

## SIENNA

The boneache had lessened a little, but it still made remaining upright very uncomfortable, so searching for Aiden was off the table for now.

Instead, I wandered to the lodge and found a seat among the others there.

The TV in the lodge played news coverage of our attack on the convoy, and I watched with unease as they spun the story:

“A viral video surfaced yesterday of an attack on a prison transfer...



“Giving rise to questions about the movement of so many prisoners to a new prison facility north of Mahiganote,” the brown-haired newscaster said.

He stared into the camera as if he wasn't a





pawn of Josh's administration.

"We go now to our field reporter Wyatt Honeysett, interviewing East Coast Beta, Gregory Singh."

Singh appeared in a shot outside the Pack House, with a microphone pointed at his face.

"This was a legitimate transfer of a number of maximum-security prisoners who present a very real and very serious threat to the public's safety," he said, staring earnestly at the camera.



The reporter interviewing him, a blond man, brought the mic back to his own mouth, "Are you saying, then, that these dangerous criminals are now running free?"

Singh nodded. "Any information pertaining to them is vital. What we have here is an act of terrorism."

He frowned at the camera.

"Sienna Norwood and her seditious followers have decided to acknowledge all similarities



“Sienna Norwood and her seditious followers have decided to eschew all civility and embrace violence. The public is in grave danger!”

*Mercer. Fucking. Norwood.*

*For fuck's sake, it's not that hard.*

“You’re calling them terrorists?” the reporter clarified.

“They blew up a bridge, attacked law enforcement vehicles, and freed murderers, rapists, and traitors. Yes, I’m calling them terrorists!”



Murderers and rapists?

I frowned at the tables full of freed prisoners all around me.

The truth was, I didn’t know much about the majority of those we’d freed.

If Singh could make that claim stick, it really would make us look bad.

The field reporter had moved on now



The field reporter had moved on, now standing in Mahigantoe Park, thrusting his mic in random people's faces.

"What do you think about the terrorist attack that freed over fifty hardened criminals yesterday?" he asked a pudgy black man in a suit.

"Traitors! Was a time no one would even think of doing such a thing! They've lost their damn minds!"

"What do you say to those who support the Norwood terrorists?" the reporter asked an elderly white woman wearing a pink sweatshirt.



"Oh, my! It's horrifying! I never thought I'd see such times," she said.

Next the reporter approached a pretty-looking young woman in a SMU t-shirt. "What are your thoughts about the terrorist attack yesterday?"

"Oh my god," she said. "All those criminals out there, running around, just waiting to grab you? It's so scary!"





grab you? It's so scary!"

As I looked around, I saw that people were muttering amongst themselves in response to the interviews.

I had to take control of the situation.

"We have to take back the narrative!" I exclaimed.

People turned from watching the TV to watching me.

"We have to show people we're not the terrorists they say we are!"



"Okay," said Ivan in a tone much more thoughtful than I was accustomed to. "But how do we do that?"

## JOCELYN

We crept in one of the Pack House tunnels, our ultimate aim: Josh's office.

Jeremy had control of my body.

I was not happy with his plans, which from what I could tell involved no consideration of what would happen to me when he succeeded in killing Josh.

*If he succeeded.*

*Jeremy, I called to him in my mind.*

*Jeremy, please stop.*

He didn't answer. More often than not, he didn't.

Most of the time, I couldn't hear his thoughts. It was like he'd built a wall around himself in my mind.



Yet when he had to work hard for control—like now—sometimes the wall cracked.

*Jeremy!*

*Jeremy, let's talk about this!*

*What you're doing is going to get me killed!*

My body kept moving forward, easing

through the narrow space between the trees.



through the narrow secret passage I knew ran between the kitchen and the staff quarters towards the stair hall to the second floor.

*Jeremy. I'm sorry.*

*I should never have stopped you from going with Selene. I see that now.*

The body stopped, wavered, and then moved on.

*Jeremy! Please!*



There was a secret staircase, tightly twisted, that rose in the west wall of the stair hall. We took it.

In moments, we were in the wall outside Josh's office, and we popped open one of the doors camouflaged as a wall panel within it.

We peered into the office, but it looked wrong.

*This isn't Josh's office.*

Gone was the western-inspired decor: the

Gone was the western-inspired decor: the cowhide couch, the Navajo-print chairs.

Instead, a saffron yellow-upholstered matching set of armchairs and couch had taken their place.

Jeremy eased us back into the secret corridor.

*See. This is a sign.*

*You won't find Josh in there.*



*That's because it's the Beta's office, Jeremy replied. Josh must have taken Aiden's.*

I could feel Jeremy's hesitation in my muscles. Then a sound made him tense.

Someone was coming into the office we had just left.

We listened.

“Well, Beta Singh, where has the Alpha disappeared to?” a male voice I didn't recognize asked.



“He was somewhat upset by my announcement, I’m afraid,” Singh’s voice replied.

“A rude awakening,” the first voice said.

“Quite. He’s taking some ‘executive time,’” Singh said.

Jeremy cracked the panel and we squinted out.



