

Chapter 51 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

My eyelids are heavy, and my body is sore and sensitive in all my intimate places when I wake up. But I am not complaining. Last night was incredible.

I turn around and smile when I look at a sleeping Axel. I nestle closer to him and close my eyes. After last night I will need a week of sleep to recover.

But try as I may, I cannot fall asleep. My mind is too busy. In reality, Axel and I have a dysfunctional relationship. What we have will never survive. We do not talk things through. We disagree, fight and then end up in bed.

I have no idea how he truly feels about Angela. Sure, he tells me he has no time for her and is downright rude at times. Even in public and in front of other people. But still, he tolerates her, and she keeps on coming back to him.

He says he is doing it because of her parents, but Angela ... she does not strike me as the self-loathing type that will tolerate such behaviour. She is a proud, spoiled and self-righteous woman. Why is she clinging to Axel? Why endure humiliation and rejection time after time?

If this were a real relationship, I could have talked to him about it. I could have told him that I love him and that Luther will never be more than a friend. Instead, I must be satisfied with pretending and incredible, mind-blowing sex.

Frustrated with myself and the situation I turn onto my side with my back towards Axel and stare through the window as the dark sky slowly turns to light.

If this were a real relationship, I could have told him about Wilson without fearing that he might think I am only using him to solve my problems. I honestly do not know what I am going to do about Wilson.

It does not matter from which angle I argue the situation, I end up with the same result. I can find a way and pay Wilson but what about next time? Because let us be real, there will be a next time with Leon.

Wilson is scum, but getting rid of him is not the solution. Leon will continue with his ways and there will always be another bookie looking for money. There will be a day when I cannot pay and then what? Those people are ruthless. What if they go after my parents?

I might not have a solution, but I know what I do not want. I do not want to involve or endanger Nina and Axel. And until I can devise a plan, I will string Wilson with the idea that I will pay him.

“Why are you awake?” Axel murmurs behind me as he puts his arm around my waist and pulls me closer to his chest.

“Why are you?” I smile as he kisses my shoulder.

“I must go to work,” he mumbles as his lips trail from my shoulder to my neck. “You’re not.”

“I can make you breakfast before you go,” I turn on my back to face him.

“You’re my breakfast,” he nibbles on my ear, and I close my eyes as his hand slips between my legs.

“Fine,” I spread my legs and curl my fingers into his hair. “Coffee then.”

“Sounds perfect,” he smiles leisurely as he settles between my legs. He keeps my gaze as he slowly enters me.

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I take a seat on the couch and pull my knees to my chest as I drink my coffee and stare out of the window.

Axel has left for the day, and I already enjoyed a long and luxurious bubble bath. Today I am only going to relax. I refuse to think about Leon, Wilson or Angela. But before I can finish my coffee, my phone rings.

“Hello Leon,” I greet politely.

“Hi,” he greets jovially. “Mom asks if you had sent this week's money. The groceries were delivered, but no money.”

“No,” I grunt through clenched teeth. The bloody cheek! “I have been discharged from the hospital less than twenty-four hours ago. When the hell was I supposed to get the time?”

“Geez, relax,” Leon snorts. “No need to bite the messenger’s head off. And if you have time to order groceries, you have time to send money.”

“The groceries are preordered and paid,” my voice is strained as I control my anger. “And since we’re talking about money. What’s the story with you, Wyatt and Wilson?”

“I have no idea ...”

“Don’t even think about it,” I cut him off brusquely. I am on the verge of hysterical rage, and it is not going to take a lot to push me over the cliff. “Playing dumb with me is not going to work. I’m not Mom that eats your shit for breakfast.”

“You know what?” His voice climbs an octave higher. “If you weren’t so stingy and helped out more, I wouldn’t have to find other ways to stay alive.”

“Twenty thousand, Leon,” I shout into the phone beside myself in anger. “Twenty-fucking-thousand. That is not the cost of living.”

“It’s with interest,” he replies as if it is the most obvious thing in the world.

“Leon,” I hiss as I close my eyes and take a deep breath. “Listen carefully, I’m not paying them. I don’t have the money. Even if I could afford it, I wouldn’t. I’m done with you.”

I end the call before he can reply. Furiously I pace up and down in the living room. I do not think I have ever been this mad in all my days. Heaven knows I try my best to be a good person. I turn the other cheek and suck it up when I feel I am being treated poorly. But I had enough. No more.

I take out my phone and send Wilson and Nina a message before I grab my handbag and walk to the bus stop.

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The coffee shop is fairly quiet when I walk inside, and I immediately spot Nina.

“You don’t look like someone that almost died,” Nina teases me when we are done hugging and greeting.

“At least I have that going for me,” I laugh softly. “How are you?”

“Great,” she smiles but her eyes betray her. “Wilson said ...”

“About him,” I cut her short and look her straight in the eye. “I invited him as well; he’ll be here in half an hour.”

“Really?” Nina looks surprised but not overexcited. “I thought you hated each other.”

“I still do,” I smile sourly. “But there’s something else I want to discuss with you before he arrives. I’m being blackmailed.”

“What?” She gapes at me. “How? Why?”

“Leon,” I roll my eyes. “He owes money and now the bookie wants me to repay it, or he’ll hurt someone I love.”

“That’s terrible,” she reaches over the table and takes my hand. “What are you going to do?”

“What would you do?” I throw the ball into her court.

“Well, I guess I would’ve paid,” she says after a moment of silence.

“And if you don’t have the money?” I raise an eyebrow.

“Protect the loved one,” she frowns. “At the very least, warn them.”

“Okay,” I nod and take out my phone. I scroll to the photo of Wilson and Stacey and hand it over to her. “You’re the loved one and Wilson the bookie. He’s only dating you to force me to pay Leon’s debt.”

Nina’s eyes nearly pop out of their sockets as she looks at me in disbelief and slowly shakes her head.

“I’m sorry to blurt it out like this,” I say urgently. “But we don’t have time for niceties and arguments.”

“I ... I suspected he is cheating,” her voice is hoarse as she hands me back my phone. “After our last conversation, I started to notice small things and I realized you were right. But this? Liana, this is mad. Do you have any proof besides the photo?”

“Sure,” I smile as I watch a frowning Wilson walking towards us. “You can ask him yourself.”

“Hello, ladies,” Wilson greets friendly as he pecks Nina on the cheek before he takes a seat across from me and next to Nina. “What a delightful surprise.”

“Cut the crap,” I sneer. “I told her everything. She knows about the money.”

“Nina, babe,” he turns to her. “I thought you said she’s fine after the accident. What is she talking about?”

“Be a man and tell her the truth, Wilson,” I challenge him. “Tell her how you and Wyatt are preying on women for money.”

“That’s not true,” Wilson spats the words. “Wyatt and I ...”

“You know Wyatt?” Nina interrupts. “Why haven’t you told me?”

“Surely you don’t expect me to list every person I know,” Wilson snorts.

“Yeah, but I told you in detail what happened,” Nina says sceptically. “And not once did you say that you know him.”

“Lies by omission,” I say before Wilson can reply. “All for ten thousand dollars.”

“Ten?” Wilson explodes and nearly elevates from his seat. “It’s twenty.”

“So, it’s true,” Nina gasps as her eyes fill with tears. “You could’ve only corrected her if it’s true.”

“You bitch,” Wilson sneers as he leans towards me. “You think you’re so smart, but what do you think is going to happen once you leave here?”

“Absolutely nothing,” I smile victorious as I stand up.

“Come on,” I take Nina’s hand and pull her to my side and out of Wilson’s reach. “Go collect from Leon, I’m not his keeper. We’re leaving.”

“This isn’t over,” Wilson growls. “Not by a long shot.”

“Maybe not for you,” I smile sweetly. “But it is for us.”

“Fine,” he leans back in the chair. “Take Nina, I’m bored with her anyway. But if you don’t pay, I will break every bone in Leon’s body.”

“You can break his neck for all that I care,” I snort.

“What have you done?” Nina whispers in a panic as we leave. “He will wait for me when I get home and ...”

“You’re not going home,” I say adamantly as I lead her out of the coffee shop.

Chapter 52 Under my Protection

Chapter 52 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

“No, no, no,” Nina shakes her head wildly as she comes to an abrupt standstill and jerks free from my hold. “This ... this is absurd and crazy and ... and I ...”

“Nina!” I say sharply and rest my hands on her shoulders. “Calm down, it will be fine.”

“Fine?” She shrieks. “How can things possibly be fine? You heard Wilson, and we have no idea what he is capable of.”

“I have a plan,” I try to calm her, but she looks at me with tear-filled eyes.

“He ... he broke my heart,” she sobs. “Now he’s going to break my neck.”

“Oh, goddess,” I roll my eyes and grab her by the arm. “Now is not the time to be hysterical. Come on.”

“Where are we going?” She sniffs. “It doesn’t matter where we hide, he’ll find us.”

“We’re not going to hide,” I say adamantly as we walk down the street.

I turn a deaf ear to Nina’s complaints as we walk to Silver Enterprises. Never in a million years did I think she will lose it like this. Trying to explain to her what I have in mind, will be a waste of time. She is too caught up in the drama in her head.

The guard at Silver Enterprises gives Nina a questioning look but he does not say a word as we walk past him. I ignore the curious glances and head straight for the elevators.

“Liana,” Juliana looks at me in surprise. “What are you doing here? Aren’t you supposed to be in the hospital?”

“I was set free,” I grin as I guide Nina to a chair and help her take a seat.

“I need a favour,” I turn to Juliana. “Can you please keep an eye on her while I talk to Axel? And order her sweet tea. She got some ... uhm, shocking news.”

“Sure,” Juliana nods.

“Thanks,” I smile and walk towards Axel’s office.

Axel POV

I am sitting behind my desk while I rhythmically tap with my pen on the desk. Last night with Liana was spectacular but still, I cannot shake the feeling that something is wrong.

When we had coffee before I came to work, she was cheerful and talkative, but there was something in her silence that sets off alarms in my head. The restlessness in her fingers as she fumbled with the spoon and her cup. The faraway look in her eyes when the conversation stops.

Something is bothering her, and I do not know what it is or what I can do to show her that I am here for her and that I will support her – no matter what.

