

Chapter 61 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

Nick, Mike and David are already waiting for me when I arrive at my office. The afternoon's event has me on edge. Wilson is either a moron or has balls the size of Texas to dare cross my boundaries. And I do not know which is worse – stupid or bold. Regardless of the answer, Wilson is dangerous, and I need to get him out of society. Fuck knows for how long he has been terrorizing pack members. Nobody says a word as I take a seat behind my desk.

“Gentlemen, we don't have time to waste,” I say as I look at them. “We're going to entrap Wilson and at the same time, we need to get the humans to safety and keep the wolves on my premises safe.”

“It sounds simple enough,” Nick shrugs.

“Except that it's not,” I say firmly as I give him a cold glare. “This threat is within our borders. It's our members attacking their own. Nobody can be trusted, do you understand? Not even the guards. Any one of them could be doing business with Wilson. You will call them in for training tonight and all electronic devices must be handed in. If they refuse, don't make a fuss about it, and dismiss them for the evening. I'll look into their affairs after we captured Wilson. As far as the guards know, this is purely training.”

“Nick,” I turn my attention to him. “You're in charge of my parents' safety. I don't want to burden them with this. So, not a word. Increase security in and around the mansion.”

“Mike,” I look at him. “You're in charge of all wolves on the premises. Increase security but stay out of sight. I don't want Wilson and his scum to realise we're onto them. David and I will escort the humans to safety, but I will return in time. My hands are itching for Wilson's neck. Any questions?”

“What if one of the guards warns Wilson that the girls have left?” David asks concerned. “They could mind-link him.”

“They can't tell him what they don't know,” I grin. “The extraction of the girls will not leave this room and I'm the only one that knows the destination.”

My words ease David a little, but I can tell he is still concerned for his mate, and I can relate.

“Okay,” I stand up and they follow. “You know what to do. We're leaving in two hours.”

Liana POV

I am pacing up and down in my room as I try to sort my thoughts, but I am failing miserably. My mind keeps on returning to one thing – I am pregnant. And every time the words pop up, my stomach dives. I am grateful for Michelle’s injection, otherwise, I would be camping next to the toilet. If I was not stressed out before, I sure as hell am now.

I wish I could blame Axel for my situation, but I am entirely at fault. I was negligent with my pills. Also, I had no idea that my hospitalization would have such an impact on the pill’s effectiveness.

With my situation as it is, I cannot afford to be a single mother. Between my studies and work, I simply do not have the time or resources. But I do not want Axel to marry me because I am having his baby. If he decides to stay with me, it should be because he wants to be with me. Not because of obligation.

I do not even want to fathom what Axel is going to say when he hears about this. I cannot think that he would be happy. No, I shake my head as I start chewing on my thumbnail, I cannot tell him. Not yet. Not before I know for a fact that I am pregnant or if I am going through with it.

“This is so fucked up,” I groan as I throw myself on the bed and bury my head in the pillows. How did I manage to get myself into such a mess?

“Liana,” Drew knocks softly on the door. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” I shout as I get up and walk to open the door. “Why are you here?”

“Honestly, I don’t know,” he smiles sheepishly. “Axel ordered me to check on you.”

“Weird,” I frown confused. “I’m fine.”

“In that case, can I beg for coffee?” Drew looks at me pleadingly.

“Of course,” I laugh heartedly as we walk to the kitchen.

Drew and I are talking nonsense as he enjoys his coffee and me a cup of tea when Axel storms into the cottage like a whirlwind.

“Liana,” he says seriously. “Please go pack an overnight bag. You and Nina need to get to safety.”

“Did something happen?” My mouth turns dry, and my throat tightens with anxiety.

“No, and I would like to keep it that way,” the corners of his mouth pull downwards. “Please hurry. We’re on a tight schedule.”

“Am I taking you?” Drew asks as he finishes his coffee and gets up.

“No,” Axel replies firmly. “Stay indoors and you need to be vigilant for the next twenty-four hours.”

“I understand,” Drew nods and does not even say goodbye when he leaves.

“Axel, what’s going on?” I frown.

“Please go pack,” he sighs as he takes me by the elbow and guides me to my room. “Just like Nina, it’s safer if you’re not here.”

“But ...”

“It’s not negotiable,” he cuts me off and I swallow my protest. He has never spoken to me with so much authority and frankly, it scares me a little.

“Fine,” I grunt as I yank my elbow free from his hold. “But we’re stopping at the pharmacy to pick up my prescription.”

“There’s no time,” he replies through clenched teeth. “I’ll have it delivered.”

“No!” I say hastily and force myself to smile when he looks at me suspiciously. “I want to do it myself.”

“Why are we arguing about this?” Tiredly he wipes over his eyes. “It’s quicker and safer my way.”

“Is it so hard to understand that I’m trying to have a little control over my life?” I reach for the first plausible argument. Truth is, it is not going to take a genius to figure out why I need prenatal vitamins.

“Okay, yes,” he sighs and suddenly he smiles at me. “Actually, that’s a great idea. Pack your things, I’ll be right back.”

I only shake my head in confusion as I start packing my bag. And then men have the audacity to call women complicated.

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Ten minutes later Axel returns with three women I have never seen before. At first glance, they look like triplets. Similar build, height and all of them are blond – just like me. They are all dressed completely in black, and their hair is tied into ponytails.

“Here,” Axel holds out a package. “Put this on and tie your hair up like they did.”

It is on the tip of my tongue to ask what he is up to, but I take the clothes and do as I am told.

“Perfect,” Axel smiles when I return – dressed in black like the women - and take a stand next to them. “It’s going to be nearly impossible to tell you four apart from a distance.”

“This is weird,” I mumble as I glance at the women.

“Adele, you’re staying as discussed,” Axel looks at one of them and she nods.

“Okay, ladies,” Axel rests his hand on my lower back. “Let’s go.”

Perplexed I allow him to guide me out of the cottage as two of the women follow. I look over my shoulder to Adele that is staying behind and she smiles at me.

“They are decoys,” Axel whispers next to me.

“Excuse me?” I frown and nearly trip over my feet when I notice three identical black SUVs waiting for us.

“Adele is going to stay in your cottage,” he explains as he opens the backdoor for me. “Just in case Wilson gets it into his head to pay you a visit tonight.”

And suddenly everything falls into place when the two other Lianas get into a SUV. If somebody is watching us, they would not know which car to follow.

“I assume there are three fake Ninas as well,” I say when Axel climbs in next to me.

“Yes, there is,” he confirms with a smile as the driver pulls away.

“Is all of this drama really necessary?” I frown. “I cannot think that Wilson would be that stupid to trespass onto your property.”

“Well, he was stupid enough to send spies earlier,” Axel snorts and I gape at him in disbelief.

“But you and Nina will be safe,” he says quickly when he looks at me. “He will not lay a finger on either of you.”

“I’m so sorry,” I whimper emotionally. All of this is because of Leon. My family and I are responsible for this drama. People are endangering their lives because of us. “This isn’t fair towards you or your people.”

“Don’t,” Axel says firmly as he folds my hand into his. “You don’t owe me or my pack an apology. You’re not at fault.”

“But he’s my brother,” I protest. “My family is causing this.”

“Only a fool will hold you responsible for your brother’s doings,” his voice is low and stern. “Every person is responsible for their own choices. Leon might be in debt, but it’s still Wilson’s choice to collect from you and not him.”

“I still feel responsible,” I mumble but I cannot deny that my heart feels lighter with the assurance that he is not blaming me.

“And I wish you wouldn’t,” he sighs heavily. “You may not understand, but in a sense, this is a good thing. I might have never learned about Wilson and his activities, and he will continue intimidating and hurting people. Now I can get rid of him. This is a good thing for the pack. We don’t need members like Wilson.”

“Okay,” I smile and turn away to stare out of the window at the passing scenery. What he is saying makes sense, but I do not care which way he colours it. My brother managed to disrupt my life yet again and I am so over it.

Chapter 62 Wilson’s Demands

Chapter 62 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

“Remember what we talked about,” I look at Liana when we park in front of the pharmacy. “Keep your head down and all of you will enter and exit at the same time.”

“Do you really think we’re being followed?” She asks with eyes full of concern.

“Not at the moment, no, but we’re not taking any chances,” I explain gently. “All of these are precautions.”

“Okay,” she nods as she takes her purse and watches as the other cars park next to us. “Why are there six cars? There were only three when we left.”

“It’s Nina and her replicas,” I chuckle. “They’re waiting for us. We’re leaving the border at the same time.”

“And nobody finds it suspicious?” She turns to me. “I mean, a convoy of SUVs isn’t an everyday occurrence.”

“Except for Alphas,” I smile patiently. “We often travel like this.”

I mind-link the other Lianas and lean over Liana to open her door once they confirm they are ready. She quickly gets out and I watch her walk into the pharmacy.

That should have been me, I groan inwardly. It does not feel right to let her out of my sight. The she-wolves are highly trained and are more than capable of keeping her safe, but I want to be with my mate.

The twenty minutes it takes her to get the prescription feels like an eternity and I only relax when she gets into the car again.

“Done,” she smiles at me as she puts her parcel in her backpack.

On my command, all vehicles head for the highway.

“Are all of those pills?” I frown when I look at the size of the bag.

“No,” she chuckles softly as she holds up a bottle. “I don’t know how long the drive is, so I bought snacks. Gatorade and ginger cookies.”

“Are you hungry?” I ask quickly and I want to kick myself for not thinking about food sooner. I was there when she emptied her stomach, and she must be starving. “We have a basket filled with drinks and ...”

“No,” she interrupts me. “I’m not hungry, but Michelle threatened me with the hospital if I don’t eat.”

“But that’s not food,” I argue flabbergasted.

“It’s electrolytes and carbs, Axel,” she rolls her eyes as she opens the cookies. “My stomach won’t be able to tolerate much else.”

She reaches between the seats and offers the driver a cookie which he accepts before she sits back and turns to face me.

“Cookie?” She smiles brightly at me.