I was surprised to see so many men in the office—I wouldn’t have guessed, but the carpet must have cushioned their steps.

Singh stood, gazing over five men, one in each armchair and two on the couch.

“He’s earned a rest,” smiled the man in the armchair closest to us. His voice had a Texan accent. He had puffy eyes and his lank brown hair receded from his forehead.

I had seen him before when we stalked the Pack House. He had taken one of the roles in Josh’s new administration.

“It *has* been a trying few days,” agreed





“It *has* been a trying few days,” agreed a fair-haired man in the other armchair. His accent was more genteel: upper crust Virginian. He was not familiar to me.

A dark-haired man I had also seen around sat on the couch.

“Well I for one am glad we can finally take control of the situation.” His accent was Hispanic.



The two remaining men said nothing. The pasty-skinned one was familiar, but the other was new: he had frizzy dishwater blond hair, and remarkably long arms with large hands.

“On that note, we have an important item to discuss,” Singh said.

The five men watched him attentively.

“The Alpha of the Millennium, Raphael Fernandez,” Singh said, “has notified us of his intention to visit the day after tomorrow.

“We’ll host him in the evening, at a cocktail party.”



“He isn’t thinking of making trouble?” the long-armed man said. His voice had a harsh twang—West Virginia?

“I don’t imagine he’s too happy with the changes we’re making,” the fair-haired Virginian said. He shrugged. “His own wife’s a bloodsucker, after all.”



“True,” agreed Singh. “And as you all know, Fernandez has been an obstacle to our goals on the Alpha council for years, in large part due to his mate.”

“I thought establishing Josh as Alpha gave us a majority,” the puffy-eyed Texan said.

“It does,” Singh confirmed. “But MacConnell feels that’s not enough, and I agree.”

He met each of their eyes.

“The work we’re doing is too important to be slowed in any way any longer,” Singh said.

“MacConnell and I,” he went on, “spoke at





length earlier today. We've come up with a plan."

Now that they were no longer talking about Josh, I feared that Jeremy would want to move on, but he remained still, listening behind the paneled wall.

"I have Sienna Norwood to thank for the inspiration," Singh continued.



UNLIMITED

"She and her little band of merry men will take the fall for a terrible, tragic attack on the Pack House. It will take place on the night of Fernandez's arrival."

"Terrorists," the blond Virginian nodded.

"Precisely," Singh said. "And the panic and distress this attack will cause will be the perfect reason to declare martial law."

"Two birds, one stone," said the Virginian.

"Two birds?" the dark-haired man asked, his face showing his confusion.

"Yes, Vasquez, keep up," chortled the Texan. "We eliminate Fernandez, giving



Texan. “We eliminate Fernandez, giving MacConnell his chance to rise, and we exert martial law over the ECP.

“Nothing will stop us after that.”

*Jeremy!*

*Jeremy! We have to find Aiden!*



*We have to warn him and Sienna!*

Jeremy pulled away from the crack in the panel, easing down the secret passage, but when he came to the juncture, he stopped.

To the left, the path would lead to Josh's office.

To the right, out of the Pack House and on to finding Aiden.

*Please, Jeremy!*

*You heard them! They're going to kill Raphael Fernandez!*

*We have to tell Aiden!*

*We have to stop them!*

Jeremy made his choice.

## SIENNA



It was Yuki's idea to stage a peaceful protest.

“We'll burn our new ID cards in the square in front of Mahiganote City Hall,” she said.

So here we were, piling out of pickups and 4X4s, crowding onto the patterned cement around a large stone fountain.

A man standing on a recently constructed, narrow structure on the southwest corner of the square saw us and immediately started howling.

*What the hell?*

He did not stop, and in the distance, I heard other howls start up.

*I must be dreaming.*

Meanwhile, Ivan, Gloria, and several others



built a bonfire.

They moved fast, piling up dry wood we'd loaded in the pickups and using lighter fluid on the newspapers we were packing it with.

In moments a hot blaze crackled.

Yuki gestured, directing people.

I looked around and met willing eyes.

We lifted hastily-made signs that read:

“NO IDs!”

“BLOODLINES ARE FOR FASCISTS”

and

“NOT MY ALPHA!!!”

I gathered several people and got them to lead still more, chanting our slogans as loud as we could.

“HEY HEY! HO HO! JOSH DANIELS HAS GOT TO GO!”



“THE ECP DEMANDS TO STAY FREE!”

Gloria took a group with her and soon had them shouting, “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!” an old Chilean protest chant: “The people united will never be defeated!”



The fire was going, and we led our lines of chanters to it, each of us throwing a new ID card.

Or, for those of us who didn't have one, a symbolic piece of paper—into the flames.

Bystanders got out phones and started filming immediately.

The howler on the corner drew breath and let out another wail.

“*EL PUEBLO UNIDO JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDO!*” Gloria's group shouted over him.

“THE ECP DEMANDS TO STAY FREE!” my crowd answered hers.

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Chant the loudest



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A smile of wild pride and love for my people spread over my face.

But then, I heard the motors of oncoming military vehicles.

The Hunter Squads were here.

Next Chapter