

Chapter 13 Price Of My Dignity

Liana

I cannot stop fumbling with my fingers as we drive to wherever Axel lives. Truthfully, I am ashamed of how little I know about this pack. Especially if you keep in mind that I was going to make this place my forever home.

Maybe that is the reason why Wyatt turned to Gwen. She understands everything pack related, and I did not even make an effort to learn it. I should have paid more attention to Wyatt and his interests. If I showed more attentiveness, he would not have to turn to another woman to satisfy that need.

"What's your name?" I ask the driver to distract my thoughts.

"Drew," he smiles at me in the rearview mirror. "I'm an Omega and Axel's personal driver."

"Is that all you do?" I ask curiously. "Drive him around?"

"Mostly," he chuckles.

"Don't you get bored?" I frown. "It's not as if Axel travels all the time."

"I love my job," he replies. "Cars are my passion. I'm in charge of the Alpha family's fleet. Service, maintenance, washing it. You name it, I do it. What about you? What's your title?"

"Slave, I guess," I laugh softly at his indignant stare. "I'm kidding. I'm his after-hours assistant. I guess the workload is too much to accomplish in a day."

"I'm glad he finally got someone," Drew nods. "As his driver, I know what time he leaves the office, and believe me, it's inhumane how hard he works."

"I didn't know that," I frown slightly, and I cannot understand why I suddenly feel sorry for Axel. What do I care about how hard he works?

"Don't worry," Drew chuckles. "I'm sure Axel won't work you to death."

"Tell me about the cottage," I change the subject.

"You'll love it," he smiles. "You and I will be neighbours, well, sort of. There are numerous cottages behind the mansion and all employees stay there."

"Like a community?" I ask eagerly.

"You can phrase it like that," he replies. "But your cottage is the most secluded and closest to the mansion. It has not been occupied in years. Beta Nick stayed there but moved out when he found his mate."

"You weren't kidding when you said mansion," I murmur as I stare at the building in awe. It is like a scene straight from Hollywood. I am certain that if I walk inside, I will find celebrities walking around with glasses of champagne and gorgeous young girls parading in bikinis around the swimming pool.

"That's the Alpha house," Drew explains. "Axel and his parents live there."

"Just the three of them in that enormous house?" I gape at him.

"Axel is an only child," he continues. "If he had siblings, they all would've lived there."

"This place is too good to be true," I mumble as I look at the passing scenery. We are surrounded by trees and overgrown vegetation. I swear if I look closely, I might see fairies or the seven dwarfs.

"It's beautiful, all right," Drew says with pride. "Luna is meticulous about the grounds. She loves gardening. But be warned, you're not allowed to wander these parts alone."

"Why?" I grin. "Is the big bad wolf hiding there?"

"As a matter of fact, yes," Drew says seriously, and I look at him in shock.

"I was only making a joke," I say weakly.

"I know," he nods. "But I'm not. Axel's girlfriend was murdered in these woods."

"You're shitting me," I cry out. "When was that?"

"About six years ago," Drew replies solemnly. "They never caught who did it."

"I'm never leaving my cottage," I shiver slightly.

"You'll be safe as long as you stay out of the woods," Drew chuckles.

"You don't need to warn me twice," I say sincerely.

"Here we are," Drew announces as he stops the car.

Curiously I get out and walk towards the cottage.

"This is beautiful," I whisper in awe as I look at the wood and brick cottage. A huge tree stands proudly next to it and a basket swing chair is hanging from a branch.

I follow Drew into the cottage and must blink a couple of times to assure myself that I am not dreaming. Everything is perfect. From the cosy fireplace in the living room to the old country-style kitchen.

I walk to the bedroom and loudly I gasp for air when I look at the most romantic canopy bed that I have ever seen. The wood is solid underneath my touch and the white and green linens add to the serenity of the room. Gently, I glide my hand down the bed's curtain which is tied to the post.

"Do you like it?" Drew asks behind me.

"Like it?" I turn around to face him. "I love it! Who decorated it?"

"That would be Maddy," he places my luggage on the floor. "She's in charge of décor and anything that involves fabric and paint. She's also the event planner for the Alpha house."

"I don't know her, but she's magnificent," I walk past him to the adjacent bathroom.

"You're more than welcome to tell her that yourself when you meet her," Drew smiles. "She also lives in a cottage."

"I'm looking forward to meeting all of you," I turn to him.

"You will soon enough," Drew walks to the front door. "If you need anything, my cottage is a mile West from here. Stop by anytime you want."

"Thank you," I smile brightly at him. "I appreciate it."

After Drew has left, I explore my new living quarters with renewed eagerness. I cannot believe my luck. It has everything I need and more. Even the kitchen cabinets are stacked with food.

At this moment, I do not care that I have a sinful contract with Axel. He deserves a proper orgasm daily for this. I already slept with him. It does not matter if I do it twice or two hundred times.

Yes, I know it is wrong and illegal. I am no better than a gold-digger. I have judged women doing this my entire life. I have fallen from grace. If word gets out about what I am doing, I will bring shame over my family.

