

## Chapter 28 Marvellous Gift

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 at 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 nished," 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 nished 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 ancé 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 owers and gifts."

"You," he points a finger accusingly at me. "You confuse the s\*\*t 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.