

SIENNA

After the fire, our life was in absolute chaos.

"Aiden, get out of the damn bathroom. I have to pee!" Selene shouted, banging on the door. "I have a whole baby pressed against my bladder, twenty-four seven."

"Selene, can you please not scream at my boss?"

Jeremy said warily.

"He's not your boss here, Jeremy. He's family,"
my mom said in a cheery tone as she shoved past
me with three loads of laundry.

"No, when he's in the bathroom, he's my mortal enemy," Selene sulked. "Aiden, GET OUT."

It was the good kind of chaos.

The bathroom door flung open, and Aiden stood in the doorway, fresh out of the shower, wearing nothing but a towel, water droplets still clinging to his glistening abs.

Thank God the haze is over.

"Mother of fucking wolves," Aiden growled. "I'm finished. Can you relax?"

"Oh no," muttered Jeremy under his breath.



Selene's eyes bulged out of her head so far that they matched her stomach.

"Do not. Tell a *pregnant* woman. Who is about to *burst*. To relax," she nearly howled, pushing past him and slamming the bathroom door behind her.

Aiden just shrugged. "Oh, Melissa, you can add this to your laundry," he said, whipping off his towel and throwing it into the hamper she was carrying.

He walked down the hallway stark naked as I stared on, mortified.

Good chaos, yes, but construction on our house couldn't finish soon enough.

My parents' little home had gotten decidedly crowded since Selene and Jeremy had decided to stay until the baby came, which would be any day.

"Sienna, come help me with the sandwiches," my dad called from the kitchen.

As I joined him, he shot me a look of concern. He'd been doing that a lot since we'd moved in.

"How are you holding up, sweetheart? Everything going okay? Are we making our home

comfortable for you and Aiden? Because if you need anything at all, just—"



"Dad, I'm fine, really. You guys have been amazing, opening your house to us while we rebuild ours."

I hadn't told my family everything that happened with Konstantin, but they knew enough.

I'd left out the details about my birth parents because I knew it'd break their hearts, and I honestly still wasn't ready to talk about it.

Aiden, on the other hand, knew everything.

It was hard at first, reliving what had happened to me. I'd felt so violated and betrayed by what Konstantin did.

He had used me. He'd tried to manipulate me, break me mentally, break Aiden physically, and he'd burned our home to the ground, but ultimately, our mating bond was stronger.

We didn't break so easily; he knew that now.

And he was out there somewhere—in a weakened state, perhaps, but still lurking in the shadows. It made my blood curdle.

Josh had established an anti-vampyre task force after everything that happened.





It was a near-obsession for him to hunt down

Konstantin, but so far, it had been four weeks with
not so much as a bite—literally or figuratively.

Josh's vigilance made me feel safer but also sad. He had a lot of time on his hands these days...

As I silently cut up vegetables next to my dad, it made me think about the whereabouts of my birth father, whoever he was. But only for a moment.

I smiled at my dad and squeezed his hand. I didn't have to go searching for my father. He was right here.

Aiden walked into the kitchen, thankfully fully clothed, and cracked open a beer. "Want one, Robert?"

He really seemed to be enjoying all this forced family time. And I couldn't blame him. He'd never had this himself.

"I'd love one," he said, taking the beer and clinking it against Aiden's.

"Hey, don't leave me out of this," I said, grabbing my own beer.

Selene shuffled in with the help of Jeremy and slumped down at the table. Mom brought in an apple pie from the dining room that made Aiden start drooling.



"Freshly cooled from the windowsill, just like my mom used to do it." Aiden said.

"Aiden, put that tongue away," I laughed. "You don't even look at me that way unless you're hazed."

"Does everyone have a drink?" my dad asked as we raised our bottles in the air.

"I wish," sighed Selene, holding her stomach.

"What should we toast to?" Aiden said, looking around the room.

I didn't know what I'd do without these amazing people in my life. They anchored me and had brought me back to shore when Konstantin tried to drown me.

The people in this room, they were where my true strength came from.

"To family." I smiled.

As I got ready for bed, I looked at my reflection in the petite vanity mirror that my parents had gotten





the petite vanity mirror that my parents had go for me as a little girl. I felt childish using it now.

So much had changed in the past couple years.

I still hadn't gotten used to staying in my childhood bedroom with Aiden either, but he was utterly fascinated by it all...

My sloppy watercolor paintings from elementary school.

My extensive collection of track-and-field trophies.

The stuffed animals that I'd half torn to shreds when I was just a pup.

I'd caught him going through one of my old diaries when we first moved in, and he'd almost joined those poor plush toys in their demise.

But now, he was lying on my bed in his boxers, looking up at the star mural I'd painted on the ceiling when I was fifteen. His earnest expression of admiration made me love him even more.

I crawled on top of him and gave him an impassioned kiss.

I may not have been hazed, but I still had needs.



"Somebody is looking for trouble," he growled, grinning and hoisting me up against my bedpost.

"And I always seem to find it," I growled right back, grabbing the rising tent in his boxers.

He threw me down onto the bed and wasted no time in pulling down my underwear and spreading my legs.

Aiden's stubble rubbed against the inside of my thighs as he dove into my sex with his tongue.

