Sky Full of Stars
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/11460477.

Rating: Explicit
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply, Major Character Death
Category: F/F, F/M, Multi
Fandom: Carmilla (Web Series)
Relationship: Laura Hollis/Carmilla Karnstein, Wilson Kirsch & Danny Lawrence, LaFontaine/Lola Perry
Character: Sherman Hollis, Lilita Morgan, Elsie (Carmilla Web Series), Melanippe Callis, Mattie
Additional Tags: Soulmate AU, Soulmate-Identifying Marks, it gets really angsty in the beginning, but its a happy ending and Hollstein is end-game, super fluffy, Fluff and Angst, Magical Realism, domestic hollstein, Slow Burn, Eventual Smut, Eventual Hollstein Wedding, Eventual Hollstein Baby
Stats: Published: 2017-07-10 Completed: 2018-01-15 Chapters: 26/26 Words: 152564

Sky Full of Stars
by rainbowflavored_fiction

Summary

Laura Hollis keeps a collection of origami stars. She promised herself that the night she made exactly one thousand, she’d move on from her mother’s passing. Carmilla Karnstein is a fragile soul who pours her emotions into her music. She’d much rather keep to herself, for fear of anyone learning about her tragic past. They meet in the strangest way possible.

Or, the one where everyone dreams of their soulmate and the more explicit the dreams become, the greater chance they have in meeting them in real life. Some souls barely have the chance to get through the first sign-- Carmilla and Laura are the lucky few. (soulmate au)

**COMPLETE**

Notes

When I started this tall tale six months ago, I had no idea it would explode into the story it is today. The plot was taking multiple different routes, until it revealed itself to me in its final form, through a dream. The idea was so profound and so heart-warming that I decided to keep it, and start over again. I wanted to write something that'd be different, but still be memorable for the fandom. It also just so happened that when I started writing, I was lonely and grieving over the death of a loved one. This story helped me overcome my adversities in real life and I learned to cope with the loss through Laura's character. I love her (my version,
and the web-series, of course) because I was able to see my flaws in her and work on them. I sincerely hope you all love reading this as much as I loved writing it.

- Inspired by *take me home, where i belong* by *paintedviolet*
"Your skin
Oh yeah your skin and bones
Turn into something beautiful
You know you know I love you so
You know I love you so" - Yellow, by Coldplay

She was dreaming.

She knew that because of the way the sky was painted in array of purples and oranges, how there was the sun resting on the horizon but a brilliant display of stars just above her. Time didn't exist here. But God—she was aware of how much sensory overload she was experiencing. It was like dipping through a pool of cold water, and then coming out the other end with it steaming off her skin. Two complete opposites coming together in an upside-down universe.

Then, she felt a stir beside her, and the smell of honeysuckle and flora. She felt her again—her love was back, safe, and warm in her arms. She was her soulmate—Carmilla knew this because every time the beautiful woman touched her, her skin was ablaze with light and fire. Their hands fit perfectly together, since they were made to hold each other's souls. There was no doubt in her mind that somewhere in the real world, this woman was waiting for her, aching to be in her arms.

For even in her dreams, nothing was ever enough. She adored her soulmate, the way she laughed, her gorgeous smile, her soft kisses... and she wondered how she got so lucky to have been blessed to share her heart with someone special.

But still, she had been waiting a long time for her, and Carmilla was lonely.

She giggled softly and her tiny hands trailed across Carmilla's shoulder, on the spot where their tattoo will soon be. The beautiful woman with blonde hair and chocolate brown eyes pressed her lips gently up her shoulder blades, kissing it four times.

Once for hope.

Twice for luck.

Third for patience.

And forth for love.

"I love you," She cooed, her voice delicate and warm and loving. "Always. I've always been here. I've always been waiting for you."

Tears glistened in the corners of her eyes, as she pulled her into a tighter embrace. "I know that, but why haven't you revealed yourself to me? I miss you. I need you."

"I'm waiting for you." She simply stated, and again, "I love you."

Then her soulmate's voice turned into an echo, and the young woman gently awoke to face the real world.

Carmilla hated the morning. Any hour before twelve pm was absolute hell, and she made sure
everyone knew it. She was nocturnal, having developed this sleeping pattern ever since she was a little girl. The only rare occasions if she did have to wake up in this god-forbidden hour, is if there was an apocalypse happening right outside her dorm room.

In her time, meeting her sister at nine am was much like the end of the Earth. Grumbling to herself, she huffed and put on her favorite leather jacket. She didn't have a roommate, since her mother as the Dean of Silas had its many perks. She didn't mind—it made her time here more manageable.

She slung her guitar over her shoulder. She named it Inanna, after the ancient Sumerian Goddess. That one summer course she took in her freshman year helped her speak the language fluently—but what purpose did that serve? No one was impressed by it.

She pulled out her cellphone from her pocket and re-read the text message. Mattie wanted to meet her down by Martin Auer, the cute university-sponsored café. The food was cheap, and a few students came by during the week, so she never had to worry about crowds.

Reality was just so boring. Too dull. Too predictable.

She'd much rather be dreaming, living in a world with her soulmate.

Sighing, she shook her head and trudged out of her room, thinking about her dream. It's rumored that the more sensual and explicit the dream became between fated partners, the sooner they will meet. The first time her love appeared before her was four years ago, at a time in her life when things were bleakest. She could do nothing but cry, as her beloved held her, whispering sweet nothings and promises of a future together. Back then her love was nothing more than a figment of a shadow, unclear, but her embrace was blazing with passion. With her soulmate, she felt warm. Safe. The more she opened her life to the other girl, the easier things became. And the more Carmilla blossomed into a young woman, so did her beloved soulmate.

She's a senior at her university now. One more year until she'll be in the real world, where the adults live and work. Why does she feel like she's running out of time?

"You're late!" Waived her beloved sister, a frown plastered on her face.

"Calm your tits," She grumbles, but she couldn't help smiling. As overbearing as her sister was, Carmilla loved her. They have been through so much together through the years, Mattie having to save her ass on numerous occasions. To an outsider, one would think they disliked each other, but Carmilla wasn't exactly the type of person to talk about feelings in a public setting. She preferred expressing herself through her music, where no one can judge her. It was just the way things were—and Carmilla wouldn't change it for the world.

"Oh, I can't stay mad at you," She cooed, pulling her in for a hug. "I just haven't seen you in a while. How have you been?"

Carmilla guiltily rubbed the back of her head. That was her fault—sometimes she gets wrapped up in her college life she forgets to check on home. "Fine. I guess."

"Life as a musician treating you well?" Mattie grins, causing Carmilla to roll her eyes.

"I got a promotion at the studio the other day." She offers, knowing that only her sister cared about her pursuit in the music business. Mama did care to some extent, but she didn't understand it. Carmilla had to compromise and chose to be a philosophy major instead. Growing up, music had become a very important aspect of her childhood, and she couldn't separate from it. She wouldn't have even gone to Silas three years ago if she hadn't gotten a job at her favorite music
"That's wonderful! Now's a good reason to celebrate!" Mattie exclaimed, clapping her hands together. She hurried off to the waitress to order their coffees, which Carmilla was grateful for.

Smiling to herself, she allowed herself to relax and take in the environment around her. There were a few university students she didn't recognize, with their entire faces in textbooks and looking painfully done with life. There was a reading corner built on the far side of the café, where Carmilla silently reserved her large comfy chair. If anyone sat in it, she would pass them a glare and they would somehow get the picture.

"A coconut milk mocha macchiato for you, extra cream, no sugar." She came back, and Carmilla reached out for it with welcoming arms. Mattie's was always simple—decaf, no cream, and one cube of sugar.

She happily took one sip of her drink and smiled, leaning back in the booth. Coffee was her only friend in this life—only it knew how to make her feel this good.

They sat in silence for a while, watching the people walk in and out of the café. Mattie was starting to look uneasy, as she lightly tapped her spoon against her drink. Carmilla raised an eyebrow at her, concern written on her face.

"I suppose I can't keep it in any longer," The older woman sighed, shaking her head. She reached across the table and placed her hand on top of Carmilla's. "Mama is worried about you." She froze, the wonderful taste of her macchiato suddenly sour. She was hoping to get through the meeting without mentioning it. She slid down on the booth, hoping to look as small as possible.

*Mama can go fuck herself.*

"I'm fine." She managed through gritted teeth.

Matte gave her a sad smile, "Perhaps. But you're not happy."

"You know why, and I don't want to talk about it."

"I'm not—," She breathed in deeply, knowing that whatever she says to her beloved sister would make her the enemy. "I'm not asking you to talk about it. I'm just saying that Mama is worried."

"Then you should tell her that she has nothing to worry about. It's... it's not like I've gone off the deep end. That only happened twice." She winced, "I'm better now." She knew Mattie didn't believe her. That makes two of them. She shook her head, and they were silent for a while, until Mattie's eyes sparkled with delight.

"Did you dream about your soulmate again?" She asks hopefully, causing Carmilla to spit out her coffee onto the table. That was a rhetorical question—she always dreams about her precious love.

Her cheeks turned red at the thought of her beloved, and nodded. Mattie reached out across the table, giving her a wistful smile. "You're a lucky girl, dear. Not many people on this Earth is blessed by the Moon to have one. Give it time. I have a feeling you'll be meeting her soon, judging by how... explicit your dreams are becoming."

"I'm sure you'll meet yours one day, as well." Carmilla managed to say, causing her sister to chuckle.

"And have to deal with my horrid sense of humor? That poor soul." She shook her head. "I'll live vicariously through you, instead."
The conversation lulled, Carmilla going back to sipping on her coffee and Mattie tapping her spoon against the table. Her face was twisted with strange emotions, and Carmilla was worried she was about to cry.

"Carmilla," She finally said, voice thick with emotion. "I don't want to lose you again."

"I…" Carmilla swallowed hard. Fuck, why did this have to be so difficult?

"I wish you'll at least try."

Mattie's try meant lots of things. Try to be friendly. Try to smile. Try to focus on schoolwork. Try to be happy. Try to change.

She said nothing in response. It wasn't exactly her lowest moment, but she did feel an overwhelming amount of sadness. To sort out her emotions, she played. She played until her fingers were bleeding. It… helped, somewhat, but Carmilla could see where Mattie was coming from. It was much better if one had another person to confide in.

Trying was easier said than done, and Mattie of all people should understand. Carmilla swallowed the bile that was threatening to release itself from her throat.

All Carmilla could do was get up from her seat, and placed a gentle kiss on Mattie's forehead before hurrying out of the café, angry tears streaming down her face.

What good was being alive in a world where she didn't have her soulmate?

0o0o0o

It was a dreary world outside. The skies were grey. Winds blew large tree branches across the campus lawn. Rain poured down from the sky, pitter pattering against the window. It was an uncharacteristically gloomy day in mid-September. This was strange. Usually the weather in Styria's beloved capital, Graz, was always sunny. It would get so warm one would be able to walk midday in the middle of the streets, with barely anything covering their body.

Though, even with this grueling weather, Silas University still looked beautiful. There were over thirty-five thousand students studying here from around the world, and they had more than enough dorm halls to accommodate. Each one was styled in its own fairy-tale theme, even the common rooms. Each hallway had a secret corridor that lead to a separate classroom. The library was the best place on campus, with the largest collection of books in Styria. Fun fact, Silas has the most prestigious course on the supernatural and Wiccan studies, if anyone was interested in dabbling with magic. The very fact that this existed here was exciting. If a student didn't fall in love with everything their first visit, then they had no purpose to be here.

This place was mysterious. Everything seemed to be… alive. Every creak in the floor, every moan, every whisper, seemed to be coming from somewhere. It's difficult to explain unless one is experiencing these sensations simultaneously.

Drawing out a low breath, I desperately tried to pay attention to the English Lit professor. Usually I'm horrid at this class, and today is no exception. The professor had her back turned, scribbling nonsense on the blackboard. We were going over Dante's Inferno, the final act, but I barely grasped the meaning and symbolism behind the first part.

I closed my eyes, starting to use my own shirt as a fan.

It was hot. The temperature had reached its all-time high, at 94 degrees.
I turned my attention to the clock, which was slowly moving through time. My eyes bore to the unforgiving circle, wishing I had magical powers of some sort.

The professor’s voice was now completely no more than just an echo in my mind, as I had drowned out everything completely.

Life was dull when one didn’t have a soulmate.

Then, timidly, I tucked in my hair and risked a glance at the tall red haired girl sitting two seats across from me. She was beautiful, and I’ve had a ridiculous crush on her since last year. I don’t know much about her, besides that her name is Danny, and she’s a leader of one of our sororities on campus, the Summer Society. Many people rave about how incredible and brave she is. I know it’s hypocritical of me, to fall for someone based on their looks, but I’m so scared and flub horribly whenever I try to talk to her.

*Welcome to Looser-Ville, population: me.*

Somehow, miraculously, she made eye contact. *And smiled.* We held each other’s gaze for a solid minute.

I waited for it. I waited for the burning sensation, for the second sign that let us know we had found our soulmate. My mind was supposed to hurt with this indescribable pain and sensation overload. It was supposed to be instantaneous. I was met with a bewildered expression instead, sorrowful eyes and the tiniest of smiles.

She didn't have to say anything. Her eyes spoke volumes.

There was an angry cough from the teacher, and I whipped my head around so fast I swore I got whiplash. I felt like a weight had crashed down on my pathetic shoulders; I couldn’t pay attention to the lecture.

Tears welled in my eyes.

Thankfully, *thankfully*, the time had struck 3:30pm and the day was over. I hurried out of the room, backpack bouncing off my shoulders, and into the rainy afternoon. I felt Danny’s eyes stare into the back of my head. I sighed with remorse, choking back a distressed sob.

My heart was heavy as I strolled back from the campus eatery, keeping my eyes trained on the floor. Normally I would spend my nights curled up by the fireplace at the library, where it was nice and comfy, but I was too tired to make the trek.

I flashed my ID towards the resident adviser, but they hardly looked up at me. No one ever takes a second glance—I’m invisible here, have been for the past three years. At first, it was nice because I could get accustomed to my surroundings quickly. But I wasn’t that great in social environments, and hardly attended any parties. I slipped in and out of the crowd as easily as possible, not being seen, but wishing that I was.

It probably didn’t help that I was five foot two. Everybody trampled upon me.

*Christ, you're a ball of sunshine today, Hollis.* I think bitterly to myself, as I lazily click the 'up' button on the elevator.

It was getting ready to close, when—

"Wait, wait, wait!" A ridiculously tall boy came bustling in, with a girl attached by the hips. He
smiled lazily at me, his arm cutting through the gap between us. He had a long, handsome face, with dark brown eyes and unkempt hair. "Phew, sorry about that, little hottie."

Ugh. A Zeta bro. My eyes narrowed, as I tried (failing) to ignore the fact that they're sticking each-others tongues down their throats. But with the way they held each other, it was easy to tell that they weren't soulmates. Their movements were quick, uncoordinated. There was no mark present on their bodies to signify that they were. Whenever soulmates have sex or kiss it's been said that the experience is electrifying, and anyone within a five-foot radius can almost feel the impact of their love. Unfortunately, I have no experience in any of that.

No friends. No job. No soulmate. Fuck, I'm pathetic.

They didn't last in here long, and got off at the second floor, making out as they left. An uneasy feeling shot through my chest again, causing me to feel even smaller. Dark thoughts swirled in my mind as I hugged myself, wishing for them to go away.

Did my soulmate even care? I've been dreaming about her for the past four years, and not once has she tried to contact me in real life. I have no idea where she is. I'd be a miserable partner for her, anyhow. The moment she realizes how lame I am, she's going to leave me.

No, stop it. I urge, shaking my head. That's stupid. She loves me—she said so. Stop thinking that.

The elevator finally stopped at the third floor, and I hurried out, walking down to the end of the hall to room 307. I do have a roommate, but I pretend she doesn't exist. She's loud, and brings over girls more often than studying. At least this is her last semester, then she'll be off in the big wide world by the time spring comes.

She was sprawled on the tiny couch in our kitchenette, rocking out in nothing but her bra and light, see-through pants. There was another girl besides her, a lustful smile on her face.

I ducked my head when the two saw me, but it was too late.

"Hey! It's my favorite roomie in the whole wide world!" The platinum blonde haired girl exclaimed with false enthusiasm, now bouncing towards me. I defensively hold my hands up in front of her.

"Eep! I'm all wet and I don't want hugs!" I shriek, causing her to shrink back, defeated.

"Aw, don't be so up-tight, Hollis." She drawls.

"I'm not up-tight, Spielsdorf, I've just had a very long and frustrating day and I want to curl up in bed." I practically growl at her, my patience thinning.

"Well, come chill with us. We don't bite." Chimed in her soulmate, a sickening look on her face.

"Thanks, but no thanks. I have better things to do." I scoff and make a bee line to my bedroom.

"Wow. Rude." I barely heard just as I slammed the door, and slid down to the floor. "Is she always like that, Betty?"

"Don't take it personally. She just has a vendetta against everyone." My roommate sighs, as if she knows what I do with my life. "She's probably just bitter because she hasn't met her soulmate yet."

"Poor thing." The other girl crooned, and tears pricked the back of my eyes.
"I know, right?"

I curl up into a ball and scream as loudly as possible, but the loud music they played drowned me out completely. I rush into my bathroom and grip the edges of the sink, helplessly crying out in pain. After a moment, I took in a deep breath. Once, twice, repeat. You can do this, Hollis. Don't let them win, once, twice, repeat. I wince at the reflection in the mirror.

…I am feeling lonely. Besides my dad, there was no one else in this lifetime I can confide in. We don't talk much to our intermediate family, since they all live in the outskirts of Austria. I wasn't exactly the type of student in my high school years to make any friends, but there were more than enough things to do to keep my mind busy. I wasn't invited to any sleepovers, or block parties… dad and I just kept to ourselves. I would have liked to expand my horizons, and do everything normal kids have, but my father has been a hardcore helicopter parent. I say 'has' in past-tense, our relationship hasn't been the greatest since mom passed.

I think I'm the only one on this damn campus that has a pack of bear spray stashed in her backpack. I keep it mostly for the sentiment; it reminds me of home.

I had already finished my homework for the week, so I didn't have to worry about that. There was only one thing I had left to do, to finish off the night.

I quietly stepped around my room, tapping lightly on one of the loose floorboards beside my bed. I pried it open, breathing out a thankful sigh of relief. It was still here—where it should be.

My mother struggled with breast cancer for if I can remember. She passed away when I was nine, and her death broke my dad. Even after all these years, he's still not over it… and I'm barely scraping by. When I was little, I used to tell myself that there were little gremlins eating away at her from the inside, and they wouldn't stop until they were full. The sad thing is that I was in denial for the longest time afterwards.

She's not dying, I remember telling my dad, she's just sleeping. She's going to wake up soon!

My fingers brushed against an old Halloween photo, of me dressed up as a nun, my father as Jack the Pumpkin King, and my mother as Sally. We had the best of times, just the three of us. I was so close with both that I never bothered to ask for another sibling. Looking back, I knew they were probably trying, but they were hiding their pain from me. I then took notice of the other thing in my hand, the small jar of origami paper stars.

I'm not sure what prompted me to start this collection, maybe it was a coping mechanism I had picked up. There was an old urban legend that if you create a thousand items of something that is precious to you, keep it someplace safe, and make a wish, it'll someday come true. It helped a lot, and I could destress or get out of my funk whenever I created them.
My mother loved birds. She was obsessed with them, and every morning I’d catch her talking to the nest just outside our window. She believed in past lives, and was convinced she was a bird multiple times. She kind of looked like one, as well—a sharp, pointed nose, hair done up in a pixie cut, sharp facial features, and a pretty voice. She loved singing second to birds. Papa used to call her 'Snow White' with how often she was out in the garden with the animals. She was special, he'd tell me, and I agreed with him.

So then, if she loved birds, why stars? She always told me that when my eyes sparkled, they looked like an entire galaxy of them, and it was beautiful.

Besides, birds were sort of her and dad's thing. As a child, I admired their detailed blue jay tattoos that adorned their necks, each one as beautiful as the last.

I wiped my eyes and trudged over to my desk, unfolding a piece of paper attached to the jar.

Here, I have it written that I was born on April 19th, 1994. My mother died on January 3rd, 2003. She was barely thirty-two when she died, and was born in September of 1971. Ever since her death, I had made exactly nine hundred and ninety-nine stars. This would be the last night I'd ever feel again.

Nothing, I think, will stop the pain in missing her. Heaving a deep breath, I pulled out my origami kit. My fingers moved like clockwork, forming the tiny figure, and I held it in my palm. It was something so small but held so much meaning for me, and suddenly I was overcome with emotion. I choked back a sob, my hands shaking as I gently placed the star inside the precious jar.

It started to rain again, and the droplets hitting the window sill was a soothing sound. *What a great start to this tall tale*, I thought bitterly. *It was a dark and stormy night…*

Briefly, I checked the time, and noticed that it was eleven-eleven pm. The wishing hour.

Composing myself, I tightly closed the lid and my hands were clammy with sweat. Maybe it was the metaphorical pressure I was giving myself, or the fact that my heart was beating a thousand miles a second, but I felt an overwhelming feeling of sadness.

The loneliness came back at full force.

I enclosed my palms together, trying to take deep, steady breaths. "I just wish I wasn't so lonely anymore. I wish you are listening to me. I miss you. Whoever you are, my beloved soulmate, I hope you are happy and that you are living a good life. My only wish is that you are here with me…" I bit my lip, shaking my head and closing my eyes, "Where are you? Please. My heart and soul aches for you. I-I'd rather die than go on another day like this…"

I pressed my hands on the precious jar, and breathed in deeply. I expected something abrupt to happen again, but everything was still. The rain didn't get louder or softer, and the dorm was settling, so I heard the floors creak. There was obnoxious laughter and shrieking coming from down the hall, causing me to roll my eyes.

And then, in a blink of a second, something happened. It was as if time had stopped. Everything was eerily quiet for a moment. Then, someone was softly playing the guitar.

*Look at the stars*

*Look how they shine for you*

*And everything you do*
Yeah, they were all yellow

My heart leaped into my throat, and suddenly I forgot to breathe. That voice… I couldn't exactly pinpoint where it was coming from, but it influenced me in a way I didn't even know was possible. I no longer felt that overwhelming feeling as I did before. My shoulders were somehow able to relax themselves, and I placed my hand over my heart.

Is that you, my soulmate? Have you answered me?

I came along

I wrote a song for you

And all the things you do

And it was called yellow

Carefully, I tip toed across my room, jar in hand, and peered outside my window. I had a perfect view of the sunset, though dad was more pleased that just above me was an emergency terrace. I first looked to my right for the source of my voice, deflating when I realized I must be going crazy. Then, I heard the clanging of metal, and craned my neck up.

And there she was. Or, at least; from the view I had of her—sitting cross legged with a guitar on her lap. I couldn't see her face, but I saw that her long dark hair hung past her shoulders. But I knew she was beautiful.

I came along

I wrote a song for you

And all the things you do

And it was called yellow

So, then I took my turn

Oh, what a thing to have done

And it was all yellow—

"Fuck!" The woman with the pretty voice hissed, suddenly hitting her guitar too quickly. I'm not exactly sure what happened, but I heard a sharp click, and the tiny pic came tumbling down the steps. She reached for it desperately, but it was far out of her grasp, and somehow wedged itself in between the crevasses on my side of the terrace.

She took a moment to collect herself, before sighing, putting her face in her hands. "Snap out of it. Get a hold of yourself," She was mumbling, and shakily turned to get up. "Whatever. You suck at this, anyway."

My heart broke for the girl, and I wanted to scream at her—no, don't bring yourself down like that! You sounded amazing! But she was gone within a second, and I didn't see what window she climbed back into. An overwhelming feeling came over me then, and before I knew it, I was crawling out of my window, and quickly grabbed the pic before the rain pushed it off the terrace. Beyond exhausted, I curled up in bed with my precious jar of stars, and her guitar pic.
Tomorrow will be a better day. It needs to be.
The Letters

Chapter Summary

Laura feels compelled to write a letter to the singing girl. Carmilla's heart soars at the thought of someone listening to her.

Chapter Notes

O-oh my! So many kudos and bookmarks! Thank you lovelies, you're all very sweet! :3 I'm glad that so many of you are interested in my humble soulmate au. This is a short chapter, but hopefully it's enough to hold you over until Monday :p

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I'd like to make myself believe that planet earth turns slowly
It's hard to say that I'd rather stay awake when I'm asleep
'Cause everything is never as it seems" -Fireflies, by Owl City


Wash, rinse, repeat.

Life had no meaning. The days were blurring into one, and the sky no longer seemed blue. For the longest time, this is how I viewed the universe.

There is no purpose for me here. I had nothing to give, was involved with nothing else of importance.

I was living, but I sure as hell didn't feel alive.

Then something had changed. Ever since that fateful night, I felt a new presence, as if someone was watching me. They were warm and comforting, giving me strength for a new day. The precious jar of stars seemed to glow with its own magical light, urging me to keep going.

That girl on the terrace… who was she, and why haven't I seen her before now? Had she always been in my life, and I just didn't recognize her?

It was the strangest sensation the next morning, as I woke up for the first time and didn't feel sad. There was, of course, the looming feeling of loneliness, but I could compose myself for the better half of the morning.

Yawning, I quickly scrambled out of bed and tore out a piece of envelope paper. I sat down at
my desk, wracking my brain for something to say. I didn't know why I am doing this, but I have the intense need to reach out to her.

Last night, it was as if she was trying to communicate to someone. I could hear the longing and desperation in her voice, and it made me sad.

Dear friend,

Thank you. I'm not sure if you play the guitar often, but this was the first night I've heard you. I loved your cover of Coldplay's Yellow. I was having trouble falling asleep and your soothing voice helped. Who were you singing for?

Love, L.

I nod to myself, smiling. Simple, and straight to the point. I decided not to put my full name, for ambiguity, and the off chance that she's a psychopath with the potential to stalk me.

I felt lighter today. I crawled out of the window and onto the terrace, sticking the note between the steps where she practiced. I skipped out of the room and brightly called out to Betty, who was characteristically nursing a hangover.

"God? Is that you?" She mumbled, her face stuck in her pillow. I giggle, shaking my head, and hurry out the door for my first class.

I was nervous when I entered my English class that day, earlier than usual. Danny comes in a second before the teacher gets here, so I must be quick with my approach. What should I say to her? Hi I've had a crush on you since freshman year? Open with a funny one-liner? Jeez, making friends in college was so much harder than the movies make it out to be.

Nervously, I started to pace. What if she doesn't even come in today?

"Hey," Came a soft, concerning voice, "Are you okay?"

"I-I like your face!" I blurt out anxiously, whipping around to see none other than Danny herself. I start to blush, embarrassed, and cover my mouth. She blinks at me for a moment, until she giggles, tilting her head curiously at me.

"If we had a chance in this universe, I'd be flattered," She grins, her face lighting up. "You're here early. I thought you hated English Lit?"

I look down at the floor, "I wanted to get my work done where there was no annoying roommate nursing a hangover." Half-truth. I just wanted to be noticed by someone, even if there's no chance of her being my soulmate.

Danny makes an agreeable noise, "I know the feeling. You're a freshman, right?"

My cheeks flush with frustration, "I'm a senior, thank-you-very-much. Graduating next semester. Twenty years old. Not ten."

"Ouch. I'm sorry—you must get that a lot." She mumbled. "What's your name?"

"Laura Hollis," I say, extending my hand towards her, heart bursting with joy. "I'm a business and journalism major."

"Danny Lawrence. I'm an English major." A thoughtful smile appears on her face, "Oh, you're the
girl who writes those columns on the Silas News Net!"

"You actually read them?" I ask, a bit flustered.

"Well yeah, it's how I get my weekly news as to what's happening on campus. Why have you stopped?"

"I… I didn't think anyone cared for it." I mumble.

She leans in, "Do you think you can write a column about the Summer Society? You know, get the word out that we're recruiting next week?"

I haven't had this close of a contact with anyone in years. It was nice. Flushing, I smacked my lips together, and nod. "W-what day works best for you?" She smelled of mint and honey.

"I'm free Thursday and Friday nights. What about you?"

"Same here—I, um, this is the part where I give you my number, right?"

Chuckling, she takes out the newest iPhone, and I stare at it enviously. I'm stuck with my old flip phone, which dad refuses to upgrade. I recite my phone number and she plugs it in.

"This is great! I guess I'll see you around, Laura."

"R-right." I mumble, and hurry back to my seat when one of her Summer Society friends come over.

My heart was still buzzing, as I lightly drummed my fingers on the table. I hid my face in my hair as happy tears glistened in my eyes.

Don't screw this up, Hollis, the warning tone echoed in my mind.

0o0o0o

Carmilla rubbed her eyes as she crawled out of bed, feeling an odd need to check out the terrace. It was two o'clock when she had finally woken up the next day, and weirdly she didn't feel tired.

Most days she would have to drink at least two cups of coffee for the buzz to perk her mind up, and function like a normal human being.

Today was different. Her world was just a bit brighter. She dreamed about her love again, but this time they just said nothing. Her love seemed happier in this dream, smiling, and laughing. She seemed to remind her that everything would be okay.

That she was strong enough.

Crawling out of the window and onto the terrace, she breathed in the afternoon air. It was still cloudy, with the smell of rain, but there was no wind. She leaned over the railings, kicking back her legs. She then looked for anything out of place and found it, a tiny envelope tucked in between the stairs.

Carmilla curiously raised her eyebrows when she picked up the note, tearing it open. She read it once, twice, and then a third time until she memorized it. Who the frilly hell was L, and why would they have the motive to even leave her a message like this? It was way too strange. Carmilla had been playing her guitar on her terrace for the past two years now—someone would have bound to hear her before then.
At first, she was panicked by the weird note, but then a sense of euphoria came over her. Someone was listening. Whoever they were, she had helped that person go to sleep the other night.

Then, she looked at the final line, *who were you singing for?*

Taking a deep breath, she quickly went into her dorm room to grab a note card and a pencil. She had to at least reply with something.

*I wasn’t expecting anyone to be listening, cutie. This is a surprise. You're welcome; I’m glad I helped you somewhat. Some nights I just like to sit on the terrace and look at the stars. It's comforting. Thinking of the lives we've led. The people we've been. Nothing to that light. It's refreshing to know that there is someone looking at the same sky as you are, in the same moment of peace. In theory, I’m singing for my soulmate, having hopes that they are near. Listening. Wishing. Waiting. I hope that today will be better for you. Do you have a song request?*

—C.

She supposed that was good enough—she was horrible with words, and never knew how to start up conversation. But this was something new, and pure. She knew she just couldn’t sit this one out. She climbed out of her back window and onto the terrace again, sticking the card between the steps.

During her classes today, she made it a point to focus on the lecture. Of course, she excelled with her philosophy courses and struggled with her sciences, but that was the norm. She had phoned Mattie later that afternoon and made small talk with her sister. Time went excruciatingly slow. Perhaps it was the fact that she was looking forward to something for once, and that someone had noticed her.

*This is crazy,* her mind was saying, *still in disbelief, No one has ever made a point to talk to me in years. This must be some sort of prank.*

Carmilla frowned, taking a slow bite of her sandwich. Surely, it all seemed too good to be true. But she had gotten this far in life, what's the harm in testing the natural order of things? This letter exchange could be good for her in the long run.

All she had to do was wait, and see for herself.

*Platinum Graz* was a small, family owned record shop in the heart of the city. It took pride in its collection of vinyl records, CDs, and band memorabilia. It was the kind of store one would walk in, spend hours looking for a specific item, and walk out with two sets of it. There was a small recording studio where they held 'jam sessions', or hours where they recorded covers that the co-workers had sung and put it on the radio for the Silas University students. It was the type of situation where someone found out about this through word-of-mouth, and Carmilla loved that. It helped her feel like she was a part of a community, however small it may be.

"Carmilla Karnstein? Smiling? What kind of universe is this?" Said a new voice, as the young woman blinked up to see her co-worker. She had this weird look on her face. Melanippe Callis is snarky, arrogant, and boasts how knowledgeable she is about the ancient bands of olden 1980s. The two get along, somewhat, but the tiny black woman wouldn't be the type of person to go out drinking with. Hell, she pretends to hardly recognize the girl if they ever bump into each other on campus.

" Shut the fuck up, Mel." There—the universe is back in balance.
"Ooh, someone has a stick up their ass. As usual," Mel leaned over and peered at her, "At least you came to work on time. You know the boss hates it when we fuck up."

"I am aware, Mel." She sighs, shaking her head. "Can you go now?"

"… Is everything okay?" Mel asked, her voice laced with an odd tone of kindness. She peered worriedly at Carmilla.

"Shit day." Carmilla mumbled, heart heavy.

Mel nods solemnly, in tune with her emotions. "They always are, when you haven't found your match." She sighs, "I'd hate to be a soul who gets their mark ripped, though."

"Better to have loved and lost, then to have not loved at all." Carmilla quoted, and Mel scrunched her face up.

"Touché." She grumbles, and says nothing more. Her co-worker left her alone for the rest of the shift. Carmilla breathed out a flustered sigh. Her life was pathetic. The only chance of happiness she got was through her dreams.

She wondered what her pen pal was doing in that moment, and continued to stack the record cases back on the shelf. Seconds later, a group of university students came bustling in, loud and rambunctious, causing Carmilla to scowl. She fucking hated people.

It was ten-thirty when Carmilla came trudging sleepily back to her dorm, throwing her backpack on the floor. Her legs hurt from squatting so much, and her fingers were sore from carrying those boxes across the store.

Still, despite her grumblings, she knew the world couldn't just stop. She had to know if her pen pal had written back to her. She managed a weak smile and got Inanna from her closet, carrying it onto the terrace.

There it was—in a pink envelope, with stars and hearts decorating the corners. Carmilla tore it open, heart beating in excited terror.

Hi, friend!

Oh, my gosh you replied! Yay! I was freaking out all day because I didn't think you would. Why wouldn't anyone want to listen to you? You're an amazing singer, I love your voice. Do you have a celebrity inspiration? Were you self-taught? How many instruments do you know how to play? Sorry, I know that's a lot of questions at once but I'm so excited. Today was better for me, thank you for asking. It's strange. For the past month I've been feeling completely out of it, and finally something within me just snapped. It was like I received a metaphorical kick in the ass. I mean… I'm not one hundred percent better, but there's a change. You get it, right? Of course you do—you're all philosophical about stars and space. I bet you're the type of person that people never think twice about, and is really quiet, but when you speak the entire world stops because you're just so prolific.

Love, L.

P.S, Do you know how to play Fireflies, by Owl City? OBSESSED 3

Carmilla let out a happy chuckle, sat down on her favorite spot, and played for a long while. She allowed the music to absorb her soul and sang as if it were her last night alive. Once she finished, her heart felt lighter, and she picked up her pen.
My celebrity inspirations have always been Pink and Rihanna. Ugh. They're so perfect it hurts. I'm self-taught. I know how to play the guitar, piano, and a little bit of recorder, but I guess no one ever counts those things as a talent. (Though, I do know how to play Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star with my nose). Erm—please don't tell anyone about that. Music is a way to express myself, and have gotten me out of rough situations throughout my life. I can't imagine life without it. I understand how you must have been stuck in a funk lately—I'm sorry about that. There are other coping mechanisms to help deal with these sorts of emotions, and I'm sure with time you'll figure out what's best for you.

I'm shocked that you guessed completely right on my aesthetic. You must have a good intuition. I'm that kind of gal who hangs out in the back of the crowd, invisible, wishing to be heard, but no one looking back. No one has ever noticed me before, I suppose. Until you, cupcake. From your letters, you seem nice enough, so I took a wild chance and ran with it. Time will tell were this takes us, sunshine.

—C

P.S. By the way, I hope you enjoyed my rendition of Fireflies, because I'll never be doing a song by Owl City again. I adore Adam's music too much and get too invested in the song. Our lovely neighbors told me so.

Chapter End Notes

btw, what are the odds that I post this chapter on the release date of Owl City's Fireflies? What crazy witch-craft is this? I'm kinda freaked out, actually. Someone hold me-- I WROTE THIS CHAPTER MONTHS AGO. I SWEAR I DIDN'T PLAN THIS.
The letters continue, and Laura has an interview with Danny. Carmilla goes to a club fair, where we meet Lafontaine and Perry.

“Lately, I've been, I've been losing sleep
Dreaming about the things that we could be
But baby, I've been, I've been praying hard
Said no more counting dollars
We'll be counting stars” - Counting Stars, by One Republic

It was funny how one small change came into my life, but it sparked a fire in me I never knew I'd still had.

C was mysterious. C was unpredictable. C was alluring.

But who was she?

Thinking about her made my stomach churn with an excited nervousness. I drew out a breath as I sat on the terrace, breathing in the air after it rained.

The terrace was like looking at a one-way mirror. I could clearly see the other person on the other side, but they can't see or hear me, since I'm a floor below. I can only get so far up the terrace before freaking out and quickly hurrying back to my dorm.

I read over the letter and my eyes focused on her one sentence, I took a chance and ran with it. And, following quickly after, time will tell.

I did a ridiculous happy dance at that. That means she—or they—want to keep doing this. As weird as this situation is, we have found each other in the great mass of seven billion people on planet Earth. That counts for something, right?

Hey there, Friend!

That's so cool! I'm always envious of people with musical talents. It's like they're walking on a different time plane and speak a whole new language. I'm... not exactly talented at any of that, but I do have a black belt in Krav Maga and have a daily Yoga routine. So... *jazz hands* Don't worry, I hardly know anyone on this campus besides you, so who am I going to tell? The friendly ghost on the fifth floor of the Library? I have a weird hobby of creating origami crafts. Whenever I'm upset or frustrated about something, I have this craft book and I just spend hours making cranes, stars, and anything that comes to mind. I can create you something, if you'd like. Here's a question: would you rather be stuck in a love triangle between a werewolf and a vampire, or be fighting for your life in a zombie apocalypse?
Love, L.

P.S. Why are you giving me those nicknames? And how can you tell I'm cute? For all you know, I can be some ridiculously ugly girl with a wart on her nose. :P

I smiled and put the card in the pink envelope, crawling out of the window and onto the terrace. Usually I hurry back quickly and start my day, but this time I waited a second. I peered down onto the campus, noticing how tiny the other students look from up here. The sun was out today, and at least it wasn't as humid as before.

I suddenly heard something that was a mix between a moan and a yawn. Curiously, I peered down to the dorm room below me and noticed that even though it was ten am, the lights were still completely shut off. There was a large lump on the bed and a pale hand lazily hanging off the edges. The scene caused me to giggle—whoever this person was, they certainly were a late riser. I'd hate to be the one who must wake them up every morning.

Nodding to myself, I hurried off the terrace and back into my dorm room, ready for the day to begin.

Classes went by quicker than I thought they would, as I only had three to worry about. I anxiously hurried back to check if C had left a note, but the terrace was empty. I sighed, realizing that we must be on different time schedules.

"Laura!" The tall redhead girl exclaimed, waving her arms at me. She had a happy look on her face. My head whipped around, momentarily stunned that someone had called out to me. This was a new reality that I'll gladly get used to.

"Danny, hey!" I greet, awkwardly waving back.

"I—oh!" I say, fiddling with my notebook. "I didn't have a place picked out. I was hoping you could help me with that."

"Sure thing; the perfect place for that is the Summer Society common room. That way you can really experience the aesthetic," She replied, linking her arms with me. I was a bit surprised by how forward she was, but I didn't mind it. This was nice. We were walking out of the main hall now, and into the courtyard. The sun was setting, as the sky was tinted with a beautiful orange glow. She turned to me with a smile, "So I know you hate English, but are there any other majors that you love to study?"

"Economics, Communications, Psychology… ooh, and that course on Wicca we have. I remember taking it in freshman year and becoming obsessed. Knowing that there are real life psychics out there who can wield magic is so cool."

Danny made a face, "I'm not sure if I can believe in it. I haven't had any magical experiences happen in my life, so… I guess it's alright to have an open mind about it."

"There we go!" I clap my hands like a dork, "What sort of books do you like to read?"

She thinks for a moment, "Hmm. As a kid, I loved to read. Now that I'm older I hardly have the time, unfortunately. I remember being absolutely in love with the old English Dramas, and read Pride and Prejudice at least twice. Once for school and again a few years back."

My eyes lit up, "Jane Austin is honestly one of my favorite authors, compared to J.D Salinger. Did you see the 2005 movie adaptation?"
Danny nods, "I loved it. Usually I'm not a fan of movie adaptations, but this one captured all my favorite scenes in the way I imagined it. Like that one time when Mr. Darcy asked Lily to dance with her…"

She loves Pride and Prejudice. We're going to be awesome friends.

Our conversation began to drift off into random things about our classes, and soon enough we were in the common room. There was only another girl lounging on the couch, headphones tucked into her ear and completely lost to the world. She was tall, like Danny, and pretty in a superficial way. Like it was difficult for her to be authentic. She had long brown hair that she tied up in a bun, and wore a crop top that barely covered her breasts.

"Yo, SJ!" Danny called, trying to get her attention. The other girl's head looked up and she smiled, taking her headphones off. "Laura is going to interview me for a couple of minutes. She's hoping that a segment on the Summer Society would help get the online newspaper up and running."

"We have an online newspaper?" SJ asked, causing me to comically slap my head. "Wait a second. Duh—I started it when I was a freshman. I didn't think anyone was still going through with it." My mouth dropped open in shock, but I said nothing, thinking better of it. "Sure. I don't mind. I'll just keep my headphones in."

Danny turned to face me, looking apologetic. "Sorry about that. Sarah Jane's a bit scatterbrained."

"Don't apologize on her behalf," I assure, chuckling. Three people. That's three people today who've noticed me. I felt a warm feeling in my chest, and slowly took in a deep breath. "So," We sit down on the couch, sitting comfortably next to each other. "Tell me about the Summer Society!" I click on the record button of my recording device I use for my journalism projects. It's a small, three-inch tech that my dad had gotten me for my birthday last year, the latest of its design.

"Well, first and foremost, I am the VP rec. The Summer Society is an outdoor social club for all girls' athletics. Every morning we wake up at six am to go for a jog around campus, and complete several bonding exercises to start the day off right. We host the schools' annual Adonis Festival and Hunt. So, if you ever see us around the spring time in wicked cool uniforms and practically taking over the hike, you know what we're celebrating."

"So why Vice President and not President?" I ask, jotting notes down.

"Mel Callis won over the public vote. At the end of every year, we host a rush to see how much the girls have improved. Mel's shown great strength in overcoming many obstacles in her life, so it was a fair contest and I settled for second best. The whole point of the Summer Society is to empower women to be great leaders throughout college and beyond." She winks at me, "Plus, this looks great on your resume."

"That's amazing. I can't believe you girls wake up at six am for roll call. How many are in your sorority?"

"Out of the whole campus, we have a rough estimate of seventy-five girls, and a waiting list of twenty every year."

"Wow. Any tips or encouraging words for new recruits?" I ask.

"Of course! Just be yourself, and keep a positive disposition! If we don't give you a call back, that doesn't mean you weren't fit to be a Summer. And remember, this type of club isn't for everyone. We're looking for a specific breed of tough girls on our team, where no one gets left behind and"
everyone picks up after one another.

She's a feminist—how admirable.

"How would you say your experience has been, joining the society?" I ask after a moment of silence.

Danny lets out a low breath, "A roller coaster, definitely. But I wouldn't change it for the world. Before I joined, I was terribly awkward and shy. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life or if Silas was the right choice for me. The Summer Society is more than just a club... we're a family, and we have each other's backs. We're sisters for life. YO, SJ!" Danny called, alerting her friend again. "We are fam-ily~!"

"I got all my sisters and me!" She sang back, loudly and off key. I couldn't help but giggle at them, and decided that I had a decent amount of information. I closed my notebook and shut off the recording device.

"Thanks so much for you time. I'm glad I finally got the chance to speak with you."

"No prob, Laura! I'm glad I could inspire you to start up Silas News Net again. I'll start spreading the word for students to check the school's website."

"A-and I'm glad that you were the one who suggested it, because this past semester I've just been so nervous to talk to you." I mumble, taking a piece of hair from my eyes.

"What? Why would you be nervous?" She asked; she turned to her friend, "Am I that intimidating?"

"Danny, you're the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk." SJ giggles, "People cower in your wake."

"N-no, it's nothing about you!" I say frantically, when the redhaired girl started to look dejected, "I'm just quirky and weird in general. Not many people view me as friendship material."

"Well, don't listen to them, Hollis. You're okay in my book." She chimes, patting my knee. "I'd like to be your friend."

"R-really?" I ask, my heart warming. Ah—this was too good to be true. Overwhelmed, I leaned over and hugged her.

"Group hug!" SJ laughs, kicking off her headphones and collapsing on top of us. We all shrieked and laughed as we toppled onto the floor, and I closed my eyes in pure glee. This would be a moment I would always look back at and be proud of myself. For even in the smallest victories, they can go a long way.

You have a black belt in Krav Maga? Well, shit. That's impressive—I know never to get on your bad side. I'm envious of your yoga routine—do you have any tips on keeping a healthy exercise regime? My diet consists of cookies and cheap fast food. Ugh—I binge eat when I'm stressed. You know about the ghost as well? There's a secret room on the fifth floor it always hangs out in. I was drunk one night and it scared the shit out of me. Whenever I ask the librarian about it, she pretends to be aloof and doesn't know a thing. Something's weird with that.

And I would love an origami figure from you. Would you care making a little musical note
and guitar? I hope that's not too complicated. I'm glad you've recognized a coping mechanism that works for you—keep at it. Ich; I hate the Twilight series. It's a disgrace against the ancient vampires of legend. Ever heard of Dracula? Or even Carmilla, the seductress from Sheridan Le Fanu's novella? A much better read. So, no. I wouldn't want to be stuck in between a lame love triangle. I'm an independent woman who can kick ass and survive a zombie apocalypse. And as for your nickname question, I am often told that I have a sarcastic tongue and a witty sense of humor that cannot be tamed. With the way you dot your eyes with stars and draw hearts on the edges of the envelopes, you're a cutie. I bet you like, dream of rainbows and unicorns every night. And hey, even if you are an ugly girl with a wart on her nose, I'd still talk to you. You're the first human I've ever had this much fun talking with in years. I look forward to these letters.

–C

P.S. Song request?

Carmilla yawned and read over her letter, hoping that she didn't come off as too strong within the last paragraph. She really meant what she wrote, and had feared the worst-case scenario of L going ghost on her.

She shook her head, pushing those negative thoughts away. Things were different now. She was making small victories and getting better each day. L was different—she felt it in her heart that the girl was a special human bean, and somehow got the sense that the girl on the other side needed these letters just as much as Carmilla did, even if they didn't have a chance in being soulmates. But that was wishful thinking.

She crawled out over the terrace and placed the envelope in their spot. She peered out over the campus lawn, and saw that there was multiple club had set their tables up. If the weather permitted it, her mother allowed the students to advocate their clubs outside. There were multiple food trucks and a bubble blower was beginning to attract the lunch crowd. Her stomach growled, and Carmilla reasoned with herself that here was a good opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. Find something to eat, and perhaps make a friend or two.

If the growing anxiety would cease to exist, things would be a whole lot better.

As Carmilla walked down the hallway and to the elevator, she thought about her dream last night. Her love wasn't beside her. She was still in the field, and saw the stars, but her arms were empty. She at first felt a cold sense of dread, as she began calling out to her so loudly her throat grew sore, and sobbed. Then the wind came, drying away her tears, and she found herself floating. There was nothing around her besides darkness, but she didn't feel lonely anymore.

What had the dream meant? It was so strange—she was so used to being with her love every night, for the past three years, and then so suddenly she was gone. Was that her brain telling her that it was finally time to move on, that her soulmate was somehow was going to come in her life?

God, Carmilla hoped so. It gets boring talking to herself after a while.

The sounds of excited chatter had broken Carmilla out of her thoughts, and she glanced up to see all the cool clubs they had on campus. As the stands became increasingly smooshed together and students were starting to bump into each other, she started to feel her chest tighten, but she had to get through this.

She'd promised Mattie. She was here, she was trying—that was more than enough, right?
"Lafontaine, for Christ's sake, why did you go to the cheer-leading captain to ask for a DNA sample?"

She turned her attention to a bickering couple, a ginger haired duo sitting a few inches away from her, a picnic blanket lay on the grass underneath them. They were an odd pair; the red haired girl on her right wore a flower crown, a bright iridescent blouse, and high-waisted corduroy pants. Her partner besides her had hair that was shaved on one side, with a t-shirt that had a neuron on it with GOT SCIENCE written in bold, and ripped jeans. They were slouching, compared to the other ginger, who sat upright and wore a frustrated scowl on her face.

"I get it that you need to do these odd things for your science experiments, but you can't just go up to people and stick a needle in their arm!" She frets, waving her arms around.

"Babe, it's for science! There's no way that cheerleading captain can keep up a healthy diet and wake up at four am in the morning to practice and complete all her work for her classes! Those girls are all breed from a weird alien cult." They argued, flailing their arms.

The older woman slapped her head, "I understand you find that lifestyle strange, but there's a proper way to go up to someone and start a conversation. Like… um…" She frantically looked around for a victim, and for a hot second, Carmilla's eyes met hers. The girl panicked, quickly pretending to eat, but it was too late. "Here. Let's say you want to be friendly with this lovely young woman. You would get up, walk over, wave, to make sure that you two are on the same wavelength —;" She did as she instructed, giving Carmilla an apologetic smile, as if to apologize for the weird situation they've found themselves in; Lafontaine watched on with disinterest. "Hello, my name is Lola Perry, but friends call me Perry. I'm a junior and I practice Wicca. You looked sort of lonely, so we were wondering if you would like to sit with us?"

"I… um…." She swallowed, glancing over at her partner. Breathe, remember to breathe. There is another human being talking to you. That's new. "Sure."

"See? That's all there is to it. You don't open the conversation and go, 'Hey, you're wearing all black and look super pale, are you a vampire? Can I have a DNA sample?'

This caused Carmilla to throw her head back and laugh—truly, laugh, for the first time in months. In that moment, she knew it was silly to feel threatened by these two dorks. "Sadly, I am not. I may be vegan but thank goodness, I don't sparkle in the sun. Nor do I have the tendency to hiss and drink blood out of a soy milk container." She thought for a moment, "I am nocturnal, though."

Lafontaine smiled wide and turned to Perry, "Hey. Babe, I like her. Can we keep her?"

"We can't just ask—;" The curly haired woman grumbled to herself, but decided that it was useless, and turned to Carmilla. "A thousand apologies for bringing you into this. You can forget we exist now. You must think we're awfully strange."

She gave her a genuine smile, "It would be hypocritical of me to even think that of you two. Hey, I named my guitar Innana after the Ancient Sumerian Goddess."

Perry made a confused face, while Lafontaine's eyes lit up as if it were Christmas morning. "Dude. That's awesome."

"So. Yeah. I'd love to sit with you guys." She grins, and as her new friends made room for her on the blanket. "My name is Carmilla, by the way."

"Any relation to the novel by Sheridan Le Fanu?" Lafontaine asks hopefully, to which Carmilla
blushes.

"You're the first human to ever guess." Carmilla was beaming.

"You must have exquisite taste in literature." Perry beamed, leaning onto her soulmates' shoulder. She smiled at the two of them—it was easy to tell that they were; they had this wonderful, warm glow that radiated off their bodies. Plus, it was a given from the beautiful ring tattoo on each of their fingers.

Carmilla couldn't help but feel a little bitter.

When she arrived back to her dorm, and peeked onto the terrace, her heart skipped a few beats when she saw the letter that awaited her.

Hello again, Friend!

We have to stop meeting up like this, people will start talking. ;) First off, in order to start with a healthy lifestyle, you need a balanced diet. Those cookies and fast food trips are doing nothing for you. Start out small. Every morning eat an apple, or banana. This way it's a good substitute for sugar. Then, gradually add said things to your normal dietary habits, and you'll crave to eat fruit instead of chips. The best thing to do is go for a walk—going to the gym on the first day can over-stimuli you, and that's not fun. Trust me.

Also, eep—you had an actual run-in with Count Baron Vordenburg? While drunk? You naughty girl, you can't just leave me hanging like that! Tell me more!

I hope you like the origami figures I made. I had no idea what a music note meant, so I spent hours online searching up the definitions. I think I made a… treble clef. And boo, what do you mean you don't like Twilight? I'm assuming you're one of the noobs who didn't read the books; if not, get off your ass and pick up a copy. They're good, I swear, the plot just starts off terribly slow and everyone hates Bella in the beginning. She fills in the whiny, lead female protagonist who can't stick up for herself and needs a man by her side. But towards the end of the third book and the fourth, she suddenly blossoms into this strong and confident vampire who annihilates the Volturi.

Aw, I actually cried while reading the last paragraph. You're too sweet. I only end up dreaming about rainbows and unicorns when I have way too much sugar before bed. It's not fun to deal with me when I'm hyper—it's like the aftermath of when my roommate Betty has more than three cups of alcohol, but tenfold.

I hope you have a great day today! I hear the sun is going to be out! Go catch some vitamin U! Heh… SEE what I did there? Because your name starts with… I'll stop writing now.

Love, L.

P.S. Counting Stars, by OneRepublic?

The grin that spread across Carmilla's face was genuine. Ask and ye shall receive.
Danny and Laura, even though they admit have growing feelings for another, realize they have to put them aside and wait for their soulmates. Meanwhile, Carmilla realizes her L might be closer than she thinks.

“Patience is not sitting and waiting, it is foreseeing. It is looking at the thorn and seeing the rose, looking at the night and seeing the day. Lovers are patient and know that the moon needs time to become full.” - Jalaluddin Rumi

As the week droned on, I met more of Danny's society sisters. They were all a weird, interesting group, but Danny was right—they were practically inseparable, at least half of them joining into pairs or clusters that was formed throughout the years. And besides, who was I to judge?

SJ and her best friend, Natalie, were like Thing One and Thing Two, always together, sometimes wearing the same clothes. They were so in sync that sometimes they finished each other's sentences, which would result in the girls doing a weird high five thing. Elsie, who I recognized as Betty's soulmate (who was a sweetheart once I gotten to know her) was always trailing behind Mel, the two butting heads. Danny fit somewhere in between all the girls, always drifting, but never settling with one solid group. I would always admire that—Danny was the type of girl that got along with everybody.

This would never be a club I intend on joining, so the sheer fact that Danny honorably let me in on the meetings, just so I can hang out with her, made my heart swell with joy. It gave me something to do for the hours that I wasn't doing homework, or writing letters to C. Oddly enough, I didn't feel like the outsider, looking in. These girls welcomed me wholeheartedly, and I wondered why I didn't reach out to Danny sooner.

She's an amazing friend.

She's honest, caring, and always makes sure I'm involved in some way with the meeting, so that way my voice is heard.

Not only that, but we text each other so often, the longest chat we've had lasting until two in the morning. That's crazy! Usually I'm sleeping and contemplating the existence of my life at that hour.

Of course, they're nothing like C's letters, but I still value the time we spend together. My heart buzzed happily at the thought of her—was this what having a friendship felt like? I only hoped these two special girls stayed in my life for a long while.

It was raining again today, but my growing cheerful optimism disregarded the weather completely. I pulled on a fleece jacket and quickly climbed out onto the terrace to check for a letter, smiling when I saw her envelope.
C's bold, ball point pen ink was always a welcome sight.

Oh, let 'em talk. Their opinion doesn't matter to us anyway, creampuff. ;) I'll take your healthy habits into consideration and keep you posted—be proud, I'm eating a clementine as we speak.

