

Chapter 28 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

I am alone in bed when I wake up, but I can hear noises coming from the kitchen. I am pretty sure that it is Carol and not Axel. If it is him, he is late for work. Lazily, I stretch before I get out of bed to go to the bathroom.

“Dammit, Axel,” I grunt as I look at myself in the mirror when I want to brush my teeth. He left a hickey again. And on the exact same spot.

Axel and I must have a conversation about this. Besides my halter neck dress, I have one more sleeveless turtleneck blouse to wear and that is it. I do not even own a scarf.

After a rejuvenating shower, I put on my turtleneck blouse and jeans before I go to the kitchen.

“Morning,” I greet as I walk into the kitchen.

“I was just about to bring your breakfast,” Carol smiles as she fills a glass with orange juice.

“You should stop spoiling me like this,” I grin as I take a seat at the table. “I might get used to it and how am I supposed to continue my life when you’re not here?”

“With suffering,” she laughs as she places the plate in front of me.

“You’re heartless,” I snort as I pick up my fork as she starts laughing.

“Oh, before I forget again,” she walks to the counter. “Here’s your handbag and phone. Chloe gave it to me that night but with everything that has happened, I forgot to give it to you.”

“Thanks,” I nod and continue eating. By now, my phone’s battery is flat and there is nothing else in my bag that is of importance at the moment.

“And Drew said to give you this,” Carol holds out an envelope.

“What’s that?” I frown as I curiously take it from her.

“It’s from Wyatt,” Carol explains as she takes a seat opposite me.

“What?” I gape at her as I tear open the envelope and take out a thousand dollars. “What the hell? How ... I mean ... what ...”

“Breathe, Liana,” Carol laughs. “It’s the first instalment of what Wyatt owes you.”

“I know that,” I shake my head. “But how did Wyatt know to give Drew the money? Wyatt doesn’t know I live here.”

“Oh, Drew collected it from him,” Carol replies nonchalantly as she gathers my empty plate to rinse out. “Axel gave the order.”

For a moment, I only look at the money. Heavens knows this could not have come at a better time. I have never been this broke in my entire life, and I need to buy clothes before I start my new job on Monday. I can hardly go with either ‘sexy’ or ‘leisure’. That is all I own after Wyatt destroyed the rest. And if I had not packed my suitcase for the honeymoon, I would have had less than ‘sexy’ or ‘leisure’.

“You look displeased,” Carol says as she sits down again.

“No, no,” I shake my head. “I’m in shock. I never expected this. I mean, in my twenty-six years, I learned to fend for myself. It’s weird having someone as powerful as Axel fighting my battles on my behalf.”

“Welcome to pack life,” Carol laughs softly. “That’s just one of many perks of being part of a pack.”

“Do you want to go shopping with me?” I ask as I put the money on the table. “I need clothes.”

“Oh, no, dear,” Carol smiles sweetly. “Ask one of your friends to join you. You don’t want an old woman like me to tag along. I’m too old-fashioned.”

“You’re not old!” I huff. “And besides, I need clothes for work, and I like how you dress. Sophisticated and classy. I need you.”

“Really?” She blushes slightly.

“Please,” I reach over and take her hand. “I need your help.”

“If you put it like that,” she stands up. “Get your things, I’ll be back in twenty minutes.”

“Thank you,” I stand up and hug her quickly before she leaves.

I put my phone on charge before I take the money to put into my wallet. I frown slightly as I open my handbag and look inside. More cash. Where does this come from? Quickly I count it and my knees go weak when the realization hits me like a ton of bricks. It is my last shift’s money ... and the hundred dollars from Brad’s game.

I toss the hundred dollars aside as if it will bite me. I do not even want to touch it. It makes me feel dirty and cheap. I am sleeping with Axel for thousands of dollars and not even then did I feel this violated. I will never, ever, ever use that money.

I will burn it; I conclude but instantly decide against it. No, that is not enough. I know myself. I will feel terrible wasting good money when it could have helped someone.

Determined I walk to my phone and my eyes widen as I look at all the missed calls and messages. But I will deal with that later, I decide as I take out Michelle's card and phone her.