“Thanks,” I take one. “But you didn’t have to buy stuff, I brought everything. Including Gatorade.”

“But did you bring ginger cookies?” She wiggles her eyebrows.

“No,” I laugh defeated. “Next time I’ll know better.”

The last of the sun's rays disappear on the horizon when we get onto the highway and soon, we are surrounded by darkness and passing headlights.

“So,” she sits back and makes herself comfortable. “How long before we get to wherever?”

“We should be there around eight,” I reply.

“Are we all going to the same place?” She looks curiously at me as she opens her drink.

“You and Nina, yes,” I nod. “The other vehicles will separate from us when we exit the highway.”

“Okay,” she tries to hide a yawn, but I can clearly hear it in her voice. “I hope Nina’s not too disappointed. I mean, she was hoping for some alone time with ... you know.”

“There will be other opportunities,” I chuckle as I watch her putting away the cookies and Gatorade.

“Are you okay?” I ask as she takes deep breaths.

“I think I was too eager with the cookies,” she tries to smile but instead swallows hard.

“Should we pull over?” I ask concerned.

“No,” she shakes her head. “It’ll pass.”

“Come here,” I pull her onto my lap and turn her towards the window. “Do you see that sign over there?”

I point to the big, bright neon advertisement for a motel, and she nods.

“Keep your eyes on that,” I wrap my arms around her and pull her head against my shoulder. “Don’t look at the passing cars or lights. Fixate on the sign in the distance.”

A comfortable silence fills the car as she relaxes in my arms.

“Thanks,” she whispers after a moment. “It worked.”

I smile down at her as I cup her cheek and kiss her slowly and silently. It is not a kiss with desire and passion. It is a tender, heartfelt kiss. A kiss filled with love and serenity.

At least, it is for me, I sigh inwardly when I let her go and she nestles closer to my chest. I lean back against the seat and close my eyes as I listen to her steady breathing.

Liana is so outspoken about her emotions but still, I have no idea how she feels. She has the ability to tell me in very colourful words why she is mad at me and what makes her happy but when it comes to matters of her heart, she does not give me so much as a glimpse. And it is frustrating as fuck.

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Liana POV

“Wake up,” Axel murmurs in my ear and I slowly open my eyes. “We’re here.”

“Where’s here?” I groan as I sit up and curiously look at the moonlight shining brightly on a lake.

“My parents’ lake house,” he replies as the driver opens the door and I climb out with stiff limbs.

I turn and look at the huge wooden cabin. It has a beautiful porch facing the lake and I can only imagine how peaceful and scenic it must be to sit there and watch a sunrise.

“This is a gorgeous place,” I say when Axel comes to stand next to me. “Do you come here often?”

“My mother comes here when she needs space when my dad upsets her,” Axel chuckles. “So, yes, she does.”

“I bet she picks fights with him just to come here,” I laugh heartedly as two cars park next to ours. “That’s what I would’ve done.”

“I wouldn’t put that past her,” Axel laughs as Nina and the guards get out of the car and walk towards us.

“David,” Axel’s playful mood shifts to business. “Please escort the ladies inside and show them their rooms.”

David nods and places his hand on Nina’s lower back. I grab my backpack from the car before I follow them into the house. Michelle’s medication has worked but I do not feel so well right now.

And I know why. Seeing all the guards and listening to Axel’s serious voice has my guts in turmoil again. I know he is downplaying the seriousness of the situation. All these arrangements have been made in haste.

The cabin is spacious and luxurious, and I follow David in awe to my room. These people simply have a different way of life. People like me must work and save for years to hopefully spend a week at such an establishment. This is merely a second home to them.

I place my backpack on the bed, close the door behind David and go stand in front of the window to admire the lake. Carefully I rest my hand on my abdomen and my forehead against the cold glass.

I know that the blood test will confirm that I am pregnant. Denying it will not change the fact and I honestly do not know how I feel about it.

What if he wants the baby and not me? I know myself; I will never give up my child – regardless of who the father is. I do love Axel, but I do not know if it would be wise to spend the rest of my life with him and raise a child together. I do not belong in his world. What does an ordinary girl like me know about wealth? Not to mention the dark cloud of shame my family will bring. How can we possibly see eye to eye when raising a child together?

“How are you feeling?” Axel asks as he enters the room and I turn around to face him.

“I’m fine,” I smile. “This place is magnificent.”

“You seem pale,” he frowns as he walks to me. “Are you sure ...”

“I don’t feel sick, Axel,” I cut him off. “Stop worrying.”

“I ordered you chicken soup,” he continues as if I have not said a word. “They’ll bring it to your room once it’s ready.”

“Honestly, that’s not necessary,” I roll my eyes. “I am more than capable of finding the kitchen and feeding myself when I’m hungry.”

“Well, it’s done,” he shrugs. “You might as well accept it.”

My cell phone rings in my bag, and I walk to the bed to get it. I frown when I look at the unfamiliar number as I answer it.

“Hello, Liana,” Wilson greets me in a creepy voice and ominous tendrils curl around my heart. Without saying a word, I look at Axel and turn the speakerphone on.

“I trust you have the money,” he continues when I do not reply.

“I told you I’m not playing this game,” I say and wish I did not sound as scared as I am. Axel takes my hand as his face turns to cold hard granite.

“And I told you what would happen if you don’t,” he snarls. “Are you really going to risk Nina’s neck for your principals?”

It is on the tip of my tongue to send him to hell, but Axel shakes his head and quickly whispers into my ear.

“Fine, you win,” I sigh into the phone after I listened to Axel’s instruction. “I’ll go to the bank tomorrow and try ...”

“Not try, Liana,” he cuts me off sharply. “You had three weeks to try, now you must do.”

“I’ll do my best,” I bite off the words.

“Good girl,” he snarls. “You shouldn’t be so stubborn, it’s very unbecoming and you’re wasting time. Meet me in the park tomorrow at noon. And Liana, if I so much as sniff the Alpha or his men, Nina will pay. That’s a promise.”

Chapter 63 Fighting About Death

Chapter 63 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I stare at the dead phone in my hand for a moment before I drop it and run to the bathroom when sour bile pushes up my throat. I reach the toilet just in time and tears stream over my face as I empty my stomach.

“I’m getting your medication,” Axel sounds worried as he looks at me.

“No!” I croak hastily and wipe over my face. This is so utterly humiliating but if he looks in my bag, he will see the prenatal vitamins and I am not ready to talk to him about that. Not before I have clarified my feelings regarding the pregnancy.

“I ... it won’t help ... right now,” I stutter as I stand up. “It will only go out the way it went in. I must wait a moment.”

“Are you sure?” He frowns and I nod feverishly before I rinse my face.

“I’m getting my toothbrush,” I mumble sheepishly as I push past him to get to my bag.

An earthquake tearing the ground apart underneath me would not be the worst thing right now, I decide as Axel’s gaze does not leave me when I gather my stuff to brush my teeth. I am embarrassed and feel like a weakling. He is a wolf, for crying out loud. Kicking ass and taking names is his thing. Meanwhile, I fall apart after a mere phone call. It is no wonder I am deteriorating while carrying his baby. I am a feeble and puny human, and I am not worthy.

“I’m still not satisfied you’re okay,” Axel mumbles as I go back into the room. “I’m familiar with nerves and this isn’t normal. This ...”

“I’m a human, Axel,” the anxiety and self-doubt get to me, and I lose my temper. “A very boring human who used to have a boring life. The only anxiety I carried over the years is whether or not my mother is going to approve. Or what trouble Leon is going to get into next and how I will bail him out – yet again. I’m not used to people extorting me or threatening my friends. Dropping

everything and fleeing to safety is new to me. It's not normal for me that people are trying to kill me. And speaking of killing. It's not normal to kill people when they piss you off. You might feel like you want to do it and you might say you're going to do it, but you don't. It's not normal."

"Liana, I ..."

"No," I cut him off adamantly. I am on a roll and am not done. "I hate Angela, like really hate her. From the very first time I saw her. She's a heartless bitch with no regard for other people's feelings. And she did a terrible thing, which is punishable. But by a court of law, not by vengeance. As despicable as she is, she's still someone's daughter. Her parents could be the sweetest people on earth and her death will devastate them."

"They're not," Axel grunts. "Believe me."

"That's not the point," I throw my hands up in the air. "Dead people don't have to deal with the consequences, the people staying behind do."

"She tried to kill you," Axel bellows. "How does that not infuriate you? How can you be on her side and show compassion?"

"Because I'm the person staying behind," I yell at the top of my lungs and his eyes widen when I start crying out of frustration and anger.

"I'm furious at her, Axel," I continue. "But I know how it feels to stay behind and deal with the consequences. Leon runs around wild and fucks up and I'm the one staying behind to clean up the mess. I'm the one planning and scheming to keep food on my family's table. And it's exhausting, Axel."

"Liana, I ..."

"I don't want the responsibility," I sob and go sit on the bed. "I don't want to see the hurt and pain in her parents' eyes because they lost their child. I don't want other people to feel like this. If you kill Angela, her parents will hate you. And your parents will too, and I don't want that for you."

It is silent for a moment between us before he kneels in front of me and takes my hands in his.

"Wolves are creatures of nature," he says softly as he captures and holds my gaze. "In nature, it is live or die, Liana. She knew what she was doing, and she knows the punishment. If the roles were reversed, she would've expected me to kill you. That's our laws, our way of life."

"I get that," I sniff. "But you need to understand that this isn't my normal and it's making me sick."

“Okay,” he sighs as he gets up and comes to sit next to me. He drapes his arm around my shoulders and I eagerly lean closer to him. “No more talking about killing people.”

“Thank you,” I mumble. “And no more fussing over me because I cannot handle the pressure.”

“Fine,” he snorts. “You can puke all you want, and I won’t care.”

“Good,” I chuckle as I wipe away the last of my tears.

“But Liana,” he pulls away and places a finger under my chin to lift my face. “You need to remember that I will kill for you.”

“O ... okay,” I murmur as his green eyes pierce into mine. His words are both romantic and scary. I never had a person who is willing to kill for me and I never expected that this Adonis of a man would. But at the same time, the enormity of the moment is scaring the shit out of me.