Ick… where do I begin? I don't remember why I was drinking, but I do remember stumbling into the library. It was almost closing time, and I found myself on the fifth floor. And that it was freezing cold. Vordenburg came flying at me then, screeching at the top of his lungs, saying how I reminded him of the assassin who killed his entire family a century ago. I got a book thrown at me. Still have the scar on my cheek, and I refuse to go up there. There's nothing else to that story, other than the fact that I'm a firm believer in the paranormal and everybody else thinks I'm crazy when I explain it to them.

Do you believe in ghosts? I'm curious.

And ugh, fine, since you're so persistent, I'll brave the library to pick up a copy of *Twilight* from the fiction section. Expect a shit-ton of criticisms in my next letter. By the by, I adore your origami figures. I placed them on the nightstand near my bed. Thank you.

Cupcake, did you eat cookies while writing this letter? I can tell. Your handwriting turned to chicken scratch by the last paragraph. It's that and I'm actually dealing with second-hand embarrassment from that horrible pun you told me. You're lucky I like you.

Here's food for thought: Did you know that most our money from the government goes to the military, instead of NASA? Imagine of the scientific discoveries we'd be able to accomplish with space within the next few years. I, for one, would like to live on Mars within this lifetime.

--C

I smiled as I read over her letter, a warm, happy feeling buzzing in my chest. C was always somehow able to do that—make me feel better about myself, even if she was never physically with me.

I re-read the last paragraph once more, my eyebrow quirking with interest. Did C just… flirt with me? The tips of my ears turned red at the thought.

I replied to her.

Good morning, friend!

Small steps are the key to victory! Keep at it, you know you have me cheering you on! Jeez… that sounded scary. I'm glad you were able to make it out of that mess alive. I can do some research on Vordenburg, and attach them to my next letter, if you don't mind? I love sticking my nose into Silas's history, and now I have the perfect opportunity! Don’t worry, this will only be for personal research, so it's not like I'll be posting it onto the Silas Ethernet.

I don't believe in ghosts, but I do believe in spirits and other forms of supernatural. When a person dies, I've always believed that their spirit doesn't stay on Earth. They go to heaven automatically, leaving all traces of life behind. There is no afterlife for us, here. But I do believe that if a person's death was terrifying and their time on Earth was unfinished, then their spirit is stuck here—which is probably the case of Baron Vordenburg. We should get a priest or exorcist to get the
old coot out of our haunted library.

I'm glad you like my origami crafts! Take good care of my children, lol. Any droplet of water on them could ruin the whole thing.

And yaaaay! I'm so excited, you can't see me, but I'm jumping up and downnnnn :D I hope you find a nice little corner to read the book in. Hehe, now I have someone else to rave about Stephanie Meyer's stuff with. Also, when you're finished with the book, check out her other, stand-alone work, The Host. It's an interesting post-apocalyptic universe where aliens take control of someone else's body, and live as that person. There's like… a FOUR WAY romance. I think you'll like that one better.

I can neither confirm or deny your statement, by the way. Cookies? Moi? Noooooo.

And ooh, I never knew that! But it would make sense—the government is more concerned with protecting the country than exploring SPACE. Having a space station that we could frequently travel to would be so cool.

FUN FACT: Considering that we are talking about space, did you know that it is completely silent? Like… everything. Sound waves need a medium to travel through. Star Wars lied to us.

Love, L.

P.S. I adored your cover of Counting Stars. Honestly, you're amazing at singing. I get chills every time.

I smiled and placed the letter at our favorite spot, and headed off to class.

"Hey, the gang's all here!" Danny exclaimed, waving her arms excitedly at me. We had all planned to meet each other in the lounge, just to hang out for dinner before the rest of the girls have night classes or other social meetings.

I'm not close with exactly all the girls, but SJ, Nat, and Mel are closing in on my top favorites. Elsie was a precious cinnamon roll that needed to be protected, and she gives great hugs; it helped that she did apologize for being rude earlier. She didn't boast about her soul mark (it was the symbol of a lock and key) or Betty, which I admired, and just casually referred to her as her 'girlfriend' in conversation, but the words were laced with nothing but love.

"Did you finish the article yet, Short Stack?" Mel asks, smiling at me with genuine interest.

"Soon, soon," I promised, waving her off, "I have a paper to write for my history class, so that's been taking up most of my free time. But I promise, it's the first on my to-do list."

"Hey, why do you like journalism so much, anyway? I've never met anyone as devoted as you before." SJ questions, as I find my comfy spot besides Danny on the couch. She smiles warmly and wraps her arm around my shoulders.

"I have a lot of inspirations. But, I think it's mostly because there aren't enough women in the profession out there. We need our voices to be heard, and I think it's important to include the masses. When I professionally get into my career, I want to be someone the people can trust with the full truth. Nowadays not many people have access to the media, you know? It's frustrating and a little sad."

"Ooh, when you become a reporter, would you have like, a cool catch phrase or a funky wardrobe?" Natalie asks, bouncing in her spot.
Mel raised an eyebrow, "She just gives out her emotional spiel and that's the question you have?"

"That would be cool," I smile, nodding my head, "But I'm not Sherlock Holms. What're all your dream jobs?"

There was a quiet moment as the girls thought, and Mel spoke up first, "Well, I know I'm going to be working with the UN someday. Human rights activist, doing missionary work."

"I can totally see you in that field. You're... determined." I offer, unsure of how to describe Melappine Callis.

"I'm not sure yet," Danny shrugs, "After my senior year, I might end up going to the police academy. It's been my dream ever since I was a little girl to become a police officer."

"That's a difficult job to get into," I say, smiling at her in appreciation. "I'm sure you'll be great at it, though." Danny smiles encouragingly at me. Nat and SJ claimed they had no idea what they wanted to do, but wherever life took them, they wanted to do it together. Their friendship was sweet, and one day I hoped that Danny and I would be that close.

The conversation drifts to crazy teachers, our homework load now that we were all seniors, and plans for the weekend. I leaned comfortably into Danny's embrace, to which she happily accepted.

"Hey. You feeling tired?" She asks.

"A little bit." I mumble in reply, letting out a yawn.

"Alright, then," Danny smiled at the group, "We'll see you tomorrow, gang." They all gave us their own goodbye's and dispersed as well.

Danny and I walked out into the warm October evening, hand in hand. I looked up at her, knowing that I probably had a dopey expression on my face.

"They like you," She said after a while, grinning back. "You're so welcoming, and they really admire you."

"Well. I'm glad I made a good first impression." I sigh happily. I look up at the stars, noticing a huge cluster just above us. I briefly thought about C, knowing that she would be looking at these stars right now. She loves doing that.

Why do my thoughts keep coming back to C?

We walked in silence for another moment, before Danny hummed thoughtfully.

"Y'know, I don't get you," She says carefully, "How does a girl as upbeat, perky, and wonderful as you have no outside friends or is a wallflower?" She winced as I gaped at her in surprise, "That came out so much better in my head."

I shrug noncommittally, "I've always struggled with making friends. No matter how hard I tried... no one would ever think to notice me. I was just always sort of... there, you know? Never really making an impact. For a while, I thought there was something wrong with me, but... I guess over time I just concluded that I was never meant to be a part of something."

"Oh, Laura," Danny frowned, shaking her head. "You couldn't have been any more wrong." I waited for her to say something, and suddenly she just stopped right in front of me. "You're so...
incredible. You are kind, genuine… whoever figured that you weren't worth their time in the past is clearly missing out on a wonderful girl. Please, I hope that whatever happened in your life you don't carry on with what's happening in the present."

"Danny," I say, my eyes sparkling, "Do you already consider me as a friend?"

"Of course, silly," She giggles, "I love my society sisters, but you're special. With you… I don't feel like I should pretend to be anything I'm not. I knew there was something different about you the moment we had our first classes together. I just… honestly, I was just so nervous to even speak up or say anything to you. You were so closed off and shy I didn't think you wanted friends."

"Believe me, I did—do," I mumble, kicking at a pebble, "But my terrible anxiety always gets jammed in my throat and I act like a complete loser half the time."

"These things take time. You think I was so confident and welcoming my first year at Silas?"

"You're Danny Lawrence," I say, as if I was stating a fact. She shakes her head at me and chuckles.

"Yeah, well… Danny Lawrence was going through an identity crisis freshman year of college." She smiles wistfully. "She was a total loser then."

"What sexuality do you identify as?"

"Bi," She says casually, "It wasn't until the summer of Sophomore year that I felt fully comfortable with expressing myself. Don't tell anyone, but… Kirsch, the Zeta bro, was someone I could confide in during that time. He listened to me going onto rants and my struggles, even though we hate each other's guts. He found me at my lowest and I owe him that. It's funny how things turned out." She links her arm into mine, "What about you?"

"Oh, I'm a lesbian," I say, without any hesitation, "I've always known. My dad was more concerned as to why I tried to hide it all those years, because he wished he could have understood me better."

Danny gave me a small smile, "Are you two close?"

I frown, slumping my shoulders for a moment, as I thought about our fractured relationship. "Not anymore. I… haven't spoken to him in years."

The red-head's face turned into a grimace, "Shit, Lau. I'm sorry. You… don't have to talk about it."

I smiled gratefully at her, "Thanks, Danny. I… trust you, but I don't know you well enough to reveal those secrets yet. Dark times."

We were silent for a while, but it wasn't awkward. We had walked into Saint Jerome's Hall, and I showed my ID to the resident adviser.

An idea came to me, and I turned to the tall red-haired girl. "Hey. Race you."

"You're on!" She snickers, giving me a head start.

"No running in the dorms!" Exclaimed the RA, but their warnings fell upon deaf ears.

It's incredible to think that not only three weeks ago I was pathetically lonely, sad, and hating life. Now I have made not only one, but two wonderful friends that I hope to cherish for a long time. Danny and C.
We didn't count the wait time in the elevator, as I practically pushed Danny aside, causing her to trip over me. We were laughing so hard our sides hurt, and unfortunately Danny made it to the door first.

"No faaaaair, you cheated." I grumble, leaning against the wall. She giggled and casually leaned with her hand pressed beside me.

"I am at least four feet taller than you, Lau," She smiles, her face flushing. "No cheating to be said here."

"Goliath." I pout.

"Sherlock." She fires back. Her forehead was leaning against mine, and I could practically hear my heart pounding in my chest. Suddenly I was looking at her lips, noticing how plump and full they are. Kissable.

Our breathing calms down a bit, as she then slowly inches her head to meet me at eye-level and

Until I stopped, realizing what we were about to do. This was wrong. We were about to betray both of our soulmates.

"Yo, if you two are gonna fuck, do you mind NOT doing it in the middle of the hallway?"

Damn it Betty.

I turn around to face my roommate, glaring with the metaphorical heat of a thousand suns. "Ignore my roommate. She's a sociopath."

"Nah, it's cool. Don't worry." Danny waved off, scrambling away from me, looking bashful.

"Hey, aren't you Danny Lawrence?" Betty asks, a smirk on her face. She then turns to size me up, "Damn. For an uppity girl like you, you've got game."

"I am not uppity!" I exclaim, cheeks turning red. "And there is no game to be had!" I then turned to Danny, who was caught in the crossfire, "Am I uppity?"

"Yeah, whatever. Just don't be so loud, 'kay?" She says, and shuts the door.

I awkwardly shifted my feet, ashamed. "I'm sorry."

"Yeah. Me too." She sighs, running a hand through her hair, "My soul hasn't recognized them yet, but you still can't help but be a little selfish, you know? All this waiting and wishing... it's honestly stressful. I want this, I want us to be together, but..."

"It wouldn't be fair." I sighed. "It wouldn't be fair to them."

"Right." She nods, and tilts her head, "So, I guess I'll see you around." She smiles stiffly, and as if preparing herself, she dared to place chaste kiss on my cheek. She hurried off, leaving me to slowly slide down the wall with a dreamy look on my face.

"Hurry back!" I call out, my voice cracking. Hurry back? That was the best you can come up with? Really? Dork.

But apparently, Danny heard and her laughter echoed across the hall. This was something good, at least.
Carmilla let out a tired yawn as she flipped through another page of her book. She knew her earlier hatred for the series would come back at full force the moment she read it again. God, it was poorly written. There were unfinished scenes and plot scenarios that just hurt her brain to even bring up theories about.

It was so bland. Bella's character is so whiny and bitter, it was difficult to find anything relatable.

"Oh, boo hoo, her parents are separated and she must live with her dead-beat dad. Tough shit. Love at first sight? More like lust at first sight—she finds a one hundred and seventeen-year-old man attractive. Pedophile, much? Then she briefly had to wonder if it would be the same case if she were a three hundred centuries old vampire. Would the rules of the universe still apply just because she was a woman?"

She groaned and tucked the book into her leather jacket, rubbing her forehead. This was giving her a headache.

"Yo, goth girl! Get back to work!" Mel chimed from the counter, "Break time's up!"

"There is literally no one else here." Carmilla raised an eyebrow.

"I know, but the boss doesn't know that. So, get off your ass and do something."

"Oh, like how you're picking at your fingernails and lazing around? Hmm. Very productive." She mumbled. Mel glared at her and scoffed, but said nothing.

Carmilla shook her head and went into the entertainment room to pick up a few cleaning products. She figured now was the perfect time to take off the dust that's been collected over the past few years.

As she worked, Carmilla marveled at how quickly things have changed for her life. Before, it hurt to get out of bed. Life had worn her down, making her tired. She had lost all hope for everything. Then, L had come into her life at the perfect time. She was wonderful. She gave her a reason to smile and wake up every morning. The sky doesn't seem so dull and grey anymore.

The chime over the door rang and Carmilla perked her head up, relieved to see her two new friends. Lafontaine and Perry have proven to be the two dorks she had been missing her whole life. Lafontaine was snarky, intelligent, and had a silver tongue, driven by the endless pursuit of science. Perry believed in the art of perfection, order, and marveled the supernatural world. They made the perfect duo, and complimented Carmilla's character nicely whenever the three hung out as a group. She wondered briefly why these two hadn't come into her life sooner. It's only been three weeks and yet she cares about them so much.

"Welcome to Platinum Graz, home to Styria's best vinyl's, blah blah blah. You break it you buy it." Mel drones, but they completely ignored her.

"Cat Woman!" LaF exclaimed, bouncing towards her. "You're not going to believe how hard it was to find this place."

"Yeah, sorry," Carmilla mumbles bashfully, "I'm not that great at directions."

"Hey now, it's quite alright. We're here. No harm done," Perry's hands fidgeted nervously,
"Even if this area in Graz is a bit… sketchy. Honestly, how can you travel down here with feeling like you're about to get mugged?"

"You become numb to the environment," Carmilla shrugs. "Thanks for stopping by though. My shift ends in a half hour. You two could chill in the break room."

"No way, Carm! This place is rad!" They exclaim, easy to please. Perry chuckled fondly as she watched her partner shift through the collection.

As Carmilla quietly worked, time passed by quickly, and Mel's judgmental stairs didn't bother her any longer. She looked up when Perry cleared her throat expectantly.

"So—Are you going to tell me why you spend hours on the terrace every day?" She asks, her voice teasing, a wicked smirk on her face. Carmilla's hand jerked and the bottle of cleaning materials fell to the floor. Her face blushed red, as she begins to mutter nonsensical words. "Don't think you're so slick, girlie."

"I—how did you—oh, forget it," she mumbles, and bends over to pick up the bottle. Simultaneously, Twilight tumbled out of the pocket inside her leather jacket. "Crap."

"If I remember correctly, you hate Stephanie Meyer," Perry adds with a grin, "Was there an outside influence?"

"I don't know, you tell me, Detective Ginger Snap." Carmilla groans.

"Ooh, Carm's gotta soulmate!" Lafontaine sang, from the other side of the shop.

"Pipe down! I don't have a soulmate! Besides, you'd know if I did!" She fumbles for the book, hugging it close to her chest. "It's a… long story."

"You know you can trust us, right dear?" Perry smiles, squeezing Carmilla's arm.

"Yeah, I… sorry. I'm just so used to keeping things to myself. I'll… I'll tell you on our walk back to Silas, okay?"

And talk she did. It was nice, finally having two other people to listen to her. She knew that if she went through this whole mess by herself, she would be a complete wreck over L. If she was ever going to meet her, if these letters would continue in real life… it was overwhelming. Being noticed. Having someone think about her every day, wherever she may be in this giant college.

She had clocked out of work, Perry and Lafontaine trailing expectantly behind her. The two had their arms linked on both sides, and Carmilla happily basked in the warmth they gave her. One was a lonely number. Three, though? Now it was a party.

She explained her story from the very beginning, with how sad she was before L. How often she belittled herself over the tiniest things. How every day it hurt to get up and she just wanted to end everything. That first letter had lit up a spark within her she never knew existed. Suddenly there was meaning, life, and hope. Someone was listening to her. Someone, in this vast universe, cared.

It made Carmilla practically cry just thinking about it.

"Carmilla," Lafontaine was saying now, a warm smile on their face, "I don't care how hard you try to deny this, but that's the most romantic shit ever." Carmilla barked out a laugh, "I mean, writing each other letters? That's like, nineteenth century courtship."
"I have to agree," Perry chimes, "You are a smitten kitten."

"Shut up," Carmilla grumbles. "Am I crazy? I've only known the girl for three weeks, and we've sent each other over two dozen letters. I know more about her than I do you guys. It's... it's like..."

"You've known each other for years?" Perry offers, and Carmilla nods in understanding.

"When did I walk into a poorly-written romance comedy?" She sighs in response, shaking her head.

"Ah-hah! So, you admit it!" Lafontaine exclaims, pointing a finger.

"Nope. Not admitting to anything. I'm still crazy. I'm a hormonal, twenty-one-year-old lesbian who thinks she knows everything about the world. I know jack-shit." She announces, stepping out in front of them.

"Yeah. And you've also sent out a mating call and another hormonal lesbian answered you with gusto." They snicker, and this time Perry slapped her partner's shoulder.

"Tact, please, Lafontaine."

"Nothing about this is normal. Just roll with it. Who knows—perhaps there's a chance of her being your soulmate." They claim, wiggling their eyebrows.

"Okay, well, what if I come off too strong and scare her off?" Carmilla frets.

"Yes, you do have the tendency to be brutally honest," Perry replies, "But whatever you're doing seems to be working so far."

A thought seemed to come across LaF's mind then, and they snapped their fingers, "Hang on a second. L. You said her name starts with L, right?"

"Yeah... how could that have any significance?"

"In your letters, she described as having blonde hair, chocolate eyes, and being exceptionally tiny, right? And hates science?"

"She's horrible at it. One time she mixed the wrong chemicals and burned off the teacher's eyebrows." Carmilla remembered with a chuckle.

"Dude, she's in my bio class! And I was there when it happened!" They said, and started to jump up and down excitedly. "I can totally give you her name to end the ambiguity, and I could ask for her number for you!"

Carmilla slapped her head, "No, no. None of that—if L didn't want to give me her name, then I want to hear it from her. Don't pressure her into it. If you know it, that's fine—keep it to yourself. She respected not asking for mine, I should do the same. And... besides... asking for her number would ruin the vibe we have going on."

"Ooh, first, you didn't want to admit that this was a romantic gesture, and now you've got a vibe!" Lafontaine grasped Perry's arm, "They're totally soulmates! I'm calling it!"

"Honestly, Lafontaine, you're so dramatic." Perry rolled her eyes. Carmilla breathed out a chuckle, grateful for her two wonderful friends. They were now finally back in the safety of campus,
having gotten off the bus minutes earlier.

She turns to them, a warm smile on her face, "Thanks for listening."

"Anytime, C." Lafontaine winked.

Carmilla's eyes narrowed as she felt her face heat up, "Don't call me that." Laf raised their eyebrows with an amused smirk.

"You can trust us with anything. We're friends, aren't we?" Perry asks happily.

"'Till the end." Carmilla nods. They then pulled each other into a three-way hug, causing the younger girl to laugh.

Perry lingered as her partner skipped off, gazing softly at Carmilla, "Any girl would be lucky to be your soulmate. You know that, don't you?"

Carmilla's breath hitched, tears glistening in her eyes for a moment. "If you told me that four years ago, I would have laughed in your face." She replies, her voice shaking.

"You're such a wonderful girl, Carm. I hope that you one day look at yourself in the mirror and realize that." Perry assures, placing a friendly kiss on her friend's cheek. Then, she collected herself, smiled brightly, and hurried after her partner. Carmilla watched on as she saw the two dorks chase each other, Perry grabbing Lafontaine by the waste and twirling them around. They let out a shriek of laughter and haphazardly flung their arms around her. They shared a kiss, for a moment, before taking each other's hands and running off towards their dorms.

Carmilla sucked in a breath at the adorable sight, her friend's laughter ringing in her ears, her heart full with happiness. That night, she had the best sleep in a long while.
When Worlds Collide

Chapter Summary

The second sign takes place; Carmilla and Laura are in for a bumpy ride. It'll be a while before they see each other again.

Chapter Notes

Hi there, creampuffs! I have exciting news! It's my birthday, so to celebrate, here's a gift from me to you, for being such awesome people! Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals! Leave a kudos, bookmark, or comment! It'll make my day :3

For the past month, I fell into a steady, healthier pattern. Every morning I would wake up and check for a new envelope on the terrace. I would quickly jot down my reply, leaving a song request, and a random question for the day C would have to answer. Then, I would eat breakfast, get to class, and hang out with Danny for the afternoon after our English class together. In the evening, I would check for another note, write back a reply, and instead of holing myself up in my room, I'd visit a new section of the Silas campus, discovering what lies there.

Keeping myself busy was slowly starting to help ease out the feeling of loneliness, and I found myself smiling more. Danny and C were certainly the main reasons for that. In their own way, these two girls have entered my life and I value both of their friendships. Danny brings out the outgoing, bubbly side of me. When I am with her, I just can't help but laugh and make stupid jokes. She knows exactly how to make me smile. C, on the other hand, was always providing me with thought provoking conversations and loved to express herself through music. She was a lot more serious than Danny, and mysterious, which ultimately started our whole relationship.

I'm proud of C; she made two new friends at a club fair, and she won't stop gushing about them. Lafontaine and Perry sound like the most adorable couple, and one day I hope I get to meet all three of them. They sound like what Ron, Harry, and Hermione would have been in a modern-day setting. I know Lafontaine from my bio class, they sit next to me. I've always been nervous to talk to them, because they're always muttering weird science theories to themselves and in a completely different world. But they're actually super nice and help me out if I'm struggling.

As my mouse hovered over the 'submit' button, I had a second of doubt and anxiousness. What if Danny didn't like my article? What if it didn't get the message out soon enough? Oh, my god—what if there's any typos?

Shaking my head, I scolded myself for even thinking that. Of course, there isn't—I triple checked the article once I've finished it.

Everything was going to be fine. Breathe—remember to breathe, Hollis. My thumb pressed the right mouse, and my brain went into full panic mode.

ASDAFKLWEFHSFEJFKSKS—MY LIFE IS RUINED.
My head collapsed onto the keyboard, and I groaned.

I was pacing anxiously outside of my English Lit class, waiting for Danny. It has been a full 48 hours since I posted the article, but I was so nervous I haven't even checked if anyone commented.

There was excited chatter filling the halls now, as students were coming out of their classes and heading towards their next one. From behind me, I suddenly heard the intense echo of feet that sounded like it was coming from a large bear, at the speed of light.

"LAURA HOLLIS!" The man bellowed, alerting practically everybody in the hallway. I squeaked, practically jumping ten feet in the air, frightened by the newcomer. Though, as I got a better look at him, I recognized him that he was cute butt guy in the elevator, and realized that the girl he was making out with was SJ. I couldn't remember what is name was… Wilson? Brody?

"Eek! W-what is it?" I mumble, nervously looking for an escape route.

His expression then changed, as a wide, friendly smile appeared on his face. "Hey! Do you think you can write an awesome column for Zeta Omega Mu like you did for Summer Psycho? Seriously, you've got talent, little nerd hottie!"

I blinked at him in delirious surprise, before breathing out a sigh of relief. "Oh. Yeah. I can definitely do that. Sorry, you scared me."

"Eheh, that's my bad. When I'm excited my voice octave rises a bit above the norm. The name's Kirsch, by the way. Brody Wilson Kirsch, but everyone just calls me Kirsch."

Smiling, I extended my hand, "Well, Kirsch, it's nice to meet you."

"LAURA, LAURA, LAURA—," I turned around again, smiling wide when I saw Danny practically galloping over with a huge grin on her face. Jeez, I'm popular today. "Oh my gosh! I'm so excited about this I could kiss you! C'mere!" Then, she wrapped her arms around my waist and spun me around, causing me to shriek with laughter. "You are not going to believe how many girls are emailing me and asking to join the sorority! They all found me through the article you posted!"

My eyes lit up, "Really? Oh, I'm so glad. I was so nervous I thought everyone would hate it."

"Who would? I mean… you kind of used big words so I didn't understand most of it… but if I was a chick, I'd join Summer Psycho and her crew after reading that." Kirsch said thoughtfully.

Danny rolled her eyes at him, "Oh, please. You wouldn't last a day with the routine our girls have to deal with. Idiot."

"Oh, yeah? My bros would wipe the floor at the ropes course if you ever challenged us."

"We did. Sophomore year. Theo Straka went home crying because he broke his arm," She rolled her eyes, and when she realized she was still holding onto me, she blushed and put me back down. Kirsch shifted on his feet, embarrassed. "Anyway, you should totally read this! Here, here!"

I giggled, holding onto her phone properly, and read the article a fourth time.

Looking for a great way to make the most of your life at Silas University? Do you want to have a group of girls who always have each other's backs, and create awesome memories you'll cherish forever? Then joining the Summer Society is perfect for you! Run by president Mel Callis and vice president Danny Lawrence, the Summer Society is an all girls' athletic team that promotes woman empowerment, and a positive workout regime that is proven to help students succeed on and off
Though, this club isn't exactly for everyone. Every morning these incredible women wake up at six am to start their day, and hike across the entire campus. They host the annual Adonis Festival and Hunt, which prepping for takes up majority of the season. They are more known for their multiple donations to charities, and show up to support many homeless shelters, giving out clothes and foods to people in need.

In the words of the great Danny Lawrence herself, "The Summer Society is more than just a club... we're a family, and we have each other's backs. We're sisters for life." So, if you think you have what it takes to be a Summer, then head over to tryouts this Saturday, October 14th, from ten am to four pm, in the football field! Best of luck to all the strong and empowered women out there! Go get in formation!

"Nice touch, quoting Queen Beyoncé there." She grins, her smile becoming wider. "And, hey, check out the comments. This one from SJ reads, 'Columns like this make me proud to be a Summer. Awesome job, Hollis.' And, another from a freshman, 'I thought I was excited to join before, but now I can't stop shaking! Eek—I can't wait for Saturday for my rush'. This was really ballsy of you, Hollis. Really. Thank you so much."

I was beaming at this point, my face hurting from smiling so much. "Right. Ballsy. That's me." I chuckle awkwardly, suddenly forgetting that Kirsch was next to us. Actually, I forgot that the whole world existed. It was just Danny and I—and that made my heart skip a beat.

Kirsch loudly cleared his throat and the two of us jumped away from each other, blushing.
"Sorry—I just wanted to feel included." He said with a grin, and Danny muttered a few choice words underneath her breath I'd rather not repeat.

"Anyway. Let's celebrate tonight, Laura! I'll invite over a few of the Summer Society girls and we'll party!"

"S-sure. No alcohol, right?" I beg, knowing that there aren't that much restrictions with regarding the rule. I can't risk a single drink.

Danny pouts, but to her knowledge I'm still a virgin when it comes to this sort of thing and relents.
"Okay. I can respect that."

I smiled, and suddenly Kirsch was forgotten about again.

The days were blurring into one again, but at least this time Carmilla was enjoying herself. She always looked forward to conversing with L through their letters, but sharing her day with Lafontaine and Perry made things a little better as well.

She wondered how she had gotten through her first two years of Silas without ever seeing them, or talking with them. They had proven to be the best of friends, Lafontaine being the one who would talk about conspiracy theories with, or help with Carm's homework, and Perry being the more sensible, calmer one of the two. She would be more concerned with how Carmilla's actual day was—if she ate breakfast that morning, if she took a shower, if she shaved her legs. She was the mother of the group, but at least she wasn't overbearing.

They didn't talk much about their pasts, and Carmilla was grateful—she didn't exactly like talking about hers either.
She was meeting Mattie again today, after a few weeks of not seeing her. Her sister had gotten into some trouble with her job and had to cancel a few of their coffee dates. Carmilla didn't mind—she had two new, awesome friends to keep her busy, and a third she spent her nights thinking about.

L had proven to be more complex than she ever imagined. On the surface, she appears to be this bubbly, energetic girl with the innate need to cheer up an unsuspecting soul. But L was more than that—she couldn't just settle on a single hope or dream. She was always on the forefront of every battle, always fighting for what's right, no matter the cost. She would go on to these rants about politics and pro-choice and Carmilla would just simply marvel at her grasp on the English language. She had to pinch herself several times that this was an actual human being, thinking all of these things, wondering the endless possibilities of time and space, she was writing to. L was beautiful.

It was silly, having a crush on a girl you've never met in person, but to Carmilla, it made perfect sense. No one can explain it but herself.

"Carmilla, darling!" Came Mattie's excited drawl, causing her to chuckle. "This is a surprise. You're here on time—are you feeling well?" She faked a worried expression and pressed her hand on top of her forehead.

"Yes, clearly I'm as green as an ogre." She mumbles, swatting her hand away.

"Oh, you're fine. Your sarcasm is still as sharp as ever," Mattie tilted her head curiously, and the two sat down at the booth. "You seem different today. You're practically radiant."

"I… I am?" Carmilla mumbled bashfully, hiding her face in her coffee. Her cream was shaped in the form of a heart, and she thought of L.

There was a beat of silence passing through them, when Mattie let out an excited gasp, and slapped on the table, "Could it be? Has my precious Mircalla met her soulmate?!"

"Matska!" She hissed, when people started to stare. Great, she already has Lafontaine teasing her about her supposed 'lover'. Mattie's much worse. "How could you know that?"

Her sister's eyes twinkled, "I know you, dearest. You wear your heart on your sleeve. Someone has captured it and you can't stop thinking about her—I see it in your eyes. So, tell me. I'm excited. How did the two of you meet?"

"I… um… Mattie…" She bemoaned, throwing her head back on the booth. "I-I-it's weird to explain, and I'm not sure you'll approve of this. We… haven't… exactly… met… yet."

Mattie froze, curiously holding her gaze to Carmilla's. "How do you mean?"

"I… um… Mattie…" She bemoaned, throwing her head back on the booth. "I-I-it's weird to explain, and I'm not sure you'll approve of this. We… haven't… exactly… met… yet."

Mattie froze, curiously holding her gaze to Carmilla's. "How do you mean?"

So, before she could stop herself, Carmilla filled her beloved sister on everything. She even told her about the dreams, when they started and her theories on how they're connected to everything that's happening now. She tells Mattie of how she feels whenever she reads L's letters, and their special connection with music. She explains to her that ever since that first letter, the feeling of loneliness had finally stopped and she finally felt human again, which prompted ugly alligator tears to fall down her face.

"Oh, Mattie, you have no idea how wonderful it is to have a friend again." She sniffed, causing her sister to beam a happy smile. "Please don't tell Mama about this—she'll have trouble understanding, and I hate repeating myself. Just let her know that I'm trying and that I'm doing better. I promise."

Her sister breathed out a quiet chuckle, "Alright, dear. So. When are you going to meet this lovely
"I'm scared, Mattie," Carmilla mumbled, picking at the loose skin on her hand. "What if she takes one look at me and realizes what a loser I actually am?"

"Mircalla Margaret Karnstein," Mattie scolded, shaking her head. She never used Carm's full name unless she was terribly angry, "From what you've already told me, this girl is already quite smitten with you. She's a fool to think any less and if she values your friendship, (which, from what you've told me of her loneliness) she'll agree to meet up with you. You have something special with this girl, dear. Hold onto it and say something now before it's too late."

Carmilla smiled, swallowing thickly. "Thank you, Mattie."

"Have faith." She chimes, patting her hand gently. Carmilla's heart fluttered at the thought of her soulmate being so near.

Lafontaine and Perry were lounging together on her tiny bed, while she took the beanbag chair. It was 6:00pm in the evening, and she had just gotten back from climbing the terrace to leave the second letter for the day. The young couple had exchanged knowing glances and giggled.

They had all completed their assignments due for the week, and were in the middle of a Friends marathon to celebrate. Carmilla was grateful for Lafontaine—they're the reason why her biology grades are improving. Her previous test was her first ninety of the semester, which she swore she had a fifty percent chance of failing.

But thankfully Lafontaine explained it ten times better than the professor ever could.

"Yo, vampirella," They snickered, "You alright?"

"Hmm," She mused, lulling her head. "I'm fine. Just thinking."

"You were lost in thought many times, today." Perry mentioned.

"Yeah. I visited my sister again. This time we were able to have a decent conversation. Such is the result." How these two dorks could pry the emotions out of her she'll never know. Though, she trusted them—which was a big step for her.

Perry smiled, "I'm glad things are alright with her. I know you seemed pretty tense mentioning her before."

"Well, you know—things aren't one hundred percent okay, but we're getting there. Good things. Good things are happening and it's wonderful."

"It's because of us, and our overall awesomeness that's improved your life, right?" Lafontaine grinned, causing Perry to roll her eyes.

"Yes," Carmilla grinned, though half of it was L's lovely letters. "My life was dull and grey before you."

"Aw, Carm!" They wailed, to which the younger woman shook her head and give them a hug. Lafontaine was always one for dramatics. They've all somehow ended up on the floor an hour later, with a mess of popcorn to clean up and two seasons of Friends finished. They had to stop watching the show several times because the three of them became so wrapped up into conversation, but it was fun. Carmilla hadn't had this much fun in years, and in that moment, she could forget about everything.
Perry was halfway falling asleep on her arm when suddenly she heard a loud clash coming from the floor below her, and the music cranking up. Her head started to pound, to which she groaned, as she's been trying to ignore the noise this whole time. Perry woke herself awake with a start when Carmilla moved to get up.

"Carm? Where are you going, dear?"

"I need to file a noise complaint," She grumbled, slamming the door behind her. "Damn stupid sororities and their parties…"

The music was getting louder as she walked off the elevator and into the third floor, scouting for the source. She saw someone coming her way and pulled them aside, "Hey, dimwit. Where is that racket coming from?"

"Across the hall. The Summer Society is throwing a rave." They said, cowering, and ran off.

Carmilla groaned at the mention—hoo boy, the bane of her existence. She's had several horrible, not very good experiences with those girls in the past. Talking to them now was certainly not going in her favor.

Taking a few calming breaths, she wrapped her knuckles on the door. Laughter and music was her only response. "Hey! Summer Psych losers! OPEN UP!"

A tall curly blonde haired woman opened the door, tripping over herself as she did so. "Heeey, are you here for the party?"

Carmilla looked at the scene of the crime in shock. There at least a dozen girls crammed on the couch, drinking, playing board games, and dancing. Half of which she barely recognized.

"No. I'm here to shut down the party. It's way too loud and we can hear it from the fourth floor." She grumbled, anxiety bubbling in her stomach. She felt like she was about to throw up.

"Aw, don't be like that, sweetie. We're a fun group. Stay awhile." She cooed, dragging Carmilla into the room.

"No. No. No—who is the person responsible for this?"

"Uhhh—DANNY!"

"What?" Came a new voice, and though Carmilla would never admit it, she peed herself. The Amazon glared down at her. "What're you doing here?"

"Listen. I'm not here to start up anything. I don't know why you're celebrating but could you please tone it down? I can literally hear the vibrations from the top floor."

"Oh," Danny blinked, shifting awkwardly. "That's it?"

Carmilla was about to reply with a witty remark, when suddenly a new figure had come into her peripheral vision. The entire world froze. It was her—Carmilla was sure of it. She was the same love from her dreams; dirty blonde hair, chocolate brown eyes, dimples. She was tiny, only a foot shorter than her, but God was she beautiful.

Her mind was working a mile a minute as she suddenly made all the connections, and her heart knew that this girl was L. Her beloved L, who had saved her from loneliness three weeks ago and gave her hope for a future.
She had waited for her and they met halfway, just as promised.

*She had found her soulmate.*

An irritable pain made its way to her mind, as they locked eyes for a solid moment, chocolate eyes meeting blue. Her heart was slowly melting as the stinging ruined all sense of reality for her, like someone was drilling a hole into her mind. She couldn't breathe. She couldn't speak. She felt all her emotions cave in on her at once.

Laura's own chocolate orbs widened in shock.

"L-Laura?" Danny worried, tapping on her friend's shoulder gently. "Are you okay?"

She couldn't say anything in response, and neither did Laura. Her heart was lodged in her throat. So, she did the most sensible thing when someone meets their soulmate they've been writing letters to the past month. She ran.

Carmilla barely held herself together by the time she made it back to her dorm, Perry and Lafontaine now fully awake and waiting for her. She collapsed to the floor and cried, as her friends frantically attempted to calm her down.

*Laura, Laura, Laura.* Carmilla repeated the name in her mind, unable to process anything else around her. *Her name is Laura.*

She vomited.
Fateful Encounter

Chapter Summary

Carmilla and Laura finally meet, though it's not under the greatest of circumstances.

Chapter Notes

This is quite possibly my favorite chapter in the whole story, and I remember spending hours trying to get it completely perfect. The first time I wrote this I was so overwhelmed with emotion that I cried. I felt for Laura, and her struggles with her mom. This chapter hits heavy with drinking, and death. So read at your own risk, it's why I changed the rating from 'mature' to 'explicit'. Enjoy, lovelies. If you want to speak to me personally about this, contact me on my Tumblr.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

C's letters, which were usually long and filled with multiple questions, were getting shorter each day as the month of October drone on. I began to panic when she stopped altogether a few days before Halloween.

This action, therefore put me in a nervous eating mode where I would painfully wait for C to reply, only to get nothing waiting for me on the terrace and my own envelopes would be piling up.

I thought back to the party, that one special night where I felt like the center of Danny's universe. It was amazing how easily she helped me feel noticed, and forget about the world around us. I could experience the amazing girl for who she had become, and we were able to have many conversations that night, with no interruptions. But something wasn't right.

Except for her. That girl who looked like she was ready to start the apocalypse because of all the loud noise. I had warned Danny that the walls were paper thin in Saint Jerome Hall, but she didn't listen to me at first.

When she came to file a noise complaint, there was an itch in the back of my head. It was burning, like someone had pressed a hot iron against it, and it wouldn't go away. And that's when I realized it—she was C. C, the girl who wrote me letters for a month and cured me of my loneliness. My soulmate. I wanted to say something, console her, but what the hell do you say to someone who looked like they were about to vomit all over your carpet?

Lafontaine, my bio partner, was beginning to act strange around me as well. Stranger than normal, at least. I knew I couldn't let this fester on for long. If I didn't get into contact with my soulmate anytime soon, I will no longer be in control or held accountable for my actions. It wasn't until a few days ago, when I cornered them after class, and I frantically grasped them by the collar in a panic.

"Okay, this might sound crazy to you, but you're the only other person who knows C a-and I have no idea where she lives and you're my only hope. At the party, I saw her for the first time and
the second sign activated. I had the worst hangover the following morning (on top of our souls recognizing each other) and I haven't slept right or eaten properly since. Please, for the love of God, tell me she's alright."

"I—how did you—what—," Then, their eyes had a flash of hard knowing, and they smiled warmly, "C's fine. She's shaken up, but nothing a calming cup of hot cocoa can't fix. I'm happy for you both."

I tried to remember how to breathe. "What's she like? Is she just as mysterious in person as she is in our letters?"

Lafontaine laughed, shaking their head, "It's like you have to pry her open using a crowbar. And I thought I was the sarcastic one. It's hilarious, though, when she starts going on tangents about you. It's like she's a completely changed person. Laura's so wonderful, blah blah blah."

"I… I need to reach out to her. I'm so anxious and I can't focus on anything. This… this is normal, right?" My arms were shaking with worry. "Like one moment you feel you're about to cry and the next you're laughing your ass off? Like all your emotions will cave in at once? For the past week, it's like my body thinks I'm carrying two sets of triplets!" I wail, waving my arms around.

"Jesus, frosh. Relax," Lafontaine eased, as people started to stare at us in the hallway. They placed both of their hands on my shoulders in comfort, "Take deep breaths for me. Count to ten." I gulp, doing as instructed, trying to get my heart beating at a normal pace. "I know you must be scared. You have no idea what's happening, why your body is reacting this way, or why your soul feels like it's slowly ripping itself apart. Trust me, you won't be in this phase for long, and if it's any consolation, C's experiencing the same emotions now too. She's probably crying as we speak," They frown, and my heart panged with longing, "Take my advice from a seasoned veteran. Don't panic. Everything will sort itself out."

"Could you please just tell her I left an envelope by the terrace?" I ask weakly, tears glistening in my eyes.

"Of course, Laura." They smiled, and they gave me a comforting hug.

With the days that followed, I busied myself with filling out columns for Silas News Net, promoting the Zeta and Summer Societies. Kirsch, despite his earlier first impression, was just a giant puppy dog and was so happy with the way the article turned out. He got me chocolates ("Because chocolate is the key to a hottie's heart, right?") as a thank you.

It was finally the day of Halloween, and I was a nervous wreck. I woke up drenched in a cold sweat, the after effects of a nightmare. I moaned, not exactly ready to start the day at eight am yet.

I climbed onto the terrace, but I knew not to get my hopes up. There is no envelope, like always, and my cards were just piling up.

A cold, deadly thought made its way into my mind and I choked back a sob.

*What if my soulmate rejects me?*

"No. She loves me. She told me so." I whimper, attempting to push those thoughts away. But they were conniving. I curl up into a ball on the terrace, feeling the dark shadows consume my entire being. I rip up the letter I was trying to write.

Bullshit—all of it.
"…aura? Hey, Laura, are you okay?" Danny's voice snapped me out of my thoughts, and I lazily turned my attention towards her.

"I'm fine." I say, my voice clipped.

"Jeez, we know you hate Halloween, but there's no need to be a Grinch about it." SJ chuckled, peering curiously at me. "At least try to show some enthusiasm."

"Shut up, SJ." Danny glares.

"Ooh," Natalie whistled. I tensed, looking away from them.

"You're coming to the party tonight, right?" The red-headed girl asks, hopefully.

I breathe out a low breath, trying to concentrate. C. The letters. The songs. My beloved soulmate. She'll answer me soon. Lafontaine promised. This'll all be over before we know it.

Something was wrong. Something was wrong. Something was wrong.

"Yeah." I bite out, barely keeping it together.

"Hey! What're your costumes going to be? Nat and I are dressing up as sexy cats!" SJ exclaimed.

"Well, I am going dressed up as Velma from Chicago." She turns to me, "Want to be my Roxie? We can whip something up real fast."

"Whatever." I sigh, and the conversation starts to drift elsewhere, but Danny's eyes were trained worriedly on mine.

I wish there was a time machine I could step into, and turn back time hours before that horrible night. Perhaps it was king karma kicking me in the butt for misjudging C, and not giving Lafontaine the time to explain everything properly to me. I have a bad habit of doing that—jumping to conclusions, letting my emotions take over.

I should have known better.

I don't remember much of that night. All I remember is that all day I was panicking, a weird sixth sense taking over my entire body. Something horrible was going to happen.

The Summer Society was hosting the campus-wide Halloween party, so they held it on the campus lawn. I remember showing up with Danny besides me, Nat and SJ practically buzzing with excitement. They were already drinking before we showed up.

Then… after that, chaos. I drank—which was the most foolish thing I've ever done. I drank more than the amount of alcohol my tiny body was used to taking in, and at the time I thought it eased the heartache. It was just a blur of colors, dancing, and regrets.

The world suddenly turned upside down when Nat and SJ suggested to bring the party elsewhere, but I was frozen in place. I couldn't move—I had collapsed in Danny's arms, unable to go with them. I remember Danny begging them not to go, because they were drunk, and that the party was getting out of hand. She never wanted this to happen, that this was supposed to be a safe night for everyone.

But even with the security patrolling the campus that night, they refused to acknowledge the gaggle
of girls who decided to go for a joy ride at two am.

It wasn't until twelve o'clock the following afternoon when I woke up again with a killer headache, clothes that weren't my costume from the night before, and the horrid stench of alcohol and vomit burning my nostrils.

The news that Sarah Jane had died spread the campus like wildfire. I had barely stepped foot out of my door when I overheard a girl crying, lamenting this to her group of friends. I haven't left my dorm room since.

It's been a whole week. I haven't attended class since, so I know I'm ridiculously behind. Now it's Thursday.

I was punishing myself, and I knew it was stupid. I should have done something. If I was sober enough, I would have been able to stop them. But of course, not—I just decided to let myself go, for one night, at the worst possible time.

Sarah Jane was dead.

She was alive only seven days ago, laughing, smiling, full of life. She had so much to offer the world, and yet the universe just... took her. She blinked off the face of the Earth, nowhere to be found. Like a star exploding.

This is my fault. My fault.

I should have known things were too good to be true. In the moment that I thought I finally was making a difference, I thought my life was turned around for the better. I guess I just didn't deserve happiness.

Dumb. Stupid—naïve provincial girl.

"Laura Hollis, open up this damn door," Lafontaine growled, pounding on it.


"Laura, I know we aren't close, and it's not my place, but... this kind of behavior isn't healthy for anyone. You can't hole yourself up away from your problems."

Go away, go away, go away.

"This is getting out of hand. I've talked to C, and yes, she's suffering too, but right now you two need each other. No one's at fault here."

Worthless. I'm worthless.

There was a sigh, and it sounded like they were holding back a sob, "Laura, when C first heard the news, she was in hysterics. She thought you were in the car wreck and were one of the girls hurt as well. It took hours to calm her down. She's a bit better now, but... she's broken without you. You're her soulmate, for crying out loud! Of course, the moment she tries to reach out to you, you go cold turkey!"

C—I had hurt her? The poor thing; I was already making her suffer by being angry with her for not replying, and now she thought I was dead. I'm such an idiot.

"Please. Give her a second chance. She left you a note on the terrace." There was a shuffle, and
the footsteps became quieter. It hurt to move. I was curled up in the same position for a while, and there was a stinging sensation that shot up my right leg. I took a tumble to the floor, shrieking, before picking myself back up.

My stomach growled and I smelled like crap, but those were the least of my priorities. I needed to get to that terrace.

I picked up the envelope she left behind, and was surprised when three full notebook pages slipped out. I sat on our spot and began to read.

Laura, before you, my life had no meaning. I was tired, and sad, and every day it was the same damn routine. You know that I'm not the greatest with words, and even as I'm writing this now my hands are shaking and my throat feels like its burning with anxiety. But I owe you an explanation, an apology, and a sense of gratitude.

I sing on the terrace every night hoping on the off chance that someone is listening. My soulmate. And if they are having a difficult day, they can hear my music and feel better. Music saved my life, Laura. I rely on it, the way a drug addict would rely on nicotine. I almost committed suicide—twice, over the course of five years, and with the second time was hospitalized for several months. I used to cut. I have scars on my body in places I'm afraid to show—it's why I wear my leather jacket all the time. My mindset back then was that if no one care about me, why should I live? I have nothing to offer this world. I meant nothing to anyone.

I used hopelessness as an excuse for all the horrible things I did.

I use my wit and sarcasm and crude remarks as a mask to hide what's truly going on inside my soul. I carry too much baggage—and I feared that if I allowed someone to get too close, I would damage them with my horrible luck.

But then… this beautiful, kind and selfless girl left a note on my terrace. She told me that she loved my voice, and that I helped her. No one has ever showed me such blind affection before, and it gave me hope. I no longer hated myself, because someone liked me. I had someone who was… able to see past my flaws (without really knowing anything about them), and accept me as I came. So, I wrote back. And with every new note, with every new reveal, I found myself smiling more and chunks of my old self drift off into the night.

There was an evil voice in the back of my mind, warning me that none of this is real. That this will soon stop, and the girl would move on to something more shiny and new. For a while, I believed it. That's why I looked like I was about to puke when I saw you at that party. I refused to believe that you were really there. It was like my worst nightmare and best dream came true, all at once.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry for being an idiot and not replying to your letters—I needed time to think, to process everything that's happened so far in this semester. I was stuck in a dark place, Laura, and you are the light that came in at the most important time. Because of you I've decided to better myself as a human being, and make the smallest of differences in my life every day.

If you don't want to continue with these, that is fine. But I just thought I'd let you know
how much you mean to me. I'm sorry about SJ—I don't know if you were close with her or not, but if it's any consolation, look up at the stars. I'm sure she's looking down on all of us right now from there.

-C.

P.S., Screw that. Screw giving up—screw never letting go. I need to see you. In person. I need my soulmate. Please, give me a chance and meet me at Platinum Graz tonight. The store closes at 10:00 pm.

I was crying by the time I finished the letter, tears streaming down my cheeks and onto her papers. In that moment, I had made my decision, my heart soaring into my chest as I climbed out from the terrace. I let out a shriek when I checked that the time read 8:45 pm. If I caught the last bus, I might just make it.

I was suddenly no longer in control of myself as I rapidly changed into a new set of clothes, and blindly grabbed my cellphone. I sent a quick text to Lafontaine and told them where I was going, to which they sent a thumb up emoji and a wink-y face.

I was anxious the entire bus ride, almost getting off at the wrong stop, but I made it. It wasn't hard to miss Platinum Graz, with its large neon green sign at the front of the music shop. I peeked in, momentarily panicked when I saw that the place was dark. But then there was a small light on in the back, and a figure sitting at the piano.

I ripped open the doors and the bells chimed overhead. C didn't even look up from the piano, immersed with the music. I recognized the tune, heart swelling—she was playing Bella's Lullaby, from Twilight.

"We're closing." She drawled, her voice dull and empty. I froze up, taking in her appearance. She wore thick sweatpants, a ripped t-shirt, and wore a snapback the opposite way. I was told by Lafontaine that she usually wore black on black, leather clothing every season of the year. She was still beautiful, though, in a terrifying way that made my heart race and my stomach churn.

But even still. This was my soulmate.

"I'm not a customer." I say, just above a whisper. Her head snapped up, tears welling in her wondrous blue eyes.

"Laura." My soulmate's voice rippled through the air, laced with nothing but wonder and relief.

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She was here. Her soulmate was standing before her in her music store, and not a figment of her imagination. She was breathing, present, and very much alive.

The beautiful girl was so overcome with emotion that she started to cry, and Carmilla's heart broke in two. Immediately, she stood up from the piano, causing the bench to clatter away. She quickly closed the gap between them and wrapped her arms around Laura, allowing the precious girl's tears to wet her shoulder.

"I'm so sorry," She was gasping, clutching Carmilla's elbows roughly, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Hey, hey, stop that, cupcake." She mumbled, resting her chin on Laura's head. She breathed in her scent, and realized that she smelled just like her dreams (which had stopped a month ago), but
ten times better. This Laura was real.

They held each other for a long moment, Carmilla placing several kisses on Laura's head, while she buried her face into Carmilla's shoulder.

"I didn't know. I didn't know, and I was selfish—I'm such a horrible soulmate." Laura bemoaned.

"I didn't write those things expecting an apology from you, sweetheart," She murmured, "You just deserved to know. I'm the one who should be apologizing—I abandoned you when you needed me most." She sighs pathetically, "I am an idiot for shutting you out. Lafontaine came screaming at me because I made you sick with worry."

"But you had every reason too," Laura argued, "You deserve better than me."

"Okay, this shit is going to stop right now," Carmilla practically growled, the two breaking apart for a second, but Carmilla was still holding onto Laura's arms, "Do you need me to say it out loud?"
The older girl's breath hitched, but she nodded. "You are the most special person in my life right now, Laura. You're incredibly smart, selfless, and kind. You see the goodness in everything and have the innate need to spread joy to every unsuspecting soul. You've… inspired me, to be better, and improve the new life I've found myself in. Yes, you are flawed… and struggling… and uncertain… but it's so beautiful. The way you try. And I'm so honored that in this wide universe we find ourselves in, you're the one percent of the population who stumbled her way into my life."

The tears had started even before Laura walked into Platinum Graz, and they weren't stopping now. They were happy tears. Laura practically tackled Carmilla into a new hug, which neither girl minded.

"Now," Carmilla huffed, breaking apart from Laura and cupping her face in her hands, "I know this isn't the only thing you're upset about. And let me rip it off like a band-aid—none of it was your fault. You weren't in control of the car. You weren't in control of the party. Hell, you weren't even in control of SJ. You have no reason to blame yourself, Laura."

"B-but—but—," She wearily blurs, shaking her head. "I was drunk. I-I could've… I-I could've gotten in the car with them and actually—,"

"But you didn't. Xena was smarter than that." Carmilla sighs, "And because of that I have respect for her. You wouldn't be here, alive, standing before me today if it weren't for her."

"C," Laura tried again, her eyes welling with new tears, "Death is merciless." She shuddered into Carmilla's arms, and the younger woman rubbed the small of her back. "My mother died of breast cancer when I was nine. She was sick for many years… and then one night she just gave up. I hated myself, because there was nothing I could do to help her. And now I hate myself even more, because I could have done something to help SJ, but like an idiot I got drunk and did nothing!"

"What's your point?" Carmilla asked, calmly, even though on the inside she was a bundle of nerves. "Both cases just help prove mine. Nothing was your fault." Her eyes glossed over, voice becoming lower, "Now… if at any time in those cases… you desired to take your own… then you can blame yourself. Because you'd miss out the chance of living a wonderful, and fulfilling life with me." Her voice broke on those two final words.

Laura stared at her for a moment, basking in every inch of her face. The other woman was truly beautiful—with a sharp jawline, pale skin, and plump lips, she could be on the cover of a magazine somewhere. Her life had made her seem older, age quicker. And yet here she still was, waking up to see another day, to conquer another adventure.
Slowly, Carmilla traced her fingers across Laura's face, the notion sending shivers down to Laura's core. She stared at every imperfection, every freckle, every speck, and tears glistened in Carmilla's eyes. She then cupped Laura's cheeks with both of her hands, lips curling in a loving smile. "You're here. You're really here." Thank the Moon.

"Are you happy?" Laura's voice was thick with emotion, as she searched for an answer in Carmilla's eyes.

First, she smiled. A quiet, warm chuckle escaped her lips. Then, she couldn't contain her giggles as she laughed, warm and rich, tears falling freely down her face.

"Yes."

"Do… do I make you happy?" She asks hesitantly, a blush forming on her cheeks.

"Silly girl," Carmilla chuckles, taking a piece of hair out of Laura's eyes. "Why are you even asking that?"

"Answer the stupid question." Laura grumbles.

"You, Laura Hollis, make me, Carmilla Margaret Karnstein, very happy indeed." Carmilla announces with a wide smile, placing a gentle kiss on Laura's forehead. The older girl blinked, realizing that this was the first time she'd heard her soulmate's full name.

"Your middle name is Margaret?" Laura asked with a chuckle.

"Shut up." Carmilla mumbles. "Your middle name is Eileen."

"Touché," Laura said in awe, a look of love in her eyes. "You make me very happy too." She repeats, resting her head on Carmilla's shoulder. They stayed in that embrace for a while, as the universe continued around them. But in that moment, they were simply experiencing each other, marveling at the sheer fact that the other existed. That they had found each other.

It was in that moment, Laura Hollis realized she was no longer invisible. In retrospect, she never was to begin with.

Chapter End Notes

Hooray! They're finally together! Well? Was it what you expected? Tell me your thoughts!
xoxo, Nikki
Chapter Summary

Laura wakes up with a nightmare, and Carmilla is there to help. We learn about her past, and also that Danny hasn't been faring too well since SJ's death.

