

Sienna

The moment we got into the cab, Michelle grabbed my phone again and put it on airplane mode. She did the same for her phone next.

"There," she said. "Now, no one can bother

"But what if something important happens and

"For once, Si, can you put aside your responsibilities to the pack and just have fun?"

She pulled a flask from her clutch and offered it. "C'mon. Drink."

"You seriously carry that around even though you're pregnant?"

"I don't drink, dummy," she said, laughing. "It's for emergencies. Like right now."

"But," I said, looking down at the flask, "it's not really fun to drink alone."

"You're not alone. I am getting plastered with you in spirit. Can't you tell? My words are already slurring. And, look, I even look sluttier all of a sudden."

She pulled one of her dress straps down her shoulder and feigned being woozy, forcing me to laugh. "Fine," I said, opening the flask. "But just a sip."

The next thing I knew, I'd finished it single-handedly and we'd arrived at Lupine, the same club I'd gone to years ago with my girls.

For a second, a flash of that night shook me

to my core. The near assault. Aiden coming to my rescue.

But then Michelle was grabbing my hand and pulling me to the front of the line, and I had no choice but to put it past me.

So this place had some weird vibes. What places didn't nowadays?

Anyway, it was a day-time party. There was less to be afraid of when it wasn't even dark yet.

"What about Erica and Mia?" I asked, voice slurring a little bit as we approached the bouncer. "If we go in now, they're gonna have to wait in line."

"That's okay," Michelle said with a shrug. "Priorities, Si. Getting you drunk and dancing. Those two come second."

She flashed a smile at the bouncer. "This is Sienna Norwood."

"Mercer-Norwood," I corrected.

"And I'm-"

"We know who you are, ladies," the bouncer said, opening the gate for us. "Please, after you."

"Wow, they've certainly improved the service around here since last time!"

With that, Michelle led me inside, and all I could see were flashing lights and all I could hear was heavy bass and nothing else in the world mattered.

The queens had arrived to rule the dance floor.

Aiden

"Josh, where would Michelle possibly go?"

I was pacing, my Beta closely following me behind, as we searched every room of the pack house. There was no sign of Sienna or Michelle anywhere.

"It's hard to say, Aiden," Josh admitted.
"When Michelle's prazing, she gets into
these...really impulsive moods. It's like she's
impossible to predict."

I watched as the last few guests left the banquet hall. When twenty minutes had passed and Sienna still hadn't returned to *her own* party, we'd realized we better let people go.

Both Rowan and Robert looked particularly guilty as they stepped out. I would need to have a longer talk with those two when all of this was sorted out.

For now, all that mattered to me was finding my mate.

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I saw Jocelyn, returning to the healers room, and quickly approached her. "Hey," I said. "Do you have any idea where the girls might've gone? I know you and Michelle aren't close, but..."

"Honestly?" Jocelyn began. "If I were you, I would wait until they reached out to you."

"What do you mean?"

I frowned. I wasn't used to being told to sit and wait like a lap dog.

And Jocelyn wasn't her usual warm self.

It seemed like she'd become a bit more honest, harsher since her time at the Healers' Retreat.

After what she'd been through, how could I blame her?

"All I'm saying, Aiden," Jocelyn continued, "is that your mate is going through a lot right now. And while it's good that you want to be there for her, sometimes she needs her own ways of letting off steam."

"But what if she's-"

"She's fine. Trust her. When she needs you, she'll come to you."

With that, Jocelyn stepped into the room and shut the door, leaving Josh and me alone in the hallway.

"What do you think?" I asked Josh.

He sighed. "I think we need a drink, man. If I know Michelle, that's probably what she and Sienna are doing right now."

"Except Michelle is pregnant."

"Yeah. But when she's in the mood to party, you wouldn't notice the difference."

With a wry grin, Josh led me to the bar in his office. Maybe a drink was exactly what I needed right now.

What Sienna and I both needed.

Michelle

After two, then three, then four shots, Sienna really started to let loose. We were at the center of the dance floor, shaking our asses like no one was watching.

But many hazing wolves, I noticed, were definitely watching. Not that they dared to approach us. After what had happened here last time to Sienna, no one dared move near the Alpha's mate.

Still, even though I was sober and mated to Josh and having a blast, I wished just one of these wolves would at least hit on me or something. Give a girl a little flattery, c'mon!