There is a soft knock on my door and my eyes widen in surprise when Liana enters.

“Why are you here?” I ask concerned and am instantly on my feet. I walk over and pull her into my embrace. “You’re supposed to be at home resting.”

“I know, I know,” her smile is strained as she looks up at me.

“We need to talk,” the seriousness in her voice wakens an ominous feeling and I nod as we take a seat on the couch.

“It’s Wilson,” Liana sighs. “He came to see me in the hospital.”

Intensely I listen to the story and the more Liana talks, the angrier I get. My mate is being blackmailed and threatened. Wilson will not survive this, I swear.

“And you’re telling me this now only?” I jump up and shove my balled fists into my pockets. It hurts that she does not trust me enough to have told me sooner.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbles and starts fumbling with her fingers. “I ... I didn’t want to burden you with my family. You’ve done so much already.”

“Dammit, Liana, why would you think that?” I close my eyes as exhaustion takes over. What have I done or said that gave her the idea that she is a burden to me?

“Because you don’t owe me or my family anything,” she stands up and walks to me with blazing eyes. “I get that you’re mad at me for not telling you, but this is ultimately my problem and not yours. And I’m sorry that I’m running to you once again with my drama. I know you’re busy and don’t have time for me and my fucked-up family. The only reason I’m telling you now is because this involves Nina, a pack member, and I don’t want to be responsible if something awful happens to her.”

“Is that what you think?” My heart cramps painfully. “That you’re a burden and that I don’t have time for you?”

“Axel, I’m a rental remember?” She laughs humourlessly. “I don’t expect anything.”

“So, last night meant nothing to you?” It feels like she stabbed me straight through the heart. “All the things I said meant nothing?”

“You said those things in the heat of the moment,” she blushes a little and avoids eye contact. “People say crazy things then and I’m not going to hold you to it.”

“Oh, really,” I squint my eyes and cross my arms in front of my chest. “And with how many men have you slept that made you come to that conclusion?”

“Only you,” she mumbles as she turns beet red. “But in all the movies and books they always ...”

“You’re more than a rental, Liana,” I grunt. Liana is naïve and I get why she has a tough time trusting me but that does not mean her words did not hurt. “And you shouldn’t believe everything you read and see. I meant every word I said last night.”

“Okay,” she lowers her gaze. “I’m sorry.”

“I still can’t believe you confronted Wilson,” I shake my head in disbelief. “Do you have any idea how dangerous and irresponsible that was?”

“I had to take a stand, Axel,” she says irritated. “If I gave in to his demands now, he would come back for more. You and I both know my brother won’t stop. I didn’t act on the spur of the moment. I thought it through. That’s why I arranged a meeting in public and not some dark alley. And that’s why I’m here.”

“He could’ve hurt you,” I say urgently. “Do you have any idea how many ways there are to grab you before you could get to me?”

“I said I’m sorry, okay,” she blurts out and glares at me. “And I will say it a thousand times more, but I cannot undo it.”

“I’m not saying it to make you feel bad, Liana,” I say angrily. “I need you to understand the repercussions of your actions.”

“I get it,” she shouts at me.

“No, you don’t,” I bellow beside myself with frustration. “I already had to pick up your lifeless body once, I won’t survive it a second time.”

“You don’t get it,” I take a step closer to her and her eyes widen. “You don’t understand the fear and panic. You don’t understand the helplessness and pain when the person you ...”

Abruptly I stop talking and close my eyes. I nearly said love and now is not the time.

“You just don’t get it,” I say softly as I walk to my desk and sit down.

“Axel, I ...”

“Just leave it,” I sigh heavily. I am done. I have done everything I could to make her love me. I made promises and reassured her over and over that I will be there. I gave her the space and freedom she asked for. I made love to her over and over and it did not work.

Liana is not a wolf, and she does not feel the mate bond like I do. For her, love weighs heavier than the bond and she does not love me. It is time for me to accept it. I should reject her and set her free.

But just thinking of the words, makes my throat pulls close and it feels like I cannot breathe.

“So,” I clear my throat. “There is more to this than your delinquent brother. It is about my pack members and their illegal activities. If Wilson can blackmail you, he will do it to others.”

“Axel,” Liana’s eyes are insecure as she looks at me and takes a seat. “I ...”

“Nina will be under my protection,” I cut her off brusquely and look away. My heart is breaking and dealing with Wilson is a welcome distraction. “Where is she now?”

“In the waiting room,” Liana whispers.

“Please call her in,” I lean back in my chair and watch as Liana gets up and walks to the door. I close my eyes and take a deep breath before I mind-link the guards.

A moment later Liana and Nina enter and take a seat across from me. Nina’s face is red and puffy from all the crying, and she looks at me with fear-filled eyes.

“You can relax,” I smile to ease the tension. “You’ll be safe. Guards will take you home. Pack what you need, you’re going to stay on my property until this is resolved. You’ll also have a bodyguard at all times, even at work. You’re not alone and don’t have anything to worry about, okay?”

“Thank you, Alpha,” she smiles weakly.

“Axel, thank you,” Liana smiles. “And I’m really sorry.”

“One more thing,” I force myself to smile for Nina’s sake. “I’m sending you two to a spa for the weekend. I think it will be safer if you aren’t within the borders for the weekend while my men and I start our investigation.”

“Is that really necessary?” Liana asks quickly.

“Yes,” I lie smoothly. Truth is I need time without her, and I know I will not be able to stay away when she is a few feet away in her cottage. “But don’t worry, there will be guards accompanying you.”

There is a rapid knock on my door and four warriors enter my office.

“Ladies,” I look at the men. “Meet your guards. Nina, they will escort you home. Liana, Drew is waiting for you in the parking lot.”

Liana opens her mouth as if she wants to say something but then she looks at me for only a second before she turns around and leaves the office.

Chapter 53 Don't Leave Me Like This

Chapter 53 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

“David,” I call the senior guard as they are about to leave. “A word, please.”

David closes the door once we are alone and turns towards me.

“Nobody touches them,” I give him a deathly stare to emphasize my words. “Not even so much as a hug. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Alpha,” David nods and shifts uncomfortably on his feet.

“Is there a problem with the order?” I raise my eyebrows.

“No, Alpha ... uhm, maybe,” he stutters. “The girl with the black hair is my mate and well ... it’s going to be hard to keep my distance.”

“Nina’s your mate?” I gape at him in surprise.

“Is that her name?” David asks and I notice he has a difficult time to contain his excitement.

“Yes,” I smile at him. “And the blond, Liana, is her best friend. Fine, you’re allowed to touch Nina, if she allows you. But that’s it. Do you understand?”

“Loud and clear, Alpha,” he smiles.

“And since you’re Nina’s mate, you’ll be her bodyguard,” I grin. “You’ll stick to her like glue. Even when she goes to work.”

“With pleasure, sir,” David smiles brightly.

“You’re dismissed,” I sit down behind my desk as David hurries out of my office.

Poor bastard, I sigh inwardly. Hopefully, he will have better luck than me. Nina and Liana’s situations are very similar regarding past relationships. I did my best and could not reach Liana.

I call in another guard and order him to temporarily move to the park where Liana’s parents live. I do not want to take any chances. If Wilson cannot find the girls, he might be desperate enough to target her parents. And I know Liana, she will never forgive herself if that happens.

Absentmindedly I stare out of the window once all the arrangements are in place. I feel empty and dead inside. I have lost my mate. She does not love me, and I cannot force her. I might as well cut my losses and marry Angela. Not for any other reason than an heir.

Devastated by reality, I make arrangements for transportation and stand up. I must go to Liana and say goodbye. There is no longer a need for our agreement.

Liana POV

“What’s wrong?” Drew asks as I get into the car.

“If you don’t mind, I don’t want to talk about it,” I try to smile but instead burst out in tears.

“Oh, honey,” Drew pats me on the leg. “Is it really that bad?”

“This time yes,” I cry harder. “Axel ... he’s so ... so m ... mad at me.”

“He will calm down,” Drew says reassuringly. “He always does. Just give him time.”

“That’s the problem,” I weep. “He is calm. Angry and calm. He’s never going to speak to me again.”

“He will,” Drew says sympathetically. “Just hang in there, this too shall pass.”

“Thanks,” I sniff and hug Drew quickly before I get out of the car.

I know Drew meant well, but he did not help. He did not see Axel. He does not know what happened. The way Axel dismissed me was clear. He is done with me.

I knew this day would come, I sniff as I take a bag and start packing for the weekend with Nina. I just did not think it would be so soon. And I did not think it would hurt so much. For fuck’s sake, I caught my fiancé in bed with another woman and it did not hurt this much. I was angry and devastated but not hurt. Now it feels like I will never pick up the pieces and move on.

“Liana,” Axel’s voice echoes through the cottage and my entire being stills. Is he really here or have I completely lost my mind?

Hastily I wipe the tears off my face and run towards the front door.

“Axel,” I smile happily when I see him walk towards me. “I’m surprised to see you.”

I intertwine my fingers to keep them from reaching for him. Honestly, there are so many things that I want to say and do and none of them are niceties. But after the way we left things in his office, I do not know what to expect.

“I’m here to say goodbye,” there is no emotion in his eyes or on his face as he puts his hands in his pockets.

“It’s just for the weekend,” I laugh nervously.

He only looks at me for what feels like an eternity and anxiety builds higher and higher inside me. I have never seen him this ... this serious and it scares me.

“Goodbye, Liana,” he smiles softly as he cups my face and strokes my cheek with his thumb.

He steps back and turns around and that is when the earth crumbles around me. He is really doing it; he is leaving me.

“Axel,” I shout on the verge of hysteria and run after him.

With all my might I push the door shut as he opens it and turn to him. My plea and protest froze in my throat and for a moment I can only look at him.

“Don’t go,” I finally croak the words. “Not like this.”

“Liana, I ...”

“Please,” I beg as I cup his cheeks and kiss him all over his face. “Please. Not like this. Don’t send me away feeling like this. Please, I’m begging, Axel, please.”

He growls deeply before his arms go around my waist like iron clamps. Desperately I cling to him when our lips collide. I kiss him hungrily as he picks me up and carries me to the bedroom.