Chapter Notes

I'M BAAAACK! Did you miss me?
...well, not really. I've been here all week, just posting new stuff for Carmilla Creations :3 Check them all out, I think they're pretty cool. The chapters will slowly start to become longer, don't worry, now that we're gaining some momentum within the story and the plot is thickening. Thank you all so much for all the lovely encouragement and sticking with me throughout this first leg of the journey, while the characters are still starting to figure themselves out! :) Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.” - Vicki Harrison

Screams. All I remembered were the screams. Then, flashing bright lights, a siren... I was in a constant state of terror, of fear. I was floating through my worst nightmare, reliving the nights of the party, of my mistakes...

That's when I saw it. That ugly, green monster clawing at me. Through the distorted reality, I saw the woman underneath it. Pale, so deathly pale. Unmoving—eyes closed, refusing to awake. The monster was growing larger with each deafening roar, consuming the woman whole. The entire world was shaking as it attacked its next victim—SJ, a girl who I barely knew, but helped me in so many ways—and was just inches away from my face.

It's hot, sticky breath was filling my nostrils and I felt like I was going to vomit. It started inching its hands towards me, gooey slime dripping from its fingers and onto my clothes.

"Laura."

But this time, I refused to die. I pushed back the monster with as much force as I could, causing it to tumble.

"Laura."
I pulled out a long, sharp object and stabbed the beast, causing it to let out a blood-curdling scream.

"LAURA!"

I snapped out of it with a strangled sob, my entire body shaking. I couldn't formulate a complete response or even register where I was. My throat was sore from screaming and crying. I started to rock back and forth, curling myself into a ball, finding it impossible to ignore the dull ache in my head.

I was tired. Oh, god, I just felt so tired.

"Laura," The voice said again, soothing this time. "Breathe."

I remembered to take a breath, difficult as it was. The tears came back, and I saw the figure through my watery vision.

Oh, Carmilla. She wasn't looking at me with pity or despair—but simply a look of understanding, and patience. The panic attacks started the weeks my mother was in chemo, and grew worse over the years. Not even my dad was able to calm me down, and he would often get upset because he didn't know what to do. I had to camp out in my room until the pain subsided. But there wasn't a doubt in my mind about Carmilla. She, of all people, would know how to handle a situation like this.

"What do you want me to do?" She asks, firmly, taking charge.

What did I want? I knew that I didn't want to be alone. Not now—not when I finally had her in my life. "Hold me."

So, she did. She crouched down, scooping me onto her lap and started to rub soothing caresses down my back. I practically melted in her embrace, resting my face on her chest and folding my arms into her stomach.

We stayed like that, and after a moment, Carmilla started to sing.

\textit{Somewhere over the rainbow way up high}

\textit{There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby}

\textit{Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue}

\textit{And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true}

I took in a breath, and this time I could do so without a fresh wave of tears pouring down my face. My cheeks flushed when I realized that this was the first time I got to experience Carmilla's beautiful voice, in person. How did she know that this was my favorite song from the Wizard of Oz?

\textit{Someday I'll wish upon a star}

\textit{And wake up where the clouds are far}

\textit{Behind me}

\textit{Where troubles melt like lemon drops}
Away above the chimney tops

That's where you'll find me

She was singing so softly into my ear, but the notion still lit every fiber of my body on fire. I was no longer shaking, though she didn't stop rubbing my back.

Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly

Birds fly over the rainbow.

Why then, oh, why can't I?

The second she hit that wonderful high note, she squeezed my thigh, and I turned to look up at her. She was smiling, a tear glistening in her eye. She placed a gentle kiss on my forehead, and my cheeks reddened.

If happy little bluebirds fly

Beyond the rainbow.

Why, oh, why can't I?

I sighed happily, snuggling up to her. She chuckled softly and rests her head on my shoulders now. "Thank you." I managed to squeak out, forever grateful.

"For what, cupcake?" She coos.

"For replying back to my letter. For being my… soulmate. For being here when I need you most," I looked at her fully, and she cupped my cheek in her hand. "For everything. I wanted to die, that night. I was just feeling so lonely and small…"

"The world would be a sad place without you, creampuff. Do you want to talk about it?" She asks, causing me to sigh.

"Not really. But I know that if I don't, everything will just practically ruin me," I begin, and she has an understanding look on her face. "Carm, know that I'll never try to downplay your depression with my struggles. I understand that we are both sad and we have dealt with grief in different ways. This is just very hard for me to talk about, since I've never really had anyone to talk about this. My dad shut himself from me for a few years to hide his pain, and we didn't have enough money for a therapist. So… so, if I say something that upsets you or offends you, please tell me."

"Stop that, cutie," She mumbles. "Don't worry about me. Just say what's on your mind."

I really, honestly, truly, didn't deserve this wonderful woman.

I didn't speak for a moment. Instead, I focused my other senses on the world around us. We were cuddling on the terrace, soaking in the afternoon sun, the world humid after it rained the night before. Cars passed by on the freeway, and multiple students were on the campus lawn hanging out. Birds were hanging out on the wires extending from lampposts, life continuing around us normally.

"I was six, when she first showed signs of cancer," I begin, gripping Carmilla's arms for comfort. "I remember it like it was yesterday. I came home from school, all happy and excited to show her what I created in art… and suddenly she just turned pale. She started gripping at her chest… exclaiming how everything felt like it was burning… and she fainted. I was so scared. I
couldn't do anything, I just stayed there and cried until dad came home from work. The following months passed by in a blur. I was scared, no one was explaining anything to me, why she had to leave for so many hours of the day. Or why she always came back home tired. Or why dad always had a defeated look on his face." I let out a sob, refusing to look up at Carmilla. I didn't like her seeing me like this—all broken and sad.

"It was my seventh birthday, when dad finally had the courage to tell me. I was so angry. I remember screaming at him and crying. I remember her trying to reach out to me, but I shut myself out from them both. In my mind, I knew I shouldn't have seen her as dead already, but I found it difficult to remember a time when she wasn't sick. For two years, we blew our money away on cancer treatment centers, chemo, and medicines to stabilize her. It was during those years where I refused to sleep in the dark. I would get these terrifying nightmares… a giant, green monster clawing away at my mother… eating every part of her body slowly until she's gone… I couldn't win against it. Every time, it consumed me as well… it continued to get worse and worse until her final night, where she took her last breath. I couldn't look when my father pulled the plug."

I turn to look at her, tears glistening in my eyes. "Does… does that make me a bad person, to vehemently wish for someone to be dead, and feel nothing but relief when they finally do? This was… this was my mother, the one who took care of me, loved me, and I wanted her gone…" My voice pathetically cracked.

"Oh, God, Laura, no," Carmilla soothed, shaking her head. She used her thumb to wipe a tear away from my eyes. "You're not a bad person. You're human. You didn't want to see your mother suffer any longer and wished that she was in a better place. It's not sinful to think that way. Please, don't hate yourself for it. She wouldn't want that." I shook my head. It sounds easier to do when Carmilla says it.

"The worst part about this, is… ever since mom passed, dad's over protectiveness started to border the pathological. I had to tell him exactly where I was going. Who I was going to be with, tell him exactly how my day went, if I was having any troubles in school… he was trying to make up for the lost time he spent with mom, but… it was hurting the relationship we had. It was two years ago, when I finally snapped. I was eighteen. I was just about to leave for my freshman year of college. He was going off on his spiel's on how I should stay safe and use protection. And I just… screamed at him. I told him that I was tired of being a little girl, that I was sick of him babying me. I told him that I will prove to him that I could handle life on my own. He told me that I was being stupid, and that I wasn't thinking logically. That I was still just a child. He said that if I ever came back crying he'd change the locks on the door."

"That bastard," Carmilla growled protectively, holding me closer. I gave her a watery smile. "I have to prove to him that I can do this on my own, Carmilla. I can be stronger than this, I… I must treat every day as a new victory to accomplish. But it was so hard, before… it was so hard to do it all by myself…"

"Then I'm going to help you," she assured, and my heart skipped a beat. "I'm going to be right by your side, competing in small victories as well. You've encouraged me to be a better person, Laura. Because of you, I saw meaning in my life. I have a purpose to exist now. I'm… not the best with this whole 'feelings' business, o-or talking things out like this, but with you I feel like I can open up with just about anything. Navigating this crazy world, let's promise to do it together."

Happy tears were glistening in my eyes, as a gleeful laugh escaped my lips. "Do you see me?" I mumble, having her smile in response.

"I see you."
This has sort of become a little mantra between us, the past twenty-four hours of me staying with her. It's comforting—she knows that I care about her and she feels the same way, if not more so. We have a special relationship, and it's still mind-boggling to me that this is the first time I get to physically be with her after forty days of letters.

My stomach began to grumble, and my cheeks blushed with embarrassment. Carmilla's lips gently pressed onto my ears as she chuckled. "Breakfast for my cupcake?"

"I may have… um… neglected my basic needs for a whole week." I groaned.

Carmilla gave me a distressed look, her lips parting. "Cupcake, that's detrimental."

"I know… I don't know what happened. I just… lost myself." I mumbled sadly, feeling a headache coming on. "I was so scared, Carm."

"I've got you, baby." She soothed, rubbing my shoulders as we stood up together. "I've got you now and everything's going to be okay."

I was starting to feel lightheaded now, and I knew that if there wasn't anything given to me right away there would be chaos.

We finally climbed off the terrace together, and into her room, where Carmilla began to search for her phone. She checked her text messages and silently cursed under her breath.

"Damn. Lafontaine and Perry have been really worried about us. They think I've gone rouge. Do you mind if we hang out with them for a bit?"

"Not at all," I say brightly. "I finally get to meet them in person!"

She smiled at my response and poked my nose, "You're such a cutie."

I stuck my tongue out at her, as if to deny that statement, and we left the dorm.

0o0o0o

She's finally here. After a whole month of waiting, of concerns, of suspicions, and of anxieties, she was finally here. Her soulmate was safe.

God, when Carmilla had heard the news about SJ's death and the number of girls involved with the incident, she was a nervous wreck. She couldn't sleep. She couldn't eat. Just the thought of her beloved even being in any kind of pain broke her heart. Nothing else mattered.

Before Laura came into her life, she didn't have a reason to smile. Now her cheeks hurt so much from doing so, and it hasn't even been a full day yet. She wasn't sure if Laura was aware that they were soulmates, but Carmilla was never more certain about anything in her life. Every time their skin touched, Carmilla's was ablaze with warmth and sparks. It was magic. They needed to discuss this someday soon, for nothing is never set in stone until the final sign—when their tattoos appear to signify that their souls are officially joined as one.

The adorable girl was jumping excitedly as they made it to the café, looking about for their friends. To anyone else, they wouldn't know that she had been suffering from a panic attack just an hour before. She had easily bounced back, but Carmilla knew that deep within her heart she was still hurting. Laura was somehow able to do that—cover up her pain for the benefit of someone else. It was going to be a long road ahead of them, Carmilla knew that. She also knew that she had her own story to tell, and at some point, she would have to trust Laura with her past.
She could only thank her lucky stars or whatever unforeseeable being for bringing them together, at their lowest moments. Lord knows what mess Carmilla would have gotten herself into if Laura didn't come into her life now.

"Creampuff, relax. They'll be here." Carmilla soothed, rubbing her arm.

"Hehe, I know, but I can't wait." She giggles in reply. "Ooh! Food!" She says, momentarily distracted, and drags Carmilla to the display. They fill their plates up with deliciousness, and find a booth to sit in. Laura digs in immediately, stuffing everything into her mouth, eating like a queen. Her plate was two weeks' worth of food.

Carmilla shakes her head and says nothing, starting to eat.

"Laura! Carmilla!" Lafontaine and Perry came bustling into the canteen, relieved expressions on both of their faces. Lafontaine barrels into Carmilla, who groaned in annoyance, while Perry hugs Laura.

They glare at the goth girl, "You jerk! Why didn't you answer any of our text messages?"

Carmilla rolls her eyes, "Well, you weren't playing therapist. I was a little preoccupied."

"Carmilla was taking good care of me," Laura offered, smiling gratefully.

"Oh, LaF's exaggerating. We're just glad you're okay now. It's Carmilla who takes the cake for the worrying award." Perry chuckles, fuzzing over Laura, making sure that everything was alright.

"Perr, please don't…" She grumbles, to which Lafontaine had a wicked smirk on their face.

"Yup. She was pacing so much she left a dent on the floor. Oh, and she broke my lamp by flinging it into the wall." They shuddered, the sounds still echoing in their mind. "And my door is falling off its hinges from her slamming it so much." They warily pointed a finger at Carmilla, "You're paying for all the damages to my dorm, you dick."

Carmilla was grumbling, to which Laura cooed with affection. "I'm sorry for making you worry that much."

"It's okay," She shakes her head, "We're okay." She snuggles up closer to her, placing a gentle kiss on her temple. Laura blushes at her lack of concern for PDA.

"Do you think they have any idea how gross they're being?" Lafontaine giggles, to which their soulmate rolls her eyes at. They were all seated comfortably in the booth now, fitting perfectly together like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle.

"Oh, shush. We were like that when the second sign happened all those years ago." Perry chuckled at them and smiled to Laura, "We're just happy for you, is all, dearest."

"Do you feel up to attending classes for today?" Carmilla asks after a while, noticing that her star was starting to doze off.

Laura blinked, focusing herself back to reality, "I can't believe I'm saying this, but no. I feel like I need to sleep for a week. I guess it helps that it's Friday." She curiously gazes at her friend, "Carm… you don't mind if I stay at your place for the day, do you?"

"Not at all, cupcake." She smiles happily in return, rubbing her back gently. "Stay as long as you'd like."
"Hell yeah! Sleepover!" Lafontaine exclaims, waving their arms. Perry gave them a warning glare.

"Laf, sweetie, you have a three-hour lab today. And I have a research paper due. We can't play hooky because our friends are in a state of distress." She reminded, causing her partner's face to falter.

"Aw, dang it."

"You can stop by later Laf." Laura said, amused at their antics. As Lafontaine cheered happily once more, she giggled, and went off to finish the rest of her plate.

The rest of the hour seemed to fly by normally, as Laura finally got some actual food in her system. Slowly but surely, she opened to Lafontaine and Perry, and the four humans were talking as if they've known each other for years. Carmilla simply just rested her head on Laura's shoulder, and watched them all, putting in something if she was directly spoken to, but she was mostly watching them in complete awe. Somehow, within the span of forty days, she's gained a new family unit she loved dearly. It was as if they were all meant to be together.

Then, within a second, the air seemed to grow tense as a larger, gaggle of girls came crying into the canteen, talking in loud and obnoxious voices. From the corner of Carmilla's eye she spotted the tall red-haired women from the previous night, eyes wild and crazed. There was something not right with her. Carmilla squeezed Laura's hand in comfort, blowing out a low breath as her heart rate quickened.

Laura wearily glanced at her, questioning, and gasped when she caught sight of the other girl. "Danny… oh, my god… Danny…"

"Laura," She croaked, wildly bringing her hands up to her hair, "W-when you weren't answering your phone, I-I got so worried." Laura climbed out of the booth, the warmth momentarily leaving Carmilla. Lafontaine and Perry passed each other weary glances. "You were supposed to call me."

"Hey, it's okay, everything's okay. We're fine." She soothes, engulfing the taller woman in a hug.

"SJ's dead, Lau. She's dead. And she was here—no less than a week ago! And now she's…"

"I know, honey. I know." Laura was saying, surprisingly keeping her cool throughout this.

"Fuck, she was so young. She had a whole life to finish. She was going to get the hell out of here, go out and travel, see the world…" Danny's voice broke, "And now she can't. Because she's gone. She's dead."

"Danny, stop it. This mantra isn't helping. You need to stop." Laura said calmly, gripping Danny's arms.

"St-stop? Stop? You can you say that, Laura? How the fuck can you say that?" Danny's voice raised, causing Carmilla to growl and start to get up. Perry passed her a warning look. "How can I stop when everything in this damn school REMINDS ME OF HER?"

"SJ wouldn't want you to be like this, Danny. I know I don't know her well, but she wouldn't want you to beat yourself up over something you couldn't control. Yes, I agree, that party got out of hand. We were drinking too much. But would it have been better if you were in that car?" Laura bit out, tears sprinkling in her eyes, "Or me? Think about it, Danny. No matter how many times you try to wish it, the past cannot change." Laura's hands balled up into fists, "Whether we like it or not."
"Everything was going so well. We were doing so good, and the night was so young. Why did it have to come to this?" She was saying, and Laura was starting to look exasperated.

"I don't know what you want from me, Danny. Comfort? Sure. I'm your friend, I'm here. Pity? Self-deprecation? Sorry, that train left the station years ago. Danny, please… you're starting to cause a scene." She mumbled wearily.

"H-how… how are you so calm about this? A person fucking died, Laura. Do you have any heart at all?" She hissed, and low murmurs spread through the cafeteria. "I thought you were different."

Laura's fists clenched as she sucked in a breath, "Danny. I'm not going to repeat myself."

"You promised you'd look after her," She hiccuped, shaking her head, "You promised you'd be SJ's sober buddy and take care of her. Instead, you got yourself drunk with her. What the fuck, Laura?! What the fuck is wrong with you?" She wailed, and awkward murmurings filled the room, "This is your fault!"

It happened so quickly. Carmilla had stepped in between the two of them, eyebrow furrowed and an angry scowl on her face. She roughly pushed Danny out of the way before she could lay a finger on Laura, and the tall giant stumbled.

"Say one more disgusting thing to MY SOULMATE and I'll be sure to give you hell." She said lowly, dangerously. Carmilla gripped Laura's shaking hands behind her. "This is not her fault. This isn't your fault. This was just a misfortunate event that happened in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yes, we lost a valuable soul on campus Halloween. She will always be in our hearts. But putting the blame and hating ourselves is not the brightest way to go. SJ wouldn't want any of us to be mourning her death in this way. I understand you have unresolved feelings because the death is very new in your memory. But keep in mind that this sort of shit happens every day. People are born—we live, we love, we age, and we die. Father Time is the only one who has a pre-determined date for all of us to leave this Earth. We can't fight it. We don't have the power to change it. You don't have to listen to a single word I say, but keep this in mind: are you going to spend the rest of your pathetic life mourning over what could have been, or seize it by thinking what can there be?"

The cafeteria was silent. Danny's weak sobs grew quieter as she was still slumped to the floor. "Get up," Carmilla ordered, prompting the taller girl to her feet. "Get up, and get the hell out of here. Don't speak to Laura until you've thought long and hard about what took place here. I don't want you near her, I don't want you trying to speak to her if I'm in the room, until you've truly come into your own. Do you understand me?" Danny looked longingly at Laura, as if to determine what the heck was going on, and weakly nodded. "I said, do you understand me?"

"Y-yes." She choked, hands shaking. Her eyes then grew wide as she glanced to Laura, to Carmilla, and back to Laura again. She understood now. Laura was never hers to begin with. A Summer Society girl slowly walked towards the battlefield, gently taking Danny's arm.

"C'mon, sis. Let's go."

The room slowly shifted back to normalcy, but everything was off rhythm. Imbalanced. The hitting of pots and pans resumed in the kitchen, chefs resuming about their normal routine. But the air was heavy—too thick. It was pressing onto Laura like a freight train at full speed, taking control of her. Silas students were trying to go about their normal conversations, but everything felt stiff. They were now feeling the intense sorrow that seemed to drift over the whole campus that morning.

"Do you want to go back home now?" Carmilla asks, turning around to face Laura. The other woman's face was nothing more than a blank gaze, skin white as a ghost, and her fingers felt cold.
"Shit, shit, shit," She croaked, quickly getting them the hell out of that cafeteria. She didn't even bother to say goodbye to Lafontaine and Perry. Laura was as stiff as a board as they finally made it outside, as Carmilla desperately tried to get her attention. "Laura, please," She whimpered, "Come back to me. I've only just found you. You can't leave me. Wake up, darling—focus on the sound of my voice. Please."

Laura began to shift back and forth on her feet, blabbering nonsensical words. "Please, cupcake. I want you to get to know you. I want to be the greatest love you'll ever have. I want to know what your favorite color is, what your favorite movie is, what you like to do in your spare time, what's your guilty pleasure… you're beautiful, Laura, inside and out. Over the past forty days your letters have given me life and purpose. Words cannot express this enough. You complete me. You gave me a chance when no one else would. Don't listen to those wicked lies—you of all people should know we say things out of despair when we're grieving! But you're stronger than this. I know it."

"Y-yellow," Laura finally managed, once her breathing became regular and she blinked her eyes several times. "M-my favorite color is yellow."

"Oh, thank God." Carmilla whimpered, engulfing the smaller woman in a hug. "You came back." She rested her face in her favorite spot in the world, on Laura's shoulders and tucked safely under her neck. "You came back to me."

"You're the only one who's ever waited for me." Laura breathed out, blinking away tears. She tightened her grip on Carmilla, as if she was going to blink away in a second. "Thank you. Thank you for saying those beautiful things."

"Anything for my Laura," She replies, placing a kiss on her cheek. "Come on. Let's just block out the world for the day. Forget about it all."

"I think I'd like that very much." Laura sighs, closing her eyes again, and they walked back to Saint Jerome Hall.

Chapter End Notes

side note: please don't hate on Danny. I love her and she's very important to the story. I know what she said to Laura was hurtful, but people react differently to grief. Danny was bottling up her emotions and taking care of Kirsch throughout this time, so she didn't have anyone to vent things too. Take what happens in this chapter with a grain of salt, okay?
xoxo,
Nikki
Give it Time

Chapter Summary

Carmilla and Laura's relationship blossoms from here. And it's beautiful.

Chapter Notes

Whew, here I was thinking I would miss my Monday update! It's not too late, right? Anyways, you all will be getting a double-update this week because I'll be going on vacation to Colorado for the rest of the summer. I'll be back two days before college starts, so I won't have time to update SfoS. :( But once school stars I'll hopefully be getting back to my regular uploads. We'll see :3
Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals!

"If patience is worth anything, it must endure to the end of time. And a living faith will last in the midst of the blackest storm." -Mahatma Gandhi

We made a detour back to my room, explaining the situation to Betty. She wasn't close with SJ at all, but she'd heard the news and said it was alright, wishing me luck. When in my dorm room, I hurried quickly to the secret spot, and took out Carmilla's pic. She stared at me in shock while I attempted to explain how I got it, but she laughed and told me to keep it for now. She said she already had something even better—when I asked her what it was, she just smiled and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

I then took out an overnight back with my clothes and we were good to go.

I loved this. I loved feeling so close to someone, so genuinely happy to be in their presence. Carmilla wasn't how I expected her to be at all. She's so kind, honest, and loving. She knew exactly how to speak to me, what to say, whenever I started to feel myself losing sense of reality. She was acting like she's been down this road several times before, and is desperately trying to keep me from doing the same thing.

We stepped back into her dorm (or mini apartment I should say, with all the expensive things she has in here) and this time I really took it all in. There was a kitchenette tucked in the corner by her desk, with a sink and a small dishwasher. She had a walk-in closet, and next to it was a large bathroom with a jet tub, which I was insanely jealous of. Her bed was kind-sized, taking up a whole corner of the room. She didn't have a television, but she did have a mac laptop on her desk. I turned around to smile at Carm, who was awkwardly dancing on her toes. She looked like she was out of her element, as if she's never had to entertain a guest before.
"S-so, uh… make yourself at home. Here. Let me take that." She mumbles shyly, taking my backpack and placing it on her desk.

"Thanks, Carm," I smile warmly at her, going to take off my shoes and checkered flannel. Wearing my tank top and sweatpants seemed like the more comfortable option.

Once everything was settled, Carmilla was staring at me again, nervous about something. "Hey," I coo, taking a step closer, "Is everything okay?"

"Laura," Carmilla mumbled softly, as my hands wrapped around her waist and she nuzzled her face into my shoulder, "Is this too much?"

"What do you mean, Carm?" I ask.

"I mean, the way I'm…" She shudders, "The nicknames, the hugging, the kissing… is it overwhelming for you?"

"Oh, Carm," I laughed softly, scratching the back of her head. She gave me a dreamy smile. "I haven't had this much love given to me in years. And this is how you naturally are, so who would I be to change that trait of you?" She chuckled in reply, "I don't mind at all. I want you to trust me and feel comfortable around me. We're both new at this, I get it. We just need to keep in mind what triggers each other and not be so overbearing when the other needs space. Your letters were the only thing I looked forward to. You're special to me, Carm. And I'll remind you of that every day." I giggle, giving her a peck on the cheek. "We are soulmates after all, so this sort of comes with the job description."

"Good," She breathed out happily, smiling at me now, "Do you see me?"

"I see you." I murmur, giggling as I snuggled up to her. She smelled nice. And I loved her arms around me. I feel safe with her.

She keeps me warm.

I felt Carmilla's hands discreetly make their way to my stomach, as she started to tickle, breaking apart from my embrace. I let out an embarrassing snort, face blushing as she tickled my exact weak spot.

"Ooh, someone's ticklish," She crooned, picking me up and twirling me around. I shrieked with laughter as she brought me to her bed, the two of us flopping on top of her fluffy downs. "You have the most adorable laugh." She says in awe, looking at me as if I were the most interesting specimen in the whole world.

"No, my laugh is embarrassing. Shut up." I grumbled, shaking with laughter. She chuckled and wrapped her arms around my waist, positioning her body so that way she could rest her head besides mine. I positioned myself so that way my legs were tangled with hers, and my hands were tucked comfortably in the space between us.

"I mean it. I'd never lie to you," She promised, smiling, "Hey."

"Hey." I sigh, bopping her on the nose. She scrunches up her adorable face and sticks her tongue out at me. We then stare at each other for a long moment. She looks like she's about to cry again. "What?" I ask softly, caressing her cheeks.

"I just can't believe you're here. I've been waiting for you for so long…” Her breath hitches, and I give her a kiss on her cheek.
"I know, baby. Me too." I smiled thoughtfully, "Tell me something about yourself."

"Like what?" Carmilla chuckled.

"Anything. Something I don't know."

Carmilla thought for a moment, "One time I rescued a kitten from the sewers and named him Stinky. I was eight."

"Aw! Did your parents let you keep it?" I ask her, and her face turned somber.

"I was… uh," She sucked in a breath, "I was an orphan, at the time."

"O-oh," I wince, not meaning to bring up those memories, as she tightened her hold on me. "I'm sorry. You don't have to talk about it."

"I hid Stinky underneath my bed for a week. Then an older boy found the kitten and hung it in the playground for everyone to see."

I was silent as she shuddered against my back, and my heart broke for her. Just who was Carmilla? I've only known the girl for a short time and she's become even more of an enigma. "Tell me a happy memory."

"That's going to be hard, creampuff," She breathed out a bitter laugh, placing a kiss to my shoulder. "Hmm. I suppose when Mama finally signed the adoption papers, and I was driving home with her for the first time. That's something I'll always remember. I was fourteen."

"There we go." I cheer, clapping my hands. She smiled sadly at me. "I'll be waiting for you, okay? You don't have to tell me everything at once."

"I know. But you've told the story about your mom—I should do the same," She sighed, "Just give me time. You're the first human I've had in my life who's genuinely cared about me, and I don't want to scare you away."

"I'm not going anywhere," I assured her, "I've got you." I say, kissing her nose, "I'm here."

"Thank God for that." Carmilla breaths. She gently rests her face in the crook of my neck, closing her eyes. She lets out a sleepy yawn.

"Bed time." I tell her, butterflies swarming in my stomach at how close we are already. She lets out an appreciative grumble, tightening her embrace. We curl up in each other's warm bubble of love, not saying anything more, and gently rock each other to sleep.

When I woke up again, the sky was turning orange and the sound of evening cicadas filled the room. I wiggled myself out of Carmilla's grasp, placing a gentle kiss on her cheek before climbing out of the bed fully. I tried not to make noise as I tip-toed over to her desk, booting up her computer. I was surprised to see that she didn't have a passcode, so I easily had access to her internet browser. It was five in the evening, so I figured the both of us will be hungry soon.

Bless the internet lords for Seamless. I ordered a chicken noodle soup for myself, and a hot sandwich for Carm, not exactly sure what she was into but I know she wasn't a picky eater. The wait time wasn't so bad, a half an hour could pass by quickly. It helped that the prices were ridiculously cheap.

I was beginning to smell foul and scrunched up my nose, wondering how the hell Carmilla
completely ignored my body odor. She probably was disgusted, but she was more concerned with the state of my mental health than anything else.

I took advantage of her jet tub and grabbed a change of pajamas so I can slip into afterwards. The hot water was burning my skin, but it's been a full week since I even took proper care of myself. I inspected my hands as I noticed dry flakes of skin were peeling off, and dirt wormed its way to my finger nails. Everything was so itchy that it hurt, so I made sure to scrub off every inch of dirt off my body. I took extra care and focus on my hair, which was starting to fall out in patches.

Carmilla's shampoo fixed tangled and damaged hair, which was good for me.

I let out a sigh of content, as the water ran down my back, onto the pimples that have been growing for weeks.

*This is the last time*, I promised myself, shaking my head, *this is the last time I'm ever abandoning my basic needs due to depression. I should have known better.*

I shut off the water and inspected my legs, wincing at the actual forest growing on them. Yup—seriously needed a shave. I decided to go full out, shaving my legs, arm pits, and making sure to clean every speck of dirt.

As I was grooming myself, my thoughts drifted to Danny, and the vile things she told me earlier today. It was just so out of character for her. She was meant to be kind, sincere, and loyal to her friends. She would never, on a daily occurrence, lash out at them for anything. She knew better than that.

*This is your fault*, I winced, shaking my head. She didn't mean that. There was no way anyone could have planned this to happen. Everything was still so fresh and raw—it's been a week since the incident. I'm not mad at her, but I know I will miss her. Danny's stubborn as a mule; it's going to be a while until she finally comes around.

I breathed out a sigh and stepped out of the tub, draining the water to clean out the access hairs. I then dried my hair with a blow-drier and used a towel to dry my body. I took this moment to stare at myself in the mirror, taking a step back at my reflection.

This woman was… different. Her eyes almost glittered with happiness, her lips curling up into a smile. Gone were the dark circles, the hair was no longer falling out in spurts, nor were the dry flakes of skin coming off her face. This new woman had replaced the old one, with a new drive, a new mission for life. She had purpose. She was glowing.

That's strange—I thought only pregnant woman glowed, and perhaps now that Carmilla is in my life, that will be my future. I chuckled when I realized this was all Carm's magic, changing me into something wonderful. A thought came to me and I mused that perhaps this new woman had always been there, she was just waiting to come out at the perfect moment. I knew I still had a lot of growing to do, not everything was set in stone.

My eyes the trailed down to my soul mark, a faded tattoo that everyone was born with and rests on a specific part of their body. Mine is on my right shoulder, a small speck the size of a raisin. One would mistake it for a birthmark, but I know the difference.

No one can determine the shape of their mark until their soul is in perfect sync with their soulmate's.

The reason for this is that finding your soulmate is a rare occurrence. People could go on for their whole life without ever meeting their one true love, fated to live alone. Yes, you can marry the
person you feel emotionally and physically attracted to, but that love will never be as pure and strong as that of a mated couple, two people who have fully accepted one another for all their flaws and overcame the trials of life.

There is only one way to tell if your soulmate is no longer living, because a burning sensation appears in your chest and your tattoo is ripped off completely, leaving a nasty scar. My eyes sprinkled with tears at the thought of my dad, when the removal took place a full twenty-four hours after my mother's passing. He was in bed, clutching at his heart and wishing for death to take him. Gone were the blue birds that decorated his neck. I could do nothing but hold his hand and pray for the pain to be over with.

Having a soulmate was not only a huge blessing, but also a burden. The thought of losing someone you're bound to for life was a fate worse than death. It's mostly the reason why some people chose to never have their souls synced, and marry someone else they feel connected to on a natural level. It's a personal choice, being in complete unity with your soulmate. The both of you must be in the same mindset—otherwise the process will never come to be.

"Carmilla's my soulmate." I managed to say, voice thick with emotion.

Everything from the past twenty-four hours clicked together in my brain. Tears were pouring down my cheeks and a happy laugh escaped my lips. Carmilla, the beautiful soul who was singing on our terrace. Carmilla, who filled my thoughts every waking hour and cared for me with all the love in the world. Carmilla, who was just as lonely as I had been, but through fate and a wish, we had come to be together.

Composing myself, I had to take a deep breath. Lovely, mysterious, charming Carmilla was my soulmate.

God help this small tiny gay.

I changed into my pajamas and quickly washed my face so it didn't look like I had been crying. Carmilla was still out for the count, causing me to roll my eyes. She sure is a mystery. I took notice of how she was curled up like a kitten, legs tucked onto her stomach and her hands were every so often fidgeting the air. I can only imagine she'd be dreaming of murdering a giant ball of yarn.

I bounced lightly on my feet before deciding to hop onto her bed, startling her awake with a moan. I was giggling as my body collapsed onto hers, and she changed her position so that way I was on top of her stomach.

"Holy shit, Laura," She gaped, "That's one way to wake me up."

"You sleep like the dead." I giggle, poking her nose. "It's five pm."

"Good. Five more minutes," She grumbles like an actual child. She then opens her eyes and sniffs my hair curiously, slowly wrapping her arms around me. Her fingers curl into fists on my back as a low, guttural sound escapes her lips, causing me to laugh. This freaking woman is purring. PURRING. What the frilly hell?

"...did you use my shampoo when you took a shower?" She asks, her cheeks blushing red.

"Yes. And I can tell you enjoy it," I give her a teasing grin. "You're secretly a shapeshifter and turn into a cat every night. I'm calling it."

"I do no such thing. And I didn't—did I really purr?" She flushed, closing her eyes, "God, how embarrassing."
"Hey, at least I know now what turns you on," I say with a wink, cheeks blushing. "You aren't as smooth and confident as you make yourself out to be. Spoiler alert: Carmilla Karnstein is just a total softie at heart!"

"What a way to ruin my reputation." She grumbles.

"I'm sure." I hummed, "Now it's your turn. Go on and shower—I ordered dinner from Seamless. It'll be here in twenty minutes."

"Yes, ma'am." She salutes goofily, an adorable smile on her face. She then stared at me, caressing my cheeks, "Laura, honey. You've been crying."

"I'm fine," I say, shaking my head, "These are happy tears."

"Cutie." She chuckles, and reluctantly leaves our embrace to take a shower. She blows me a kiss over her shoulder.

I crawled out of bed and moved over to her chair, spinning around in it. In this moment, I finally felt happy. After so many years of sadness, it was incredible how easily the emotions came to me—overflowingly powerful, all consuming. I no longer felt lonely. I had someone special in my life, now. My precious soulmate. How did I get so lucky?

The shower turned on and at the same time, so did her phone. It was loud and annoying, tucked in between a pile of clothes on the floor. I flinched at the noise, wondering who would be calling her. I shifted through the clothes and grasped the phone in my hand after the final ring. There was multiple worried texts and calls from the same girl in the past hour. Messages like Where are you, is everything okay, Mama is worried, ANSWER YOUR DAMN PHONE I'M HAVING A PANIC ATTACK WOMAN—Carmilla, I swear if you don't answer me I'm calling the swat team. And, a final one, I sure as hell hope you've been taking your medication throughout all of this. Please contact me.

I frowned, guiltily thinking about the fact that Carmilla has been ignoring her because she's focused her attention on me. The poor woman was obviously worried sick, as she called her at least fifteen times. Taking a deep breath, I click on the call button and wait for the woman to answer.

She picked up instantly. "Carmilla Margaret Karnstein, you have some nerve young lady! Ignoring me for a whole week?! How the hell do you think I felt when the news spread across campus! You're at risk of relapsing, and I do know you've been taking care of yourself, but I still can't help but worry!"

"I-I… hah… this is going to be weird to explain." I mumble, rubbing my ear from all the yelling. "…you're not Carmilla. Where the hell is my sister?"

"Okay. I won't explain anything to you unless you calm down and talk to me in a civilized manner. I don't like talking to people who argue like children." I warned her, and on the opposite line, she let out a breath, taking a moment to collect herself. "Carmilla is fine. She's in the shower now, and we're going to eat in a few minutes. She hasn't been calling you or texting you because the news of SJ's death shook her completely. She was in hysterics for a few days because she was under the impression that I… was in the car accident. I was an idiot and I got wasted that night with the Summer Society girls. Not exactly my proudest moment." I shuddered, biting my lip, "I'm not completely over it either, so Carm's been… taking care of me. She's a wonderful girl, she decided to help me all on her own accord."
"Who are you and how do you know my sister?" She asks.

"My name is Laura Hollis. I am a senior, and a journalism major. And I know your sister because… through." Our story starts to become even crazier the more I explain it to people. "A month ago, I was at my worst. I was lonely, sad, and angry. I was debating the meaning and existence of my life until I heard her voice on my terrace, and… I decided to write to her a letter. I wasn't exactly expecting an answer at first. I didn't know what came over me. But sh-she… she wrote back. She listened to me, and… we just didn't stop. And suddenly everything turned even brighter. I had someone to look forward to, and… I finally have a friend. When I was suffering from my panic attacks, your sister knew exactly how to calm me down. I owe her so much for everything she's done for me. She's my soulmate, Mattie."

Oops. Cat's out of the bag. My heart hammered in my chest.

There was a pause as I heard quiet sobs on the other line, and I frowned, "It's been a long time since my glittering girl has ever had a companion. She's rough around the edges, sure, but her life has molded her. I swear, if you do as much as break her heart, there will be hell to pay. I don't think Carm could handle another… another…"

"I promise. She means the world to me. I can tell she has a past, and I'm not pressuring her to say anything. She'll come to me when she's ready." I swore honestly.

"That's a good girl. Carmilla's been raving about you all month—I know you can be trusted. You're a good match for her." She let out a sigh, "Alright, then. This week will be busy because the board will be hosting a funeral for SJ and her family. I won't pressure to meet the two of you. But do tell Carm that I want to speak with her—she can't go forever with ignoring her favorite sister."

"I'll pass on the message." I say with a laugh. "Is there anything else you need?"

"No, dear. I can sleep at night knowing that my darling is in good company. You're free to contact me anytime you want."

"I will. Thank you. I hope things turn out well on your end, Mattie."

"As do I, Laura. Farewell for now." She says, and clicks off the phone. I sighed and plugged her phone in the charger on her nightstand. Carmilla was still in the shower, as my phone dinged and the Seamless delivery guy was finally here.

I bounced happily off her chair and picked up my wallet, hurrying out of the dorm. I paid him and gave him a generous tip just as Lafontaine and Perry finally walked through the double doors.

"Mom! Papa! You're back!" I laugh happily, engulfing them into a hug.

They giggled at my antics and hugged me back, Lafontaine patting my head. "Good to see you, frosh. You look better."

"I feel better. Like a new woman, actually." I say.

"Does a certain someone who wears all black and is the actual goddess of death have any influence on that?" Perry teases, giving me a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm sorry, who are you talking about?" I giggle, as Lafontaine pokes at my shoulder.

"Don't be a dunce, miss crushes on soulmates." They smile.
"I-I don't have a crush!" I shriek, heart beating fast. "No crushes to be had here. We're just friends. Best friends, who hug. And give each other friendly kisses. And cuddle. A lot."

"Riiiight." Lafontaine drawls, "And I suck dick."

"Lafontaine! TACT!" Perry scolds, reprimanding her soulmate. My face turns a deep shade of red.

"...I... um... there may have been slight developments to this story." I mumble, causing them to exchange glances.

"What is it, Laura? Is everything okay?" Perry worried.

I paused for a moment, before shaking my head, and saying in a whisper, "I... may or may not have a crush on her."

They stared at me in shock for a moment, before huge grins appeared on their faces, and Lafontaine extended their hand to Perry.

"Ten bucks, please."

"Lafontaine! I never agreed to this!" She hissed, flustered beyond belief.

"Says miss 'Oh it's completely impractical. What are the odds?' Perry, I love you, but sometimes you can be such a realist." They grin, and their soulmate grumbled as she fished out ten dollars from her pocket.

I giggled at them, shaking my head, "I... I'm developing feelings about her, but I'm still so unsure about everything. Th-this is all happening so fast. I-It's not like this was talked about in elementary school, so I have no proper knowledge of this whole 'soulmates' drama. I wouldn't even know the first thing to do about how to be a good soulmate."

"Aw, Perr, do you hear this adorable bean?" They ask, poking Laura's cheek, "Just be yourself, Lau. And be patient—Carm is dealing with this in her own way as well, so the key to any good relationship (regardless of soulmates) is communication. Everything will fall into place soon enough."

"Do... do you really think we can get through this? Everything is so real and raw right now, I'm more worried about saying something that will trigger her." I ask, biting my lip.

"Of course, Lau. Right now, you're just learning how to live with one another, so everything is so new and scary. Be patient with each other. And don't worry about what anyone else thinks—what matters now is your feelings and the time you spend with her." Lafontaine claims, but they share a knowing look with Perry. Probably mind-linking.

"You guys are the best." I say, meaning it. We stepped out of the elevator and finally reached Carm's dorm. I pulled the door open, and Carmilla was where I expected her to be: on her bed, a book in hand, and headphones on. "Behold, my soulmate, Carmilla Karnstein, in her natural habitat." Lafontaine and Perry laughed.

Carmilla must've heard us come in as she smiled warmly at me, and waved at our friends. She took her headphones off. In a low, serious voice she asked, "Hey, cutie. You got the goods?"

"If you give me a hug and a kiss you may eat." I tease her, causing her to blush. She chuckled and without hesitating she got up from her bed. She wrapped her arms around me in a loving hug,
and I realized that Lafontaine was right. Who cared what anybody else thought of us? Somehow in this vast universe I found her, and I'm now never letting her go. She peppered my cheeks with not one but several kisses, causing our audience to snicker at the display of affection. Her hand then slipped down my back and gripped the bag, pulling it out of my hands.

"Ah-hah! Food, glorious food!" She sang, causing me to shake my head. Carmilla Karnstein, the broody, scarcity of emotions, rebellious goth was happily singing and dancing because she was about to be fed.

What a wonderful world I live in.
In Loving Memory

Chapter Summary

Silas hosts a funeral for SJ, where we finally meet The Dean, who might not be as scary as Carmilla makes her out to be. Then we learn more about Lafontaine and Perry's soul mark.

Chapter Notes

Almost two-hundred kudos?!?!?! You guys are awesome! Upon transferring this story onto ao3, I had really low expectations, because of struggling to get this story noticed on ff.net. Thank you all for being patient with me while I figure out how to work ao3, it's been a wild ride so far! I hope you enjoy this chapter, it's a lot more fluffy for you all. Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"A pearl is a beautiful thing that is produced by an injured life. It is the tear [that results] from the injury of the oyster. The treasure of our being in this world is also produced by an injured life. If we had not been wounded, if we had not been injured, then we will not produce the pearl." - Stephan Hoeller

The weekend had passed on quicker than Carmilla and Laura would have liked. Before they knew it, it was Monday evening, and the funeral would begin in a half hour. They had spent all of Saturday cuddled in bed watching Laura's favorite cartoons and a few of Carmilla's movies. Sunday, they traveled to the park, enjoying the fresh air and learning more about each other. Carmilla did her best to distract her from the sadness, from the funeral, but she knew that even with the brave face Laura put up she was hurting.

They really did have a long way to go. It helped that they were soulmates—they had an entire lifetime to work through this.

It was still hard to believe that they've only been with each other for four days.

Three days of loving, kissing, and cuddling. It feels like it's been four years.

Carmilla frowned as she checked the time, rubbing Laura's back soothingly. "We have to get going, cupcake."

"Hmm. You're right." She sighs, getting up from the bed. "Damn it, I hate this."

"I know. It's an open casket too," She shook her head, "You're strong. You can do this."
"I-I don't have anything in black," Laura mumbled sadly, "C-can I borrow something from you?"

"Of course, sweetheart," Carmilla assured, pulling her soulmate into a hug and squeezing her arm.

"Black is so not my color." She sighs, stepping out of her embrace to look through her closet.

"This will be just for an hour, cutie." The older woman claims, coming over to look with her. She found a fitting dark blue dress with sleeves that went down to her elbows. "Here. This will be just fine."

"Th-thanks." Laura grumbles. Frowning, she didn't look up at Carmilla as she hurried to change in the bathroom. Carmilla's heart hurt at the tears pouring down Laura's face.

Carmilla sighs and shakes her head. They'll get through this. She had faith that their relationship would be able to withstand even the toughest of storms, and this was only the beginning. There was an adorable ice cream parlor in the city not so far from campus, so she made a mental note to cheer her up after this whole shebang was over. Then they could finally move on and be human again, without the overwhelming feeling of sadness crashing down on them.

As she dressed, she thought back to how the weekend had gone. She enjoyed being around Laura, more so than Lafontaine and Perry. They had something special that Carmilla never thought she would experience. Just being in Laura's presence made Carmilla happy, made her feel safe—was this what it was like to have a soulmate? She completed Carmilla, as if she were a missing puzzle piece just waiting for its other half.

It was such a wonderfully terrifying experience.

It was rare in this world for someone to even come across their soulmate. Soulmates were about as rare as second chances, and people could go on their whole lives without finding their special half.

The signs to spot their soulmate, before that moment, are subtle. First sign are the dreams. Sometime prior to meeting your soulmate, you dream about them. Lucid dreams that make the universe seem real, and your soulmate appears before you. When you wake up the lines between your reality and real life are slim as you can't tell the difference.

The second sign is when the two see each other for the first time, a burning sensation appears in their mind. It's all consuming, and indescribable. Their souls are just barely recognizing one another at this point. During that process, both parties behave as if they've known each other for years. Whenever they were apart, they would think about each other, watch the hours' tick by until they can be with each other again. Their lives are slowly merging into one, to prepare for the finale.

Each human had a significant, distinct tattoo placed on their body that matches their partners, regardless of if they meet them or not. It's faded, not easily noticed, but when it becomes clear the world around them is vibrant and everything they both love is intensified tenfold. This is the final sign, and the deed is complete. It could take weeks, months, or years after their first meeting—love is in that sense timeless. It doesn't matter if they're together, or if they're separated; the moment their souls are fated as one, the tattoo shines brightly like a honing beacon, and it's a spectacular sight. Though, there is a catch—the process is incredibly painful. An indescribable feeling of pain fills each partner, as their souls are merging every thought and emotion they have experienced. This is the purest form of love any human being can be lucky enough to experience. Complete and unconditional devotion.

They are so in sync with one another that soon after they start mind linking, bounded together by
fate. It's at this point in their relationship where each of their pasts are put behind them, and they're ready to have a future.

Carmilla's heart soars. Within the timeframe she knew Laura, she's so far experienced two of those signs. Right now, she must be going through the transitional phase with her, because that would be the more logical explanation to their relationship. And it was wonderful.

She was sure about her feelings, that she was slowly falling for the beautiful girl, but it wasn't anywhere close to love just yet. They had many waters to travel across before they even got there.

Laura reappeared then, that ugly frown plastered over her pretty face. Carmilla stared at the dress, and while it fit her curves nicely, showing off her perfect ass, dark really wasn't her color.

"You ready to go?" She asked, but Laura didn't reply. She just turned her head towards the floor.

The walk to the church was silent, as students began to pile out of their dorms, a sea of black filling the campus lawn. Even though majority of these people never knew SJ, it was a requirement for students to attend any kind of service in respect. They met Lafontaine and Perry halfway, who uncharacteristically wore dull colors as well.

"Hey, frosh," They chimed sadly, pulling her into a hug. "We're here for you."

"I-I know." Laura whimpered, hiding her face, "I know."

"One day at a time, honey, we're going to get through this." Perry added, rubbing her back. Carmilla stood awkwardly to the side, saying nothing, just gripping Laura's shoulders to let her know that she was there.

Carmilla spotted Danny not so far away from them, huddled in a mass of crying Summer Society girls. Her face was void of any emotion as she comforted them, glancing up every so often in Laura's line of sight. She then caught eyes with Carmilla, and bit her lip, her posture turning rigid as her gaggle of girls headed into the church.

The weather was starting to become windy as more students hurried in, the group following suit. Laura's walk slowed the closer they came to the casket, until she fully stopped in the middle of the pews, staring at SJ's body.

Carmilla, Lafontaine, and Perry gave each other anxious glances, unsure of what she was going to do. Laura gave Carmilla's hand a squeeze as she walked up first, bowing down, and giving her deceased friend a goodbye kiss. She was mumbling a prayer and crossed herself before leaving, finding her way back to her group of friends, steps heavy.

They filtered into the pews as the choir started to sing a few hymns. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. Painful minutes had passed until the doors of the church flung open, bringing the rain and the wind.

In walked Carmilla's adopted mother, the Dean of Silas. She had a cold expression on her face as she scanned the room, and everybody froze in fear. Her high heels clicked against the hardwood floor, causing Carmilla to wince at each echo. Due to her mother's busy schedule, she sees the woman less than she would have liked. Despite everyone's generalized opinion on her (Dr. Lilita Morgan was known to be a strict woman, having no time for funny business and with an air of authority about her that can make a grown man cry), she loved her daughters. Carmilla and Mattie were special to her, and Carmilla learned long ago never to take any of her comments personally—the woman had seen much sorrow and death in her life, something that Carmilla related to greatly. They understood each other.
Of course, one wouldn't be totally sane after having their soul mark removed, no matter how many years have passed.

She whisked past Carmilla's row looking at her daughter through a sideways glance. She saw the way Carmilla was clutching onto Laura's arm, desperately trying to keep her steady, and the action melted her heart a bit. Mattie isn't so good about keeping secrets; she knows all about Carmilla's budding relationship with the tiny girl, and it made her happy. Lilita gave Carmilla the smallest of smiles, before her face turned cold again.

"I am ashamed in all of you," She spoke loudly the moment she stepped onto the podium. Everyone in the pews visibly flinched, "I hope this all serves as a lesson to all. A lesson to never go above your limits. A lesson to never take life and everything in it for granted. A lesson that even though we may think we're making the right choices, we must keep in mind the consequences that we face. You all should have known better. Imagine what it must have been like to be in that car, with those girls, driving under the influence. This sort of reckless behavior is prohibited and will not be tolerated at my school." She hissed, "We lost a soul. A soul who had a chance at life, who had the possibility of achieving her full potential. She had a family. A mother, a father, a sister. Friends who cared for her. A boyfriend who loved her."

Carmilla turned her head slightly to see the Zeta bro's face twist in pain, trying to hold back tears. Love was such a convoluted word in the twisted world of soulmates and destined fate.

"Everyone suffers. Whether you knew SJ or knew of her, you are all shaken by the loss of a beloved Silas student. So, to keep in mind the intensity of this situation, I will make a new set of strict rules. No one is allowed outside their dorm past eleven pm. No one is permitted to bring companions from outside schools in here if they don't have any license on hand. No one is permitted to take in outside alcohol on campus. If they do, they will be severely punished. If one club or social event desires to happen, then they must get it cleared through me before hosting it, and a security guard needs to be within the room until the party is over. If you all be good students and follow these rules, there will not be any problems and an incident like this will never happen again. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Dr. Morgan." They all chanted, lifeless and dull.

"Good. You may stay to pay your respects for as long as you like until the casket was lowered." She states, and without another word, left the same way she came. The door slammed shut, and everyone stilled for a few moments longer. The quiet was overwhelming until Kirsch finally lost it, collapsing in the pews, covering his face with his hands and rocking back and forth like a baby.

"SJ… SJ… SJ…" He sobbed, breathing coming out in ragged motions. Danny came to his rescue, comforting the larger boy, hiding her face on his massive shoulders. The loud noise started the audience and a low, anxious murmurings rippled through.

Laura leaned into Carmilla's shoulder, her hands shaking, as she whispered quietly, "Can we go home?"

"Yes, my beloved." Carmilla sighs, giving her a hair a kiss. Lafontaine and Perry shared a knowing look, and agreed to leave with them as well. It was starting to get too much in there.
All four of them stayed in Carmilla's dorm room for the rest of the afternoon, re-watching *That 70's Show* and *How I Met Your Mother* to cheer up the mood. Soon they were all laughing with one another as if that morning never happened, sweeping it under the rug for now, moving on from it. It was best for Laura's fragile mental state.

"That was your adopted mother, wasn't it?" Laura was asking, using Carm's lap as a pillow. "The dean." Perry and Lafontaine were using one of her blankets together.

"Ding, ding, ding. You get five thousand dollars." She drawled.

"She seems like the kind of lady who likes to party." Lafontaine chuckles.

"Mama isn't known for her pleasantries," Carmilla sighs, "Don't take it personally."

"How long have you known her, dear?" Perry asks.

"Well, I was taken out of the system when I was fourteen, and now I'm twenty-one, so... seven years. She adopted my sister, Mattie, from Africa at the age of eight, and she's twenty-six now. She's possibly more alike to Mama then I ever will be."

"That's intriguing," Perry smiles, knowing not to push on this topic, and says nothing more.

Laura gazes at Carmilla and kisses her cheek, caressing her thumb on the top of her hand. They've been doing that a lot this weekend—those gentle touches, reminding the other that they're both still alive.

That they've made it.

Once the episode ended, Laura decided that it was time for them to go. She'd had enough of being in this dorm room. She clicked off the computer, "Alright. I'm bored. Let's do something else."

"Hmm? Like what, cutie?" Carmilla asks.

"I dunno. Something fun. Something that's other than this. Holed up here, being all miserable and sad."

Lafontaine thought for a moment, "The only think I can think of as nightlife in Graz are the bars, but I don't think any of us are in the mood for that. Hey. I've an idea. Why don't we go bowling?"

"Yes!" Laura exclaimed, pointing a finger, "That's perfect!"

"And have to be around civilization? No thanks." Carmilla grumbled.

Perry shakes her head at the girl, "Now, Carm, Laura does have a point. We all need the stimulation. And besides, even if none of us know how to play, we'll all have fun."

"All in favor in going bowling say 'aye'!" Laura exclaimed, raising her hand. Lafontaine and Perry followed suit, while Carmilla grumbled. "That was rhetorical. We're going now. Get off your ass, Carmilla."

"Make me." She teased, sticking out her tongue. As Lafontaine and Perry got up from their spot, Laura wrapped her little arms around Carmilla's waist and heaved her up with surprising ease.

Carmilla shrieked as she was being pulled up, grasping onto Laura's arms for support. The tiny girl was laughing hysterically, as she stumbled to her feet, and their friends looked on in amusement.
Despite the embarrassment she found herself in, hearing Laura's beautiful laugh made things even better.

"Alright, alright," She chuckles, positioning herself so that way she could wrap her arms around Laura. They leaned their foreheads against one another. "Do you see me?"

"I see you." Laura relays, giving her a peck on the cheek. "Let's have fun, okay?"

"Okay." Carmilla smiles.

"Woo! Party time!" Lafontaine exclaims, throwing their hands in the air, and the four friends walked out of the room.

The bus ride to Graz's popular bowling alley was only twenty minutes, so they weren't waiting outside for long. As it turns out, many other Silas students had the same idea to go to there. It wasn't a large crowd, but Carmilla recognized many from the funeral earlier that morning. The manager must have heard the devastating news because regular admission was half price.

They all got their shoes fitted, putting their personal belongings in a safe place and headed over to the middle isle. Laura happily skipped over to the monitor, clapping her hands together. "Alright, gang! What should be our nicknames?"

"Easy," Carmilla clicked her tongue, "Cupcake, Ginger Snap, Einstein, and Dracula." Laura nods seriously and turns her attention towards the screen.

"Why do you call Laura all sugary and sweet treats as nicknames anyway?" Laf asks, giving Carmilla a shit-eating grin.

"Don't forget 'my beloved', 'sweetheart', 'my star', 'cutie'…" Perry trails off, giggling.