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"Are you ready?" Carol asks as she walks into my room.

"Just finished," I smile brightly as I take my phone and grab my handbag. "Can we make a stop at the hospital?"

"Are you okay?" Carol is instantly concerned.

"More than," I laugh as we walk to her car, and I tell her about the money. "I know it's only a hundred dollars, but Michelle said it will help."

"Of course, it will," Carol agrees. "The Haven always needs funds to house and feed women and children that escaped domestic violence. As a matter of fact, Axel hosts a charity event every year to raise funds for them."

"Please don't tell anybody I'm doing this," I plead with her as she parks in front of the hospital.

"Why not?" She frowns. "You're doing a good thing."

"Because I'm ashamed of I got this money," I admit without looking at her.

"Okay," she nods. "But you do not need to feel ashamed."

"Just ... don't, okay," I open the door and quickly walk to Michelle's office.

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It is after five by the time Carol and I stop at my cottage. Taking Carol with me was the best decision of the day. She gave me wonderful ideas and tips on how to improve my wardrobe without spending all my money.

I also bought a concealer to camouflage my hickey ... and any future hickeys that Axel might leave.

“I should start dinner,” Carol says as we walk inside with arms full of shopping bags. “If I serve sandwiches for dinner, Drew will not cuddle with me tonight ... if you know what I mean.”

“I wish I didn’t,” I laugh awkwardly and put the bags down. “But since you saved me today, I will help so that you can get your cuddle.”

The atmosphere is light and relaxed as Carol and I prepare dinner. I just finished setting the table when Axel and Drew walk in.

“Ah, my favourite female,” Drew takes Carol in his arms and kisses her passionately.

“Hello, Liana,” Axel winks at me and I curse myself for blushing. I know he is only teasing me. Why do I have to react like a giddy teenager?

“Hi,” I pull my shoulders back and recompose myself. “Thank you for sending Drew to Wyatt’s.”

“Don’t mention it,” he gives me half a smile and I quickly look away. Dammit, he is too gorgeous for my well-being. Especially when he smiles at me like that.

“Have a seat, gentlemen,” Carol orders. “We haven’t slaved in front of the stove for nothing.”

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“I have something for you,” Axel says as he locks the door after Carol and Drew have left. “It’s on your bed, go look.”

Curiously, I walk to my room and find a box on my bed. Carefully I open it and stare at the contents. It is filled with every possible pencil size that I might need and sketchpads. But what takes my breath away, is the state-of-the-art graphic drawing tablet.

“Do you like it?” He asks behind me.

“Are you insane?” I pick up the tablet and stare at it in awe. “It’s amazing.”

I cannot stop looking at this marvellous gift. Excitement bubbles through me as I think of everything, I am going to do with it. I am so happy I do not have to start work this week. Now I can spend every waking hour on this.

“I didn’t know what you would like, so I got one of everything.”

“Axel, this is too much,” I turn to face him. As much as I love and appreciate it, I cannot help but feel a little guilty. Wyatt was my fiancé and not even he spoiled me this much. “You shouldn’t buy me things, but ...”

“Why not?” He frowns.

“Because I’m not your girlfriend or anything like that,” I put the tablet back into the box. “We don’t have that kind of relationship, and I ...”

“Fine,” he looks furious as he takes the tablet. “But you’re keeping those because you still owe me a sketch and I only want the best quality.”

“Will you stop interrupting me,” frustrated I take the tablet out of his hands and cherish it against my chest. “I love it, thank you. But I am not your girlfriend, and I don’t expect you to treat me as such. I do not expect romance and flowers and gifts.”

“You,” he points a finger accusingly at me. “You confuse the shit out of me.”

“Well, if you allow me to finish my sentences, you’d be less confused,” I chuckle as I gently put the tablet away.

I go stand in front of him and wrap my arms around his neck.

“Thank you,” I smile before I kiss him softly. “This is the best gift anybody has ever given me.”

“You’re welcome,” his voice is sultry as he picks me up and carries me to bed.

