



## The Millennium Wolves



Book 6 - Chapter 22

**SIENNA**

At five-thirty the next morning, I gave up trying to pretend I was going to get any more sleep.

As quietly as I could, trying not to disturb Aiden's gentle snoring from the other side of the bed, I got up and padded softly into the kitchen.



The sky was still coal black, the sun hours away from rising. I decided to make a cup of hot tea to calm my nerves.

As I put on the kettle and sorted through various flavors of tea, I thought again of the drawings Rowan's teacher had shown me.

I had hidden them in a box of sewing materials that neither of us had touched in years, and I went now and got the box down from the hall closet.

Furtively, listening carefully for footsteps coming down the hall, I took the drawings out of the box and studied them again.



Chapters



Display



Unmute



Comment



React



Somehow, using nothing but fat crayons, Rowan had depicted Selene precisely as I had found her that afternoon a week ago.

It was drawn as if from above, but I could clearly make out the stone steps, the broken glass, the wooden slates of construction scaffolding.

Selene's neck was bent at an obscene angle. Her eyes were dark slash marks.

This was impossible.



We had been meticulous about keeping Rowan from seeing the constant barrage of media surrounding the death of his aunt.

We'd never even told him exactly how she died.

It was impossible for my son to have the faintest idea of what Selene's body had looked like.

Let alone to draw it in such astonishing detail.

The tea kettle began to whistle, and I raced over to shut the stove off before the noise woke anyone.



I wanted to tell Aiden. I should have told him the second I got home with Rowan, but things were so overwhelmingly complicated right now that I couldn't bear to burden him with one more worry.

*This is nothing.*

Rowan overheard someone talking about Selene's crime scene, and his imagination filled in the details.

Drawing was a natural way for children to express their emotions. Rowan was simply sad and scared over the loss of his only aunt.

*This is nothing.*



Impulsively, I seized the drawings in both hands. I ripped them in half, then in half again.

I ripped until Rowan's artwork was nothing more than red and black confetti that littered the sink.

Flipping on the garbage disposal, I poured the hot water down the sink until every last scrap of paper was washed away and out of sight.

*This is nothing.*



Perhaps if I said it enough times, I could convince myself it was true.

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**Erica**

Hey everyone! This is gonna sound kinda weird, but I need your help

**Michelle**

What's going on?

**Mia**

Yeah what's up?



**Erica**

Do you remember that guy from Halloween? Troy?

**Michelle**

No but r we supposed 2 remember all ur many boyfriends??

**Mia**

Shut up Michelle.

**Mia**

I remember him. Why?

**Erica**

He plays bass in this band.

**Erica**

They are supposed to be performing at a bar downtown tonight...

**Michelle**

Ok....?

**Erica**

And I was hoping you guys would come with me. 😊

**Erica**

I know it's way too soon after...



**Erica**

but I promised I would be there and I could really use my wing-women...

**Mia**

Erica, of course I'll come with you

**Mia**

Harry is here he can watch the kids.

**Mia**

This week has been awful.

**Mia**

I don't know about you guys, but I could use a distraction.

**Erica**

Are you sure Mia?? It isn't too soon?

**Michelle**

I agree with Mia.

**Michelle**

Selene wouldn't want us 2 sit inside and b sad.

**Michelle**

She would want us 2 go out and be happy.

**Erica**

Wow. Thanks Michelle. 😊

**Michelle**

Moms' night out! 🍷 🍷



**Erica**

I'll drop a pin.

**Erica**

His band goes on at eleven. Want to meet up at 10

**Mia**

Cool. See you guys tonight!

**Erica**

Sienna, I totally understand why you would want to sit this one out.



**Mia**

Yeah babe. Don't make up your mind right away.

**Michelle**

But if u feel like coming out, we'd love to see u!!! 💚💚

I groaned as I looked at the string of messages that had come in early this afternoon.

I was still in bed, having spent most of the day asleep in an effort to make up for all the tossing and turning of the night before.



Aiden knocked on the door before opening it a crack and sticking his head inside.

“Hey there, Sleeping Beauty,” he said with a grin, “you missed dinner. We ordered pizza. With extra black olives and onions, because our child is strange.”

He grimaced as he said the words aloud.

And he didn't even know the full truth.

“What's going on with the girls?” he asked, gesturing toward my phone.