"Because they fit her and she likes it, piss off." Carmilla growled, blushing red.

"Ooh, Perr, I think we struck a nerve." Laf snickered, shoving Carmilla's shoulder.

"What? Friends give each other nicknames all the time."

"Friends." Lafontaine drawls, looking between the two of them. "Friends. You think you and Laura are just friends."

"Lafontaine, please kindly fuck off."

"Dude, anyone can see from a three-mile radius you're head over heels for each other." Thankfully it was so loud Laura could barely hear this conversation.

"The kissing is a bit excessive, dear. Anyone can be fooled." Perry buts in.

Carmilla let out a sigh and leaned closer to them, "Can we… can we talk about this a little more in depth later? Just… just drop it, for now." She passed them a weary glare, "I don't see why you two dorks are badgering me about it when clearly you must know some of the truth."

Lafontaine went to open their mouth, but Perry gave them a warning look. "Leave it alone, Lafontaine."

"I'm back!" Laura said cheerfully after a moment later, clapping her hands together, "This is in alphabetical order, so I'm up first!"
"Knock 'em dead, creampuff." Carmilla says, smiling at her.

Laura gave her a cute smile back that sent Carmilla's heart a flutter, and Laura skipped over to pick up a bowling ball. Carmilla's eyes trailed down her body to her butt as she skipped onto the lane, and her cheeks flushed red. *You're killing me, Hollis.* She thought, as Laura's hands fumbled to hold the ball up properly. *You're slowly driving me insane and you don't even realize it.*

Laura pulled her arm backwards and flung the bowling ball, and with her strength it rapidly sped down the lane. It knocked down all the pins. On the first try. How the frilly hell? Laura threw her hands up in celebration.

"Woo! Lucky strike!" She bounced over to Carmilla, who was staring at her in complete awe, and placed both of her hands on her knees. "Beat that, Carm."

When Carmilla didn't answer the girl at first, Lafontaine was snickering and their cough sounded awfully a lot like, *Whipped.*

"Ooh, honey, I don't think you want me as your enemy," She drawls, clearing her throat, "I can play dirty." Damn. Laura was so close right now—any inch further and she would be tasting her lips. Was it too soon? She wanted to kiss her so badly.

_Pull yourself together, Karnstein._

"I'm sure Lafontaine and Perry will be the judge of that." She crooned, raising an eyebrow.

"Fine." She husks, and as she got up, she boldly squeezed Laura's ass. The tiny girl let out an embarrassed shriek, gaping at the younger woman.

_Fuck, _Carmilla thought. _Just fuck._ She was in real deep water now.

Chuckling, Carmilla tried to focus her attention on the game, but thoughts of Laura clouded her mind and the bowling ball got stuck in the gutter. What a brilliant, real life metaphor.

Lafontaine was laughing so hard they fell to the floor, and Carmilla wanted to be anywhere but here. This was going to be a long night.

They were well into the game after a half hour later, but neither of them wanted to quit. It was so much fun, just all of them hanging out, pretending not to have a care in the world. Everyone concluded that Carmilla just sucked ass at bowling, regardless of Laura distracting her or not. She had scored a measly 72 points, while Laura was ahead of everyone else with 150.

Lafontaine offered to get food for everyone, and Carmilla volunteered to go with, partly because she was hungry as well and the other being she couldn't handle another second being around Laura. She needed to confirm her suspicions before they drove her completely crazy. Lafontaine seemed to know what the other girl had in mind, as they pulled into a quieter place in the bowling alley.

"Alright, talk to me, Vampirella. You've been acting squirrely all night." They urged, causing Carmilla to let out a low breath.

"I-I think I'm starting to have feelings for her." She sighed, "And I'm scared as hell."

"It's okay," They squeezed her shoulder reassuringly, "You're going through the middle sign, right? The transitional phase?"
"I've been having dreams about her four years prior to meeting her," Carmilla rattled off, "When I finally saw her, I had the worst ache. My mind was burning up. You know this. You were there. I was a mad woman for days."

"No wonder you're practically stuck to each other like glue now. It makes sense." Laf agrees.

"And now… I've only physically been with her for just four days, but we can't keep our hands off each other. Literally. It's just… so strange."

"Your souls are only just now recognizing each other, Carmilla. It's only a matter of time. Weeks, months, years." They gave me a reassuring glance, "You have to be patient."

"Lafontaine, this… this is all happening so fast. I… I've known her for two months, a-and already I depend on her. She… she completes me Laf, a-and I'm scared because I've never opened my heart like this before."

"Hey. These are all normal concerns, kiddo," They smile, patting her shoulder, "Remember, your souls won't fully become one unless all loose ends are tied, and the two of you are at your happiest. You're still holding a lot of things back from her." Lafontaine lectured.

"I know. I just don't want to scare her away," Carmilla deflated, "I'm… I'm really broken inside, Laf. I have baggage and I don't want her to deal with that."

"The moment your tattoos appear, none of that will matter, honey. She will love you regardless."

"What was it like, Laf? When you and Perry became soulmates?" She asked, curiously.

Lafontaine chuckled, "We were sixteen. I'd known Perry my whole life, and had always known that she was my soulmate. Things were starting to get rough as I was going through my transition from female to male and it was starting to take its toll on our relationship. At the time my parents weren't very supportive of the path I was going down and Perry was the only support I had. So, like an idiot, I took all of my stress out on her," They shook their head, "Perry broke down on me then, and we had the biggest argument of our lives. Shit was thrown, hearts were broken, and I felt like a dick. But at the same time, we both felt better about it because we had been saying what was on our minds this whole time."

They smiled, reminiscing, "It happened the following morning. Perr was sleeping on top of me as she stayed the night, and I felt an indescribable pain in my stomach. The pain always appears first where the tattoo is. I remember clutching my stomach, as my skin literally bubbled, and I saw her memories, the tattoo becoming clearer. Y'see, what some people don't usually know is that getting your tattoo is a 4-D experience. You can smell, taste, touch the symbol that you and your soulmate hold dear to." They lifted their shirt to reveal the beautiful lotus flower, and Carmilla gasped in awe.

"Perry's mother owned a garden in their old home. She would always be out planting, and her favorite flower was the lotus. Not knowing this, it was the same flower I picked when I first met her on the playground when we were five. So, it became our mark. When it finally appeared on both of our stomachs, it was like we were really in her mother's garden. Then, extra one on our ring fingers." Lafontaine smirked, showing it off to Carmilla. This tattoo had a lotus symbol as well. "This means that we are eternally blessed with fortune and unity and overcame triumph in the face of adversary."

"Lucky bastard," Carmilla laughs, feeling better now that she's talked to Lafontaine. "Thank you. I needed to hear that."

"It'll be worth it in the end," They assured, "This is a scary time in everyone's life, finding your
other soul, regardless of race, gender, sexual identity… we're all human, and we are all deserving of pure love." They smiled, "I'm glad I get to experience being a mentor for you during this process. I sure as hell wished someone explained to me what the hell was going on while it was happening to me."

"Well, I appreciate it, Lafontaine. I'm grateful too." She smiled and wiped the corners of her eyes. "Okay, Einstein. Let's get food for our girls so they don't think we've walked off the face of the Earth."

"Like we'd last a day without them." Lafontaine snickered, and they hurried over to the concession stand. While Carmilla's day was horrible to start with, hanging out with her friends and being with Laura made things a bit brighter. Laura was magical like that.

As the group all said their goodbyes and Carmilla collapsed onto bed with her beloved, she thanked her lucky stars or whatever unforeseeable being that was watching over them for bringing Laura into her life.

Who was Carmilla Karnstein in the days prior to meeting Laura? They were nothing more than a blur.

Chapter End Notes

btw, I'm two chapters away from finishing this story on Word. *sobs forever* I DON'T WANT IT TO END.
Little by Little

Chapter Summary

Laura finally meets Mattie, and we learn something interesting about her, while Danny and Carmilla have a heart to heart.

Chapter Notes

I LIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIVE.

Thanks for being patient with me, lovelies. I was in the middle of no-where with no internet for a week. Colorado was absolutely beautiful, the second gorgeous place I've ever been to, apart from Greece. Take me back. I don't want to go to school tomorrow. Or have responsibilities.

Anyways, I missed these adorable dorks. Enjoy guys, gals, and everyone in between.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Three weeks have passed since the dreadful funeral incident, and things were slowly turning back to normalcy. There was a shrine set up beside the campus lawn for SJ, and every so often students came by to leave flowers or memorabilia for the lost soul. I knew things would never be the same at Silas ever again, but we were trying. I think we all took something away from that moment, regardless of if we knew her or not.

Life is too short, and it's our choice if we want to seize every moment of it.

We were now in mid-November, thanksgiving was drawing near and so was the cold. Within the past two months alone, the weather had shifted dramatically, which raised a few concerns. Some days it was sixty degrees while others it was twenty—we could do nothing but brave it, wearing whatever was suitable that day.

My relationship with Carmilla was blossoming, as we were slowly learning more about each other, and slowly began to move as a unit. We were nowhere near as close as soulmates who have surpassed the final sign, but every small victory counted.

I was sleeping over her dorm so much that I've practically moved in, and it was a welcome change. She was a much better roommate than Betty. (Every other night she would hang out in my dorm, and then on the weekends I preferred to stay over at hers, since it was more comfortable there). It was a small glance into what our domestic life would soon be like, and I adored every moment of it.

It was difficult to meet up with her daily, however, since we were on different schedules. Carmilla had night courses from four pm to nine-thirty pm, and on weekends, she worked at *Platinum Graz*. My schedule was the complete opposite; I had classes from nine am to three thirty pm, and recently got a job as a cashier at a small, family owned pizza restaurant. My employer was a kind, soft spoken man named JP (who's soulmate was named Will and he was coincidentally the owner of *Platinum Graz*), but if things went awry he was strict and did everything he could to make sure things go in
We got along well, and had a nice conversation with Carmilla when she visited me one day. I knew she was just being good to suck up to my boss, because if he wasn't there, she wouldn't have been able to keep her hands off me, or steal a few bites from the displays we had out. So, that was nice—we were kind of a package deal at this point.

I was excited today because our schedules finally lined up, and for that hour we were going to meet with Mattie. This would be the first time seeing her sister in person, and I hoped to make a good first impression.

"Cupcake," Carmilla chimed, bemused, "You don't have to put any make-up on. It's just my sister." I sat my little butt on her bathroom counter, hovered over my toiletry bag. She leaned next to me, playing absentmindedly with a loose string of hair on my face. Her touches were always gentle, always the loving reminder that yes, this was real, that she was mine, and I practically melted around her.

"I know, but I look gross on a usual basis, and I don't want to give off the wrong impression." I mutter, applying color to my cheeks.

"You look beautiful every day of the week." Carmilla reminded, hopping off the counter wrapping her arms around me.

"Cheeky," I giggle, "Are you saying that just because you're my soulmate?" Her cheeks flush a warm red, as she smiles at me, eyes filled with nothing but adoration.

"I'm simply saying the truth," She grins bashfully, "The Moon has blessed me with such a kind," She places a kiss on my shoulders, "Selfless," She places another by the crook of my neck, "Generous," She then placed another on my neck, letting it linger. "Brave," Her lips then moved to my cheek, "Beautiful soulmate."

My face was warm as I moved around to face her, and our bodies were so close as she held me. She had her hands wrapped around my waist and she leaned her forehead against mine. I could feel my heart beating rapidly as well as Carm's, her lips drawing closer to mine. I stopped her before she even got a chance, grinning sheepishly.

"Carm, honey, you and I both know that if we start this, we're never going to meet up with your sister. You'll never hear the end of it." I giggle, and a look of discomfort flashed across her face.

"But I wanna kiss you," She whined, like a literal child.

I laugh, heart swelling with joy, "I want this to work, sweetie. And if it does, then we should do it the normal way. I want us to take each other out on dates. I want us to laugh and learn more about each other, falling for each other, become girlfriends, regardless the fact that we're soulmates. And then when the moment is right, you can kiss me."

"Have you ever been kissed before?" Carmilla asks softly.

"You will be my first for everything." I utter shyly, wondering if she was turned off because of my inexperiencen.

"First and only." She conceded, rubbing noses with me.

"First and only, babe." I agree, and she holds me tight. After a few moments she let me go, and we hurried off to meet with Mattie.
We had decided to meet each other for a late lunch at *Chipotle*, since it was the closest to the school and the prices were surprisingly affordable in Graz.

Mattie was a beautiful woman, with her chocolate skin practically shimmering in the sunlight. She wore masculine clothing, a classic business suit and tie, but the outfit suited her figure well. She held herself confidently, like she was a woman always on a mission. Whoever her future soulmate will be, they will certainly have her hands full in keeping up with her. I had the feeling she was always one step ahead of everyone else.

A smile illuminated her pretty features when she saw us, changing her whole serious disposition. It was clear to see now that despite their differences, Mattie loved Carmilla. It made me a little envious—growing up as an only child, I never had the experience to disclose confidential information I would never tell my parents. But I knew the grass wasn't greener on the other side; Mattie and Carmilla weren't sisters by blood, and they had a tragic history I knew next to nothing about. How they were standing here, alive and facing the new world, is something beyond me.

"Oh! It is such a joy to meet my darling sister's beautiful soulmate!" She cheered, engulfing me in her arms. I laughed and happily accepted the gesture, even though I was several inches shorter than the woman and she towered over me. "Let's have a good look at you."

"Matska," Carmilla groans, rolling her eyes.

"Now, now, Carm," She tusked, "Let your sister relish in this moment." She smiled lovingly at me, nodding her head, "Yes, you have the most adorable cheeks. A glittering smile, I'm sure Carmilla has fallen in love with it already. Good posture, steady gaze, and you take good care of yourself. Not a blemish," She then scrunched her nose, "Although, your fashion sense could… erm… use some work, but we're going to look past that." She nods to my animal print sweater and matching purple jeans.

I couldn't hold in my laughter as she stepped away, steadying myself on Carmilla for support. My poor soulmate was so embarrassed as she tried to be anywhere but here. I cooed lovingly at her as I rubbed her arm, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

She then rounded on me, her face serious, "Break her heart and I'll be your worst nightmare, do you understand?"

"Matskal!" Carmilla sputtered.

"I understand, ma'am." I told her earnestly, and knew that this would be next to impossible. Carmilla was such a huge part in my life now; everything I do is reflected on her. We're a team, and I trust that Carm knows I'm always going to be here for her, no matter what.

"Good," She grinned, clasping her hands together, "Now, let's eat!"

Carmilla ordered a salad bowl with beans and cheese to fill her up, claiming she wasn't that hungry. I didn't come to *Chipotle* often, but when I did, I always ordered a chicken burrito and saved half of it for later. Mattie simply got chips and a drink, and decided to have half of Carm's meal.

(I narrowed my eyes at how Carm would reach over me over the course of the meal and pick at my burrito, sticking my tongue out at her childishly. She smirked in response.)

It was nice to see Carmilla interreacting with her sister. After the horrible month we've had, I worried I'd never see my soulmate come back to her own again, smiling and laughing without a care in the world. Mattie and I were two completely different people, and yet here we were, co-existing
with one another, because of the same beautiful girl that waltzed her way into our lives.

"You two have a lot to learn about one another, but lucky for us there are great websites and support groups out there for soulmates going through the transitional phase." Mattie was saying, tilting her head. "I am curious. When was the first time you two saw each other?"

"It was at a Summer party, we were celebrating because I had written an article that garnered many interested girls' attention," I explained, smiling, "I had no idea you were in the same Hall as me."

"With our differing schedules, it's not surprising that we never bumped into each other," Carmilla shrugs, taking my hand and rubbing it with her thumb, "If the Amazon hadn't decided to throw the party, I would've never come down."

"Right, and the look on your face was intense," I told her, biting my lip, "I can't explain it. Sorrow, pain, hope… your face was so pale I was afraid you were going to vomit."

"I did, the moment I made it to my dorm." She mumbled, flushing, "Lucky Lafontaine and Perry were there. I was in hysterics for the whole night as they held me."

"I understand now why you stopped writing," I sigh, snuggling up to her, "The weeks leading up to SJ's death must have made it hard for you to formulate any concrete thought. I was so upset I thought you hated me."

"We should truly invent some helpful remedies for soulmates going through that stage," Mattie lamented, "I can only imagine how painful it was."

"I'm fine, Mattie," Carmilla told her earnestly, "We're almost there. It'll all be worth it in the end." I think I fell for her a little bit more then. We stared at each other for a moment, smiling.

"Imagine what could have happened instead," I mused, "My soul would have been in distress because it didn't recognize yours."

"Mattie, that's bad news, isn't it?"

"Yes," Mattie said frighteningly, "The longer souls are to get to each other after the first sign, the harder it becomes. It starts to become a physical illness on each of your bodies. That's why the second sign is so important—the moment you lock gazes with your soulmate, the planets and stars start to align to their rightful place. If not, the universe is slightly catastrophic."

"Have you started having dreams about your soulmate, Mattie?" I ask curiously.

The older woman blushed, and incredibly, she looked sheepish, "I have, for the last several years," She looks over to Carmilla, who smiles encouragingly, "I see two soulmates." Getting up discreetly in her seat, she lifts her shirt to show us two marks on her right hip.

"Mattie, that's amazing!" I exclaim, "I'm so happy for you. That's nothing to be ashamed of!"

"Thank you, moppet," She shakes her head in bewilderment, and sits back down. "That's the beauty of our world—true love comes when you least expect it, I suppose." She grips the both of our hands together, "Cherish each other for all the years you have together, dears."

"We will. And we wish the best for you, Mattie. You deserve all the happiness." Carmilla says, showing her a knowing look.
Mattie smiled, as if she needed to be reminded of this, and chuckled, "You really are something special, dear."

"Isn't she?" I coo, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"Oh, disgusting," She wailed, waving her hands, "Take it to the room, please."

We laughed at her, and continued with eating our lunch.

I decided that I liked Mattie—we were going to be awesome friends.

Carmilla and I were curled up in a loveseat by the fireplace in the common lounge, resting after a long day. I was grateful that no matter how busy we became, we still managed to call each other, text each other, just to let us know we were okay. My favorite texts from Carm was when she would send me quotes from her favorite authors, thought provoking and meaningful. The silly ones were when she would send me corny pick-up lines, and she would always send them at the worst times because I would be in the middle of class.

But in her own way, she was just letting me know she was there. That she saw me. The letters may have stopped, but our feelings certainly didn't. They were only growing.

The last episode of Family Guy had ended when I saw Danny's tall figure coming towards us. I perked my head up, heart racing in anxiousness. Carmilla had unconsciously wrapped her arm around my waist so I couldn't move. I quietly closed the laptop to get a better view of my old friend. She just looked... worn. Gone was the sparkle in her eyes, the wide smile that brightened her face. Even her hair seemed a shade darker, matching the gloominess of her appearance. I could see that she was on a mission for something, and Danny's eyes softened when she gazed fully at me. She was different from when I saw her at the café, and the church.

I knew better than anyone it would take a while for the old Danny to come back. "Hey, Hollis." She rasped, giving me the smallest of smiles.

"Danny. Hi." I fidgeted on Carm's lap, wondering how the hell this girl hasn't woken up yet.

She's a vampire, I swear.

(Though, if she were, I would have found the blood in the soy milk container by now.)

She nodded to me and Carmilla, "You two look comfy. Room for one more?"

I cracked a smile, "Unless you want to pay for a broken chair, be my guest."

She giggled quietly, before pulling up a chair to sit beside me. She stared at me a long moment, and uttered, "I'm sorry, Laura."

"Danny..."

"No, I... Let me explain. Please," her eyes were pleading, clasping her hands together, "I owe you a huge apology. What I did was humiliating and selfish. I was wrong on so many levels. I had no idea what came over me, what possessed me to say those horrible things, but... I hope you know that none of what I said that day holds true to what I really feel." She shook her head, "I let the party get out of hand, I allowed more drinks to sneak in for the Summers for a wild night of fun. I wanted everyone to have a good time, but I was too blinded by the thrill of it all and let one of our Summers go unwatched. But... even with this in mind... there is no one to blame. It was just an unfortunate circumstance happening at the wrong time. SJ could've easily gotten into a car any other day of the
year, and gotten hit by an oncoming vehicle. I realize that now. Yes, what happened scarred Silas's
good name, and I am paying the price for it by resigning as a Summer sister," I quietly gasped at that,
"But I know that SJ wouldn't want me to be a complete mess over this. I must move on, even though
I'm a stubborn asshole. I need to put on my big boy pants and girl the hell up."

I smiled kindly at her, nodding in approval.

"You don't have to say anything in return. I just thought I'd let you know that I'm truly sorry for
the damage I've done to us, and for hurting you. I'm going to try now to be better. It's... it's tough,
coming to terms with your flaws, and working on ways to overcome them. But I need to. If not for
my sake, but for SJ's."

"Then I wish you the best of luck, Danny." I say, voice thick with emotion. "I'd like for us to
be friends again."

"I do miss you, Laura," She agrees, "You were the first girl I've ever felt at peace with. You
complete me in a way a younger sister would."

"The same goes for me." I assure her. "We'll get through this together, okay?"

Danny smiled fully, gripping my hand in hers, "Okay. Together."

"Joy... the Beanstalk is in our lives again," Carm was grumbling, her voice groggy from sleep. She
blinked and shook her head.

"Play nice." I warned her, using my other hand to swat her shoulder.

"Only if she does."

"I come in peace, Carmilla," Danny giggles, "Trust me. After that fiasco, the last thing I want
to do is pick a fight with you. I pissed my pants that day."

Carmilla grinned in satisfaction, leaning onto me to rest her chin on my shoulder, "Good to know I
left quite the impression on you."

"Down, kitty," I tease, sticking my tongue out at her. Carmilla wasn't all bark and no bite—she
could hold her own in an argument. I know it'll take a while to tame her.

"It makes sense as to why she would defend you so boldly," Danny nods, "A soulmate's
emotion is heightened when their partner is in danger or feels threatened, even more so in the
transitional phase."

"When you hurt, I hurt." Carmilla mumbled sleepily. I cooed softly, caressing her cheek.

Danny had a longing expression on her face. "I owe you an apology, as well." Carmilla
gazed curiously at her, "We've never gotten along, and it was for all the stupid reasons. I never had a
reason to hate you. I'm sorry for judging you in the wrong light."

Carmilla's lips curl up in a small smile, "I accept your apology then, Xena. Recognizing that
your actions were poor is one thing—coming through and being the bigger person is another. I
appreciate that."

I look between Danny and Carmilla, my two favorite girls. Growing up and learning from their
mistakes. Little by little, we were getting there.
“Do you want to come back to Saint Jerome Hall with us?” I ask hopefully, getting up from Carm's lap and stretching.

“That'd be nice, L. Thank you.” Carmilla chuckled as she helped get our bags situated, and we walked out to the cool November air.

0o0o0o

It was moments like this where Carmilla had to pinch herself. After such a dreadful month, goodness had somehow been able to come out of it. She had gained two doting friends who in their own way, became mentors to Carmilla.

Lafontaine's brutal honesty and innate need to find the truth in everything was comforting to say the least, and often she would slip into deep conversations with the mad scientist that most people had trouble understanding. They were incredibly smart, wise, and observant, but they were also humble, never truly boasting about the accomplishments they've made with science.

Perry became Carmilla's sister, her rock. If Carmilla was in a state of distress, Perry knew just what to do, how to calm her down and get her back on her feet. It was magical, in a way, just how in tune the curly haired woman was with everyone's emotions. Together with Lafontaine, these two were a power duo. It's no wonder the Moon blessed them both to become soulmates—they were a match made in heaven.

And finally, her favorite person in the world. Her beloved soulmate, tiny Laura who needed a stepping stool to reach the cabinets. Adorable Laura who always had a smile on her face and desired to spread joy and gladness to everyone she met. Brave Laura who could overcome her nightmares, and the panic attacks have subsided to a manageable level. If one had just met her, they wouldn't know of the cold, lonely nights she used to spend in her room, crying because she thought no one cared for her. That no one was listening to her, noticed her.

Who would dare do such a thing to ignore this precious girl? She was the axis that Carmilla's world turned on, and Carmilla was bewildered how she managed to get through life without Laura.

She was the galaxy and Laura filled the space between them, an array of stars in her wake.

Gone were the horrible nights where Carmilla would go for hours without eating.

Gone were the days where she was beaten half to death by her fellow orphans, teased endlessly because she hasn't been adopted yet.

Gone were the days of her high school, where she felt so small and insignificant.

Gone were the dark hours where she tried to take her life.

They were all gone, gone, gone, far away from her peripheral vision, threatening to infect her brain no longer.

All those years, those long, twenty-one years of her existence, she was always running. Running away from her problems, running away from her mistakes. She was nobody to start with; no family, no friends, no soulmate.

She was running blindly, tripping and falling as she went. She felt worthless, alone, afraid.

And then, a miracle happened. She had stopped running. She paused abruptly in the middle of her life, shocked to her core because she had found what she was looking for. She realized then that
she was looking for something much more than an escape.

She was looking for home. And she had found it.

Laura is the sky that she fell through. She is the sun, the moon, the stars.

She is home.

The small girl was snuggling next to her, as they lay on the grass together. Besides them, were Lafontaine and Perry, playing a quiet game of chess. Danny was with them too, laying on her back and staring up at the stars. Every so often she would point out a constellation she recognized, and Carmilla would tell her a fact about it. Laura looked on in wonder. Surprisingly enough, the dude-bro was with them as well, having seen the gang as he walked out of class.

Kirsch looked as if he'd seen better days, but the poor boy was trying. His hair was unkept and his clothes were wrinkled, torn. There was sadness behind his eyes. He laughed and joked with the group as if nothing had taken place, his presence warm and welcoming. The only downside was that him and Xena argued like an old married couple, and if Carmilla didn't know any better, she'd say Danny had a bit of a crush on him.

She chuckled softly at her wonderful group of friends. She held Inanna on her lap, strumming a few chords to warm up her fingers. She was nervous about playing in front of them, seeing how Laura was the only woman she ever sang for. But she trusted them—within the span of a month, her little family unit grew from two to six, and she wouldn't have asked for anything more.

Laura gave her an encouraging smile, placing a hand on her thigh. Carmilla took in a deep breath.

"Inanna?" She quietly asked.

"Inanna." Laura replies, giving her a gentle nudge.

Carmilla started to sing.

'Cause you're a sky, 'cause you're a sky full of stars

I'm gonna give you my heart

'Cause you're a sky, 'cause you're a sky full of stars

'Cause you light up the path

Lafontaine and Perry had stopped playing chess to stare at the girl, passing each other knowing smiles. Danny propped herself on her elbow, and Kirsch was swaying to the music.

I don't care, go on

and tear me apart

you do, ooh

in a sky full of stars
saw you

All she cared about was Laura. She was staring at her with nothing but adoration in her eyes, as she drew soothing circles on Carmilla's shaking leg.

'Cause you're a sky, 'cause

you're a sky full of stars

'I wanna die

in your arms

'Cause you get lighter

the more it gets dark

I'm gonna give

you my heart

Ever since Carmilla realized that Laura was her soulmate, her inspiration for music increased tenfold. Every night she would play her guitar, creating new music and singing her feelings away. It was the best medicine, working more wonders than any other pill she'd taken in the past. She felt herself become weightless when she sang.

'I don't care, go on

and tear me apart

'I don't care if you

do, ooh

'Cause in a sky, 'cause in a

sky full of stars

I think I see

you

I think I see

you

A few students stopped by to listen, but only for a moment, as it was almost time for everyone to head back to their dorms. But for the friends who were wrapped up in the beautiful song, they wouldn't dare move. Carmilla didn't care—she was staring at Laura now, tears glistening in her eyes, heart beating rapidly in her chest.

'Cause you're a sky, you're

a sky full of stars

Such a heavenly

view

You're such a

heavenly view

"Bingo!" Lafontaine obnoxiously called out, breaking the comfortable silence. Perry glared at her soulmate and grumbled, realizing that she had lost the game of chess, cueing everyone in
Kirsch, ever the jokester, chuckled in Carmilla's direction.

"Bro, I think I'm in love with you." He says, cueing everyone in knowing laughter.

Carmilla smiled gratefully at him, "Not in this lifetime, frat boy."

"You'd have to wait in line, anyway." Laura claims with great cheek, causing Danny to snicker and let out an obnoxious 'ooh'.

"That was beautiful, dear." Perry chimed, getting up from her spot on the blanket.

"Thanks, Perr. Th… that was the first time I ever sang in front of a group of people." She mumbled.

"You were great." Laura smiled, climbing up so she could kiss Carmilla on the cheek. "I loved it."

"Practice makes perfect, after all," Lafontaine chuckles, "All performers aren't geniuses overnight." She had awesome friends.

Danny reached out her hand to help Carmilla up, and the group gathered each other's things off the lawn, not wanting to leave anything behind. They all walked back to the hall together, parting ways to their dorms.

Laura gave Carmilla a hug when they made it to hers, kissing her nose. "Do you see me?" She asks, a warm smile on her face.

"I see you." Carmilla says without hesitation.

Her soulmate's face lit up, and they held each other for another moment until the eleven o' clock bell chimed.

That night, Carmilla dreamed that she was floating in a sea of stars, with Laura beside her.

Chapter End Notes

as of now, I have this entire book completed on Word. So hopefully expect a usual update every Monday/Wednesday! The song used in the chapter was Sky Full of Stars, by Coldplay (can't you tell I love this band???)
Fickle Hearts

Chapter Summary

Danny and Kirsch experience the second sign. Carmilla and Laura provide comfort for them best they could.

“\textit{There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature.}” -Jane Austen

I shook off the sleep and checked the time on the wall. It was almost seven, and my shift ended in twenty minutes. Working here not only helped bring in extra cash, but I learned how to cooperate with the customers, and my boss. But mostly, I needed it to feel noticed—I liked having a purpose, being a part of a well-oiled machine. It kept my mind busy and distracted, which was a far better anecdote for me.

Plus, I decided to join the work force as another stab at my father. I had to prove to him that I can make it on my own, that I can be an independent woman.

I also felt bad because for the past couple of days, I was casually leaning towards Carm's income for things, and it just didn't feel appropriate. I mean, yes, she's my soulmate, but that doesn't mean I had free access to everything she owned. There was only so much stability she could provide for me, and I respected that. I want there to be a time where I could take her out to a fancy restaurant, and treat her like a queen with the allowance I've made.

She deserves so much for saving me.

"Here's your change." I chimed happily, smiling at the older woman.

"Thank you, dear." She said, leaving me a tip. I was beaming.

"At this rate, Hollis, you're going to earn us enough money for drinks." JP chuckled, coming up to me. "Some regulars just come back to see you."

"I-I don't drink anymore." I mumble, shaking my head, "But I'm flattered."

"Oh, right," He says, embarrassed, "I'm just grateful for all the work that you do. Is this your first paying job?"

"I've interned at a summer camp for a few years, but as for paychecks, yeah," I smiled sweetly at him, "It's nice that I have a boss who's showing me the ropes."

"Y'got Elsie, too." JP said, pointing to the perky, blond haired girl waiting on a table, "I treat
my co-workers like family, and expect the same respect back. You're a dime-a-dozen, Hollis. Whatever field you desire to go into, your boss would be lucky to have you."

"I'm not looking to quit anytime soon, don't worry." I say, clicking open the cash register to organize the bills.

"Good. I'm not ready to let you go just yet." He laughs, warm and welcoming.

I smile and continue with work. JP was the type of boss who walked around his restaurant, talked with the customers and made sure that everything was going smoothly. He wasn't hiding behind the curtain, breathing down everyone's necks to make sure nothing goes awry. I ate at this restaurant often with Carmilla, and when I saw the 'now hiring' sign on the window a month ago, I snatched up the opportunity.

It was finally seven now, so I cleaned the countertops and called out to Elsie, "I'm signing out!"

"See you in class, Laura!" She replied, "Have a good night!"

"You two! Safe drive home!" The other employees said their goodbyes, and my heart fluttered with warmth.

Waking up every morning was such an adventure, now. There was a new day to seize, new memories to make. I was managing my time well, able to be ahead on my homework and balance my social life accordingly.

Things were looking up.

When I had gathered everything, and was about to leave the restaurant, Carmilla had walked on through, with Inanna on her back and a loving smile on her face.

"Carm!" I cheered, going for a sprint and jumped like a monkey on top of her. She laughed as she stumbled backwards, barely holding on to me. JP was barely holding his emotions together, shoulders shaking with laughter.

"Hello, monkey," She greets, resting her forehead on mine.

"Laura! How many times do I must tell you? No PDA in my restaurant!"

"I haven't seen my soulmate all day, give me a break." I mumbled into Carmilla's neck. "Hi!" I exclaimed cheerfully, causing her to smile.

"Let's go before your boss takes away my free drink with every meal quota." She chuckles, kissing me on my forehead. She then craned her neck to look at JP, "Will says hi and he loves you, by the way."

"Aw, even after so many years, he's such a sweetheart." JP cooed, and the two of us gagged. Elsie rolled her eyes, "You know, with the way you two dote on each other like teenagers, I'd be concerned if I didn't know any better."

"You're just jealous because of our love."

"J-jealous? JP, I have had a soulmate for two years! WHAT would I be jealous of?!"

"For our first-year anniversary, I booked a flight for Will and took him to Hawaii." JP snickers, wiggling his eyebrows. Elsie flushed red, muttering some choice words under her breath that if JP
was any other boss, she'd be fired for.

Carmilla and I laughed at the exchange and headed out into the crispy night air, tucking my hand in her arm. It was cold enough to see our breaths, and Carmilla tightened her hold on my body for warmth.

"It's been recorded to start snowing tonight." She says, breaking the comfortable silence.

"Do you think it'll be enough to cancel classes?"

"Just three inches, I don't think so. But finals will be upon us soon, so let's hope." She chuckled.

"Yeah." I yawned, lulling my head.

"Someone's sleepy." She smiles, resting her head against mine.

"No. I'm wide awake, I promise. I'm so awake I can do a handstand and solve Einstein's theory of relativity." I yawned again. Damn it.

"I think we should save that last one for our actual Einstein," She said, tucking a piece of hair out of my face, "And you're a horrible liar. I can tell by the bunched up face you make. Which is hilarious, buttercup."

"The number of nicknames you're able to come up with never ceases to amaze me." I say in awe, her cheeks reddening.

"It's an underappreciated talent."

We were quiet again, rounding a corner, several blocks away from the school. It was almost serene, walking in the evening at this hour. Cars and people bustled by, either starting their day or hurrying on home. It was fun to just people-watch occasionally, looking through the windows of the buildings and imagining what their lives were like. Thoughts like this usually lead to the thinking pattern of me feeling insignificant and without a purpose in this world, but nowadays it sparked my imagination.

"Hey, Carm," I ask, turning to face her, "Imagine a world without soulmates. Do you think we would still be able to find each other?"

She thought for a moment, tilting her head curiously, "I'd like to think so, Laura. I can't imagine a universe where you weren't my beloved."

"But, on the surface… we're so different," I begin, "You use sarcasm as a defense mechanism if you feel threatened or pressured into something. You're quiet, and prefer to sit on the sidelines if a problem arises. You pour your heart and soul into music when words aren't good enough. If soulmates didn't exist, we probably would have never given each other a second glance."

Carmilla nods and hums thoughtfully, "Yes, I can see why you would think that. Your pathological need to put your nose in everyone else's business is irking. I would have taken one look at you and become deeply annoyed with the brightness that just seems to emulate from you. I can't explain it, Laura, but somehow you're able to worm even my darkest memories out of me, and I can trust them in your hands." She gazed at me incredulously, "It's magic, the way you're able to do that."

"You know I'm never going to pressure you into anything, sweetie," I smile, "But… if you wait too long and it becomes detrimental to your health, I'll have no choice to butt in."
"Let's hope for both of our sakes that doesn't happen." She sighs, and suddenly I stepped in front of her. I analyzed every inch of her face, her smile, her eyes. She was a beautiful creature, even more so since her heart beat every second for me. "Laura?" She asks curiously, biting the inside of her cheek.

What were we? I know we are soulmates, souls bounded by the true laws of nature. Forever meant to live in perfect unity as one another. But we weren't there yet. We had a lot of growing to do until we made it to the final sign, many trials to overcome.

But what were we? I had needed her as a companion when we were writing letters on the terrace, though that feels like years ago now. I had needed her to hold me when SJ died, and I could do nothing as the dark thoughts swirled around in my mind. She had asked me if the kisses and hugs were too much, and I had told her no, because she was the first human in a long time to ever show me that kind of pure affection.

Our connection was ever growing, and I wanted us both to be on the same page. Was I simply falling for her because she was my soulmate? Or was I falling for her because of her character, her whole being of existence, because Carmilla is the greatest mystery to have ever walked on this Earth?

I want to be good enough for her. I want to hold her like she does for me, kiss her with every fiber of my being and remind her how much she means to me.

I'm just… so scared. This… this is scary.

But I'm so ready for this. And come what may, I've never been so sure about anything in my entire life.

"Everything okay, love?" She says worriedly, wrapping her arms around my neck and pulling me close.

Love.

"Carm…" My breath hitches, and boldly I drew my lips closer to hers, "Carmilla, I…"

This was it. One step closer, and I'd be able to—

There was a loud, buzzing sound in my pocket and I mentally cursed. My phone rang. Just fucking great. I was about to kiss my favorite girl and tell her how I feel about her, but of course the laws of nature are never on my side.

I stepped away from her, my cheeks blushing red as I angrily took out my phone. Carmilla could do nothing but wait in confusion, awkwardly standing beside me.

It was Danny calling.

"I swear, Dan, you better have a good reason to—," My heart filled with panic as I heard sobbing on the other line, "Danny? Danny, what's going on?"

"My head hurts. God, Laura, I feel like I'm about to throw up." She whimpered, "I-I can't stop shaking. I'm hurting. Fuck—why does this hurt so much?!"

"The second sign," Carmilla says, her eyes widening in realization. I sucked in a breath.

"Danny, where are you right now? We're almost to Silas." We quickened our pace.
"I'm in my d-dorm. I left before he had the chance to say anything. Oh, fuck. Why me? WHY HIM?!!"

"Danny, stay on the line with me, we're almost there," I say calmly, "Who is it? Who's your soulmate?"

"D-don't make me say it. Please. Don't make me." She was crying now, causing Carmilla and I to wearily glance at each other. She didn't have to. We already knew. We'd have to stop by Kirsch's dorm and see how he's holding up after this. We'd managed to make it with five minutes to spare, to see a difficult sight.

Danny was clutching her heart, curled up into a ball under her covers. I made no hesitation to climb on top of the bed with her, while Carmilla closed the door behind us. I wrapped my tiny body around her larger figure, rubbing soothing circles on her back and snuggling up to her.

"Carm, sweetie, how long did this go on for when you went through the second sign?" I asked, and Carmilla winced at the memory.

"Two hours. But even after I was still shaken up." Carmilla nodded to the tea maker, "I'll brew her an herbal remedy. That should be soothing enough."

"Thank you." I told her earnestly, and she blew me a kiss. I turned my attention back to Danny, who had her eyes closed. "Everything's going to be okay, honey. Take deep breaths. In and out."

"Fuck. Just my luck," She moans, "My soulmate turned out to be the very guy I hated for years."

"What happened?"

"I was getting my research paper done in the library," She shuddered, "You know, the one for English Lit? I was just finishing the last paragraph when Kirsch came into my reading section, looking for a book for his class. But then… s-something was different about him. When I usually see him, I am repulsed by his appearance. I want nothing more than to wipe that stupid grin off his face. I want nothing more than to shut him down for his stupid, sexist comments. But then I reminded myself of how he was at the funeral, and the days after SJ's death… I was the one who cared for him. I-I have no idea what came over me, but I knew that if I just sat and wallowed on my own, I would never forgive myself. S-so I remembered that a-and when I gazed into his eyes, I realized I wanted nothing more than to reassure him every day how wonderful he is. Wh-whoever was his soulmate, she was one very lucky girl." Danny winced again, but smiled gratefully when Carmilla came back with a mug, "And that's when the pain came."

"Funny how things work out like that, huh?" Carmilla chuckled, rubbing her shoulders, "It's up to you, now. You have a choice to make. Are you going to keep this hidden or reveal yourself to your soulmate?" Danny didn't answer, wincing.

"You should tell him, Danny," I say, patting her shoulder. "Rip it off like a band-aid."

"What if he rejects me?" She mumbles.

"I'll kick him in the nuts." Carmilla announced, cueing all of us in laughter. "No, I'm serious! If he's that thick-headed to not realize how lucky he is that you're his soulmate, there's going to be a problem."

"No nut-kicking, Carm." I giggled, and she stuck her tongue out at me. "No matter what happens, we're here for you, okay Danny?"
She smiles, wincing at the pain. "Thank you, Laura. Carmilla. You honestly didn't have to come to my rescue about this."

Carmilla gave her a small smile in return, "Well, we are friends, aren't we?"

"Friends." She says, letting out a content sigh. "Yeah."

We stayed in her dorm room for the next several hours, before she dozed off to sleep.

Carm and I decided to visit Kirsch, sneaking across campus because it was after hours. We just had to know if he was alright. When we arrived at his dorm, we both winced as we heard a frustrated scream. Something broke.

Carmilla grasped my hand tight for comfort, stepping into the wreckage first. Kirsch's room was in a worse state than Danny's, that was for sure. Clothes were thrown across the floor, his bed was unmade, and packets of snacks were left behind. I can only imagine what must be going through his mind—he'd just lost his girlfriend (whom he probably thought would be his soulmate) and gained another too soon. His heart must be all sorts of confused.

Kirsch was curled up in a fetal position, against the wall where a fist-sized hole was. "Oh, Kirsch," I sighed, coming over to him and wrapping my arms around his back. Carmilla sat cross-legged beside him. She pulled out a first-aid kit from her backpack (she always carries one, after she discovered how clumsy I am) and starts to clean his bloodied fingers.

"This may sting a little." She offered gently, nothing but kindness written on her features.

"The universe hates me," He grumbled weakly, hissing in pain, "I... I was going to tell SJ that I loved her... th-that I wanted our relationship to be more than just on-and-off hook-ups. And then she's just... just gone." He slumped his shoulders, defeated, "What's the point of soulmates, if we're all just going to end up in pain and heartbreak anyways? SJ and I... we just, we just had a good thing going. Sh-she... she wasn't the girl in my dreams, sure, but the girl in my dreams despised me in real life. I didn't have a chance with her. There's no way she'd accept me now, after all those years of her waiting for me."

"I wouldn't write yourself off that quickly," I chimed, holding his hand, "You and Danny may be soulmates, but you have a lot of emotions to shift through. The both of you should be on the same wavelength for this to work. Regardless, she does hold some affections for you. It's just... the way she expresses them is through competition and masked by annoyance."

"I want to be good for her," He sighs, looking up at me with weary eyes, "I want to be a good boyfriend, a-a good soulmate. But where do I even start?"

"Start by being her friend," Carmilla offers, smiling. "When Laura needed me in the beginning, she simply needed someone to talk to. We sent each other letters on the terrace, talking about our day and the memories we've made. When Laura was going through her panic attack's after SJ's death, she needed a companion to hold her steady. I sang to her, held her, gave her kisses. When Laura finally grew into her own, blossoming into the beautiful girl she is today, she needed her soulmate." She says, winking at me. I blushed easily. "We're nowhere near perfect yet, but that's the whole beauty of this world, Kirsch. I can't wait for the day when Laura can come home from her day with her head held high, eyes filled with nothing but love and warmth. I can't wait for the day when Laura's able to sweep me off my feet, surprising me with kisses and declarations of love. But mostly, I can't wait for the day when our souls merge completely as one and I'm able to hear every thought of hers, every unspoken whisper, and feel our soul mark burning with life. We'll get there. And you will too. You just need to have a little bit of faith in your abilities as a human, Kirsch. My best advice is to
meet Danny halfway for that to happen."

We were silent as Carmilla finished her speech. Tears were glistening in my eyes at the amount of hope she has in our relationship. In that moment, I was sure of my affections—and my heart swelled with happiness.

"C-Carmilla!" I exclaimed, jumping up from my spot and climbing over Kirsch. He let out an 'oof' as my knee kicked him in the stomach, and wrapped my arms around her. We fell to the floor. "You're the best soulmate ever."

"I'm glad you think so," She chuckles, kissing my forehead, "Do you see me?"

"I see you." I murmured, snuggling up to her.

Kirsch smiled kindly at us and shook his head, "Well, if you two can certainly fight against the odds, then Danny and I could."

"There are times that I worry we are moving much too fast," I admit, resting my head on Carmilla's chest, "We've only known each other for three months now. Usually soulmates know each other for years before the signs start to work. B-but at this point, what with how strange my life has been already, I've decided to just roll with the punches. There's no sense in fighting something that's written in the stars. And I can't wait for those days either, babe." I coo, caressing her cheek.

"I'll meet you halfway if you do the same for me."

"Deal." I grin, and Kirsch chuckles. I turn to him, smiling sweetly, "How are you feeling now, Kirsch?"

He grunts, stretching out his arms, "A bit sore, but nothing a hot bath can't fix. Th-thanks for coming to my rescue. I… I guess I needed to see how you two cared for each other first hand, so I know what to expect from mine and Danny's relationship. I mean, we see Lafontaine and Perry every day, but you two are at a stage like us. I-It's good to know that I can come to you for advice."

"Anytime, honey." I assure him, patting his knee.

"Is there anything else you need?" Carmilla asks, beginning to get up, extending her hand out for me. She cleaned up her kit.

"I wouldn't want you two to get in trouble since it's after hours, I'm fine," He assured, getting up to wrap his arms around us, "I'll text you both in the morning."

Carmilla opened her mouth to say something, but closed it. I smiled at her—she as such a mother hen sometimes, it was cute. "Alright. Try to get some sleep tonight, then. You look like you've been hibernating in a coffin."

"With how horrible that mattress is, I may as well be." He shakes his head, and leads us out to the hall, "Thanks again for coming over."

"Goodnight, Kirsch." I chime with a giggle, giving him a kiss on the cheek. He sighs in response, leaning against the doorframe as we walked down the hall. It was funny how much people change when they've met their soulmate. For a long time, Kirsch was limited to one stereotype: loud, competitive, and a frat boy persona that consumed his every whim. He had nothing to lose so he used his popularity to his benefit, getting the girls he wanted and owning the student body of Silas.

Danny was a thorn at his side, the one thing he needed to push him over the edge. Those two
may be complete opposites, but she balanced him in a way no other girl could. She was the moral compass he needed to rethink his actions, and he was the relief she needed to not be so uptight and stubborn about everything she tackled in life. They had one thing in common, and I was sure it would be the golden ticket to save their relationship: loyalty. They were loyal to their friends, family, and peers. They would both stop at nothing to save the ones they loved.

It was only a matter of time before those two pulled the wool over their eyes.

As we stepped out into the frosty winter night, I was excited to see that little specks of flakes were just starting to fall. I let out a shriek of excitement as I ran out towards the campus lawn, spreading my arms out in pure joy. Carmilla laughed as she followed suit, sticking her tongue out to catch them.

It may have been cold, but with Carmilla's arms draped around me in a loving embrace, my skin was burning with warmth. Wherever we were, she will always be home.
Carmilla's tired eyes threatened to close, her entire body aching to quit. She had been up all night, studying for her philosophy final, hoping to cram everything she needed in her mind for the exam she surely failed earlier this morning. Hell Week had come upon the students of Silas at full force, which soon led to an army of zombified twenty-somethings roaming the campus, fighting sleep and looking for anything to snack on.

Her previous years of surviving Hell Week had been dull and uneventful. She didn't have a friend group to compare notes with, so anything she had trouble with she was forced to consult the internet.

But it was different this year. She was a senior, which meant she had to ace every exam with flying colors. She had Lafontaine and Perry, who were literal masterminds and brilliant study partners. They'd spent hours in the library preparing for their final exams, which was incredible because Carmilla worried that they'd goof off and never get anything done.

(She'd made the mistake in studying with Kirsch for her psychology exam, since the poor boy was still fretting over his awkward situation with Danny. She needed to study, damn-it, not be a therapist.)

Danny seemed to have a better grasp on her emotions and the two tackled the history textbook together.

Laura was… weirdly absent. She hardly saw the tiny woman; every time she tried to check her dorm room, Betty claimed she was at the library. When she checked the library, she wasn't even there. She was never on their favorite chair in the lounge, or hanging out by the fireplace in Martin Auer. She just seemed to be… gone. That terrified Carmilla greatly, especially when her soulmate stopped communicating through text messages.

Her anxiety skyrocketed with the added stress of finals, as she worried about her soulmate's whereabouts.
"You're doing it again. You're growling." Lafontaine grumbles, passing the other girl a glare.

"Text faster!" She hisses.

"You know what doesn't help anyone text faster? Growling." Lafontaine rolls their eyes, sending the message to Danny. They had sent up a scouting mission to find the missing gay in action.

"I will not chill out until we figure out where she is," She growled, shoving them aside and continuing to pace. "She hasn't been answering her phone, and I have no idea what's going on! I haven't spent a solid hour with her in eight days. YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH I MISS CUDDLING WITH HER."

"I AM JUST A PERSON." Lafontaine snapped, running a hand down their face. "Look. Maybe she just needs her space during finals week. Everybody studies and copes differently with stress."

"By shutting me out?" Carmilla whimpered, slumping her shoulders. "I just… I just don't understand. We were doing so well."

"Carmilla," They tried again, lulling their head, "You need to calm down. Stop making this about you, babe."

Carmilla's eyes widened, and she sighed in defeat. "I'm just… worried, is all. I know my beloved becomes overwhelmed easily and I don't want her to be hurting. But you're right. I should trust her and know she won't do anything detrimental to her health. She's stronger now." Lafontaine took in a deep breath, as if to think that Carmilla's worrying would cease, but the poor girl was besides herself. She then angrily took Lafontaine's phone and flung it onto the ground.

"You know, the texting would usually happen quicker if our phones remained landbound." They glare, picking up their busted iPhone and wiping the dust off with their clothes. Thankfully, Danny walked in the common lounge to the rescue. "Thank God you're here. Where the hell is Laura?"

Danny's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, "I walked in on her slumped over her desk, her head imprinted on her laptop," She claims, glaring at Carmilla, "She's in her dorm room." The taller woman then leaned over with a threatening glare on her face, grasping Carmilla's shoulders. "I don't care how you do it, but sort. This. Out. This little cat and mouse game you're playing with Laura is KILLING US ALL. I hate being the awkward third wheel!"

"I'll remember this when you're going through the same ordeal with the man child, Clifford." Carmilla drawls, clicking her tongue.

"Besides the point." She growls, and Carmilla's stomach churns with anxiety. Lafontaine nods in agreement.

"Danny, I don't know…" She mumbles, fiddling with her hands nervously. "H-how am I going to…"

"For fuck's sake, she's your soulmate!" Danny exploded, "Listen, I know why you're doing this. You don't want to pressure her into a relationship when she's just barely overcoming her own obstacles. You want to be her friend and companion for the time being. But anyone can see from a mile away the heart eyes you give her, and the kisses you steal her away with. You need to let these fears of rejection and of the future go, Carmilla. Laura's suffering with this too! Don't think she hasn't told me anything! Let's settle a few things right here, right now. Do you love her?"

Carmilla's cheeks turned red, as she bit her lip. "I'm getting close."
"Do you want to kiss her?" Danny asks.

"Yes." She replied, without hesitating.


"YES!" Carmilla shouted, garnering the attention of a few other students.

The taller woman rolled her eyes, already knowing that answer. "Then you need to girl the hell up."

Carmilla looked between Danny and Lafontaine, who both had equally tired looks on their faces. She internally sighed and supposed they were right. For the remaining weeks of November and the beginning of December, Laura and Carmilla had been driving everyone up the wall. Carmilla wasn't even aware of it, assuming this was a normal feat in the transitional phase, and Laura never spoke up or voiced that she was uncomfortable with this development.

This relationship was hardly normal at all.

"Why the fuck are you still standing here? Go!" Danny urges, pushing Carmilla out of the room. Carmilla grumbled, muttering unkind words under her breath as she trudged towards Saint Jerome Hall.

Why was she so great at making things so difficult?

Shaking her head, it felt like forever as she finally made it to Laura's dorm. Betty was lounging on their couch with her soulmate, Elsie cuddled up next to her. A look of relief washed across the blond-haired woman's face.

"Our lord and savior is here," Betty drawls, pointing towards Laura's room, "Please help us."

"I mean, I know I want to pass finals and stuff, but she hasn't been out of her room for a whole day."

Elsie mumbled, shaking her head. "Good luck."

Carmilla rolls her eyes, and then pauses, eyeing them curiously. "Is it worth it? Going through all of this?"

Elsie smiled warmly at the younger woman and nods, "Trust me, when the time comes, you will know the answer to that."

Betty gives her an encouraging fist bump, "Go get her, tiger."

Carmilla drew out a breath and silently thanked them, rapping her knuckles on the door. "Cupcake?" She doesn't hear anything in return, praying to whatever unseen god to give her strength. She pushed the door open for it to reveal Laura slumped over on her desk, a pile of papers thrown on the floor beside her. There were multiple bottles of coke and snacks littered next to her computer, and Carmilla wrinkled her nose at the sight.

This woman's bloodstream was honestly 90% sugar at this rate.

"Sweetie..." Carmilla cooed softly, strolling over to her beloved. She peered at the screen, chuckling as Laura's cheek was pressing on the 'V' key, screwing up the entire word account. Cheekily, she quickly typed up the word **vagina** on the last page. She then gently leaned over Laura and grasped at her arms, removing them from her desk. She awoke almost instantly, gasping at Carmilla's touch.

"C-Carmilla..." Laura mumbled. Her cheeks were flushed red, and there was a bead of sweat
coming down her brow. "No, Carm, please. I need to study."

"Oh, do you? I can help with that." Carmilla smirked, wrapping her arms around Laura's waist and placing gentle kisses on her neck. The other girl practically melted in her embrace, as if she craved her touch, but pushed Carmilla away.

"Carmilla, I'm serious. I'm not giving into your seduction eyes—I'm failing in one of these courses and I need to pass this final." Laura whimpered, though her eyes were filled with lust and desire.

"Laura, you have two more finals. And you've already studied with Lafontaine for both. You're fine. Honestly, what's gotten into you? All week, you've been avoiding me like the plague. At first I reasoned that you just need your space to study, but now I can't help but worry." Carmilla urges.

"Carmilla, I can take care of myself. Everything's okay—there's no reason for you to worry," Laura groaned, furrowing her eyebrows, "Please, stop hovering."

"I-I'm not—," okay, so perhaps she sort of was, "Fine." Carmilla gave her a weary look, and an uneasy silence passed between them. Laura went back to stare at her document, groaning in frustration and hitting the delete key. The noise became unbearable for Carmilla, as she remembered Danny's words.

*Girl the hell up, Karnstein.*

"Laura," She swallowed, biting her lip. She saw the other girl's shoulders tense. "We need to talk."

A second passed. Finally, she did turn around, revealing her bloodshot eyes. "Right. Talking. Talking would be… good." She pushed away from her desk, so that way Carmilla could sit comfortably on her lap. "What do you want to talk about?"