The loaded atmosphere between us splinters when there is a knock on the door. With a sigh, Axel gets up to answer it.

“Your soup arrived,” he announces as an Omega places a tray on the table in the corner and scurries away. “Do you think you can eat it?”

“I sure as hell am going to try,” I smile wryly as I get up.

“Where’s yours?” I frown as I look at the single bowl on the tray.

“Soup is for sick people,” he snorts. “It’s not a food group.”

“Then where’s your steak?” I mock and make my eyes big at him.

“At home,” he grins as he takes a seat on the sofa next to me. “I must go back tonight.”

“You’re not staying?” I blow on the soup and avoid eye contact to conceal my disappointment.

“No, there are pressing matters at home,” he smiles.

“Like Wilson,” I nod in understanding and the delicious soup turns tasteless in my mouth. I do not know what Axel is hiding but I am sure Wilson’s spies did something that has Axel on edge.

“Yes,” he confirms. “I must brief Adele. She will pose as you tomorrow.”

“What is going to happen to Wilson?” I ask softly.

“I bet you wanted to ask if I am going to kill him?” Axel raises his eyebrows at me, and I look away guilty.

“No, Liana,” he sighs. “Contrary to what you’re thinking, killing isn’t a sport for me.”

“That’s not what I said or implied,” I protest indignantly.

“I need him alive,” Axel continues as if I have not said anything. “He has an illegal business and preys on the weak. This is bigger than Leon. It is about my pack’s safety. Getting rid of Wilson’s business is more important than getting rid of him.”

His words are like a punch in the gut.

“Wyatt,” I mumble as I look at Axel. “I forgot about him. He is somehow involved.”

“I won’t kill him either, okay?” Axel’s face is hard, and his eyes are cold. “Your ex-fiancé will live.”

“Axel, you better get off this runaway horse before it throws you off,” I warn him softly. “I haven’t said a word about killing.”

“No,” he jumps up. “You only screamed at me five minutes ago about what a monster I am for wanting to.”

“Get out of my room,” my words are soft and calculated as I get up and go stand in front of him so our eyes can meet. “Now.”

“No,” he glares at me. “You can’t expect me to simply be okay with what you’ve said.”

“I told you how I feel,” I hiss at him. “I didn’t accuse you of anything or called you names. But don’t worry, in the future, I will keep my feelings and opinions to myself.”

Furiously and hurt, I turn around.

“We’re still talking,” he grabs my wrist, but I jerk free and take a step backwards.

“Well, then, go ahead and talk,” I glare at him as I cross my arms in front of my chest.

“I am the Alpha,” he says through clenched teeth. “I’m responsible for every pack member’s safety. I’m not a raging lunatic on a killing spree, I’m protecting my people and certain crimes are punishable by death.”

“Go ahead and kill them,” I shrug. “I’m not stopping you.”

“You just ...”

“No,” I cut him off, unable to control myself. “I shared my feelings, Axel. Don’t confuse that with telling you what to do and how to do your job. I only remembered Wyatt has a little boy and

for a moment I committed the ultimate sin to feel sorry for the child that will grow up without his father. But you can go now, I won't keep you any longer."

"You're right, I should go," he huffs as he walks away.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath. This day is a disaster.

"Axel, wait," I call him softly and he turns back to me.

We look at each other for a moment before I walk to him and put my arms around his waist. I press myself tightly against him and hold on until I feel his arms around me.

"Be safe," I murmur before I pull away.

He looks at me perplexed for a moment before he softly kisses me and walks to the door.

"One last thing," he says as he opens the door. "There are things much worse than dying. There is mercy in death. Remember that."

Chapter 64_Humans Do Not Understand

Chapter 64 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

Zombified, I stare at the door Axel slammed shut. This is wrong on so many levels, I groan as I rub over my face.

This situation has us both on edge and instead of talking things through like adults, we are fighting. I angrily kicked him out of my room and we both said hurtful things.

I do not get why he thinks I called him a monster. Or what I have said that gave him the impression that I think so. All I wanted was for him to understand why I am so stressed out.

You need to remember I will kill for you.

His words dart through my mind and suddenly everything changes. All of this, all that he is doing, is for me. He is protecting me. He is on his way to face a criminal for me.

"Dammit, Liana, what have you done?" I reprimand myself as I run to the door.

Axel POV

I am trembling with rage as I walk to the car. Never in my life did I have to defend my actions or the pack's laws. Now I understand why humans fear us. Why they think we are murderous monsters. Because they do not understand us and our laws.

And now I have a human mate.

Her human heart will never allow her to accept me for who and what I am. In her eyes, I will always be cruel and heartless with a taste for blood. How can she love and respect me as a wolf, her mate and alpha when she thinks I am the devil?

I keep on clinging to the hope that she will accept me. At times I figured it would be best if I reject her and be done with it. But then I turn around and hope again. Tonight, however, it became clear that I am a fool for hoping. She will never accept me or our way of life. The sooner I acknowledge it, the sooner I can move on and find happiness elsewhere.

"Axel!" Liana shouts from the porch and I sigh inwardly. I cannot argue with her about this any longer.

"I need to go, Liana," I say as I turn around. "We can talk more when I get back."

"No," she shouts as she runs to me. "I need to say one more thing before you go."

"Don't you think we've said enough for one night?" I push my fingers through my hair as she comes to stand in front of me with a flustered face.

"One thing," she looks at me eagerly. "I only have one thing to say."

"I'm listening," I say as I place my hands on my hips.

"Privately," she whispers as she leans forward and motions with her head towards the driver who is waiting for me.

"Dear goddess, you're exhausting," I grunt as I take her by the elbow and lead her towards the lake. I mind-link all guards to stay out of sight when we reach the shore.

"You have five minutes," I say firmly as I let go of her.

"I get it, you're a wolf," she says softly. "But so is Wilson and I forgot that. You're not protecting me against a human, you're protecting me against a wolf. I might not understand or agree, but I get it."

"Is that it?" I ask brusquely to hide my relief. I did not expect this, and I do not want to get my hopes up. The next words out of her mouth might very well devastate me again.

"No," she sighs, and I grind my teeth. I knew it. Now she is going to lecture me about the value of life.

“You’re doing this for me, and I don’t want you to leave in anger,” her words surprise me.

“Okay,” I agree to ease her mind. Truth is, it does not matter if we are fighting or not. There is a gap between us, and I do not know if we will ever be able to cross it. “We’re done fighting.”

I place my palm against her cheek and gently stroke with my thumb.

“But I really must be going now,” I smile softly.

“Okay,” she whispers as she turns her face and kisses me on my palm. “Be safe, please.”

I lean forward and kiss her long and lingering. She throws her arms around my neck and pushes herself closer to me. I know I should pull away and leave but I cannot resist her. With a groan, I wrap my arms around her waist and intensify the kiss. It does not matter how much we argue or what we argue about, everything falls away when she is so willing and eager in my arms. Liana is trembling softly when I let go of her and she wraps her arms around her waist as she looks at her feet.

“Why are you crying?” I look at the tears that she is trying to hide. “We’re done fighting, remember?”

“I know,” she sniffs. “But I’m scared.”

“You have nothing to be scared about,” I smile reassuringly as I rub up and down her arms. “You and Nina are safe here and Wilson will never ...”

“It’s not about me or Nina,” she interrupts. “I’m scared for you.”

“Listen, I know all of this is new to you,” I say firmly as I rest my hands on her shoulders. “But this isn’t such a big deal. Adele is going to do the exchange and then we catch him.”

“But what if he doesn’t come alone,” she protests.

“Adele’s not going alone either,” I reply patiently.

“And they might shift and ...”

“Then we will shift,” I cut her off. “Liana, we got this. You shouldn’t work yourself up about it.”

“But anything can go wrong,” she argues. “And you ...”

“We will handle it,” I say firmly. “We have dealt with worse.”

“Okay,” she nods after a moment and wipes her tears off. “Okay, just ... just come back to us.”

“I mean,” she takes a deep breath and blinks a couple of times. “Come back to ... to me and ... and Nina and your people.”

“I will,” I kiss her once more before I walk to the car.

Liana POV

My heart is racing like a horse as I watch him walk away. The last thing I planned on was becoming emotional. I only wanted us to part on good terms. But then he kissed me, and I thought about how good it felt. Fear that he might get hurt and that I might not see him again overcame me and I ... I should not have said that. I am still trying to come to terms with this pregnancy, I cannot dump it onto him tonight. Especially not now. He has enough to deal with.

Fuck, this is such a mess. There is merit in the saying when it rains, it pours.

I am no wolf and definitely no alpha. I have no idea what it takes to keep an entire pack in line and safe. And I have no business having an opinion. Like I did earlier. For goddess' sake, there is a reason why I keep running to him with my problems. He is the one solving problems. Not me, I create them and then I am entitled enough to criticize his methods.

I was so wrapped up in my own feelings that I did not consider Axel's position. He has taken all of my problems on himself. I might disagree with his methods, but he gets it done. Who am I to judge? It is not like I know better or have better ideas.

I exhale deeply as I walk back to the house.

I might not be able to do anything, but I sure as hell can stop adding problems for him to solve. In fact, I am going to do my part and sort out my own business.

First thing tomorrow morning, I will make an appointment with Michelle to confirm the pregnancy. Then I must decide what I want to do about it.

I would love to keep it, but I need to be realistic. I cannot provide for the child on my own. I am only temporarily employed and not to mention that I must take off time to give birth at some point. And I will have to give up my studies. I must be practical and face the fact that I cannot do everything at once.

This leaves me with the only option but to involve Axel – again. To be fair, this is his baby. Keeping it away from him would be wrong, cruel and immoral. But he has so much to cope with, does he really have the time to deal with a baby? Hell, does he even want to be a father?

I hate to admit it, but now the best option is to terminate the pregnancy. It is horrible, and I cringe at only thinking about it, but I must do what is best for everyone.