My panic and fear turn into desperation and desire as I hastily start undressing him. I need to feel him, touch him. The room fills with our heated breathing as we get rid of our clothes and our naked bodies entangles with each other.

I push him onto his back and straddle him. I lean forward and caress his chest with warm and eager kisses. He moans softly when I suck on his neck and his fingers dig into my hips. From the very first time, he loved kissing me on my neck and even though I do not really understand it, I know this spot has a significant meaning. And I am desperate to keep him with me. So, I keep on caressing the spot as I centre his shaft at my core.

I take a moment to tease him as I rub and circle him at my entrance. The harder I suck on his neck, the heavier his breathing becomes, and I know that he enjoys it. I bite into his neck as I lower myself onto him. The moment I bite, Axel roars and he thrusts hard into me before he jerks and ejaculates.

For a second, I fear that I have gone overboard and hurt him with the bite. He never cums so quickly, but he pulls me to his chest with brutal force. Harsh, passionate kisses rain down on me as he rolls me over onto my back.

“What have you done?” He growls and I swallow hard when I notice his eyes are more black than green.

“Nothing,” I whimper. “I only wanted to please you. You like being kissed on the neck and ...”

My words are cut off when he kisses me wildly. His hands are rough and almost painful as they explore my body. His hands and mouth are everywhere and all over me and I try to keep up. I have never experienced Axel like this before. It is like it is him, but it is not.

Unceremoniously he flips me over onto my stomach and lifts my hips. His erection is hard and throbbing between my legs and I steady myself on my knees. Ruthlessly he shoves into me, and I cry out. His rhythm is hard and fast and my fingers curl into the linen for support. Axel reaches from behind and starts rubbing my clitoris as he increases his pace. My climax builds rapidly as he stimulates me mercilessly.

Every muscle in my body tenses and my legs start trembling. I cry out in ecstasy when my orgasm hits me, but Axel keeps on shoving into me until I am nothing more than a trembling and whimpering mess.

Axel growls long and deep when he finally relieves himself into me. I collapse forward onto the bed, trying to catch my breath.

“Are you okay?” He asks as he picks me up and cradles me against his chest. I look into his eyes that is now the familiar green that I love so much.

“I’m fine,” I smile as I nestle closer to him. Honestly, I can take much more if that means he will stay with me.

“Are you sure I didn’t hurt you?” He studies my face intensely.

“Yes,” I sit up and kiss him.

Instantly his arms go around my waist and his lips are warm and tender. He lays me down back onto the pillows and trail kisses down my jaw, to my neck and lower before he settles on my breasts.

I sigh and close my eyes as my fingers get lost in his hair. He lifts himself and settles between my legs. In contrast with earlier, he enters me slowly and gently. His mouth is tender and warm on my lips as he rhythmically thrusts into me. I glide my hands over his back and dig my nails into his bottom as I lift my hips to be closer to him.

I moan softly when my orgasm washes over me and Axel grunts against my lips when he joins me. For a moment we remain like that as we catch our breaths.

“You must get ready,” he says as he gets up and starts dressing. “David will be here any minute to take you to the spa.”

“Axel, are we okay?” I ask softly. I cannot shake the feeling that he is still mad at me.

“Sure,” he replies but does not look at me.

“Are you still mad at me?” I whisper as I bite back the threatening tears.

“Go and enjoy your weekend,” he leans over and kisses me quickly before he turns around and leaves.

Motionless I sit on the bed and stare at the entangled sheets. Tears start streaming down my face. He did not answer my question and I know; we are not okay. This might very well be the end.

Chapter 54 Love Stro...he Mate Bond

Chapter 54 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

The second I am out of the door; I shift and tear my clothes to pieces. I run and run until my lungs burn like fire.

Exhausted I sit on my hind legs and look up at the sky before I howl long and hard. I was ready to let her go and then Liana marked me. My mate marked me, and she does not even know it.

I shift back and shamelessly start to cry as I touch my mark. I cannot blame her. This is not her fault. She did not know better but that does not change what happened. I tried my best to keep my wolf under control but the second she bit me he demanded domination. He wanted his mate. I am just grateful I could stop him before he marked her.

This is supposed to be one of the happiest moments of my life, instead, it turned into a dreadful mess. It was going to hurt when I reject her without a mark. Rejecting her with a mark is going to be downright unbearable.

Not to mention the effect it will have on my wolf. If I reject Liana, he will mourn her for the rest of our days, and it will be a daily struggle to keep him calm and reasonable. But if I do not ... the longer we are without our mate, the more aggressive he will become.

And Angela ... marrying her now would mean certain death. My wolf will rip her apart the moment she tries to touch me intimately.

How did everything become such a mess? I went to say goodbye to her. Now I am sitting in the woods naked and crying.

My choices suck, I sigh as I stand up to shift back and go home. If I reject Liana, I will turn into a mean, aggressive person. If I do not, I will bind Liana to a lifetime of unhappiness. Whatever I choose, someone will suffer. All I have to decide if it is going to be me or her.

Liana POV

I do not even bother wiping off the tears as I continue packing. I cannot stop thinking about Axel.

This is over, really over. The thought hits me hard and I must sit down when my legs give in.

“Breath,” I murmur when it feels like I am about to suffocate. Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale.

“Breath, dammit!” I yell hysterically and fall to my knees. Raw sobs rip through my chest as I rest my forehead on the floor. I wail like a wounded animal but at least I can breathe again.

It feels like an eternity until I am calm enough to continue with the task at hand. I place my bags at the door and get into the shower. My body is sensitive and tender as I gently wash myself and here and there a bruise is already visible. And I do not even mind, I sniff as fresh tears pour over my cheeks.

I dry myself and get dressed before I do damage control with makeup. Nina will bombard me with questions when she sees me like this.

There is a knock on my door, and I quickly gather my last things before I rush to the door.

“Are you ready to go?” The guard asks politely.

“Yes,” I nod. “You’re David, right?”

“I am,” he confirms with a smile as he picks up my luggage and I follow him to the car. Another guard opens the backdoor for me and I smile at him as I get inside.

“Have you been crying?” Nina whispers as I settle next to her.

“Not now,” I mumble and motion towards the guard that is sitting in the passenger seat.

Nina nods in understanding and I lean back against the seat and close my eyes in exhaustion.

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“Liana,” Nina’s voice is soft and soothing. “Wake up, we’re here.”

“Already?” I blink a couple of times as I sit up and look at my surroundings. Day changed into night while I was sleeping. Bulbs are hanging from the big old trees that are surrounding the buildings. Giving the place an atmosphere of fairies and mystique.

“What do you mean already?” Nina laughs as our doors open. “You’ve been snoring for three hours.”

“I don’t snore,” I roll my eyes at her as I get out of the car.

“Ask David if you don’t believe me,” Nina laughs.

“Mike, get the luggage,” David smiles mischievously at Nina as he orders Mike. “I’ll escort them inside.”

“So, Mike,” I squint my eyes at him as we walk inside. “Do I snore?”

“I believe that it would be safer for me not to get involved,” he replies with a stoic face and Nina bursts out laughing.

Curiously, I look at her, but I do not say anything. She is in good spirits for someone that broke up with her boyfriend earlier today.

Nina babbles nonstop about the five-star resort as we walk to our rooms. I smile and make the appropriate noises, but I do not hear a word. My heart is mourning Axel and all I want to do is curl up in bed and cry until I dissolve into a puddle.

“These are your rooms,” David points to two doors next to each other. “We are across from you. A guard will be outside your door at all times. Don’t hesitate to call if you need anything.”

“Thanks, David,” I smile politely as I enter my room and walk straight to the windows. I pull open the curtains and look at the bright, blue pool that is glittering in the lights. Behind me, somebody brings in my luggage and leaves.

“Can you believe this place?” Nina bursts into my room a few minutes later. “It’s awesome.”

“Yes, it is,” I hide my dismay behind a smile as I turn around.

“Do you want champagne?” She asks eagerly as she walks to the minibar. “Or wine. They have both.”

“What’s going on with you and David?” I ask as I reach past her and take out a bottle of sparkling water. If I start drinking now, I will never stop and then I must fight a hangover on top of a broken heart.

“Nothing,” she shrugs nonchalantly as she takes out a bottle of wine and pours herself a glass. “But he’s sooooo hot, don’t you think?”

“Nina,” I sigh heavily as I sit down on the couch. “Wilson broke your heart like five minutes ago. Don’t you think you should slow down for a second before jumping into David’s arms?”

“Says you,” she snorts as she takes a seat on the sofa. “You jumped into bed with the alpha.”

“And look how well that worked out for me,” I grunt, biting hard onto my quivering bottom lip. Honestly, how could I still have tears left?

“It did,” Nina shrugs. “You got a job and ... hey, why are you crying?”

“It didn’t work out, Nina,” I sniff and wipe the tears off my face. “It’s worse. Everything is worse.”

“You’ll need to explain,” Nina gets up and brings a box of tissues as she sits down next to me. “I know we haven’t been as close as we used to be, but you seemed so happy when we talked.”

“I was happy,” I grunt, frustrated, pulling out a tissue. “And then I fucked it up and fell in love with him.”

“You’re in love with the alpha?” Nina gapes at me.

“Yes,” I shout as I throw my hands up in the air. “Of all the stupid, moronic things I have ever done, this is the worst.”

“Don’t say that,” she gently places a hand over mine. “He obviously likes you too. I mean, he wouldn’t have slept with you or helped you if he didn’t. Maybe he’s also in love with you and you just don’t know it.”

“No,” I shake my head as my lips curve down sourly. “It’s over. We had a big fight and ... and he said goodbye.”

“All couples fight,” Nina tries to cheer me up. “I know it feels like the end, but it doesn’t mean it is. You guys can still work things out.”

“You don’t understand,” I sniff and close my eyes for a moment before I look at her again. “I’m a human, he’s the alpha. He will never pick me. Not even if he’s head over heels in love with me. It’s not allowed. Besides, his parents already picked out a bride for him.”

“For real?” Nina looks at me with big eyes.

“Fucking Angela,” I snort and roll my eyes.