Carmilla took in a deep breath, staring at her beloved's eyes. They were filled with confusion and worry. "Laura, what are we?" She asks, running a hand slowly through her hair, "I can't even try to hide what I'm feeling for you anymore. Apparently, I'm so transparent that anyone can see it. I was in denial for the longest time, terrified that the moment you'd realize that you were my soulmate, hell would hath no fury. I reasoned with myself that for the longest time I wasn't a person fit to be a soulmate, that I would be horrible and things would not work out. But with you… you're just so different, Laura. You seem to complete me in every way possible, and I feel the need to trust that with every secret I say you'll treasure it. Now that you're in my life I can't seem to imagine or even remember a day before this." She had Laura's full attention now, her hand shaking as she was finally spilling her soul, "You make me feel things and break down my walls not even Mattie could manage to do. Every time I look at you I just can't help but smile because of how flawlessly beautiful you are. My heart skips a beat whenever you smile, whenever you laugh, whenever you touch me. I know we are no-where near the final sign as soulmates but God I'm getting close to it. Every day, Laura, you never fail to surprise me and I'm slowly falling for you. And yeah, I'm scared too," Carmilla breathed, wiping away a tear that trailed down Laura's face.

"I'm scared that things will turn to shit and I will one day be in a place where you fail to reach me. Because every day, while I'm slowly falling for you, there's a demon inside of me threatening to break through, trying to pull me out of reality and desperate to ruin every good thing that is in my life. They're powerful and ugly and whisper to me dreadful things I know aren't true. I'm broken, Laura. My heart has been ripped open and it's slowly repairing itself in the only way it knows how. I look past that because you're in my life now, and I know that no matter what happens, you'll still be here with me." She shuddered out, voice thick with emotion. "I'm tired of being light and casual with you. I don't want to pretend that this is some stupid, frothy thing that doesn't matter because you are the axis that my world turns on. I want to treat you right. I want to take you out on dates, kiss you
endlessly, and remind you every day how lucky I am that you are here with me. You are a wonderful, incredible girl for putting up with me and waiting patiently as I sort out my emotions. But I'm sure of everything now. You saved me, Laura. Every day, you save me from myself."

Tears were pouring freely down Laura's face, as she hugged Carmilla, rubbing soothing circles on the small of her back. "I'm such an idiot." She mumbled, hiding her face, "I am such an idiot for even thinking that you didn't feel the same and weren't ready for me. I d-didn't mean to shut you out, I-I had thought doing so would help me sort out my emotions but it turned out that only caused me to miss you more."

"Laura, tell me how I make you feel." Carmilla urges, chuckling as Laura wiped her eyes with her sleeve.

"Carmilla, every time you hold me, I feel safe," She sighs, smiling weakly at her, "You know just what to say and just what to do if I'm in the middle of a panic attack. Gone are the lonely nights where I would cry in my room and wish for death to take me. Gone are the sad days where everything was bleak and my world was grey. Whenever you're with me, I feel like I can't breathe. I don't know what to do or what to say because words fail me. Whenever you touch me, my skin feels like it's on fire. I can't help but think about you every waking second of the day and be amazed at how you're always able to calm me down through your music. Although you're my soulmate I have this unexplainable pull towards you and I've never been so sure about anything in my entire life. I like you, Carmilla. I like you a whole lot." Her eyes were filled with nothing but love, and Carmilla's heart swelled, "And I'm willing to try this out for real, if you are."

Carmilla was beaming at her, "So does this mean I finally have the honor of distracting Laura Hollis from her studies?"

"First and only." Laura coos, craning her neck up to Carmilla's lips. Though, at the sudden movement, her stomach churned uncomfortably after all the snacks she'd just consumed. They weren't sitting well with her, and she winced in pain. "R-raincheck on that kiss, C-Carm."

"Laura? What's wrong, cupcake?" She asks, stepping off her lap and taking her soulmate's hands.

"Please remind me to never drink an entire bottle of Mountain Dew and eat three packets of Recess Pieces at once. My stomach will definitely not agree with it." She announced, and proceeded to vomit over her floor.

Carmilla winces as she rushes to get the nearest trashcan. This was going to be a long night.

Finals week ended in the blink of an eye, which meant that winter break could finally begin. Turns out, Laura had nothing to worry about because she aced majority of her finals and received a B in her Chemistry Lab. Carmilla did exceptionally well on her finals, with Lafontaine as her guide. The tension in the group seemed to dissolve overnight once they received their test scores and flurries of snow had fallen from the sky.

Though, it seemed to have worked the opposite for Laura and Carmilla, given the amount of almost kisses they shared so far. They always seemed to be interrupted by someone (either for a favor or advice), which comically ended with Carmilla shouting "Oh, come on!". The universe hated her. Of course, the moment when her and her soulmate decided to take their relationship seriously, stupid shit like this happens.

The week following their confession went as followed.

On Monday, Carmilla caught Laura chatting animatedly with Betty and Elsie in the hallway on her
way to work. She was looking very cute in a Christmas-themed sweater, black leggings, and fuzzy boots. Carmilla was already late, but she would much rather give her soulmate a tease than deal with Mel or her boss. So, discreetly, Carmilla nipped at Laura's ear and squeezed her butt. The girl became flustered as she blindly swatted at Carmilla, face turning redder than a tomato. Carmilla barely managed to whisper huskily a 'hello' and scurried off.

The following day, she caught Laura in the middle of changing, wanting to give her a cuddle before leaving to her final. They both seemed to be at a loss for words as Carmilla helped button Laura's shirt. Laura's hands fell loosely at her side, and Carmilla swore she could hear her heart hammering rapidly. She mentally praised herself for having a good poker face even after Laura flashed her, though anyone knows from a mile away what she was thinking. They were unfortunately interrupted by Perry because she wanted to know if Laura wanted to have lunch with the gang.

Wednesday, she was sure she reached her limit. Music was blasting from Laura's room and the tiny girl seemed to be having a grand time. Carmilla's cheeks turned a bright pink when she realized that the song Laura was jamming out to just so happened to be Rihanna's *S&M*. She hadn't realized that Carmilla walked into the room, as she was still dancing around cleaning up anything that looked messy. The moment the chorus hit, Carmilla wasn't sure what came over her. She boldly wrapped her hands around Laura's waist, their bodies rocking to the rhythm. Carmilla's brain was going into overdrive because *holy fuck Laura Eileen Hollis was currently giving her a lap dance*. This was wild. She was breathless as Laura worked her magic, hyperaware of the environment. She couldn't handle the wait any longer. She whipped Laura around, both hands cupping Laura's ass. She was so close. If fucking Kirsch hadn't interrupted them, blissfully unaware of what was going on, they would have never left the room.

Thursday God was truly testing her. She was going over with Lafontaine plans for the winter break in her dorm room, since it was big enough to fit a white board. Laura had decided to join in, not for studying but purely for distracting Carmilla. Carmilla tried her hardest to pay attention. Honestly, she was. But Laura was looking ridiculously hot in her work outfit and Carmilla had a perfect view of her well-toned abs. How this woman could eat boatloads of sugar and still maintain a beautiful figure was just not humanly possible. She was in the middle of explaining how they should do a secret Santa this year when the holy gates of hell opened, and Lafontaine couldn't handle the tension in the room. Carmilla needed a cold shower. A very… very cold shower.

She sighed as she struggled to put on her ice skates. It was now Friday night, and it really didn't help that she was barely recovering from having a wet dream with Laura involved in it the morning of. *(Don't ask her the details; she honestly would never give anyone the play-by-play of THAT.)*

Kirsch plopped down next to her, already in his skates, a beaming smile on his face. "Hey, Mortica! How're you?"

"As any sexually frustrated lesbian would be when all she's been trying to do is fucking kiss her soulmate," Carmilla growled, slapping her head, "We haven't even talked about being girlfriends yet! We've barely managed to get past first base! *I just want to kiss her!*

"You know none of us were doing that on purpose, right? We all genuinely wanted to speak with you." Kirsch assured, patting Carmilla on the shoulder.

"I know, I know," She groaned, shaking her head, "I just… I just want it to be perfect, when we kiss."

"These things aren't planned, Carmilla," Kirsch chuckled, "Hell, just look at me and Danny. We hate each other's guts, but welp, here we are. I'm not complaining." Carmilla narrowed her eyes at him and slapped his chest playfully. "And hey, I'll tell the gang to tone it down so you two can spend
some alone time together on the ice."

"Thanks, Kirsch." Carmilla breathed out, though her nerves were nowhere near calm. From the corner of her eye, she shamelessly stared at Laura's behind while she gathered her skates from the girl at the counter. Damn, it honestly was such a nice ass, too. Carmilla's stomach churned as she then saw the other girl lean in closer to her soulmate, whispering something, causing Laura to blush. She watched in anxiousness as Laura shook her head and pointed to Carmilla, and the other girl turned considerably pale.

Her lips parted in confusion as Laura came bouncing over, happily sitting in between her and Kirsch.

"What's that all about, creampuff?"

"Oh, she was just trying to use a flirty pick-up line with me. I then told her that my soulmate is at her wits end because we haven't gone past first base and hell would freeze over if nothing happens anytime soon." She exclaimed, raising her eyebrow, "Don't think I didn't see you staring at my ass, Carm."

"I can't help it. You have a nice ass." She husked, slowly reaching her hand down Laura's back to squeeze it. Laura let out a squeak and slapped Carmilla's knee in return. Kirsch awkwardly coughed his way out of the conversation.

"This is getting a little too rated R for my liking. I'm leaving. Leaving now." He grunted, hurrying over to the ice. Lafontaine, Perry, and Danny were already skating.

"What a baby," Carmilla laughed, cheeks blushing red. Laura shook her head as she put on her skates, tying the knots. "Hey, Laura," She began, playing with the loose strings of her shirt, "For all those years you were away from home, how did you celebrate Christmas?"

The other girl stopped tying her shoes, letting out a sigh. "I didn't. It was… um, my mom's favorite holiday. So, dad and I stopped putting up trees the year after she died. I-it just hurt too much for both of us. I would just… camp out in my room and watch Doctor Who videos until I washed away all my feelings with alcohol." Laura winced, realizing how terrible that sounded.

"Well then, Laura Hollis, I am going to give you the best Christmas you'll ever have. We're going to go Christmas tree shopping, go caroling, watch dumb Christmas-themed movies, so we can make new memories together. How does that sound, baby?" Carmilla asks, taking her hand and kissing her knuckles.

"You're the best soulmate ever." Laura coos, scooting closer towards her. "I'd love that. Thank you."

They were so close. One more inch, and she'd be tasting her sweet lips—

"Hey, Frosh! Are you coming onto the ice or nah?" Lafontaine asked, the ultimate cockblocker.

"Lafontaine, you have no idea HOW MUCH I WANT TO STRANGLE YOU RIGHT NOW!" Laura exclaimed, face blushing red as the adorable girl passed them the birdie. Carmilla's eyes widened as she chuckled. Yup—they've reached their limit. There was no going back now.

"Permission to punch them in the face?"

"Permission granted." Carmilla agrees, taking a moment as she watched Laura angrily stomp onto the ice skating rink.

That ass though.
Danny was confused. All her life, she was sure her soulmate would sweep her off her feet. That she'd be completely taken away by their character, their passions, and their dreams. That they would be able to push her to her limits, encouraging her all the way, even at her lowest moment. That their love would be this big, grand affair and they'd run off into the sunset together.

She wished for this because her parents were soulmates, but things ended poorly in their relationship on the physical level, rather than spiritual level. There were too many factors that pointed to an unforgiving break-up when Danny was barely five years old. Her mother had caught her father cheating. All her life, she was looked down upon because her parents denied the mark Mother Earth and Father Time chose for them—that she was cursed and she would soon suffer the same fate. This aspect about her family history tended to make her bitter about things.

But things changed the moment she set foot on Silas grounds, and suddenly she no longer cared about what other people thought of her.

(She was nothing like her parents.)

She had wished for the longest time that Laura would have been her soulmate. She was just... perfect. Loyal, selfless, kind, and brave... she saw the underlying layer of sadness about the girl, but of course she was too stubborn to ask about it. She knew just as well as anyone that the second sign didn't happen by chance. One simply cannot wish for pain and suffering to come to them when they see a person they're even remotely attracted to. It doesn't work that way, and it took Danny days to get over the heartbreak.

Her own soulmate walked up to her with a goofy expression on his face, placing a packet of French Fries and soda nearby her. Then came along Kirsch. Loud, unpredictable, and totally not her type. And yet, the Moon still blessed their souls to be together. The way he looked at her sent butterflies swarming in her stomach, and her heart skip a beat. She never expected her soulmate to turn out to be someone as wild as him. But did she hate it?

He made a motion with his hands, offering to give her a fry. Danny blushes and opens her mouth, the tasty snack burning on her tongue. No. She didn't hate this—she could learn to like this.

They had a lifetime together, after all. Boldly, Danny slowly inched her fingers towards Kirsch, and he looked at her in shock. He chuckled kindly and placed his hands into hers, the touch sending shivers up Danny's arm. She wondered if Kirsch felt them as well.

Perry and Lafontaine were still ordering food from the vender, while Carmilla and Laura were still skating on the ice. She turned her attention away from him and towards the two fumbling dorks on skates. Kirsch had told her that Carmilla was about to lose it if something doesn't happen between them soon. From the way they were basically holding onto each other, Danny had to agree.

She watched as Carmilla struggled to regain her footing, Laura laughing all the while. While also sucking at bowling, the gang decided that she sucked at ice-skating. But everyone knew that she went out to these things to be with Laura—there was no argument.

"Are those two idiots still on the ice?" Lafontaine asked, coming over to their table.

"I think Laura's nervous," Kirsch supplied, "Neither of them have done anything yet."

"Carmilla just fell flat on her ass," Danny laughed. She watched as the tiny girl shrieked and bent over to help her soulmate.
"How romantic," They rolled their eyes, "I give it three minutes."

"No way! Laura's not that slick! They'll be dancing around each other all night!"

"Lafontaine, what did I say about betting on our friends?" Perry scolded, glaring at her partner. She then turned her attention to the rink, her cheeks turning red. "Oh my, they are awfully close to one another."

"I win."

"Laf, they haven't even kissed yet!" She then turned to Kirsch, shaking his arms. "Kirsch, what do you think?"

"I—I—ah," The boy panicked, turning his attention to the young couple. On the ice, Laura had Carmilla balancing herself on the railings. Their foreheads were now touching one another's, with Laura's arms wrapped around Carmilla's neck. The seconds that followed were painful, and the group waited on with bated breath.

"Thanks for the save, creampuff," Carmilla said, smiling gently. "I wouldn't want a broken ass for Christmas."

Laura giggled, "Broken or no, I'd love it anyways. You're catching on fast, Carm."

"Yeah. When my face wasn't kissing the ice." She husked, placing a gentle kiss on Laura's cheek. Danny was gripping onto Kirsch's shoulder. "I'd much rather be kissing you."

"You missed, then." She grinned cheekily, blushing.

"W-what?" Carmilla blurts, her eyes widening.

"You missed. Kiss me now." Laura breathed, and finally, their friend group watched in sweet victory as they pressed their lips together. It was gentle. Loving. Danny glanced away for a moment, a warm feeling fluttering in her chest.

"Wow." Laura giggled, eyes sparkling with delight. They separated for a moment, both in shock, before pressing their lips together again. It was awkward to watch, sure, as Laura sure as hell didn't know what to do so Carmilla had to aid her. It then became hot and frenzied as Carmilla's hands were loose in Laura's hair, and Laura looked like she had died and gone to heaven. This time, they lost their balance and fell on the ice together, giggling shamelessly as they went out of sight.

Lafontaine slapped their hands on the table, a wild, happy look on their face, "Pay up, bitch!"

"Oh, fuck you," Danny grumbled, her hands shaking as she pulled out a wad of dollar bills.

"Language, children!" Perry scolds, causing Kirsch to laugh. "I swear sometimes I think I'm the only adult in this group."

The bickering went on for several more minutes until Kirsch, from the corner of his eye, caught Carmilla and Laura coming out from the rink. Their cheeks were flushed and Laura's shirt buttons were undone, while Carmilla's hair was tousled. They were holding onto each other like their life depended on it, as if they were both going to collapse at any moment. But what was most notable were their eyes, how they were full of hope and excitement. It made him a little envious, as his gaze flickered to Danny.

"G-guys, act natural! They're coming this way!" Kirsch whisper-yelled, and they immediately
stopped their bickering.

Carmilla and Laura walked right past them, over to the vendor for some food. They watched on as the two young lovers waited on line (it had grown longer since their first hour here), and shared a kiss publicly.

"Gross." Lafontaine groaned, sticking out their tongue.

"You were the one who was shipping them since the very beginning. Deal with it, buddy." Danny giggled, a smug look on her face.

"I think it's quite sweet, dears," Perry chimed, smiling happily at the two, "There might be something there that wasn't there before."

"Beauty and the Beast? Really?" Laf asks, giving their girlfriend a bewildered look. Perry simply giggled and gave them a peck on the cheek in reply.

This was surely a miracle. Something had really changed that night, and it was wonderful.
Chapter Summary

Carmilla and Laura celebrate their first Christmas together.

Chapter Notes

What you do mean it's September? No. It's Christmas, and we're celebrating it right now, b*tches. I DON'T CARE. TAKE THIS AS YOUR PRESENT. Also, special thanks to squishyprince (or jellylovesdonughts on tumblr) for helping me write this beast. I've been staring at it for months and it was driving me so crazy, i think it came to a point where i was changing the same sentence over and over again. Anyway, hope you all had a lovely day! Leave a comment or two~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?" - Bob Hope

"Papa! Papa, look! Santa came!" A young Laura exclaimed, bouncing excitedly on her heels. Sherman Hollis chuckled at his only daughter, picking her up and swinging her around.

"Yeah, he did, pumpkin. Let's surprise Mama with breakfast in bed and then we'll open presents, okay?"

"Okay! I can't wait for you to see what I got you!" She says cheerfully, clapping her hands.

"Whatever it is, I'm sure I'll love it and hang it on the fridge, sugarplum."

"Yay! I love you, papa! Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas, Laura-bear."

My heart was heavy Christmas morning as I woke up, cuddled in my soulmate's warm embrace.

I was no longer that excitable girl who waited all night for Santa to come visit, shimmying his way down through the chimney. I no longer happily watched as my parents opened my presents, loving whatever I gave them in the end.

I had thought that the Christmases I spent away from home would help ease the heartbreak, but unfortunately the distance made it worse. I drank away my sorrows, hoping to stop the feeling of worthlessness. While my peers were out celebrating with their parents, I holed myself up in my
bedroom, locking the door, shying myself away from anything joyous or happy. I still have scars from when I used to cut the pain away. Absence truly makes the heart grow fonder.

This year was different. I had to keep telling myself that so I don't slip under the radar, and allow those dark thoughts to take over. I had to be stronger than this.

This would be my first Christmas with a new family:
I had Lafontaine.
Perry.
Danny.
Kirsch.
Matti.
Carmilla.

Beautiful Carmilla, who surprised me every day. My rock, my shoulder to cry on. I had to be brave for her. I need to prove to her alone that we can get through this, after everything she's done for me. And by doing so, I'd finally prove to myself that I can do it, and that simply saving myself for me was more than a worthy task.

I yawned and wiped my eyes, calmly counting to ten in my head. Once my breathing had calmed to a normal rate, I slipped out of bed, going over to sit by the windowsill. Carmilla's family estate was loosely placed besides the library, so she technically had two places to sleep on campus. The building was beautiful—inside and out. Dr. Lilita Morgan had hired her most trusted contractors to redesign the place, since it was a family heirloom dating back to the early 1800s. My first moments in here, I thought I had stepped into a palace. When I questioned Carmilla about it, she didn't seem at all phased by her adopted family's riches. She wasn't used to the lavish life Dr. Morgan lived, and she desired to live off her own money. Her reasoning is that luxuries weren't something to be given, they had to be earned.

I took in another deep breath, hoping that thoughts of my soulmate would distract me for long enough. But old memories still seeped through my mind, as I gazed outside at the blanket of snow that coated the ground. There, playing in the snow, I saw a tinier version of myself making a snow angel as her father built a snowman. I saw her mother watching on with a gentle smile on her face. I desperately placed my hand on the glass, wishing to slip into that memory and relive it, just one last time.

I wasn't sure how long I was sitting there, but I felt a warm pair of arms embrace me, pulling me out of it. They made soothing caresses on my stomach, calming the bubbling nerves inside, keeping me afloat.

"Remember to breathe, Laura." Carmilla's quiet voice urged. My mind became clearer again, so I did. Breathing in once, and letting a low breath out. My hand found its way on Carmilla's cheek, just to make sure that she wasn't an illusion and that everything I was experiencing was real. "That's my girl." She cooed, nuzzling her face into the crook of my neck. "You're getting so much better, love."

"I've had a good teacher." I managed to croak. I swallowed, placing my shaking hands into hers. She held me in silence, as I tried to focus on her breathing, her warm body pressed against mine, but the tears still fell down my cheeks. My heart ached as I scolded myself for even doing this,
wondering why the frilly hell I still behaved like a child on this day. Carmilla cooed gently as she suddenly slipped from behind me, revealing herself. She pulled me onto her lap, wrapping her arms around my neck.

"I've got you, honey." She soothed. "I'm here." She kissed my cheek and started to sing, her velvety voice relaxing my aching heart.

_I don’t want a lot for Christmas_

_There is just one thing I need_

_I don’t care about the presents_

_Underneath the Christmas tree_

I took a deep breath and blinked, wiping my eyes as I peered up at her. She chuckled softly, taking a piece of hair out of my face.

_I just want you for my own_

_More than you could ever know_

_Make my wish come true_

_All I want for Christmas is you_

Carmilla, while still holding onto me, stepped off the windowsill and started to dance around the room.

_I don’t want a lot for Christmas_

_There is just one thing I need_

_And I don’t care about the presents_

_Underneath the Christmas tree_

I was laughing now as she spun me around, and we collapsed onto her bed together. She was on top of me, peppering my face with kisses as she sang to me. Her soothing, sultry voice made my toes curl up and sent ripples of happiness through my body.

_I don't need to hang my stocking_

_There upon the fireplace_

_Santa Claus won't make me happy_

_With a toy on Christmas Day_

_I just want you for my own_

_More than you could ever know_

_Make my wish come true_
I cut the next verse off with a passionate kiss, overwhelmed with emotions. Carmilla chuckled into the kiss, her hands getting lost in my mess of hair. Whenever we kissed, I couldn't help but slip into a giggle fit as well, barely comprehending that the situation was even happening. I just couldn't help but feel so... bubbly. It was as if my body always craved her touch, and even when she pulled away, I couldn't get enough of it.

She leaned away from me, a dazed look on her face, but her eyes were filled with compassion. "There's only so much I can do to help you, lovey," She soothed, rubbing noses with me, "I know that this will be a difficult time for you, since your mother will have passed a week and a half from now. But I see that you're trying, that you're slowly catching yourself, and I'm so proud of you," I let out a whimper, tightening my hold on her, "Whenever things get too much for you, let me know and we'll come back up here, okay?"

"Okay." I sighed, giving her another kiss. She smiled into it.

"Do you see me?"

"I see you." I reply, my heart buzzing. "Thank you, Carm. For everything."

"Anything for my Laura." She claims, nuzzling her face in the crook of my neck. It was moments like this where I had to pinch myself awake, reminding myself that everything was real. My soulmate is beautiful. She was selfless, devoted, kind, and dropped everything to make sure that I was okay. I hope that there will be a day where I can pick up my own two feet, and take care of her in the same way she took care of me. I know my beloved has a tragic past—I can see it in the way she carries herself, the way she speaks. There is a weight resting on her shoulders. There is an overwhelming aura of sadness about her, almost blinding, but she brushes it off for the sake of everyone else.

I can only imagine what has happened to her in the past, to have affected her so badly even now. Such is the reason why I adore her, and why she's my angel. Every day she slowly reveals one aspect from her childhood, which none of them had been happy memories. I don't pressure her to talk about the times where she tried to commit suicide or her dark, evil thoughts—she clams up on me before I even get the chance. I, of all people, should know to respect that.

At least now I know why she says that I saved her, and that every day I give her a purpose and reason to smile.

We were kissing each other again, my body wearing off the last few notions of sleep. Every touch she gave me sent sparks up my skin, and I couldn't control the moan of pleasure that escaped my lips.

"You know, for someone who hasn't kissed anyone before, you're incredible at it," Carmilla breathed, giggling softly.

"I can do this all day as long as it's you." I managed to gasp, as her hands slipped down my body and rested them on my waist.

"God. How come I waited this long to taste these delicious lips?" She mumbled, mostly to herself, as she gently touched my lips with the tip of her finger.
A laugh bubbled its way out of my mouth, my hands getting loose in her raven hair, my forehead resting on hers. "We were both scared. Thank god for our friends giving us the push that we both needed." Carmilla hummed, giving me a languid kiss.

We would have wasted the entire morning away, making out on her bed, but our stomachs growled for actual food and Carmilla's sister sounded the alarm that breakfast is ready.

"Don't make me come up there! Your food is getting cold!" Mattie was saying, cueing everyone in knowing laughter. The gang had decided to spend the day at Carmilla's estate to open presents, and join in on the Christmas festivities, which Dr. Morgan didn't mind at all. She was just so happy that her daughter had finally found a group of friends she cared about deeply.

Both of us moaned in disappointment, Carmilla not making a move to leave my side. She snuggled even closer to me. "I'd much rather stay all day in bed with you."

"The feeling is mutual, but it's Christmas. And our friends will miss us," I urge, "C'mon, grumpy cat."

She grumbled nonsensical words as she separated herself from me, flashing me an adorable smile as she changed her clothes. I shake my head at her and go into another corner of the room to put on my ugly sweater and Santa hat. We took separate turns in the bathroom, brushing our teeth and getting ready for the day.

When we were all settled, Carmilla pulled me into a hug and gave me a passionate kiss, "What was that for?" I ask, a little out of breath.

She smiled lovingly, running a hand through my hair, "Every day I thank the Moon for blessing me with the most beautiful, kind, and adorable soulmate."

"Don't say things like that." I murmur, feeling my eyes glisten with tears.

"Why, creampuff?"

"Because you're going to make me cry." I tearfully laugh, smiling gratefully at her. She smiled back, chuckling. "Hey." I coo, poking at her nose.

"Hey."

"Piggy back ride?" I beg, and she rolled her eyes.

"Sure, sure," Carmilla laughs, bending down so that way I could climb on her shoulders.

"Yay! Best soulmate ever!" I giggle, my heart swelling at how adorable she can be.

"I hope to live up to expectations," She teases, craning her neck to give me a kiss on the cheek. We hurried downstairs after Mattie called after us for a second time.

"Finally, you two showed up," Lafontaine drawled, a shit-eating grin on their face, "Perry here was ready to call the swat team."

"Lafontaine!" She groaned, cheeks turning red. She turned to us with an embarrassed look on her face, "You were taking a while and I became worried."

"Everything's fine, Perr. We just... need to take things slow today." Carmilla assured, letting me off her back. Perry then gave us an understanding smile. "So. Where's Mama?"
"In the kitchen, love!" Dr. Morgan called, poking her head from around the corner. "Do come and get your food!"

"Yeah, that we have been waiting for because you two dimwits wouldn't come out of your nest." Danny glares, giving Carmilla the middle finger.

"Don't be jealous of what you can't have, Lawrence." Carmilla chuckles, giving the redhead a wink. I blushed and giggled at them.

"Believe me, there's no competition here, Karnstein." Danny rolls her eyes. Quietly, she added, "Not in any universe." Carmilla playfully hissed at her.

"Whoa there, lady killer," I urge, patting Carmilla on the shoulder, "Yes, how chivalrous you are, defending my honor. Let's go." Lafontaine had a bemused expression on their face while Kirsch poorly attempted to hide his laughter.

Carmilla's hands found themselves in mine, as we skipped over to the kitchen, and Lilita Morgan greeted me with a hug. "Merry Christmas, darling."

"Merry Christmas, Dr. Morgan," I chime, practically melting in her embrace. She reminded me of mom—or, at least, the mothering aspect of her. She tsked at me, shaking her head in an amused manner.

"Now, now, call me Mama. You'll be my future daughter-in-law one day, after all. And I'll be a future grandma. Might as well get used to it." She claimed, giving us both a wink. This was a different woman compared to the one we met at the funeral. She was happy, carefree; gone was the business uniform and in its place she wore a fancy red dress, and matching earrings. She was a glamorous woman. Carmilla's cheeks turned a bright red. We haven't exactly made ourselves official girlfriends yet, and her mother was already teasing about marriage, and babies. She's eager.

"Mama," Carmilla groaned, "Stop embarrassing me."

"Let me live up this moment, dear. It's not every day I see you as a smitten kitten. It's a good look on you." She teases, giving her own daughter a hug and kissed her cheek. I giggled at the affection, though my heart panged with envy. "Now. Help yourself, dears."

We both thanked her as she walked out of the room to give us space, and the rest of our friends hurried into the kitchen. Their excited voices and laughter all became an echo in my head, as I replayed what had happened at the forefront of my mind. When Carmilla's fingers gently touched my skin, bringing me back to the present, I let out a soft sigh and smiled at her.

"Hey! After this, who wants to open presents?" Kirsch exclaimed, bouncing excitedly like a child. We were all sitting on the couch by the large Christmas tree. The television was on, playing *Home Alone*, but no one was paying attention to it.

"I'm game! That'd be awesome!" Danny agrees, giving him a shy smile.

"I've honestly never done a secret Santa with anybody before, so this should be interesting." Lafontaine says, looking at all of us suspiciously, "We're pulling names out of a hat, right?"

"That's what we agreed on, Laf." Carmilla replies, and they gave her a cheeky look.

"Yeah, when the gates of hell opened. Of course, I'd remember that." They snickered, causing me to spit out my drink. Carmilla snorts in reply as she pats my back.
Danny gave me a confused look, "What?"

I blushed, sputtering, "Inside joke. Don't worry about it."

"For the record, cutie, if Lafontaine hadn't been there, oh the shenanigans we would have gotten into." Carmilla crooned, and my eyes grew wide with embarrassment.

"C-Carm!" I squeaked, slapping her knee. Carmilla simply laughed and she boldly made a move to kiss me, not caring that our group of friends were in the same room. They all groaned in response, as this was a natural occurrence, voicing their opinions. Though I knew better than to think that this was out of malice—far from it. These lovely people were our biggest supporters.

"Could you please celebrate your love with the PG-13 rating?" Perry exclaimed, flustered, coming over to separate us.

"PG-13. How incredibly dull." Carmilla drawls, rolling her eyes. I was out of breath as I tried to calm my racing heart, staring at her with a dreamy look in my eyes.

"Can we open presents now?" Kirsch complained, his eyes pleading. I laughed at the man child.

"Yes, Kirsch. Get the bag from under the tree." I say.

"Boo-yah!" He hollered, placing down his food and leaping off the couch. Carmilla chuckled at his antics as I happily snuggled up to her, resting my head on her shoulder and draping my right leg over her lap. Her thumb was soothingly rubbing over my knuckles, and her other hand was caressing my thigh. I was fine, physically, but mentally she knew I was managing my emotions the best I can.

The best medicine right now was distraction.

Kirsch slipped the bag over his shoulder and laughed in a Santa Claus-like notion. He greeted the gang with a flourish, almost tripping over himself in the process.

"Is he always that strange?" Mattie asked with a wrinkle of her nose, prompting a laugh from Danny. She had finally come back from the kitchen, a full plate of food in her hands.

"You get used to it." She blushes, shaking her head. The gift-giving was anonymous. Nobody knows who was their Secret Santa, which made me giddy with excitement. I've never done this before with a group of friends, and so I hope my friend adores their present.

Kirsch happily presented a gift to Carmilla first. "For you, princess of the night."

She chuckled warmly and griped the medium sized box in her hands. "Should I open it now or wait until everyone else gets theirs?" Kirsch shrugged his shoulders, motioning for her to open it. I curiously gazed at Danny, who had a wide, expectant smile on her face. She pulled out a black shirt with bold print on the front with the words encrypted, If Found Return to Laura. She laughed, nice and rich. "Who's the wiseass?"

Danny shamelessly raised her hand, pointing to the box. "There's another shirt, too."

Curiously, I giggled as I pulled out the other shirt, this one yellow and with the words, I Am Laura. "Thanks, Danny."

"Don't mention it. Ever. Seriously, never wear those shirts out in public." She urges, tone light and teasing. This caused the group to laugh and make teasing notions towards all of us, while Kirsch fished through a gift for me.
I excitedly ripped through the paper, squealing when the present revealed an amino doll of my favorite Tenth Doctor, with a Tardis keychain. "WHO IS THE GREATEST HUMAN BEING IN THE WORLD?"

Perry happily raised her hand, beaming, "There was a sale at Hot Topic."

"Aw, Perr," I whimper, cursing myself for getting sentimental about this as I hurried over to give her a hug. "You're a babe for putting up with my Doctor Who obsession."

"I'm used to it, dear. What with Laf's Marvel obsession I can never understand." She says, flashing a playful glare towards their partner. They rolled their eyes.

And so, the gift giving went on for twenty minutes. Carmilla comically gave Danny an ornament of high heels, and a funny Hallmark card that she put little effort in. Kirsch gave Lafontaine a Captain America t-shirt and a DVD set of Big Bang Theory he found for cheap at a thrift store. Mattie wasn't a part of the Secret Santa shenanigans, but it was nice to have her with us.

Once all the gifts were unwrapped and we'd finished breakfast, Carmilla and Danny declared a snowman building competition.

"Soulmates versus soulmates!" I chanted, so ready to annihilate the competition with Danny at my side. Carmilla begrudgingly joined forces with Lafontaine, while Perry had Kirsch. It was odd seeing everyone mixed up, but in the end, there was no real winner or loser.

"My love, it pains me that we are on opposing sides like this." Carmilla was saying, pulling me into a desperate hug. I laughed, swatting her shoulder.

"Our families are at war! If they see us together, they'll kill you!"

"I won't let them hurt you." She growled, dramatically glaring at any opposing fort. "Even if the whole world burns, I—,"

"Are you serious?" Lafontaine groaned, "The snowman won't build itself!"

"Parting is such sweet sorrow." She quotes, giving me a quick peck on the lips.

Phew. Who knew Carmilla quoting Shakespeare to me was such a turn on?

"Hey! Tiny gay Laura! Get your ass over here!" Danny snaps, a bemused smirk on her face.

We parted, dramatically pulling apart slowly until only our fingertips were touching. We gave each other knowing smiles until going to our respective battle partners.

"Useless lesbian." Lafontaine muttered to Carmilla, who in return, could only have a dreamy smile on her face.

The rest of the afternoon breezed by, and new flurries of snow began to fall when most of us were wrapping up our snow-creations. My fingers were cold and I couldn't feel my toes, but my heart was full and the love from all my friends kept me warm. Mattie came out to inspect the creations we've made, an amused smirk on her face.

"My, my, these are lovely," She crooned, rubbing her hands together.

"Our snow-figure is non-conforming to any gender and is a leader of the Russian army!" Lafontaine cheers, motioning to the formed pistol beside their snow-figure. Carmilla slapped her
head in annoyance.

"Laf, we agreed that Sir Lancelot is the leader of the secret service."

I giggled at the two, motioning towards Mattie. "Our snowman has himself a lovely snow-lady, and they have a cat!" I exclaimed, pointing to our creation.

"The cat was my idea." Danny announces.

Perry folded her arms, proudly looking at her creation, "Well, dears, those are all nice, but our snowman is helping Santa lift presents onto his sleigh."

"How the frilly hell…?" Carmilla gaped, shaking her head. Mattie chuckled. "Never mind. So, dearest sister, who won?"

"Hmm," She began, pretending to think.

"Remember who you've been taking care of all these years." She stage-whispered, causing all of us to groan.

Rolling my eyes, I said, "Remember who bonded with you when you were obsessing over The Vampire Diaries!"

"This is hardly fair, they have an advantage." Kirsch groaned.

"Sometimes that's just how it is." Perry sighs.

"Well, Carmilla, your snow-figure's story is very captivating even if the curb appeal is… not the greatest." Lafontaine scoffed. "Not precisely what I'm looking for. Kirsch, Perry, if you hadn't told me what the scene was here, I would have thought it was a chicken running without its head on a pogo stick." Kirsch gave her an offended gasp. She turns to Danny and I, "I'd say these two put in the most effort. The kitten was such a nice touch."

Danny and I high fived. "Woo!"

Carmilla grunts and picks up a snowball to throw it at her sister, because of the sore loser she is.

"I do not partake in this riff-raff, Carmilla."

"Yeah, yeah, you say that because I'd beat your ass in a snowball fight." She chuckled.

"Watch your tongue, kitten," Mattie hissed, smiling through her teeth. The snowball hits the older woman in the shoulder. "Ooh, you've asked for it now!"

"Murder her for Christmas! Murder her for Christmas!" I cheered, and Kirsch declared war. We stayed outside for another hour or so, throwing snowballs at each other and making snow angels. We would have stayed out all afternoon and evening, if it weren't for Dr. Morgan forcing us inside.

"I've made hot chocolate!" She exclaimed, causing all of us to cheer.

Kirsch was the first to hurry in, the rest of us following quickly after. While the rest of us behaved like normal adults, taking off anything that had snow in it and hanging up our coats, Kirsch headed straight for the hot chocolate. Dr. Morgan was screaming at him in distress because he tracked snow into the house, and ordered him to take his shoes off like a normal human being.

Carmilla pulled me aside, looking a bit nervous. "Hey. Do you have a minute?"
"Of course, honey." I smiled at her, putting my hair up into a messy bun. "Is everything okay?"

"Yes, yes. I. Um. Just want to give you your Christmas present now."

My eyes grow wide with excitement, "Oh! I got you one too! We'll meet in your room, alright?"

"Sure." She smiled, relaxing a bit as she gave me a peck on my cheek and hurried off. I grabbed Carm's present from underneath the tree and was about to run up the stairs when Lilita stopped me from the kitchen.

"I hope you two won't stay up there for long," She chimes, with a twinkle in her eye, "We're serving eggnog and caroling soon."

"We won't, Lilita. Promise."

She gently squeezes my wrist in a loving motion, "I want to take this time to properly thank you, dear. I've never seen my beloved Carmilla smiling so much. You make her so happy. I've known the poor girl for years and there's only so much that I, as a mother, can provide for her. Thank you for taking care of her."

"She's my favorite person, Lilita. I'm... not exactly sure where my feelings are right now for her, but all I know is that her soul is safe with mine. When she feels ready to reveal it to me, I will be there for her." I say earnestly.

Lilita's eyes sparkled with tears, and she pulled me into a hug, "Patience, my love. I am grateful that this is something you do not lack. Ah, well. Go on then—you have much better things to do than listen to an old lady like me ramble."

"But you don't look a day over twenty!" I exclaim teasingly, and she chuckles. I wasn't kidding; she looks fantastic for her age.

She shooed me away and I made my way up to Carm's room, smiling as I spotted her lying on her large, comfy bed. She looked so... at peace with herself. Relaxed. I didn't hesitate as I climbed over to her, kissing her in greeting. She moans in shock, before melting into the kiss as she always does, and pokes my nose when we part.

"Hello again, monkey." She smiles, and I shake my head at her.

"Why do you call me that nickname now?"

"Because you are a monkey. You need a stool to climb onto cabinets and you like tackling people into aggressive hugs. It suits you."

I stick my tongue out at her childishly, before sitting down on her lap and handing her my present. She reaches over to her bedside table and grabs a velvet box, sitting up straight.

"Merry Christmas, darling." My heart clenches as I open the box, and gasp at the beautiful silver chain inside. There were several charms beside it, a cluster of stars, a quill, and a music note. "It's a collector's necklace," She says softly, rubbing my knuckles, "I chose the symbols that represent our relationship to start you off; you can add whatever charms you like later."

"C-Carm, it's beautiful."

"Just like you are." She eases, and notices that my hands are shaking so she puts the necklace
together for me. I let out a hard, anxious breath as she places her hands on my chest, resting them on the charms. "Can I just come out and say how proud I am of you? You did so well today. I know there were moments where you wanted to curl up back in bed, sleep the day away, but you didn't. You fought those demons, and you stayed with us. You've come a long way from the lonely girl I once knew and I know you're only going to blossom even more. I can't wait for the day when we both cross our own bridges and many waters. We'll both get there, with time and patience, cupcake."

"What did I say about saying things like that?!" I say with an exasperated wail, shoving her shoulder. She laughs. "Stop making me cry!" I wrap my arms around her neck and bury my head into her shoulder.

"I only speak the truth. You know this. Now show me your present."

I giggle tearfully, wiping my eyes and hand her a sleek folder. "I had Lafontaine help me with this, because they somehow have all these connections."

"Why am I not surprised?" She chuckles, and her eyes sparkle as she opens it. "Star coordinates."

"I bought a star for you. I'm sorry if its dumb or lame or cheesy. I-I kind of thought, since stars are important to us, because we were both looking at the sky when you sang to me, and you liked stargazing, that it would be the perfect gift for you. I couldn't get you a book because I was certain you've probably read every single one in the campus library by now, or new music because I don't know how to play the guitar, so—,"

"Laura!" She said with a laugh, gripping my shoulders, "Relax, cutie. I love it. It's such a thoughtful gift. Thank you."

"Merry Christmas, Carm." I say, leaning my forehead on hers. "My grumpy cat."

She lets out a content sigh, holding me close as we listen to the universe around us, our hearts ablaze with the Christmas spirit.

The tender moment was cut short with an exasperated shriek from Perry, causing Carmilla to wince. Then Lafontaine's crazed laughter was heard, and soon Lilita's voice carried out the whole estate claiming that now they needed an entirely new batch of eggnog. Whatever happened, we were glad we missed it.

I smiled as I looked across my beloved group of friends. Perry and Lafontaine were curled up on the loveseat by the fireplace, fingers intertwined and relaxed smiles on their faces. Danny and Kirsch were sitting on the floor, playing an intense game of Life and becoming ridiculously competitive over it. Mattie was admiring the Christmas tree with Lilita, leaning against her adopted mother comfortably, the former wrapping an arm around her waist. Carmilla and I were sitting at the family's grand piano, her fingers beautifully flying across the keys. The medleys she played shifted from White Christmas, to Oh Holy Night, to Mary Did You Know, before she settled on All I Want for Christmas Is You.

My hand gently squeezed her thigh as a thank you, and I gave her a kiss on the cheek. She was smiling at me now, her eyes full of emotions. No words needed to be said. She was my beautiful angel, my savior, my soulmate. We could discuss the future and my mental state of being another time. For now, all we needed to do was relish in this perfect moment, the one pure time I spent with her that I finally felt alive.

Her eyes sparkled like a sky full of stars.
WE'RE GETTING A MOVIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE! *is hype*
Don't Let Me Go

Chapter Summary

Carmilla meets Laura’s father, though it's not under the best of circumstances. mentions of attempted suicide (implied), and anti-depressants (explicit).

Chapter Notes

I'd recommend a tissue when reading this. Or a teddy bear. Or a pal. Either way, this is probably the saddest thing I've ever written, and I've written a lot of angst. But it's important. So brave these waters carefully. If you have any concerns, rant to me on my tumblr.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Grief does not change you, Hazel. It reveals you.”- John Green, The Fault in Our Stars

They had a beautiful Christmas, and a fantastic New Year's Eve. When the ball dropped and fireworks went off across campus, Laura and Carmilla shared a passionate kiss. It was even more memorable because Danny and Kirsch joined in on the action, the two idiots revealing they had growing feelings for each other. Carmilla snatched a photo for blackmail.

One cannot have joy without sorrow, and there was one huge elephant in the room waiting to explode.

She knew this day was going to be difficult. God, she was dreading it. She's never felt so damn nervous in her life.

It's January 3rd, 2016, and Laura had just woken up, screaming. Her breathing came out in ragged, uneven breaths and tears streamed down her face. Her hands were shaking as she gripped blindly at Carmilla, moaning in pain.

Carmilla was just barely waking up when she heard her soulmate, but the sounds of her wailing in pain was more than enough. "Laura…" She croaked, positioning herself so that her arms were wrapped firmly around her body, protecting her from every evil force. "Baby, everything's okay. I'm here. I've got you. Do you see me?" Laura didn't answer her, as she wailed in response. "Focus on me, love. Focus on my voice."

Urgently, she took out her phone, and texted her friends.

Grumpy Cat  (8:30am)- Send help. I need you now.

Gaylord  (8:31am)- Shit. We're coming. How is she?
Grumpy Cat (8:33am)- I can't get her to speak to me. I've been trying for the past ten minutes. She's having a panic attack.

Gaylord (8:35)- Cheers, love. The cavalry's queer.

(8:36) Shit, I meant here. Damn auto-correct ;)

Carmilla snorts and looks up, their dorm room hall revealing Perry and Lafontaine, the best sort of friends who know how to deal with these sorts of things. Carmilla could only do so much.

"Laura, honey," Perry said, her voice as smooth as silk. She was the Mom Friend of the group, for sure, but this would be the first time seeing her in action. "Hi, sweetie. Could you detach yourself from Carmilla, dear? You're hurting her." Laura wasn't, though when her claws finally did detach they left a red mark on Carmilla's shoulder. She refused to move from her side. "Now. Laura, have you taken your pills yet?"

Her soulmate grimaced, mumbling a quiet "no".

"You need to take them, honey. They'll help you stay emotionally stable," Laura's eyes widened in fear, and Carmilla's heart broke. Perry turned her attention to her, "Where does she keep them?"

"In her underwear draw, bottom left." Carmilla mumbled to Lafontaine, who nodded and quickly searched for it.

"N-no! C-C-Carm, don't make me take them! They're evil pills! They make my brain hurt and I feel loopy!" She expresses, tears streaming down her face.

"I know, love. But you're not yourself today, and you need help. There's only so much I can do." Carmilla managed, her voice breaking. She began to rub Laura's stomach. This motion usually helps, but why the fuck wasn't anything working? "Please, my beloved. Cooperate with me."

"C-Carm, my heart hurts. I… I don't like feeling sad. I… I'm trying for you, I'm trying to feel happy, but today's the ten-year anniversary of my mother's—," Laura's voice broke with a strangled sob, hiding her face from view.

"F-fuck." Carmilla hissed through gritted teeth, clutching her hands. Perry grimaced at the sight and gripped her hand. This sucks ass.

"Here, Laura. Pretend it's your favorite candy." Lafontaine supplied, holding her TARDIS mug and the small white pill. Carmilla glared at it, wishing it to disappear. Laura shied away from it, hiding her face on Carmilla's chest, causing the other girl to blush on impact. "Now you're just behaving like a child."

"Lafontaine!" Perry scolds, glaring at her partner. Her face then softened at their exasperated look, "Be gentle."

"Here comes the choo-choo train." They decided to say, making ridiculous noises with their mouth, but it did have Laura remove herself from Carm. Beagryingly, Laura opened her mouth, trying not to gag as she swallowed the pill. She took a huge swig of her water, spilling some of it onto her breasts.

Carmilla watched as Laura took a deep breath in, and breathed out slowly after counting ten seconds. "…Hey." She whispered, looking at Carmilla.
"Hey." She sighs with relief, taking a piece of hair out of her eyes. "Do you see me?"

"I see you." Laura replied, giving her a weak smile. Her eyes looked so, so tired. She was trying. That was more than enough.

"Do you want to talk about it, dear?" Perry asked, rubbing her thigh.

A second passed. Laura stared on ahead, tightening her hold on Carmilla, a blank look on her face. "It was dark," She finally spoke, her voice low and haunted. "I couldn't see or feel anything. I was alone, feeling like a giant weight was pressing down on my heart. When I opened my mouth to scream, no words came out. I'm not sure how much time passed until I saw a shining light, and I moved myself towards it. I then heard these... menacing sounds. Growling. Scratching. Biting," Her voice did not shake, though her hands were turning white. "It was back. The terrifying beast, bigger and uglier than it ever was. My demon. My tormentor. I thought I'd... I thought I'd killed it. But of course, not. It was there, limping over my mother, sucking life out of her still. I was so terrified I couldn't move. I felt so weak. Worthless," She bit out the final word, her eyes clouding over in defeat, "Something was different. Someone else was there. I felt her, heard her, wrap her comforting soul around mine and face the beast. She was so beautiful. Brave. Kind. Selfless. I've never had anyone else save me from the beast before, and I was so overcome with emotion that I cried. My beloved killed the beast with me. It roared in pain, and thank God, my mother did not get dragged with it. In... instead, there was a light beckoning towards her. And she... and she opened her eyes... and she was smiling at us..."

Tears were now flowing freely down Laura's face, as Carmilla gently wiped her eyes with her thumb, "All this time, I blamed myself for my mother's death. I could have done something. I hated her too much. This was all my fault. I wasted so much time hating myself that I forgot to forgive her, and I never got the chance to really say goodbye," She sobbed, shaking her head, "That's why I've been holding onto this stupid guilt for so long. I've lost sight of who my mother was, putting her cancer at the forefront of every thought. She became a thing and no longer a human. I saw her as nothing to me, and that's probably why the beast tempted me for so many years. I'm a fool for ever wasting so much emotion on something that had no meaning or merit. That's the worst insult any daughter could give to her mother."

She had to pause to steady herself, Carmilla gently rubbing her stomach again. Bless this cinnamon roll. She's too pure for this world.

"I understand now. I understand that this way of thought has been destructive. I was slowly ruining myself without even knowing it. There must be a change, and I realize now that I must be the one to make it happen. You've been a beautiful soulmate for me all this time, Carmilla, but I know now that there is only so much you can do. I need to... I need to learn how to find myself through all this, and be my own knight. I'm strong enough. I'm brave enough." She cracked a small smile, gripping Carmilla's hand, "After my mom smiled at me, she... she came over to us and gave us both a hug. She didn't say anything to me. She didn't have to—I knew she had forgiven me for all those years. The light was shining down on her again. But she said something to you, Carmilla. She said, 'Take care of her.' Which you have. Oh, God, you have. And I don't think I ever express it enough. You've done so much for me and I haven't given you anything in return."

Carmilla sucked in a breath, tears threatening to spill over, "Just your happiness is good enough for me, my beloved."

"Fuck, you're so good to me. You're so good. Bless the Moon," She whimpers, wrapping her arms around her, "When mom went into The Light, I no longer felt pain. Because her presence is still here, and I knew that I no longer had to suffer with nightmares. We had forgiven each other.
Forgiveness. After all these years, can you imagine?" She sucked in a breath, "Now I can finally talk about my mommy without feeling sad."

"One day at a time, dear," Perry says, sighing with relief. "You'll get there. We're all very proud of you, Laura. We… both knew of your loss, but we weren't sure of how devastated you'd be."

"Now I understand why Laura felt so shaken up when SJ passed," Lafontaine mused, "Trigger. Too much stimulation." Perry nodded solemnly.

"Laura's a fighter." Carmilla stated proudly, squeezing Laura's thigh. "She's my brave warrior princess."

"And you're my knight. My angel," Laura cooed, "You save me every day."

"You're worth everything." Carmilla replied, and pulled her in for a loving kiss.

Perry smiled at the endearing sight, taking Lafontaine's hand. They nodded in satisfaction.

"Right. Well, as much as we want to stay, we do have to prepare our schedules for next semester. Better late than never."

"Perr, are you going to force me to color code everything again?"

"Yes, sweetie! Have you learned nothing from being my soulmate for all these years? Prepping for the new semester is my favorite thing!"

"Hmm, no sorry. I fell asleep in Scheduling 101 and the Importance of Highlighters." They sassed, causing Perry to gasp in offence.

"I swear, one more word and you're sleeping on the couch." She glares.

"Chapter One—here you will learn how to get on your girlfriend's good side and cooperate when she asks you to complete tasks. Even if you find it ridiculous."

Perry largely rolled her eyes, but she turned her attention to the girls, "Call us if you need anything, okay, dears?"

"We will," Carmilla said gratefully, smiling at her friend, "Thank you."

They all waved their goodbyes, leaving the two soulmates alone. Laura sighed as she wiggled her body into a comfortable position, Carmilla now moving on top of her so that Laura was resting on her yellow pillow. She lay her head against Laura's chest, listening to the beat of her heart, thanking any unforeseeable being that it was still alive and beating strong.

"You're my hero, Carmilla." Laura said softly, playing with Carmilla's hair.

Her heart lept in her throat, and she was sure of her emotions. A second passed. Laura blinked at her, her beautiful eyes shining with light and color. She was falling for Laura Eileen Hollis—there was no sense in denying anything now.

Laura Eileen Hollis was her soulmate.

What a beautiful world to live in.

It's a world where Laura Eileen Hollis exists.

"As you are mine, my shining star," She leaned over to give her love a peck on the nose, "What
do you want to do today?"

"Absolutely nothing." Laura sighs, a relaxed smile on her face.

"I can arrange that." Carmilla grins, placing another kiss on her forehead, before finally letting her arms limp over their bed. Laura laughed as Carmilla lay her head on her chest again, and cuddled up with her.

Carmilla had ordered from Seamless for lunch, both refusing to leave from their humble abode. Betty had recently graduated this past semester, so Laura took the leap and asked if her soulmate wanted to move in with her. Of course, there was no hesitation on Carmilla's end, and she was the new roommate of dorm 307. She wasn't completely unpacked, as her suitcase was still half full, clothes spread across the floor. But that didn't matter right now.

They had spent the afternoon listening to the Hamilton soundtrack and watching Harry Potter movies, only a few of Laura's favorite things. The beautiful girl was smiling now, and Carmilla could tell that the worst was over. She could feel it in her soul that they were very close to the final sign. A scratched number of days, perhaps weeks? Who could be sure at this point, but with the way the scars burned every time Carmilla touched them, it was almost time.

It made her giddy, and a little terrified.

Because that meant she would have to reveal her own story as well. All of it—even the parts she refuses to tell Mattie.

Her beloved soulmate has done the same, so it's only fair if she gives Laura peace of mind about her past.

The ultimate test of trust.

Laura was napping besides her, back facing Carmilla. They were only halfway through the Goblet of Fire, but the poor thing was emotionally exhausted. In Carmilla's defense, she was hardly paying attention either.

She chuckled softly and paused the video, shutting off her laptop. She positioned herself so that way she could stare at Laura, admiring how peaceful she looked. Perhaps that Edward twat wasn't spouting nonsense—watching her beloved sleeping was a good pastime. No nightmares to worry about, no demons plaguing her mind… it must be nice, to finally let go.

Carmilla placed a gentle kiss on Laura's cheek and played with her hair. The moment was disturbed when her cell phone rang, and she internally groaned.

"I'd rather not." She grumbled to the phone, causing the other person to chuckle.

"Listen, I'm sorry if this is a bad time, but Will needs you to fill in for the radio segment today. Our other guy bailed." Mel urges, desperation in her voice.

"Mel, my soulmate is emotionally unstable right now and I need to be here. Can't you do it?"

"I know, but I can't because Will needs me to stack and organize. There's only so many of us. Please, Carmilla?"

"Fine, but I hope you know the sacrifice I'm making here. You owe me."

"When did you become a hard-ass, Karnstein? Thanks. I'll take you and Lau out to dinner, I
"Yeah, yeah. Whatever the fuck." Carmilla grumbled. An uneasy feeling settled in Carmilla's stomach, as she ended the call. Damn it—she wanted to be with Laura for the whole day, not half of it.

She sighed and wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulders, peppering her face with kisses. "Hey, love. I'm sorry. I have to go."

"Hmm?" Laura yawned, peering up at her, "What's the matter, babe?"

"I'm needed at Platinum Graz. I wish I could stay with you all day, but…"

Laura shook her head and smiled, "It's okay. I'm okay."

Carmilla nervously bit her lip, the uneasiness bubbling inside of her, her sixth sense sending warning bells off in the back of her mind. Just what was going on? Everything should be fine, but the universe was sending her mixed messages.

"I'm a phone call away." She reminded, giving Laura a peck on the cheek.

"I know, honey." Laura cooed, caressing Carmilla's face. "Now go."