Chapter 29 Caught Cheating

Chapter 29 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Liana POV

It is Saturday morning; the thought brings me no joy as I turn on my side and look at the empty pillow. I hate to admit it, but I miss Axel when he is not sleeping over.

I do not know why, but I sleep so much more soundly and peacefully with him next to me.

But something happened at work which required him to work longer hours and I have not seen him since Tuesday. Dinnertime with Drew and Carol was still fun, but I felt lost the moment they left.

I look at the time and jump out of bed.

Nina has invited me over to meet Wilson and I am curious to meet the man that swept her off her feet.

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I am walking from the bus stop to the restaurant where I am to meet Nina and Wilson when my eye catches the most beautiful evening gown. I stop and take a moment to admire the dress in the window.

I would love this dress, I sigh inwardly. But even if I had the money, buying it would be a waste. I have nowhere to wear it. Just as I was about to leave, I see Angela and instantly, I am irritated. What is she doing here? Has she come to visit again, or did she never leave?

My blood ice over when I watch her walk to Axel and show him a bracelet.

What the fuck? He smiles at her, and she laughs joyously as she hands over the bracelet to the salesperson.

Axel picks up his phone and turns away to answer it ... and that is when he sees me. It takes everything from me to smile friendly before I turn around and walk away.

I take deep breaths to calm myself as I put as much distance as I can between me and the boutique. Is Angela the reason I have not seen him this week? Is she his late hours?

Stop it! I reprimand myself.

I have no right or claim on Axel. He is free to date whomever he wants. And once our agreement is over, he can sleep with whomever he wants.

But it does not make me feel any better. Why do I even care? I am not in love with him.

This should not bother me.

I bet I would not have thought twice about it if it were anybody other than Angela.

My phone rings and I look at Axel's name. My first instinct is to decline the call, but I decide against it. Just because I am being ridiculous, does not mean I should be petty and childish as well.

"Hi," I answer friendly.

"Where are you going?" His voice sounds strained.

"Lunch," I reply.

"Why didn't you tell me you're going out?" He asks irritated.

"Listen, Axel," I grind my teeth as I fight my brewing anger. "I'm not an exotic bird that you can keep trapped in a golden cage. I don't have to report to you my every move. I'm only supposed to be available when you need me and clearly you don't need me now. I'm sure as hell not going to sit on my hands at home like a good little girl until you get the urge to see me."

“It’s not what I said, and you know it,” he grunts. “I would only appreciate it if you’d inform me when you’re going out. I was on my way to see you and ...”

“Oh, no, no, no,” I cut him off. “You do not get to turn this around. You had the entire week to inform me to expect you this afternoon and then I wouldn’t have made plans. You do not get to galivant with other women and then have your fun with me. I’m nobody’s substitute.”

“Tred lightly,” his voice is low and dangerous. “You’re making wild accusations which you cannot back up.”

“Oh, please,” I snort. “I saw Angela. Go pay for the bracelet but remember our agreement.”

“Are you jealous?” He sounds amused.

“Don’t flatter yourself,” I scoff indignantly. “I simply do not wish to be associated with her in any way. Including sharing a partner.”

“This conversation is not over,” he hisses. “Not by a long shot.”

“I agree wholeheartedly,” I sneer as I disconnect the call.

Great, now I am angry, I scoff as I continue walking. He has spoiled my good mood. It is just ... Angela! She treats people like crap, why can he not see through her? Why does he tolerate her if he is not interested?

I pull myself together as I walk into the restaurant and go to the table where Nina is already waiting. She greets me friendly before introducing me to Wilson.

I can tell why she is so taken with him. He is handsome and charming. The only thing I find odd is the way he keeps on checking his phone. With every notification, he stiffens for a moment and relaxes after he looks at it.

“Excuse me, ladies,” Wilson smiles as he stands up. “I need to visit the gents.”

“Isn’t he perfect?” Nina whispers as he walks away. “Check out his ass.”

“I’d rather not,” I roll my eyes. “You drool enough for the both of us.”

“I’m telling you, he’s the one,” she says dreamily.

“Did he tell you you’re his mate?” I ask surprised.

“Not in so many words,” she pouts. “But I simply know it.”

