

Chapter 25 Drawing As Therapy

Liana POV

I wake up to the sound of mued voices. Slowly, I open my eyes and look at an unfamiliar woman and Carol standing next to my bed.

"Good morning, honey," Carol smiles sweetly at me as she hands me my robe. "This is Doctor Michelle. She's here to check up on you."

"How are you feeling?" Michelle asks.

"Fine, I guess," I mumble as I avoid eye contact. I am naked and this entire situation is uncomfortable and awkward. I am unprepared and honestly, still half asleep.

"I'm going to prepare you something to eat," Carol smiles and walks out of the door.

"Would it be okay if I look at your wounds?" Michelle asks as she puts on gloves.

"Sure," I clear my throat. As if I have a choice.

I look at the wall, the oor, the ceiling. Everywhere but Michelle.

"All done," she smiles and I tighten my robe as she explains wound care and precautions to me.

"Have you considered talking to someone?" She looks at me with kind eyes.

"There's no need," I reply. "I'll be ne."

"Liana," she rests her hand on my shoulder. "None of this is ne. If you don't want to talk to someone, nd an outlet to process what happened to you. Self-care is important."

"Okay," I nod and avoid eye contact.

"Here's my card," she sighs heavily. "Don't hesitate to contact me."

"Thanks," I take the card and look at it for a while.

"Doctor," I call her just as she is about to leave the room and she turns around. "I'm not ungrateful. I'm just ..."

"I know," she smiles sympathetically before she closes the door behind her.

I am about to go to the bathroom when Carol walks in with a tray of food.

"You must eat before you can have your medicine," she places the tray on my lap and sits next to me on the bed.

"You don't have to fuss over me," I smile as pick up the fork and take a bite of scrambled eggs. "Geez, these are good."

"It's because you're hungry," she chuckles. "And the secret's in the whisking."

"This was awesome, thank you," I pick up the glass of orange juice and the pills.

"Any requests for dinner?" She asks cheerfully as she picks up the tray.

"Seriously, Carol, you don't have to," I smile at her. "I can take care of myself. My wounds aren't that deep. Even the doctor said so."

"Look," she sighs heavily as she places the tray down on the dresser and comes to sit next to me again. "I know you're strong and independent and don't need my help. And I know you want solitude and space. I'll give you plenty of that, but I'm going to be here and feed you because I care. So, you might as well take advantage of it and tell me what you like."

"Besides," she continues as she stands up. "Drew and Axel will kill me equally if I don't take care of you."

"Fine, I give up," I roll my eyes. "How's your meatloaf?"

"Always perfect," she smiles proudly. "Oh, and before I forget. I took the liberty of ordering you a couple of oversized T-shirts to wear until your wounds are healthier. It should be here in an hour or so."

"Great, thanks," I climb out of bed.

"I'll be in the kitchen if you need me," Carol shouts as she leaves.

I throw a towel over the mirror before I do my business and brush my teeth and hair. I put on clean underwear and tights before I put on the robe again. I will have to parade around like this until the T-shirts arrive.

I take out my sketchpad and pencils and go sit on my bed. I do not even have to think about it, my hand immediately starts owing over the paper.

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"Come in," I say absentmindedly as I ip over the page and start a new drawing.

"The t-shirts arrived," Carol announces as she comes in and places a parcel on my bed. "What are you doing?"

"Therapy," I mumble without looking up.

"May I look?" Carol asks curiously and stands closer to take a peek.

"Nope," I look up and smile. "I'm sorry, I'm not being a b***h. It's just ... It's private. Other people use words and talk things to death. I draw."

"Any other answer and I would've been offended," Carol nods.

"Thanks for understanding," I put the sketchpad down and reach for the parcel.

"And for this," I take out a shirt.

"My pleasure," she smiles. "Dinner will be ready at seven."

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Axel POV

The closer I get to the cottage, the lighter my heart feels. Liana was on my mind the entire day. There is no way I was going to leave her home alone today and when Carol volunteered to stay, I reluctantly agreed. I did not want to go to work but I had to deal with the mess at the restaurant. I also gured Liana might need some space. Plenty was said last night but she endured a lot and I do not want to smother her.

My stomach growls happily as I walk up to the cottage and the aroma of food hits me. I never ate today and now I am starving.

