?

As I got closer to Sienna's gallery, I could sense her. She was still alive—and still herself.

But I also sensed something else.

Something dark.



He's already inside.

I made a sharp turn and hit a spot of black ice, spinning out in front of the gallery and losing control.

I crashed into a fire hydrant and jolted forward, my head smashing into the windshield.

As the water gushed out of the hydrant and started seeping through the cracks of the window, I struggled to keep conscious.

Everything was blurry. Blood was running down my face.

“Fuck.”

Sienna.

I kicked my passenger door so hard it flew off, scraping across the sidewalk.

Her gallery was filled with some kind of black smog that obscured my view from the outside.

I'm coming for you, fucker.

I took a step back then started bounding forward, my muscles ripping through my shirt as I began to shift.



I leapt and shifted midair, crashing through the thick glass storefront.

A man—no, some sort of demon—was hovering over Sienna's body. He whipped around when I came roaring in and hissed, revealing his long, protruding fangs.

This was a vampire; I was sure of it. Raphael had warned me of their kind.

I unclenched my jaws, baring my own fangs, and howled with all my might.

I was gonna send this pasty motherfucker back to hell.

JOCELYN

I had no idea if I was strong enough to pull this off, but I had to try. I'd been able to absorb Nina's pain, but Michelle...

She wasn't just in pain.

She was possessed.

Healers were resistant to possession—at least that was what I'd read—but theory was different than practice.





I looked up at the swirling vortex of pack-house furnishings that shielded Michelle from us getting too close.

Selene and some others were trapped behind a podium on the other side of the room with no escape route.

I motioned to her to run when I gave the signal.

“Josh, I need you to distract Michelle while I try to get close.”

“I’m on it,” he yelled, charging toward her, using his claws to rip through anything that flew at him.

“The beta finally steps up,” taunted Michelle’s possessor. “But can he rise to the occasion?”

She lifted her arms in the air, and Josh went hurdling into a chandelier, bouncing off it like a rag doll and landing on the floor.

Selene made a dash for the door with her group, attempting to get them to safety.

“Everyone run. Don’t look back,” Selene shouted.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

Selene screamed as she was pulled backward.





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Serene screamed as she was pulled backward, sliding across the floor toward Michelle. I dove forward and grabbed her hand.

“Jocelyn, please, don’t let go,” she cried.

Michelle was too powerful. We had no chance.

We need a miracle.

AIDEN

I grabbed the vampyre by his cloak and slammed him against the wall, dragging him across Sienna’s paintings and throwing him into a sculpture.

When I was able to grab him, I could actually do some damage, but he was so slippery, disappearing and reappearing within seconds.

I lunged at him, and he split into two, giving me a smug look. Before I could decide which one of him to mutilate first, they transformed into my mom and dad.

“You’re such a fuckup. You can’t do anything right,” Charlotte hissed.

“I wish you had died instead of Aaron,” Daniel whispered in my ear as he swirled around me.



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What the hell? How does he know so much about me?

“Sienna revealed all her deepest fears and desires to me—and yours as well.” He laughed.

He multiplied into a dozen versions of himself, all laughing in unison.

This asshole was just a wannabe magician, full of cheap tricks. I wouldn't fall for his mind games.

I grabbed a bucket of paint with my jaws and splattered it across the room at all his doppelgängers. It only stuck to one of them...

I took my chance. I lunged at him and bit down into his side.

JOCELYN

Michelle screamed in pain, as if something inside her was on fire. All the floating furniture crashed to the ground, and she began free-falling toward the ground herself.

Josh sprang into action and caught her, doing a barrel roll and holding her tight.

We might not get another chance.



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I sprinted toward Michelle. Her body was seizing and she was trying to throw Josh off.

“Jocelyn, hurry. I can’t hold her much longer,” Josh shouted.

“Selene, get everyone else out of here and bar the doors behind you,” I ordered.

She nodded and began shepherding the remaining guests to the exit.

I grabbed Michelle’s face as Josh held her down.

“All right, baby girl, we’re bringing you back.”