Carmilla hated this. Damn Mel for calling her into work. She gave her one last languid kiss before crawling out of bed, squeezing Laura's shoulder as she left.

Carmilla made sure to be a pain in the ass towards Will, because she was wasting precious time away from her beloved soulmate. She trusted Laura, but as the hours ticked on by the horrible sixth sense never left her being. It was a slow work day, which didn't help, as only a few university students walked in and an older couple. She had spent most of her time brooding and thinking about Laura.

She had just left the recording studio when her phone rang (as it had been the entire time), from Lafontaine.

"Shit," She cursed, quickly beginning the call, "Laf, what is it?"

"We need you here. Like, right fucking now." They were saying, and the sound of Laura's distressed wails broke Carmilla's heart.

"What happened? She was fine when I left."

"The Hospital of Styria just called Laura. It's her dad. He tried to kill himself earlier today and they're just now stabilizing him."

"God fucking—," In a state of shock, Carmilla tripped over the stack of vinyl cases and groaned. Will, who had just come into the studio, flashed her a worried look and came to her assistance.

"Jesus, Karnstein. Are you okay?"

Carmilla didn't answer him, trying to focus on her own breathing. "Laura. Baby, I'll be home soon. I'm so sorry, love. I'm so sorry."

"Why would he do something like that? I… I'd only just forgiven mom… a-and he's worse off than I am? This isn't fair."
Carmilla gave Will a pleading look, and he smiled sadly. "Take off today. I warned Mel not to drag you in, that bastard. You know what? Take the whole week off—at least until the semester starts again."

"Thank you, Will." She sighs, and turns her attention to Laura. "I know, honey. The moment I'm home, we're going straight to the hospital. Stay on the line with me, please." The minutes that ticked by as she waited on the bus were painful. Laura had calmed down her breathing for the most part, but was still emotionally unstable. When Carmilla had finally come home, Laura's hands were shaking, since the medication had worn off.

Laura flung herself at Carmilla, causing the other girl to drop her bags and stumble backwards. She let out a sigh as she rubbed Laura's shoulders, kissing her cheek.

"Tell me what you're feeling right now, baby."

"Angry. Sad. Anxious. Confused. Scared," Laura peered at her with growing nervousness, "I haven't seen him in four years, Carm. It shouldn't be like this."

"Laura, do you feel the urge to cut?" Carmilla asked seriously, holding a steady gaze with her beloved.

"No." Laura whimpered, clutching her shaking hands onto Carmilla's waist.

"Drink? What about drinking?"

"No." She moaned in reply, face twisting into a grimace, "But I feel like shit. My head hurts."

"I know, I know," She sighed, rubbing Laura's temple, "Do you want to see him?"

"W-will… you come with me?"

"Silly girl. Of course." She agrees, breaking apart from Laura.

The ride to the hospital was quiet. Laura couldn't sit still in her seat, as she kept on glancing out the window, and nervously picked at the skin on her fingers. Laura tried her best to keep it together, Carmilla could see that. She looked ready to explode at any moment. An older woman looked on at the two in pure sympathy, making the sign of the cross in their favor. A thank you tumbled out of Carmilla's lips, though she wasn't feeling particularly religious in that moment. When the bus finally stopped, the two hurried out into the blizzard.

Ah, fuck. As if this day couldn't get any worse.

When they came to the receptionist, words failed Laura, as tears glistened in her eyes. Carmilla cooed softly and griped her hand as she tried to steady her.

"Hi. We're here to see Sherman Hollis."

"Down the hall. Family members only." They drawled, not looking up from their pen.

Carmilla snapped, "Listen here, bitch. You WILL let me in. I'm her soulmate."

They looked up now, terror in their eyes, "U-uh, sure. H-here's a guest pass." Carmilla grunted as she quickly led Laura down the hall, a tense silence forming between them.

Laura couldn't walk into the room. She was frozen in place, her eyes widening at the sight of her father in such a distressing state of being. This was all too much for her, Carmilla knew, because it
reminded her of the long nights she’d spend in the waiting room for her mother. Her eyes were closed, as her breathing became uneven once more, and Carmilla grasped her shoulders together.

"He's alive, love. He's okay. Don't cry, Laura. Keep it together for me, please." She urges, gently placing kisses on Laura's cheeks. "You're stronger than this."

"Carmilla," Laura whimpered, shaking her head, "I didn't want us to see each other again in this way."

"I know, honey. But you must be brave," She held onto her shoulders, "Take deep breaths, cupcake."

There was a polite cough as Carmilla gripped Laura's hand, and the goth girl stepped away to see the doctor. He had kind smile and regarded the girls with a look of gratitude. "He's been asking for you, kiddo. Thank goodness, he has a helpline that gets triggered whenever an accident arises. The ambulance was there not only a few minutes afterwards. Is there any particular reason why he'd be in a state of distress?"

"Today's the ten-year anniversary of my mom's passing." Laura mumbled, wincing.

"I see," The doctor replied, frowning. "That explains why he comes in so often for pain medication. Does he have any live-in assistance?"

"I wouldn't know," She sighs, "We haven't spoken to each other in four years."

"I'm sorry to hear about that. Well, as the only immediate family member, and you're the only one on his emergency contact list, we've called you because you're the only one who could discharge him. I hope you're okay with that."

"Th-that's… fine," She managed to say, glancing at Carmilla, "How many days will he be in here for?"

"Preferably two to four, just so he becomes mobile again." He supplied. "I pray that things only go uphill from here."

The doctor gave them one more smile before hurrying off, and Laura remembered to breathe again. She reached for Carmilla's hand, who took it readily, and they walked into the room together.

Carmilla hated hospitals. They were in the "let's keep you alive" business and not "let's help your emotional state of being" business. They brought back too many horrid memories. Even though the Hospital of Styria had high ratings, she couldn't help but feel uneasy. Laura could hold a testament to that statement.

Her eyes turned towards the older man propped up in bed. He really was Laura's father—same eyes, jawline, hair (even though he was balding). A carbon copy. She internally winced at the large burn on his neckline, the scar from his old soul mark. The price to pay for the world they live in—not everything is as wonderful as it seems. She then stared at his hands, which were bruised and bloodied. Carmilla swallowed the vomit that threatened to spill out of her throat.

"Laura," Sherman Hollis finally croaked, his voice old and tired. This was a man who has been through much strife in his days. "My baby girl."

"Dad," Laura finally sniffed, reaching out to him. "I-I'm sorry I never called, o-or sent you letters, but I was just so angry at you for so long—,"
“Shh, honey, I know. I'm a bastard for shutting you out. Please, just give your old man a hug, okay?” He begged, causing Laura to choke on a sob and she collapsed on top of him. Carmilla sighed as she took a seat in one of the folding chairs, folding her arms and spreading out her legs.

“You idiot,” Laura was saying, burying her face in her father’s arms, “I don't know what the hell you did, to get yourself into a state like this, but you are a fucking idiot! I've already lost ONE parent, I don't want to lose another, dad!”

“Well, with the lack of response you gave me over the years, it's not like you'd care.” He grumbled, wincing in pain. "I figured I'd go out with a bang." He uttered sardonically.

“You think, that after all this time, I DON'T CARE?” Laura screeches, causing Carmilla to flinch. There was silence. "YOU'RE MY FATHER, FOR FUCK'S SAKE.” Sherman opened his mouth to reprimand his daughter for her use of language, but quickly shut it.

“I want to be angry at you,” Laura admits, wiping her eyes, "I want to hate you with every fiber of my being for kicking me out. You've made me feel like shit for years, dad. Every time this month came around, I drank. I drank. I cut. I locked my bedroom door and pretended that nothing else mattered but my own self-deprecation. And it wasn't like you were much help when I was living with you, either. Whenever I had a panic attack, you'd run. You'd run away, into your own pathetic room because you didn't know how to comfort me." She hissed out, shaking her head, "But I know now my hatred wouldn't be fair for your sake, or mom's. She doesn't want us to be like this. She doesn't want us to remember her in this way. We had so many happy memories, daddy…”

“I know, Laura-bear, but the last week of her life…”

“Sucked ass, I was there, remember? But it isn't fair for her if that's all we remember her by. I'm… exhausted, dad. Emotionally, physically… mentally… I've gone numb to everything, and I'm trying so hard to feel human again. Every day is a waking, terrifying battle, but it's better than being dead, dad.”

Sherman breathed in deeply, clutching at his daughters' hands. "How are you doing this? How are… how are you even here, with me, right now?"

Laura took this moment to reach out to Carmilla, spreading out her arms and with an adorable pout on her face. She chuckled softly and dragged her chair over, allowing Laura to sit on her lap.

"I wouldn't even be alive right now if it weren't for my beloved soulmate." She sighs, melting into Carmilla’s embrace. Sherman's eyes widened in shock, as he looked between the two girls.

"You're doing so well, creampuff," She praises, giving her a gentle kiss, "I'm so proud of you."

"She's been through… similar experiences as we have, so she knows just what to say and do if I need anything. If I need space, she gives me space. If I need cuddles, she's there. If I need kisses, she gives me them. She doesn't ask, she doesn't hesitate… she's been an angel throughout this whole journey, and we've barely scratched the surface. We still have a shit-ton of growing to do."

"I'd rather meet you on better circumstances, Mr. Hollis, but there's nothing I can do about that." Carmilla says, giving him a smile. "My name is Carmilla."

"Thank you for taking care of my daughter when I couldn't." He replies gratefully, sighing tiredly. "What sign are the two of you experiencing, if you don't mind me asking?"

"The transitional phase," She explains, pressing a kiss to Laura's temple, "It's only a few more months until we reach the final sign. The spot where our tattoos would be burn if we touch them."
"This explains the lack of personal space you two have," Sherman says, motioning between them, "I remember it well..." He then sighs, shaking his head, "What irony is this. I'm still grieving over my own soulmate, while my daughter has just found hers."

"I want my dad back." Laura choked, reaching out for his hand, "The only way for both of us to recover from this is if we do this together. I know I said hurtful things to you in the past, and I'm guilty every waking second of the day because of them. But I'm willing to put all of that aside and forgive you because you're the only family member I have left."

"And I miss my daughter," He sighs, face looking torn, "I miss her adorable laugh, her smile, the way she lights up the room. I was sick when I shooed her away. She was the only shining star I had left. It's going to be a difficult road ahead for us, my dear, but I'm willing to do this if you are."

"Thank God you're alive, dad." Laura sobs, suddenly leaving Carmilla's side and hugging her father.

"No, thank God you're alive." He corrects, accepting her embrace. Carmilla shifted in her seat, feeling awkward over this tender family moment. Sherman notices this and chuckles, motioning towards her, "Come here, sweetheart. You're family now too, after all."

"Thank you, Mr. Hollis." Carmilla choked, tears glistening in her eyes.

"Enough with the formalities, call me Sherman. Or even dad." He winked, causing the other girl to smile. He turns to Laura, a content look on his face, "I always knew that you were gay, sweetie, but I was a such a fool in that I was never around we never got the chance to talk about it. My only regret is that I wish I was there to help you when you were struggling to identify yourself. Your mother was better at those sort of things. A father's biggest regret is knowing that he's done nothing to help his daughter," He let out a shaky breath, Laura's forgiving gaze keeping him afloat, "I hope you know that I approve of the Moon's choice for the two of you. You're a good match for my daughter, Carmilla."

"That means so much to me, sir." Carmilla says, heart fluttering with warmth.

Sherman's eyes then narrowed, "Break her heart and you're dead to me."

Laura's eyes dropped open in shock, "DAD!"

"I wouldn't dream of it, sir." She said honestly, squeezing Laura's thigh.

"See to it that you won't." He chuckled, leaning back on his pillow. "Oh, Eileen. You'd be so proud of our little girl." He mumbled to himself. "She went and got herself a soulmate who loves her so very much."

Carmilla's heart beat rapidly, as she noticed Laura's cheeks turn red. They didn't bother to correct the old man as it was true, though they were both terrified to admit it in that moment. The simulation was too much for Sherman as he dozed off, but the two girls stayed with him until visiting hours were over. When they walked out of the hospital, Laura looked much happier than before. She had a skip in her step and there was a brightness in her smile that increased tenfold.

When they finally came back home, the two relaxed on their bed, Laura allowing Carmilla to gently trace the outline of the tattoo on her shoulder. Her heart raced in anticipation, words of love dancing on her tongue as her fingers felt the burning sensation underneath. Laura was doing the same thing, tracing her own fingers on Carmilla's other shoulder. The sensation that coursed through her soul was unfathomable to describe.

"Soon, my love." Laura cooed, kissing Carmilla's tattoo four times. She shivered in response.
“Soon.” Carmilla promised, knowing she could trust Laura with even her darkest secret. It was only a matter of when.

Chapter End Notes

(also, 250 kudos? thank you, loves!! this story has come so far and its not even halfway done yet!)
She Keeps Me Warm

Chapter Summary

Laura confesses her love for Carmilla through letters. Meanwhile, Mattie gives her beloved sister the push she needs to be brave, and face her biggest fear. Emotions are high and their souls are almost ready. (mentions of past physical abuse- explicit. Sexual themes- explicit).

Chapter Notes

I wonder what it's like to be in love. To feel, so wholly and completely devoted to another human being. To dedicate your life and share new memories with them. I've always wanted to have a partner, but it was only until recently that I imagine that partner to be a woman, so my heart is still reeling in that regard. How do you know when you've fallen in love with someone? What do you feel, think, expect? I... I don't know. So I hope I captured Laura's and Carmilla's emotions the best I could. If you are in love, make sure you tell that respective partner every day. Remind them how wonderful they are. Remind them that their love is respected, that they are valid and good. And they will surely do the same in return. <3

I hope you've all had a lovely day today! Enjoy. If you have any concerns, feel free to contact me on my tumblr.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“She wasn’t exactly sure when it happened. Or even when it started. All she knew for sure was that right here and now, she was falling hard and she could only pray that he was feeling the same way.” -Nicholas Sparks, Save Haven

After a whirlwind of drama and craziness, it was nice to finally have things settle down. I discharged dad three days later, once he convinced the doctor he could move on his own and there was no threat to his mental health. Carmilla and I stayed over his place for the weekend, taking care of him, making sure everything was back in order. It was so weird, being back in my old family home after so many years; it was like walking into a time capsule.

I could tell dad enjoyed the company, and I was surprised that him and Carmilla got along… mostly. Their devotion and innate need to make sure that I was safe brought them together, at least. Though, not everything was solved, seeing how dad and I still needed to sort out feelings—there were too many things left unsaid. We promised to meet each other over summer break, and have a good, long talk.
But we were getting there—after four years of absence, this was a start.

Given that classes didn't start up again until late January, that meant students had a lot of down time. Carmilla and I were at least lucky we had jobs to earn extra cash—and we still saw each other the majority of the day.

It was domestic, and I really liked it. Save for the times when I discovered that Carmilla was a horrible roommate.

She refuses to use the chore wheel.

She never cleans anything.

She hogs the blankets when we sleep together, taking my yellow pillow.

And not to mention, I always find HER locks of hair clogging up the drainpipe in our bathroom.

If I wasn't in love with her, I would honestly file a complaint to the RA.

The thought suddenly shook my mind awake, and I let out a surprised gasp.

Love… I…

Am I really in love with Carmilla?

A nervous energy bubbled its way into my stomach, and I closed my eyes, slowly counting to ten. Okay. That was a fleeting thought—but looking back on the progress we've made, there's no doubt in admitting that we have gotten better. The panic attacks have subsided to a manageable level, and I no longer rely on her for emotional support. Whenever I wake up now, I no longer feel lonely or sad. I have many things to look forward to. New classes to learn, new professors to meet, new clubs to join… friends to hang out with… these doors have opened to me recently, but I can no longer imagine a life where I didn't have access to them.

And Carmilla. Have I finally accepted that my feelings for her are love because I've grown to love myself? Or is it just infatuation? I no longer hate myself for the years I angrily blamed mom. I no longer feel worthless. I no longer have to fight my heart to be happy, because just the mere thought of Carmilla puts a smile on my face.

The logical side of my brain is screaming at me, telling me that this is too soon. Everything is happening to us so goddamn fast. This past September, I was ready to die because I convinced myself that nothing was worth it. In October, I had found a friend in Carmilla, as she wrote letters to me on the terrace. In November, she became my soulmate, my rock when I needed her most to get through the day. In December, we learned to communicate and work as a unit, learning what triggers our emotions. In January, it was domestic bliss. And so on and so forth.

There was nothing—NOTHING, normal, about this relationship.

The fact that I've opened my heart to her so easily scares the shit out of me.

We're not even girlfriends yet—hell, we haven't even been on a date, yet, but I knew how much we meant to each other.

My mark yearns for the day when our souls link together as one—it's a desire unfathomable to describe, and every time I try to make sense of it, my physical body becomes an upset mess.
Why wasn't ANY of this written down in the soulmate handbook?

I let out a tired sigh as I allowed my eyes to stare at Carmilla's sleeping figure. Her lips were slightly parted, light snores escaping. She had her arms wrapped around my waist, her head resting comfortably on my chest. She was making adorable twitchy notions with her nose, which I could only assume she's dreaming about murdering a giant ball of yarn.

And suddenly I was analyzing every freckle, every imperfection on her face. I noticed the scar on her cheek from her battle with ghost Vordenburg. I then traced my fingers across her nose, touching her lips, and across her sharp jawline.

Everything about her is beautiful.

Carmilla's eyes slowly opened, those lovely orbs gazing at me. Ah, yup—my favorite part of her. I loved staring at her eyes, especially at night, when we stargaze. The entire galaxy is reflected in those irises.

There was no sense in denying it now. In this lifetime, there is one thing I'm absolutely positive of.

I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with her.

"Morning." She hummed, giving me a warm smile.

"Hi." I yawn, giving her a peck on her forehead. "I'm sorry for yelling at you."

"I'm sorry for causing the toilet to overflow."

"And I'm sorry for calling you a soul-sucking demon." I mumble, feeling ashamed.

"That was pretty funny." She chuckled, giving me a peck on the cheek.

"Even when I hit you with the pack of U-Kotex?"

"Still funny."

"Then I proceeded to kick you out of the dorm and made you sleep with Lafontaine and Perry?" I gaped, causing her to shrug.

"I deserved—,"

"Okay, enough with the whole indifference and nonchalance about this, before we get into another argument about that pointless spiel," I murmur, getting lost in her eyes, "Do you forgive me?"

Carmilla laughed, warm and happy. "I'll always forgive you." Oh, yeah—I am so in love with her. When her lips touch my skin, an array of sparks shoot up from each notion, sending shivers to my core.

Send help. I'm dying here.

"We're spending a lot of time together, cupcake," She reasoned, positioning herself so she can begin to kiss my neck, "We're always off working, or in classes, or hanging out with friends. Getting used to this would take a while, but despite the fights we have, I'm enjoying this."

"Y-you do?" I ask, biting my lip to keep myself from moaning. "Good. I'm glad."
Is she even aware of the effect she has on me?

"Uh-huh; and you want to know the best part?" She asks, her lips lingering on the crook of my neck, and suddenly I felt pressure. I let out a gasp. "It's good practice for the future, creampuff."

"I can't wait." I admit, squeezing her shoulder. "A few more months and we'd be graduated from here. Were you planning on staying in Graz?"

Carmilla separates her mouth from my skin as she stares at me now, her eyes distant, "I was planning on quitting after this year and traveling to Paris. Leaving behind everything I once knew. Silas… while I adore this place, I felt trapped here. That is… until, my soulmate came to me. Who knows what could have happened to us if I jumped ship…" She trails off, shivering.

I frowned at her, caressing her cheek, "We could still do it. I'd love to travel with you once we've graduated in May."

"Good," Carmilla smiles, giving me another kiss on my cheek. "Because now, I realize that my reasons for traveling were foolish and that I would just be running away from my problems. With you here, you're my anchor, keeping me afloat."

"Rome wasn't built in a day." I reason. "We're getting there."

She didn't say anything in response and just smiled at me, her eyes glistening.

"What?" I giggle at the look on her face.

"You kill me, Hollis." Carmilla husks, and finally, her lips pressed themselves against mine. I moaned in pleasure, my entire body melting into the kiss. Every time she kisses me, I feel like I'm drowning in her, and she helps me forget the world around us. No war, violence, or death exists in this realm—just love. This is my safe place. Here, I am home.

I giggle as her hands trail up my stomach, she knows I'm most ticklish there, and we move to a different position on the bed. Instead of me laying down, she's now pressed up against the wall, and my legs are wrapped around her waist.

Her fingers play with the ends of my shirt, but she doesn't take it off. I can tell she's fighting with herself to keep in control. I'm barely hanging by a thread, here.

"Cupcake," She rasped, tracing her thumb across my lips, "How's the weather?"

This has become our safety question, for if either of us become overwhelmed or anxious, we know when to stop. We… haven't gotten far, due to our insecurities, and the annoying chance that our friends chose to interrupt us at the most awkward of times.

"The stars are beautiful." I reply, face flushing red. She smiles at me through the kiss, biting my lip. Stars.

They're so important to the both of us. We were both looking at the same sky the night we decided to write to each other. Carmilla loves astrology. Theories always were buzzing through my mind as to what our soul marks would be, and they always led to stars. An imprint of our galaxy would look incredibly beautiful on Carmilla. As if reading my mind, the mark burned slightly, causing me to gasp.

"Laura? Are you okay?" Carmilla worried, taking her lips away from mine for a second. She
then traced her fingers across the mark, lips curling into a small smile. "This is honestly so terrifying and exciting at the same time."

"It could be any day, now," I exclaim, practically jumping in her lap, "Th-this cosmological energy is making me super hyped."

Carmilla chuckled lovingly, her hands relaxing as she cupped my breasts. I shivered at the cool touch of her fingers. She pressed her forehead against mine. "As if dealing with you on a sugar high is bad enough," She rolled her eyes, "Now I've got to deal with you getting power-ups from the Moon."

I slapped her shoulder playfully, "Hey, you're at fault here too! Ms. All-Smiles-And-Sunshine. You're not as broody as you were before."

It was true. She looked radiant, and the resting-bitch-face had seemed to leave the building (not that I didn't adore her resting-bitch-face). She even laughed at Kirsch's jokes, where usually she would groan or poke fun at the boy. Though, the goth exterior she kept (dark clothing and black eyeliner) and to an outsider, it would be hard to tell if she was being serious or sarcastic with her death threats.

But I knew my beloved Carmilla.

We understood each other. That's all that mattered.

"My reputation is ruined." She drawls, clicking her tongue.

"What reputation do you have? We were both losers before we were soulmates. Now we're soulmates and we're still losers." I was laughing now, pointing at her. "The only difference is we're even more gay."

"Hah! Jokes on you then! The Moon decided you'll complete my soul!" She snickered, kissing every inch of my face.

"I wouldn't have it any other way." I told her earnestly, wrapping my arms around her neck. The alarm dinged on Carmilla's phone, signaling that it was time to get out of bed, and the both of us groaned.

"Can't we just stay in bed?" She grumbled, giving me the ultimate pouty face.

"Babe, we did that last week. Besides, we kind of did plan to go to the planetarium with the whole group today. We can't bail because you want cuddle time."

"Great. Another day out with the Ginger Twins and the Mr. and Mrs."

"Stop complaining, our friends are awesome." I argue.

"Yeah, when they aren't being problematic and a disturbance to the public."

"I'll... treat you to a cute stuffed animal at the gift shop. A giant stuffed panther," I tempted, wiggling my eyebrows. She blushed with embarrassment and chuckles. "Do I know you, or do I know you?"

"Y-you... you know me."

"Damn right!" I cheer, and detach myself from her, "C'mon babe, we've gotta day to seize!
Let's go, *let's go*!" Carmilla could only chuckle in reply, a dreamy smile on her face.

We met our friends in front of the planetarium in Citypark, who were more than happy to spend the day with us.

"You're here! Finally, let's go look at space shit!" Lafontaine exclaimed, giddy beyond belief. Perry chuckled lovingly at them, patting their shoulder.

"We would have gotten here sooner if SOMEONE didn't keep delaying the process." I teased, causing Carmilla to blush.

"Can you blame me? You're a hottie, creampuff." She winks, causing Danny to gag.

"Okay. Ew. Gross—now I have a mental image of you two feeling each other up."

"Yeah—and Lau's got the battle scars to prove it." They chuckled, wiggling their eyebrows. My cheeks turned a deep red.

"W-what?" Just now feeling the bites on my neck, and whipped my head around to a sheepish Carmilla. "A-ack! BABY!" I squeal, slapping her embarrassingly on the shoulder.

"I warned you that I'm a biter! This shouldn't be a surprise!" She exclaimed, exasperated.

"You couldn't have told me before we left?" I giggle, nervously balancing back and forth.

Danny rolled her eyes, taking my hand in hers, "C'mon, babe, I've got my make-up with me. Let's fix you in the restroom."

"Thank you, Danny."

I felt weightless as Danny dragged me along, thoughts in the gutter.

Carmilla smiling.

Carmilla happy.

Carmilla laughing.

Carmilla holding me.

Carmilla kissing me.

Carmilla, Carmilla, *CARMILLA*. She's overcome so much in her life, and while I only know parts of it, that doesn't stop my heart from falling in love with her.

She's… so beautiful I can't help but hold her in the highest regards.

"Take it easy, Lau." Danny soothes, patting my shoulder. "You look like you're about to freak out on me. Is everything okay?"
"Peachy," I wince, fiddling with my thumbs as she put foundation on my neck. "It's not like I've realized I'm in love with my soulmate, or anything."

A pause.

Danny froze, the tube of make-up dangling from her fingers. "Holy shit, Laura."

"Yeah." I breathe out, chuckling weakly.

"Holy fucking shit, that's amazing." She exclaims, her eyes widening and a happy smile on her face. "You adorable tiny gay." She laughs, pulling me into a hug.

"Danny, I'm terrified," I whimper, shaking my head, "I-I don't know what to do or how to act around her. W-we're so close, D, we're so close to the final sign and my soul is so overwhelmed it's hard to control myself. O-one moment I feel like I'm about to cry and the next I'm laughing hysterically. HELP ME." I grip her shoulders like a crazy woman.

Danny chuckles, gripping my elbows, "There's nothing more I can do than be a supporting friend. Erm, Lafontaine would know more about how to help with this stage. But if you ever need to vent out your frustrations, I'm here for you, baby."

I breathed out a relieved sigh, "I've been wanting to ask Carm out on a date properly, regardless that I'm in love with her. B-but I just get so nervous and panic."

"Now why would you be nervous? It's not like she's going to say no." She scoffs, applying the make-up to my neck.

"I just want everything to be perfect. And I want to make up for all the times she's taken care of me."

"Honey, have you been listening to what Carm's been saying at all? She doesn't care about any grand gestures, your happiness is all that matters," Danny quirked an eyebrow at me, "But, if it'll make you sleep at night, why don't you ask her out through… like… letters? I know that's very important to the both of you. Make it official."

The metaphorical lightbulb appeared on top of my head. "Danny, babe, you're a genius."

"I try," She coos, giving me a kiss on the cheek. She hopped off the restroom countertop, collecting her things, "You're in the clear."

"Danny," I say, feeling emotional as I pulled her into a hug, "For what it's worth, I'm so glad I met you in this universe."

"Me too, Lau," She smiles, rubbing the small of my back, "Me, too."

0o0o0o

Carmilla was happy. For the first time in her life, she finally felt able to breathe.

It felt… liberating, to feel this happy. After so many years of being in constant pain (whatever the reason may be) she never realized how much of an effect happiness had on her. It was a bubbling emotion, first appearing as tingles in her feet—small and subtle, until the emotion slowly poured over her entire being. Her lips were always curling up, an effect of being around her beloved soulmate so much.

Happiness. She never thought she deserved to experience happiness, in all honesty.
Perhaps Mother Earth and Father Time truly was looking out for her.

It was scary, sure, to allow your heart to be open and complete with another person. She could tell Laura was more than ready for this, words of love dancing off her lips at every given moment.

Reminding Carmilla of all the beautiful things she was capable of.

Carmilla cursed herself for not being able to say those precious things back to Laura. She was terrified. She’s seen horrible things in her lifetime, things that have scarred and molded her into the person she was today. However, she can admit that she's grown out of her shell. She had the opportunity to find herself and see herself in the view that Laura does. She was making progress.

So, why is she so reluctant to admit those three precious words?

Maybe it was the fact that she didn't truly love herself, just yet. There were scars on her body she refused to look at, and every imperfection she hated herself for.

She was too skinny. Too pale. Too strange. She doesn't fit in the normal standards of the Austrian woman.

Yet… for all the things Carmilla hated, Laura loved.

Irony at its finest.

Carmilla grunted as she fumbled for her room key, nearly dropping her bags. She had just finished her night shift at Platinum Graz, and was sure Laura would be curled up in bed already. She pushed her glasses onto the bridge of her nose, as she pushed the door open. She wanted nothing more than to cuddle with her soulmate.

"Laura, honey, I'm home." She called, placing her things besides her desk. That's when she noticed something was different. Laura wasn't here. Worried, she checked her phone, noticing that the last time they've communicated was one o’ clock in the afternoon.

She then saw a small, pink envelope on their bed, with Carmilla's name on it. Curiously, she leaned over to pick it up.

Hello, friend,

It's been a while since we've talked, hasn't it? I know you must be confused, but trust me, everything is fine. I have something special planned for this evening. Play along and humor me, why don't you? I promise I'll make it worth your while, hehe ;). Go to the place where you sang me a lullaby, and you'll receive your next clue!

Love, L.

"Oh, Laura," Carmilla chuckled, shaking her head. She held onto the note, her heart beating rapidly in her chest. She climbed onto the terrace, finding the note on their favorite spot.

Hey there friend!

Remember that first night when you sang to me? That one night feels like years ago, when we both felt so lonely. Thinking about how different we were hurts my heart... I knew by the tone of your voice you were looking for someone, and what are the odds that I am your soulmate? Our fate was written in the stars before we even realized it. Your letters gave me hope for a future and a better tomorrow. Words cannot express how you saved me. Travel to the second sign, when you realized
you were mine. 3

Love, L.

Danny's dorm. The Summer Society party. The night where she spent hours in pain afterwards, her head throbbing from seeing her soulmate.

Excited now, Carmilla hurried out of their dorm and traveled to the opposite end of Saint Jerome Hall. She gently wrapped her knuckles on the door, upon hearing sounds of the television, and Kirsch's laughter. She peeked in, her lips curling upward at the adorable sight. The other boy was giving Danny the most obvious heart eyes, a look she knows all-too-well. They had their foreheads touching each other, neither of them paying attention to the movie. Danny's eyes were closed as she leaned her head so her lips were just inches apart from her soulmate's.

Carmilla politely coughed, a wicked smirk spreading her lips. Danny flushed a deep red as she gasped, pushing Kirsch on the far side of his bed. She slammed down the laptop, ultimately crushing Kirsch's fingers in the process. He yelped in pain, clutching his hand and giving Danny a disgruntled look.

"The fuck are you doing here?" She snaps, face turning redder than her hair.

"My soulmate is sending me on a scavenger hunt. I presume you have a card hidden somewhere?"

"O-oh. Right!" Danny exclaims, sobering up. She begins to mutter something to herself as she searches her desk, pulling out a card. "Take it and go."

"I'm sorry. Am I interrupting something, Xena?"

"Kiss my ass, Mortica." She growled.

"Looks like you already have someone for that." Carmilla winks, giggling.

She got a door slammed in her face as an answer.

"From here on I knew my life would never be the same again. Unknowingly, you've become a part of it, and I thought about you every second of the day. I had no idea what was happening to my soul, why I was so drawn to you. God, I was so confused, scared, anxious... I wasn't sure of the future that we would have together. But everything changed the moment you defended my honor. You were just so... brave. And I knew then that no matter what happened, I needed you in my life.

Love, L.

Taking a deep breath, Carmilla remembered those scary days back in November, following SJ's death. Where Laura was nothing but a shell of herself, her mind clouded in misery. It was devastating, seeing her beloved in pain so much. She did everything she could to get her back on her feet, but in the end, all the progress that was made was done by Laura herself.

It's hard to believe that they were in February now. Six months have truly flown by.

She quickly headed over to the cafeteria, greeting the lunch lady by the front. She found her note
tucked in the napkins bin by their booth they normally sit at.

Dearest,

It was here that I needed you in the physical sense, holding me, cradling me, comforting me. It was as if we've been together for years, how our bodies reacted towards one another. Being comforted by you... I love how easily my body completes yours. We fit together like a puzzle piece. You just knew. When I had my panic attacks, you knew how to handle the situation. You sang to me, kissed me, loved me... and I didn't need to ask. How often is it that people in this world find their soulmate who knows them so well? I'm lucky to have met you, my love. Although... there is a small part of me that believes we have met in multiple lifetimes, and perhaps that is why we're so good together.

Go to the place where I had my very first Christmas.

Love, L.

Tears were glistening in Carmilla's eyes now as she jogged across campus, knowing the way to her mother's estate by heart. It made Carmilla's heart sing as she labels the holiday as 'her very first', because she knew the meaning behind it. The first Christmas where Laura learned to let go of her grief. The first Christmas where Laura had the opportunity to spend with her soulmate.

What a precious girl—she's truly grown up so much.

Mattie was sitting on the couch when she arrived, the night owl reading something off her Kindle. Her eyes sparkled when she saw her beloved sister.

"Carmilla, darling! Nice of you to visit." She chimes, getting up to hug her sister. "Here you go, love."

"I'm scared, Mattie," Carmilla admits, lip trembling as she clutches the final letter.

"Hmm, now this seems familiar," Mattie smiles, placing both of her hands on Carmilla's shoulder, "Isn't that what you told me back in the old days when you haven't revealed yourself to her? My, how much you've grown since." She chuckles, pulling her sister into a hug, "You've been through so much my dear, and now you have an opportunity to experience true love. True happiness. I can only imagine how terrifying this whole ordeal must be. Giving yourself, wholly and completely, to your soulmate. Letting everything go. All your worries. All your struggles. To have trust in yourself and trust in your soulmate that no matter what life throws at you both, the Moon is certain that you two will accomplish it together. I see it in her eyes, the way she regards you, Carm," She claims, tears glistening in her eyes, "She's ready for you. She's ready to give you her love in the purest form. She has fallen deeply for the beautiful woman you're becoming, and it's not simply because you're her soulmate. You gave each other a chance. You wrote to each other nights prior to The Sight, your fate written in the stars long before you had a say about it. You have every reason to be afraid, my dearest, but that is every reason why you should tell her. She will not judge you for the person you once were. That Carmilla is long gone. We cannot dwell on her mistakes—we need to learn from them, and put them behind us. And she will help you through it all."

Tears were falling freely down Carmilla's cheeks, as she hugged her beloved sister, sure of what she had to do now. "M-Mattie, there's so much I haven't told her. Where should I start? I... I wouldn't want to overload her with everything at once..."

"Pace yourself. Don't rush into the story. Give yourself time to collect your thoughts, allow her to ask questions, and learn from each other. The sooner you tell Laura, the easier this will be for you. Understand?"
"Understood."

Her sister sighed wistfully, "My precious Carmilla. Falling in love with her soulmate. Happy days are upon us. Love is a good color on you, dear."

"Love." Carmilla says softly, clicking her tongue. Yes, there was no point in denying it any longer. She had fallen deeply for the adorable girl and there was no going back. "Fancy that."

"Go on now, Romeo. Don't keep your Juliet waiting." She giggles, patting Carmilla's shoulder. Carmilla let out a nervous sigh, heart beating rapidly. Her legs seemed to have a mind of their own as she walked up the stairs to their roof. As she walked, she tore open the envelope with her shaking hands.

My love,

The Christmases following mom's passing were difficult, each one worse than the last. When I was a child, my mind was tortured with nightmares of her in pain, reminding me of the monster she was turned into. I was scared and alone and confused. My dad had no idea what to do or how to help me, so the only option I had was to hide in my room and wish for the day to be over. As the other children played out in the snow with their friends and family, my father and I were shrouded in misery. We didn't know any better. We were foolish to slip into this pattern of deprecation.

When I grew older, I discovered alcohol. I drank the day away, blocking out every memory I could think of, numbing the pain. While my peers would celebrate with their families by leaving their dorms, I would stay stuck in mine, refusing to call my father, refusing to give myself relief. It... really didn't help me out in the long run, seeing how even at my age, I'm having trouble remembering the past because of my drinking problem.

It was difficult, that first Christmas with you. I had the urge to drink—it was suffocating, blinding every thought I tried to make happy. I had the urge to lock myself away. But every time those demons came into my mind, thoughts of you would pull me out of them. And I reminded myself how cruel it would be to lose myself now. It would be an insult to you and everything that we've accomplished. I had to be strong, if not for me, but to prove myself to you. And I did. God, Carmilla, you gave me the strength to withstand even the toughest day of my life. That night, when I was lying in your arms as you rocked me to sleep, I wasn't crying because I missed my mother. I was crying because it was the first Christmas where I was sober to experience it.

The sheer joy of being around everyone and looking at how happy they were filled ME with happiness, giving me strength. I'd forgotten how wonderful the holiday was. You helped remind me of it—and I had the opportunity to behave like a child again.

Carmilla... ever since then, each day I'm finding it hard to imagine a world where you weren't in it. You complete me, in every sense. Whenever I need you, you stop at nothing to take care of me. You have proven time and time again the Moon has made the perfect choice in aligning our souls together. We may be opposite in some areas of our personalities, but we're able to communicate with each other, and we know how to listen.

If someone had told me that lonely night, that the sad girl singing on the terrace was my soul mate, I wouldn't have believed them. But looking back on the progress we've made, and how much we've grown since, I'd repeat everything we've been through in a heartbeat.

So, yeah. We may be two hormonal-controlled idiots and we hardly have our lives planned right now. And we both have personal baggage that will take time to talk through. But our souls are aching to be with each other, and right now, you are the axis that my world turns on.
You’re beautiful, cunning, sexy, kind, brave, and incredibly selfless.

Since we're going to be stuck with each other forever, then I want something good for us to hold onto.

Here's to a future of happiness,

Laura.

Tears sprinkled in Carmilla's eyes as she finished the letter, and she glanced up, glancing at the beautiful sight before her. There was a small tent pitched in the middle of the roof, with flashing snow lights falling off the edges. There was a rug, a small table decorated with snacks, and a record player belting out Philip Collin's *Can't Help Falling in Love*.

How fitting.

Laura herself was not seen at first, but if Carmilla peered to the right, she saw the adorable girl leaning across the railing. She seemed to be giving herself a pep-talk, which made Carmilla chuckle.

"Okay, Hollis. You need to girl the hell up. You can do this." She breathed, nodding to herself.

Carmilla decided to end her misery. Her heart beat so fast it hurt. "Hey."

Laura whipped around, clutching onto the railing to keep her steady. "H-hey."

There was a pause.

"Have you seen my soulmate? She's about… like… this tall, has a really cute face, a sexy ass, and she makes me smile?"

"Hmm," She giggles nervously, her body automatically gravitating towards Carmilla's. Carmilla didn't hesitate to wrap her arms around her waist, "I haven't seen her around. But I'm sure I can keep you company."

"I wouldn't mind that at all, cutie." Carmilla husked, and eagerly dipped her head to kiss Laura on the lips. Laura was hesitant. She could tell something was just bubbling from her lips, something she desperately wanted to say with how her arms gripped at Carmilla's shoulders. Laura's body was rigid, and Carmilla could hear Laura's heart beat with anxiousness above her own.

"Carmilla," She breathed out shakily as they pulled apart. Her eyes were pleading, full of adoration and love.

"Don't be scared, Lau. Say it to me."

Tears glistened in Laura's eyes, as another painful second passed. "I love you," She uttered boldly, earnestly. A tearful giggle escaped her lips. "I'm so in love with you."

Laura loves her.

Laura Eileen Hollis is in love with Carmilla Margaret Karnstein.

The truth was finally said. After everything they've been through together, the scariest moment had been leading up to now.

When they had met each other, they were not in the right state of mind to fall in love. They simply needed each other's peace of mind. Now, though, their souls were more than ready to merge, a true
testament of their relationship. There was no going backwards from here—they had an entire future to look forward to.

Carmilla felt like she was flying. For so many years, her wings were clipped, torn at the edges. Her beloved Laura had given her the strength to find herself and move on from her past. Was she ready to say those three words back? No, not yet. But in her heart of hearts she accepts this affection, and promises herself that the moment she reveals Laura the truth of her past, she'll tell Laura she's in love with her as well.

If not more so.

She felt her metaphorical wings spread out, cloaking the two of them in a loving embrace of protection and warmth.

Nothing can stop them now.

She couldn't formulate a response. She didn't have to—Laura never forced her into anything she was uncomfortable with. She was an angel in that regard. Laura was too good for her. She cried. Tears freely trickled down her face as Laura held her, whispering words of love and rubbing her arms in comfort.

She had no idea how long they were holding each other for, but Carmilla didn't care. Her eyes were puffy from crying, snot was probably dripping down her nose, her hair was a mess, and even her throat felt congested.

Ugh. Yeah. Real attractive.

And yet Laura loved her still.

They had moved onto the comfy couch, Laura sitting comfortably on Carmilla's lap, the latter sitting with her legs spread. The candles spread around them were burning brightly, the evening cicadas singing their tune. The stars were out. Nothing more was said between them, as now the tables had turned. Usually it was Carmilla who had to hold Laura, but now, Laura was doing a fine job in keeping Carmilla afloat.

"Laura," She whispers, voice cracking. "There's something that I… I need to show you."

"You don't have do to anything right now, baby. This is more than enough." Laura coos, rubbing Carmilla's back.

"N-no. I have to do this. I-I trust you," She claims, gripping Laura's arms, "I want us to work. I don't want there to be any secrets between us any longer. God, my soul mark burns with desire to match yours. You've already overcome your struggles. It's time I face mine. I-I can do that now, because your love gives me strength."

"Okay, honey. Show me." Laura utters gently, a worried frown appearing on her face.

Carmilla breaths out a shaky sigh. She lets go of Laura, and first pulls off her leather jacket to reveal her pale skin. She slowly displays the cuts and bruises on her arms for a moment, Laura paying careful attention to the hand-cuff shaped scars on both of her wrists. Gently, she pulled both of Carmilla's arms up to her lips, kissing her wrists, thumb caressing the outline of those old wounds.

After a long moment, Carmilla then fiddles with the bottom of her shirt, and carefully lifts it over her head careful not to throw off her hat. Laura lets out a quiet gasp at the old scars on her stomach. Feels like centuries ago when she gave them to herself. She then shakily propped herself on
her butt to take off her leather pants, skin growing cold as she realized she was truly exposed now. She'd ripped off the desperate mask she was trying to hold onto, but it had crumbled a long time ago.

She was now completely vulnerable to her soulmate. Naked. Submissive. She trusted Laura. She was safe to reveal herself here.

The other woman traced her fingers across Carmilla's legs, staring at every scar she inflicted on herself. They were getting larger the further up Carmilla's body she went, and tears glistened in Laura's eyes at the cuts that were between Carmilla's thighs. Too many to count. She then stared at what was once a large gash on her stomach, and pressed her lips against the old wound. The first time she tried to kill herself. Her eyes then trailed to Carmilla's breasts, where just above it was the outline of a rope's imprint. This was the second. Mattie saved her in time.

She then turned around to show her back, but these scars were different. They weren't inflicted by Carmilla—someone else had harmed her, and Laura's heart panged with anger. They were ugly and obnoxious.

"Now you know what I meant," Carmilla hissed, barely holding it together, "W-when I said that you save me every day?"

"Of course, my love," Laura replied weakly, taking a breath through her tears, running her hand through Carmilla's hair, "You're so brave. God, you're such a precious soul. I love you so much."

"Y-you still love me?" Carmilla gaped in shock, tears streaming down her face, "Even after I revealed my body to you, you still love me?"

"Yes," She says through a watery giggle, "I-It increased my love and adoration for you. And every day I won't hesitate to scream it to the heavens."

"Fuck, you're too good to me, Laura. Th-there's only so much I can express myself through words…"

"Then I'll show you." She urges, lust glistening in her eyes. "I'll show you how much I love you."

Carmilla's brain short-circuited. She wasn't ready for sex, and knew for a fact Laura had no idea. But right now, her mind wasn't working and words failed her. She had to give her beloved at least some form of absolution.

"Can we just… m-make something clear, first?" Carmilla breathed, as Laura gently pulled her onto her lap.

"Hmm? What is it, baby?"

Fuck. She couldn't focus. Laura's breath was hot against her skin.

"W-well, you j-just told me you love me, so it's only fair if I ask you this in return. I'd like to be your girlfriend."

Laura smiled, a soft cooing noise escaping her lips, "Hehe. Yay." She giggles, and Carmilla melted in a puddle of love. Her heart grew three sizes that night. "I was wondering when you were going to ask me."

"Y-yeah. Sorry about taking a while."
"Let's not worry about that, Carm. It's all in the past, now."

"You're so good to me." Carmilla barely squeaks out, as Laura begins to leave a trail of kisses up her abdomen. Normally when they had the time to make out, Carmilla naturally takes control, but there was something about Laura being dominant that really turned her on. Tonight, she allowed her beloved to woo her, as this moment was inevitable. Their kisses over the past week were slowly becoming more passionate and heavy, on top of their soul marks burning with desire.

Her soul mark was burning in that moment, and a moan of pleasure escaped her lips as she threw her head back. Laura's gentle fingers traced up her ribs, making circling notions on her breasts, sending tingles down her spine. This action, therefore caused her panties to feel wet, and her cheeks flushed red. Her hips were moving automatically against Laura's body.

"How's the weather?" Laura asks.

Oh. Right. "The stars are beautiful." She managed to croak.

Laura finally pressed her lips against Carmilla's gently, as the action pushed the two girls onto the couch. Laura was on top of Carm now, and she struggled to keep the two in balance, squeezing her ass. Laura's shirt had ridden up, to which Carmilla traced her own fingers across her skin, gently across Laura's own scars. The throbbing in Carmilla's legs was an indescribable feeling, and she moaned again.

This was killing her. The sexual tension these past couple of days was frustrating. She wanted to do this all night—and this wasn't even sex, just grinding.

But this wasn't enough. She wanted more. She needed more of Laura.

Laura, Laura, LAURA—

She gasped as her beloved star bit down at her neck, leaving a hickey. Payback's a bitch.

All their pent-up desires and worries were now experiencing a full notion of release. With every grind, every thrust, every action of love, she could feel herself getting closer to exploding. A throaty giggle escaped Laura's lips as she licked the bruise, and kissed it in attempt to soothe her.

It was hot. Carmilla's skin was thick with sweat. Laura was breathing heavily against Carmilla's neck, causing the girl to shiver. Nails were digging into skin. Hands tangled in hair. Legs straddling each other like a safety belt.

Laura moaned Carmilla's name when her orgasm hit, sending shivers down Carmilla's spine, clutching onto her arms. Carmilla closed her eyes, reveling in this moment, as hers followed mere seconds after. It was in that moment they finally gazed at each other, both girls reeling from adrenaline. So many silent conversations were happening between them through their eyes. Carmilla let a soft whine escape her lips as she physically relaxed, and Laura let go of her, letting her arms rest beside them.

"Wow." Laura giggled, blinking several times as she started to come down from her respective high. "Th-that was…"

"Beautiful." Was the word Carmilla could formulate, and she giggled weakly.

"You're beautiful."

"As are you," Laura hummed, placing gentle kisses on her girlfriend's cheeks, "Do you see me?"
"I see you." Carmilla answered without hesitation. Even if she wasn't brave enough to say those other three words yet, they always did have their precious mantra. And that was more than enough for Laura.

This time, both of their soul marks burned in pleasure.

Chapter End Notes

*passes out kleenex* are ya'll okay?
Tensions are high as Carmilla and Laura are hours away from the final sign. Carmilla reveals her backstory, finally trusting her soulmate. (mentions of past abuse- explicit. mentions of suicide- explicit)

Hello there! So, if you haven't already followed me on my tumblr, you should know that over the weekend I dropped a bomb. An Almost Adults, remake/fanfiction type bomb. I think I broke the internet. I haven't crawled out of my cave since--is it safe to come back out now? Please let me know if the mob is gone. XD Haha, either way, thank you all so much for being so supported and excited about my new project. My goal for it is to not offend or insult anybody, just to bring the entire community together, so we can all work on creating something entirely new and wonderful. If you have any questions, feel free to message me! I love having people to talk to!
Also, in regards to this chapter, it gets heavy with a lot of deep, troubling themes about Carmilla's past. Please read at your own risk if you're triggered at all.
As always, enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals! Have a lovely day!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“In a world
full of
temporary things

You are
a perpetual
feeling.” -Sanober Khan

It's been a week since my confession, (we had started a new semester of classes now, I can't believe it's February) and every second I get with Carmilla she clutches onto me like a safety belt. I didn't mind her neediness, as we were both mentally unstable, and needed each other to keep afloat. The tension between us was palpable, but not suffocating. Our soul marks burned constantly, an indescribable feeling coursing through both of us.

Whether it was days, hours or seconds, the final sign was looming among us. Perhaps it was my confession that we were one step closer? Who knows at this point—the number of fucks I've given towards everything else is zero.
Carmilla was all I cared about—her patience was thinning, it was evident in the way she held me and snapped at everyone else. Her heart was always beating rapidly in her chest and her hands wouldn't stop shaking, even if I held them.

I had faith that we would get through this. We've survived those scary nights' post SJ's passing. We were both stronger now.

My thoughts drifted back to reality at the sound of the shower turning off, and I turned my attention desperately back to my laptop. I have a paper due next week in Theology—not exactly my strongest subject. Have I written anything yet? No.

I moan pathetically, hitting my head against the desk.

Why did this have to be so hard?


I mentally snorted at that statement—at this point, my affections for Carmilla were much more than a crush. It didn't take a genius to figure that one out.

Carmilla chuckled at me, coming out in just a robe. My cheeks flushed red, cursing myself as all I thought about was my lips on her skin, and Carmilla moaning my name.

Fuck. I'm helpless.

"Everything okay, creampuff?" Carmilla drawls, walking over to her side of the closet.

"Oh, I'm fine. My soul feels like it's about to combust at any given moment, I hate the employees my job, I'm already failing two of my classes… I'm a mess, LIFE IS GREAT!"

Carmilla shakes her head, slipping into her clothes on. "Gee, say how you really feel," She then comes over to me, wrapping her arms around my waist, and everything shuts off in my brain. "Why are you wasting your time stressing over finishing that paper when you could be cuddled up with your nice… warm…" Her lips crashed into mine, tongue exploring every crevasse of my mouth. My body aches to be even closer to hers as my hands grip at her breasts, and she propped herself on my lap.

"And when you do things like that, it makes my whole brain short-circuits and I can't focus!"

"I'm showing you affection and you're complaining," She giggles, biting my lip, "You're something else, Laura."

"That's rich, coming from the girl who had freaked out because my robe slipped while changing."

"That's hardly fair. I'm done for when your skin is exposed." She whines, whines, like a child that didn't get the toy she wanted at the gift shop.

"This relationship is starting to border the pathological." I grumbled, "God, I love you."

"And when you say things like that, I'm about as useless as a sloth."

"Shut up and kiss me, damn it."

"Ooh. Demanding." She husks, and suddenly, she then picks me up and pushes the both of us on top of the desk. Things fall to the floor besides us as we try to fit both of our bodies on the tiny desk fit for a laptop. We kiss each other in that position for a long moment, this time slower than
before. Carmilla slowly begins to unbutton my shirt, and my hands moved away from her breasts to grip her shoulders to keep myself steady.

Carmilla was thrusting her hips against my body as I slowly raised my arms so she could take off my shirt. She left kisses across my stomach and gently bit down on the skin of my breasts, leaving a mark. I desperately gripped onto the desk for something to hold, hands shaking from the intensity of our love.

I manage to grasp her head in my hands and pull her into a full kiss, lips tingling with delight.

We've done this a few times now, but I still lose all sense of reality when she touches me this way. It was surprising to me how Carmilla was more passive than she appeared, allowing me to take the reins and give her the pleasure she wanted. Each grinding session was a new experience for the both of us, and I think I fall in love with her even more. This time, however, she decided to be top, and her orgasm hit before mine. She let out a breathy moan, letting her arms droop like a rag doll.

I chuckled softly, feeling her heavy breaths tickle my neck. Carmilla then trailed her arms so she could keep a steady grip around my shoulders, her face buried within the crook of my neck, and her legs curled up around my waist.

"This is turning out to be habit forming." I utter weakly, as neither of us made a notion to move. Carmilla's lips found their way to my skin again, leaving a trail of wet, open-mouthed kisses.

"Come here often, cupcake?"

I laugh. "It's a nice view from here."

"My view is much better." She giggles, giving me a wink.

"Pervert." I claim, rolling my eyes at her. She kisses me once more, before pushing herself off me, still holding onto my arms as we climbed off the desk. We giggled at each other as our respective highs slowly came down to a manageable level, and my heart began to beat normally again.

My stomach began to growl uncontrollably, and I flushed with embarrassment. Way to ruin the moment.

"Breakfast," Carmilla smiles kindly, rubbing noses with me.

"Hmm. I have something else in mind. I could just eat you alive." I utter, surprising myself by how forward I was. I attempted to steal a kiss from her. She places a finger to my lips.

"Tempting, cutie. Remember the last time you ignored your basic needs?" She replies, grimacing. "You haven't eaten all of yesterday."

"S-sorry," I mumble, "When I'm anxious I can't force myself to eat. I'd throw it all back up."

Carmilla stays quiet, biting her lip tentatively. "Now cupcake, why are you feeling anxious?"

"Don't you feel it? W-we're so close," I whimper, gripping her arms, "Whether it's a matter of days or hours, our souls are aching to merge. The ache in my mark is killing me and I can't focus on anything else. One moment I'm in a euphoric state of mind and the next I'm drowning in sorrow. I-I honestly have no idea how you're keeping your poker face right now."

"Trust me, Laura. This is hurting me too. A-a part of me feels horrible for being so needy these past couple of days, cutting us both off from seeing our friends. A-all I'm thinking about is how
much you mean to me and that I want the both of us to get out of this alive." She held me in her arms, rubbing my back. A look of realization appeared in her eyes as she let out a small huff.

"What?" I ask wearily.

"I... I haven't told you everything about my past, yet."

"Yes. I know that—I'm only aware of a few things, and stories from Mattie."

"...for the final sign to commence, each partner must be fully and completely honest with one another. No secrets are left unsaid. No judgements. No second thoughts. We both need to be ready for each other's love," Carmilla's voice broke, "I need to be brave. I have no reason not to trust that you'll listen to me and comfort me. I-I'm the one prolonging this whole mess. The sooner I say everything to you, this time tomorrow, we'll have our soul marks."

"Carm," I breathed, reaching up to caress her cheek, "I wouldn't want you to force yourself into telling me for my sake. Having a soulmate is a two-person job, you know? Takes two to tango. I'll never pressure you into anything you're not comfortable with. You look to be completely at war with yourself. You're not emotionally ready to tell me, we can wait another day."

"That's the thing," She whimpers, shaking her head, "You're throwing me these second chances, and I'm grabbing them like they're a safety belt. The longer I use your kindness as an excuse for my stubbornness the sooner I'd grow mad." Tears glistened in her eyes, and my heart broke for her, "I want to no longer feel afraid or resentful of my past. The fact that I've bottled everything up for so long is now starting to feel overwhelming, and you're the only person in this world that I trust with my life. Please. I need to do this—for both of our sakes. I need to tell you. Will you wait for me until tonight?"

"I'll wait for you until the edge of forever, baby." I assure, giving her a gentle peck on her cheek.

"I am a lucky woman to have been blessed to have such an understanding soulmate." She breathes with relief, lips curling into a smile.

