

## Chapter 4 of Hunted Hybrid - Aegis War Saga 1 |

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### Daxon Stormclaw POV

"She's fuckin feral," Rylen muttered as we stepped into the cool night air, the door to The Hollow Spot swinging shut behind us.

"No," Jace added, licking salt off his fingers, "she's psychotic. That chick looked ready to rip Vaela's throat out with her teeth. Hot, but terrifying."

I didn't say anything. Mostly because my jaw was still clenched so tight it hurt. I kept seeing it. Her eyes. That flash of silver.

That raw, guttural snarl. Like it was coming from something ancient inside her, not just a wolf. And when I pulled her off Vaela, when she turned on me, baring her teeth, wild and furious, it felt like getting hit by lightning.

My wolf had jumped. Not like, "oh shit, fight incoming," more like... we know her.

But we don't. And we shouldn't.

"I've seen a lot of rage shifts," Rylen continued, clearly enjoying the drama. "But that? That was some next level divine wrath shit. Like... she had murder in her blood, bro."

"She didn't shift," I said quietly. They both stopped walking. Jace cocked his head. "What?"

"She didn't shift," I repeated. "No full transition. No fur. Just her. Her eyes changed, her voice dropped, and her energy went nuclear, but she didn't shift."

Rylen looked at me like I'd grown a second head. "Okay, but why are you noticing that?"

I ignored him. Because I didn't have an answer. Because my skin still burned where I touched her waist. Because I could still hear her snarl in my ears.

Because for a second, when our eyes locked...It didn't feel like I was restraining her. It felt like I was trying not to fall into her.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

"She's not even an alpha," I muttered. "She's just a... rogue case the Gamma couple took in after Caelan died."

Rylen raised a brow. "Dude. She just full body tackled your sister and almost took out a royal table. Pretty sure we can stop pretending she's a harmless omega."

"She won't submit," I snapped. "She never has. She's mouthy, stubborn, and always thinks she's smarter than everyone. She's not.."

"Y'know," Jace said, smirking, "you say a lot of words for someone who 'hates' her."

I glared. "I do hate her."

"Right. That's why your voice drops a whole octave when you say her name."

"I'm serious. She's always challenging me. She won't obey. She never flinches. She gets under my skin like a thorn that won't come out."

"Like a mate?" Rylen said casually. I stopped walking.

Both of them bumped into me from behind.

"Don't."

"C'mon, bro. It's not the worst thing in the world."

"She's not my mate," I growled. "If she were, I'd know."

Wouldn't I? Fated mates were rare and if I hadn't found her by now I likely wouldn't. There's no way. No possible way. I shook my head definitively. Nope.

My wolf was quiet. Too quiet. And suddenly, I hated the silence more than I hated her.

By the time we pulled into the Stormclaw estate..less "home" and more fortress with mood lighting..I was still chewing on the ghost of Elowen's snarl.

The whole damn drive, Rylen and Jace wouldn't shut up. "You should've let her finish choking Vaela," Jace said, cracking his knuckles as we walked through the carved obsidian front doors. "Would've been the most peaceful dinner this year."

"You say that like you wouldn't have pissed yourself," Rylen snorted.

"I would've clapped, actually."

"Both of you shut the hell up," I muttered, stepping into the grand hall. It was dark stone and silver chandeliers. Faint moonlight spilled in from the glass ceiling. My mother's touch was in every sleek surface, every expensive art piece no one understood.

And standing dead center under the spiral staircase, arms crossed, wearing a look that could freeze lava...was...Alpha King Draven Stormclaw.

My father. Of course.

"Boys," he said, his voice cold as iron. "Out."

Rylen and Jace didn't need to be told twice. They practically vanished, not even pretending to be subtle about it. I didn't move. Draven stepped forward slowly. No shouting. No drama.

Just presence. Alpha to the bone. And for once, he didn't look like he was ready to rip someone's throat out.

Yet.

"I got a call," he said quietly. "From Marnie. And Mina. And half the damn teenagers in town."

"Of course you did."

He narrowed his eyes. "You gonna tell me what the hell happened with Elowen Thorne... or do I need to pull it from your skull?"

I rolled my shoulders, my jaw tight. "She was provoked."

