

## Chapter 70

Even when her brother breaks down and sobs, Elena remains standing tall and dignified. Her hand grasps his shoulder as she tugs him closer. She turns, leading him to his seat. Elena's face is expressionless. Her face is a mask of stoicism as she keeps her emotions in check. Despite the tears threatening to spill, her jaw is set in determination, and her gaze is distant, as if she is looking far away from the present moment.

I know what she is doing. She is placing her own emotions on the back burner in order to remain present for her family and pack. She remains composed and gives her brother the support he needs at this time while neglecting that she needs it herself.

It is almost impossible to believe that it has already been a week since the explosion. As I look around the room that is filling with our packs and friends, the sadness of who everyone has lost begins to sink in a little deeper. Even though they're gone, their memory lives on in all our hearts—a reminder of what Louise had done for her children. Even in death, she still managed to bless us with her love, leaving behind her daughter and my sons, whom I will cherish forever.

I take a deep breath and try my best to compose myself as more family and friends arrive. Everyone is quiet in reflection as they embrace Elena, offering their condolences.

Just like the past week, she slips effortlessly into a facade of being okay, when I know she is anything but. I notice how her hands shake, and how she tries her best to steady them when someone speaks, telling those present to switch their phones off and take a seat or stand where they're out of the way in aisles.

The service begins, and I can feel my heart break as I watch Elena struggle with her emotions. There is no doubt that this loss has changed our lives forever.

I step forward and wrap my arms around her in a tight embrace, feeling the tremors of emotion that ripple through her body as the last of our guests enter.

The service is a solemn reminder of how fragile life can be, and how quickly it can all change. With tear-filled eyes, we say goodbye to an amazing woman who will remain in our hearts forever. Louise sacrificed her life to save her kids and grandkids. And lastly, Derrick, who caused a mix of emotions amongst everyone by the looks on their faces, yet no one stood up and gave a speech for him when the woman waits with the microphone in her hand, looking expectantly at the crowd.

When I see Elena's head turn to look for someone with a friendly face for Derrick, I watch her swallow and glance at Luke. No one rises to give a eulogy for Derrick, and I know Elena didn't have one planned, so I am surprised when once again Elena rises. Murmurs break out as they wait for her anger or heartache, but Elena is a pillar of strength as she takes the podium and speaks for the one man no one dared to.

"I know most of you expect me to get up here and condemn my father for his actions, condemn him for being a terrible Alpha. But I can't do that and I won't. Despite his flaws, he was still my dad. So, I won't speak of his mistakes because we've all made those. We just haven't carried them to our graves yet; we still have time to redeem ourselves for our failures. He wasn't given that. So, I will not speak of the man, but I will speak for my father,"

Luke lifts his head beside me, staring at his sister, waiting to hear what she has to say. Leaning over a little I squeeze his shoulder.

"Growing up, he was a good father, at least to Luke and me, for the most part. Growing up as the alpha's daughter came with great responsibility, but it also came with great pride. The love and care he showed us can never be taken away or erased.

So today, I will honor my father and his legacy. He may have been a sinner in the eyes of some, but in mine. He'll always be the man I grew up believing was bigger than life, someone to look up to and who loved his kids and his pack.

He was the one who taught me how to hunt and how to survive without modern conveniences. My father made sure I understood our pack laws, our rituals, and traditions before I could walk. He taught me leadership skills from a young age.

He taught me how to ride a bike, how to drive, fight and hunt, and he made me into an Alpha despite never giving me the title. I had to fight for it. That's what he taught me. He brought me up in his image, and although his character has not, as of recently, been painted in a good light, he'll always be an Alpha, that is a title no one can take from him, yet the least important title he held. His greatest title will be that he was once a great father and that I will always be daddy's little girl. And Luke will always be daddy's little Alpha."

I look at Luke, who has tears in his eyes, and know that he is thinking about all their memories together with their father. I know she did it for Luke, but I also know she believed the words she spoke.

As the service ends, I squeeze Elena's shoulder and offer her a small smile; she nods once and after the coffins are walked out; I take Elena's hand as we walk out of the funeral home with Luke when I spot Michelle with the stroller; the boys tucked inside.

"Did you get it?" Elena asks Michelle and my brows furrow.

"Elena, we should—" Elena dismisses her with a wave of her hand, and Michelle reluctantly looks beneath the stroller, pulling out some folders. I peer over Elena's shoulder as she takes them, flipping them open.

"What's this?" I ask.

"Pack lists. I need to organize housing. There still isn't enough room at your apartment building." I almost groan. Can't she take a day off?

"Elena, I'm sure that can wait," I tell her, but she shakes her head and walks off. I sigh, looking at Michelle, who watches her nervously.

I follow her as she reaches the car, opening the trunk and back doors to put the boys in. I grip her shoulder.

"Are you okay?" I whisper, looking into her eyes, yet her jaw clenches, and she swallows, pulling her gaze from mine.

"I'm here for you if you need anything," I whisper softly as Elena slowly turns to face me. She nods, her eyes void of all emotion, but despite everything, she manages a small smile that I know is fake.

"I'm fine," is all she says, but I know she's not. Despite Khan's protests, I don't press the matter. Instead, I help her get the boys in the car.

"You need to do something!" Khan snarls angrily at me, and I am beginning to think he is right. She keeps going like this. She'll burn out.