

Chapter 6

Elena

After picking up Sondra's pain medication, I race home to my sons. The women are out working the ranch, tending to the animals or picking fruit and vegetables from the fields. It's hard to wrap my head around the knowledge that we've created this peaceful little piece of tranquility out here. It was once a rundown ranch, the fields of vegetation dying out, the cattle not being tended to the way they needed. The main house has since received an uplift and everything is now flourishing out here.

Pulling up, Sondra is waiting on the porch in her rocking chair, my mother staring at her worriedly, which makes my brows furrow in confusion as I climb out of the car. Luke is up the side of the house, chucking wood into a wheelbarrow to take to the women and inside the packhouse.

"Hey, El," Luke calls out, and I give him a brief wave before climbing the few steps to my mother.

"What's wrong?" I ask my mother, nervously glancing at Sondra. She frowns. Worry is etched into her facial features, and I wander over to Sondra. Her eyes are closed, and her face is peacefully relaxed. Just as my hand reaches out to touch her to ensure she is breathing, she speaks, scaring the living daylights out of me.

"I know you weren't about to check if I was breathing. If I am dying, it will be dramatic and preferably with your father's head resting in my lap as I croak my last breath."

"Gees, Sondra, did you have to play dead right until I touched you?"

"You were the one going to poke the dead if I was. Serves you right to sneak up on an old woman like that!" She smiles, opening her eyes, yet I can see the pain pooling in their depths. Her eyes don't crinkle in the same way. They're also a little glassy, making me wonder if that is why she had them closed, not wanting my mother to see how watery they are.

“You old bat, I have been watching you for the past ten minutes and not one word, not even when I called out to you!” my mother scolds her.

“Aren’t you werewolves supposed to have good hearing? Can’t you hear my old ticker pumping the blood through my body? I may look as if I have one foot in the grave, but I can assure you, dear, I still have outstanding balance. I won’t be tipping over that edge to the afterlife quite yet,” Sondra retorts.

I smirk and shake my head, turning to look at my mother, who throws her hands up in frustration before stalking back into the house. “Kinda creepy, the way your mother watches me while I am resting, like she was waiting for a new wrinkle to appear,” Sondra huffs, reaching for the paper bag in my hand, and I pull it away.

“You scared her.”

“I scare many people, though no one here needs to fear me. I owe these women for my past failures. I’m the last person they need to fear,” she states. My brows furrow, wondering what she means. Sondra owes us nothing. We all owe her. So, I don’t know why she would think she owes any of us.

“Care to tell me what you mean?” I ask her.

Sondra tilts her head to the side, looking at me. “We all make mistakes. Some are just bigger than others, some are redeemable, and some aren’t. I just hope I have done enough when the day comes, and I finally meet my maker.” She states, looking out at the women working, a sad smile pulls at her lips.

“What could you have possibly done that needs redeeming?” I ask her.

“Countless things, things I am not proud of. I should have spoken up, maybe then there wouldn’t be all this mess. Fear makes people react differently. I was scared then. But I’m not now.”

“Sondra, are you alright?” I ask her, beginning to worry. She rarely talks like this, yet when she does, she gets in these weird moods.

Sondra sighs, turning her attention back to me. “Promise me that when you take down your father. You make sure he hurts. I want him to hurt the same way he hurt all of you.”

“My father? Sondra, what is going on?”

“Nothing you need to worry about now. But I know that monster, just like I know your mate. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree with that one, but I’m glad to see you aren’t made from the same roots your father is.”

Her words confuse me, and I want to ask more when she points to the pills in my hand.

“I have said enough for now. You have places to be and people to destroy. Don’t feel guilty for ruining them. I can assure you, Elena, that those you destroy deserve it.”

She takes her pills from my hand before I take them back from her when she fumbles to pop them from the foil covering. I hand her two, and she raises a very thin brow at me.

“You’re only allowed two,” I tell her, checking the packet.

“Those doctors are all quacks. Besides, they’re weak as shit,” she says, clicking her fingers at me.

I sigh and roll my eyes, popping another out and handing it to her. “No more, you’ll be high as a kite,” I tell her.

She narrows her eyes at me, but relents when she realizes I wasn’t giving her anymore. “Spoil my fun then.” She huffs, reaching for her tea. I watch as she chews her tablets before swallowing a mouthful of tea.

“Don’t you have to take the boys back to your mate for his weekend visit? Why are you loitering? I can ward off the grim reaper myself, stop fussing and get ready.” she waves me off dismissively. I turn to head inside.

“And tell your mother if I catch her holding a mirror below my nose again, I will whack her with it. I don’t enjoy holding my breath. It’s short these days.” She huffs.

“And you wonder why she was watching you?” I retort. Sondra smiles wickedly. The crazy old lady I love returning.

“Well, she thought I was dead. Figured I would act the part.” She chuckles, and I laugh, walking inside to check on the boys.

As I double-check their diaper bag, ensuring they have every little thing they could need, my anxiety reaches an entirely new magnitude. Lexa ripples beneath my skin nervously, not liking what we are about to do, but also understanding it is necessary.

“Why don’t you stay in the city for the night? That way you’re close, and it may help your anxiety?” my mother suggests.

“And stay where, at one of his hotels, or should I ask dad if I can sleep at home?” I snap at her without meaning to. My anxiety comes off in waves of anger and for the past hour, anyone who has crossed my path has copped a mouthful of my snappy mood.

“We can manage a few nights without you; besides you need to reclaim your old pack back. Why not work from the city? The council chambers are right there, which is where you need to be to get whatever it is you’re looking for. We can manage; we did for years,” Noleen tells me.

“Doesn’t matter where I am. It’s them being in his care that has me nervous.”

“More reason to stay in the city!” Michelle adds, and I roll my eyes, scooping Bane out of his rocker while my mother grabs Kyan. She follows me out to the car, and I buckle them into their car seats and toss the diaper bag onto the passenger seat.