His brow lifted. "By?"

"Vaela."

A beat of silence.

"She spat a wad of chewed paper in Elowen's face," I added. "On purpose. In front of everyone."

He didn't react right away. Just let the words hang there. "And Elowen responded by...?"

"Launching herself over three booths and pinning Vaela to the ground."

Another pause. Then Draven exhaled through his nose. "Of course she did."

"She didn't shift," I added before I could stop myself. "But her eyes..her energy.."

I shook my head. "I've never felt anything like it."

He looked at me closely, studying my face like it held secrets I didn't know I had. Then he turned and walked toward the staircase.

"She needs to be reprimanded," I said, unsure why I felt the need to speak again. "We can't have wolves attacking royalty in public.."

"She's not just a wolf," he interrupted, pausing on the first step.

"What?"

Draven glanced over his shoulder. "She's Caelan's daughter. That means something. Even if the rest of the pack forgets, I won't."

I blinked. "That's not what I.."

"Vaela will be dealt with," he cut in. "Quietly. You don't need to worry about Elowen's punishment. Not this time." And just like that, he disappeared up the stairs, leaving me in the silence.

I stood there, fists clenched at my sides, not sure whether I was relieved or... something else. She wasn't just a wolf. No.

She was a fucking wildfire wrapped in skin and secrets. And I wasn't done with her.

Not even close.

### **Vaela Stormclaw POV**

I barely made it two steps into the manor before I heard it.

"Vaela. Now."

My stomach dropped. Draven's voice wasn't loud..but when my father spoke like that, it didn't matter how royal your blood was. You moved.

I sighed dramatically and tossed my hair over my shoulder, ignoring the sharp look from Soria at my side as I turned and strutted toward his office. "This better be fast," I muttered under my breath. "I still have to post my side of the story."

The door was open. The second I stepped inside, I realized I'd fucked up worse than I thought.

He was standing at the window, hands behind his back, shoulders stiff like a wolf on the edge of snapping. The moonlight made the silver in his hair shimmer...and for once, I wasn't charmed by it.

"Sit."

I sat. No princess tone. No "my beautiful daughter." Just command. Alpha to subordinate. And I hated it.

"I spoke with Daxon," he said, his voice calm in the most dangerous way. "He told me exactly what happened."

I crossed my arms. "And I'm sure he left out that she's a lunatic who.."

He turned. And the look in his eyes shut me the fuck up. "You assaulted the Beta's daughter."

"She's not even.."

"She is Caelan's daughter," he growled, slamming his fist onto the desk hard enough to make the wood groan. "And that means she's not just some she wolf. She's pack royalty in blood if not title, and you disgraced your position by acting like a petty child in public."

I flinched. I hated that I flinched. "She started it," I muttered, my voice tight. "She thinks she's better than everyone, and she's not."

"She's stronger than you."

That hit harder than a slap. I stared at him. "What did you just say?"

"You heard me," he said coldly. "She didn't shift. Didn't even blink. And still had you on the ground with one hand at your throat before anyone could react. That's alpha blood. That's discipline. That's power."

I gritted my teeth, nails digging into the armrest.

"She disrespected me!"

"And you embarrassed this family," he snapped. "This is not a debate, Vaela. It's a warning."

He leaned down slowly, his eyes burning into mine.

"If you ever pull a stunt like that again... if you ever put hands, or spitballs, on that girl again... I will make you regret it. Do you understand me?"

My pride screamed. My wolf snarled. But I nodded. "Yes, Father."

"Good," he said, already turning his back. "Now get out of my sight."

I stormed down the hall, my heels clicking hard against the polished stone, until I reached the top of the stairs.

Soria was waiting. When she saw my face, her lips curled into a cruel smile. "Let me guess. Daddy didn't like your performance."

"I hate her," I hissed. "He's defending her like she's one of us. Like she matters."

Soria leaned against the wall, arms crossed, her golden eyes gleaming in the dark. "He's wrong, you know. She's not stronger. She just caught you off guard."

I clenched my fists. "She's not even alpha."

"No," Soria said softly, "but she will be."

We stood there in silence for a moment, seething.

And then Soria leaned in, voice low and razor sharp as she grinned maniacally. "Let's make sure she never gets the chance."