I bite my objections back and smile at her. She is so happy, who am I to burst her bubble? Wilson is clearly into her; it does not matter if she is his mate or not. I am just paranoid after my conversation with Axel.

“He gave me this earlier,” Nina reaches over to show me her watch and accidentally pushes my glass over, spilling wine over me and the table.

“I’m so sorry,” she grabs the glass.

“It’s fine,” I smile as I pick up a napkin and wipe it off my jeans, but the damage is done.

“I’m going to clean up,” I stand up.

“I’m coming with you,” she says eagerly.

“No,” I stop her. “Wilson might think you ditched him if he gets back and we’re both gone.”

“I’m sorry,” she pulls her face as I quickly walk to the ladies’ room.

I apply water and dry the spot with the hand dryer the best I can. Well, this is the best I can do, for now, I sigh inwardly. It is not perfect, but it is not that bad anymore. I walk out of the bathroom and notice Wilson on his phone.

“Babe, it’s a business meeting,” He whispers, and I nearly choke. Babe?

I dash back into the bathroom but keep the door open to eavesdrop. He is so wrapped up in his conversation that he does not notice me.

“I’ll be home in a couple of hours and then I’ll make it up to you, okay?” His voice is soft and calming.

Son of a bitch! I see red as I step out of the bathroom. He pales when he sees me standing with my arms crossed in front of my chest, glaring angrily at him.

“I have to go,” he swallows hard. “See you later.”

“It’s not what you think,” he says as he disconnects the call.

“Why do people always say that when they get caught red-handed?” I grunt frustrated. “It is exactly what I think. You’re cheating on Nina.”

“No,” he looks me straight in the eye. “I’m cheating on my girlfriend with Nina.”

“That does not make things better, you bastard,” I hiss at him and take a step closer. “In fact, it’s worse. You’re toying with two women’s hearts.”

“Listen, I know how it looks,” he tries to reason with me. “But I’m breaking up with my girlfriend, I swear. I want Nina.”

“Oh, bullshit,” I snort. “You’re just backpaddling because you know I’m going to tell Nina.”

“Please don’t,” he looks a little panicked. “I was already with my girlfriend when I met Nina. The second I realized I’m in love with Nina, I wanted to break up with my girlfriend, but it is her birthday next week. I already feel bad for dumping her, I don’t want to ruin her birthday as well. I’m serious, I want to be with Nina, and I’m going to dump my girlfriend after her birthday. But if you tell Nina about this, she will never forgive me. Do you really want to be responsible for breaking her heart?”

“I’m not the one breaking her heart, you are,” I poke him against his chest. “Emotional blackmail doesn’t work on me, buddy.”

“Nina’s the one for me,” he says urgently. “And you’re about to ruin something pure and beautiful because you want to play vigilante.”

“Oh, really?” I raise my eyebrows and turn around.

“Okay, wait,” he rushes towards me and blocks my way. “I’m sorry, I panicked. All I’m asking for is a week, please. Stacey’s birthday is on the fifteen. I’ll give you her number and then you can phone her and ask her yourself if I broke up with her.”

“Give me her number,” I take out my phone, calling his bluff and I am surprised when he actually does give it to me.

“Okay,” I sigh and put my phone away. “One week, then I’m telling.”

“Thank you,” he takes my hand, but I jerk away.

“We are not friends,” I warn him. “I do not like you. I think you’re a pig. I’m doing this for Nina. But hear my words, Wilson, if you break her heart, I will break your kneecaps.”

“Sure,” he laughs condescendingly. “You’re a human.”

“Try me,” I take a threatening step closer, and his eyes widen. “You have no idea what I’m capable of.”

“Okay, okay,” he holds up his hands. “It doesn’t matter anyway, because I’m not going to break her heart.”

“You’re a piece of shit,” I push past him and march back to the table.

I am fuming. All I want to do is tell Nina. She deserves to know. Even if he claims that he will leave Stacey. But I know Nina, the second she learns the truth, she will never trust Wilson again. And with good reason. Fuck this, I am telling her, I decide as I take my seat.

“Sorry for taking so long,” Wilson says as he touches Nina’s shoulder and her face lights up when she looks at him.