I am surprised to hear Liana laughing carefree when I walk inside. I thought the atmosphere would be stiff and gloomy. As quietly as I can, I walk to the kitchen. Liana, Drew and Carol are sitting at the table playing cards.

"You're cheating," Carol accuses Drew. "You always cheat."

"I'm not," Drew huffs. "You're just losing."

"What's this then?" Liana chuckles as she picks up a card underneath Drew's chair.

Instantly, Drew and Carol start arguing with Liana offering her two cents.

"Drew, you're busted," I say as I walk in, and stop myself just in time before I give away my secret and kiss Liana.

"Finally," Drew huffs. "Now we can eat."

"Please," Carol rolls her eyes. "You're just happy the game is over."

"You look better," I smile at Liana as I take a seat next to her.

"Much better," her smile is so pure and genuine that I forget to breathe for a second. "How was your day?"

"Chaotic," I wipe my thumb and index nger over my eyes. "Nothing new."

"Axel," Drew reaches into his pocket. "I found your phone. It slipped in between the seats. I took the liberty of charging it for you."

"Thanks," I take the phone from him. "I was going to replace it today but never got around to it."

The second I turn it on, it starts chiming.

"How long have you been without a phone?" Liana looks at it in surprise. "There's so many notications, it sounds like you're playing a game."

"A week," I sigh as I look at the messages in consternation. It is going to take me an eternity to work through all of this. "Hey, you send me a message."

"Time to eat," Liana announces and looks at me. "You can read those later. You heard Drew, he's hungry."

"He's not the only one," I put the phone away, but I am dying to read her message. "I'll help you set the table."

Within minutes, the four of us have set the table and we are enjoying Carol's delicious meatloaf. We were halfway through when my phone starts ringing.

"Sorry," I mumble as I reach for it. "I'll silence it and call back later."

I silence my phone and take the opportunity to quickly read Liana's message. I grind my teeth as I put it away. Her message does not sit well with me. Why does she not want to study anymore? That was her ultimatum. What happened that she changed her mind?

"This was fantastic, Carol, thank you," Liana sighs contently as she puts her cutlery down.

"As always, wife, well done," Drew looks at her lovingly.

"Thank you," Carol thrives under the compliments. "Drew, Axel, you guys don't mind doing the dishes, do you?"

I stop chewing and look at her in awe. Has she lost her mind? Asking the future alpha to do the dishes is unheard of.

"I'll do it," Liana volunteers.

"No, honey," Carol smiles mischievously. "You're going to shower and I'll assist you while they do the dishes."

"Yes, dear," Drew says somberly as he stands up and starts gathering dishes.

"See?" Carol says with satisfaction. "Everything sorted."

"If you say so," Liana gives me a wicked grin as she stands up. "Thank you, gentlemen."

"I'll get you for this," I mind-link Carol but she only smiles at me.

"Get your things ready," Carol urges Liana. "I'm just going to give them a quick tutorial on how to do dishes and then I'll be there."

"What are you up to?" I grunt when Liana is out of earshot and Carol's face changes from carefree to serious.

"There's a sketchpad on her bed," Carol whispers urgently. "Look at it when we're in the bathroom."

"I'm not going to invade her privacy," I say adamantly. "She'll show me if she wants to."

"Just do it. I got a quick glimpse earlier," Carol hisses at me. "You need to see it."

I am still lost for words when Carol walks out of the kitchen. I take a moment to deliberate on the situation. I do not want to do it, but Carol would not insist if she did not think that is necessary.

"Excuse me," I mumble as I walk to the room.

The bathroom door is closed and I can hear Liana and Carol talking. I pick up the pad and open it.

"Dear goddess," I murmur as I page from one drawing to the next.

It is like looking at real photographs. But it is the last pages that rip my guts to shreds. Images of an angry Liana, holding up his st, ready to punch. Brad with crazy eyes and a paw for a hand. And lastly, a wolf with a missing eye.

I swallow the bile that is rising in my throat as I put the sketchpad back and return to the kitchen.

Without a word, I pick up a cloth and start drying the dishes. Now I am grateful Carol gave us this tedious task. I need something to do while I process what I have just seen.

Those images of Brad were like looking into Liana's mind and seeing what she had to endure.

None of those are doodles, as she calls it. It is memories. Vivid and real and brilliant. Even those monstrous drawings of Brad are awless. Clearly, she has a talent and passion for it. Why would she give up on an opportunity to explore it?