“I’m so sorry, Liana,” she leans over and hugs me tightly. “You don’t deserve this.”

“Yeah, well, it is what it is,” I shrug as she pulls away. “So listen to me when I tell you to go easy with David. You don’t want to end up where I am. Trust me, it sucks.”

“What are you going to do?” Nina asks concerned.

“I’ll suck it up, I guess,” I shrug as I laugh humourlessly. “I’ll work at Silver Enterprises until Juliana comes back from maternity leave. Repay my debt, pack up and leave. There’s not much else I can do.”

“I know I sound insensitive, but you’ll heal,” she says compassionately. “You’ll meet a great guy, and you’ll forget about Axel.”

“No,” my voice is hoarse as I look at her. “I won’t. Wyatt was my mate, Nina. The strongest bond for wolves. And I didn’t feel an inch as bad as I do now. Sure, it was humiliating and painful, but it was bearable and forgettable. The love I have for Axel is stronger than the mate bond I had with Wyatt. I couldn’t breathe, Nina. When he left my room, I couldn’t breathe. I collapsed on the floor and cried like a baby as I was fighting for air. So, no, I won’t get over Axel and if, by some miracle, I do, I don’t want somebody else. Because this kind of pain is not something that I want to experience twice in a lifetime.”

“I’m so sorry,” Nina whimpers as her eyes fill with tears.

“I know,” I sniff as I get up.

“I need fresh air,” I say over my shoulder as I leave my room.

Chapter 55 | Must Reject Her

Chapter 55 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

“It’s Monday,” I mumble to my reflection in the mirror as I fix my makeup. I am not ready for today. I am not ready to face Axel, but I have no choice.

After my emotional breakdown Friday night Nina gave me all the support and space I needed. She carried me through the worst and by Sunday I could actually smile and enjoy activities with her.

But that was yesterday. Today I will see Axel and I do not think I am ready for it. Scrap that, I know I am not ready.

I still wake up in sweat crying every night. I still struggle to breathe when I replay our last encounter. My heart still pulls painfully when I hear his name. I am not fine.

“Holy mother of pearl,” I mumble when I open the cabinet to put my makeup away and I notice my contraceptive pills. I have not taken a pill since ... since that dreadful day that Angela locked

me in the bathroom. And with being in the hospital and dealing with Wilson and Axel dumping me, it completely slipped my mind.

I sigh as I toss it back into the cabinet. There is no use in taking it now. Axel left me. I will never have sex again. The thought creates fresh tears and I shake my head.

“Suck it up,” I say to my reflection before I put on my sunglasses, grab my handbag and walk to the car waiting for me.

**

I am relieved when I walk into the office and notice that I am the first to arrive. I need more time to build up the strength to talk and laugh with Juliana as if nothing is wrong.

I pick up the stack of papers that needs to be documented and sit down at my desk. Longingly I look at Axel’s office door. Is he here yet? Should I check and say hello?

I have not seen him since Friday, and I miss him so much.

No! I reprimand myself when I feel the tears creeping up and pull the papers closer. I cannot sit here and cry, I need to work.

**

“You’re here,” Juliana says happily, and I look up in surprise. I was so deep in my work that I did not hear her. “Welcome back.”

“Good to be back,” I smile at her.

“I hope Axel is in a better mood today,” she sighs as she places her handbag down and starts her computer. “He was downright full of shit after you left.”

“Really?” Interested I look up from my work.

“Don’t say I said that,” she whispers with big eyes. “He’ll fire me.”

“No, he won’t,” I chuckle.

“Friday he would’ve,” she snorts.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell,” I smile as I continue with my work.

“I’m going to make coffee, do you want?” Juliana asks as she walks past my desk.

“Yes, please,” Axel replies, and my hands jerk over the keyboard in fright.

Don't look up, don't look up, I say to myself as I look up. My heart stops and my blood freezes when our eyes meet.

"Yes, sir," Juliana's reply splinters the moment and I look down at my hands.

"No, thank you," I clear my throat and start typing random letters with trembling fingers.

I have no idea where I was, and Axel is still looking at me. The last thing I want is for him to know how unnerved I am.

"Liana," my name sounds like honey on his lips, and I steel myself as I look up at him. "Can you come to my office please?"

"Sure," I clear my throat as I pick up a pen and my diary.

My heart is beating a thousand miles per minute as I follow him into his office. I wonder if he can hear my heart beating. Wolves have exceptional hearing, he might and if he does, he can tell how I feel.

"How was the weekend?" He asks as he drapes his jacket over his chair.

"Good," I say as I take a seat. "The resort was lovely, thank you."

"I'm glad you liked it," he smiles as Juliana comes in with the coffee.

I sit quietly and look at my hands as Axel talks to her before she leaves.

"Liana," he clears his throat. "We should talk."

"No," I shake my head adamantly. I already know what he is going to say, and I cannot hear it now. I will suffer another panic attack and being dumped by him is humiliating and painful enough. To hear the actual words will break me. "I ... uhm, let's stick to work."

"Okay," he says after a moment of silence, and I feel his eyes on me. "I must go to Dallas again for three weeks. Please book a flight and accommodation."

I nod as I scribble it down. Not because I am afraid that I might forget a single instruction but because it keeps my hands busy, and I do not have to look at him.

"Anything else?" I clear my throat and look up. Which is a terrible mistake because I am instantly sucked into his eyes.

"Yes," he stands up and I keep my eyes fixated on the clear blue sky behind his desk. "I need to know how you're doing."

I close my eyes and swallow hard as he sits down next to me.

Axel POV

“Axel, please,” her voice is nothing more than a whisper. “I cannot do this here.”

“I cannot go to Dallas not knowing,” I take her trembling hands into mine. It is killing me to see her like this. The weekend was hell. My wolf yearned for her and so did I. Neither my wolf nor I will be calm when I go to Dallas, and she is still unhappy.

Has she somehow figured out that she marked me and regrets it? Did I hurt her when my wolf was dominant when we made love?

“I must go,” she sniffs and dashes for the door. But I am quicker and block her way.

“Why are you so upset?” I frown as I lock the door and rest my hands on her shoulders.

“Really?” She sneers with a quivering bottom lip. “Like you don’t know.”

The pain in her blue eyes is like a dagger in my heart. My wolf did hurt her!

“I’m so sorry,” I say urgently as I place my palm against her cheek. “I never meant to hurt you. It’s complicated but my wolf ...”

“It doesn’t matter,” she cuts me off. “It’s over and in the past.”

“No,” I say adamantly as I cup her face and kiss her softly. “It’s never okay to hurt you.”

She sighs as I deepen the kiss and my wolf rejoices when she responds eagerly. How am I ever supposed to let her go? I groan inwardly as she puts her hands on my wrists and pulls away.

“Please forgive me,” I mumble as I rest my forehead on hers.

“There’s nothing to forgive,” she smiles softly before she gently kisses me. “It’s not your fault.”

“Liana, I ...”

“I need to go,” she clears her throat and unlocks the door. “Your plane ticket isn’t going to magically appear from the sky.”

Defeated I hang my head and close my eyes. I cannot go to Dallas, not like this. Not while she is hurting. It does not matter that she says it is fine, her eyes are telling a different story.

“Liana,” I open the door and walk to her desk. “Please come with me.”

She looks at me in bewilderment for only a second before she follows me to the elevators.

“Where are we going?” She asks as the elevator descends.

“I signed a multi-million dollar contract in Dallas,” I explain as I lead her to the parking lot. “And you’re sorely mistaken if you think that I can do my work efficiently when you’re looking like this.”

“Looking like what?” She frowns as we get into the car.

“Like a kicked puppy,” I grunt as I start the engine and pull away.

“You apologized and I accepted,” she crosses her arms in front of her chest. “End of story.”

“If only you meant it,” I grunt as I drive deeper into the woods to the place, I showed my wolf to her.

“I did mean it,” she argues. “You’re forgiven.”

“Fine,” I kill the engine and turn to face her. “If I’m forgiven, why can’t you look at me?”

“Because it took me an entire weekend to stop crying,” she explodes and looks at me with pain-filled eyes. “And I don’t want to go back to that. I’m not upset or angry. I’m trying to heal, and it’s not easy, okay?”

I swallow hard on the disgust as I look at the trees. I never knew I hurt her so deeply. She might forgive me for what I have done but I will never forgive myself. Up to this point, I was debating whether or not I should reject her but now I know. If I love her at all, I will set her free. My wolf and I will learn to deal with the rejection, but I cannot continue knowing that I am responsible for her pain.

“What are you doing?” She asks softly as I open the door and climb out.

“I’m going to tell you something in a minute,” I undo my tie and throw it back into the car. “And then I’m going to shift. You should take the car and go back to the office.”

“Axel,” her eyes widen as I take off my shirt.

“Wait,” she shrieks as she gets out of the car and runs towards me.

“Did ... did I do that?” Her voice is hoarse, and horror is written over her face as she touches my mark.

The mate bond sparks through me, and I quickly step away from her.

“It’s nothing,” I mumble as I take off my shoes and pants. I need to reject her and fast. She simply touched my mark, and my wolf is already aroused. He is going to fight me on this. Once I have uttered the words, I must shift and run away as fast as I can before he goes berserk and kills what is in front of him.

Chapter 56 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

Panic creates havoc in me as Axel undresses. My eyes fixated on the mark on his neck. I did that. Me, the girl crying her eyes out because he left me. Why would he want to stay? Look what I have done to him!

He has been apologizing and asking for forgiveness when it should be me grovelling in front of him. I was the moron falling in love, I am solely responsible for my broken heart. It is not his fault. And I am the one who inflicted physical pain, not him. For fuck's sake, I scarred him.

"It's not nothing," I shout as I grab his hands before he can pull down his boxers.

"Please," I beg softly as I look at him. "I'm the one that should be apologizing, not you."

"It's not what you think," he smiles sadly. "It doesn't hurt."

"Bullshit," I grunt and gently lay my fingers on the mark. Instantly he flinches and I look at him sternly. "See? It does hurt. It's warm and obviously sensitive to touch. It's most likely infected. You need to go to the doctor and have that looked at. You'll probably get a tetanus shot."

"No, I won't," he laughs heartedly, and I look at him flabbergasted.