I slump down on my bed and reach for my backpack. I pull out the prenatal vitamins and stare at them. What is the use of taking it if I am not going to keep the baby? With a defeated sigh, I shake out a pill and swallow it. While I am carrying this baby, I will do it good and properly.

After a long, luxurious bath, I put on my pyjamas and get into bed. But even after all of that, my mind cannot shut down. I am worried about tomorrow, about Axel. I am conflicted about the baby.

But most of all, I feel guilt and self-pity. Guilty because it is my brother that caused all of this.

And I feel immensely sorry for myself. I am hopelessly in love with the wrong man. No, he is the right man. Axel will always be the right man. But I am not the right woman for him. I will just ruin his life – like I have been ruining it since I signed the agreement with him. And I have no idea if keeping his baby will be good or bad.

Chapter 65_The End Of Wilson

Chapter 65 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

“Anything?” I mind-link Adele as I restlessly pace up and down in the gymnasium two blocks away from the park. It is five minutes before noon, and she is waiting in the park as instructed by Wilson.

My men and I are ready to move as soon as he shows his face. But we cannot risk hanging around and tipping off Wilson.

“Not yet,” she replies, and I grind my teeth. I am itching to get answers from Wilson and put this business to bed.

“Here he comes,” Adele mind-links.

“Keep your head down and the link open,” I reply urgently. “We’re on our way.”

I mind-link my men and together we run to the park. We ensure to stay downwind and out of sight as we surround the park and take our positions.

“Hello Liana,” we listen to Wilson through the open mind-link. “I’m glad to see you followed my orders and come alone.”

“Don’t reply,” I order Adele as I take cover behind Wilson’s back. “We’re here and ready.”

I watch as Adele pulls the cap lower over her face and keeps her eyes on her feet. Wilson is standing in front of her with his hands on his hips, looking down at her.

“Leon is right about you,” Wilson chuckles. “I thought he was only full of it, but he was right. With enough pressure, you’ll agree to anything. Including keeping your mouth shut.”

His words infuriate me, and I take a deep breath to control my wolf. Running towards him and ripping him apart would be so easy.

“You know,” Wilson takes a seat next to Adele. “I’m kind of disappointed that you’re cooperating. I didn’t expect it and I was looking forward to seeing Nina again. She’s a generous lover and ... what the fuck!”

Wilson jumps up and feverishly looks around.

“Who are you?” He growls.

“Well, I’m obviously not this Liana person you’re looking for,” Adele replies sweetly as she looks up at him and I quietly walk towards them. “And you have a creepy way of starting a conversation with strangers.”

“I ... I’m sorry,” Wilson stutters flabbergasted. “I was supposed to meet Liana and you look a lot like her. It’s a simple misunderstanding.”

“Is it?” I ask brusquely and Wilson swings around to face me.

For a moment, he only stares at me before he bursts out laughing.

“I knew it,” he throws his hands up in the air and takes a seat next to Adele.

“I knew it and I told them, but they didn’t believe me,” he continues with big hand gestures and movements while he keeps his eyes on me. “I told them she only looks so obedient and submissive but she’s not.”

“Congratulations for calling it,” I snort as I follow his hands. I do not trust him for a second. “Now ...”

“No, no,” he shakes his head. “You don’t get it, Alpha.”

“I told them,” his laughter dies down and Adele gasps when he pulls out a gun from behind his back and presses it to her side. “Leon called me an idiot when I picked out this gun. Seems I know his sister better than he does.”

“Sir,” Adele mind-links me. “I can take him.”

“No, not yet,” I order urgently. “The park is crawling with children. I’ll tell you when to move.”

“If you knew you were right, why did you go through with this?” I snarl as I mind-link my men to start evacuating the park and be on the lookout for Wilson’s accomplices. “There’s no way out, but you already know that don’t you?”

“I don’t expect you to understand,” he snorts as he clicks off the gun’s safety. “What does an Alpha know about taking orders?”

“More than you think,” I reply calmly as I keep my eyes on his gun. If Wilson is taking orders, somebody else is in charge. He has referred to ‘Leon and them’ and it sounds awfully a lot that Leon is in charge. Which is impossible and does not make sense at all. “People tell me how to do my job all the time.”

“So not the same thing,” Wilson rolls his eyes and I swallow hard as he cocks the gun.

“Adele,” I mind-link her. “Get ready to move.”

“Educate me then,” I say quickly as I watch my men silently evacuate the park behind Wilson. “Tell me what you’re hoping to achieve. You said it yourself; you knew Liana wasn’t coming with the money. Even if you manage to get away now, you know I’m going to hunt you. It’s over for you. But you’re not in charge. Tell me on whose orders you’re doing this, and we can make a deal.”

“Typical Alpha,” Wilson snorts. “You demand loyalty, but you don’t have an idea what it means. But you’re right about one thing, this is over for me.”

“No!” I yell and jump forward when Wilson lifts the gun.

Adele jumps into action and reaches for the gun, but Wilson is faster. The gun is already pointed at his temple when the loud shot rips through the air and he falls sideways. People start screaming and running wild in all directions as I kneel next to him.

“I have a pulse,” I shout as I pull off my shirt to cover his wound. “Call an ambulance and start CPR.”

“Is it just me, or is this weird?” Adele frowns as she starts compressions.

“It’s not just you,” I shake my head. “Going through all this trouble just to kill yourself, doesn’t make sense.”

“Alpha, what can I do to help?” A guard, Albert, asks as he joins us.

“Search his pockets,” I order brusquely as I try my best to stop the bleeding.

Nobody says a word as we wait for the ambulance, but the tension is tangible as we try to keep Wilson alive.

“Sir, look at this,” Albert holds out a letter. “It’s a medical directive. He’s an organ donor and is making a direct donation to Stacey Brooks.”

“Here,” I hand Albert my phone as the ambulance’s siren gets louder. “Take photos of it and put it back where you found it.”

“This explains a lot,” Adele mumbles.

“It also changes everything,” I agree.

“Albert, stay with him and keep me updated,” I order him as the paramedics take over from me and Adele.

“Does the directive mention what he’s donating?” Adele asks softly as we move out of earshot of the paramedics.

“His heart,” I grunt as I look at the blood on my hands.

“I’m going to clean up,” I say as I walk to the public restrooms.

“Alpha,” Mike mind-links me. “There’s a breach at the South border of your premises.”

“Get them, dammit,” I link back urgently and dry my hand as my phone starts ringing. “We prepared for that.”

“Stanley,” I answer the phone brusquely as an ominous feeling settles in my gut. Stanley has been staying in the trailer park keeping an eye on Liana’s parents. The fact that he is calling now while all of this is happening does not predict anything good.

“Alpha, I’m sorry,” Stanley sounds nervous. “Five men came, and I tried, but I failed. They killed Leon.”

“The parents?” I ask urgently.

“They’re traumatized, but unharmed,” he reports and relief rushes through me. I am not going to lie; I do not give a rat’s ass about Leon. It is his debt after all, but his parents are innocent, and Liana will lose it if something happens to them.

“The old man is not about to have a heart attack?” I ask concerned when I remember about his condition.

“I don’t think so, sir,” Stanley replies.

“Get them to a hospital or clinic and have them checked out,” I order. “If they want to contact the police, let them. I’ll send a team over to remove all traces which could lead to our pack.”

“Adele,” I call her over and wait until she is standing in front of me before I continue. “Get a team and go to Wilson’s house. Search every inch of every corner. I want answers.”

“Yes, Alpha,” she nods and runs off.

With long strides, I walk to my SUV which is parked at the gym while phoning David.

I relax a little when he informs me that the girls are safe and that there is no suspicious activity around the house. Lastly, I send a crew to the trailer park. There should not be so much as a wolf’s hair when the local police get there. We will apprehend Leon’s murderers ourselves, but I cannot afford for law enforcement to come and sniff around here for answers.

My mind is restless as I drive home. Wilson had the directive on him, which could only mean that he planned to die today. But on his terms – there would be no organs to donate if I ripped him to shreds.

Catching Wilson was supposed to bring answers, not more questions. And I have a bad, bad feeling. A simple exchange turned into a murder, a suicide and an attack. There is something we are missing.

I am not surprised when I see smoke as I near my grounds. Even though most of the gasoline was burned out yesterday, the attackers would not have known, and they would have used an accelerant to start the fire as quickly and viciously as possible. Something was bound to take fire.

“Nick,” I mind-link him as I drive to the South border. “Update on my parents.”

“They’re fine,” he replies. “Nobody even attempted to get to the mansion.”

I exhale in relief as I park and get out of the car.

“Alpha,” Mike runs towards me. “We caught all four of them, but they don’t know shit. Their stories are pretty much a repeat of yesterday. The only difference is they were supposed to kidnap Nina. And they all report to Wilson.”

“Son of a bitch,” I growl frustrated. Another dead end. Everything points to Wilson, but he is not in charge.

“Lock them up,” I bark at Mike as I get back into my car. “They can stay there until I figure out what the fuck’s going on.”

Chapter 66 Wilson Died For His Mate

Chapter 66 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

“This is torture,” I grunt as I jump out of my chair and start pacing on the deck.

“It’s only been ten minutes,” Nina snorts and raises her face to the sun. She stretches out on the deck chair into a more comfortable position. “The exchange will take more than ten minutes. So, sit down and enjoy the sunshine. It’s not like you can do anything else.”

“Why aren’t you stressed out?” I practically yell as I take a seat next to her, but my leg cannot stop bobbing up and down. “I mean, Wilson is after you too.”

“Yeah, but we’re safe here,” she shrugs nonchalantly. “Stressing about it is not going to change it. Look, there’s nothing we can do but sit here and wait. The way you wait is your choice. I chose not to pace and chomp down on my fingernails.”

“Easy for you to say,” I roll my eyes. “You’re not worried about the safety of the love of your life.”

“You should have a little faith,” Nina sighs. “You should hear how much awe and respect David has for him. And the things he told me about Axel. That man is indestructible. You have nothing to worry about.”

“You’re missing ...”

