

Chapter 2 of Hunted Hybrid - Aegis War Saga 1 |

Elowen Skye Thorne POV

"Not slutty enough," Lyssira said in my head, her voice full of snark and mischief. "Try that one, the red one that screams breed me under the stars."

I rolled my eyes so hard it hurt and threw my phone down on the seat. I had been browsing dresses for my coming of age party, and Lyssi and I could NOT agree on what to go with.

"You are so dramatic."

"And you are so boring," she shot back, her tail swishing smugly in the back of my mind. "You turn eighteen in three days, El. The Moon Goddess could drop our mate right in front of us, and you wanna wear a beige sweater? BEIGE?"

Out loud, I huffed, flipping down the visor in the passenger seat of Taya's car to glare at my reflection. "It's not beige. It's...cream."

From the driver's seat, Taya Quinn cackled. "Girl, please. Lyssira's right. We're going for hot, not homeschool librarian. We need mated up energy, serve that snack platter, bitch!"

She swerved into the cracked lot of Silver Ridge, our pack's only real town center, hidden deep in the forest like a secret postcard from a forgotten world. If humans ever stumbled into this place, their minds would just... skip over it. Magic like that only costs blood, a blessing, and a whole lot of wolf politics.

Taya's purple Volkswagen bug screeched into a crooked parking space in front of Lune & Thread, the boutique run by a retired beta

named Marnie Vale. She was older, sharp-tongued, and used moon magic to make clothes that fit you like a damn dream. If anyone could make me look good enough to ignore my anxiety about this whole mate business, it was her.

Taya threw the car in park and grinned, snapping a selfie on her cracked phone. "Say howl, bitches!"

"Wait, my hair!"

Snap. Too late. She posted it to WolfNet with the caption:

"Bout to bless this town with our hotness. If you see us? No you didn't."

Tagged: @ElowenSkye

"Ugh," I muttered, grabbing my bag as we hopped out.

I glanced at the reflection in the boutique's glass window.

My skin was pale as moonlight. Hair long and black, glossy and straight, currently braided to keep it from getting tangled in the wind. My eyes were my curse and my favorite feature, bright blue, like stormy skies and secrets. I guess I loved my curves too. I hid them mostly, so no one knew how curvy I was.

Taya, on the other hand, was a whole walking firecracker. 5'3, thicker than a snickers, wild red curls, wearing ripped black leggings, combat boots covered in glitter, and a cropped hoodie that said Bite Me Harder. She was chaos incarnate. My chaos.

We stepped inside, and instantly the air smelled like sage, thread, and magic. Marnie, in a gorgeous floor length navy dress and silver wolf pendant belt, raised an eyebrow as we entered. Her white hair was tied into a loose braid, and her eyes were sharp enough to make grown alphas flinch.

"Elowen Thorne. About damn time you came to me. I was about to make a public post calling you a fashion disgrace."

Taya snorted. "Don't tempt her. She's already been fighting her wolf about how boring she dresses."

"Excuse me?" I said, offended. "I have taste!"

"You have trauma," Lyssira corrected in my head. "There's a difference."

I ignored her and turned toward the racks of enchanted dresses, my fingers trailing all of the soft fabric that shimmered faintly under the boutique's lantern light. The magic hummed beneath my skin, subtle and familiar. My wolf stirred, pleased.

Marnie waved her hand and a dozen dresses floated into the air. "Pick three. Try them on. If none of them make you feel like the sexiest moon blessed bitch in the room, we start over."

We emerged an hour later, exhausted and with three bags, two matching necklaces, and one very smug wolf in my head.

"She's finally getting it," Lyssira purred. "We're a catch. We need to look like one."

Taya slung her arm around my shoulder as we walked to the diner next door. "I'm starving. If I don't get a milkshake in my mouth right now, I'm going to eat someone's child."

I snorted, pushing open the door to The Hollow Spot, our local teen hangout. Booths, fairy lights, and enchanted menus that floated a few inches off the table. The smell of grease and fries hit me like a hug.

