

Chapter 3 Morning After

Liana

I grunt in pain when I stretch out and instantly lay still. Everything hurts. From my throbbing head down to my ankles. Flashes of the previous night bombard my brain and I cringe.

Alcohol has created a band that is keeping an offbeat rhythm in my head, sending waves of pain against my temples and eyes. And the pain in the rest of my body ... well, Axel is responsible for that. He was not a gentle lover.

I open my eyes partially and look at my surroundings. Sunrays are dancing through the curtains, and it takes me a moment to realize I am still in the hotel room.

Oh shit, what have I done? I pinch my eyes closed and send a silent prayer that Axel has left already.

My life shattered into pieces last night and I made it worse by indulging not only in alcohol but also in a stranger's body. When I propositioned Axel, I was too intoxicated to take into account the walk of shame. Why did I not sneak out while he was sleeping? Oh yeah, I was too drunk and tired.

Well then, that is it, I decide as I slowly turn around, I have hit rock bottom and ruined my life. Sure, Wyatt helped me out in that department, but I was the one who got drunk all on my own and challenged a man to take me to bed.

Dammit, I groan inwardly when I see Axel snoring next to me. Is it really that much to ask the universe for a break? Why did he not leave like other men do? Not that I have experience in this department, but hey, is that not the theme of every Hollywood movie?

As quietly as I can, I worm out of bed. With any luck, I can be out of here before he wakes up.

"Order coffee," his voice demands behind me and with a shriek I turn around.

His eyes dartle lazily over my body and I blush beet red when I realize I am naked. I reach over for the blanket and jerk it off the bed to cover my nakedness.

Oh no, that was a mistake, I swallow as I look at the door. Axel is sprawled out in the bed with his crown jewels on display and apparently, it does not bother him one little bit.

"Why so shy?" he chuckles as he puts his hands behind his head. "I've seen it all last night."

Because you are looking at me as if I am your breakfast, I think to myself as I ignore him and start gathering my clothes.

"I should go," I mumble as I quickly put on my T-shirt. I am not going to bother with my bra right now. Not while he is watching. My only mission is to get out of here as fast as possible with as much dignity as I can master.

"Not before you ordered my coffee," his tone of voice is superior as he stands up. "Then you ..."

He abruptly stays quiet, and I follow his gaze to the blood stain in the centre of the bed. I swallow hard on the regret and tears as I look at the evidence of the exact price I paid for my drunken stupidity.

For twenty-six years I have protected my virtue at all costs. Not because of some belief or because I am a prude. But coming from a poor home, this was the most valuable gift that I could give to the man I love. Something pure and priceless and I gave it away ... for free ... to a stranger.

"Your first time?" His voice is dark and low as he looks at me.

"What?" I shrug and pretend not to care. "Do you have a virgin complex?"

He is quiet for a long time as he holds my gaze to the point where I have to fight myself to remain still and not start squirming.

"How much?" He growls and I am taken aback by his anger.

"How much what?" I frown confused.

"Don't play dumb with me," he hisses furiously. "Money. How much do you want?"

Dumbfounded I stare at him as I try to make sense of his words. He has lost me completely. Why are we talking about money? Is there some werewolf rule or ritual that I do not know about regarding virgins?

Then a dark thought hits me and I swallow hard on the bile that is rising in my throat. He thinks I am a prostitute.

"Do you always pay for sex?" I ask irritated as I pick up my sneakers. Some alpha he is. He is so used to paying for the deed that he does not even know what to do when he gets it for free.

"How dare you insult me?" He bellows.

"Oh, and insinuating that I'm a prostitute is a compliment?" I lose control over my temper. Last night's hurt and betrayal are still fresh and now I must deal with the shame that I brought over myself. The last thing I need is his judgement.

"Only whores throw away their virtue," he crosses his arms in front of his chest.

"Go fuck yourself," I grunt as I walk past him, but he grabs me by my wrist and pulls me against his chest.

"Let. Me. Go," my voice is low and dark as I glare angrily at him. "You and I have nothing to say to each other. The second that door closes behind me, you and I have never met."

I jerk my hand free and storm out of the room as fast as I can.

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The sunlight is much too bright for my comfort and my headache is increasing with every step I take as I walk back to Nina's. Maybe I should have taken money from Axel. Just enough to get an Uber. She lives right on the edge of the border because she is human. She was nine years old when her father died, and her mother remarried when she was twelve. Nina loved her werewolf stepfather, and he legally adopted her. According to my knowledge, Nina is the only single human residing within the borders. All the other humans are mated to a wolf, like me.

Wyatt might be a cheating bastard, but he was spot on about Axel. That man is a sanctimonious and pompous prick. I do not care if he is the alpha. He is an unpleasant brute and I wish to never see him again. Thankfully, I never gave him my name.

By the time I reach Nina's apartment, I cannot tell which part of my body hurts the most. The long walk home calmed my anger, and I am acutely aware of every inch of me that is in pain.

"Liana," Nina bursts out in tears when I walk through the door. "I've been worried sick. Where were you? Wyatt's been calling nonstop and I ..."

"Did you answer?" I cut her tirade short as I walk to the fridge and pour myself a glass of water.

"No," Nina frowns confused. "I didn't know what to tell him and ... Liana!"

She takes a step closer to me and sniffs before she stammers backwards with big eyes.

"You slept with him," she murmurs as she looks at me in disbelief.

"How ..."

"You slept with Wyatt," Nina cuts me off and I shake my head feverishly. "Don't lie to me. I can smell it. You reek of sex."

"It wasn't Wyatt," I croak as I storm off to the bathroom. I need aspirin. Lots and lots of aspirin. "And how can you smell sex?"

"Not Wyatt?" Nina explodes as she follows me. "What the hell has gotten into you? You're getting married this afternoon and ..."

"The wedding is off," I whisper the words and suddenly the world collapses around me. Saying the words out loud is so much harder than thinking about them. The harsh reality makes me stammer backwards until I am with my back against the bathroom wall. My knees give in, and I slowly slide down the wall until I sit on the floor.

"It's all such a mess, Nina," I sniff as I look at her before I tell her everything. All of it, except Axel's identity. That piece of information I will take to my grave.

By the time I am done, Nina is sitting next to me, crying.

"You'll get through this," she sniffs as she takes my hand. "I don't have all the answers, but together we'll come up with a solution."

"Thanks," I sigh and rest my head on her shoulder.

"But first you need a shower," Nina stands up and pulls me to my feet. "And I'll go to the pharmacy and get you the morning-after pill. The last thing you need now is to get pregnant by a stranger."

"I didn't even think of that," I swallow hard in the panic. I really fucked up last night.

"And I don't blame you," Nina smiles gently at me. "If I were you, I wouldn't think of it either. Now, get in that bath and just relax. I will go to the pharmacy and then we can contact your guests and inform them the wedding is off."

"That's ..."

"Liana!" Wyatt bellows as he hammers on the front door, and I look at Nina with big eyes as a s anxiety settles within. "Open up."