“Oh, it's nothing. Erica has a date. She invited Mia and Michelle to go watch this guy play in a band downtown,” I replied, switching off my phone and sliding it under my pillow.



“And they didn't invite you?” He came and sat next to me on the bed.

“They invited me, but Aiden, I can't go out to see a concert. My sister died six days ago. The press would go insane if they saw me at a club.”

“Fuck the press,” he growled. “Michelle will be there. Maybe she'll earn her new paycheck for once.”





“Besides that. Doesn’t it seem a bit *wrong* to go out and listen to music at a time like this?”

Aiden shrugged. “I remember after Aaron died...I felt like a part of me should die too. Like if I was feeling happy, it was dishonoring his memory somehow. You know?”

I leaned my head against Aiden’s shoulder and nodded. My throat tightened, and I choked back a sob.

“Eventually, though, it was like the walls started closing in. And I just needed a way to release all of that pent-up energy. So, do you know what I did?”



Now Aiden glanced at me with a slightly guilty look. “What?” I asked with a raised brow.

“I got into a lot of fights. I think I must have beat up half the kids in school.”

“I bet Charlotte and Daniel loved that,” I responded, drily.

He chuckled, but then looked at me seriously, “Sienna, what I’m saying is that if you need to go out and be with your friends and listen to music, that isn’t irresponsible.



It's natural."

I could feel all my misgivings letting go as Aiden spoke. I couldn't run from my problems anymore. I was too old for that.

But I could at least put them on a shelf for one evening.

"What about Rowan?" I asked.

"I'm here, remember? I can take care of my own son for the night. But if it makes you feel better, I can ask Lexa to stay late. She'd be more than happy to help; she loves Rowan."



I knew that Aiden was more than able to watch Rowan. He did it all the time when I worked late at the gallery.

Still, I spoke with Lexa, and she happily agreed to stay overnight and sleep in the spare bedroom.

"You're sure this is okay?" I asked for the twelfth time as I stood in our walk-in closet.

I tugged an emerald green and black dress over my shoulders.

It gathered tightly at the waist before

It gathered tightly at the waist before dropping to a loosely draping tulle skirt that twirled and moved around my thighs as I put on a pair of dangling black earrings.

I was beginning to feel a tiny bit of enthusiasm but kept getting pulled back by thoughts of guilt.

“Because I don’t have to go. Aiden seriously, look at me!”

“Oh, I am,” he said with a sudden lusty grin that made me smile in return. His eyes moved from my loose red hair to the black slouch boots I was currently tugging on.

For a fraction of a second, I thought I felt my haze spring to life, but then the feeling passed, and I sighed with resolve.

“I’m going to be late if I don’t get going,” I said to my mate.

Aiden kissed me deeply on the lips.

“Have fun,” he answered.

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I had never been to RiffRaff, the bar on the southern side of town where Erica’s date was



southern side of town where Erica's date was playing.

The moment I entered, my ears were assaulted by the crashing of electric guitars and the pounding drums.

It was only ten-thirty, but the small dance floor was already teeming with people, all of whom seemed to be wearing clothes that had been artfully ripped and safety-pinned back together.

I suddenly felt horribly overdressed in my dark green dress and boots, but then I saw another girl in what appeared to be a neon pink prom gown dancing with a man in a three-piece suit.



My anxiety lessened somewhat.

This was an “all-sorts” kind of place.

The atmosphere of the club, in general, was one of loosely contained anarchy, which, in a weird way, was incredibly appealing.

No rules. No expectations.

Freedom, if only for a moment, from the grief and stress that lately felt like constant companions.



A flying blur of brown hair appeared out of nowhere and tackled me. I had to take three steps back to catch my balance before Michelle knocked us both to the floor.

“SIENNA!” she squealed at the top of her lungs. She pulled me into a smaller side room decorated with rickety black barstools and heavy wooden pool tables.

The noise from the band was somewhat muffled in here, and I shook my head to clear out the echoes from the pounding music.



“I never thought you’d come! Oh, Sienna I’m so happy to see you! Mia and Erica are already here.

“We’re waiting for Joey’s band to start! They’re on next! Oh my god, wait until you meet Joey. What will Erica think of next!

“Why are we just standing here? Let’s get you a drink!”

All of this was said in a breathless rush of excitement so genuine that I couldn’t stop myself; I burst out laughing and pulled my friend into a tight hug.

