

## Sienna

It was good to be around family.

As my mom, Selene, and I baked our third pie for the day, a strawberry-rhubarb that I knew would make Aiden drool at the mouth, I listened to them chatter away and smiled.

I was beginning to feel like a normal person again.

Like myself.

"...and all I'm saying is, if Jeremy is willing to work extra hours at the pack house, you would think his paralegals would too," Selene complained.

"All the men in this family are workaholics," my mom said, waving it off. "Even your father. He's a human, and he still has twice the stamina of most wolves."

"I hope we're still talking about work," I said with an amused grimace.

"The haze is alive and strong!" Mom declared. "You know me. There's nothing to be ashamed of. We are open in this family."

"Yes. Way too open!" Selene said, laughing. "Like legs spread. At all times."

"Could you guys please stop?" I begged. "This

pie is starting to lose its innocence."

"From what I hear, it's the Alpha's aphrodisiac," my mother said with a wink. "So when were pies ever innocent?"

"MOM. STOP."

But we were all laughing uncontrollably now. This was the first time I'd thought about the haze in a while. After prazing and then losing the baby, it was just hard to think of sex the same way.

But now, acting as if everything was normal, I felt a mild thrum within me. A tug at my navel. A hint of molten heat that suggested...the haze was far from over.

Soon I might even be able to act upon it, who knows?

"Did you hear that?" Selene asked with a frown. "I thought I heard the doorbell."

"Who would be coming over?" I asked. "I don't think—"

But then I heard it too, the loud sound of someone rapping on the door. Someone was here. "Sienna," Selene said, "your hands are the least dirty, you mind?"

I nodded, wiping the flour off on my apron. Then I walked over the front door, swung it open, and blinked, surprised. "Jocelyn, what are you doing here?"

are you doing here?"

"Hey, Si. Can we talk?"

### Aiden

How do you kill a monster you've already killed before?

That was all I could keep asking myself as I paced in the boardroom of the pack house, all of my leadership present.

There were maps and diagrams and stacks of research that Josh had accumulated while Michelle was in a coma and he'd been a drunk, obsessive mess.

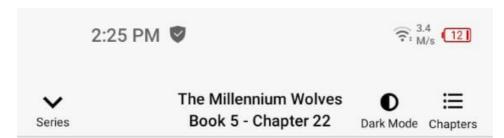
It felt like we were preparing for war. And maybe we were.

"Help me make sense of this," I said to my Beta, waving to the piles. "What am I looking at?"

"The history of vampyres. Including testimony from the Alpha of the Millennium's mate, Eve."

"She's a vampyre?" I asked, surprised. "I knew she was different, but..."

"Not exactly, she's half-vampire, half-human. It's..." Josh trailed off. "It's complicated. We don't need to go into all of that. The



"The dinosaur bone you were ranting about?"

"The radial head bone of an allosaurus, to be exact."

"What about it?"

"Eve told us that, using the marrow of that dead monster, Konstantin would be capable of conjuring doubles."

I nodded, understanding. "That explains what we killed."

"Or what we didn't kill, we should say," Josh corrected. "From his movements across the continent, which I've been tracking, it seems he's trying to amass as much power as possible right now."

A chill went down my spine. Konstantin was already a powerful enough adversary.

The possibility that he might be "leveling up" was not ideal.

"But for what?"

"That...I don't know, my Alpha. But I can tell you this. Based off of what Rowan told us about Sienna's birth and what the mental patient, Gregory Grantwell, said about this orphan Konstantin is after...raw, untapped Josh pointed to markers on a map, indicating the last sightings of Konstantin's location.

"Here, you can see a pattern. He's going from pack to pack, feeding off powerful creatures. The Texas Pack thought they were dealing with Divine Hunters again until they noticed the bite marks on one of their members' necks. It's definitely him."

"Where does it lead though?" I asked. "How are we going to find him next?"

Josh could spout facts at me all day. I wasn't interested in trivia. I needed a plan, and I needed one now.

"There's only one large pack he hasn't targeted yet," Josh said, getting to the point. "And it happens to be the largest. With one of the most powerful beings in the world at its center."

"Lumen," I said, putting together the pieces.