"Yeah, that's it," I murmured, gripping my sheets.

Aiden sat up and pushed my legs open even farther, tapping his hard cock against my entrance.

He teased my sex, pushing in the tip, then pulling back out.

"More," I said breathily.

"You asked for it," Aiden growled, placing his hand lightly on my neck.

I let out a soft moan, which turned into a sharp yelp as he entered me, stretching and hitting just the right spots.

Once he got into the rhythm his thrusts felt like





Once he got into the rhythm, his thrusts felt like heaven. My pussy was about to explode from the pleasure.

"Aiden, I'm-oh fuck-I'm..."

My abdomen clenched, and my back arched as I cried out.

"I'm cumming. Oh fuck, I'm cum-"

"IT'S COMING," my mom started screaming, banging on my bedroom door.

"THE BABY-IT'S ALMOST HERE!"

Despite my niece choosing the most awkward time possible to enter this world, I was beyond excited to meet her.

My parents anxiously gripped each other's hands while sitting with Aiden and me in the waiting room. It had already been two hours since Selene had gone into labor.

"You know I saw a supply closet around the corner," Aiden whispered, sliding his hand up my leg. "We could finish what we started."



I slapped it away. Men. Always thinking about fucking.

Although I had to admit it wouldn't be the worst way to kill some time.

Jocelyn suddenly pushed through the double doors in scrubs, smiling from ear to ear.

"What's the news?" My mom shot out of her chair.

"A happy and healthy baby girl. She's ready to meet you now," Jocelyn said, leading us into Selene's room.

Jeremy hovered over his wife and child with absolute awe and devotion in his eyes. Selene held her beautiful baby girl—my first niece—in her arms. Her face was wet with tears.

I started tearing up myself. Dominance be damned. I was so happy for her.

Aiden clutched my hand. He almost looked like he was a little misty-eyed himself. Almost.

"What's her name?" my mom cooed, taking in the gorgeous little bundle of a granddaughter in front of her.

"Oh my God, we haven't thought of one yet,"





Selene said, abruptly bursting into tears. "She has no name!"

"Honey, it's okay, don't cry. We'll think of one. We have time," he said, nervously trying to console her and understand her erratic hormones.

A vision suddenly swam into my mind—flowing red hair, fierce eyes. Someone important, who deserved to be honored.

"What about... Vanessa?" I suggested.

Selene's eyes lit up. "That's... that's actually perfect. It's beautiful. But why Vanessa?"

"No reason," I said as Aiden looked at me knowingly. "I just think it fits."

"Me too," she replied, yawning, her eyelids getting heavy.

"Okay, Mommy and little Vanessa need to get some rest," Jocelyn ordered. "We can all admire the baby in the morning."

Jocelyn lightly touched my shoulder as I was about to leave. "I have another patient that I need to check up on, if you'd like to join me."

I nodded as my stomach twisted in knots.

She looked so peaceful asleep—except she wasn't really sleeping, not willingly, anyway.

Oh, Michelle, this is all my fault.

As Michelle laid motionless in her hospital bed, a wave of guilt swept over me. If it hadn't been for me, she never would have gone to Konstantin's in the first place and he never would have used her to try and hurt me.

Jocelyn gripped my hand as I started to tear up. "Don't blame yourself," she said. "Sometimes people come into our lives and they lie, and those lies infect everyone around us."

"But what if I helped spread that disease?"

"You were just trying to find answers about your past. I'm sure he understands that," she responded, looking far away. "Aiden wants nothing more than to protect you."

"Maybe she was just trying to protect you too," I said delicately as I watched Jocelyn stiffen.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... Aiden told me about Nina. Have you heard from her?"

"No," Jocelyn replied vacantly. "But I'd rather not talk about it."

The door swamp onen and Josh trudged in looking





The door swung open, and Josh trudged in looking faded and worn down. He was sporting a full beard and dark circles beneath his eyes.

He hadn't let up the search for Konstantin for even a moment since Michelle had gone into a coma.

"Oh, uh, I didn't think anyone would be in here,"
Josh mumbled, not making eye contact with me.

"We'll clear out," Jocelyn said softly. "Let me know if you need anything."

As Jocelyn ushered me out of the room, I turned back for a second to see Josh place his forehead against Michelle's.

I won't let you do this alone, Josh. We will find him. And we will bring her back.

Aiden placed his arm around my shoulder as we walked up the driveway to my parents' house. The sun was just beginning to rise over the treetops.

"Things will get back to normal, Sienna. Your family will always be there for each other, through the good and the bad. *Our* family will always be there for each other," Aiden assured me.

"Of course," I said, forcing a smile and leaning

"Of course," I said, forcing a smile and leaning my head into his chest.

Nothing inside me had felt normal since Konstantin had invaded my mind and body, but I didn't want to worry Aiden.

I felt an unfamiliar power inside me, one that I didn't understand...

And it was growing every day.

ROWAN

As the rising sun's rays fell across her head, it set her magnificent red hair ablaze. She was beautiful, a near mirror image.

I watched her walking with her mate, and it stirred up emotion in me that had been long dormant.

"She looks...just like her mother."

Next Chapter