



Chapter 8

Sienna's Point of View

I force myself to go back to checking the supply shelves, my hands moving automatically even though my mind is still tangled in knots.

No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to push him out. His voice. His eyes. The way his scent is still clinging to the room, warm and sharp, wrapping around me, making my wolf pace frantically beneath my skin.

I grit my teeth and push a box of gauze too hard onto the shelf. It topples over with a soft thud, scattering rolls all over the counter.

"Damn it."

I whisper, pressing a hand to my chest. My heart still hasn't stopped racing.

The door suddenly opens behind me again and I nearly jump.

For a few seconds I am convinced that it is Asher, coming back, but when I turn I see Ava slipping inside. Her eyes quickly dart up and down the hall before she shuts the door behind her and settles her gaze on me.

"I saw Asher come out of here. What happened?"

She asks immediately, her brow raised curiously.

I let out a long sigh before turning and leaning forward to gather the scattered rolls.



"Nothing."

I say simply.

"Nothing?"

Ava folds her arms in front of her chest, her sharp eyes narrowing at me.

"You really expect me to believe that nothing happened?"

She asks.

I glance at her and then back down at the mess on the counter.

"Fine."

I mutter, straightening.

"We talked about the injured warrior he brought in. About work. About ..."

My voice falters slightly and I clear my throat before forcing myself to continue.

"About Aiden. And Bianca... And that is it."

I say, shrugging.

Ava blinks at me, clearly unimpressed, and a small frown forms between her eyes.

"Seriously? That's it? After six years, after everything, that is all he had to say to you?"



She asks, her voice sharp with disbelief.

I hug the clipboard to my chest again, as if it can shield me and nod my head. "Yes. That is all."

I whisper.

For a few minutes, Ava just stares at me, her lips pressed into a thin line. Then she shakes her head, muttering something about "stupid alphas" under her breath. 1

"Are you okay?"

She asks, her voice softer now.

I manage a small smile and nod my head.

"I guess I am as okay as I can be."

I say softly and her expression softens even more. She steps forward, wrapping her arms around me.

I sink into her hug, letting her steady warmth cut through the ache in my chest.

"Forget about the idiot Alpha."

She murmurs against my shoulder.

"Just focus on the fact that your shift is almost over. Then you get to go home to Aiden."

The sound of my son's name is like sunlight breaking through the clouds.



I smile faintly, my chest loosening just a little.

"Yeah. Aiden."

I say letting out a soft breath. My mood immediately lifts, just thinking of his little grin, his laugh, the way he runs into my arms after a long day...

He is my anchor. He is my everything.

And no matter how much Asher's return stirs old wounds, I know who I live for.

Ava doesn't let me go right away, but when she finally pulls back, her hands stay on my shoulders, her eyes scanning me like she is trying to read every thought that I am not saying out loud.

"You are not telling me everything."

She says flatly. I try to look away, but she tilts her head, blocking my line of sight.

"Sienna."

Her voice is soft and I sigh, running a hand through my hair.

"What more do you want me to say, Ava? He walked in, we talked, and then he left. End of story."

Her lips press into a thin line again.

"You can lie to everyone else, but not to me. You saw him. You smelled him. Your wolf must have gone crazy."

I flinch slightly, but I don't answer her.

"Exactly, Si..."

Ava says, her tone sharp.

"You don't get to shrug that off like it is nothing. That kind of pull doesn't just vanish because you decided to bury it."

My throat tightens.

"I have to shrug it off. What else am I supposed to do, Ava? He has Bianca. He has a life. I can't..."

My voice breaks, but I shake my head and take a deep breath before I force my voice to come out steady.

"I can't go back down that road."

I finish softly.

For a moment, she just studies me, her expression unreadable. Then she shakes her head slowly.

"You are stronger than me. If it were my mate standing in front of me, I don't think I would be able to breathe, let alone hold a conversation."

I let out a weak laugh, but there is no humor in it.

"I barely held it together. It felt like every word was tearing something open inside of me."

"Good."



Ava's voice hardens, though her hand squeezes mine gently.

"Then remember that feeling next time he tries to come around. Because if he thinks he can stroll back into your life after six years and just...what? Say a few words and undo all the healing that you have done? He has got another thing coming."

Her fierce tone actually makes me smile, a real one this time.

"You know you don't have to keep fighting my battles for me." 1

"Somebody has to. Especially when you are too stubborn to admit that you are bleeding."

She says without hesitation. Her words make my chest tighten, but I still smile at her.

"I'll be fine. Really."

I say, squeezing her hand. She eyes me for another long moment, then finally sighs.

"Alright, fine. But I'm holding you to that."

"I have no doubt."

I say with a small smile, shaking my head.

"Now, go so I can get my work done. I want to go home and see my son."

I say as I pretend to push her towards the door. She sighs dramatically and throws her hands up in the air.



"Fine, fine. I am going, but only if I can come get ice-cream with you and Aiden."

I laugh and nod my head.

"Fine. We can go for ice-cream."

She grins at me, and her eyes soften before she pulls me in for one last hug.

"I love you, Si. Just remember that I am here, for anything you need."

She says softly and I nod against her shoulder, hugging her back tightly.

"I know. I love you too, Ava."

She pulls back and steps outside.

I watch as she begins to make her way down the hall and I shut the door, but before it closes I hear Ava call out.

"Sienna, you better not leave without me. I will come find you. I know where you live."

She warns me teasingly and I laugh, shaking my head as I close the door.

I laugh softly to myself as the door clicks shut, Ava's voice still echoing down the hall.

For a moment, the ache in my chest eases. Ava always has a way of pulling me back, of reminding me of what matters most.



I turn back to the counter and begin gathering the scattered supplies, my movements steadier now. The lingering burn of Asher's presence still coils in my veins, but it doesn't feel quite as suffocating as it did before.

Because Ava is right.

I have already survived the worst of it once. I can survive this too.

All I need to do is finish this shift. Then I will go home, where Aiden's laughter will drown out every ghost Asher resurrected just by walking through a door.