Dammit, I sigh inwardly. I do not want to ruin this for her. She is so happy and in love. What if Wilson is telling the truth? I am going to be responsible for her heartache and pain if I tell her now.

“Thanks for lunch,” I gather my things and get up. “But I got to run.”

“So soon?” Nina pouts.

“I’m sorry,” I lean over and hug her. “I’ll make it up to you. Promise.”

I wave them goodbye and get out of there as fast as I can. I want to know who Stacey is.

Chapter 30 | Will Not Marry Her

Chapter 30 - Selling Myself To The Alpha

Axel POV

Irritation and frustration boil in me as I look at the dead phone in my hand. She put the phone down in my ear, the little witch!

“I hope your mother likes the gift,” Angela says next to me, and her voice makes me cringe inside. “I know I would.”

“Come on,” I say politely and guide her out of the store.

The very last thing I am in the mood for right now is this woman and my mother. Mother adores Angela and the two of them are insufferable together. Not even a deaf person can ignore the blatant hints that I should marry Angela.

And yes, on paper she is the perfect mate. She is an alpha’s daughter, and their pack is strong. Our parents have been friends for years and I know nothing will bring them greater joy than me tying the knot with Angela.

But I cannot stand the woman. She is clingy and annoying. Not to mention incredibly entitled and rude. I do not care how much it financially makes sense to marry her, my life will be one living hell if I do.

Especially now that I have found my mate and know how it feels to hold her in my arms. How do I go from complete bliss to utter misery for the sake of the pack?

But I am also sensible enough to know that it would be a nuclear explosion if I claim Liana as my mate now. As long as Wyatt is still in her system, she will reject me but that is the least of my concerns. Her brother is a problem.

After investigating him I learned about his gambling and financial problems. There is no way I can allow him to be associated with the Alpha house. He will tarnish our pack's name and that could lead to dire consequences. Other packs will withdraw business from us. And how do I accept Liana without her brother?

Angela babbles nonstop next to me as Drew drives us back home, but I do not listen. I keep on thinking about Liana and trying to figure out a way for us to be together.

I grind my teeth when Angela clings to my arm as we walk inside. I want to shake her off like a pesky fly, but I have no choice but to endure this as we enter the entertainment area.

“Ah! Axel,” Angela's father greets us jovially. “Come and join me and your father for a scotch. Let the women talk about ... whatever.”

He laughs heartedly at his own joke, and I plaster a smile on my face as I walk to them. At least I am rid of Angela.

“Son,” Dad hands me a drink. “Jack and I have been talking and we came to a fine agreement.”

“Which is?” I accept the drink and take a sip. Something tells me they have been at this for a couple of hours and that their ideas might not be as well thought out as they think.

“You and Angela will get married,” Jack raises his glass and I nearly choke on my drink.

“Not you too,” I groan. First the women and now them? Do they have nothing else that they can talk about?

“It's the perfect solution, son,” Dad puts his arm around my shoulder, and I nearly spill my drink. “With our companies combined, we can go international. Our designs and their technology. Nobody will be able to beat our prices.”

“With all due respect ...”

“No, no,” Jack cuts me off. “You don't have to worry. You have my blessings. Angela will cooperate.”

“You don’t understand,” I try again. “I’m not ...”

“We thought it all through,” Dad chimes in. “You marry Angela the day before your inauguration as alpha. Then we do both the Luna and Alpha ceremonies simultaneously the next day.”

“I’m not marrying Angela,” I bellow and instantly everything quiets down. Even the women sitting on the opposite side of the room stop talking and look our way.

“Angela is not my mate,” I continue with a moderate tone of voice. “She and I both deserve the happiness a mate brings. Therefore, I respectfully decline this idea you two concocted.”

“Axel,” Mother gets up and walks over to us. “Just consider it, please. You’re twenty-nine and haven’t found your mate. Chances are you never will. It would be wise to marry Angela while you have the opportunity.”

“Angela and I aren’t cattle that you can trade, Mother,” I ball my fists to keep myself from exploding. “She’s sitting right there and can hear how you talk about her as if she’s a consolation prize.”