Maybe it was the anxiety of being pregnant, knowing that soon I would lose this killer body, but one of the main reasons I'd wanted to take Sienna out clubbing, I had to admit, was for myself.

It felt good not to think about the vampyre Josh and I were hunting.

It felt good not thinking about the baby growing inside me.

And it felt good forgetting all the tragedy that my best friend had been through.

As she twirled and sparkled in the LED-light, I took a second to admire her.

"Sienna," I yelled over the bass. "You're so damn beautiful!"

She grinned and threw her arms around me, wobbling. She was way drunker than she looked, it seemed.

"Michelle..." she said. "You're the sweetest. But where are Mia and Erica? Should we go get them?"

"No, it's okay! I'm sure they'll be in any minute."

"And where's Josh? And Aiden? Shouldn't they be coming too?"

I frowned. Surely, Sienna realized that the boys weren't invited, right? Where was this coming from?

"Or do they not want to be here..." she asked, frowning drunkenly. "Is everyone avoiding me right now?"

Uh-oh. Paranoid Sienna was about to emerge. I'd seen this drunken version of my friend before, and it wasn't pretty.

"Of course not!" I said, panicking, trying to mollify the situation as fast as possible. "C'mon, let's go to the other dance floor. I think they're playing more poppy stuff—"

But Sienna had stopped dancing and was standing still as a statue now, immovable. A nervous pout frozen on her face.

"I don't belong here..." she said. "Where am I? What am I even doing?"

All of a sudden, she was tilting and, before I could reach out a hand to help her, falling to the floor in a heap.

"Sienna!" I cried out.

A group of dancers all gathered round to help her up. "I'm fine!" she shouted. "I'M FINE! GET OFF OF ME. STOP TOUCHING ME!"

Sienna tore herself away from the group that were just trying to help, and I ran after her.

Luckily, she wasn't as fast when she was this drunk.

I took her arm and led her straight to the bathroom. "Let go!" she cried out.

"No," I said firmly. "We're both going to chill out for a second, all right?"

She was shaking, I realized. The tears were overflowing.

My friend was breaking down, and if I didn't do something quick, her wolf might take over, and knowing Sienna's wolf, we'd be in even bigger trouble.

"Here," I said, opening the door and leading her inside the bathroom. "Everything's fine."

Sienna

Everything wasn't fine.

Everything was spinning around me.

The only anchor I had left was Michelle, and she couldn't understand. Nobody could.

I barged into a stall and tried to seal myself inside, but Michelle slipped in before I could lock it. Then I sat on the toilet and put my head in my hands.

"Sienna," I heard her say, but it sounded so

muffled. "I'm so sorry I brought you here. I just thought... If we just had a girls' night, we could forget everything and..."

"I can't forget, Michelle!" I blurted out. "How am I supposed to forget? All I see is like this...this shadow life playing out before my eyes. Where I'm a mom. And I'm a woman. And not this mess."

Michelle took one of my hands, holding it tight. I felt so boxed in. Claustrophobic.

"I need to get out of here," I said. "Michelle

"Not yet," she said. "Not until you get it all out. Please."

I shook my head. I didn't know where to begin. But the liquor made talking easier, I had to give it that.

"This isn't supposed to be my life," I said. "Going to clubs. Having pity luncheons thrown for me. Watching two fathers fight over who's better."

"It's not right," Michelle said, understanding. "None of it. And...Sienna. I hate that I'm—"

She shook her head, tears filling her eyes. I realized what she meant and shook my head. "No, Michelle," I said. "Your baby is a blessing. I don't resent you being pregnant for a second!"

"But it should be you! Not me. And we both know it."

"No," I said, taking her face in my hands.
"You don't get to feel guilt about this. Only joy, okay? Promise me. Promise!"

Finally, Michelle gave me a teary nod. We'd grown a lot closer lately, but we'd never been this raw. I thought we might both burst into tears at any second when we heard it.

Puking. In the stall next to us. A girl was upchucking, and a lot, at that.

We both made eye contact and, before we could stop ourselves, burst into uproarious laughter.

Sometimes all it took to quell heartbreak was the honest-to-God miracle of humor.

In this case, the miracle smelled awful.

Aiden

"Okay," Michelle said, standing up. "Now, we can get out of here."





Aiden

Where are you?

Sienna Lupine

Sienna The club

Aiden

That place again???

Aiden

Are you okay?

Sienna Yeah, babe

Sienna

I think I'm gonna be fine

Sienna

Aiden

I'm omw