“Hello, ladies,” David walks in and I immediately go quiet. The very last thing I need is for David to report back to Axel about my feelings. “Axel just called, it’s over.”

“It is?” I jump up and walk over to David. “And everybody is fine? No one got hurt?”

“None of the guards or Axel were hurt,” he says compassionately. “You can relax now.”

“Oh, good,” I sigh relieved and hug him tightly. “Thank you.”

“Pack your bags, ladies,” he smiles and pulls away awkwardly. “We’re going home.”

“So soon?” Nina pouts from the chair. “I was enjoying our little vacation.”

“We’re leaving in an hour,” David looks at her longingly and I take a step back to observe them. The connection between them is tangible. No wonder Nina does not want to go back. She wants more time with David.

The loud ringing of my phone splinters the moment and I eagerly reach for it. Disappointment fills my gut when it is not Axel’s name on the screen.

“Ah, dammit,” I grunt and decline the call. “It’s my mother.”

I want to shove it back into my pocket, but it starts ringing again.

“You should answer,” Nina says as she stands up and David walks away. “It could be about your dad.”

“No,” I shake my head. “I spoke with him this morning and he’s just fine. Mommy dearest just wants money – again.”

“She keeps on calling, Liana,” Nina looks at the ringing phone in my hand. “You’re going to hate yourself if this is not about money and you didn’t answer.”

“You’re right,” I sigh heavily as I answer the phone.

“Mother, calm down,” I say urgently as her hysterical cries threaten to burst my eardrums. “Crying isn’t words and I have no idea what you’re trying to say. Is Dad okay?”

“He ... he’s dead,” she sobs, and my legs go numb.

The blood drains from my face as I take a seat in the closest chair.

“Daddy’s dead?” I murmur in disbelief. It does not make sense. He sounded perfectly fine this morning.

“L ... Leon,” she stutters.

“Mom, please,” I beg on the verge of panic. “Who’s dead?”

“Leon,” she cries. “Your brother was killed. Murdered, right in front of us.”

“I’m coming home,” I say quickly before I end the call with trembling fingers.

“What’s wrong?” Nina asks urgently as she kneels by me and takes my hand in hers. “Who died?”

“Leon,” I whisper. “Leon’s dead.”

“What happened?” Nina gasps in shock.

“I ... I don’t know,” I stutter as I pull my hands free and stand up. “I need a minute.”

I walk blindly towards the lake as my mind jumps from one thought to another. I am not a moron. This is not a coincidence. Wilson collecting money from me and Leon dying at the same time is no coincidence. And I hate, hate to think that I am responsible for his death.

If I just played along with Wilson and gave him the money, Leon could have been still alive. Leon and I might not have gotten along, but that does not mean I wanted him dead.

No, I shake my head. This cannot possibly be my fault. Wilson cannot be at two places at once. He was at the park meeting me – or rather the fake me, Adele, and somebody else killed Leon. What the hell did Leon get himself into?

Axel POV

Impatiently I watch David parks in front of Liana's cottage. It feels like an eternity since I have last seen her and what could have been a happy reunion is now going to be a messed-up affair because I have the dreadful obligation of telling her about Leon's passing.

But the second Liana gets out of the car, I can tell she knows. Her eyes and nose are all puffy and red. She only glances in my direction before she thanks David and walks to her cottage.

"How much does she know?" I ask David softly as I watch Liana disappears inside.

"Her mother called," he replies. "She only knows her brother has been murdered."

"Fuck," I grunt as I push my fingers through my hair. I should have known her mother would have called. But with everything that has been going on, it slipped my mind.

"Keep security on Nina," I order. "Until we know exactly what's going on, I'm not assuming anybody's safe."

"No problem," David nods as he gets back into the car, and I walk to Liana's cottage.

Silently I walk to her room and stand at the door as I watch her pack her bags. I want to take her in my arms and kiss the pain away but after the way we left things, I have no idea if I am the person she wants around.

"Liana," I say softly.

"It's Wilson, isn't it?" She continues packing without even looking my way. "He's responsible for Leon's death."

"I think so, yes," I confirm.

"But it doesn't make sense," she shouts as she looks at me with blazing eyes. "How could he meet Adele at the park and kill Leon at the same time? Did he even come? Where is he? I want to talk to him."

"Liana," I sigh as I walk to her and take her hands in mine. "We should talk."

“We are talking,” she frowns but a moment later her eyes widen and looks at me with disgust. “Wilson’s dead, isn’t he?”

“He had a gun and ...”

“You killed him,” she cuts me off yelling. “And now ...”

“I didn’t kill him,” I defend myself loudly and she takes a step back.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath to calm myself. I should have known that would be her conclusion. After all, I am a monster in her eyes.

“Then what happened?” She starts crying and goes to sit down on her bed. “How did things get so fucked up?”

“Wilson shot himself,” I explain patiently as I sit down next to her and tell her everything that transpired. “He’s been declared brain dead, and his heart will go to Stacey.”

“Stacey?” Liana’s blue eyes are large, and her face is awfully pale when she looks at me. “His mate?”

“We don’t know yet,” I put my arms around her shoulders, and I am relieved that she allows me to. “We’re still investigating.”

“I know it’s her,” Liana whispers as she nestles closer to me, and I wrap my arms around her waist. “He died for his mate. That poor girl.”

“What do you mean?” I look at her curiously.

“He sacrificed himself so she could live,” Liana stands up and resume packing. “She is going to spend the rest of her days without her mate, and she will be conflicted about it. On the one hand, she is going to love and adore him for his sacrifice. On the other hand, she is going to hate him for making her live without him.”

“It sounds like you know her,” I frown.

“No, Axel,” she sighs as she zips her suitcase closed. “I’ve seen her once. But that is exactly how I would feel if somebody did that for me.”

“I don’t know if you’re right,” I murmur after a moment of thought. “But I do know I would’ve done exactly the same as Wilson if it meant keeping my mate alive.”

“So would I,” she looks at me with her soulful eyes. “Guess it’s a good thing we don’t have mates.”

“You do have a mate,” I say softly as I get up and go to stand in front of her. It is time that I tell her about us. This has been going on for far too long. I kept it a secret to give her time to get over Wilson. To give us time to grow closer and bond but lately, it feels like we are drifting further and further away from each other. “Liana, your mate is ...”

“Was,” she interrupts sharply. “Wyatt was my mate. And he didn’t love me enough to sleep with me, let alone give me his heart – literally or figuratively speaking.”

“I’m not talking ...”

“Oh, dear goddess,” she whispers, and I did not know that she could possibly turn paler than she already is. “Wyatt. It’s him! He’s behind all of this.”

“Why would you say that?” I grunt frustrated because she killed my – almost – confession with rational thinking.

“You said it yourself, Wilson’s not in charge,” she says early while she rubs her forehead as she is thinking. “And he admitted Wyatt’s involved. It has to be him.”

“That’s a wild assumption,” I frown. “Wyatt could be just another pawn like Wilson.”

“Sure, maybe,” she throws her hands up in the air. “But at the very least, he’ll be able to answer questions or tell you who is calling the shots.”

“Liana,” I stand up and rest my hands on her shoulders. “We need to talk. About us.”

“And we will,” she smiles weakly. “But not now. I need to go home, Axel. My parents need me now.”

“Okay,” I nod after a moment and let go of her.

Chapter 67_Terrible Sister

Chapter 67 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I exhale in relief when Axel’s hands drop off my shoulders. I am not ready to tell him about the baby or to break up with him. I do not care if it is for the best. I am selfish and want him a little longer by my side.

And I could tell that he had something serious to say. It was in the tension of his shoulders and the twitching muscle in his jaw. Nope, I am not ready and if I have to shamelessly use my parents to postpone the inevitable, I will.

“It’s only going to be a day or two,” I say apologetically to break the awkwardness that crept in between us. “I need to know they’re okay.”

“Take all the time you need,” he smiles empathetically. “This is not going to be easy for them.”

“It’s ...” The loud growl of my stomach interrupts me rudely and a blush creeps up my neck and cheeks.

“Liana, have you eaten today?” Axel asks as he crosses his arms and looks at me sternly.

“Yes,” I reply quickly as I push past him and walk to the kitchen. “I had breakfast, but then shit hit the fan and I forgot about lunch.”

“Was Michelle not clear enough?” His angry voice follows me. “Do you want to end up in hospital?”

“Cut the crap, Axel,” I snap as I open the fridge. “I didn’t do it on purpose. Who the hell has an appetite when their brother dies?”

“Tell me you’re not going to have a sandwich?” He looks with disgust at the ingredients that I have taken out.

“Yes, I am,” I roll my eyes at him as I take out slices of bread. “Do you want?”

“That’s not enough,” he protests. “You need proper food. Vegetables and meat and ...”

“And I don’t have time for that now,” I interrupt him. “Besides, ham and tomato cover the categories.”

“Always a clever answer and in the meantime, you’re about to fall through your own ass,” he grunts as he opens the freezer.

“Where’s your steak?” He turns to me with a frown.

“I don’t have steak,” I shrug as I butter the bread. “It’s a luxury I cannot afford.”

“Are you implying that I don’t pay you enough?” He growls.

“Dammit, Axel,” I lose my temper and throw him with a tomato. It hits him solid on the chest and bursts open, staining his perfectly white shirt.

He goes eerily quiet and stares at the stain before he slowly looks up at me. I bite hard onto my bottom lip to stop myself from smiling but I give up the fight and burst out laughing.

“I’m sorry,” I laugh as I wet a dish towel and turn to him.

“No, I’m not sorry,” I cannot stop the laughter as I clumsily wipe the stain on his shirt. “You asked for it. There’s nothing wrong with my salary but I stick to a budget and that doesn’t include steak.”

“So, you didn’t lose weight because you didn’t have money for food?” He asks cautiously and a fresh wave of laughter bursts over my lips.

“What’s so funny?” He demands brusquely. “Is it wrong that I care?”

“You’re adorable,” I stand on my toes and quickly kiss him on his lips. “Axel, cooking for one is a schlep, okay? And I didn’t grow up on steak. It’s not normal for me.”

