

## Chapter 8

“That is not what I am offering!” I growl, pulling my keys from the ignition. I should go home. This wasn't my plan.

“Why are you still hesitating?” Axton questions.

“Because my pack is without an alpha if I stay,” I tell him, the words leaving my lips taste bitter, knowing I should be home by now.

“I sent Eli and a few of my men to patrol your borders already, so please tell Sondra not to shoot them!”

“You did?”

“I won't leave your pack defenseless, Elena, so yes. I knew you wouldn't be able to stay away for long. You'd fret for them. They are still under one. All she-wolves fret for their young, especially when you are breastfeeding.” I chew my lip when another thought occurs to me. If Eli isn't here, that means we would be in his house alone unless he has a nanny to help with the boys.

“Wait, if Eli is gone, who is inside with the boys?”

“They're asleep, and I'm just meters from the door. They are perfectly fine and safe tucked in their crib.”

“How would you know that when you're out here?” I snap at him, climbing out of the car, and he rolls his eyes at me before reaching into his back pocket. He holds up a baby monitor with a little screen. Showing the boys sleeping together in their crib.

“See, now you know your pack is safe; the boys are safe. Can we go inside?” I look at the huge house when Axton snatches my keys and slams my door shut. He hits the fob, locking it.

"Come in or sit in the rain," he says, heading towards the front door. I growl, marching after him.

I am as drenched as he is by the time I reach the door. The rain outside intensified, seemingly eager to wash me away. Yet, stepping inside the packhouse, it is toasty and warm. Axton heads for the stairs, and I close the door, staring at the lock before shaking my head and locking it. It's not like he can order me.

"I can, but I won't," Axton answers, reminding me once again just how much stronger the bond is for him. It won't be long before he can hear my thoughts, as if they're his own at this rate.

"Not quite hear them unless you mark me, more of a sense of them like they are mine." Axton shrugs. Wow, the invasion of privacy just climbed higher on the ladder of creepiness.

"Coffee?" Axton asks. And I nod, following him upstairs to the kitchen when he stops by the linen cupboard. He pulls a towel out, handing it to me before speaking again.

"It's only because I spent so much time around you today. Once you go back home, don't worry. It will be like starting over with the bond." His words offer me little comfort. Yet, I could see what he said bothered him.

"Are you seriously that uncomfortable being here by yourself with me?" he asks.

"Last time we were by ourselves, you had me locked in that prison apartment. The time before that, you knocked me up. So sorry if I don't exactly trust being on my own around you." I retort.

"I can keep my hands to myself. I'm not Jake. I'm not going to rape you, Elena." Axton growls, his eyes flicker, and that is the first time he acknowledged what happened with Jake wasn't by my choice. He walks into the kitchen, and I follow, drying myself the best I can with the towel.

"You're safe with me. Even if you don't want to believe it because you hate me, that doesn't mean I would do what he did?" he growls, reaching for the mugs off the shelf.

"Because locking me up was so much better. And nothing like what he did," I reply sarcastically.

"I would never force myself on you, despite what I've said in the past, Elena."

"Are you sure? Because you wanted to lock me in your basement earlier?" I retort.

“Doesn’t mean I would rape you, kidnap you, yes. But I won’t force myself on you. Besides, you’ll come to me soon enough anyway when you go into heat.” Axton laughs.

“Wow, how romantic? He’ll kidnap us but not rape us. Oh, I’m glad he draws the line somewhere!” Lexa huffs.

“I have suppressants. My mother got them for me.” I admit while ignoring Lexa, not wanting to think too hard about the fact I just locked myself in a house with him.

“You’re not taking them.” Axton shoots me a glare, and I scoff at him.

“I mean it, Elena, those things are dangerous. You deny your heat too long when you do finally go into heat. It can kill you!” he snaps at me.

“Wait, have you already gone into heat?” he asks, and I roll my eyes.

No, I haven't needed to take them yet. She only got them for me today while I was at the council. She and Michelle went with the boys.” Axton lets out a breath.

“Good, don’t take them. You don’t need to.”

“I am not having sex with you!”

“Why not? It’s not worth risking your damn life, Elena. And it’s not like we haven’t fucked before.”

“I’m not risking my life, Axton. They’re perfectly safe, or they wouldn’t sell them.” I shake my head.

“Yeah, if you’re mated to a common wolf. We are both alphas. Your heat will be intensified tenfold. The pills will be lethal if you reject the bond for too long. I get you don’t want to complete the bond. I am not asking you to mark me; I’m just asking you not to risk your damn life when I’m right here!” he snaps, handing me my coffee.

“And if you reject me,” he starts to threaten.

“Let me guess, your basement has my name on it?” I retort. He smirks.

“I rather you in my bed than in my basement, but if you reject me, I may just have to move my bed down there,” he chuckles.

I say nothing, not wanting to argue over something that hasn't even happened yet, nor will I allow it to happen. I follow him upstairs to his room. He opens the door and wanders over to his bedside table, setting his mug down, before removing his drenched shirt and tossing it in the hamper. I watch him feeling awkward and out-of-place while also trying to keep my eyes off him; the bond urging me closer.

I can't help but admire the man, he has always been handsome, but now I can really look at him, my eyes roam over the hard muscles of his back when he turns drying his dark hair with a towel hanging from the hook by the bathroom door. My eyes trail down his body, taking in his tattoos that cover his left shoulder and part of his chest, down his abs, before dropping lower to a V-line that disappears into his jeans. Luckily, Lexa pulls and snaps me out of it.

"Are you trying to send us into heat? Stop gawking, pervert!" she snaps.

"I was only looking," I mumble.

"Look at the walls, the floor, the damn ceiling, just stop being a creep. It's bad enough we are in his room, his scent is driving me insane, and your wandering eyes are not helping!"

"Am I really being a creep though if he is technically ours?" she growls at me.

"Eyes to yourself!" she snaps when he looks up. His eyes take in my clothes and he nods toward the closet. "You can help yourself. Take what you want?" he says. My mind, when flooded with his scent, went instantly to the gutter, wanting to take something that involved removing my clothes, not putting any on while I devour his—I shake my head, coming to my senses.

"Elena! Don't make me come out there!" Lexa scolds. "Ceiling, floor!"

"There are extra towels in the bathroom. You remember where everything is?" I nod, watching him. Axton moves into his attached office, which has been turned into a nursery.

Seeing the boys, my anxiety instantly leaves and the mate bond fog fades into the background; both are snuggled up nice and cozy as Axton tucks the surrounding blanket around both, ensuring it is tight when he looks over at me.

"Thank you," he murmurs before looking back down at their sleeping faces. I swallow that strange feeling of guilt for keeping them away from him sweeps over me. After inspecting them, Axton exits the room, leaving the door slightly ajar.

“I will get you some clothes. You can do what you want. Why are you being awkward?” Axton questions while I watch him walk into the closet.

“Probably because she wants to have her damn way with you!” Lexa snarls at me.

“I do not.” She scoffs, and we argue. She is being ridiculous.

“One step into his room, and you suddenly turn brain-dead,” she yells at me. Axton clearing his throat makes me jump; I blink at him. He holds a shirt and sweatpants, smirking. He hands them to me. “Thanks,” I mutter, taking them. He chuckles, and I raise an eyebrow at him, watching as he grabs his own clothes.

Gosh, he has a nice ass.

“Thank you. I like yours, too,” Axton snickers. My face heats, and I instantly turn away, marching into the bathroom and shutting the door before I make a bigger fool of myself.