

## Chapter 74

Elena

Axton and I spent the night watching movies, or I did because he fell asleep about twenty minutes in. I have been listening to him snore quietly ever since. Flipping my pillow over, I try to get comfy. However, my mind is on what Marco had said earlier about us being suspected of for my parents' murder when, in fact, it was a murder-suicide. One done out of my mother's love for us, but I now wonder if it was also to put herself out of her own misery of living with a broken mate bond. I can't imagine that torture.

My mind doesn't want to switch off, conjuring up every scenario from the past couple of days. How rapidly our lives have changed. I can't remember how we got here. How did our lives get to this point? It seems more like I am thinking of someone else's memories, not mine. Or maybe I am still in shock and grief that is making me feel like an outsider in my own life. I want to find a way to make sense of the chaos, but it feels like I am grasping at straws. I feel like I have been living in a parallel universe with no control over my life. I just want to go back to the way things were. The way things were when our lives weren't so broken. So once again, in the dead of night, sleep eludes me.

My mind keeps churning, working in overdrive, and my body refuses to rest. I can't shake the feeling of restlessness that keeps me awake, and I know I need to find something to occupy myself.

My thoughts fixate on the files Marco left for me at the council chambers. It is almost as if they hold the answers to all of our problems, and I need to find a way to access them. I won't be able to rest until I have those files. As I sit up in bed, my eyes adjust to the darkness, I know I have to go get them.

So, I slip out of bed, being extra mindful not to wake Axton, who always seems to have a way of sensing when I am up to something.

The only problem is they are sitting untouched in my filing box at the council chambers. With a sense of guilt, I get dressed as quietly as possible, not wanting to

wake Axton. He stirs but rolls over, blissfully unaware of my escape. I tiptoe to the closet, and grab some clothes. I grab a pair of dark jeans, a black sweater, and a pair of black tennis shoes. Glancing over my shoulder toward the bed, I quickly dress and grab my keys from the bedside table before heading out the door.

Guilt washes over me as I sneak out of the house, but my need for answers outweighs everything else. The night air is cool and crisp as I step out of the house, the moon casting its pale light over the world around me. I gently pull the door closed and rush to my car. Putting the car in neutral, I let the car roll down the driveway and onto the street. With one last parting glance at the house, I start the car. He won't even realize I left, and it is like a ten-minute drive.

I move quietly through familiar streets. The city streets are eerily still and silent, the darkness only illuminated by the occasional streetlight. I can feel the tension in the air, and I feel a chill run down my spine as I drive. The streets are coated in a thick layer of fog and I can barely see the white lines on the road and the outlines of the surrounding buildings.

The quietness of the city is unnerving, making my senses on high alert as I near my destination.

"It's the curfew, remember? The entire city has a curfew now. You're freaking out for nothing," Lexa reminds me and I exhale, having forgotten all about the city being on lockdown during the night. A guilty feeling still nags at me, knowing I am sneaking around at this hour knowing I am violating my mate's rules for the city, but my curiosity got the best of me.

Pulling up at the council chambers, the gates are open. "Crap, Soyer must have forgotten to close them," I curse and Lexa grumbles in my head, but it saves me from unlocking them. Upon pulling into the parking lot, I find it deserted. No cars in sight. I turn the car off and reach into my purse, which I left in the car. I rummage through it, looking for my keys and pass card for the security doors inside. Finding them, I shove my door open and climb out.

The council chambers at night are hauntingly eerie. The only sound is the occasional wind gust through the deserted parking lot. The darkness of the night is only broken by pale moonlight. The fog seems to add to the sense of dread as I look up at the huge building cast in shadow by the skyscrapers surrounding it. As I approach the council chambers, the shadows in the windows seem to come alive. I know it is just my paranoia, and Lexa has a fun time making fun of me as I make my way to the huge doors.

I place my key in the panel and the sliding doors open. I rush inside to the alarms and flip open the box to turn the alarms off; however, when I look at the panel, I notice they already are off.

“Gee, I know Marco was in a rush, but damn, this is just plain careless,” Lexa mutters to me.

Closing the alarm panel, I move to the next set of doors and unlock them with my card. I push through the turnstiles and head toward the filing room, turning lights on as I pass.

Once again, I use my card to open the door and flick the lights on. They flicker and buzz before turning on and illuminating the place. Rows of hardwired cabinets line this room. Each pack has its own row. Mine is at the back by the far window covered in steel bars. I wander toward the back, where my filing cabinet and postal box are.

I set my bag on the desk in the far corner near my filing cabinet. I slide my card through the swipe code, it turns green and opens the door for me to slide out and rummage through. I find the envelope sitting at the top and grab it out. Shutting it with my hip, the cabinet pings telling me it's locked, and I wander to the desk to check everything is here when suddenly the lights go out.

The room is plunged into darkness, and I stare at the ceiling and instantly reach for the lamp on the desk. It doesn't turn on. "Well, duh. The power is out!" Lexa tells me and I groan at my stupidity.

"Just grab it and let's go," Lexa tells me. My eyes adjust to the darkness and I move back to my purse, cramming the file into it. I pull the strap over my shoulder when I notice the parking lot lights are still on. "Aren't the city lights on a different grid?" Lexa asks. "Maybe," I offer when I notice two cars in the rear parking lot through the steel bars.

"Wait, aren't those Soyer's and Cane's cars?" Lexa asks as I peer out into the eerie, foggy parking lot. I lean closer peering out the window. "Maybe they walked to the club across the road and caught a taxi home," I mumble to myself. Shaking my head, I turn around, head down rummaging at the bottom of my bag for my keys. However, I walk into a wall. I stagger back, when a set of hands grip my arms. A growl tears out of me and I lift my gaze, finding Alpha Cane. I exhale a breath of relief.

"Geez, Cane." I slap his arm trying to catch my breath after the fright he just gave me. "You nearly gave me a heart attack." I laughed aloud. He stares at me, and I wonder if he is drunk.

"Did you come to collect your car? Is Soyer with you? Make sure you lock the gates on your way out," I remind him, about to step past him when he steps in my path. I look up at the man. He watches me with cold eyes that seem vastly different. It takes me a second to figure out why, the whites of his eyes are red. I squint at him. "Cane, are you alright?" I ask him. While Lexa presses anxiously against my skin, a shiver runs down my spine and dread pools in my stomach. His aura feels off. Different.

"I actually liked you," Cane tells me, speaking slowly.

"Pardon?" I ask, confused.

"But you just had to snoop, couldn't leave things be." He snarls. The next minute, I see his fist fly toward my face. Everything happens so fast that I didn't expect it. His fist connects with the side of my head so hard I see literal stars. With more force than that of any werewolf I've encountered.

Darkness swallows me seconds before I hit the ground, my ears ring loudly, and my head seems to have developed its own heartbeat as it throbs violently. Footsteps barely reach my ears, and I try to remember what is going on. Am I dreaming?

"It didn't have to be this way; I never asked for this. But you forced my hand!" Comes an angry voice when suddenly I feel, hear, and see nothing.