"This is not funny, Axel," I say furiously. "This could become life-threatening if left untreated."

"It's a little funny," he winks at me.

"Asshole," I shove him hard against his chest, turn around and blindly storm off.

"Liana, wait," he shouts.

"Die and see if I care," I yell angrily over my shoulder.

Can anyone please explain to me why I love that jerk? I put myself through hell this weekend thinking that he left me when he only could have told me that I hurt him. And now, when I apologized for it and try to be helpful, he laughs at me. Laughs!

"Will you stop running away?" He catches up with me.

“No,” I grunt and keep on walking.

“You’re going the wrong way,” he chuckles.

“Any way away from you is the right way,” I huff.

“Why are you so mad?” He grins.

“Because you’re laughing,” I come to a standstill and turn to him. “That thing could start oozing pus any second and you’re laughing about it.”

“Okay, wow,” there is no laughter in his voice and his eyes are serious when he looks at me. “There is nothing wrong with my mark. I’m a wolf, remember? If there’s one thing I know, it’s bitemarks. It’s not infected, and nothing will discharge from it. I will not have seizures and die.”

“Is that why you laughed at me?” I ask angrily. “Because I’m too stupid to know that.”

“Liana, I didn’t laugh at you,” he rests his hands on my shoulders. “I promise. It was cute that you care, and it made me happy.”

“You’re still a jerk for laughing,” I say stubbornly as I walk back to the car. But I must bite my lip to stop myself from smiling as relief washes over me.

I still feel terrible for biting so hard but at least he is fine. And I put myself through hell for nothing this weekend. He did not leave me, I assumed that he did because of his reaction. A reaction I caused by biting him.

Axel POV

I laugh softly as I watch her walk away but my smile falters after a moment. She still has no idea what this mark means.

I sigh heavily as I follow her to the car. I must tell her the meaning. It will be selfish not to. Liana must decide what she wants to do about it.

A part of me does not want to do it. If I do not tell her, she cannot reject me. But keeping this to myself is getting dangerous. I will not be able to control my wolf forever.

“Liana, wait,” I call as I jog to her, and she turns around. “We need to talk.”

“That doesn’t sound good,” she swallows and looks sceptically at me.

“It’s serious,” I nod and take a deep breath as I search for the right words. “You’re right, the mark isn’t nothing.”

“But you just said ...”

“Medically it’s fine,” I cut her off and take her hands to calm her down. “But ... what are you doing?”

My mind ceases as she leans forward and gently kisses my mark. Instantly my wolf stirs, and my erection grows.

“Apologizing,” she smiles sweetly.

“You shouldn’t do that,” my hands ball into fists as I fight my wolf. “I don’t want to hurt you again.”

“I don’t understand,” she frowns.

“When you touch my mark, you’re connecting with my wolf,” I struggle to say the words and ignore my desire. “That’s why things got so rough Friday, and you got hurt.”

“You didn’t hurt me,” she looks at me in amazement. “It was different but not painful at all.”

“Good to know,” my chest heaves up and down as I concentrate on my breathing. “You should go now.”

“Are you about to shift?” She looks at me with big eyes.

“Pretty much,” I grunt. “So, please, stop talking and get out of here.”

“But I’ve seen your wolf before,” she protests. “What’s different now?”

“Liana, please, this is becoming unbearable,” I kneel and dig my fists into the dirt. “Touching my mark arouses my wolf. I must either shift and get rid of this energy or take you to bed. So please, for the love of the goddess, leave.”

“Then take me to bed,” she whispers as she kneels next to me and kisses my mark.

I growl loudly as desire pulses through me but that does not deter her. It only encourages her to suck on my mark and I lose it. My wolf wants his mate and she just offered herself to him.

My arms clamp around her and she wraps her legs around my waist as I stand up. Liana keeps on caressing my mark as I walk to the car with long strides. My erection is painfully hard by the time I open the backdoor and lay her down.

We maintain eye contact as she removes her clothes and lays on her back. My wolf growls in satisfaction when she places her ankles on my shoulders. I drink in her naked beauty before I slowly bury myself in her warmth. She moans softly and swirls her hips and I thrust faster and deeper into her. Her breasts move along with my rhythm, and I cannot tear my eyes away from her perfection. Liana moans louder and I reach for her clitoris. She gasps loudly as I stroke her with the same rhythm as I shove into her.

“Yes,” she arches her back, and her legs start trembling as she cums. I shove harder and deeper until I find my release and ejaculate.

My legs are weak, and I close my eyes for a moment to regain my composure. Liana removes her legs from my shoulders and stands on her knees in front of me as she wraps her arms around my neck and longingly kisses me. I wrap my arms around her waist and pull her closer to me as I deepen our kiss.

“Now, isn’t this more fun than running,” she murmurs against my lips.

“We still need to talk,” I chuckle before kissing her again.

“If it’s bad, I don’t want to hear it,” she says determinately as she pulls away and starts dressing.

“It’s not bad,” I sigh as I walk to my bundle of clothes. “It’s complicated.”

“I don’t want to talk about that either,” she replies, and I shake my head.

“Liana, if we don’t talk about this, I’ll be taking advantage of you and I don’t want to,” I explain as I pull up my pants.

“Fine,” she hops out of the car fully clothed. “What’s so important that you need to spoil my afterglow?”

“This mark,” I point to my neck. “It means something to wolves, Liana. You accidentally marked me like I’m your mate.”

“What?” Her head jerks to me and her eyes are wide as saucers. “Are you serious?”

“Now is not the time for joking,” I sigh as I take her by the arm and lead her towards the car. “It’s a wolf thing. We mark our mates by biting onto the neck.”

“But I was Wyatt’s mate and he never said anything,” she frowns confused. “Or tried, for that matter.”

“Because he was in love with Gwen and not with you,” I explain as we drive back to the office. “When we find our mates, we can choose to accept or reject them. If we choose to accept, we complete the ritual by leaving a mark and that’s when our wolves connect.”

“Oh shit,” she looks at me with devastation. “I’m so sorry. How do we fix it?”

“You either become my mate or you reject me,” I answer nonchalantly but honestly, my gut is in turmoil. I deliberately do not tell her that we are mates. I do not want to force her to accept me. If she chooses me, it must be out of love and not an obligation. This is the moment of truth. My mate is either going to break my heart or make me the happiest man alive.

“What happens to the mark if I reject you?” Her question makes my blood ice over and I hold tighter onto the steering wheel.

“It will fade away and disappear,” I reply through clenched teeth.

“Good,” she sighs and rests her hand on her chest. “I would feel terrible if I scarred you for life by accident.”

Her answer is like a ton of bricks dumped onto my heart and I keep my eyes fixated on the road. I feel like shit, and she has not even officially rejected me. It is going to hurt like a bitch.

My phone rings and I answer when I see the office’s number.

“Sir,” Juliana’s voice fills the car through the speakerphone. “Angela is here to see you.”

I close my eyes and crank my neck to the side. This is the very last thing I expected or needed.

“Tell her I already left for Dallas,” I say brusquely and disconnect the call.

“Are you okay?” Liana asks concerned. “You’re as white as a sheet.”

“Just peachy,” I grin sarcastically. The last thing I want to do is make her feel guilty for rejecting me, but I am incapable to pretend that it does not hurt. “I simply don’t have the energy to face Angela.”

“Okay,” she replies softly as I pull into the parking lot.

“Please book my plane ticket and mail the details,” I manage to sound normal and look at her. “I’m going to hide at the airport.”

“Have a safe trip,” she leans over and kisses me quickly before she hops out of the car and walks away.

Chapter 57 Axel Is Engaged

Chapter 57 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

I speed off with screeching tires towards the airport. I am relieved that I packed last night and loaded my luggage. I do not want to risk going home and finding Angela’s parents there as well.

Liana does not want to be my mate. The words are like hot daggers jabbing me. I replay our conversation over and over in my head. Trying to figure out if her decision would be the same if I have said things differently.

“Dammit!” I hit the steering wheel in frustration. I should have coerced her into accepting me. Why did I have to be so stubborn? Why does it matter so much that she loves me? If she accepted me, she could learn to love me over time.

No, I sigh. That is selfish. I cannot say I love her and then put my happiness above hers. Besides, if she stays with me in obligation I will always wonder where she is and who she is with. I will turn into a jealous and paranoid freak questioning all her relationships. That will make us both miserable.

It sucks, but I did the right thing. I laid out the options and she made a choice.

And there still is hope, I try to cheer up myself. Until she officially rejects me, I have time to show her how much I love her. I only wish I did not have to go to Dallas and leave her. On the other hand, this trip can turn out convenient. Liana can use this time to come to terms with everything and she could very well change her mind.

Liana POV

I cannot get rid of the ridiculous grin on my face as I walk to the office. All that drama and tears over the weekend were for nothing. I got into my own stupid head and tortured myself for no reason. Axel did not leave me.

I still cannot believe I marked him. That was a terrible thing to do, and I feel awful about it. I might not be as educated on wolves as I should be, but common sense tells me that I overstepped. Marking is a mate thing. Axel said so himself. It is not a sex thing. And I violated the mate bond by marking him without his permission. In human terms, it comes down to abuse. The thought turns sour in my gut, and I swallow hard. I owe him so much more than an apology.

Axel is such a good and kind man. He was not angry when I did this despicable thing. He did not blame or hate me for it. Any other person would have been furious. Instead, he explained the situation and told me how I can fix it. Not to mention the mind-blowing makeup sex.

Oh, shit! My hand stills midair when I reach to press the elevator’s button. I did not take my contraceptive pill this morning. I thought we were over, and I do not need it anymore. I must get to the pharmacy at lunch for an emergency contraceptive and start taking my pills again. When Axel returns in three weeks, it will be safe again.

Satisfied that all is well again, I walk into the office and smile at Juliana as I sit down behind my desk. I book a flight and accommodation for Axel and mail the information. Poor man, he still has another three hours to kill at the airport before he can board the plane.

“Where did you go?” Juliana asks out of the blue.

“Excuse me?” I frown and look up at her.

“You and Axel,” she leans forward on her desk. “Where did he take you?”