I started absorbing whatever was inside Michelle into my body. *Holy shit, this feels weird.*

My veins started turning black again, and I sucked out all the darkness until the energy seeped all the way into my brain.

My eyes went dark, and suddenly I couldn’t see anything.

I started dry-heaving, my healer physiology rejecting the uninvited guest.

I abruptly spewed out a load of black gunk all over the floor, and my vision returned to normal.

Fuck me.

It felt like I had just drunk a gallon of tar.

Michelle was lying peacefully in Josh's arms.

"I... I think he's gone."

"Jocelyn... she's not moving," Josh said quietly.

I immediately felt for her pulse. She was...

Still alive.

Thank God.

Alive, but lifeless.

I tried to transfer my energy to her, but her body wouldn't accept it.

The darkness was gone, but Michelle was in a coma, and I had no idea how to bring her back.

AIDEN

The vampyre was wounded, but I sensed that his power had somehow grown even stronger. He wasn't fucking around.



“I tried to be in two places at once. That was my error, but make no mistake, all of me is here now,” he seethed.

I glanced at Sienna’s unconscious body in the middle of the gallery. I needed to keep him away from her at all costs.

“Sienna.”

“Sienna, you have to wake up.”

“I need you.”

I hoped she wasn’t too far gone, but our link remained static.

The vampyre shot toward me like an arrow, knocking me down and sending me skidding across the floor.

As I tried to get back on my feet, he lunged at me again and again.

My ribs cracked from the rapid-fire blows, and I howled in agony.

He left me on the floor in a heap and returned his attention to Sienna.



No, don't let him get close to her!

I shifted back into a human and struggled to my feet, holding my side.

“Hey, asshole, if you wanna mess around in someone’s head, why don’t you try mine? Right now I’m having some great thoughts about how I’m gonna tear you in half.”

He turned around and scoffed at me for trying to stand up to him in my injured human form.

“If you insist, Alpha, I’ll gladly kill you first. Then I can replay the memory of ripping your head off in Sienna’s mind, over and over again.”

As the vampyre advanced toward me, a wolf snarled behind him.

Sienna.

She tackled him and latched her fangs deep into his shoulder in one swift movement.

He screamed as she pulled with all her strength and ripped a chunk of his body away, causing it to evaporate into the air.

The rest of him started fading away too, and it was clear he had no control over his sudden destabilization.





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“No, not yet, dammit. I was so close!”

Sienna shifted and ran over to me, putting my arm around her shoulder, helping me balance. We both stared him down as he turned to dust.

“I won’t disappear forever, Sienna. I’ll always be inside you. You invited me in, and I’ll return...,” Konstantin bellowed.

His body evaporated before he could finish his tirade.

Sienna embraced me and nuzzled into my shoulder. I winced at the cracked ribs, but I didn’t fucking care.

It felt so good to hold her, to know she was safe in my arms.

SIENNA

I wore an artist’s smock and a pair of Aiden’s old jeans and boots as we walked home. He had managed to salvage his clothes from when he shifted, but my gold dress wasn’t so lucky. And neither was Aiden’s car.

We walked in silence, but I knew Aiden had a million questions. I was ready to answer them.



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I'd dug up so many buried secrets, and now they were haunting me.

There was so much to tell.

About Konstantin.

His powers.

My powers, which I didn't yet understand.

My mother.

My father, Rowan, who might still be out there somewhere.

But right now, I appreciated that he just held my hand and walked in silence.

He was there for me tonight, and I was there for him. That was the way it would always be.

I'd tell him everything when we were safe and sound at home.

As we neared the house, it began to snow again, but it felt too warm out for snow.

The light over the horizon glowed orange, and I realized this wasn't snow...



I'd tell him everything when we were safe and sound at home.



As we neared the house, it began to snow again, but it felt too warm out for snow.

The light over the horizon glowed orange, and I realized this wasn't snow...

It was ash.

"Aiden..."

He ran ahead of me, over the cobblestone bridge and through the trees.

I knew what I was about to see, but as the house came into view, I still covered my mouth in disbelief.

Our home.

Set alight, a raging inferno.

Next Chapter