He looks at me long and intensely before he takes out his phone and walks away. I exhale deeply and shake my head as I clean up the tomato. He really is not in a good mood.

“Put that away,” Axel says as he enters the kitchen again. “I’ve arranged with Maddy for food. It will be delivered soon.”

“Let me guess, steak?” I snort as I put back the ham and cheese.

“And vegetables,” he confirms. “Plenty of it.”

I take out the Nutella and a spoon and take a seat at the counter as I watch him take off his shirt. My eyes feast over his chiselled chest as I dip the spoon into the jar. I love his body; I sigh inwardly as the sweetness of the Nutella hits my tastebuds.

The muscles on his back ripple smoothly as he rinses out his shirt and I shift uncomfortably on my chair. Is it wrong that I am aroused instead of grieving?

Leon and I were never close and honestly, I am sorrier for my parents and their loss than for myself. Leon was never kind or even brotherly towards me. I have not lost a brother. I have lost a burden. But Axel ... he has been nothing but supportive and caring.

“There,” Axel shakes out his shirt and hangs it over the chair. “It should be dry in a couple of minutes.”

I do not say a word as I get off my chair and walk to him.

“What now?” He frowns when I stand in front of him.

“Nothing,” I murmur as I stick my finger into the jar and scoop out a chunk.

“What are you doing?” He hisses as I smear the Nutella over his nipples and as answer, I slowly lick the sweetness from his chest.

He groans low and deep when I add more Nutella and continue removing it with my mouth. Swiftly, he takes the jar from my hands, picks me up by the hips and puts me down on the counter. His lips come crashing down hard and mercilessly on mine.

Overcome with desire, I wrap my legs around his waist and push closer to him. I eagerly caress his chest where my lips were a moment ago and his fingers curl into my hair as his tongue demands entrance.

Our breathing is rapid and shallow when he pulls away long enough to get rid of my shirt and bra. His palms are warm and hungry on my naked skin, and I revel in his touch as our kiss turns greedy.

Gently he pushes me backwards until my back is on the cold counter. Our eyes lock as he undoes my jeans and strips them down until I am naked. He picks up the jar and I shiver involuntarily as he traces a finger with Nutella over my breasts down to my navel.

I gasp for air when he leans forward, and his tongue and lips follow the path his finger has drawn. The kitchen fills with my moans as he licks and kisses me. He picks up my legs and I wrap them around his neck as he continues moving lower.

“Hm, yes,” I moan when his mouth finally reaches its destination between my legs. My fingers cramp into his hair and I open my legs wider as he caresses my clitoris.

Everything fades away until I am only aware of him and the havoc he is creating between my legs.

“Axel,” I pant, and I tighten my grip on his air as my muscles tighten.

“Stop,” I beg as I fight my orgasm.

“What’s wrong?” his voice is hoarse and warm against my skin.

“Nothing,” I struggle upright and reach for his pants. “I just want you to join me.”

He claims my lips feverishly as he undoes his pants and drops them to the floor. His fingers dig into my hips to pull me closer to the edge of the counter. His green eyes bore into mine as he tediously slowly enters me and my eyes flutter close when he completely fills me.

With a content sigh, I wrap my arms around his neck and my legs around his waist. The fulfilment of him inside me is overwhelming and I whimper in delight as he shoves into me.

I am so incredibly close to release, and I know I cannot hold on much longer. My muscles pull tighter, and my breathing becomes heavier with every thrust. Desperate for him to join me at this

height, I suck on his mark and his growl echoes loudly through the kitchen. He increases his rhythm and I scream out my ecstasy when my orgasm waves over me at the same time as he jerks against me.

Breathlessly we cling to each other until. Our jagged breathing is the only sound in the kitchen.

“Desert before the entree,” he grins as he slightly pulls away to kiss me. “I can get used to it.”

“This wasn’t desert,” I playfully make my eyes big at him. “This was the appetiser.”

“You mean there’s more?” He raises his eyebrows.

“Only if you’re up for it,” I shrug nonchalantly.

“Desert is for those who finish their meals,” he chuckles as he kisses me on the tip of my nose. “You need to put clothes on, our food will be here any minute.”

“Yes, Alpha,” I snort as I scoot off the counter and reach for my underwear.

“Liana,” he reaches for my hand. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” I look at him flabbergasted. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Leon,” he says the word softly as if he is afraid that he might disturb the light-hearted atmosphere.

I do not answer him as I put on my clothes and take a seat. Axel looks at me and sighs before he reaches for his pants.

“I guess I’m a terrible sister,” I say softly after a while. “I didn’t want him dead or hurt but ... I’m relieved in a sense. It’s liberating to know that nobody will knock on my door again because he owes money. I know it sounds selfish and horrible, but the only memories I have of him are ones of him wanting money.”

“You’re not a terrible sister,” Axel takes a seat next to me. “He was a terrible brother.”

“Regardless,” I shrug. “It doesn’t matter what he did, he was my brother and I ...”

“Don’t you dare,” he cuts me off and takes my hands into his. “Don’t you dare feel guilty. Leon was going to die whether you paid or not. I promise you I will find whoever is responsible.”

“I know,” I smile weakly as I rest my head against his shoulder. “But I cannot shake the thought that things could’ve been different if I paid.”

“There are always what ifs and maybes,” Axel kisses me on the top of my head. “Just be careful that it doesn’t cloud the facts.”

“Thank you,” I sigh as I close my eyes and hug him. “For everything.”

Chapter 68_You're To Blame

Chapter 68 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I am laying snugly in Axel’s arms as I stare out of the window. The grey clouds and soft rain reflect my mood perfectly. I am in complete turmoil about seeing my parents. Especially Mother. Leon was her favourite and perfect child. She is going to be inconsolable.

“Are you sure I can’t come?” Axel murmurs as he kisses me on my neck, and I turn around to face him.

“Yes,” I cup his face and kiss him softly. “There’s nothing you can do, and you’re needed here.”

“I can come as support,” he catches my bottom lip between his teeth, and I kiss him eagerly.

“You’re always supporting me,” I smile as I pull away. “But your pack needs you more.”

“Do you have to go so early?” He complains as I get out of bed.

“Yes,” I reply over my shoulder as I walk to the shower. “You already convinced me to leave today and not yesterday. I cannot postpone this any longer.”

“Only if I can join you in the shower,” he shouts after me.

“Then hurry up,” I laugh and open the taps.

**

The bus is overcrowded and stuffy. For a split second, I regret declining Axel’s offer that Drew drives me. But I had an appointment with Michelle and there is no way he will not report that to Axel.

Michelle just confirmed what we both already knew – I am pregnant. I bite hard on my quivering lip as my eyes fill with tears and I place my hand on my abdomen. I am still uncertain if I should keep it. My heart says yes but my mind says no.

The bus approaches my stop and I quickly wipe the tears off my face before gathering my things. At least it has stopped raining – for now. That is one of the reasons I loathed living in a trailer. On rainy days everything is damp and muddy.

My mind is trying to find the right words for my parents as I walk from the bus stop. But my words fail me. What do you say to grieving parents? And I know my mother, she is going to take it out on me. All her grief and anger will be directed at me like missiles through hurtful words.

Without knocking, I enter my childhood home and place my things at the door. Mom is sitting on the couch staring into the abyss. Silently I walk to the kitchen and pack away the groceries I bought for them. I made an effort and bought everything they like. Even chocolate cupcakes that Dad enjoys so much.

“Hello Mom,” I say softly and take a seat next to her.

“I saw everything,” she takes my hand tightly into hers. “And now I cannot sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see them slicing his throat.”

“Mom,” I swallow hard and close my eyes for a second. “Didn’t the doctor give you something to help with that?”

“He did,” she snorts. “But it doesn’t help. I will never forget.”

“Maybe you should talk to someone,” I suggest softly. “I will ...”

“No!” She says sharply. “I want to remember. When the police catch them, my mind must be clear to testify. I want the bastards to burn for what they’ve done.”

“Mom, what happened yesterday?” I finally master to ask the dreadful question.

“They knocked on the door and Leon stepped outside to talk to them,” her voice is a lifeless monotone. “I was watching my favourite telenovela and I didn’t want them to bother me. After a while, I heard them arguing and I walked outside to shut them up but ... we have a new neighbour. His name is Stanley. He was fighting three men while another was holding Leon. One of them pulled out a knife and cut his throat. There was so much blood, Liana. More than I have ever seen. I started screaming and they ran away, leaving Leon there in the dirt choking on his own blood. Your father was outside and ran to help. I couldn’t move. I just stood there screaming and screaming.”

“Oh, Mom,” I sniff as I throw my arms around her shoulders. “I’m so sorry.”

“Stanley called 911 and took us to a hospital,” she continues as if I am not there. “Leon was gone when we came back. All that was left, were blood. But Stanley cleaned it up. He’s a good man.”

“Mom, I ...”

“I need fresh air,” she stands up and leaves me alone on the couch.

I bury my face in my hands as sobs tear through my body. I have never seen my mother like this. She is functioning but it is like she is not here at all. There is no emotion. I was expecting hysterics and blame not this ... this emptiness.

After a moment, I pull myself together and wipe away the tears. I need to find Dad. I am worried about him and his heart. Mother is in such a state, she will not notice if something is wrong with him.

“Dad?” I call and walk to their bedroom, but he is not there.

Slowly I walk to Leon’s room. I inhale deeply and steel myself for what is waiting on the other side of the door. I did not plan to go into his room, and I do not know if I am ready.

Dad is sitting on Leon’s bed with his elbows resting on his knees and his fingers intertwined. His head is hanging low on his chest, and I can hear him sniffing softly.

“Dad?” My voice is hoarse, and my heart is breaking for him. He is such a loving father; he should not have to go through such a thing.

When he hears my voice, he sits up straight and wipes over his face. Quietly I walk closer, but I stop dead in my tracks when he looks up at me. His always tender eyes are blazing with unblemished anger.

“Of all the times you could’ve refused, you chose this time,” he hisses at me.