“Oh, that,” I lower my eyes and clear my throat as I think of an excuse. Lying always comes around and bites you in the ass, but telling the truth is out of the question. So, I decided to stick to the truth ... from last week. “Do you remember my crying friend from Friday?”

“Yes, Nina,” Juliana’s eyes start twinkling and instantly I can tell she loves gossip.

“She got involved with a guy that’s not her mate,” I explain. “And it turns out he’s a dangerous person to know. Axel agreed to help her, and we went to sort out loose ends from Friday.”

There, I smile satisfied. Not a single lie. Axel and I did sort out Friday’s events.

“You know,” Juliana sighs and shakes her head. “I never could understand why people get involved with anybody other than their mates. Call me old fashioned, I don’t care, but you don’t jump into a relationship if it’s not your mate.”

“In her defence, she’s human,” my smile is strained. I might be defending Nina here, but I am also defending myself. Axel is not my mate and not only are we sleeping together, but I also marked him. “She didn’t know he wasn’t her mate.”

“Oh, I’m not judging her,” Juliana says hastily. “If anything, I pity humans for not having the mate bond to guide them.”

“You do realize I’m human, right?” I raise my eyebrows. Juliana is dangerously close to offending my specie.

“Of course I know,” she looks at me as if I have lost my marbles. “And I’m not insulting you, I’m sympathetic. The mate bond guides us to our perfect match. We don’t have to search and date frogs to find our princes. Sure, our mates can still turn out to be a douche, but the odds are in our favour more often than not. It’s not like that for you. You can fall in love with the wrong person and have your heart broken over and over. And my judgement is reserved for wolves messing around with random people. They have the guiding system and should know better. Nina isn’t at fault, the wolf is. He knew better.”

“I guess you have a point,” I sigh as I overthink her words. In theory, she is right. But theory does not take into account cheating assholes like Wyatt. He was my mate and betrayed me. Axel is not my mate, and he has been my rock from the moment he rescued me and Nina in the parking lot.

“I’m simplifying, I know,” she smiles apologetically. “Nothing is straight forward and there’s always an exception to the rule. Some wolves don’t find their mate and settle for the next best thing. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn’t. I mean, just look at Angela and Axel.”

“What?” my head jerks up and an iron clamp tightens around my chest.

“The two of them together scream disaster,” Juliana rolls her eyes theatrically. “There’s a reason they’re not mates. He’s a good man and she’s horrible. He strives to be a good alpha for the pack, and she only wants status. That marriage is going to be a disaster from the second they say I do.”

“Marriage?” I croak. What am I missing here? I literally had my legs around Axel’s neck two hours ago. He is hiding at the airport to avoid Angela. Why is Juliana talking about Axel and Angela as a couple?

“Yeah,” Juliana sighs and shakes her head. “That witch flew in here on her broom and showed off a monstrosity of a ring, claiming that she and Axel are keeping their engagement a secret until the official party.”

“Oh, wow,” I mumble as I sit back in my chair and try to process all the information. “Axel is engaged.”

“To Angela,” she gives me a pained look. “Can you imagine how demanding and bitching she’s going to be once she’s Luna? She’s already horrible, now she’s going to be insufferable.”

“Yes,” I agree like a zombie. This cannot be true, my heart argues. This is just one of Angela’s lies.

“And I like my job,” Juliana pouts after a moment of silence. “I don’t know if I could continue working here if she starts throwing her weight around.”

“Do you think she’s telling the truth?” I grasp to a sliver of hope. “I mean, Axel would’ve told us, right?”

“In all my years working for Axel he has not shared an inch of his private life with me,” she shakes her head. “And Angela is desperate to marry him. She will not jeopardise her only chance by making up stories and aggravating him.”

I stare blindly at my computer screen. This cannot be true. This has to be a sick joke Angela concocted. Axel promised me Angela will not get away with trying to kill me. He ... the realization strikes me like lightning. Not only did he not do anything about it, but he is also marrying her.

My cell phone rings and dumbstruck I pick it up.

“It’s Nina,” I clear my throat and stand up. “Excuse me, I need to take this.”

“Hi,” I answer the phone as I walk into the elevator.

“I’m just checking in,” Nina says softly. “You didn’t look so great yesterday.”

“It’s horrible,” I burst out in tears as I slide down the elevator's side to the floor.

“I’m coming,” Nina says hastily.

“No,” I say urgently and pull myself together. “I’ll be fine. He left for Dallas.”

“You don’t sound fine, Liana,” Nina says strictly.

“Because I’m not fine,” I pick myself up from the floor and wipe the tears away. “But I will be because I have to be and there’s nothing you can do to help.”

“I can bring wine,” Nina offers. “Wine always helps.”

“It’s not even lunch,” I laugh through my tears.

“It’s lunch somewhere,” Nina scoffs. “And you need it.”

“No,” I sniff and lift my chin. “I appreciate it, but it’s time for me to face the facts. It’s over. It was fun while it lasted, and I will pick up the pieces and move forward. I’ve done it before; I will do it again. I will see you tonight.”

“Are you sure?” She tries one more time.

“I’ve never been surer in my life,” I say, and I am glad when anger starts brewing inside me. Anger is good, anger will keep me going.

We say goodbye and I go back to my desk.

That son of a bitch! Fury rages through me. I am done with him. I am done crying over him. Done sleeping with him and done listening to his sweet words of seduction. I am done, just done.

Chapter 58 Your Plan Sucks

Chapter 58 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

Three weeks. Three weeks have passed since I last seen or heard from Axel. I have ignored his calls and messages. I replied coolly and professionally to work-related emails and messages but that is it. Now I am sitting at my desk and staring at my computer as my nerves gnaw at me.

Axel can walk in here any second and I can only pray that I will seem calm and collected. That he cannot tell that I have fallen apart when I learned about his engagement. That he cannot see that I still cry myself to sleep at night. That it is not obvious that I have not been eating because everything tastes like dust. That I do not look as miserable as I feel. I have been practicing daily but reality is vastly different from what is plotting in my mind.

According to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, there are five stages of grief, and I am pretty sure I worked through all of them.

I am done with denying the truth that Axel is engaged. I went into a manic rage and screamed and shouted at my favourite portrait of him that I drew. In the solitude of my cottage, I told him how much I hated him for making me trust and love him. How much I miss him and how empty everything seems without him. And when I was at my angriest, I broke down crying and started bargaining. I begged him to come back to me. To love me, to pick me. I wanted to promise him the moon and stars and eternity. And then I realised I have nothing to give. I have no bargaining chip. I cannot promise lucrative contracts and allies to a neighbouring pack like Angela. So, I accepted it. I am a human and I cannot bring anything of value to the table.

The ping of the elevator's door pulls me away from my thoughts and I look up – right into Axel's green eyes. My heart starts racing like a horse and I fight the urge to jump into his arms and kiss him senseless. My palms start sweating despite the cool office and the room just got a little bit brighter.

“Where's Juliana?” He asks brusquely.

“Good morning,” I master my brightest smile. “She has a doctor's appointment and will be back this afternoon.”

“Oh, yes,” he grunts. “I forgot.”

“Do you want coffee?” I ask as he storms to his office.

“No,” he huffs before he slams the door shut.

I slowly exhale and sit down. I made it. It was hell and awkward, but I made it. I was friendly and professional just as I planned, and I did not break down or throw myself at his feet begging him to love me.

Progress. I am making progress.

Axel POV

The windows shatter as I slam the door shut and I take a seat on the nearest couch. My hands are trembling, and I ball them into fists.

“She's still here,” I breathe the words in relief.

These past three weeks were hell. She kissed me farewell and then went cold. In the back of my mind, I expected to find her desk empty and her gone. Or that Wilson got to her and made good on his promise. David had to send me pictures of proof that she is unharmed and at home. Not only is she still here, but she is also all smiles.

What the fuck happened?

I want to jump up and confront her, but I cannot bring myself to move. The relief of seeing her is too great. I rest my elbows on my knees putting my face in my hands. I have no idea how I am supposed to handle this situation.

There is a knock on the door, and I look up as Liana enters.

“Jack has sent this,” her voice is steady and sweet. “It’s the new contract. He said he’ll contact you this week regarding a meeting.”

Flabbergasted I look at her as she walks to my desk and places the documents down. It is like watching a stranger. She is not the passionate woman that made love to me before I left. Nor is she angry or silent like the person that ignored me for three weeks.

“Oh,” she turns to me. “And your father phoned, he ...”

“Enough,” I bellow as I jump up and walk to her.

She does not move or flinch. She simply intertwines her fingers and looks at me with a stoic expression.

“What the hell has gotten into you?” I demand and push my hands into my pockets. Goddess knows I would much rather touch her, but she is acting so strange that I fear that she would attack me.

“I’m simply doing my work, sir,” she replies coolly, and her gaze does not waver from mine.

“Liana don’t test me,” I growl deep and low. “You know perfectly well what I’m talking about.”

“My apologies, Alpha,” she bows slightly, and my eyes nearly pop out of my sockets. “I have no intentions of aggravating you.”

“Aggravating me?” I hiss as I cling to the last shred of self-control.

“Aggravating me?” I bellow as I grab her hand and she gasps for air as I press her fingers against my throbbing mark. “You shouldn’t worry about me, Liana. You should worry about him.”

Her beautiful blue eyes look emotionless at me, but she does not move.

“Do you feel it?” I growl.

“Y ... yes,” she stutters. “It’s beating.”

“It’s beating for you,” I warn her softly. “You cannot toy with a wolf like you would humans. Choose your next move wisely.”

“That’s rich,” she explodes as she jerks her hand away and I am relieved to see emotion in her eyes again. “You can string an entire harem along, but I must choose wisely.”

“For the love of the goddess, what are you talking about?” I bellow.

“Angela!” She spits the word as if it is a bad taste in her mouth. “Your fiancé. Tell me, Axel. Does she approve of you fucking me on the backseat of your car or should I expect another attempt on my life?”

“What?” I whisper as the blood drains from my face. How does she know about Angela? Worse, who else knows? The entire idea of the engagement party was to keep this concealed.

“We had an agreement, Axel,” she yells furiously. “No other relationships. I kept my part but you ... you got engaged!”

