

Chapter 12 Counter Offer

Liana POV

I'm in a state of shock as I walk out of Silver Enterprises. This has not gone as I planned. I did not expect this in my wildest dreams. Honestly, I have not even thought of such a proposal. I was mentally preparing myself for so many arguments, but this was not one of them.

Blindly, I walk into the first coffee shop I pass, and I take a seat. My legs do not want to work anymore. Neither does my brain. I order an espresso from the waiter and stare out of the window at the people passing by.

I hate to admit it, but I am hurt and offended that Axel has such a low opinion of me as a person. But I only have myself to blame. If I had not behaved so scandalously, he would not have propositioned me.

But more than that, I was rocked to my core when he told me he had no use for my skills. Is that how people see me? Is that why I cannot get any form of employment? Because my skills are minuscule and useless.

The waiter places the espresso in front of me and absentmindedly I thank him.

If lady luck somehow decides to give me a break, I will be able to find minimum-wage employment. And it will take years before I can get promoted to a higher position. It will be a constant struggle to make ends meet and repay such a huge loan.

But even if I accept Axel's proposal, it is not the solution. Sure, Dad will get his surgery and in six months I will be debt-free, but then what? I will still be unemployed with little or no skills. I will be right back where I am now. I must better my life, but how?

Out of nowhere, an idea hits me. If I am going to commit the ultimate sin and pimp myself out, I might as well go all in. I know what I am, and I know what I'm not. I might not be the brightest person or a qualified person, but I am not ugly.

Axel is a Greek god of a man, and according to Nina, every female pack member's fantasy. If he can pick and choose among the women, why the hell is he willing to pay so much money for s*x with an unskilled human? To me, the answer is simple – I am desirable to him.

I do not even want to accept his proposal. It screams against every moral fibre in my body. Why not go all in? I am going to march up to his ivory tower and state my demands. If he accepts, good for me and Dad. If he does not, then I will ask Nina for help.

Satisfied with my decision, I finish my espresso and pay for it before I walk back to Silver Enterprises. In contrast with my first visit, I feel confident when I walk to reception.

The woman looks at me with hostility, but I ignore it. She must still be pissed off at me for cunning her earlier.

"I need to see Axel again," I announce. "And yes, he's waiting for me."

"A moment, please," she replies through tight lips as she picks up the phone.

I wait patiently for my pass and hastily walk to the elevator. To say that I am cautiously optimistic is an understatement. I know this is a long shot, but it is the only one I got and am I not going to let it slip through my fingers. Even if it means selling my soul.

I smile at Axel's receptionist as I walk past her and into Axel's office.

"I have my own conditions," I announce as I shut the door behind me, and he looks curiously at me. "I will become your ... your s*x slave or whatever on condition that you'll pay for my father's surgery and my studies."

"Your what?" He frowns as he walks to me.

"You heard me," I say firmly and lift my chin. "I'm not going to sit in your cottage and dance like a monkey for six months. I'm not an i**t, Axel. I know I'm average. I always have been and I'm new with it. But I refuse to remain like that. I want to better my life and you're going to help me do it."

"And why should I?" He smirks and I do not miss the twinkle in his eye. The bloody man is laughing at me, but I do not care. He can mock me all I want; I am not backing down now.

"Because I am worth more than one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars," I say with determination. "Just because life handed me a raw deal, does not mean I should accept it and roll over. I want more because I am capable and worth more. I am in the prime of my life and am willing to sacrifice six months of youth for you. Time I will never get back for any amount of money. So, if you want me, you'll pay my worth."

"And if I decline?" He crosses his arms in front of his chest.

"Then I will walk out of here and find a man that is willing to," I shrug. "If a man like you is willing to pay for me, there must be an old fart out there that's willing to pay twice as much."

"You're bluffing," Axel hisses and I am taken aback by the aggressiveness in his voice. Why would he care so much about who I sell myself to?

"No, Axel," I sigh and turn around to leave. "I'm determined."

"You're not going anywhere," he growls as he grabs my wrist and yanks me against his chest. His eyes blaze angrily into mine and I swallow hard. He cannot possibly be this angry because I negotiated.

"You are mine," he growls from deep within and his lips come crashing down on mine. The sparks from last night return in all of their glory and my handbag drops to the floor when I throw my arms around his neck and return his kisses feverishly.

There is almost something desperate in his kiss and I hold on tighter to him. I want to comfort him. I do not know why and for what. All I know is that I have this uncontrollable desire to calm him down.

It feels like a small eternity by the time he lets me go and we breathlessly cling to each other for a moment.

"I accept your terms," he pants. "What do you want to study?"

"Art," I reply softly and pick up my handbag. "I like to paint and draw."

"Sit down," he motions to the chair in front of his desk, and I obey as he walks around and takes his seat.

"This is my personal email address," he says as he writes down on a piece of paper. "Mail me your father's information and I will take it from there. I also need all of your information to enrol you."