“Dad, I don’t ...”

“I heard everything,” he bellows as he jumps up and glares at me. “When they attacked Leon, I heard every word. Why didn’t you pay, Liana? Why? You could’ve prevented this.”

“That’s not true,” I defend myself hastily. “They would’ve killed him either way.”

“Liar!” He snaps and I take a step backwards.

Never in my life have I seen my father this angry. It is so unexpected that my mind and body cease. Dumbstruck I stare at him.

“Why are you even here?” He continues mercilessly. “To rejoice that you’re free of him? That you’re off the hook for providing for him?”

“Dad, no,” I start crying as I wreck my mind for words to calm him down. “I’m here to help.”

“We don’t need your help!” He shouts. “When you should’ve helped you turned your back and now my son is dead. You’ve done enough. Leave my house.”

“Dad, please,” I sob. “You’re not being fair.”

“Don’t talk to me about fair,” he yells. “Burying my son isn’t fair.”

“I’m not responsible,” I try again. “I tried, Dad. I really did. You have no idea all the things I’ve done to help. I’m ...”

“It’s not enough!” He bellows. “You should’ve done more. You failed your brother, and you failed me.”

He storms out of the room, and I slump onto the bed as tears stream over my face. Each of Dad’s words was like a punch in the gut. He always saw my side. I could always count on him to understand and support me. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect him to blame me. Mother yes, but not him. His attitude toward me is worse than losing a brother. Even in death, Leon succeeded at taking something from me.

I feel empty and lost by the time I get off the bed. I am too scared to walk out of the room and face Dad. I do not know if I can handle another word lashing. But staying here is out of the question. The room is filled with accusations, and it is smothering me.

With dragging feet and a bouncing heart, I walk to the tv room. Mom is sitting in front of the television, but I can tell that she is not watching. I relax a little when I do not see Dad anywhere.

“Mom,” I say hesitantly as I take a seat next to her. “I’ll arrange the funeral, okay?”

“Why?” She turns to me.

“Because he was my brother,” I reply flabbergasted. “And I want to help.”

“Just send money if you want,” she turns back to the television. “We don’t need your help.”

“Mom, please,” I beg urgently. “Don’t do ...”

“Don’t what, Liana?” Her eyes are dead and dull when she looks at me. “You got what you’ve always wanted. You’re free of your obligation to this family. You never wanted the responsibility and always complained about it. Now you’re free.”

“That’s not true,” I did not know I had tears left but I am crying again. “I did my very best.”

“If that were true, Leon would’ve been alive,” she sighs and turns back to the television.

Defeated I only look at her. I tried to explain but it is like she and Dad refuses to comprehend the words. I want to believe it is only the grief talking but my gut is telling me I am only fooling myself. According to them, Leon’s death is solely on my shoulders.

“Where’s Dad?” I ask. Maybe if I try talking to him again, he will listen.

“At the bar,” she replies. “And you should get going. I don’t want you to miss the bus.”

“Mom, I came here to help,” I say urgently. “I took time off from work to stay here and ...”

“No need,” she interrupts me. “You should go work and add to your piles of money.”

“Will you please stop?” I jump up as I look at her on the verge of hysteria. “Stop blaming me for Leon’s choices. I didn’t borrow the money, he did. I owe hundreds of thousands of dollars and cannot afford more loans, Mother.”

“Nice,” she snorts. “Blame the dead.”

“I’m your child too,” I continue.

“No,” Mother stands up. “You’re not. I don’t have children anymore.”

“Mom, don’t ...”

“Don’t bother coming to the funeral,” she says as she walks to her room. “You’re no longer welcome here.”

My legs give in, and I sit down as she slams the door shut. I knew today was going to be hard, but this is too much. I force myself to stand up and walk to the door.

I inhale the fresh air deeply but a radiating pain rips through my abdomen and I fall onto my knees in the pouring rain.

Chapter 69_Wilson's Plan

Chapter 69 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

“Miss,” a man kneels next to me. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” I pant as the pain subsides. “My stomach ... but I’m okay now.”

He helps me up and I smile shyly at him.

“Thank you ... uhm?”

“Stanley,” he smiles brightly.

“Thank you, Stanley,” I secure my handbag over my shoulder and pick up my bag.

“Can I give you a lift?” He asks as he walks with me in the direction of the bus stop.

“You’re kind, but no thanks,” I close my eyes as my abdomen cramps again.

“It’s raining,” he protests. “You’ll get sick. I promise I’m not a serial killer or ...”

“I know you’re not,” I smile weakly. “You’re the guy that tried to save my brother.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry about that,” he sighs. “I wish ... what’s wrong?”

I cannot stop myself from moaning aloud when the pain hits again and I stop to catch my breath.

“Probable the stomach flu,” I wave it off as nothing. “It will pass.”

“No way,” he shakes his head. “I’m taking you to the hospital.”

“I’m fine, really,” I protest weakly but grab hold of his arm when fresh pain radiates through me.

“Okay, yes please.”

I do not struggle when he picks me up and carries me to his truck. Fuck with dignity and manners. I am in too much pain to walk, and I want every painkiller known to man.

The pain keeps on coming and going as he drives me in silence to the nearest hospital.

“A little help here!” He shouts as he parks at the ER and runs over to my side.

People rush over to me with a gurney, and I close my eyes as I fold double when they push me inside.

“Where does it hurt?” An elder man with kind grey eyes asks.

“My stomach,” I grunt. “It came out of nowhere.”

“What’s your name?” He asks as people move me onto a bed.

“Liana,” I pant as I fight the pain. “Erickson.

“Okay, Liana, I’m Doctor Webber and I’m going to examine you, okay?” He smiles as he pulls up my shirt. Firmly he presses my abdomen but when he presses on the right side, I scream bloody murder.

“Appendicitis,” he mumbles as he pulls down my shirt. “Are you on any medications?”

“Yes,” I whimper and point to my bag. “Everything I take is in there.”

“Doctor,” I grab his coat and he leans closer to me.

“I’m pregnant,” I whisper when he is within earshot. “But don’t tell, please. Nobody must know, please. Not yet.”

“I understand,” he smiles reassuringly and for a split second, I relax. “We will leave it up to you to announce the joyous news when you’re good and ready. For now, we’re going to examine you a little more, but chances are that we’ll have to remove your appendix laparoscopically.”

“No,” I look at him in panic. I want this baby. I have been debating keeping it back and forth but now that the moment is here, I know without a doubt that I want to keep my baby. In the last twenty-four hours, I have lost more than I could imagine. I cannot lose anything else. “My baby, I ...”

“You and your baby will be fine,” he pats my hand sympathetically. “It’s a perfectly safe procedure for pregnant women.”

“Okay,” I exhale deeply and close my eyes.

“Is there anyone we can call for you?” He asks softly. “Maybe your friend that brought you in?”

“He’s a stranger,” I reply. “My parents’ neighbour and a good Samaritan that took pity on me.”

“He’s still here, Liana,” he says softly.

“Please tell him thank you and that I’ll be fine,” I smile weakly.

“Okay,” he pats my hand again. “I’ll see you in a minute.”

“Thank you,” I mumble, and I close my eyes as a nurse pushes my bed down the hallway.

Axel POV

I am at the office sitting at my desk, but I cannot concentrate on my work. I am not happy that Liana has gone alone to her parents. And I am especially unhappy that she is taking the bus.

I do not care that she is right that the pack needs me now or that I cannot do anything for her parents. She is hurting and I want to be there for her. But I cannot force her to include me. The only consolation I have is that Stanley is still there. He will inform me if there is something I need to know.

There is a knock on my door, and I pull myself together when Adele enters.

“Punctual as always,” I smile at her as she takes a seat across from me. “What did you find?”

“The biggest shitshow since Watergate,” she snorts.

“Stacey Brooks,” she hands over a file. “She is Wilson’s mate and over the years she had more ailments than supercalifragilisticexpialidocious has syllables. And she needs a new heart. She is on the transplant list, but no donor heart has come her way.”

“So Wilson gave his,” I nod in understanding.

“Well, it’s a bit creepier than that,” Adele pulls a face. “Wilson not only tested himself, but he also managed to test Nina as well. Both are compatible donors for Stacey.”

“You’re shitting me,” I gape at her.

“I’m afraid not,” she shakes her head. “Only Wilson knows how he did it, but somehow, he got Nina’s blood and had it tested. And not just Nina’s. There are at least twenty other tests, but they aren’t a match.”

“This makes complete sense and also no sense at all,” I lean back in my chair and close my eyes for a moment to sort my thoughts. “If Wilson’s motive wasn’t money, but a heart for Stacey, why did he threaten Liana to pay?”

“Oh, Wilson was a man of many talents,” Adele snorts. “He had a very lucrative sideline as a loan shark – until he dipped into his own pot. Wilson had five investors and he kept up with paying their monthly interests, but their capital is gone. One of the investors, Wyatt Miller, recalled his investment and Wilson could only do a partial repayment. I have no idea what story he fabricated to Wyatt, but according to his emails, he was going to settle the outstanding twenty thousand this week.”

“Wyatt Miller,” I sit up and page through the file. “Anything on Leon Erickson?”

“Not that I can recall,” she frowns. “But the last fifty pages are all names of people that borrowed from Wilson. It’s in alphabetical order. He could be on that list.”

Hastily, I flip to the back of the file and scan through the names.

“He’s here,” I tap on Leon’s name. “He owed Wilson money, but only twelve thousand, not twenty.”

“Wilson didn’t go easy on interest,” Adele raises her eyebrows. “And he charged interest on interest. I bet the original amount was something like five thousand.”

“Interesting,” I mumble as I go through the list. “Have you noticed that almost everyone’s debt has been paid?”

“No,” she scratches her head sheepishly. “Honestly, I haven’t paid much attention to that list.”

“That’s fine,” I smile reassuringly. “See these names? Ivan and Ian? Those were the two men we caught on my property. They either had to do Wilson’s bidding or settle their debt. I bet that everyone that participated in this plan owed Wilson and by helping him he cleared their debt.”