“It’s not what you think,” I defend myself. “It’s not real. It’s a smokescreen so that she can stay away from you.”

“That’s your master plan?” She raises her eyebrows. “To marry my assailant?”

“Wow,” she throws her hands up in the air. “Now that will teach her.”

“I have no intention of marrying her,” I shout angrily.

“You’re missing the point,” Liana shoves me hard against my chest. “It’s not about your intentions, it’s about your actions. You have no intentions of marrying me but that doesn’t stop us from humping like rabbits. Angela is planning a wedding to a hotblooded alpha. I don’t believe she would’ve said yes without a quick roll in the hay.”

“Believe it!” I interrupt her. “I have not so much as kissed her since I met you.”

“Don’t wrap horse shit and sell it as figs, Axel,” she sneers. “And you can bet that she will definitely kill me once she learns I marked you.”

I stand there like an imbecile as her words hit hard and mercilessly. This is not how I planned things to go. The engagement was supposed to keep Angela occupied while I woo my mate. Now I am stuck with Angela and not with Liana.

“You were laying in the hospital fighting for your life,” I hiss when life returns to me. “I had to do something to keep you safe. My dad is still Alpha and can overrule me. Do you honestly think he would believe that his best friend’s daughter is capable of attempted murder?”

“Then why didn’t you tell me?” Her bottom lip starts quivering and my heart breaks for her.

“Because it’s a ruse,” I say softly as I step closer and rest my hands on her shoulders. “It’s so insignificant and unreal to me that I do not think about it. Because I was occupied with keeping you and Nina safe. I am sorry, Liana. I fucked up and I’m sorry. I haven’t seen Angela since the night we got engaged. And I haven’t kissed or slept with her.”

As I say the words the image of Angela pinned against my bedroom wall taunts me, but I shove it to the back of my mind. Now is not the time to tell Liana about it.

“I’m sorry you had to find out this way,” I sigh as I glide my hands up and down her arms. “I tricked her into keeping it a secret until we announce it at a party that never will happen.”

“Your plan sucks,” she sniffs and wipes the tears off her face as she pulls away from me. “Because you don’t have an exit strategy.”

“Liana ...”

“No,” she shakes her head as she walks towards the door. “I’m done. And at the office, we work. Nothing else.”

“I’m going to kill her,” I blurt out the words as she reaches for the door.

A deafening silence fills my office, and she slowly turns around.

“Have you completely lost your mind?” She gapes at me.

“She tried to kill you, I’m simply returning a favour,” I shrug as I go sit behind my desk.

“She did it at the spur of the moment,” Liana shrieks as she marches to my desk. “You’re planning hers. That’s not the same, Axel.”

“Are you defending her?” I look at her flabbergasted.

“I’m not defending her, I’m protecting you against yourself,” she argues. “The truth always finds a way to surface and when her parents learn that you killed their daughter, there will be war. You’re going to risk your pack, your company, everything you have and cherish to get rid of a nutjob. That’s simply foolish and the price much too high.”

“Then what do you propose?” I raise my eyebrows.

“Marry her for all I care,” she sneers as she turns around and walks to the door. “And you can answer your own damn phones. I’m taking a sick day.”

“Liana!” I call her but she slams the door shut and defeated I stare at it.

What the fuck just happened?

Chapter 59 | Missed You

Chapter 59 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I grab my handbag and storm towards the elevator. So much for my progress. I tried so hard not to get angry, not to cry and not to care. And I failed miserably on all accounts.

Kill her! What the fuck?

I stop at reception and report to Shelly that I am leaving and that she should handle Axel's calls before I walk to the bus stop and go home.

Today I was supposed to prove to myself that I can live without Axel but then I saw him ... I wanted to strip off his clothes, have my dirty, nasty way with him and then kill him for putting me through hell.

Goddess knows I missed that man. It was painfully good to see him again. And I accept his explanation about the engagement. I am not sure if I am an idiot, but I believe him. He did what he could to keep me safe. My anger already subsided when I was leaving the office. I was going to make him stew on it for the rest of today and then tonight ... for fuck's sake! Why did he have to go and spoil it – again – by talking about killing Angela?

How can one man be so kind, so caring and so compassionate just to turn around and murder a person? Granted, Angela is a cow and death becomes her, but still.

I drop my coat and handbag on the couch before I kick off my shoes and fall face-first into the pillows. I scream and scream into the pillows until my screams turn into tears.

Why? I sob into my pillow. Why did I have to fall in love with him?

Axel POV

I am speechless. For the first time in my entire life, I am numb and gobsmacked. By a human! I am supposed to be a mighty alpha and a tiny human ripped me to shreds. I am in uncharted waters, and I suspect that I am drowning.

Do I really want her as my mate? I wonder as I rub my mark. A lifetime with a maneater? Hell, yeah, I smile as I get up. She keeps me honest and on my toes. I need her in my life.

Determined to get her back, I grab my phone and keys to head to her place.

**

It is eerily quiet as I enter her cottage. For a split second, I thought she is not home but then I see her coat and handbag. Silently I tiptoe to her room and find her sleeping.

My heart cramps when I see the tearstains on her cheeks. I am responsible for that. Nobody else. I do not want to make her cry. I want her to be happy.

Softly I sit down next to her and lean forward. She moans in her sleep when I tenderly kiss her on the lips.

Through a haze, she looks at me lovingly for a moment, but her eyes start blazing when she realizes I am sitting next to her.

“Do you visit all your employees when they are on sick leave?” She groans as she sits up.

“Only when they’re faking it,” I smile.

She moans softly as she places her fingers in front of her mouth.

“Are you okay?” I frown when I notice she is paler than a moment ago.

“I am sick,” she stands up and walks to the bathroom. “I’m sick of your shit.”

“I’m sorry I’m such a jerk,” I stand up and follow her. “And I’m here to make it up to you.”

“I need privacy,” she looks me dead in the eyes before she shuts the door and I lean against the wall.

“Liana, I’m serious,” I shout at the door. “We need to talk.”

But the only response I get is unearthly sounds.

“Liana?” I ask urgently but the sounds continue.

Worried out of my mind, I open the door and stare in horror at Liana that is bent over the toilet.

“You are sick,” I rush to her side. I did not think she was serious. I thought she was only trying to get rid of me.

“Go away,” she croaks before a fresh wave of nausea overcomes her.

“I’m taking you to the doctor,” I say adamantly.

“There’s no need,” she grunts as she flushes the toilet and rinses her mouth.

“I’m fine,” she takes out her toothbrush. “It’s just stress.”

“You’re not fine,” I protest as I look at her – really look at her. “You’ve lost weight and you’re pale. You need a doctor.”

“I said no,” she mumbles with a mouth full of toothpaste.

“I don’t care ...”

“Dammit, Axel,” she cuts me off and rinses her mouth before she turns to me. “Give it a rest. Tomorrow is the due date with Wilson, and I’m stressed out about it, okay? I don’t need a doctor.”

“I don’t like this,” I frown. I am still not convinced that she is simply stressed out.

“Neither do I,” she pushes past me and walks to the kitchen. “Throwing up is my least fun activity.”

“What can I do to make it better?” I ask as I take a seat at the kitchen counter.

“Nothing,” she smiles weakly as she pours water into the kettle. “You’re doing everything you can to keep me and Nina safe.”

“David is taking Nina to a hotel tonight,” I inform her as I watch her making tea. “He will stay with her until we catch Wilson.”

“I know,” she nods. “Nina told me and she’s excited about it.”

“Between me and you,” Liana gives me a mischievous look. “I think Nina has a huge crush on David.”

“Between me and you, David is her mate,” I grin.

“Seriously?” Liana nearly spills the tea as she sits down and gapes at me.

“Yup,” I reach over and take my cup. “David told me.”

“But she hasn’t said a word to me,” Liana pouts.

“He hasn’t told her yet,” I take a sip. “He’s waiting for her to recover from Wilson.”

“But why?” She frowns. “That’s wasting time.”

For a moment I look at my tea for answers. Now is the perfect time to tell her that she is my mate. But she is literally sick with worry, and I do not know if she can handle more.

“What would you have said if I told you I’m your mate after you rejected Wyatt?” I ask as I look her dead in the eyes.

“Let’s see,” she taps her finger against her chin as she thinks. “Yeah, you’re right. David should give her time. Because I would’ve rejected you on the spot. Once burned, twice shy.”

I slowly nod as I inhale deeply. Knowing that I was right does not make it any better. It only confirms my fear that I might lose her.

“Are you ready for tomorrow?” I change the subject and reprimand myself for being a coward. I am not ready for her rejection.

“As ready as I can be,” she chuckles nervously.

“You won’t be alone,” I reach over and take her hand in mine. “I promise. I will be with you the entire time.”

“I know,” she swallows and pulls her hand away. “It’s just ... this is new to me. All this drama. My life used to be delightfully boring and predictable.”

“I’m sorry for adding stress to your life,” I say sincerely.

“Please,” she rolls her eyes. “This thing with Wilson would’ve happened with or without you.”

“I’m talking about Angela,” I say softly.

“You can’t control crazy,” she chuckles awkwardly. “It’s not your fault.”

“I’m so sorry ...”

“Listen, Axel,” she looks at me with sincerity. “I came to you, not the other way around. You don’t owe me an apology. I owe you. I call you an asshole and that’s unfair. You helped with my dad and now with Nina. You gave me a job and are paying for my education. You have been nothing but kind and helpful. I wouldn’t have survived these past months if it weren’t for you.”

But before I can say a word, her eyes widen, and she jumps up and runs away. Hastily, I follow her and find her in the bathroom next to the toilet.

“That’s it,” I growl as I pick her up when she is done being sick. “This is not normal. You’re going to the doctor.”

“I’m fine,” she starts crying and I gently lay her down on the bed.

“Okay, okay,” I soothe as I sit next to her and stroke her hair. “The doctor will come here.”

“I don’t need a doctor,” she sniffs as she pulls a pillow over her head. “Go away, this is embarrassing.”

“Liana, how long has this been going on?” I ignore her plea.

“It started yesterday,” she mumbles.

“I don’t believe you,” I say patiently. “You’ve lost too much weight.”

