

SIENNA

Aiden's hands felt warm and rough on my skin, awakening it from its grief-induced slumber.

The scent of pine enveloped us in the cool shade of the forest.

Are we alone?

Is some reporter going to catch us?

But the desire for Aiden pressed me.

I kissed him hard, my mouth demanding.

Sensing my need, Aiden gripped my hips with tight fingers. He pushed me against the ash tree and yanked off the t-shirt.

With his mouth, he nipped and kissed my bare breasts, his hands cradling and lifting them to him.

I dug my fingers into his shoulders, pressing my naked back into the tree.

“Aiden. Please.”

My usual dominance had ebbed. I needed him to take the lead.



Aiden pulled down the sweats. I was naked underneath.

Will a reporter walk into this?

Will a photo surface on Yapper?

My heart raced with desire and fear.

With care, Aiden eased me down onto the leaves covering the forest floor.

He ran his tongue along my inner thigh, palms stroking the skin of my belly.



Smoothing his hands over my hips, he parted my legs.

Anxiety about being discovered pricked the edges of my senses, but I ached for his touch.

For release.

His mouth, hot and gentle, pressed against my sex.

I forgot everything else.

He licked between my folds, using his fingers to part me and access the tenderness underneath.

My breath hitched. My fingers entwined in his hair. "Aiden."

He slipped two fingers inside me, pressing against the tightening muscles. His tongue flicked, an insistent pleasure.

"Aiden, I..."

He pulled away a fraction. "Shh. Let me take care of you."

I had no fight in me.

As he pressed his tongue to me again, I arched my back, nails digging into the dry leaves around me.



The tip of his tongue pressed and circled, and he started pushing his fingers in and out rhythmically.

I moaned, my legs opening more as I tried to let him have all of me.

My pleasure was building.

He slipped out his fingers before plunging his tongue inside me.

A cry tore from my throat, and my body contorted.

Aiden's hands gripped my hips, rocking with me, his tongue still inside me.

Waves of electric pleasure shocked me. The orgasm was hard and almost brutal in its intensity.

As soon as it passed, the feeling of his mouth on my sex was too much.

I writhed and freed myself from him, pushing myself up against the ash tree.



“Are you okay?” he asked. “Did I hurt you?”

I tried to answer but choked on the words.

What the hell am I doing?

“Sienna?”

How could you do that? How could you let him get you off when Selene is dead?

When her killer is still out there?

I brought my knees up to my chest, wrapping my arms around them.

“Sienna, talk to me,” Aiden said, scooting closer.

Shuddering, I raised my eyes to his face. "It's nothing you did," I managed. "Oh, Aiden. I just—Selene."

Aiden reached over and took my hand, entwining our fingers.

"Selene wouldn't resent you for this. She loved you, Freckles."

Tears spilled from my eyes, then.



"She wouldn't want you punishing yourself for her death. Especially since you had nothing to do with it."

"But I did," I confessed in a whisper distorted by the pain of my weeping.

"What are you talking about?"

"It's my fault no one was there to save her."

"What? How?"

I met his eyes. Aiden looked deeply confused. "Security... it's my fault we cut back so much..."

Aiden's face cleared with understanding.

"Sienna, you couldn't have known."

I should have realized.

How could I have been so self-centered?

I wiped away the tears, my hands rough, but more leaked from my eyes.

I inhaled, trying to stop the weeping.

He moved closer, wrapping an arm around me.

“After Konstantin... after we saw what you could do... it seemed like no threat could ever really harm us. I felt the same way. I wanted Rowan to grow up more... normally.”



I tightened my grip on his hand, using the other to cover my eyes. “But now Selene—”

“Was killed by someone inside the pack.”

I blinked away tears and tried to look at him. My vision was blurred, and I wiped at my eyes. “What do you mean?”

“It had to be,” he said. “Josh showed me the security tapes when you were out walking with Rowan. Someone tampered with them. He’s seeing if he can restore them.”

“What?”

Aiden nodded. "I know. It's hard to fathom."

"You think someone we know killed Selene?"

With a sigh, Aiden nodded again.

"Someone who knows the layout of the Pack House. Who would know how to access the security footage. I mean, it's older tech. Josh is pissed. Thinks we should have updated it a long time ago."



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"But like the rest of our security, we just didn't make it a priority."

Aiden squeezed me. "Sienna, it's as much my fault as anyone's. I got complacent."

I looked into his eyes. "We have to find who did this."

His eyebrows drew together as he met my gaze. "We will. I promise, Sienna. I'll see to it myself. I'll find Selene's killer."

AIDEN

Together, Sienna and I shifted and ran back to our home.

Making good on my promise was priority

number one. And not just for Sienna, for myself.

I had loved Selene like a sister. Sienna's family was my own, now. To lose Selene meant devastation to *my* family.

Someone was going to pay.

I spent the afternoon and evening looking after Sienna and Rowan, giving Josh time to work with the security footage.

First thing in the morning, I sought him out at the Pack House.

His appearance shocked me.



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It had been less than forty-eight hours since Selene's death, but Josh's skin had a grayish cast, and he looked exhausted.

His eyes had dark circles under them, and he hadn't shaved.

Do I look like such a wreck?