It was the first time I had laughed, *truly* laughed since the death of my sister, and it



felt wonderful. I laughed again, giving in to the heady feeling.

She began laughing as well and hugged me back. We just stood there for a moment, remembering our years of friendship.

*I don't know how I would ever get through this without my friends.*

“I’d love a beer, but I can’t go too crazy tonight. I want to spend most of tomorrow down at my gallery.”



I hadn’t actually thought of my gallery until this moment.

I realized that a long afternoon spent painting, sorting through my emotions, felt like the most perfect idea in the world.

*A way to begin healing.*

I ordered my drink and Michelle and I headed toward the back of the bar, where Mia and Erica gathered with a small cluster of men, all of whom were holding instruments.

Erica was in animated conversation with a short man with a deep tan.



He had bleached blonde hair that hung in twisted dreadlocks around his face, and he was wearing a purple tie-dyed Grateful Dead T-shirt.

Michelle wiggled her eyebrows dramatically, “That’s Troy. His band is going on next. Our friend has decided he’s definitely ‘The One.’” I had to turn my back so Erica wouldn’t see me giggling.

As rude as it was for me to laugh, Michelle did have a point.



Troy looked like the last person on Earth who should be dating my shy, bookish friend.

I started walking toward Erica and Mia, but Michelle caught my arm. “Can I talk to you for a second?”

She quickly followed that up with, “It’s about your lawyer.”

“Thanda? What about her?” I asked. “How do you even know about her?”

“I was there yesterday when she totally ruined Josh’s big meeting. She was a total bitch. Plus, did you know that she was Gregory Singh’s daughter?”



“I mean, they have the same last name, so I kinda figured. But what does that have to do with anything?” I asked, confused by where Michelle was going with all this.

“Josh hates Gregory. He says that Gregory is always trying to undermine Aiden.”

“Can we talk about this...not right now?” I said with a sigh. I really didn’t want to deal with this right now.

Michelle looked furious.



Uh-oh.

I needed to find a way to smooth this over before Tropical Storm Michelle made landfall.

“Tell you what,” I said, linking my arm through hers and turning my friend back toward the dance floor, “what if I promise to keep my guard up about Thanda, and you come dance with me?”

She shrugged petulantly, but then smiled and gripped my arm in return.

“Ten bucks says Erica sticks her tongue down that guy’s throat by the end of the night!” she said, the mischievous grin





returning to her face.

Erica and Mia had seen us and were wildly shouting and waving their arms to come and join them.

The band had finished warming up, and as we reached the stage, they crashed into a punk-rock song that demanded lots of jumping around and head-banging.

I felt a pang of guilt.

But it was swept away by the insistent guitars as my friends and I hit the dance floor.



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Thirty minutes later, I already knew I would be hoarse the next morning from screaming along with the pounding, pulsing music.

I emerged from the sweaty tangle on the dance floor and headed toward the bar. I finished my first beer and signaled to the bartender for another.

My heart was thumping in time to the music, and I took a moment to wipe the moisture from my face.



I was so glad I had decided to come out tonight.

Dancing, allowing myself to float away on a tossing sea of anonymous people, was the closest I had come to feeling real joy for days.

Troy's band was actually pretty good, and the crowd had continued to swell as the night progressed.



The drummer finished his solo by throwing his drumsticks into the air and catching them. The band now struck a slower tone, an old Guns N' Roses song that I loved.

As the lead singer belted out the lyrics, I felt a tiny flicker in my groin, similar to the one I had felt with Aiden back in our home.

That insistent little spark of the haze.

Instead of sputtering out like it had earlier, this time it roared to life like a brilliant flame. Immediately, a scarlet blush spread across my chest, and I felt a dampness between my thighs.

Here, in the middle of this pulsing, hungry crowd was the last place I wanted this to happen.



Here, in the middle of this pulsing, hungry crowd was the last place I wanted this to happen.

But against my will, I could feel that familiar fire burning its way through my veins. I swallowed hard as the haze threatened to take control.

*I had to get out of here.*



Abandoning my beer on the bar, I stood and headed toward the exit. Already waves of desire were starting to overwhelm me.

I closed my eyes and took a long, deep breath to try and collect myself.

*All I had to do was get home.*

Aiden's hands, his touch was all I craved in this moment.

I opened my eyes to see my mate standing in the entrance of the bar.

Next Chapter

