Sienna

I couldn't believe it.

We were finally, after three years of being mated, *finally* going to visit the werewolf capital. I was so excited I could hardly sit still.

Yes, there were still two weeks before the Summer Banquet in Lumen. And, yes, we technically had to wait on the Alpha of the Millennium's approval. And, yes, I know, obviously we were actually going to catch Konstantin.

Not to relax by the famous West Coast beaches.

But...if we happened to do so along the way, what could it hurt?

I'd already packed two bags in advance, and Aiden was looking at me like I was nuts.

"You realize you may need some of those clothes before we go?"

"No," I said, rolling my eyes. "These are all for California weather."

"Lumen is in Oregon, Sienna."

"What's the difference?"

Aiden laughed and shook his head. But I think he was happy to see me excited about anything. He stepped toward me, throwing my bag aside, and wrapped his arms around my waist.

"I can't wait to see you in a bikini," he said, eyes teeming with lust.

I felt a shiver of the haze under my skin. But it wasn't as powerful, as radiant, as all-encompassing as before. It was like a shadow of its former self.

And as I looked down at Aiden's hands snaking around my waist, I was reminded again of how recently that waist, that belly, had carried a life in it.

A life that was gone now.

"Aiden..." I said, gently backing away.

He furrowed his brow, realizing. "You're not ready. I'm sorry. I moved too soon. I—"

I leaned forward and kissed him, shutting him up. The spark was dull but remained alive and well. With enough time, it would fan into a flame and consume us both again.

I was sure.

"Just be patient with me," I said, leaning back. "It's still me."

I could see the carnal hunger beneath his eyes, but he nodded gently. "Whatever you need, my love."

When I returned to packing, Aiden nudged me. "You mentioned something about a pie?"

Selene had insisted that she deliver all the pies to the pack house so that they'd be waiting for us when we went to work. As we left our home, though, I wished I'd taken one with me so we wouldn't have to go to work on a Sunday.

But when we stepped into the banquet hall, where Selene had mentioned she left them, I stopped in shock.

"SURPRISE!"

The room was packed with people. My parents were there. My sister was there. Michelle,

Josh, Jocelyn, Nina, everyone was there!

"What..." I turned to Aiden. "What's going on?"

"It was your mom's idea," Aiden said with a grin.

"But it's not my birthday or anything."

My mom approached, wrapping me in a hug. "We know, it's just a little luncheon. A way to say we're all here for you and love you."

"Even though we're going through...hard times," Aiden said, "it's important to remember all that we've got."

I wrapped my arms around him, heart feeling like it might burst from joy.

"C'mon," Aiden said, taking my hand. "I want to try this strawberry-rhubarb your sister was bragging about."

I was in the middle of feeding Aiden his third piece of pie when I felt my phone buzz in my purse. "One second," I said, wiping my hands on the only available napkin.

"Sienna," Aiden mumbled through a mouthful, "I am covered in pie. Please."

He looked like a toddler after dessert. It took all my willpower not to laugh in my mate's face. Instead, I grabbed another napkin and handed it over while I fished out my phone.

I was beyond surprised to see who was texting me.

Rowan

Hey Sienna...

Rowan

It's your dad...

Rowan

I mean, Rowan...

Sienna

Sienna

Uh

Hi

Sienna What's Up?

Rowan

I just wanted to see how youre holding up

I lowered my phone, looking around the room. Everywhere I looked were the people of my life, the people I loved, the people who had, in part, made me.

Even though I hardly knew Rowan, knowing now what he'd sacrificed in order to save me, I felt a twinge of guilt.

I might've not thought of him as family. But he was, whether I liked it or not.

> Sienna Hey

Sienna

Do you want to swing by the pack house

Sienna

There's a little luncheon going on

Rowan

Rowan

1...

Rowan

I'd love that...

Sienna Great

Sienna

You know where to find me

Aiden

When he walked in, I didn't know how the room was going to react. Most of them didn't know who the bearded stranger was.

But I did.

And I knew Melissa and Robert, Sienna's adopted parents, had heard all about him. Sienna's biological father. Rowan.