Probably inevitable.

"Hey, man," I said as I approached his desk, where he sat, staring at his computer. "Are you alright?"

Josh's eyes flicked to me but returned right away to the computer.

"Yeah," he said. "I'm fine. I just... I haven't slept since... you know..."

I came around to look over his shoulder. He had several windows of footage open, playing over and over in loops.

The foyer and main hallway of the Pack House.

The high-windowed gallery that led to the terrace.

The terrace itself.



Each scene had time stamps running, skipping ahead by several minutes, then resetting.

"They just clipped a piece out of each of these," he said by way of explanation.

It was much the same as what he'd shown me yesterday, although at that time he hadn't taken the clips out separately yet.

"Can you restore what was removed?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I've tried every way I

can think of. They're just fucked."

"Did you compile a list of people with access to the footage?"

"Yes, but it's so long it's useless," Josh said, running his hands through his hair.

He tapped the mouse, and a document opened. There were well over a dozen names, including mine and Josh's own. He was right. Too many people had access.

With a groan, I pushed away from his desk, pacing a few feet off.

"This is why I kept pushing you about tightening security," Josh said.



I glanced at him but let the comment slide. I understood his frustration, and I did blame myself. But none of us could have seen this threat coming.

It's so unbelievable.

How can some murderer have killed Selene right here? In the Pack House?

No one saw.

No one was here to stop them.

“What I don’t understand,” I said, “is who would want to hurt Selene? I can’t think of anyone who had a problem with her.”

“I know,” Josh agreed. “A professional rival, maybe?”

“Is anyone that cutthroat in the fashion industry?”

Josh shrugged. “Michelle thinks so.”

“That doesn’t explain how they would have had access to the Pack House security footage.”

“Maybe they paid someone.”



I came over and looked at the list on his screen again. Plenty of lower level pack employees. All of whom I would have sworn were trustworthy two days ago.

But now?

A knock interrupted my ruminations.

It was Robert, Selene’s father.

I clenched my jaw, unsure of what to expect.

He looked worse than Josh—face ravaged

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with grief, clothing rumpled like he hadn't changed them in two days, blond hair uncombed.

"Excuse me," he said. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I think I found something. I don't know if it's useful, but I thought it best to show you."

Josh and I exchanged a glance, and I hurried to Robert's side, ushering him in and offering him one of the Navaho print chairs that faced Josh's desk.

"What did you find?" I asked.

Robert sat heavily, then began fumbling in pocket of his tan jacket.



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"I went to Selene and Jeremy's house for supplies for the kids," he explained. "I saw Jeremy's phone charging."

He grimaced a little, then. "I—I wanted to see if Selene had texted him anything. I wasn't really thinking. I just—I hoped for anything, really. Just a love note, even. Something of hers."

"Did anyone find Selene's phone on her body?" I asked, then flinched at my bluntness in front of her father.

I frowned, but not at his indiscretion.

Josh shook his head. "No one said anything about it."

"I'll have to follow up with Jocelyn," I said.
"Maybe she has it."

I can't believe I just now thought of this.

This situation is messing with my head more than I realized.

I'm too close to it.

I would probably have to turn it all over to my Hunter Pack.



I need people with distance on the case.

I hated to do it. I wanted to handle it all myself, only extending responsibility to Josh.

But looking at him, his disheveled appearance, it was obvious he was too close to the matter, too.

"What did you find?" Josh prompted Robert.

Robert pulled a cell phone out of his pocket, then.

"She did send him a text. Just one. Not long

at all before she died, from what I can tell.”

Robert held up the phone for us to see.

It showed only one word.

Selene

Robin

I didn't have time to wonder aloud about the text's significance, however.

The next thing I knew, I heard the high voice of my assistant, Helena, followed by Rhys's baritone.

Both sounded stressed.



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The door of Josh's office burst open.

A man walked in—human, by the smell, and a drinker at that—dressed in a distressed brown leather jacket. He was flanked by my distraught assistant and treasurer.

“I *told* you, sir, you can't just barge in here!” Helena exclaimed.

Her face was flaming red as the man came to a stop just inside the door.

He looked around, taking in the office.

I studied him as *he* studied Josh's western-inspired decor.

He was probably in his early forties.

His hair was a tidy crewcut, and he had a five o'clock shadow on his jaw. He wore a collared utility shirt under the leather jacket, over scuffed jeans, with work boots.

He surveyed the room with a detached air of calm cynicism.

His smell had a sour tinge to it.

This was a human who liked hard liquor, but it was plain to see he was perfectly sober right now.

His sharp eyes moved over Josh, then Robert, then me.

"I'm really sorry about this, Alpha," Helena said.

I waved away her concern. "That's fine, Helena. Rhys, take a ten-minute shift at the phones and give Helena some time to wind down from this... encounter."

The two of them left.

I turned to the human.



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“You always barge in, ignoring the norms of an organization?” I asked him.

As a response, he pulled a wallet from the front right pocket of his trousers and held it open, revealing a badge and ID.

Shit.

“Special Agent Anthony Enzo, Territorial Investigations Bureau,” the human said.
“I’m here about the murder of Selene Gibbs. I’ll be taking over the investigation.”