

## Chapter 24

Elena

“Here’s the last bag,” Axton says, holding it out to me. I take it from him, placing it in the trunk while he says goodbye to the boys. Shutting the trunk, I walk around to the driver’s side. We spent all day going over the evidence and unfortunately, it appears Marco and Axton are right, and it is a strigoi or some form of hybrid. But its ability to come and go without being seen or caught is quite distressing. We are still no closer to figuring out who it is.

Axton quickly kisses the boys' little heads, who are munching happily on their bottles. He shuts the door and sighs.

“I wish you would stay here.”

“I’ll see if Marco will lift the ban. I will appeal to the council for you tonight so you can leave the city.”

Axton nods once, and I go to hop in the car when he grabs the door, a devious smile on his lips. I raise an eyebrow at him, eager to get home and check on the women when I hear a car engine. Turning my head, I see the same car from yesterday.

“That’s the same car I saw yesterday,” I mutter and Axton looks over at it, but it pulls into his driveway and then turns around.

“As I said, they always turn around here, so you should get home before it gets dark. I glance down the driveway one last time, shaking the odd feeling that I got away, turning back to hop in the car. Axton is still standing in my way.

“What are you—” His lips cut my words off as he grabs me, pushing me against the door of the car; the bond flares to life instantly and I kiss him back despite Lexa telling me we have to get home. When he eventually pulls away, I am breathless. “It’s the bond!” He shrugs with a silly smile on his face.

“Sure, it is,” I tell him, shaking my head. Axton steps aside and I climb into the car.

“Make sure you message me when you get home.”

Nodding my head, I shut the door and start the car, Axton walks inside and I can't help the silly smile splitting onto my face. Reversing out, I pull onto the road, suddenly feeling sick at the idea of leaving him making me stop.

“We have to get home,” Lexa reminds me, but the bond was screaming for me to stay.

“Elena!” Lexa growls at me. Ignoring the feeling, I start driving, yet when I am coming out of Axton's territory, the feeling gets ten times worse.

“We need to get home so we can take those damn pills; I don't like this, Elena!” Lexa scolds me and I shove her back, yet as we head toward the borders leading out of the city, I see that car again. I watch it stop at the lights two cars ahead of me and a shiver runs up my spine.

“All this strigoi stuff has got you spooked. It's a common car!” Lexa reminds me.

Crossing over to the border station, I sigh when I see it turn off down a side street. I stop at the barricades, and grab my ID, handing it to the man before he lifts the boom gate and lets me leave. Halfway home, the boys fall asleep and I turn the music playing down and turn the AC up. However, while fiddling with it, my eye catches the rearview mirror and my heart nearly stops in my chest when I see that car behind me.

“Lexa!” I hiss and she comes forward, peering out my eyes; I keep my eyes on the road and the cars in front start to brake, slowing down for the intersection after my turnoff. “It's a common car, Elena.” She tells me, yet I'm sure it is the same one.

We continue driving and I can see our turnoff coming. I slow down when the strange car suddenly overtakes heading toward the town.

“See?” Lexa says and I nod, feeling foolish as I turn onto the dirt road. Once home, I finally relax as I pull up at the driveway until I spot Eli leaning against the fence post. His clothes all wrinkled and his chin is resting on his chest. I stop and roll my window down.

“Is he asleep?” Lexa asks.

“Eli!” I call out and he jumps before clutching his heart when he notices it is me.

“Geez Luna, are you trying to give me a heart attack?” he chuckles.

“Why are you still here?” I question, Axton was supposed to swap the patrols over to give them a break.

“Double shift, while we wait for Axton to find more warriors.” I shake my head.

“You need sleep!”

“I’m fine, though some of the others are feeling it. Slater hasn’t slept in three days running purely off adrenaline and caffeine.” he shrugs then yawns.

I grit my teeth and shake my head. “I’ll handle it. Go home, Eli.”

“No can do until Axton gives the order,” he tells me. Shaking my head, I wind the window up and continue up the driveway, parking out the front of the house. The moment I pull up, I leave the car running for AC and grab my phone from my handbag. Axton answers after only two rings.

“Your home?” he asks immediately.

“Yes, but your men are falling asleep. Order them home until you find others to take over. Eli was asleep leaning against the front gate!”

“I can’t for a few more hours; I just pulled a heap from the borders that were dropping.”

“Order them home. We can run patrols for a few hours, Axton. They’re no good to us asleep!” I tell him and he falls quiet.

“Axton!”

“Fine, fine. I will order them to go home. The next rotation starts at 9 PM. Can you wait till then?”

“Yes, we’ll be fine. Order them home.” I tell him before hanging up annoyed. We were perfectly capable of doing patrols.

Climbing out of the car, I see Michelle and Noleen rush over from the barn to help get everything out of the car. Grabbing the boys, they both wake and I juggle them in my arms when the front door opens and I see my mother in her robe and slippers, her hair a mess and she looks exhausted...

She looks like she spent all night crying but rushes to help me by taking Kyan. Climbing the last few steps, I find Sondra sitting in her rocking chair, staring out at the fields.

“She needs to tell us the truth.” Lexa tells me and I nod my head in agreement.

When I stop, she turns her head to look at me and sighs. “Spit it out,” she says and my mother stops.

“I know about Floyd,” I tell her, gauging her reaction, and she purses her lips and nods her head once, her features turning stern like she knew this was coming and was just waiting for me to figure it out.

“Sondra!” I call out to her and she stares at the women working the fields and tending to the vegetable’s patches. “You and I need to talk.”

“You figured it out.” she states and reaches for her tea.

“No but I know you’re hiding something; I know what Floyd was.”

Sondra watches me over the rim of her mug, takes a sip before lifting her head and turning her head back to watch the women. “Settle the boys first.” she says.

“So, Axton is right?” I question, and I could see my mother staring at me, confused.

“Settle the boys, then I’ll tell you about Floyd.” She says then takes another sip of her tea, she sets the cup back down on the small table and looks at me leaning back in her chair.

“And I’ll tell you why I killed him.” she turns her gaze away and I look at my mother who holds the same shock on her face that I feel.

Of all the answers I was waiting for, that was not one I was expecting. My mother gasps, and I swallow but quickly nod my head.