"Hi, Rowan," Sienna said, giving him an awkward side-hug. "Um, allow me to introduce you to my parents. Melissa and Robert. This is Rowan. The...man I told you about." I didn't blame Sienna for not knowing how to deal with this extremely bizarre scenario. When parents met parents, we could both attest, it often did not go as planned.

Robert was the first to shake Rowan's hand. "Welcome," he said simply.

Melissa only nodded curtly. Despite being the loveliest and most open woman alive, I think Sienna's mom was uncertain how to react to his presence.

"Well, I'll let you all talk," Sienna said. "Or not. Whatever you want. Rowan, there's pie."

"Thanks, Sienna," he said, smiling warmly and stepping off to grab some.

Then she turned to me, and her eyes widened as if to say, what the hell was I thinking?!

I laughed. "Hey, I think it was a nice gesture."

"Aiden!"

I turned to see Josh, waving me over by the table. I was still covered in pie, anyway, so it was a good excuse to leave my mate's side for a second.

"I'm going to grab some more napkins." I

"I'm going to grab some more napkins," I said, kissing her cheek. "I'm sticky all over."

"All over, huh?"

After this morning's moment, I was surprised to find her flirting. But maybe her pain was like the haze. It came with ebbs and flows.

"Be right back," I said with a wink.

I joined Josh, looking like he wanted to talk business.

"Any news from Raphael yet?" I asked.

"No," Josh said, shaking his head. "But I have some ideas on how we can corner Konstantin. So, I was thinking—"

"He can't be cornered."

We both stopped, surprised to find Rowan, holding a fork, eating a piece of pie. He was eavesdropping.

"Um," Josh said, annoyed. "What do you mean?"

"If the vampyre can possess multiple forms, he can't be surrounded, can he?" Rowan asked.

"He has a point," I said. "Rowan, what would you suggest?"

But before he could open his mouth, Melissa stomped over, looking irate.

"Hey!" she yelled. "Are you talking business?"

"Just a little," I said, confused by her reaction. Sienna's mom was usually the definition of bubbly. Not right now, though.

"We agreed there would be no discussion of business today, remember?"

"Absolutely," I said. "It's just—"

"Aiden, after everything my daughter has been through, will you just let it rest for a moment?"

"Honey," Robert said, walking over, "there's no need to get upset. I'm sure it was just a slip, right?"

"Actually, it was a rather important conversation," Rowan argued, taking another bite. "I don't see why it needed to be interrupted."

I took a look at Sienna. Thankfully, she was too busy chatting with Michelle to notice what was going on over here. Melissa's face was growing red.

"Excuse me, who are you again?" she asked Rowan "The man who just stepped into our lives and expects to be treated like family?"

"Woah, woah," I said, holding up my hands. "I think everyone should calm down for a second."

"I told you, Aiden," Melissa said, voice growing frantic. "This is not the kind of environment Sienna needs right now! Not after..."

Melissa stopped mid-sentence, choking. An involuntary sob escaped her lips. I blanched. This was not the way I expected this day to go down.

I hadn't realized how affected Melissa had been by the miscarriage.

I turned to Sienna for help, but this time, thankfully, she was already on her way. Looking confused over what all the commotion was about.

Sienna

"What's going on?"

I approached my crying mother and turned to Aiden. "What happened?"

"He...had to bring up business!" my mom said, hyperventilating. "When...I...told...him today was not the day..."

"I didn't mean any offense," Rowan said.
"But this is a *family matter* that deserves to be talked about. Not swept under the rug."

"Who are you to talk about family?!" my dad roared, coming to my mother's side, holding her close. "You're a stranger! We have no idea who you really are."

"Dad, please—" I began, trying to interrupt them.

But both men were getting into each other's faces now.

"You and your wife need to calm down," Rowan said.

"How DARE you talk to my wife that way? Who the hell do you think you are!"

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"You and your wife need to calm down," Rowan said.

"How DARE you talk to my wife that way? Who the hell do you think you are!"

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I stared in disbelief.

My fathers, biological and adopted, were about to kill each other...

Next Chapter