"Silly. I'm the one who's blessed." I giggled, furrowing my eyebrows in a playful glare. If it's one oddity we end up fighting about, it's how much we care for one another.

"No—ever since you came into my life, I've been given a purpose. You gave me hope and a reason to smile. I'm stronger now, as each day passes, because of you."

"Touché." I smile, and we gaze into each other's eyes for a moment. We no longer had the desire to give frenzied kisses, or grind on the desk. We both just needed to be held. There was comfort in knowing that this whole mess would be over very soon.

My stomach growled again, but this time Carmilla's followed suit, and we both erupted in laughter.

"Okay, okay. Now it's really time for food."

"Here, love. As much as I enjoy seeing your body, it's not socially acceptable." Carmilla chuckles, bending over to pick up my shirt. I spread out my arms as she fits it on, buttoning each button for me. She then gently cups my face in her hands and pulls me in for a loving kiss.

"Ah, shit," She mumbles, cheeks turning red as she looked down at her pants, "I need to change again."
"I might as well, too." I giggle, patting her shoulder, as we both respectively changed in separate rooms so neither of us had the urge to prolong breakfast later than usual.

I was grateful I started later in the morning this semester, having my first period Psychology class at 10:30am. Carm decided to take the morning shifts while I was taking classes, so that way she had classes in the afternoon and we got to spend our nights together. I was the opposite, having took the afternoon shift at my job and going at least until 7:00 at night.

I let out an anxious breath, tapping my pencil on the desk. Ever since classes started, I was having trouble concentrating. I barely registered what my professor was trying to communicate, or what chapter we were on. My mind would often drift to Carmilla, wondering how she was doing, and when I would get to see her again.

"Hey, little nerd," Kirsch chimed softly, patting me on the shoulder. "How ya holding up?"

"As well as any person would be when their soul is hours away from merging with her girlfriend's." I managed, checking the time on the clock again. Class wasn't over yet.

"How can you tell?"

"For starters, my soul mark literally feels like someone is pressing a hot iron against it every second I try to move my arm," I wince, rubbing my shoulder.

Kirsch cautiously placed a gentle finger on the outline. "I don't feel anything, Lau."

"Gee, I wonder why." I hiss, blinking away tears. Fuck—I'm a mess.

He chuckled, "You've been hanging out with Carm too much. It's like the two of you are becoming the same person."

"That's another thing to keep in mind. You know its time when you start to share the same characteristics and demeanor. As well as finishing each other's sentences or talking at once."

He shifted back and forth, lulling his head, "And Carmilla? How is she?"

I sigh, "She's in no better state then I am. She tries to keep a brave face for me, bless her heart. We had an emotional talk this morning. She's ready for me. It's only a matter of time."

"Are you scared?"

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't," I mumble, looking down at the floor, "All these months leading up to now had only been a trial course. Baby steps. We're both in this for the long haul, and our marks will be the true symbol of our love. There's no going back from here. I-I guess... I'm mostly anxious. One can only assume how painful the marking will be. It's different for every fated soulmate."

Kirsch gave me a comforting squeeze on my arm, "We're here for you, Laura. We're all just a phone call away if you need us."

"I know that. You're an awesome friend," I say, smiling gratefully, "I just want this to be over with. The wait is smothering."

"Go through the day with the knowledge that by this time tomorrow, you and Carm will be mated for life." He eased, "No more anxieties. No more worries. No more stress."
"To love each other wholly and completely." I agree, biting my wavering lip. The professor chimed quietly that class was dismissed, and we barely made it a few feet away from the door as I collapsed into his arms, not caring that I was crying openly in a hallway full of students. They all glanced at my warily, though some had sympathetic looks.

"You've grown so much from the shy, lonely girl I bumped into in the elevator," He chuckles, rubbing my back, "You're so selfless and loyal to us. Carm's influence on you is for the better, and you both have improved so much. You're still growing into your own, I see that, but anyone can see that you're in a better place now than you were seven months ago."

"Feels like it's been seven years." I hiccupped, "I love all of you so much. I love Perry, who's become my second mom, I love Lafontaine, who's been the voice of reason and my best friend, I love Danny, who's the best sister I never had, I can't imagine a life without my partner in crime. And I love you because you're like, my over-protective older brother who would stop at nothing to make sure I was okay. You all aspire me to be better, that I have reasons to smile," I sniff, and he gives me a warm kiss on my forehead, "I've stopped trying to make sense of how everything is NOT NORMAL in my life ever since I sent that first letter. Whatever happens next, I'd take it with open arms."

"So, like, if aliens invaded our planet you'd be all for fighting in the apocalypse." He chuckles, causing me to smile.

Leave it to Kirsch to make jokes at a time like this.

As he held me, I calmed my breathing to a manageable level, and wiped my eyes free of tears. My heart still beat with growing anxiousness, but crying did help.

"You're so important, Laura." He said, tears glistening in his own eyes, "You are kind and wonderful and you bring happiness to everyone's day. It pained me to know that there was once a time where that spark left you—and you had yourself believe that you meant nothing to anyone. You're a beautiful soul, shining so bright that it's a beacon anyone can see from a mile away. Carmilla's a lucky woman to get to experience that light in the purest form. Makes me a little envious." He chuckles, giving me a wink, "But beggars can't be choosers."

"You have your own soulmate to worry about," I say teasingly, still reeling by the lovely words he comforted me with. His cheeks turned red and he chuckled.

"Hah. I suppose you're right."

"You two doing okay?"

"Well, we um. I sort of stole a kiss from her while we were at the movies and she slapped me." I threw my head back and laughed, "She then hurried out of the theater and I had to calm her down. She said it took her by surprise, and I apologized for it, having been caught up in the moment. But then she said she did like it so… I don't know. She's sort of hot and cold with me right now."

"Have you talked with her since?"

"Briefly—I asked her how her day was. It's not like we moved in the first day with each other like you and Carm, so on the whole we rarely see each other." He rubbed the back of his head, "We haven't really had a full conversation since. I'm kind of freaking out."

"There's no reason to. You know Danny, she follows the mantra of act now, think later. Either she'll come around, or you meet each other halfway. Let me ask you this: do you love her?" At his
doe-eyed look and nonsensical blabbering, I knew my answer. "Hehe. Well don't wait too long. The hardest part is keeping it to yourself."

His shoulders slumped, a defeated look on his face, "What if she's not ready to say it back?"

"Carm didn't say it back—and that's okay. That doesn't mean our soulmates love us any less. She's going to reveal her past to me tonight, so respectively, I have a feeling she'll be brave enough to tell me after. I have faith in her."

"When did you get so wise, little nerd?" He chuckles, ruffling up my hair affectionately. I giggled and swatted his hand away.

"Since I realized there's more to life than meets the eye. For so many years I've wasted grieving for my mother, hating my father, and thoughts of ending my life had entered my mind. Every day, now, I'm making up for all that lost time by creating new memories with the ones I love." I remind, standing on my tippy toes and giving Kirsch a kiss on his cheek. "You're an awesome guy, Kirsch. SJ would be so proud of you. I bet she's smiling from up there, giving you her blessings."

He sighs, running a hand through his hair, "I've always known SJ wasn't my soulmate—I was a fool for convincing myself that we could make it work. I was using her heart for my own selfishness and I never got the chance to apologize to her. That's what I was sad about, I suppose. Being in denial. Being ruled my hormones and emotions rather than my soul."

"We all have our temptations, Kirsch. But what you had with SJ you shouldn't write off as unreal. She was your girlfriend—she filled your heart for a short time, but it wasn't all for naught. Everything happens for a reason, Kirsch. Yes, you were muddled on your feelings, but you wanted to make SJ happy and she provided a good source of comfort for you. Don't look back at your time with her and cry because you weren't meant to be. Cry because she gave you the happiness and understood you for what you were at the time. She may be in heaven now, Kirsch, but she'll always be in your heart. Remember that, okay?"

At this, tears were falling down his face and now it was my turn to comfort him. I giggled tearfully as he wrapped his strong arms around me, his larger body dwarfing mine.

"I'm going to miss SJ." Kirsch said meekly, as if the girl was just leaving for a vacation and coming back soon.

"I know, honey. God, I know."

We stayed in the hallway for another few minutes, until Kirsch's sobs ceased and he could breathe properly. He then stepped apart from me, swaying on his feet before chuckling gently. "Wait. I'm supposed to be the one comforting you. How did this happen, bro?"

"We both needed it." I giggle, squeezing his arm. He smiles in return.

"Are you free right now? I… I kind need someone to play video games with." He asks shyly.

"Aw, sorry Kirsch," I coo, "But I have work until 7:00pm. Why don't you call Lafontaine? I'm sure they need a good excuse to have a break from the lab, okay?"

"O-okay." He says, and took in a deep breath, "I can do this."

I place both of my hands on his biceps, "You can do this."

He then smiled and placed a gentle kiss on my forehead, "We can do this."
I laugh tearfully. Yeah. Everything was going to be okay.

I tried my damned hardest to focus on my job, but bless Elsie for giving me a break tonight. I left an hour earlier from the restaurant because I kept on cleaning the same spot on the surface of the booth. I had a mental break-down in her arms as she dragged me to the employee lunch room, and calmed me down.

"It'll all be over soon, kid." She says kindly, patting me on the back, "This time tomorrow."

"I feel like all of my emotions are about to cave in at once." I sob, shaking my head, "Elsie, what was it like when you received your tattoos?"

"Oh, it stung like a bitch," The curly blonde supplied, "Betty received hers first. We were both walking back home from a night out with friends. We were drunk, so, we didn't realize what was happening at first. We were almost back at Silas when Betty slumped to the floor in pain, crying out to the heavens. It… hurts, you know? Seeing your soulmate suffering like that. You want nothing more than to take the pain away, but that's how The Marking has commenced for centuries. But while it's a painful process, it's also a beautiful one."

I looked at her strangely.

"Well, you see, your soulmate will mostly cry out in pain because in her mind, every memory that their partner has experienced becomes submerged with theirs. It's as if another brain is getting squished in with theirs. They're able to see their respective partners' past and present memories through their minds' eye. It's very hard to explain, but, you'll understand once you experience it. Don't freak out when all you see at first before your tattoo is a red blotch—that's Mother Earth and Father Time designing the imprint for you. Then, it's blessed by The Moon several seconds later, which is when the actual tattoo appears." My soul mark burned in anxiousness, causing me to wince. Elsie smiled warmly at me, pulling me into another hug. "Betty's always asking about you, ya know. She's always like, 'How's that tiny gay who I used to dorm with?' She'd be so excited to hear about this. I… know you two never got along, but I understand that you weren't in the proper state of mind back then. When this whole shebang is over, we should all go on a double date to catch up."

I smile, eyes glistening with tears for the umpteenth time that day. "Th-that'd be nice, Elsie. Th-thank you."

"You're welcome, honey. Now go on home to your soulmate—you're in no state to work tonight." She said, shooing me away.

I giggled tearfully and gathered my things. I quickly checked my phone and my heart soared when I received a text from Carmilla.

**Useless Vampire (6:23pm)**- Hey love, I'm hanging out with Danny and Perry in the lounge room. I miss you.

**Cupcake (6:24pm)**- I miss you too! I'll see you in a few, Elsie let me out early today. How're you feeling right now, baby?

**Useless Vampire (6:26 pm)**- Like I'm about to have another mental breakdown… our soul mark just WONT STOP BURNING.
Cupcake (6:27 pm)- Hang tight, sweetie. I'll be home soon to give you kisses.

Useless Vampire (6:28 pm)- Thank the Moon. I'm not sure how long I can sit this out. I feel it now, Lau. It's almost time.

I swallowed thickly as I walked a bit faster, and tucked my phone in my pocket. The night air seemed to get cooler, as I felt the breeze, and fallen leaves blew past me. I stared up at the sky, taking notice of how there were many constellations out tonight. My mom always used to tell me that the stars were Father Time's way of telling Mother Earth that he loves her. Every time a new star was born, it was a symbol of their love, and the universe was in balance. When a star exploded, it meant they were arguing, because Mother Earth desired to be with her soulmate but the forces of nature prohibited them.

I loved her stories. When she told of how the universe began, I felt as if I were there.

Thankfully I made it safely back to campus, finding Carmilla in the lounge room with Danny and Perry. It was an adorable sight to see. The broody girl had her arms crossed, a scowl on her face as Danny braided her hair. They were all in pajamas already, a bowl of popcorn between them and the television playing the final scene of *Mean Girls*. Perry was giggling at Carmilla's condition, a curling iron in her hand.

"You look like you're having fun." I cooed softly, causing Carmilla's eyes to widen. She struggled to get up, a desperate look on her face, but Danny held her down.

"You're going to ruin it!" She wailed, keeping a firm hold on Carm's shoulder.

"I haven't seen my fucking soulmate all day, damn it..." She whines, slumping.

"Honestly, dear, you can last two more minutes." Perry agrees, giving her a gentle pat on the knee.

I laugh and place my bookbag on the couch, coming over to wrap my arms around her. Carmilla visibly relaxed, though I felt her hands shaking. I grasped her hand in mine, bringing it up to my lips and kissing them. When she looked at me, her eyes were glistening with tears, and I wiped my thumb to clear them away.

"How are you, my love?"

"B-better, now that you're here." She breathes, causing Danny to gag. Perry narrowed her eyes and slapped Danny on the arm. I didn't say anything more as I just held her while Danny finished braiding.

"There! You look beautiful!" She eased, clapping her hands.

"I look like a girl." Carmilla grumbled.

"Uh, Carm, you are a girl." I chuckled at her, and she just groaned in response. I motioned to Danny and Perry. "Now, what do you say?"

She sighs, leaning into me as I helped her up. "I—um, thanks. For everything."

"You're welcome, sweetie. Anytime." Perry says, pulling her into a hug. "Oh, and please remember to call us. When the final sign happens, we want to be there to help you."

"We will. Until then, Perr." I say, giving her hand a squeeze, and turned to give Danny a hug.
She giggled and gave us both kisses on the cheeks. We waved our goodbyes and we were off.

Carmilla's walk was sluggish back to our dorm, her gaze flickering at the stars. We didn't say anything to each other, but the silence wasn't suffocating. I then felt a tug at my sleeve and she pointed to the campus pond, having a desire to stay there for a few moments. I smile and pull her in for a kiss. I held her hand as we decided to sit cross-legged on the grass, staring out to the pond. The moon's reflection could be seen, shining brightly on the surface.

Silas was the most beautiful at night. Shadows danced along the campus lawn, the library, the tall castle-like dormitories. Cicadas sang into the cool air, the gentle waves from the pond calming our senses. Trees draped over us like a canopy, with beautiful cherry blossoms sprouting.

It was peaceful here, without any Silas students roaming around. There was an unseen energy here, as if the pond was filled with magic.

We didn't say anything for a while. I could tell Carmilla was trying to control her breathing, closing her eyes and mumbling numbers to herself. I gently reached over to take her hand, rubbing her knuckles and bringing it to my lips for a kiss.

"All my life, I've convinced myself I wasn't deserving of happiness," She began, her voice sounding far away. "Soulmate or otherwise, there was no one out there who was going to care deeply for me. The world I once knew was filled with sadness. Starvation, contempt, and hopelessness were the only emotions I'd ever known. I feared to think of what lied ahead tomorrow. Every day was merely a battle of will, a coin flip. A question of: how worse can this get? How long will it be until I break? I've gone off the deep end too many times to count. I found... solace there. My mind was in a vulnerable state where nothing else mattered, and I allowed myself to feed into those demons. It was easy, to give in. To let myself go. To convince myself that I am worthless. I was foolish. I did not know any better."

I swallowed thickly, taking both of my hands in hers. I did not speak—this was Carmilla's moment. She was revealing her soul to me, and all she needed was someone to listen.

"I was born Mircalla, on September 24th, 1993. My parents were odd folks, having distanced themselves from society—I have twelve other biological siblings. We were poor, my father only having a job as a banker and my mother staying home to take care of us. It was a tough life... some nights' father didn't bring enough money home and we went without eating. Or mother would become ill (mostly due to stress and body pains) and we would have to fend for ourselves. Disaster struck when I was four years old. Father lost his job because he was caught making a fraudulent check, attempting to keep the false money in reserves. Then... child services came... and separated all of us..." She drew out a tired breath, and my heart broke for her.

"I don't remember much of what happened that night. I was hiding in my closet, hearing the screams of my brothers and sisters as they were taken away. I figured that if I hid long enough, they would forget about me and I could make a run for it. I wish I knew then that the world was a dangerous place for a four-year-old to be by herself. I blacked out completely when they eventually found me, all pathetic and crying. I haven't seen any of my family since." I positioned myself so I was cuddled beside her, rubbing the small of her back and resting my head on her shoulder. She gratefully craned her head to kiss my cheek.

"Two years I spent in an orphanage, confused, and unsure of my future. I refused to play with the other children and kept to myself. The old woman who cared for us was despicable. If we misbehaved, she would spank us so hard marks were left behind. My darkest memory of that place... was when she handcuffed me in the cellar and left me there for three days. I had stolen rations from the kitchen, and that was my punishment. No one was brave enough to stand up to her... except for
me... and we were all grateful when she passed away in her sleep. Then we were all moved to another orphanage, a bigger one, but it certainly wasn't any better. The older kids, who were roughly twelve or thirteen when we were all barely six, were hard on us. Now we had to worry about getting our lunches taken away rather than getting smacked on the wrist."

"Then, I was adopted my first foster family. They were an older couple, who didn't have the chance to try for a baby when they were younger. They were lovely to me. If you are a young child and in the system, then by law you only stay with one foster family for two years. By the time you're eighteen, you're a legal adult and can decide on your own what to do. So, naturally, I cycled through at least four different families over the last decade of my life, before Mama legalized the papers and adopted me when I was fourteen years old. Those years were a blur. It was always the same routine: new parents, new home, new school to attend for one semester. It was during these years of my adolescence I decided to cut. It was the only constant thing in my life at the time, and I didn't know of the harmful side effects. I cut. I bled. I cried. It was the only time where I truly felt vulnerable and allowed myself to feel. I was... twelve, the first time I tried to commit suicide. I was upset because it was my last week with my final foster family, since they hadn't decided to keep me. That meant I was going back in the system. I decided that in that moment, there was no future for me. I'd rather die than be stuck in another orphanage. So, I planned my death weeks in advance. It was the one horrid thing I actually looked forward to." She laughed bitterly, and tears glistened in my eyes. A world without Carmilla Karnstein was a lonely one. "So, I stabbed myself. Several times in my thighs, my ribs, and my abdomen, wishing for death to take me. If the parents hadn't come home soon enough to find me a bloodied mess on the floor, I wouldn't have made it. I was hospitalized for several months until they put me back there, on probation, with a new therapist to aid me in my recovery. I had decided that since people wanted to keep me alive, I might as well do so—but that didn't mean I had to subscribe to acting like a human. The other children at the orphanage were afraid of me, spreading rumors that I was a ghost, or an apparition. I went mute for a few years. It was easier that way. No one bothered me."

She was quiet now, thinking back to those dreadful times. I cooed softly at her, whispering sweet nothings, wrapping my arms fully around her waist. She squeezed my arm in thanks. "Just when things started to look bleak... there was Mama. Strutting into the orphanage looking proud and determined. There was something about her that was... fascinating. She had no business to be there. She was a millionaire, for fucks' sake, she had no time to travel to the shittiest place in Styria. Of course, the nun put on her widest smile for her and welcomed her with opened arms. Mama found me, laying on the grass in the garden—it was one of my special discoveries, where I would read my books in peace and forget about the universe." She shook her head, tears glistening in her eyes, "Mama saved me—somehow, she opened her heart to me and I was begging for her affection. There was such genuine love and affection simply seeping through her veins that I was overwhelmed. We had a long talk that day. She didn't say who she was at first or ask me my name, we just... talked. About the most random things—about my dreams, my desires to get the hell away from here... and she listened to me. When she had to go, I just remember breaking down and losing it. She was the only person in my entire life who noticed me. When I was bouncing from family to family, or orphanage to orphanage, no decision was made for me. That was the moment—when she got up to leave and told me that she enjoyed speaking with me—that I knew I couldn't stay there anymore. I had to be with her, and I saw in her eyes she wanted me to leave as well."

An overwhelming feeling of respect came over me for Dr. Lilita Morgan. She was truly an amazing woman.

"I was living with Mama for over a year until I met Ell. It was my freshman year of high school—and I was a nervous wreck. It was my first time ever in a school system, and I didn't know how to act or what to do. The teachers struggled to get me to participate because I was still mute. There was always this girl who sat next to me—bright red hair, gorgeous green eyes... a pretty smile... and she
would always talk to me."

"At first, I was apprehensive, wondering what her motives were. Then I saw she was cheery with everybody, and preferred to be with me the most. She saw that I was sad and wanted me to feel welcome, the precious girl. She had so much love in her heart she hated it whenever someone was injured or getting bullied. She would always step in to help me, if I was ever a victim, and called over a teacher. She was my angel during that time—my rock. Even though I was the quiet one, she confided in me with everything, and I loved listening to her talk. I seriously would have never made it through high school without her." There was a heaviness in her voice, and I braced myself for what was to come. "Things were… looking up. I was seeing a therapist, I had the greatest friend in the world (whom I was slowly getting a developing crush on), and an adopted family who loved me. And then… everything went to shit. We were walking out of my piano recital, my new family there to cheer me on. The day had started out wonderfully. We were about to cross the street to Mama's car, when the light turned yellow, and thinking that it was okay, she decided to run. She was blissfully unaware of the oncoming traffic, calling out my name to join her, but I stayed frozen stiff. The world seemed frozen in time as the vehicle rammed into her. I blinked, seeing her figure in the middle of the street in one moment, and then seconds later, her body pressed up against the front of the car, bloodied and lifeless. Everything that ensued after was havoc."

She was sobbing now, reaching out for me. I decided then to prop myself on her lap, wrapping my legs around her waist and rocked her back and forth. I left a trail of kisses on her neck to soothe her, not saying anything still. I knew that her story wasn't finished yet, but she needed a break. We held each other for a long moment, Carmilla's shaky sobs quieting to sniffles. My throat hurt from holding in tears—but I had to be strong for her. She listened to my tale of woe, it was only fair if I did the same.

She hummed softly, collecting her thoughts. As she pulled apart from me she placed a thankful kiss on my lips, her eyes full of love and adoration. She then rests her face just above my breasts, listening to my heart beat, feeling the rise and fall of my chest.

Poor Carmilla. Poor Ell. They were both so young.

"I was eighteen when I tried to take my life again—and this time I refused to be stopped. My emotions and regrets were still so raw from Ell, even though it's been a few years since. I had convinced myself that there was no more purpose for me, that everything was going to shit and my adopted family no longer loved me. I had dropped out of high school, finding no desire to pursue an education. I had a stash of drugs ready to overdose with, a rope for the aesthetic. I was so ready for death to take me, *again*, but it seemed the universe had other plans. Mattie burst into the bathroom then, having been suspicious and worried of my behavior the past few months. She was screaming at me, telling me how stupid I was, what a horrid decision I was making. I growled at her, reminding her with every fiber of my being that she was wrong. That this was the destined path for me. That I deserved to die—there was nothing for me in this world. I had placed my head through the rope and yanked it, but Mattie was quick. She grasped both of my arms, and screamed something I'll never forget. She said, "Carmilla Margaret Karnstein, if you give up now, YOUR SOULMATE WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU!" …the silence that followed between us was pungent. It was enough to make me cry for forgiveness, and force myself out of death's clutches. That night, oddly enough, I had my first dream of you."

"Each day, you give me a new reason to smile. A new reason to be happy. A new reason to be thankful for all the blessings I have been given in this life. You are my beloved star. My angel. My
cupcake. Your presence is just enough to remind me that I am worth it. That my feelings are valid. That I can make a difference in this lifetime. That I'm strong enough. Brave enough. You've taught me how to find happiness within myself, Laura. And I'll spend the rest of my days reminding you of how much I love you!"

I allowed myself to cry now, flinging my arms around her with such force it knocked us both to the ground. My hands were tangled in her hair as I peppered kisses all over her face, heart swelling with love. She was laughing as well, tears streaming down her face, grasping onto my shoulders.

"You're so beautiful, Carm," I managed between kisses. "You're so strong. You're so brave—," Carmilla hiccuped, burying her face in the crook of my neck. "I love you so much."

"As I love you, my beloved." She coos, her voice muffled underneath my hair.

We stayed like that for another moment, holding each other, minds still reeling from before. Our soul marks burned intensely now, causing us both to groan in pain.

"It's almost time." Carmilla says through gritted teeth, gripping at my arm. I nod in understanding.

"And then it'll all be over. Come on, love. Let's get back to our dorms and try to get some sleep, okay?" Carmilla nods, unable to formulate a response. I hold onto her, wincing as my foot fell asleep and I needed her support to keep me steady.

We tumbled into our dorm room, emotionally and physically exhausted. Carmilla fell onto the bed first, not bothering to change her clothes as she pulled me beside her. For the most part, we tried our best to get some sleep, but our souls had other plans.

Chapter End Notes

Fun Fact, "Her Eyes Were Like Stars" was actually going to be the title of this story, before I settled on "Sky Full of Stars". And my first wlw story actually wasn't going to even be about Carmilla--it would be about a young farm girl, who is struggling in her small town and wishes to explore the world. She creates a jar of origami stars every night since her father's death to help cope with her loneliness. Then, one day, a mysterious, attractive women suddenly crashes into her barn with nothing on her person to identify who she is. The young farm girl is suddenly thrust into a world of lies, confusion, and unsure of her future now that this mysterious woman is here. I was also thinking about having it be an interracial relationship and having the mysterious woman be a woman of color! What do you creampuffs think? I don't know, it sounds a little bit like Wynonna Earp now, so I'm hesitant on ever publishing it. Who knows what my future is at this point. *shrugs*. 
Truly, Madly, Deeply

Chapter Summary

Laura and Carmilla receive their soul marks. All is well.
(mentions of past abuse- explicit. mentions of suicide- explicit).

Chapter Notes

Prepare for a lengthy author's note!

First of all, I'd just like to give a big shout-out to everyone who's read, commented, or left kudos on this beloved story. Thank you so much. It's hard to believe that a year ago today I was emotionally unstable and legitimately needed to watch Carmilla in order to be happy. To feel something. To find comfort in the fact that yes, I am a lesbian, girls CAN like other girls and that's okay, that is nothing to be ashamed of. Last year I was an emotional wreck for a number of things. I was confused with my sexuality and my great aunt was in hospice care, after years of being sick.

She passed away the day I came out to my parents. November and December were rough for me; while most people were out celebrating with their family and friends, I was stuck in my room, sad, lonely, and dangerously suicidal. Two big blows took their emotional toll on me and it was worse that I knew I was sad, I just didn't know how to get out of that head space or how to cope. Some days I couldn't get out of bed and I skipped class. I would watch Carmilla for hours until I cried, feeling something at least, and then I slept. I was so angry and upset over my parents unwilling to accept my sexuality that I wasn't able to fully grieve over my aunt. So I wouldn't be surprised if this year I finally have the capability to do that, and spend at least a day off the internet so I can be one with my emotions. (Thankfully they wouldn't be so bad to a point of wanting to die, because now I have every reason to be happy and keep living to face a new day).

I started writing Sky Full of Stars because I was lonely. Writing has always been my way of coping with my emotions, and I wanted to reach out to people. To talk to people. To ask them how their day went. I wanted to make a difference with my story and reach out just by the small chance that someone out there, was looking at the same sky I was and feeling the same things. That I could leave these letters for them and they could find peace within themself too. I didn't expect for there to be so many of you! And I am grateful you all enjoy this and leave your kind words. When I started writing this story I was lonely because I didn't have any friends in real life. I was tired and I was scared to reach out, for fear of having my heart broken. But now, over the last six months I have met a core group of friends through choir who are all queer and super cool, and I don't even have to try to be someone else because they accept me as I am. Now I don't need to fight myself to be happy. I just... am happy.

It's ironic that I upload the chapter where Laura and Carmilla receive their soulmates three days before I meet mine :'). I remember watching the videos from last year's Comic Con and Fan Expo thinking, "one day, I'm going to tell Natasha and Elise how much I love them and thank them for saving my life". And now I finally get to! I'll probably be
crying so much I can't even get a word out, but just seeing them would even be enough for me. Just being in that room. With all my other fellow creampuffs. I can't wait. I promise to take pictures.

It gets better, loves. To love or to not, to be happy or to not, to die or to not. It gets better. All is temporary. Whatever struggle you're dealing with right now is going to heal itself, and so will you. Have faith in yourself that tomorrow will be a better day. That someone, somewhere, is looking at the same sky that you are right now. And they're thinking of you.

Special shout-out to my lovely friend, Squishy Prince, or (Jellylovesdoughnuts on Tumblr) for helping me beta this chapter. And to brittletoast, bloodycreampuff, attack-on-sarcasm, and dont-think-just-let-it-flow, for being awesome humans. *gives you all giant hugs*

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"your hand touching mine. this is how galaxies collide." -Sanober Khan

It was a long night. The hours seemed to drag as Carmilla and I lay in bed, holding each other. Every so often one of us would get up to stretch their tired limbs, or reach for a glass of water.

Our bodies were so tense. Our souls were ablaze with emotion, unable to make sense of the universe, our planets slowly aligning themselves in the very fabric of space-time. It was difficult to explain.

The clock struck twelve AM when I felt it. Pain suddenly shot up my right shoulder, like someone was slowly pouring a pot of boiling water against it. I jolted from my stupor, biting down into my pillow and wishing for Carmilla to come back. I was lying face down on our bed. It was so hot. My brow was thick with sweat as I screamed, unable to comprehend what was happening to me.

Carmilla came running back from the terrace (as she needed a moment to look at the stars), a worried, frantic look on her face.

"LAURA!" She exclaimed, throwing herself onto the bed. She hissed as she pressed her fingers against my soul mark, feeling the burning sensation.

"Fuck… fuck, it's so hot. It's so hot." I barely managed, clutching at my chest, slumped over in pain.

"I'm here, love. What do you need me to do?"

"T-take e-everything off." I whimpered, before another scream escaped my lips. She nods, helping me out of my clothes. I was stark naked now, but the heat wouldn't subside, and my mind was working overtime. I risked a glance over at my right shoulder, letting out a shriek as a dark red
blotch began to take form. It felt as if someone was scraping a knife into my skin.

Carmilla pulled out her phone in haste, calling our friends for help. I couldn't understand the words that were coming from her lips, as suddenly the pain consumed me whole.

The world was spinning. I couldn't make sense of where Carmilla was, or that our beloved friends had burst into the room seconds later. All I remembered before my unconscious took over, was Carmilla's whispers of love into my ear, and her cool arms wrapped around me.

And then, I was floating in her memories.

"Daddy! Daddy's home!" Exclaimed Carmilla, bouncing up and down excitedly, her adorable raven-haired curls moving with her. She was hungry and tired, though seeing her father again made everything a bit better.

"My princess Mircalla. I've missed you, cupcake." He rumbled tiredly, picking his daughter up in a hug.

"Mama's sick again today... so she didn't cook us food. D-did you bring something home, daddy?"

"I'm sorry, cutie, it was a stressful day at work. I didn't have the money this time. I promise I'll try again tomorrow."

Carmilla frowns, lip pouting. "You say that all the time."

"I know. I know. But this time I mean it."

I couldn't make sense of the universe outside of her reality. Where was I? What's happening? Why am I like this?

Poor, poor Carmilla.

Four years of waking up, wondering when there would be a better tomorrow. Four years of being bullied by her older siblings. Four years of training herself to become a master thief. She was tiny—she could get away with things like that. This was not her home. She deserved better than this.

"Search the entire house. Make sure there's no kid left behind. We need to rescue every single one." Said a gruff voice, and the other man made a noise of affirmation.

"I'm on my way to the top floor, sir." Carmilla rocked back and forth in her closet, unsure of what was happening. She was scared. She wasn't sure why these cruel people were separating her family. They were all hanging out in the living room, playing board games, when big people in large suits extracted them one by one. All her siblings scattered, and she could hear her parents' cry of protest somewhere in the home. Her heavy breathing and sobs must have given her away, because the man slowly opened the closet doors.

"Hi, sweetie. I'm here to take you somewhere safe. This home isn't fit for a child like you anymore." He said kindly, and Carmilla flinched away from him. "I need you to trust me, okay? You cannot live here. I want to help you."

Carmilla, upon hearing the screams of her siblings, decided that it was best to comply with the strange man. She wobbled on her feet, crying, as she screamed at him, attempting to fight him with every fiber she had left. But she was too tired and hungry to make a run for it. Darkness consumed her.
I let out a pained gasp, clutching Carmilla's body. I couldn't speak. I was still in shock from what had transpired. I blinked around the room to see Perry, Lafontaine, Danny, and Kirsch giving me worried looks. Carmilla had her body draped around mine, weakly reaching out for Lafontaine.

"How much longer?" She whimpers, causing them to place a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"See how the red splotches on her soul mark are becoming more distinct? Right now, her soul is sifting through your memories. Keep holding her. She doesn't recognize this reality, she's traveling through your soul. But pray that this will be over soon. Be patient."

"I love you, Laura. You're so beautiful. Please come back to me." She croaks, but I couldn't comprehend it. I lost all consciousness again.

Carmilla clutched the rations in her hand, running down the hallway of the rickety orphanage. She stuffed the food in her mouth, wincing as the cook yelled after her. The other children glanced at her in awe, whispering amongst themselves. She then bumped into something cold and unforgiving.

The caretaker glared down at the little girl, arms folded and a scowl on her face. "Now Mircalla, what do you have there?"

She shrieks, hiding the food behind her back. "N-nothing, m-ma'am." Her voice was tired and weak.

"Selfish pest. Naughty girls like you need to be punished. I'll make sure you listen to me this time." She growled, grabbing Carmilla by the arm. She was dragged across the orphanage and into The Chamber, the stuff of nightmares. She had a set of handcuffs and attached them to Carmilla's wrists. There, Carmilla stayed for three nights, with no food. She never stole from the kitchens ever again.

I was crying, ragged breaths escaping from my lips as I felt every emotion Carmilla was going through those years. My precious soulmate had suffered so much, undeserving of this treatment. The memories then blurred together, as if I was watching them from a movie screen. Carmilla moving from different foster families. Carmilla getting bullied at the orphanage. Carmilla cutting herself. All of which were painful memories.

And they were only going to get worse from here.

"Mircalla… we're sorry to tell you this, but we've decided not to keep you."

The young teen's eyes were filled with dread, "W-what?"

"We're not ready to be parents yet. You're a lovely girl, but being with you so far… it wasn't what we expected. We're having trouble relating to you, sweetie, your history is… concerning. You need to be in an environment where it is safe, and there are people who can help you."

Carmilla screamed, shoving them aside and ran up to her room. Her breaths came out ragged, and she was angrily hitting herself. No one wanted to keep her? Fine. She could fix that. She planned her suicide weeks in advance.

She would stab herself until she bled out. It was the only way. No one cared for her. She didn't have a soulmate. When she died, no one would mourn her absence.

The pain was excruciating. It stung, she bled, and she cried, but the numbness she felt afterwards gave her hope that she would leave this Earth soon.

"C-carmilla," I gargled, reaching out for her. My voice came out distorted and crazed. "Carmilla,
Carmilla, Carmilla…"

"I'm here, love. You're doing so well. It's almost over soon." She hissed, pulling me closer to her.

I desperately held onto her, trying to hold onto my consciousness, but another memory seeped through.

Carmilla stretched her limbs as she trudged into her garden. Another lonely day at the orphanage had passed. No one bothered her. The caretaker (who was far better than the first one she'd stayed at) gave the gloomy girl a comforting smile. She no longer had the desire to kill herself, though depressing thoughts clouded her mind on the daily. Demons were constantly consuming every inch of her soul. She did not have the strength or willpower to keep fighting.

Tears sprinkled her eyes as she focused on her book, curling up underneath the weeping willow tree.

It was a sad day in the world of Carmilla Karnstein.

She was dozing off to sleep when she heard footsteps against the tall grass, and her head peeked with interest. There was a new woman watching over her, standing beside the caretaker. She was beautiful. Tall, had to be more than six feet, with dark ebony skin. She wore a business suit and tie, having an air of authority about her. Her posture was stiff and professional, though her face betrayed her. She wore a kind, intrigued smile, the notion meeting her eyes the moment she caught gazes with Carmilla.

"You have a beautiful home, my friend." She chimed, her voice music to Carmilla's ears.

"I take good care of my children. Every one of them has a story, everyone is precious to me. Was everything found to your liking?"

"What is her story?" She questioned, nodding towards the lonely girl.

"Sad, Lilita. The woman sighs, tears glistening in her eyes, "The poor thing had experienced so much. No foster family desired to take her in. We've decided to keep her here until she's eighteen, so she could legally be on her own. But not a day goes by where I worry about her."

"Do you mind if I have a moment alone with her?"

"You can try. She's mute, Lilita. Has been since the day she arrived."

"Thank you, Georgette. I'll meet you up front," The other woman nodded stiffly and hurried off, leaving Lilita and Carmilla alone. She then cautiously sat beside Carmilla on the grass, who shied away from her.

"Hello, darling," She eased softly, her eyes caring. "This is a lovely garden, isn't it?"

Carmilla didn't respond to the strange woman. Her gaze flickered back to the book.

"My favorite is planting basil. It just smells so heavenly. Have you ever tasted basil before?" She shook her head no. "Oh, come now. You have—it's on pizza. I'm sure you've had that delicacy before." At this, Carmilla's eyes widened and she nods.

Lilita chuckled at her, and peered over her book, "Hmm? Now what is it are you reading?" Carmilla showed her the cover. "Oh, I see. The Great Gatsby—an excellent choice. You have good taste in literature, darling."
Carmilla blushed when she received the praise, her stomach churning with nervousness. "Personally, I was quite pleased with Leonardo Di Caprio's depiction of Gatsby in the film. He is quite attractive, non?"

The gloomy girl's face scrunched with disgust, causing Lilita to laugh. "Ooh, I understand. You were more attracted to Daisy, weren't you?" She claimed in a teasing voice, and Carmilla nodded. "That is fine, love. I accept everyone regardless of their preferences with open arms. You need not to be fearful of me."

At this, Carmilla relaxed in the stranger's presence. She was good. She was to be trusted. "My name is Dr. Lilita Morgan, but you can call me Mama. What is your name, sweetheart?"

Carmilla hesitated. She hasn't spoken in years. Her vocal chords stung. "C… Carmilla."

"That's quite a lovely name, dearest. Well. I'm afraid it's time for me to go. But it was lovely meeting with you, Carmilla."

Lilita's warmth left Carmilla's side for just a second. But it was enough to trigger the poor girl, and all she knew in that moment she needed the older woman to stay. She started crying, desperate pleas escaping her mouth as she reached out for her, and Lilita accepted the gesture with open arms. For a while, the two simply held each other, Carmilla deciding in that moment she needed to go home with her Mama.

The red blotches had started just before my shoulder, and they covered my entire arm, stopping at my elbow. My soul mark was still burning, but Lafontaine was right—images were starting to form. It was only a matter of seconds until The Moon will give us its blessing so we could truly see our tattoo.

"Carmilla," I uttered again, my voice just above a whisper.

"Laura, look," Danny said with a gasp, tears streaming down her face. Kirsch placed a comforting hand on her arm, "They're so beautiful…"

I whimper, shifting my gaze from Carmilla to our tattoo. My arm was covered in red scabs, my skin bubbling. Though, on the edge of my shoulder blade, a beautiful hue of blue began to paint my skin. The first cluster of stars. I recognized the constellation—Orion.

"Hey! I really liked that drawing!" She exclaimed, a welcoming smile on her face. She was pretty, with pigtails bouncing at her shoulders, and a bright pink tee. She had cornered Carmilla after class was over, taking the gloomy girl by surprise. She glanced up at the other girl, raising an eyebrow. "I wish I could draw. All I can do is stick figures."

Carmilla rolled her eyes and tucked in her knees to her chest. She began to scribble into her notebook again.

Ell smiled. "You don't talk much, do you?" At Carmilla's disgruntled look, Ell laughed. "That's okay. My mom says I talk too much. So, we're even."

The bubbly girl decided to plop herself besides Carmilla, the two leaning against the tree. "Hey. My name's Ell, by the way."

Even though she was mentally wishing for the girl to go away, a happy buzz filled her chest. It was… nice. Warm. Hastily, Carmilla scribbled her name on her artbook, and Ell's face lit up happily.
"Carmilla, huh? Cool. I think we're going to be great friends."

The pain was subsiding now, as my conscious mind was sifting through the last of Carmilla's memories. I was slowly beginning to make sense of my reality, my breathing becoming even once more, as I felt Carmilla's fingers squeezing my hand. I took in a deep breath as I glanced at her tired face, her lips curled up into a proud smile.

"You're doing so well, my love. Look. Look at our stars." Tears streamed down my face as I complied, gasping in shock as my skin was, in fact, filled with tiny constellations. There was only a small speck of red left, curling around my elbow.

"Carmilla." Mattie was growling, her hands shaking violently. "Don't do it. Don't fucking do it."

"There's no purpose for me here, Mattie. I'm worthless. God has tested me this whole time, and whoops, looks like I've been failing. Do you know how difficult it is? To find goodness in your life after experiencing so much sorrow? Ell was taken from me. She was my angel—my only hope. Without her now, I am nothing. If that's not a true testament to my fate here, then I don't know what is."

"What about Mama, and everything she's done for you?" Mattie whimpered.

"She'll get over it eventually. She's a busy woman, she'll adopt another child once I'm gone."

"What about me? I'm your sister, for fuck's sake."

Carmilla didn't say anything, her fingers dangerously close to pulling the rope tighter around her neck.

"Carm, you're not thinking straight, please. Don't do this to yourself. You have a whole life ahead of you!"

"WHAT GOOD IS MY LIFE IF I HAVE NO PURPOSE." She screamed angrily, tears streaming down her face. "I am nothing to anyone."

"Carmilla Margaret Karnstein," She hissed, pointing an angry finger, "If you give up now, your soulmate will never forgive you!" That seemed to snap Carmilla out of her daze, as her heart panged with guilt. "Think about it, dearest! She's out there somewhere, waiting for you! If... if you end your life now, the repercussions of that against your soulmate is dangerous! She will spend the rest of her life wondering, wishing, waiting for you to come, only to realize that YOU ARE DEAD." She shakes her head, "That's hardly fair!"

Mattie pulled the soulmate card. It was enough to cause her sister to break, releasing the rope from her neck and tumbled to the floor. Mattie caught her dear sister, protecting her from every evil.

That night, a shadowed figure appeared in her dreams, comforting her, giving her hope. She cried tears of joy.

I blinked several times, the last of Carmilla's memories fading away, my brain slowly coming back to the universe. I took in big gulps of air, placing a hand to my racing heart, and wearily glanced over to my tattoo.

The Marking was complete—Mother Earth and Father Time had fulfilled their purpose, and with the Moon's blessing, Carmilla's soul was safely merged with mine. The whole process wasn't complete yet, as Carmilla still had to receive her tattoo, but the love in this room was overwhelming.
I briefly glanced towards my friends, who's eyes were all puffy and red from crying. Lafontaine was grasping onto Perry for support, a beaming, proud look on their face. Tears were streaming down Perry's face, though a wide, loving smile was plastered on her lips. Danny's face was filled with awe and adoration, as she clutched at Kirsch's arm. Kirsch ran his fingers through his hair, blabbering nonsensical words, like he couldn't comprehend what had just taken place, though his eyes were filled with wonder.

I then shifted my body to face Carmilla, her expression alive with every emotion imaginable. She craned her neck to place kisses on every star that was imprinted on my tattoo, the notion sending tingles up my body. She then presses her lips against mine, a gentle greeting. I sigh in ecstasy—every loving caress she gives me now is as if I'm experiencing them for the first time, with everything heightened tenfold.

"Wow." I breathed, cueing everyone in knowing laughter. Carmilla chuckled quietly, caressing my cheek. "Your soul… it's so blue."

"Blue?" She asked, raising her eyebrow.

"Yes. It's so pure. Calming. Infinite. Ethereal," I hum softly, pecking her nose, "All of the things I love you for."

"I was expecting my soul to be black as the night." She says cheekily, and I swatted her shoulder.

"Far from it, Carm."

"How are you feeling, sweetie?" Perry asks, placing a hand on my forehead. I no longer felt warm, nor did my tattoo burn.

I felt so alive.
Happy.
In love.

"Tired." I settle for, pulling the sheets higher to cover my breasts and snuggle closer to my soulmate.

She wraps her arms around me, "Then rest."

"But Carm… you don't have your tattoo yet. I can't sleep now."

"We have an army of friends keeping watch. I'll be fine, I promise. Take a nap, even if it is for a few moments."

"Okay." I smile. "Hey, Carm. Ell is with my mother right now, watching all of this, and thinking how proud she is of you," I rub her shoulders, "She loves you so much."

"Thank you, Laura." Carmilla managed, placing a loving kiss on my forehead. I squeezed her arm, before turning on my side in a comfortable position, and sleep happily took me.

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Carmilla stared at her soulmate in complete awe. Her breathing had calmed to a manageable level, as she gently traced her fingers across their tattoo. Laura was fast asleep in her arms, as she
cradled her, and a bewildered scoff escaped her lips.

"What's up?" Danny chuckled, coming over to hand her friend a cup of tea.

"This is my soulmate." She gaped, causing Danny to roll her eyes.

"Yeah, goth girl. We know that—you haven't shut up about her for months."

"This is my soulmate and I'm in love with her." She laughed tearfully, blinking, "...look. That's our soul mark!"

"Jeez. Who would have thought Carmilla would be the emotional sap during The Marking?" Kirsch chuckles, giving her a kind smile. "I would have originally presumed Laura."

"She's an emotional sap every other day of the week." Lafontaine supplied, and Carmilla glared at them. "How're you feeling, kid?"

Physically, I feel anxious. Tired. My soul mark is still burning as if someone pressed a hot metal plate against it. Plus, I can't place a finger on my emotions right now." She mumbled, pulling Laura closer to her, placing her head against Laura's shoulder. Her soulmate hummed quietly in her sleep, snaking her arms around Carmilla's neck as a reflex. "Thank you all so much for being here."

"Don't mention it, Carm. We're your friends and we love you." Perry said earnestly.

There was a comforting silence. Then, Carmilla felt it just as Laura had. A hot, burning sensation shot up her arm, and she almost dropped Laura in shock. She cursed, jolting her soulmate awake in a panic, and her friends to re-adjust their positions in the room.

It's show time.

"Mommy, can you tell me a story?" Asked little Laura, as she was tucked into bed. Her mother chuckled and gave her a loving kiss on her cheek.

"What do you want to hear, love?"

The tiny girl thought for a moment, before her eyes lit up. "The story of Mother Earth and Father Time!"

"Honey, you've heard that story a thousand times."

"It's my favorite, mommy."

Alright, alright pumpkin. I'll tell you." She smiles, holding her daughter's hand, "In the beginning, there was darkness. There was nothing. Then there was a song, a quiet melody, and the first star appeared. Then, because of the star, there was light—the day, to separate night. Father Time awoke from his slumber, overwhelmed by the power he was blessed with. Beautiful arias came from his lips as he created more stars, the planets, space... and he was at peace. Father Time looked at all his creations with pride, though a longing feeling filled his heart. He realized he was not yet finished with creating the universe. As he floated through his galaxy, he lamented of his loneliness."

A quiet sniffle came from Laura, "Poor Father Time."

"I know, dearest," Her mother eased, and began again, "The Gods have heard his prayer, and blessed him with a partner. From the ribs of his body and the dust of stars, Mother Earth was created for him. She was beautiful. She'd only exist for a day, but she already had Father Time
wrapped around her finger. They loved each other so much. Together, they finished creating the universe, and Mother Earth gave his planets soil, created the animals, the trees, and things were beautiful. But even with all their hard work, they still were not finished. It was still very lonely with just the two of them. They wanted to share their love. Molding the soil into clay and the water from the sea, the first humans were created. The man was called Adam, and the woman was called Eve. Father Earth and Mother time wept because they could no longer hold their physical bodies. They were centuries old, and life needed to continue without them. So, with blessings from The Moon, their spirits combined into Adam's and Eve's, the first Marking taking place in the universe. It was the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known."

"And that is why we all have soulmates!" Laura cheers, throwing up her arms. Her mother chuckled and pat her shoulder. "Mommy... where do you think my soulmate is?"

"I'm sure she's out there somewhere, love. You never know for real unless you have the dreams." Her mother smiles, "She's waiting for you."

"I can't wait for the day when I meet her." She yawns, "Do... you think I would be a good soulmate?"

"Any girl would be lucky to be your soulmate."

"Hehe. I love you, mommy."

"I love you too, Laura-bear."

Carmilla hissed in pain, noticing that Laura was no longer in her arms and she had her arm draped across her shoulder. "Carm, sweetie, tell me what you're feeling right now."

Laura's voice was firm, not a waver in her tone.

"It's so hot. My arm... my arm feels like it's bubbling..."

"I'm going to undress you, love. This will only take a few moments." With Lafontaine's help, they could lift Carmilla's shirt to reveal the dark red splotch forming on her shoulder. "Carm, sweetie, tell me what you're feeling right now." Laura's voice was firm, not a waver in her tone.

"Perry, you were keeping time. How long did my Marking take?"

"Exactly thirty minutes, dear. It's 12:34 am."

Laura held Carmilla's hands, wincing as her nails dug into her skin. "I've got you."

Another memory filled Carmilla's mind.

Little Laura giggled as she happily created her project, the living room table a mess of glitter, crayons, and markers. She was inspired by her learning at school, and wanted to show her mother. She heard her mother's steps coming from the door, and shrieked in excitement.

"Mommy! Mommy, look at what I drew!" She exclaimed, bouncing off her chair. The tiny girl stood frozen when she saw her mother, how insipid her face was. Her mother was clutching at her chest, wheezing, and collapsed.

"Mommy! What's wrong, mommy?" She wailed, worried tears streaming down her face. Her mother was unresponsive as her father suddenly came into the room, his eyes widening with fear.
"Honey, go upstairs please."

"B-but... daddy..."

"NOW, Laura Eileen." He shouts, and Laura's eyes sprinkle with tears. It's the first time her father had raised his voice at her, and the action terrified Laura. Holding the picture desperately, she ran up to her room crying.

Carmilla was panting heavily as she struggled to remain consciousness, feeling Laura's loving embrace. She closed her eyes and rested her head against the headboard, letting out a moan.

"I'm here, love. I'm here. You're doing so well."

"Daddy... is mommy ever going to grow her hair back?" The young girl asked, a worried frown on her face. "She's been bald for a while..."

"That's what I'm praying for, love. But that's the thing about mommy's sickness. We don't know if she'll ever get better."

"B-but... what's actually WRONG with her? She was fine the morning I came home from school a year ago!"

"Honey, we don't want to worry you with that. She's getting better and we're giving her treatments. This'll all be over before you know it."

"Why are the gremlins eating away at mommy? Why are they angry with her?"

"Laura, this is the last time I'm speaking to you about this. It's time for bed."

"Sherman," Her mother sighed, a tired look on her face. "Let me have a moment with my daughter."

"Eileen—," He whimpered.

"She's old enough to know. Please, I'm fine. I need to tell her." Sherman Hollis let out a sigh and left the room. The older woman took her daughters hands, and her daughter engulfed her in a hug. "Laura. I'm dying."

"...mommy?"

"I have stage four breast cancer, pumpkin. I only have a few more years left to live."

There was silence. Then, a terrified, almost animalistic sound escaped from Laura's lips as she jerked away from her mother, hands shaking in fear. The second her father ran back into the room, she ran out, locking herself in her bedroom.

Carmilla's heart panged at the traumatic experience Laura had to go through at such a young age. She whimpered as memories flashed by. Lonely years of the child isolating herself from her parents, the family attending social functions awkwardly trying to fit in. Towards the end of her mother's life, Laura had completely lost all her childhood innocence, her mind clouded in sorrow. She had already perceived her mother as dead.

"Look, honey," Laura soothes, wincing as she felt their soul mark, "You're almost there." She was right. The red splotches were just ending around her elbow, and she let out heavy breaths.

She could do this. Laura pulled through. She had to be strong for Laura.
"Laura, you have to come with me." Sherman Hollis begged weakly.

"No." She hissed in return, on the opposite side of the door. "I don't like seeing mommy like that."

"Please, honey. She's been asking for you. She misses you."

"I'm NOT. GOING."

"Laura Eileen Hollis, you will go or so help me I will ground you for a month. Understand?"

Laura threw open the door so hard it almost hit her father in the face. She trudged out to the car. She had a scowl on her face as they made it to the hospital, and the little girl slumped in one of the folding chairs. Her father didn't come into the room right away, as he was talking outside with a doctor in hushed voices.

Tears pricked in her eyes as she stared at the sleeping figure. This thing was not her mother. This thing was a monster, eating away at flesh until there was nothing but bones left behind. For four years' she had watched the woman who took care of her slowly disintegrate into nothingness.

She then listened to her father talk outside, hearing words like "We've tried everything." And, "I'm sorry." Scary words.

Inevitable words.

Laura's world turned for the worst as she watched her dad slowly walk in, a sorrowful look on his face. He wrapped his arms around his daughter, hugging her for a long moment, before sitting on a chair beside his soulmate. He was shaking as he held her hands, crying violently. He mumbled a prayer up to the heavens, and as the doctor walked into the room, nodding his head, he pressed a needle into the woman's arm, and she took her last breath.

"You killed her!" Laura screamed, jumping up and clawing at her dad. "YOU MONSTER!"

Tears were streaming down Carmilla's face as she was overcome with sadness, finally understanding how difficult the recovery process must have been for Laura. No one deserves this, to go through something so devastating at such a young age. Not a soul.

"Oh, Laura..." She barely managed to say, body shaking with sobs.

"I know, baby. I know." Laura replied weakly, hugging Carmilla tight. "We're halfway there."

Laura breathed heavily, rocking back and forth in her bathroom. Everything hurt. Her eyes were welling with tears and she couldn't see right. She tried to get up but the weight of the world pulled her down, and she moaned in pain.

Her dad came bursting into the room, "Laura! Laura, honey, what's the matter? W-what's happening to you?"

"D-d-dad..." She croaks, flinching away from him.

"P-please, is there anything I can do?"

"G-g-get away from me. G-get t-the hell a-away from me!" She screamed, her throat clenching in pain. Forlorn, her father complied, but sent a worried glance over his shoulder as he left.
Laura collapsed onto the floor, physically exhausted, and she cried herself to sleep.

Laura didn't say anything as her fingers danced across their soul mark, which was just starting to form. The first cluster of stars wrapped themselves across Carmilla's shoulder, and they were beautiful. Orion; beautiful, angelic Orion.

"The Moon's blessing." Kirsch said in awe, still not fully recovered from the precious marking. He placed a hand on Danny to steady himself. "Both of their souls are so beautiful."

"Ying and yang." Lafontaine agreed. Carmilla smiled gratefully at her friends, holding tight onto Laura's hand.

It was almost over. The worst has yet to come.

"The hell do you think YOU'RE going?" Sherman Hollis grumbled, as his daughter, in her haste, hurried out the door.

"Somewhere far, far away from you." She hissed back, lifting her suitcase with little difficulty.

"That's hardly fair," He glares, grabbing his daughter by the arm, pulling her back. "I don't even get a goodbye?"

"No. I can't stand being another second with you. I need to get out of here, dad. I NEED TO."

"This is the thanks I get for paying your full college tuition? Some daughter you turned out to be."