“Well, I don’t see a problem with it,” Angela says, and I wish I could wring her neck right now. “I will be a loyal and faithful Luna. Even if we aren’t mates.”

“For me, it’s an enormous problem,” I grunt.

“Everything isn’t about you,” Father yells angrily. “It’s what’s best for the pack. You will marry Angela.”

“I will not marry her,” I challenge my father. “And that’s final.”

“Then you’ll never be alpha,” Dad is red in the face as he points a finger at me.

“Fine,” I shrug. “Find someone else to take over.”

“Axel, Grant, enough,” Mother intervenes. “Grant, if you disown Axel, you will be challenged by every rogue and wolf from here to Africa to take over this pack. It will destroy everything and everyone within these borders. Is that what you want? And Axel, you know perfectly well what it means to be alpha. Making sacrifices for the greater good. You need a strong Luna, and Angela is perfect for the position. At the very least, you must consider her.”

“Fine,” I place my glass down. “If I haven’t found my mate by the time of my inauguration, I will ask Angela to marry me.”

“Thank you, son,” Mom smiles grateful at me. “Grant?”

“Agreed,” Dad mumbles and pours himself another drink.

Angela gives an excited shriek before she huddles with her mother. Dear goddess, she is already a blushing bride.

“Excuse me,” I grunt. “I need fresh air.”

My heart is beating dangerously fast, and I must fight my wolf for control. Blinding I walk in a direction. I need to be anywhere but here.

I am furious at my parents for cornering me in front of Angela and her parents. That is a type of conversation that needs to happen privately. And do not let me get started on Angela! How thick-skinned can a person be? I denied her openly and aggressively and still she is planning a wedding that will not happen. I simply cannot marry Angela. She will drive me insane, and I might kill her.

I stop abruptly when I realise, I am standing in front of Liana’s cottage. I know she is not home, but I go inside anyway. I need quiet to gather my thoughts and calm down.

Liana POV

I will be a terrible detective; I sigh as I walk from the bus stop to my cottage. I have searched for Wilson on social media since I climbed the bus, but I have had no luck. But I am not going to give up. I will subtly ask Nina where he works and then I will take it from there. I know how it feels to be cheated on and I will never be able to live with myself if I did not at least warn Nina.

I walk inside my cottage and nearly scream when I see Axel sitting on the couch. I bet he is here to fight with me about earlier.

“What the hell, Axel,” I press my hand on my galloping heart. “You gave me a fright.”

“Sorry,” he gives me half a smile. “I just needed to be alone for a moment.”

I look at him for a moment, trying to figure out what is happening. I was so certain that he came here to fight. And I am more than ready to rip him a new one about Angela, but something tells me that there is something else going on here.

“Are you okay?” I frown as I put my handbag down and walk to him when I notice how tired he looks.

“Yeah,” he sighs and takes a deep breath. “I had a disturbing meeting.”

“That’s a first,” I say as I sit down next to him. “Nobody has ever referred to a meeting as disturbed.”

“It’s more polite than to call it fucked up,” he pinches his nose bridge between his fingers and closes his eyes.

For reasons unbeknown to me, I get this overwhelming urge to comfort him. All my arguments about Angela are forgotten. Without thinking about it, I climb onto his lap and cradle his head to my chest. His arms instantly go around my waist like clamps, and he holds me as if his life depends on it.

Whatever it is, it is really eating at him, I realise as I stroke his hair. I have seen him angry, serious and humorous. But I have never seen him so lost.

I have no idea how long we have been sitting like this, but his grip has not eased for a second. When he finally lets go of me, his eyes are overflowed with emotions that I cannot decipher.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” I whisper as I gently stroke his cheek.

“I am now,” he smiles as his fingers curl into my hair and pull my lips down to his.

There is an urgency in his touch as his hands roam my body that I have not experienced before.

“I have an idea,” he murmurs against my lips before he lifts me off his lap and stands up. “Get your sketchpad and pencils. I’ll be back in twenty minutes.”

“Where are we going?” I call after him, but he only gives me a wicked smile before he closes the door behind him.