I nod and take the paper from him.

"Wait here," he orders me brusquely and walks to a door that I notice for the first time.

I slowly release my breath as I wait for him. I must admit, selling myself to Axel is not a punishment. Shameless, yes, but not a punishment. I know I have not been with any other man than him, but I have kissed others before and not one of them comes close to Axel. Including Wyatt, and I thought of him as the love of my life.

"Take this," Axel holds out an envelope and I hesitantly take it. "Use it for a health check-up and get a prescription for a contraceptive. Any questions?"

Flabbergasted I shake my head and stand up. This is moving way faster than I anticipated. I am still recovering from our kiss and am not ready for all the orders that are raining on me.

"A car will pick you up at six tonight to take you to your new accommodation, be ready," he orders.

"To ... tonight?" I look at him dumbstruck.

"The sooner the better, right?" He goes to sit down behind his desk again. "Your father's health depends on it."

"Y ... yes," I nod.

"Good, I'll see you tonight to sign the contract. You're dismissed," he says and ignores me as he continues with his work.

I blink a couple of times before I place the envelope in my handbag and get up. My mind is scattered as I leave his office.

What the hell just happened? I walked in there confident and got everything I asked for. But somehow the tables turned, and I do not understand why he is so mad right now. Why do I feel like I have just lost this round?

**

My bags are packed and ready by the time Nina gets home. I went to the gynaecologist and got a clean bill of health as well as six months' worth of birth control. There were still five hundred dollars left after I paid the doctor, and I used that money to buy extra toiletries and perfume. I was going to spend it on new underwear, but I remembered that I had never worn the lingerie that I bought for my honeymoon.

I do not even know if Axel would care about my underwear or appreciate the delicate items that I carefully selected over time. But it is not for him, I am doing this for me. It is like Mother always said – do it properly or do not do it at all. And even though I am doing a shameful thing, I will do it properly. I will prove to Axel that I am worth every cent he spends on me.

I place the bouquet of flowers on the coffee table next to the box of chocolates I bought for Nina with the money that was left over. I will never be able to truly repay her for everything she has done for me, but this is the only way I can show her my appreciation.

"What's this?" She looks at me with big eyes. "Please don't tell me it's from Wyatt and he wants you back?"

"No," I laugh nervously as I go sit on the couch. "I bought it for you as a thank you."

"It's beautiful," she exclaims joyously as she smells the flowers. "But you didn't need to do that. You should save your money."

"About that," I rub my neck awkwardly. "I managed to find a job."

"You did?" Nina asks excitedly as she comes to sit next to me. "That's awesome. Tell me everything."

"I ... uhmm ... I got a job as Axel's personal assistant," I lie.

"You're joking," Nina looks at me abbergasted. "You're going to work at Silver Enterprises?"

"Not exactly," I avoid eye contact. Lying to her is the last thing I want to do. "I will be assisting him after hours."

"I don't understand," Nina says suspiciously, and I look at her.

"I went to him and told him everything," I explain. "I asked him to help me to get a job within the borders and I can get something in the city. He said I will be sorry for me because he created this position until I can find something else."

"I guess that makes sense," Nina says after a while.

"It does?" I gape at her and quickly pull myself together. "I mean, yes, it does."

"As alpha, he is responsible for the pack members and after what Wyatt did to you, Axel must feel that it's his responsibility to help you get back on your feet," Nina reaches over and picks up the box of chocolates. "So, what do your duties include?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure," I chuckle nervously. "I'm allowed to do whatever I want during the day but must be at home when he returns from work. He said I will be living in a cottage, but I have no idea where it is or how it looks. I guess it would be taking notes and typing emails. That kind of thing."

"Or ironing his shirt and bring him coffee," Nina wiggles her eyebrows as she puts a piece of chocolate in her mouth.

"As long as I don't have to wash his underwear," I roll my eyes and Nina bursts out laughing.

"What about your father?" She asks seriously after our laughter died down.

"Taken care of," I smile. "Axel gave me a loan."

"Damn, that's generous," Nina widens her eyes.

"Yeah," I shrug. "He must feel really bad. But I'm not complaining. My dad is getting the help he needs and that's all I care about."

"Can I come and visit you?" Nina asks.

"Well, duh," I roll my eyes. "The moment I know where I live, I'll send you the location."

There is a knock on the door, and I take a deep breath as I stand up.

"That's my ride," nervously I rub my palms against my jeans. "Wish me luck."

"I'm going to miss having you around," Nina hugs me.

"Not as much as I will miss you," I hold tightly onto her. "But look on the bright side. I'm not moving to the city just yet and we can still see each other daily. Hey, how about we meet for lunch tomorrow? My treat."

"Deal," Nina smiles as she lets go of me. "Come on, I'll help you carry your luggage. You can't let your boss wait for you on your first day."

I take a deep breath and gather my bags. Why do I suddenly feel that I am making a huge mistake?