But I have been the perfect little girl for my parents. I never got into trouble as a child or teenager. I did not even have a curfew because I never went out and attended wild parties. I had part-time jobs to help my parents keep a roof over our heads.

I only made one mistake – I fell in love with Wyatt – and one blink later and I was worse off than before. I am not taking advantage of Axel any more than he is taking advantage of me. This is a business transaction. We both know where at we are getting into. Is it really so wrong?

A car parks in front of the cottage and I run to the window to peek through the curtains. My heart leaps when I notice Axel walking to the door. I open the door even before he can knock.

"Hi," he greets me and for the first time, I notice he looks tired.

"Hi yourself," I whisper as I step aside so that he can come inside.

"What can I get you?" I ask as I close the door. "Something to eat or drink?"

"Nothing now, thanks," he answers and sits down on the couch.

"Good," I smile as I go sit on his lap and start undoing his tie.

"What are you doing?" Axel laughs softly, but he does not stop me.

"Making you comfortable," I reply as I scoot off his lap and start taking off his shoes.

"Liana," Axel bends over and takes my hands in his. "A lot was said this morning, but this is not what I meant. You're by no means my hooker or sex slave. I asked you to be mine, and that means I will treat you with the respect I would treat my wife."

It warms my heart to hear these words and it makes me even more grateful towards him.

"I appreciate that," I smile softly as I free my hands from his and continue to take off his shoes. "But you're misinterpreting my actions. This is my way of thanking you for allowing me to stay here. Do you have to be anywhere tonight?"

"No," he sighs as he leans back into the couch. "I'm done for the day."

"And are you expected at home for dinner?" I ask as I take his foot and start massaging his sole.

"No," he groans softly and closes his eyes.

I do not say anything as I continue massaging him.

"Where did you learn to do that?" He asks lazily.

"My mother," I reply softly. "She worked in a grocery store, and it was my duty to rub her feet after double shifts."

"You're good," he murmurs, and it is not long before I hear his soft snoring.

Quietly, I get up and fetch a light blanket. I cover him up and hurry to the kitchen. I am no chef, but I did manage to master a few basic recipes over the years.

My heart feels light and carefree as I make bacon carbonara with tagliatelle and a salad. I know it might not be the meals that he is used to, but this is the best I can do for now. Cooking for him was never on the agenda, but this is the only way I can think of to show him how happy and grateful I am for all of this.

Agreement or not, I got the better end of the deal. Sure, I must be ready whenever the urge strikes him, but I am clueless when it comes to sex. I know which part goes where but when it comes to skill, I am a zero.

"It smells good," Axel's voice is thick with sleep.

Startled I swing around, and he laughs softly when he sees my bewilderment.

"It's only pasta," I shrug, and ignore his amusement. "Would you like some?"

"Please," he takes a seat at the kitchen table.

"Anything to drink?" I offer.

"Water will be perfect," he replies as he helps himself to a generous serving.

I place the water in front of him before I take a seat and dish for myself. Neither of us says a word while we eat, but the silence is not uncomfortable. Satisfied, I smile inwardly when he helps himself to another serving.

"Thank you," he pushes his empty plate aside. "It was delicious."

"You're welcome," I stand up and start cleaning up.

"I'll help," he reaches for the plates.

"You'll do no such thing," I say sternly. "I need something to do other than living in luxury."

"Luxury?" He raises his eyebrows. "What are you talking about?"

"This place," I lift my arms to include everything. "This is more than I could ever hope for."

"It's a one-bedroom cottage, Liana, not a palace," he chuckles. "This is not luxury."

"This morning I was homeless, Axel," I say seriously, and his eyes turn dark. "If I weren't for my friend, Nina, I would've slept in cheap motels until my money ran out and then it would be benches in parks. This is luxury for me."

"I'm sorry," he clears his throat. "I didn't realize."

"It's not that bad," I smile as I take his hand and lead him back to the living room. "And I expect an appreciated bit. I would've moved back in with my parents before sleeping in parks. Point is, I'm grateful beyond measure and I want to thank you."

"There's no need to thank me," he says as he sits down on the couch. "You're earning it, remember?"

"Yeah," I smile timidly as I sit across from him. "But I got the better part of the deal."

"Only time can determine that," he chuckles as he pulls out an envelope from his pocket and hands it over to me. "Take your time tonight and read it over. The moment it's signed, your father will be transported to a private hospital and read the operation."

"O ... okay," I stutter as I take the envelope from him. "What do you want me to tell people when they ask me what I'm doing here?"

"What have you been telling them?" He asks amused.

"That I'm your after-hours assistant," I say softly as my cheeks turn beet red.

"Clever," he chuckles as he picks up his tie and heads for the door. "Stick with that and thanks for dinner."

"You're not staying?" I ask quickly and jump out of my chair. "I ... I mean, I thought ..."

"You haven't signed it," he points to the envelope before he turns around and leaves.

I release a heavy sigh as I sit down and stare at the envelope. This is it. My absolute last chance to walk away with my dignity intact. But is my dignity worth more than an education and my father's health?