Josh nodded, pointing to Oregon on the map. "The werewolf capital. We think the vampyre's headed there as we speak."

All of a sudden, I understood what Konstantin was after.

More importantly, who he was after. A man I happened to call my friend, the only wolf I would ever how to

would ever bow to.

"That means..." I said, realizing. "He's going after..."

Josh nodded. "The Alpha of the Millennium himself. Raphael Fernandez."

# Jocelyn

I wasn't sure where to begin, but I knew the longer I waited, the more agonizing it would be.

For Sienna and me, both.

We were sitting in her sister's workroom, surrounded by dresses and designs that Selene had created herself. I always forgot what a strangely talented family Sienna came from.

"These are lovely," I said, touching one form-fitting midi dress, the vibrant color of a sunset. "This one especially."

"That's for the Summer Banquet," Sienna said. "Selene made it for me personally."

"Is that coming up already?" I asked.

"Believe it or not," Sienna said, nodding.

"Lots of preparation to do."

"I'm sure."

I was stalling, and Sienna could tell. She cocked her head at me, curious. "So what brings you here, Jocelyn? I told you over text that my health is all right. It's been a pretty easy recovery."

"I'm really glad to hear that, but I..." I trailed off. "I need to tell you something."

I didn't want to tell Sienna anything. She looked like she was making progress, like she was blooming once again into her former self.

How could I possibly bring her down right now? Especially with news this grave.

But I remembered what Nina had told me. To be honest. And imagining the rogue was beside me, holding my hand, giving me strength, I spoke.

"Sienna, I looked at the hospital forms. And it's not as simple as we originally thought. You didn't have a normal miscarriage. You're...you cannot have children, Sienna. I'm so sorry."

I spat it out as quickly as I could, so when Sienna didn't react, I assumed it was because I hadn't spoken clearly enough. "Um," I said. "Did you hear what I—"

"Yeah, Jocelyn." Sienna nodded. "I know already."

"What?!" I asked, shocked. This was the last thing I expected Sienna to say. "Why did you let me..." "I wanted to hear it from you. To be sure."

I felt a wave of embarrassment wash over me. To think I'd made her listen to this terrible news twice in a row. But Sienna looked calm and resolved.

Sad, yes. But not as broken as I expected. As if reading my mind, she nodded.

"I've been learning a lot about who I really am, and where I come from lately. And it's...just the way I was made. There's nothing we can do."

"But you're not...upset?"

"I am, of course. But if I've learned anything being mated to the Alpha, it's that you can't fight your own nature. If this is what I am, this is who I am."

I was amazed to hear Sienna speak about this tragedy with such grace and poise. It was going to take a while for her to accept it completely, of course. She wasn't healed overnight.

But she was thinking about it the right way.

I took her hands in mine and smiled. "I'm so proud of you, Sienna. And I'm sorry if I've ever failed you. As your healer. As your friend."

"No, Jocelyn," Sienna said. "Michelle is alive thanks to you

thanks to you.

I am alive thanks to you.

You owe me no apology. Not now, not ever."

I was about to hug Sienna when her phone buzzed and she fished through her purse to check it.

#### Aiden

Come to the pack house.

Sienna

What's going on???

#### Aiden

No time to explain.

#### Aiden

Hurry.

## Sienna

I looked up at Jocelyn, still reeling from our conversation. I quickly gave her a hug.

"Jocelyn, I've got to go," I said. "Aiden just texted me and..."

"Go," she said. "I totally understand."

"Before you go, grab some pie. We made way too much and maybe Nina would enjoy some."

Jocelyn's smile dipped a little at the mention of Nina. "At some point," she said, "we'll all have to talk about her. And what we're going to do."

I nodded. "I know, but Jocelyn...if you love her, Aiden's going to have to accept that."

"But she-"

"Was here to kill me, I know," I said with a shrug. "We all make mistakes."

And with that, I left Sienna in the room full of dresses, hurrying for the door. If Aiden needed to tell me something urgent, I wasn't going to keep him waiting.

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"Well?" I asked.

"It's Konstantin," Aiden said. "We know where to find him."

"Where?"

Aiden smiled mischievously. "Sienna, how do you feel about planning a trip?"

**Next Chapter**