“I lost weight because I haven’t eaten okay,” she says furiously as she jerks the pillow from her face. “I missed you and I couldn’t eat. Happy now?”

“Not at all,” I chuckle as I pick her up and cradle her against my chest.

“Let me go,” she starts wiggling. “I was sick, and I smell.”

“Shut up,” I hold her tighter. “I’m not kissing you.”

“I missed you so much,” she throws her arms around my neck and starts crying.

“I missed you too,” I bury my face in her neck and hold her tightly. When I came here, I expected to grovel for another chance. I did not expect an apology and a confession.

But the joy and happiness I feel are overshadowed by worry as I stroke her back. I can feel her bones underneath my fingers. I do not care how much she fights me on this, but she will see a doctor today. She neglected herself by not eating for three weeks and now she cannot even hold down a cup of tea.

I close my eyes and mind-link Michelle to get here immediately.

“Can I get you anything?” I ask when her crying stops.

“A breath mint,” she groans.

“I’m not a woman with a magic handbag full of tricks,” I say jokingly, and she laughs softly.

“Fine,” she wiggles out of my arms. “I’ll go brush my teeth.”

“Stop worrying,” she makes her eyes big at me when I follow her to the bathroom. “This will pass once Wilson is out of the picture.”

“The doctor is on her way,” I cross my arms in front of my chest as I lean against the frame.

“So unnecessary,” she rolls her eyes.

“Better safe than sorry,” I reply and push myself upright when there is a knock on the door.
“Finish up, I’ll answer the door.”

Chapter60 You Are Pregnant

Chapter 60 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I sigh heavily as I look at my pale reflection in the mirror. My timing to get sick is terrible. Axel and I are supposed to talk things through.

I rinse my mouth after I brushed my teeth – again – and walk into the room just as Michelle and Axel enter.

“I’ll leave you to it and wait outside,” Axel smiles after Michelle and I greet each other.

“This really wasn’t necessary,” I smile awkwardly as I take a seat on my bed. “It’s only stress and it will go away.”

“When stress starts affecting your health, it is necessary,” she takes out my file and starts paging through it.

I do not say a word as I obediently follow her instructions when she examines me.

“And no fever?” She starts writing in the file.

“No,” I shake my head as I dress. “No cramps, no aches or pains.”

“Just vomiting and weight loss,” she takes out a cup.

“The weight loss isn’t relevant,” I protest and avoid eye contact. No way am I admitting I lost weight because I was lovesick. “I didn’t eat because I wasn’t hungry.”

“Lack of appetite is also a sign of stress,” she holds out the cup to me. “I need a urine sample, please.”

“But why?” I frown as I take the cup.

“I need to be thorough,” she smiles patiently. “Nausea is a common symptom for many things. And since you can’t keep anything down, I need to check your vitamin and mineral levels.”

“Fine,” I huff as I walk to the bathroom. This really is a fuss about nothing but arguing about it is only a waste of time.

It is quiet as I sit on the bed and play with my fingers while she tests my urine.

“Good news,” she smiles after a while and turns to me. “You don’t have an infection; you are stressed and ...”

“Told you this was a waste of time,” I grin victoriously.

“And are you aware that you’re pregnant?” She asks softly.

“Yeah, right,” I snort and start laughing. But my laughing quiets down when her facial expression does not change.

“Oh, shit, you’re serious,” I mumble, and she nods.

“No,” I shake my head as I stare dumbstruck at her. “It can’t be. I ... we ... no.”

“Which protection do you use?” She looks sympathetically at me.

“The pill,” I jump up and start pacing in the room. “I took it religiously until ...”

“Until what?” she asks as I sit down on the bed when my legs turn to jelly.

“Until I ended up nearly frozen in the hospital,” my voice is hoarse. “And then we broke up and ... and I didn’t see the need to start again.”

“I see,” she nods as she continues writing in my file.

“No, you don’t,” I am on the verge of panic. “That test must be wrong. I’ve only been with one man my entire life and we haven’t had sex in three weeks.”

“Liana, when you were hospitalized, your system was flushed with fluids to heat you as well as antibiotics,” Michelle explains patiently. “The pill was cancelled out by that. Were you and your partner intimate after your hospitalization?”

“Yes,” I groan as I bury my face in my hands.

“But only like ... five times or so,” I blurt out as I sit up again.

“Once is enough,” she says patiently. “Haven’t you noticed that you missed your period?”

“I don’t know ... I ... uhm, I didn’t track it,” I stutter with a blush as I take out my phone and open the calendar.

“Oh, goddess,” I mumble when I notice I am two weeks late. “I was preoccupied, and I didn’t notice.”

Truth is, I was zombified because I missed Axel and simply did not pay attention to anything.

“Are you sure you’re not mistaken?” I look at her hopefully.

“It’s very unlikely, but it could be a false positive,” she nods. “According to your timeline, this is an early pregnancy, a blood test will confirm it.”

“Fuck me,” I mumble and hold out my arm. “Take my blood.”

“You’ll have to come to my office for that,” she smiles, and I drop my arm. “In the meantime, I’m going to give you an injection to help with the nausea and a vitamin shot.”

I simply nod as she takes out a syringe. I was not prepared for this news and am still processing it.

“Do you want a sedative for the anxiety?” she asks as she administers the medicine.

“No,” I shake my head adamantly. “I need a clear mind to get through this.”

“Okay. Are you going to tell the father?” She asks sympathetically.

“No!” My head jerks towards her. “And you can’t tell him either.”

“Relax,” she laughs. “There’s such a thing as patient-doctor confidentiality and I don’t know who the father is.”

“So, you won’t tell Axel?” I look at her hopefully. “Even though he’s paying the bill?”

“I’m not allowed to,” she confirms.

“Good,” I sigh relieved.

“Do you know if you’re keeping the baby?” She takes out her prescription pad.

“Let’s first confirm the pregnancy,” I laugh awkwardly.

“Regardless of your decision or the results, I’m prescribing prenatal vitamins,” her voice is calming as she scribbles. “You should start taking it immediately. Your vitamin levels aren’t where it’s supposed to be.”

“Liana,” Michelle gives me a stern look as she hands over the prescription. “I cannot stress this enough. If you don’t start eating and taking care of yourself, I’m going to hospitalize you. If you keep this up, you’re not only risking losing the baby, but you’re also going to dehydrate.”

Especially if the father is a wolf. The strain on a human's body carrying a wolf's baby is much more than for a she-wolf. That's also a reason why you've lost so much weight so fast."

I do not know why her words instil fear in me, and I nod in understanding.

"Make an appointment with my office for the blood test," she starts gathering her things. "And please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any doubts or questions. Especially if you want to terminate the pregnancy."

"Thank you," I clear my throat before I look at her. "For everything."

"It's my pleasure," she smiles before she walks out the door.

Axel POV

"Is she going to be okay?" I ask eagerly when Michelle walks out of the room. The waiting has been driving me nearly insane.

"Yes," she smiles reassuringly. "But she's under a tremendous amount of pressure. Do you know why?"

"I do," I close my eyes as I push my fingers through my hair. "We're working on it."

"Okay then," she smiles. "Call if you need me."

"Thanks," I escort her to her car and see her off.

"Alpha," Mike mind-links me. "We have intruders at the South perimeter."

"Did you catch them?" I link as concern starts brewing. All the cottages are South.

"We're still tracking," Mike replies. "But they're organized and slippery bastards."

"It's broad daylight," I bellow. "Catch them, dammit."

"Alpha, you better get here," Mike replies.

"Fuck!" I grunt. The last thing I want to do, is leave Liana but I cannot ignore this threat.

"Drew," I mind-link him as I start undressing. "Get to Liana immediately."

"On my way," he replies.

I do not waste a moment, I shift and run as fast as I can. Dark tendrils curl around my heart as I smell smoke. But what is more ominous is the smell of burned meat.

With horror and disgust, I look at the raging fire along the perimeter. Next to it, Mike has a wolf pinned to the ground while another guard is doing his best to extinguish the flames on a wailing wolf.

Quickly I assist and cover the burning wolf with sand until all the flames are extinguished but we are too late. He has no heartbeat.

“Are there more?” I mind-link hastily.

“No, Alpha,” Mike replies. “It’s just the two of them. None of our people are hurt.”

“You,” I glare at the wolf that’s pinned down underneath Mike’s paw. “Shift and start talking or you’re joining toasty over there.”

He immediately shifts back and does not even attempt to resist Mike’s hold.

“Please, no,” he whimpers. “My name is Ivan. I ... we had no choice. Wilson, it’s Wilson. He gave the orders. I’m just a cashier at a convenience store, Alpha.”

“And you owe him money,” I state as I shift.

“Y ... yes,” he stutters. “Either I did this, or he will take my mate and keep her until I can repay him.”

“And exactly what does this entail?” I frown as I cross my arms in front of my chest.

“To locate the human’s coordinates and boobytrap the perimeter,” he quickly explains. “We poured gasoline along the border of your property. We weren’t supposed to light it now but when the guards came for us, we panicked, and this happened. The firewall was supposed to trap you inside while they escape. Nobody was supposed to get hurt.”

“Tell that to crispy over there,” I motion to the body. “Who was he?”

“His name was Ian,” he replies. “And he was pretty much in the same position as me. We haven’t met before today.”

“Have you reported any of this back to Wilson?” I ask brusquely and he shakes his head feverishly.

“Give him the coordinates,” I smile slyly. “Report to him that everything went smoothly except the part where Ian accidentally set himself on fire when you were leaving.”

“But ...”

“Let him go, Mike,” I interrupt Ivan. “Clean this mess up and go by your day as usual.”

“But Alpha,” Ivan looks flabbergasted as he stands up. “You don’t understand. Wilson is planning to kidnap Nina if Liana doesn’t pay tomorrow.”

“If Wilson wants a trap, I’ll give him one,” there is no humour in my laugh. “And Ivan, if you double cross me, Wilson will be the least of your concerns. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Alpha,” he nods.

“Now, report back to Wilson that everything went as planned and get Ian’s corpse out of here,” I order him firmly.

I watch a butt-naked Ivan scurrying to Ian as I mind-link my men to meet me.