

Chapter 6 of Hunted Hybrid - Aegis War Saga 1 |

Elowen POV

By the time lunch rolled around, I was so done with today that I could've thrown myself in front of the delivery truck bringing fresh venison to the cafeteria.

"Eyes forward," Taya muttered as we wove through the crowd toward the food line. "Ignore the whispers."

"I'm trying," I hissed back. "But they're not even whispering anymore."

We passed a table of juniors who all went suspiciously silent as we walked by, only to burst into giggles and mock howling as soon as my back was turned.

"I heard she tackled Vaela like a rabid omega." "Did you see the shirt?" "Bet she shifts with her tits out."

"Fucking charming," I muttered, grabbing a tray.

"High school wolves," Taya growled. "Nothing but hormones and half a brain."

We loaded up our plates at the build your own nacho bar, me with extra cheese and jalapeños, her with so much sour cream it looked like a snowstorm, and made our way to our usual table by the window. It wasn't private, but it was ours.

The moment I sat down, I felt Lyssira stir again. "They think we're weak," she rumbled. "Let me show them we're not."

I shoved a chip in my mouth to keep from snapping out loud. "You're not helping," I mumbled into my plate. Across from me, Taya raised a brow. "Still brooding?"

"She's pacing," I said. "She wants blood. I want nachos. We're working through it."

"Well, tell her to chill. It's lunch. No one ruins nachos on my watch." I smiled despite my frustration.

Taya took a dramatic bite of her tower of tortilla goodness. "Okay, so... aside from being pack gossip legend today, you mentioned something last night, the chest?"

I swallowed, the moment sobering me fast. "Yeah. Eron brought it up to my room. Said Caelan left it for me. I'm not allowed to open it until my birthday."

Taya's eyes lit up like it was Yule morning. "And it's sealed with magic?"

I nodded. "He said the Alpha King himself reinforced the lock."

"Holy shit, El," she whispered. "That's not just a keepsake box. That's like... plot twist in a box."

I glanced around the lunchroom. Eyes were still on me, whispers still circling like vultures.

"I don't know if I want a twist," I said quietly. "I just want to survive the ceremony without setting someone on fire."

Taya's smile softened. "You'll be okay. Whatever's in that chest...whatever your dad left you...it's yours. Not Vaela's. Not the pack's. Yours."

I looked down at my tray. I wanted to believe that. But somewhere in my gut, the truth twisted. Because my dreams were only getting darker. And I had the horrible, gut-churning feeling that when I opened that chest.....nothing would ever be the same again.

"So..." Taya said, licking nacho cheese off her finger with no shame whatsoever, "you ready for tomorrow night?"

I nearly choked on my soda. "Mentally? Emotionally? Spiritually? Absolutely not."

Taya grinned. "Cool, cool. Total breakdown energy. We love that."

I groaned and dropped my head to the table. "I can't do it, Tay. I want to run. Like, shift and vanish into the fucking trees." She reached across and flicked my forehead. "You could, but you won't. You're not a runner. You're a fighter."

I scowled. "Sometimes I think running is smarter."

"Only if you're wearing hot boots and a smoky eye. Otherwise? No."

Before I could tell her how much I hated that she was always right, the lunch bell rang like a damn funeral chime. "Ugh, training hour," I muttered.

"I brought extra hair ties. Let's go snap some egos."

We hit the training grounds behind the school five minutes later. It was warm for Minnesota, and the air smelled like dirt and arrogance..aka, every alpha's sweat. And speaking of...

Vaela and her clones were already there, flipping their glossy ponytails and laughing like they'd just discovered new ways to ruin my life. They didn't even try to hide it.

"She probably thinks the Moon Goddess chose her," Brielle snorted.

Soria smirked. "More like cursed her with delusions."

Taya rolled her eyes so hard she almost sprained something. "I hate everyone here except you."

"Feeling's mutual," I said.

We started warmups, and I tried..really tried..to block them out. But as I jogged past the line of cones, a foot "accidentally" slid into my path. I stumbled hard, catching myself just before I hit the dirt.The laugh that followed was unmistakable.

Vaela. Something inside me snapped. Lyssira rose fast and hot. "Let me break her jaw."

"No."

"One claw. One swipe. She deserves it."

"No."

My hands were shaking. My vision shimmered at the edges.

"Excuse me," I gasped, backing away.

"El.." Taya started, but I was already sprinting for the trees. I hit the forest line and shifted mid stride. Fur burst over my skin in a wave of silver fire. My bones cracked painfully, and then I was running on four legs, my muscles stretching, my heart hammering, wind whipping through my fur like moonlight made real.

Lyssira roared with freedom. She bolted through the woods, dodging trees and leaping fallen logs with ease. We weren't running to escape... we were running to breathe.

I remembered something horrible way too late. I'd forgotten to dye my fur. The blue and silver tips at the ends of my otherwise snow white coat gleamed in the sun. Shit. I skidded to a stop, panting hard.

And then I smelled him. Daxon. I whipped around and saw him, maybe fifty yards back, near the treeline, watching. His expression was unreadable, and I groaned inwardly. Was he fucking stalking me!? What the fuck? I didn't wait to find out what he thought.

I shifted back, yanked on the emergency leggings and tank I stashed under a root, and ran. By the time I reached the parking lot, I was halfway dry and fully pissed off. I jumped into my truck, slamming the door shut, and threw it into reverse.

But before I could pull out, He was there. Leaning against the driver's side door, his muscled arms crossed, looking like the exact brand of trouble I did not need today. I rolled down the window just enough to glare. "Move."

"Where were you?" he asked flatly.

"My business."

"I saw your wolf."

I froze. My pulse spiked. He stepped closer. "That wasn't the mutt you pretend to be. That was something else. I've never seen fur like that."

I swallowed hard. "You're mistaken."

"No, I'm not."

His voice was calm, but his eyes burned. That same flicker from the diner. That same confusion. Like something in him recognized me... but didn't know why.

"I don't know what your game is, Thorne," he said. "But whatever you're hiding, it's bleeding through."

I met his stare head on. "So what? Gonna tell Daddy Alpha on me?"

He smirked, but it didn't reach his eyes. "Not yet."

And then he stepped back. I slammed the gas, gravel flying behind me. But even as I tore away from the school, his voice echoed in my mind.

"Whatever you're hiding...it's bleeding through."