But then I saw them. Him. Daxon Stormclaw and his two douchebag besties. His future beta, Rylen, and future gamma, Jace..already seated near the back.

They looked up. Daxon's storm grey eyes met mine like he'd smelled something foul.The smirk that followed made my wolf bristle. He was tall, broad, every inch of him carved from stone and ego, and dark hair all messy like he styled it by punching a wall. Dressed in a black shirt and jeans, his pack crest tattoo peeked out from under his collarbone.

"Ladies," he said with that condescending smirk that made me want to stab him in the thigh.

"Cockroaches," Taya replied sweetly, flipping him off as we walked past.

Lyssira snarled in my head. "Why does he look like that today? Ugh, the audacity."

I gritted my teeth and kept walking. Daxon Stormclaw may have been the heir to the pack. But he was not the main character of this story.

I was.

We slid into our usual booth near the window, the cracked red vinyl squeaking under us. The diner's enchantments kept the warmth perfect no matter the season, and the table glowed faintly with silver runes that pulsed as we sat.

Before we could even grab the floating menus, our favorite waitress padded over.

Mina, a sweet omega wolf with soft golden curls and honey-brown eyes, offered a warm grin that made her feel like family, even if she was barely twenty and shy as hell. She wore a cropped tee with

Bite Me, I'm Sweet scrawled across the front and a sparkly moon pin on her apron.

"Hey girls," she said, bouncing on her feet just a little. "The usual?"

"Two burgers, extra fries," I said. "And two giant chocolate milkshakes with whipped cream and chocolate drizzle," Taya finished, kicking her heels under the table.

Mina giggled and jotted it down even though she knew damn well what we wanted. "You got it. Coming right up."

As she walked away, I leaned back and sighed. "I cannot believe you bullied me into that silver dress."

Taya wiggled her brows. "Bullied? Babe, that dress was made for you. It literally shimmered like it wanted to be worshipped."

Lyssira howled in agreement. "YESSS. You in that dress? You're gonna cause so many neck injuries."

I groaned, hiding my face in my hands. "It's so low cut. I feel like I'm one wrong move away from a wardrobe malfunction."

"Exactly," Taya said with zero shame. "El, your tits are legendary. And don't even get me started on that ass. The slit goes all the way up. If you don't find a mate in that dress, the Moon Goddess is slacking."

I snorted. "I'm not trying to find a mate. I'm trying to survive the damn ceremony without a panic attack."

"You can do both," Lyssi said smugly. "While looking like a moonlit snack."

Taya leaned in, her green eyes sparkling. "Besides, if I can rock a deep green backless number that shows off every freckle on my boobs, you can handle a little cleavage."

"Yours is amazing," I admitted, stealing a peek at her phone where she had the dress saved. The rich emerald green hugged her curves like it had a crush on her. With her wild red hair and vivid green eyes, she looked like walking sin.

"Damn right," she said proudly. "I'm gonna make my new crush pass out on sight."

I raised a brow. "Wait, new crush? You moved on from River the tattooed supply guy already?"

"Obviously. He didn't like dogs. Dogs, El. He said they drool too much. How the hell are you gonna hate dogs and try to date a wolf?"

"...Valid."

We both cracked up, just as Mina returned with a tray of heaven. Two plates stacked with double cheeseburgers, golden fries sprinkled with rosemary salt, and milkshakes so thick they bent the straws.

"Bless you," Taya whispered to Mina like she was a goddess. Mina laughed and disappeared toward the kitchen.

We dug in, and for a moment, everything was perfect. No full moons, no whispers, no "what ifs" about my lineage or magic or whatever the hell was wrong with me.

Just burgers, fries, and my chaotic best friend trying to find the love of her life between milkshakes and mood swings. Of course, that's exactly when Daxon fucking Stormclaw decided to walk by our table and smirk.

But that's fine. Because I looked hot. And I had fries.

And I'd made it three days from my birthday without stabbing him.

That's what we call progress.