“Have you interviewed anyone?” I ask as I close the file. “Did you talk to Stacey?”

“No, sir,” she replies. “I thought it best to talk to you before we start interrogations.”

“Good,” I nod. “Find everyone on this list that still owes Wilson. Four of them are already locked up. The rest would be Leon’s attackers. But don’t talk to Stacey or the investors until we know more.”

“Yes, sir,” she nods. “Anything else?”

“You’re dismissed,” I smile. “Good work.”

Adele smiles and stands up to leave. I pick up the file again and attentively page through it. The more I read, the brighter the picture becomes. Nina was more than just a tool to control Liana, she was going to be the donor. His suicide was a backup. A last resort if things fell apart.

Either Wilson knew Liana was not going to pay or he simply did not care. He planned the exchange and kidnapping at the same time. He was either going to walk away with the money and the heart or nothing at all. All I need to figure out is why he killed Leon. And how the fuck did he reckon he could get away with it? Surely, he must have known that Nina’s disappearance would not go unnoticed. Unless ...

“Holy shit,” I mumble as I frantically page through the file until I reach the page I was looking for. A deed to a house in Rochester, Minnesota. The home of Mayo Clinic – one of the most prestige cardiovascular facilities.

Wilson never planned suicide as a backup. He did it on the spur of the moment because it was his only way out. No, he took the gun to kill Liana. Leon and Liana were loose ends and needed to be tied up. Nina was going to be transported to Rochester and then be sacrificed for his mate. With a new identity, his investors would not have found him and since his enterprise is illegal, they could not call in the authorities to help. And the poor bastard had no idea that Liana is my mate. Never in his wildest dreams would he have thought that I would be looking for him.

My phone rings and with irritation, I reach for it and decline the call without looking at the name. Figuring this out is a priority. But my phone immediately starts ringing again and with a grunt, I pick it up. Instantly my stomach dives when I read the name.

“Stanley, what’s happening?” I ask brusquely.

“It’s the daughter, sir,” he replies. “She’s sick and I took her to the hospital.”

“What’s wrong with her?” I ask as my blood freeze over.

“They don’t want to tell me, sir,” he says nervously. “I’m not friends or family.”

“I’m on my way,” I bark as I jump up and reach for my keys.

Chapter70_That's Why I Love You

Chapter 70 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

There is a foul taste in my mouth and my eyelids are heavy. I force my eyes open and blink a few times until I register my surroundings. The hospital bed is surprisingly comfortable, and I snuggle deeper into the pillows.

They will only operate tonight because I ate earlier, and my stomach needs to be empty. In the meantime, I had the luxury of a pain-free afternoon nap. Whatever medication they gave me, worked like a charm.

I turn on my side and freeze when I see the sleeping figure in the chair.

“Axel?” I whisper surprised and he opens his eyes.

He looks at me for a second before he jumps up and rushes to my side.

“You’re awake,” he states the obvious as he takes my hand. “How are you feeling?”

“Well rested,” I smile and lean back against the pillows. “How did you know I’m here?”

“The question should rather be why didn’t you tell me you’re here?” He growls as he pulls the chair closer to the bed and takes a seat.

“I didn’t have time,” I yawn and close my eyes. “I was in pain and whatever they gave me made me sleep. Stop avoiding answering my question.”

“I’m not avoiding it,” he chuckles. “Stanley called me. He’s part of my pack, and he was keeping an eye on Leon and your parents. Unfortunately, he failed.”

“He didn’t fail,” I sigh. “He was outnumbered.”

It warms my heart to learn that – despite what Leon has done – Axel tried to protect him. Leon is not part of his pack. Hell, I am not even part of his pack. Still, he protects us. Nobody has ever been so good to me. Not even the people I call family or who said they love me.

Axel has seen me at my worst. I insulted him, doubted him and fought with him. I even threw him with a tomato, but still, he showed up. And yes, he kills people that deserve it, according to him. But he is also the kindest and most considerate man I know. Not to mention trustworthy and loyal. He is the father of my child – whether he wants to be part of it or not – and I love him.

It hurts to know that he will never love me the way I love him. Once our agreement is over, he will politely thank me and let me go. When the time comes, I will deal with it, and I will always be grateful for everything he has done for me. He might not love me, but he has shown me love.

But if I must pick a day to be rejected, today will be it. My parents already kicked me out, I might as well get it over and done with Axel.

“You’re a good man, Axel Silvermann,” I say softly as I fight the sleep. “That’s why I love you.”

“What?” His voice is a mere whisper, and his hold tightens on my hand.

“You heard me,” I smile nervously. Just because I want to deal with this, does not mean he does. I have said it and you cannot take back words. Even when you say something you do not mean, it will always be there lingering. Now the poor man must pick his words carefully to let me down easy. “I love you. Can I go back to sleep now, please?”

“Yes ... no,” he stutters and stands up. “You can’t go to sleep after saying that.”

“It’s the perfect time to say it,” I yawn and turn on my side to sleep. “Now you’re not in that awkward situation that you have to respond.”

“But what if I want to respond?” He protests heftily.

“I didn’t say you couldn’t,” I laugh as I turn back to face him. “But this way you can pretend that I haven’t said anything and avoid the awkwardness.”

“Do you have a fever?” He frowns and places a hand on my forehead. “Or did they pump you full of drugs and now you’re hallucinating?”

“No,” I groan, and my eyes fall closed. “I meant what I said. After the day I had ... things changed and got into perspective. So, I love you and good night.”

His joyous laughter fills the room and I open my eyes to look at him. Of all the reactions, laughing at me was the last I expected. And it stings that he finds it amusing that I love him.

“You should go now,” I turn my back on him and close my eyes. I want to be alone and cry.

“Never,” he comes to sit on my bed and cups my face so that he can look me in the eyes. “I never planned on leaving you and after your confession I sure as hell not going anywhere.”

“Axel, you don’t ...”

“I don’t,” he leans over and kisses me softly.

“But I want to,” he murmurs against my lips. “Because I love you too.”

“You do?” I ask flabbergasted and wiggle out of his hold to sit upright.

“Why haven’t you said anything?” I slap him against his shoulder. “Why make me say it first?”

“Well, first I had to give you time to get over Wyatt,” he shrugs. “And then you sounded so disappointed that you marked me. So, I assumed that you don’t feel the way I do.”

“I wasn’t disappointed,” I protest indignantly. “I was devastated that I disgraced something sacred to you. I can’t believe you made me say it first. What are you doing?”

I laugh softly as he pulls me onto his lap.

“You talk too much,” he mumbles before he kisses me until I am lightheaded.

“If we talked more often, we would’ve figured this out sooner,” I whisper as I close my eyes when his lips trail down to my neck.

“Why do you always fight me on everything?” He grunts against my skin.

“I’m not,” I sigh as he pushes me back against the pillows.

“You’re doing it right now,” he captures my lips and I throw my arms around his neck.

I return his kiss with all the love I have for him. We still have so much to talk about and things to work through, but not now. For now, I am simply going to submit to the happiness that is overwhelming me.

“Excuse me,” a sharp voice snaps me out of my euphoria. “Sir, what do you think you’re doing?”

“Kissing the love of my life,” Axel murmurs against my lips and reluctantly I let him go.

“This isn’t a hotel room,” the resident snorts. “Get off her and return her tonsils.”

“Rude,” Axel gives the resident a deathly look and the young man’s face pales.

“Sir, I’m sorry,” he swallows hard. “I meant it as a joke.”

“Get out of this room and come back in five minutes,” Axel orders him.

“Sir, please,” he looks panicky at Axel. “I need to prep her for the procedure and my boss ...”

“Five minutes,” Axel growls and he scurries out of the room.

“That poor soul,” I laugh softly. “He’s a human and doesn’t know you’re a wolf, Axel. You shouldn’t be so hard on him.”

“He’ll get over it,” Axel snorts before he leans over and kisses me tenderly.

There is a cough from the door and Axel sighs heavily.

“I love you, Liana,” he murmurs against my lips.

“I love you,” I kiss him once more before he stands up.

“And you,” Axel’s voice is loaded with authority. “You need to work on your bedside manners.”

“Yes, sir,” he nods. “I apologize, sir.”

“You better bring her back alive,” Axel threatens him as he starts pushing my bed towards the door.

“Yes, sir,” he nods.

“Good luck,” Axel kisses me quickly. “And come back to me.”

Axel POV

My heart pulls painfully together as I watch the resident push Liana away. I know this is not a life-threatening procedure, but I cannot help but worry. I cannot lose her, not now that I know she loves me.

I have waited and hoped for so long, and now the time has come to confess to her that she is my mate. The happiness I felt when she said those words were overwhelming. I thought my heart was going to explode.

I want to rush home and get her engagement ring to propose when she wakes up, and I must force myself to stay. I am not the world’s most romantic man but hell, at the very least I want to make an effort and give her a special occasion. Doing it in the hospital with the smell of illness and disinfectant would be wrong.

I rub my sweaty palms nervously against my jeans. I hope she says yes when I ask. To love me is one thing, to spend the rest of days with me, is another.

But before I plan anything, I must work on Angela’s situation. Liana was right – I did not think it through properly. Angela wanted Liana dead when I was only sleeping with her. I shudder to think what Angela will do when I break off the fake engagement to marry Liana.

Killing her would solve all my problems and would be so much easier. I will do it in a blink of an eye, but I heard what Liana said the other day. Not only will she feel guilty that Angela had to die, but her parents will also avenge her and start a war with our pack.

What I do know, is that I will not make a decision without consulting Liana. If she agrees to marry me, she will be my Luna and we will be a team. Even though Liana is a human and does not fully comprehend our way of doing, she is reasonable and objective. She is kind-hearted and fair. I never realized how much I need someone like her by my side. I need her voice of reason to keep me from making spontaneous mistakes – like getting engaged to Angela.

I sigh heavily as I sit down and close my eyes. It is going to be at least another forty minutes before Liana's procedure is done and heavens know how long before she wakes up. Time has never moved so slowly before, and this is going to be the longest wait of my life.