"Oh yeah? THAT'S where we're going? Well, some FATHER you turned out to be, completely ignoring me for all those years you had to take care of mom! You ABANDONED ME!"

"You WERE THE ONE WHO SHUT ME OUT," He exclaimed, pulling at his greying hair. "Laura, I hardly know you anymore. Who the hell are you? What have you done with my daughter?"

"Oh, your daughter has left the building, SHERMAN, when you decided to KILL MY MOTHER WITHOUT TELLING ME."

"We hardly talked those years! How was I supposed to know what you were feeling? You were just a child, Laura. We didn't want to burden you with this. You still are just a child. You're not ready to face the outside world on your own."

"I'm EIGHTEEN, dad. I'm legally an adult. I can take care of myself! For fuck's sake, you've signed me up for Krav Maga lessons for this very reason!" She pulled out her hair, "I need to get out of here. I need to go. I hate you. I hate you so much for RUINING MY LIFE."

"Is that what you truly believe? Then FINE. Don't come back to this fucking place. Let's see how you do on your own. If you do come crying back, I've changed the locks and my phone number. Get the hell off my lawn."

"GLADLY."

Carmilla sucked in a hard breath as her gaze flickered to her soul mark, which was almost complete. She relaxed in Laura's hold, who was deeply in tune with her emotions. They were almost done. The months following that devastating event were sad, as Laura struggled to fit in at Silas University. She lost herself at parties, and drank away her sorrows. It was a difficult, scary time for
The last significant memory appeared in Carmilla's mind.

Laura wearily trudged through the campus lawn, a bottle of beer in her hand. It was snowing, and dark out, but she didn't care. It's not like anyone would catch her. She chugged the filthy liquid down her throat, no longer tasting it.

She was drunk, lonely, and sad. Just another day in the life of Laura Eileen Hollis.

"Stupid fuck." She grumbled, bringing the beer bottle to her lips again. "What a dumb piece of shit." She wasn't sure who she was referencing—her mind was sort of a blur.

She came across the beautiful pond, which was frozen over from the winter. Grumbling to herself, she stopped for a moment, drinking the last of her beer. An overwhelming feeling of anger coursed through her as she chucked the bottle across the frozen lake, having it stop in the middle.

Laura stared at where the beer landed for a long, hard moment. Then giggles erupted from her lips. Within seconds she was laughing, as she wondered just how easy it would be to travel across the ice and get the bottle back. She didn't hesitate to take a step forward and place it on the ice. And then another.

And another.

Until... the ice underneath her broke. She gave out a soundless scream.

Laura wasn't sure how long she was underneath the water for. But a strong pair of arms had lifted her up, like the angel that they were, as Laura was suffering from hypothermia. Laura couldn't make sense of reality at that point—was she alive? Was she dying? She didn't fucking know.

But what she was sure of, was in her unconscious, her soulmate appeared. And they told her they loved her.

Carmilla let out a breath of relief as the final constellation made its way onto her skin, and the process was complete.

Laura and Carmilla were officially bonded for life. Their souls, matched together by their ancestral gods, had gone through Hell and back just to be with one another. Carmilla could feel every emotion that was pouring out of her beloved.

Lafontaine wasn't kidding when they said it was a 4-D experience. She felt like a second brain has been lodged in her head. Carmilla tiredly glanced at all her friends, who all had relieved looks on their faces.

Laura was sobbing quietly, taking Carmilla by surprise as she reached over to cup her soulmate's cheeks, "Your soul is so yellow." She muses, arms shaking, "Bright. Happy. Filled with emotion and sunshine. Even throughout your life, while thoughts of your mother were still plaguing your mind, your soul shined through. It's so strong, Laura. You have such a powerful energy that now I understand why it fills me with so much joy. Your soul is so bright it nearly blinded me. I'm so... proud of you, Laura. I'm proud of how much you've grown. I'm proud that you've learned to forgive your mother, and learn to love yourself for the beautiful woman you are. My precious cupcake... my sweetheart... I love you more than words can allow me to say right now. I hope this can suffice, for now."

Carmilla pulled Laura in for a loving kiss, and their friends quietly shifted out of the room. They
simply needed a moment alone to process what had just taken place.

"This is more than enough." Laura managed, smiling into the kiss. Carmilla carefully positioned them both so that Laura was resting on her back, her arms draped across Carmilla's neck. They stayed lip-locked for several moments, just breathing into each other, unable to part.

"Now I understand why The Moon blessed us." Laura muses, snuggling up to her girlfriend, "We were once both broken souls. We were made to heal each other. And we're both happier because of it."

Carmilla said nothing. She just smiled, tracing her fingers on every star of her soulmate's tattoo, marveling at the intricate details. This was their soul. It was a beautiful feeling unfathomable to describe. Laura had fallen asleep in her arms, and Carmilla willed her eyes to stay open for a few more minutes, drinking up Laura's love.

She had to remind herself that this wasn't a dream, that everything was real, and their soul marks would still be there in the morning. Letting out a content sigh, she snuggled up with her beloved, and closed her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, Carmilla. For giving me a home.
You Are The New Day

Chapter Summary

Carmilla and Laura are finally at peace with each other, as they learn to experience this new side to their relationship. They finally put aside a night to go on a date. Disclaimer: Sexy times ensue.

Chapter Notes

OH. MY GOSH. I have so much to tell you, but I feel like if you all follow me on my blog, then you know everything that happened to me this weekend. XD Yup, I met Natasha and Elise on Thursday at Comic Con, and fumbled like an idiot during the Q and A session, because I was so determined to give Natasha the first chapter of my fanfiction. So now there's a YouTube video of me giving my emotional speech to the cast of Carmilla. I'm not sure exactly when in October I found out about this little web series, but it is my anniversary month. As you know, October and November were difficult for me and watching Carmilla some nights was the only absolution. I wrote about that in my letter to Natasha.

Then, yesterday, I had an amazing experience meeting Miles again on their Love is Love tour, the second human that encouraged me to come out to my family. I met them for the first time back in April. It all seemed like everything had tied itself up in a little bow, how I met my three favorite humans all within the same week of each other and in the same month I first discovered who they were. Excuse me while I cry in the corner :') I thanked them for being awesome and for introducing me to the little web series that could, and they were so excited/happy to hear that I met them both!

Now, onto the story. I'm glad a fellow creampuff pointed out that some of the themes sounded awfully similar to bigmamallama5's tattoo au, and that's because it is! Grace's art inspired this story to even exist. She even did fan art of Carmilla, which can be found on my blog. Also, several chapters before Carmilla and Laura get their soul marks, one of them says, "The stars are beautiful." which is a reference to Maybe We Can Learn to Share, by counthoelaf. Now, in this chapter, there is a scene where Carmilla brings out a white board and they start writing sticky notes to express their insecurities/desires in a relationship. This scene was inspired by LatchingOntoYou's story, "Find Me Through The Radio". So credit goes to them and their story.

Also, special thanks to jenocide, or Jen, for beta-ing this fic and assuring me that everything was biologically correct for when Hollstein does the do... hum... has sex. XD Trust me, I'm an innocent creampuff, writing this was very difficult for me but I knew I had to write out a smut scene at some point! This was actually the first wIw scene I've ever written, and I'm nervous about uploading this chapter. Please assure me down in the towel section below if I did okay. *hides underneath my desk to preserve my innocence*

Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals. Hope you all have a lovely day today! MAKE GOOD CHOICES.
Even dreaming was a new experience. My beloved had her arms draped around mine as we floated through the endless universe, traveling to nowhere, journeying everywhere. Our stars were so beautiful. Every one of them was alive, engulfing us, born from the raw emotions of our love.

There were no more secrets between us. No more worries. We were one, our souls finding comfort in each other.

We both may have come a long way since we met, but our journey was far from over. It was only just beginning.

I awoke with a tired yawn, stretching my arms to gain the sensation back. I blinked several times, noticing how everything I saw was heightened now. I was familiar with everything around me, and yet, it was like I was staring at them with a new set of eyes. My favorite TARDIS mug was a brighter shade of blue. The precious origami stars that we displayed on our desk glowed with its own magical light. The sounds from Silas students hanging out on the campus lawn was like music to my ears.

And Carmilla. I've always known she was beautiful, but now her features were heightened with an almost heavenly glow. Her pale skin was tinted a rosy pink, her raven-colored hair having a glossy finish.

Slowly, I traced my fingers across her tattoo, sighing in relief. I then casually placed my lips across her neck, leaving a trail of kisses, before pressing my lips against hers. She didn't wake up right away, though her body did react first. She moaned softly, snaking her arms around my neck as she pulled me closer to her.

"Hey." She mumbles in return, a wide smile on her face.

"Hey." I reply, kissing her again.

She chuckled into the kiss and allowed her hands to get tingled into my hair.

"How are you feeling?" I ask, a giggle escaping my lips.

"Mostly sore. Tired. But otherwise I'm okay." She yawns, admiring the tattoo on my arm. "You?"

"The same. Our souls did get merged together last night, after all. It's a taxing experience." I sigh, and relaxed in her embrace. "What time did our friends leave last night?"

"Around one in the morning," Carmilla supplied, "They send their regards."

"We have awesome friends." I smile, snuggling with her, "We should do something nice for them."

"What, like throw a party?" She asks, "We haven't done that in a while."

"There's a good plan." I say, playing with her hair. There was a silence that passed between us. "You're so beautiful, you know that?"
"Oh, hush." She chuckles, swatting at me. "You're beautiful. You've gone through so much and I'm incredibly proud of you. You've come a long way from the lonely girl I once knew."

"You too, Carm… when you were suffering through those memories… I felt your pain. It was consuming me, as if I was there with you. When you attempted to kill yourself, I…" I bit my lip to keep myself from crying, "I was so scared for you. Even though I knew it was a memory, watching that was difficult as all hell. You're the one who's changed so much. And not a day will go by where I remind you of how brave you are."

"You… didn't think of me as a monster?" She wondered quietly, biting her bottom lip, "When I was in that state of mind?"

I would never in a million years.

"Gods, no, Carm," I urged, shaking my head, "YOU were not in control of yourself. Those nasty, ugly demons were consuming your whole soul. You didn't know any better. It was a dark period in your life you can never take back, but it happened, and you've learned so much since. You've grown a thick skin because of it."

"Laura, when you stepped on that ice, a part of me broke," She whimpered, "You were so lost within your sorrow you couldn't see what was happening to you. Y-your hair was falling out in patches… y-you had multiple bruises on your face, holes in your clothes… the light was completely gone from you. Seeing you like that… I know now not to take this for granted. When you smile, when you laugh… every notion you make fills me with joy, because now I understand there was a time in your life where you weren't capable of doing so."

"For the last few months, I've smiled more than my whole twenty years of life." I hiccupped, burying my face in her neck, "And it's all because of you, baby."

"We've still got a long way to go, cupcake." She says, rubbing my back. "I'll be with you every step of the journey."

"We have a whole lifetime together," I agree, "My precious soulmate."

"My beloved Laura." She cooed, and finally brought her lips up to kiss mine. I giggle into the kiss, and my hands instinctively going up her back. Carmilla broke apart from me as she placed a trail of kisses up my neck, her hands cupping my butt to keep me on her lap. I was panting as she pulled away from me, cheeks flushed red.

"Carm—," I whined, leaning in to steal another kiss from her. She chuckled and placed a finger to my lips.

"Lau, we can't get carried away—we need to focus on recovery first." I grumbled, shoulders slumping in annoyance. "But I wanna kiss you." I mimicked.

"You honestly think you have the stamina right now to last through a grinding session with me?" She asks, raising an eyebrow. She laughs at the defeated look on my face. "I promise, love. After today, whenever you want this—," she gestures to her body, and I blushed, desperately trying to keep my thoughts in my brain where they belong. "I'm all yours."

"I'll hold you to that promise." I remind her, pecking her on the nose.

"Good. Now, go change into clean clothes. I'll make us both cocoa and something to eat."
"Hmm. How domestic of you." I grin, stretching out as she made her way out of the bed.

"Just doing my job." She winks.

"I'm sure the paychecks are nice." I giggle, desperate to bring her back into bed with me.

"Very much so." She replies, giving me a sideways smirk, but nonetheless continued making cocoa in our kitchenette. I let out a disgruntled sigh, but reminded myself that Carmilla was right. Today needed to be a day of rest. There was a time and a place for sexy times.

Every bone in my body ached as I tried to get out of bed, clutching onto the posts for support, but emotionally I couldn't have been better. The events of last night repeated in my head as I gathered up my clothes, glancing often at the beautiful soul mark on my arm.

It's beautiful to think about how far we both have come. Time was redundant—it didn't matter whether we've known each other for weeks, months, or years. Our souls have found one another in this vast universe, and they were stuck to each other for good, now.

Carmilla. I smiled as I stripped and stepped into the hot shower. She was no longer a mystery to me. I knew all her weaknesses, her strengths, her desires. She overcame her vices, and conquered them with all the strength she could muster.

I understood now why Carmilla was so reclusive when we first met. Just because we were soulmates it didn't mean all her worries would wash away. She was still battling her demons, she had her insecurities, and she refused to burden them on me. Bless her soul—she was suffering, and even though we are meant to share everything together, she put my feelings and emotions over hers.

I'd be lying now if I claimed that I wasn't a little bit shaken up.

I shake my head, thinking back to Carmilla's sad adolescent years, how she became mute because of her suicide attempt. Being in that memory… experiencing the pain with her… giving into her emotions… I understand how she must feel about that aspect of her life. She wasn't in control of her emotions, and she was unsure of how to get better. It was scary. Feeling so helpless like that… I want nothing more than to remind her every day that she is worth it. That she is strong, brave, and her feelings are valid. Mama rescued her for this very reason, and I'll always be grateful of that. If it weren't for Mama, who knows what path Carmilla would have gone down.

I let out a sigh. Now that we're bonded, where do we go from here? What more in our relationship to we need to improve? We already know the full extent of our pasts—the tragedies we've suffered through, the demons we've fought. I suppose this can still be classified as a learning curve for us, seeing how just because we've both experienced our pasts on a physical level, that doesn't mean everything is fixed with our relationship. There may be no more secrets regarding both of our pasts, but now this helps us to be more self-aware of the present.

I can always ask Lafontaine and Perry for counseling; they've been bonded for a decade, but not every bonded soulmate is a perfect couple. I shouldn't expect myself to have all the answers the morning after. There's still so much for us to talk through, not everything is set in stone. We have a whole lifetime to sift through those memories, and work on how to have a happy future together.

As of now, all I care about is being with Carmilla. Comforting her, loving her… that should be more than enough for now.

Whenever she needs me, I'm there. And vice versa.

A thought came to me as I blushed, when I realized this very important aspect. We haven't had a
first date yet. We've just been so busy with work and college that we haven't dedicated time for each other. Our relationship is far from normal, I've stopped questioning that, but the thought of treating Carmilla to a fancy dinner often crossed my mind. We both deserved a night out.

This would be a good place to start.

A nervous energy bubbled in my stomach and I scoffed, giggling slightly. We've just gone through the marking and I'm more nervous about asking my soulmate on a date than anything else. Oh, the irony.

The water suddenly turned cold and I struggled to turn it off. Physically, I felt better than before, but emotionally with the honest thought of asking Carmilla out on a date, I was an upset mess. She wouldn't turn me down, I knew this.

I can't help but feel anxious.

I quickly checked myself in the mirror, noticing the heavenly glow illuminating my body, before stepping out. Carmilla was sitting on our bed with the laptop between her, a cup of cocoa and crepe in her hand. There was an extra plate for me. She smiled when she saw me, extending her arms.

"Hey, beautiful." She coos, and I giggle, wrapping my arms around her shoulders.

"I love you." I eased gently. My, those three precious words hold so much more meaning now.

"I love you too, cupcake." She says, making room for me so that I can climb on the bed beside her. Disney's Moana was ready to play, and I smile gratefully at her—she knows that's my favorite movie.

My stomach grumbled and, snuggling up to her, I happily ate my breakfast. We were about thirty minutes into the film, when I worked up the courage to ask her, and pressed the space bar to pause the movie.

"Everything alright, Laura? Are you hurt?" She asks, tracing her fingers on my soul mark.

"Never better," I smile, patting her cheek. "Th-there's, um. There's something I need to ask you."

"Alright, love. Talk to me."

Taking a deep breath, I nervously played with the skin on my fingers, "Wouldyouliketogoonadatewithme?"

"Gesundheit." She chuckled. "Try again."

I blinked, shaking my head, "Would you. Like. To. Go. On. A. Date… with me?"

She laughs, giving me a peck on my cheek, "Sure. Though… I think we're far past that stage in our relationship."

"I-I know," I blush, giving her my best puppy-dog eyes, "But, I still think it would be nice. You know. For prosperity."

"Prosperity doesn't care—I should know. I live in it." She drawls, smirking as I shoved her aside. She laughed, holding my hand so she doesn't fall off our bed, "I'd love to go on a date with you. In all technicality, you've already treated me on a first date. So, may I have the honor in doting on
you?"

My cheeks blushed, "Yes. Yes, you do. Thank you, Carmilla."

"Again, anything for my Laura." She smiles, rubbing noses with me.

I lean in to peck her on the lips, causing her to chuckle, and she caressed my cheek with her hand. The morning passed on just like that, the two of us watching our favorite Disney movies, placing gentle kisses or caresses on our soul marks to make sure that we were both okay. Soulmates who have gone through the bonding usually take a day to recover before they're both back to their normal personalities. It was a tender, vulnerable period because our emotions were still on their respective highs, and any stressor added anxiety during this relaxation period would not bode well on both souls.

The movie was long since finished and Carmilla had comforted me at least twice because I had cried, when her cell phone began to ring. I was curled up in her warm embrace, my arms wrapped around her shoulders and my leg draped across her stomach. Carmilla was already fast asleep, to which I giggled at her nocturnal habits.

"Carm," I cooed, poking at her cheeks. "Carm, your phone's ringing." She mumbled my name and swatted my hand away. "C'mon, babe, you're closer."

"You get it. I'm so tired." She groaned.

"Seriously?" I roll my eyes, hitting her playfully on the shoulder. "Stop being a lazy ass. Just reach for it." She mumbled something, burying her face into my neck. I let out a groan. I shifted my body so that way I could climb over her, and reach for her phone on the night-stand. My eyes widened when I realized that these calls were from Mattie, and a few from Lilita Morgan herself.

"Baby," I began, snuggling back in her embrace, "You… did tell your mother and sister that we were going through the final sign, right?"

Carmilla's grip on me tightened and she groaned. "Shit. I forgot."

"Carmilla!" I wailed, slapping her on her left shoulder. "Oh, we're going to get an earful."

"I'm sure it'll be fine." Carmilla winces, "They can't stay mad at us for long."

"Okay. I'm going to call them," I worried, and pressed Mattie's number. She didn't hesitate to answer.

"Mircalla Margaret Karnstein, you have some nerve—,"

"Mattie," I giggle, to calm her, "Relax a second, okay? We're resting now. Please don't pounce on us."

"You two dorks received your soul marks! AHHHHHHHH!" I brought the phone away from my ear, Carmilla chuckling underneath me. "What is the tattoo? Tell me, tell me!"

"Stars," Carmilla smiled, placing a gentle kiss to my cheek, "Our souls are stars."

"Stars," Mattie repeats, "How lovely. Oh, Mama will be so happy for you."

I gave Carmilla a reassuring smile, who frowned guiltily. "Mattie… I… believe I still owe you and Mama a talk."
There was a pause. "Sweetie, that's behind us. You're a better person now and you're really growing into your own."

"I-I know, but Laura's seen my memories and it's only fair if we walk through my past from your point of view. She's—she's family now, and she loves you both. It's about time we all got together."

"Alright, Carmilla. As you wish. I'll let you rest this weekend and we'll pick a date where we can all will talk."

"Thank you, Mattie." Carmilla sighs happily, stretching her arms.

"You're always welcome, dear. I'm so proud of you."

"I know." She smiles.

"Oh, and Laura? Do take care of my sister. Make sure she doesn't get into trouble." She said in a teasing voice.

"Trouble? Me?" Carmilla scoffs, and I roll my eyes at her.

"I'll be sure to keep an eye on her, Mattie."

"Good, good. Do remember to call Mama, Carm. She's been trying to reach you."

Carmilla only gave disgruntled moan in response, sinking deeper into the fluffy downs. I smiled, "We love you, Mattie."

"I love you both, as well. More than you'll ever know."

Mattie hung up first, and I crawled back over to put her iPhone in the charger. Carmilla outstretched her arms, beckoning me to come back in her embrace, and I giggled at her. She behaved just like a cat sometimes—she always loved cuddles, and never got enough of them.

I hopped back onto the bed, melting into her arms. Carmilla had a goofy smile on her face as she played with my hair, and I noticed the expression displayed in her eyes. She looked so much calmer now. At peace.

It was a good look on her.

"What?" I ask, tilting my head.

"I'm just looking at you." She mumbles in reply, cheeks flushing crimson.

"See anything you like?" I giggle, giving her a cheeky wink.

"Everything." She answers, poking my nose. My heart skips a beat. I opened my mouth to say something, but I found myself feeling sleepy, and yawned again. "Time for sleep." She claims, rubbing soothing circles on my soul mark.

I happily comply.
By the time I wake up again, the sun was in the middle of the sky, and I didn't feel Carm's presence beside me. I craned my neck to check the time on the digital clock, that it was already 3:30pm. I wasn't fully comprehending my environment when my soulmate came back into our dorm, with a large white board filled with post-it notes and miscellaneous things. I cautiously raise an eyebrow at her, mentally wondering if my beloved has finally gone mad. Did she take that all the way from Lafontaine's dorm?

"Okay, here me out," She said, and chuckles at the baffled and concerned expression on my face. "I know we're soulmates and we already know everything about each other, I still think its best we still sort out our emotions before we start this relationship forever."

"Oh," I say, breathing out a sigh of relief. "Okay. That makes sense." I crawl out of bed, wrapping my arms around her waist. She smiles, giving me a kiss before placing the first sticky note on the board.

"There used to be days where I had to pinch myself because I couldn't believe that you were mine," She mumbled, "And I made myself believe that I didn't deserve your love."

I coo softly, shaking my head, "I will spend the rest of my life reminding you how beautiful you are, and that you deserve nothing but happiness."

"Loving you has given me the strength I didn't know I had, and for that, I thank you." She said, writing a line underneath what I previously wrote.

"In this lifetime, and in everyone after, I will always fight to be by your side." I assure her, and she smiles gratefully.

"Some nights, I dream that I'm back in that dreadful place, and I can't go back to sleep."

"I'll do whatever I can to ensure that you go back to sleep, my love." I write, now knowing the tragedy of her past. "I have days where I am reminded of my mom and I feel so lonely, even with you there."

"Then I will lay with you and comfort your soul until you come back to me." Carmilla wrote, tears prickling her eyes. "Sometimes not even music helps calm my PTSD."

"Now that I know your triggers, I will do my best to ensure your safety." I claim, reaching up to kiss away her tears. "I sometimes refuse to take my medication in January because it's such a difficult month for me."

"After that situation, I now know how to handle your trauma, and I'll try to step back. But trust me that I'll never leave your side." Carmilla heaved a deep breath, "Enclosed spaces make me want to vomit."

"If I am in the area, I'll rush to your aid, and be by your side until the situation subsides." I wipe away my tears, "I like Oreos and pussy. Yes, in that order." I write with a giggle, and she shakes her head at me, a bemused smirk on her face. "Kidding. I like my hot chocolate in the morning, regardless of the season."

"Then I will always make you hot chocolate to remind you of my love. In turn, your happiness is all I need." Carmilla writes, giving me a peck on the cheek. "I will never purposefully hurt you or take advantage of our love."

"I will talk to you when something is bothering me, and in turn, I trust that you will listen." I write, and she nods.
"What is love?" Carmilla asks, placing it on the board.

"Love is patient," I write, noticing how our post-it notes are taking the form of a heart.

"Love is kind." She smiles.

"Love is not jealous or boastful," I sigh, leaning into her.

"It is not arrogant or rude."

"Love does not insist on its own way"

"It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs, but rejoices with truth."

"Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, love never gives up."

"Three things remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."

I smile and give her a proud kiss, "Do you see me?"

"I see you." She grins, rubbing the small of my back. "I love you."

"I love you more."

"I love you most." She giggles, the air between us overflowing with happiness. She lifts me up without warning, twirling me around and we collapse on the bed. I shriek with delight, as she peppers my face with kisses, and I marvel at how playful she is now. She makes sure to not leave every inch of my face untouched, before placing a long, passionate kiss on my lips.

I hum softly, a little winded by her affections, before we snuggled together, and drifted off to sleep once more.

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All they needed was a day to recover, and the following afternoon, the two soulmates were back to their normal selves. Carmilla was broody as ever, her beloved Inanna strapped around her back, and Laura was a ball of sunshine, eager to spread her happiness to any unsuspecting soul. They were no longer joined at the hip, though if they were ever in the same room, they still gravitated towards each other, almost like an unspoken ritual.

If a passerby briefly glanced at them they would smile and stare in awe at how peaceful those two souls were. Friends and family marveled at how their emotions heightened to their fullest potential, both changed for the better.

It's been a week since the final sign took place, a week since everything shifted back to normalcy. Carmilla couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief. Even though having a soulmate was a beautiful experience, the process was taxing, and it was good that she finally had some time alone to reconnect with her music. Right now, Laura was out on a lunch date with Danny, probably venting about the stressful week she's had.

Carmilla smiled. Even though her soulmate wasn't physically with her, she still felt her presence in their soul mark. She gently tapped her fingers against a constellation of stars, feeling wholly at peace.

A burst of energy came through her entire being in response, and she knew that Laura was thinking about her. She hummed softly, reminding herself that tonight was going to be very special. They've spent time together so much that it could be classified as a never-ending date, but just this


once Carmilla wanted to dote on Laura. She had everything planned. They would meet up at six, eat at a fancy restaurant her mother owned for the evening, take her out to see a movie, and spend the rest of the evening watching the stars. A perfect way to spend the night with her beloved—not something too extravagant or overwhelming.

Another thought came to her, as she strummed another chord on her guitar. Something was missing from this equation. Everything was perfect, sure, but Carmilla craved to give something more to Laura that she was admittingly, nervous to ask. They've gotten more physical with each other over the past few weeks, which Carmilla didn't mind at all. It was like a new layer was added onto their cake of their relationship, as they were exploring more of each other. Grinding, Carmilla knew, only scratched the surface of how deep their sexual activities could go. She knew that there were other ways to make the other have an orgasm, and she only recently decided that she wanted to explore Laura fully.

The girl was just so beautiful. She wanted to taste her, feel every inch of her body, remind her of how much she loves her without words.

She wanted to have sex with her. To be inside Laura, to claim what was rightfully hers. Having matching soul marks was one thing. Trusting another person with your body was another.

She could only hope that Laura was currently on the same wavelength as her, or this was never going to work.

Her phone rang in her pocket, interrupting her thoughts. It was Mattie. "Hello, my glittering girl." She giggles.

"Sister dearest. Is everything under control?" She asked, smiling.

"Yes, your reservations are secure, and we've rented out the movie theater for you. Everything is all set."

Carmilla breathed out a sigh of relief, "Thank you for this, Mattie."

"Anything for you and your beloved. Is she with you now?"

"Sadly, no. She's hanging out with the Amazon today. We'll meet each other before six."

"Are you nervous?"

"A little bit. This'll be my first night where I get to dote on her, I hope I don't fumble like an idiot."

Mattie chuckles, "Don't stress. Just be yourself, Laura will love you regardless. First date jitters are normal, it makes things interesting. You'll be fine."

"That wasn't what I was referencing," Carmilla mumbles, turning a bright pink. "Mattie, how do I bring up the topic of sex without making it awkward?"

Mattie laughed softly, and she swore the other woman was rolling her eyes, "Have you thought about this fully, and you truly want to give yourself to her? That you're ready for this?"

"I am. I've never wanted something like this before, but I love Laura so much, and I want to show her how much I feel when words cannot suffice."

"Then let it happen. It'll only be awkward if you make it so. Don't overthink your actions—treat her like a queen throughout the night and when the moment comes, you both will know."
"Have I ever told you that I love you, lately?" Carmilla says with great cheek, and Mattie chuckles.

"I love you too, girlie. Mama and I are so proud of you."

"I know." Carmilla smiles, and the two sisters said their goodbyes before hanging up the phone. She strummed another chord in her guitar, and took a deep, relaxing breath. She can do this. She had tonight to look forward to.

Carmilla checked herself in the mirror once more as the alarm on her iPhone chimed. She looked… sexy. There was no other way to describe her. She curled her hair so that her raven curls hung to her shoulder, and gel so that there was a shine to it. She spent what felt like hours on her winged eyeliner, and her lips were coated in a sharp hue of red. She wore a black corset that hung around her stomach, giving her breasts an extra boost. She preferred to wear something that showed off her soul mark proudly, which beamed back at her in the mirror. She couldn't part with her leather pants, though she added a gold belt to keep them up.

If this doesn't scream 'Sex with Legs' than Carmilla wasn't sure what did.

Laura wasn't in their dorm getting ready. She was over at Danny's, three stories down. She quickly spritzed herself with perfume and grabbed her purse, heading out of their home.

The excited, out-of-tune singing to some pop song was the first thing Carmilla heard as she exited the elevator. The music was blaring from Danny's dorm, which the tall redhead would get a few complaints for later. She sent a text to her beloved, which resulted in panicked shrieking on the other side of the door, making Carmilla chuckle.

"You're all finished! You look beautiful!" Danny's voice exclaimed.

"Wait! Danny! You forgot the back of my dress!" Laura wails, and Carmilla rolled her eyes.

"There. Done. Stop stressing! Now go!" Perry said now, casually pushing Laura out the door.

"I-I left my purse on the bed!" Laura worried, to which Danny threw it at her. She breathed out a sigh of relief, giggling nervously as her two best friends pushed her into the hallway. Carmilla blinked once, twice, to make sure that this was the same woman she fell in love with.

Laura wore a beautiful, skin tight blue dress that clung to her curves. She had her hair back in a braid, and her cheeks tinted with foundation and blush. She wore heels, which was a sight to behold. They weren't obnoxious six-inches, but they were enough to give her height a boost. Their soul mark shined proudly on her right arm, and Carmilla's lips curled into a smile.

"Don't you look like a virgin sacrifice." She husks, taking Laura's hand and pulling her beloved into an embrace.

"I'm not the one in a corset, which by the way… wow." Laura giggled, giving Carmilla a kiss on her cheek. "Sexy, babe."

"You know, my sister would kill me if we decided to dump everything and entertain each other for the rest of the night." Carmilla says, wiggling her eyebrows.

"If you be a good girl and behave yourself, maybe we can skip desert." Laura giggles, to which Carmilla tightens her hold on Laura's perfect ass.

"That sounds divine." Carmilla hisses, pulling herself away from Laura before they couldn't control themselves any longer.
"So, where to first?"

"We have reservations at Eckstein." She grins, and Laura's eyes widened. Eckstein was only the most ludicrously expensive restaurant in all of Graz, with popular celebrities dining at certain weeknights. It also happens to be bought by Carmilla's mother, who was so excited when she heard that the two soulmates were splurging for a night of fun. This would be the first incident where Carmilla was taking advantage of her mother's money—even though it was all for Laura, the idea was still unsettling to her.

She might as well push those thoughts to the backburner, it was a losing battle. She was enjoying herself, and Laura's happiness was priceless compared to any gold in her mother's large vault.

A company car pulled up to greet them, and Carmilla opened the door for her soulmate.

"Such a gentle-woman." She giggles.

"I believe you're speaking of yourself, darling." She eased, and the two cuddled in the backseat. They pulled into the parking lot, and Carmilla took Laura's coat from her.

"Wow. It's beautiful in here." She smiles, admiring the white pristine walls and sophisticated ambiance as they strolled in. There was a grand piano in the center floor, with a large fish tank displayed behind it. Hanging from the ceiling was a golden chandelier, which Laura to a moment to marvel at. She also happened to notice that not another soul was dining with them tonight. They had the entire restaurant to themselves.

A waiter led them to their table, with a beautiful view looking out towards the city. "Wow." Laura murmured again, her eyes full of stars.

Carmilla chuckled and took her hand, giving it a kiss. "Cat got your tongue?"

"Carmilla, this is… just being with you is more than enough. Thank you, my love." She cooed, beaming.

Her heart leaped. For several minutes, they just admired the scenery, a pleasant silence coming between them. A waiter came by to take their orders, smiling kindly.

"Hello, you two. Are you ready to order?"

"Yes, I'll have the beef tartare." She said, folding up her menu.

"And I'll try the oyster special, please." Laura smiled nervously, "I'm feeling bold."

"You've never tried them?" Carmilla asks, surprise written on her face. "Oh, you're in for a treat. Eckstein's known for their dishes."

The waiter nods and hurries off.

Carmilla stared as Laura began to fidget with her tablespoon. "Hey." She says softly, catching her attention.

"Hey." Laura replies, sighing.

"You look beautiful tonight. I don't think I've ever seen you in a dress before. The color looks wonderful on you." She husked, lulling her head.

"Really? Thank you. I saw it at the mall and I was drawn to it." She smiles, "I'm sorry if I
Carmilla chuckled, "It's fine, baby. Given that... we already know about each other's pasts, lived through them, tonight's all about relaxing and enjoying ourselves. We can turn this into a game, if you'd like. We can play a game of twenty questions to see how well we know each other."

Laura's eyes lit up, "Ooh, fun! What does the winner get?"

"Bragging rights." She shrugs, earning a groan from the blonde.

"C'mon Carm, there has to be something we can get out of this."

"Hmm," Carmilla thinks, gently tapping her finger across her lip; she smirks, "When we have our sexy time later, the loser has to be the bottom. They must abide by the winner's commands—and get to be on top."

Laura's lips curled into an evil smirk. She lets out a throaty chuckle, which made the hairs on Carmilla's neck stand up. God, that was so hot.

"It's a deal." She says, sticking her hand over the table like a dork. Carmilla rolls her eyes.

"Alright. So, I'll go first in asking you questions about me. When I was going through my emo phase, what was my favorite band?"

"Radiohead! And Fall Out Boy. C'mon, give me harder ones!" Laura says, flailing her arms.

"Fine, smarty pants. What's my favorite time of the year?"

"You love the spring. It's where you're more in tune with your music."

"Least favorite?"

"Christmas. Grumpy cat."

Carmilla snorts. "Do you think I have ever snooped behind your back?"

"Yes. When you forced me to take my anti-depressants," Laura mumbles. "It's hard to believe I've been off them for months now."

"I see an amazing difference in you now, love," Carmilla smiles. "Okay. Hum. What is one habit that you do that turns me on?"

"Whenever I tie up my hair," She giggles, "And if I wear tight pants."

"Because they show off your perfect ass," Carmilla says without missing a beat, "What's a sexual fantasy I've had, that you're willing to try out?"

"You have a good girl kink," Laura smirks, "Always wishing to receive praise and give praise. That'll come in handy for later." She winks, and Carmilla wished for death to just take her now. Fuck—all she wanted to do was rip that dress off her.

"If you had to give me a funny nickname or phrase based on my personality or habits, what would it be?"

"Dracula but before and lesbian." Laura snickered, and Carmilla agreed without question.
"What's my favorite book?"

"The one that's named after yourself, narcissistic bitch." Laura laughs, and so does Carmilla.

The waiter came by to refill their glasses of champagne, and place an appetizer before them.

"What's my favorite food?"

"BBQ ribs. Extra spicy."

"What's my spirit animal?"

"Panther."

"What's my favorite store to splurge money on?"

"Hot Topic. It's like your second home, babe."

"Hehe. Truer words have never been spoken," She snickered, "What's my favorite movie?"

"Princess Protection Program. You always claim that it's a rated G lesbian movie," Laura says with a yawn. "I'm beating you at this already, sweetie. It's like you almost want me to win."

Carmilla cursed under her breath, a light blush forming her cheeks. "What is the most embarrassing thing I've ever done?"

"Probably all those times when you tripped over chairs, and fell down the stairs on our way to class."

"Ouch." Carmilla snorts, and their food was finally brought to the table. She slipped the delicacy into her mouth and moaned as it practically melted on her tongue. "Where did we first kiss?"

"At the ice rink in town." Laura says fondly. "Our friends were all taking bets when it would happen."

"What was the first words I said to you?"

"Trick question!" Laura shouts, pointing her fork at her soulmate, "You didn't say anything! You ran off!"

"Not a fond moment," Carmilla agrees, shaking her head, "What is one of my fears?"

"Claustrophobia, or anything in a dark place. Understandable." She eased knowingly, tapping Carmilla's hand.

"Do I have any birthmarks? If so, where?" She blushes.

"Several on your stomach, a star-shaped on your breast, and another on your ankle."

"Damn—,"

"Also, you have a fang tattoo on your waist." Laura winks, "Thus adding to your vampirism."

"Caught that, huh?" Carmilla snickered. "Do I like kissing you or cuddling you more?"

"You're a fucking cat, Carmilla. You love it when I cuddle with you," She coos, swallowing an oyster. She had an indifferent look on her face. "I don't like this. Yuck."
"It helps if you add the sauces," Carmilla offered, "How're you holding up, baby? Think you have what it takes to guess all twenty?"

"Fuck yeah," Laura cheers, taking a sip of her champagne. "You asked a question." She teased, wiggling her eyebrows.

"Shit." She groaned, a nervous energy bubbling in her stomach. Laura did pay attention. She was so good at this—it would be easier to just forfeit now and rip that dress off her. But she had to hold her ground. One more to go. "Do you think I'm more of an optimist, a pessimist, or a realist?"

Laura grew silent. She didn't answer right away, as the waiter came by to refill their drinks. "You're a realist. While I'm an optimist, always thinking of the brighter side, and looking for ways to make the situation happy, you accept it for what it is, and learned that the past cannot change. That's what I admire the most about you—I'm so proud of how much you've grown, baby," She claimed, tearing up, "Can you believe we've been together for seven months?"

"Only seven months; that's right, it's now March." Carmilla breathed, in awe of how much time passed, and raised her glass. "Well. That's another thing we're celebrating tonight. Cheers to many more."

"Cheers." Laura beams, clinking their glasses of champagne together.

The rest of their dinner went by smoothly after that. (In hindsight, there was no real winner or loser). Laura quizzed Carmilla on her personality, but it was clear by the end who the winner was. Carmilla left a tip for their waiter as they both stumbled out, laughing and enjoying the time they were spending with one another. The movie was some rom-com Carmilla forgot the name of, because she was too busy smooching Laura to care.

Laura's hand fumbled with Carmilla's bra string, when—

"Cupcake," She rasped, "I love you, but I don't want to make love to you in the back of a movie theater."

She giggled weakly, and managed to compose herself for the painful seconds where they had to transition back to campus. They must have looked strange, two souls desperately clinging to each other, but neither of them cared. The poor driver must've been extremely uncomfortable with the sexual tension under their roof.

It was even worse waiting in the elevator. Carmilla folded her hands together, staring up at the ceiling. She then felt cool fingers slip into her pants, sending sparks up her body. Carmilla's cheeks blushed a bright red when she realized what Laura was doing, and before she could say anything, the sneaky girl was feeling her ass. She was unable to comprehend the English language, as nonsensical words bubbled out of her mouth. She griped onto the railing as Laura then found her clitoris, and stuck her fingers in, letting out a satisfying moan. She pulled them out just in time when the elevator had reached their floor.

"You're killing me, Hollis." She choked, pulling Laura in for a heated kiss. She bit Laura's lip, hands cupping at her breasts when a wicked grin appeared on her face.

"Race you." She giggled, and dashed out of the elevator.

Fuck." Carmilla hissed, tumbling after her. Laura was already pulling off her dress and kicked off her shoes when they made it into their dorm, flinging herself at her soulmate. They slammed into the wall, giving each other a heated kiss.
"Carmilla," She breathed, placing sloppy kisses on her neck, "You're so beautiful. Kind. Brave. Selfless," She said, her eyes sparkeling, "Everything you do draws me in, and I'm addicted to your love."

Carmilla managed a sigh as she felt Laura's fingers trail up her abdomen, as she felt her legs ache with desire, "Cupcake, I'd go through hell again just to be in your arms. You complete my soul in more ways than one. I love you. I want you. I _need_ you. Sometimes my desire for you is so overpowering I can't control myself." She then held Laura's hands and brought them closer to her chest. "Please."

"C-Carmilla," Laura mumbled, at a loss for words, and with a definitive nod, she pushed Carmilla onto the bed and arranged herself between her legs. The slow, agonizing build up is what she loves the most, as Laura savors every inch of Carmilla's beautiful skin. Their hips start to automatically move against each other, like second nature.

"On your stomach." She says quickly, and Carmilla gives her a strange look. "Trust me." Carmilla did. With every fiber of her being. She lay flat on her stomach, spreading out her arms as she pulled off her corset. Laura then began to slowly kiss up her back, saying _I love You_ to each scar, her hands making soothing caresses on her thighs. Carmilla's eyes welled with tears at the sheer intimacy of it all.

Carmilla watches as Laura maps out every inch of her skin, and she flipped around to face her. Laura had a determined glint in her eyes. Every freckle is kissed, every scar, every imperfection is given love. Her pale skin is now covered in Laura's love-bites. Slowly, Laura un-zips Carmilla's pants and throws them onto the floor, along with the panties. God, she's so wet already.

"O-Oh," She utters softly, a light blush tinting her cheeks. Before she could think, Carmilla took Laura's legs before they straightened out and hooked them around hers. Laura giggles as her fingers lightly caressed the outer lips of her clitoris, teasing her love. Laura was casting some sort of magic spell on her as she trailed her other hand up her body, caressing Carmilla's hard nipples, dragging a low moan out of her.

Laura nibbled on Carmilla's ear, as Carmilla gasped, "Show me how much you love me."

While her nipples ached, her clit throbbed with the way Laura was grazing against it, she realized that this was her favorite place in the whole world. Loving Laura—this was home. She had found her purpose in life. She had found her reason to smile, her lovely pocket of sunshine that was always with her.

Laura gently eased her fingers inside Carmilla, curling the two of them in just the right way. Carmilla let out a gasp as she tried to make sense of reality. Her thrusts became quicker, harder, as Carmilla grasped her fingers on Laura's hair. She couldn't control her hips any longer. She pushed, rolled, and grinded her body against Laura's, drinking in her love. Thighs were tightened, at the same time there was no concept of space. Time was frozen. It didn't matter what year was it, or what day. All that mattered was her _soulmate._

"I've got you." Laura mumbled, squeezing her shoulders tightly.

She let go. Her orgasm was at its peak, as she cried out Laura's name to the heavens. Thanking them for bringing this special woman into her life. The indescribable sensation was like fire coursing through her body. She was transcended into a different reality then. It appeared that she was back in her dream-world; a place where she saw stars on one corner of the sky, and the rising of the sun on the other. She was so overwhelmed by the intensity of their love that she began to cry.
Laura slowly pulled out her fingers, panting as she placed loving kisses on Carmilla's abdomen, bringing the other girl back to reality.

So, this was what it was like to feel worshiped. Loved. Adored. Cherished.

Carmilla let out a breath as Laura lapped up the wetness with her tongue, relishing in her love's taste. She then collapsed on Carmilla's body, while Carmilla let her legs flop into the fluffy downs, utterly spent.

They both lay together for a moment, collecting their breath.

Carmilla hummed softly as she caressed Laura's hair, placing a trail of gentle kisses on her face.

"Carm," Laura croaked, wiping away tears with the back of her thumb, "Are you okay?"

She chuckles weakly, nodding. "I-I was just so in awe by your beauty that my emotions transcended reality for a second."

"You're such a sap," She giggles, "You think you're so cool with your gothic exterior, sarcasm, and guitar, and yet you cry during sex."

"Laura, in all my years, I've never felt so alive in that moment," She eased, "My love for you is infinite and boundless as the sea."

Laura placed a hand to her heart, "Oh, Carm. When you say things like that, I fall in love with you all over again."

Carmilla chuckled softly. She took the moment to admire her love. Her face was flushed and thick with sweat, make-up smeared on all corners. Her beautiful blonde hair was no longer in a braid, but it was frazzled on all ends, falling carelessly onto her shoulders. Her eyes trailed down to her breasts, which were still cupped inside her bra—the one thing she forgot to take off in the heat of things.

Her eyes darkened. "Mind if I help you with that one strap of clothing you have left?" Carmilla asked, biting her lip.

"Please," Laura huffed, sitting upright in between Carmilla's legs. The raven-haired woman chuckled, staring at her again in awe before leaning towards her, slowly letting the bra fall from her body, and Laura's glorious breasts hung free.

Carmilla eagerly went for her breasts, cupping them in her hands and gently peppering them with hot, needy kisses. Laura moaned in delight, feeling herself already becoming undone.

"Caaaaaaaaarm," She whimpered, holding onto her soulmate's arms. "Fuck me, please."

The young woman chuckled throatily, "I let you savor me. Now it's my turn. Let me worship you." They repositioned themselves on the bed; Laura now had her head on the pillow, while Carmilla was hovering over her. The sheets beneath them were damp.

Laura swallowed, burying her face into Carmilla's neck, desperate to feel her. In one fell swoop, Carmilla captured Laura's nipples into her mouth and began to suck on them. The tiny woman scrapped her fingernails against Carmilla's back, and bit down on her lip as heat bubbled within her stomach. She grinded their hips together.

"That feels so good, Carm." She whimpers, her eyes glistening with tears as she pressed their foreheads together.
"Does it, baby?" She husked in return, and gave her other nipple the same treatment. Laura moaned and cried out her name. Carmilla then left a trail of wet kisses down her soul mark, her neck, her cheeks, before silencing Laura's moan with a kiss. She kept her hands firmly on Laura's thighs, her fingers slowly inching towards her clit.


Carmilla's heart hammered in her chest, as she rested her forehead on Laura's and closed her eyes. "Where?"

"Inside. I want you inside," Laura then pointed to her clit. "Here."

Carmilla didn't hesitate. She carefully slid her two fingers in, feeling the wet folds, before moving them in a circular motion. Here, she suddenly became hyperaware of everything. The way Laura's hot breath felt on her skin. The way Laura's fingers gripped at the bedsheets, and then the bedframe.

Laura, Laura, Laura.

She felt utterly and wholeheartedly consumed by her soulmate, and she relished in the feeling. Their soul marks burned in pleasure.

"Carmilla!" She screamed, and the raven-haired woman flickered her gaze. "I'm going to come."

"I love you," Carmilla said earnestly, "I'm here and I love you. Come to me."

That was all the reassurance Laura needed as the bed sheets between them became damp, and Carmilla slipped out her wet fingers.

Fire. It was like her world was consumed by fire, and she was caught in the flames, unable to move. But these didn't burn—they were beckoning, comforting, filled with warmth and pleasure.

It coursed through her with such intensity that the bedframe broke, and Laura yelped as her arms pulled it down completely. The old, creaky wooden planks crumpled to the floor.

Laura marveled at what had just transpired, staring as the peak of her orgasm coursed through her. She let out a happy, bewildered giggle as she collapsed onto her pillow, pulling Carmilla into a heated kiss.

Laura's body was writhing at her touch, as Carmilla continued to suck and lick around her clit, lapping up the remaining wetness. She let go of the grip she had on the bedframe, hands scratching down on her back again, and Laura moaned Carmilla's name. Her toes and fingers curled at each sensation, and as she felt herself come a second time. Carmilla finally removed her fingers from Laura's clit.

Laura collapsed back into the fluffy downs, her cheeks flushing red and her eyes filled with love. "Wow." She manages, barely keeping it together.

Carmilla hummed in reply, leaving a trail of kisses from her back to her neck, before finally biting down on the skin of her neck, leaving several hickeys. She then crashed her wet lips into her soulmate's, loving and passionate. They kissed until they ran out of air and then they kissed again.

Carmilla was emotionally spent at this point, as she let her arms droop around Laura's neck, and she pressed her face into Laura's breasts, letting out a deep, resounding sigh.
They were silent for a few moments, trying to catch their breaths, both still on their own respective highs.

Laura giggled as a thought came to her, and she peered excitedly at Carmilla.

"What?" Her soulmate asked, giving her a bewildered smile.

"We broke the bed," Laura said, cackling. "Our lovemaking so intense that WE BROKE THE BED."

"Um, that is an alternative fact," Carmilla said with a chuckle, pulling her in for a kiss, "You broke the bed."

"Potato, po-tah-to," she mumbled, flexing her fingers, and when a thought came to her she groaned. "Laf's going to hate us tomorrow. Heaven knows the walls are super thin in Saint Jerome Hall."

"They can complain all they want. It's not like we're ever going to stop." Laura shook her head, "Besides, that headboard was so old. It was bound to break at some point."

"Really?" Carmilla said with mock surprise, "So… you had a good time then, cupcake?"

Laura rolled her eyes, shoving Carmilla's shoulder playfully, "No, it was the worst sex I've ever had. Ask the bed."

"Creampuff, I had the honor of deflowering you. You were a virgin until now."

"Shame. Wish I had rewind powers, I'd run away from that date the moment I had the chance." Laura giggles, and Carmilla pouts.

"You don't mean that."

"Of course not," She smiles, and reaches over to gently caress Carmilla's face, "Do you see me?"

"I see you." Carmilla sighs, and smiling, gave her a gentle kiss. "I feel you," She then started to pepper Laura's face with kisses, "I adore you. I cherish you. I worship you." Laura let out a happy giggle, rubbing noses with her. "I am you." She says gently, tapping their soul mark on Laura's arm. She kisses Orion first, noticing how the constellation burns in soulful pleasure, before making her way to every cluster of stars.

"I've always been in you." Laura hiccups, tears glistening in her eyes as she pulls Carmilla into a languid kiss. Her lips tasted salty with cum and tears.

"Always. I've always been here. I've always been waiting for you," She replies, holding Carmilla's face. "I love you."

"I love you too, Laura." The two souls, finally finding peace with each other, wept together as all their sorrows went away. Utterly and emotionally spent, Carmilla and Laura drifted off into a heavenly sleep.

Chapter End Notes
*peeks out from hiding space* ...h... hewwo?
Heaven is a Place on Earth

Chapter Summary

Carmilla finally finds closure with Mattie and Lilita. Meanwhile, Laura starts to have vivid dreams of their future and hopes that they will come true one day.

Chapter Notes

This is probably my favorite chapter, and I hope you all enjoy reading it as I enjoyed writing it all those months ago. It's so surreal now that there's so many of you who read and comment on my work, and the lives I've helped change because of it. It makes my heart happy that you are all so happy. The lovely @Pandraws is drawing fan art for this story, check my blog for the tags to their art! It's amazing!

(Side note: i watched the stream with you all thirsty hoes yesterday and I never realized how neurotic and crazy this fandom was until then. I love you all. Thank you for bearing with me while I had multiple nosebleeds as Carmilla spread her legs on A HECKING CHAIR. sweet jesus *fans self*)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I let out a peaceful sigh as I felt my soulmate tighten her grip around me. My mind whirled with the events of last night, my heart overflowing with love. My soul mark burned with this indescribable feeling of pleasure that I was sure Carmilla felt too. We would be experiencing this often—soul marks after The Marking and after the two souls make love for the first time burn for quite some time. It's no longer painful, just something they experience to bring each other closer together.

Emotions are raw and high and abundant.

My eyes slowly opened, as the welcoming sun peeked through our window.

Carmilla had somehow found herself on top of me, her head nestled within my breasts.

Her favorite place, she told me. What a goof.

"My love," I giggled softly, poking her nose, "Good morning."

She grumbles in reply, her hands feeling their way up my back and getting lost into my hair. "No."

She weakly garbled, her lips gently kissing and licking around my nipples.

"Oh, so you're not in the mood to get up, but you would rather kiss me half asleep? Some priorities you have." I smile, caressing her beautiful face.
"You are my priority." She mumbled. I laugh at her. She then let out a yawn and propped her head up and sleepily beamed at me, "Wow, are you my girlfriend?" She nods in approval, "I did good."

I shake my head at her. The things Carm says when she's barely awake are the sweetest and I wished I got all of them on video. "Yes, baby. I'm also your soulmate too. It's amazing how far we have come, hmm?"

Carmilla stared at me in awe for a moment. Then, quickly, she pulled our lips together for a kiss. "I'm in love with you, Laura Hollis." She breathed, resting her forehead against mine, and I sucked in a deep breath. My heart began to beat rapidly, as tears sprung in my eyes, and she chuckles. She smiled and placed her ear on my heart, humming softly at each beat.

"I'm in love with you too, Carmilla Karnstein." I manage weakly, kissing the top of her head.

I'll never get tired of this exchange.

"Are you… up for round two?" My soulmate husked, sitting upward and peering at me with that delightful smirk.

"I am, but I don't think our bed is." I remind her, pointing to the broken bed frame. "Unless you want to explain to our beloved Floor Don why our bed frame split in half."

She pouts, her shoulders slouching, "But I want nothing more than to stay in bed all morning and make love to you again." She then slowly reached out with her hands to grip at my breasts, and I gave her a noncommittal look.

"Your obsession with my boobs is starting to border the pathological." I say dully.

"Hey, I wasn't this horny before I met you, I swear," She chuckled, biting her lip, as a rare blush tinted her cheeks, "You make me feel things that sometimes I have no control over."

I smirk at her, eyeing her hands as they gently caressed the area around my nipples. Gods, that felt so good. "No, that's a boldfaced lie. You have the sex drive of a succumbus."

"Careful, now. Wouldn't want to boost my ego." She grins, "I thought I was a vampire?"

"Vampires are usually known for their broodiness, strength, and knowledge. They aren't very social creatures. A succumbus would suit you better since you haven't been able to keep your hands off me since day one," I giggle, and gasp as she gently brings her lips down to my breast and sucks on them. "See? You're not even helping your case!" I hit her shoulder.

"Cupcake, you talk too much." She husked, feeling her hand down my stomach and bringing it close to my thighs.

Heat pooled in my stomach as the last bit of sleepiness washed out of me. I moaned with desire while Carmilla placed hot, needy kisses all over my body, kissing the bruises that were left the night before.

I was about to grind my hips into her, when my cell phone started to buzz. "Cutie, please. Leave it alone." She grumbled, and I smirk at her, stopping for a moment to reach for my phone. Carmilla let out a disgruntled sigh and buried her head into my breasts again.

It was our friends. Lafontaine wanted to know if we were ever coming down for breakfast. We missed that deadline—now they were out of class and were wondering if we wanted to head over to the café for lunch. I quickly texted them back and told them they were on our way.
"Aren't you hungry?" I asked her, as she rolled over on her side, and pulled me with her.

"Yes." She admits, fighting a smile.

"Then, c'mon grumpy cat. We'll continue this later. Besides, I want to hang out with my Renny and my sisters."

"It's nice that you think of Lafontaine as your parental figure," Carmilla eased gently, playing with a piece of my hair, "I'm sure they're honored that you think of them in high regard."

"They've been through so much with us, Carm. How could I not? They brought our souls together." I say, beaming at her.

"That is true." She chuckled, and gave me a languid kiss.

We stayed in bed for a few more moments before I wiggled out of her grasp, and she let out a needy moan. I chuckled at her, heading into our bathroom for a shower.

I paused for a moment to smile at myself in the mirror. My hands trailed from my soul mark, to all the bite marks and scratches Carm gave me the other night. I was glowing, with my hair a mess and tired eyes, but anyone from a mile away could tell that I was filled to the brim with happiness.

Tears glistened in my eyes as I truly thought about how far we've come, and the way Carmilla's love empowers me.

It was hard to believe at some point in my life I couldn't last a day without her. I felt Carmilla's arms wrap around my body and I give her a gentle, loving smile in return. We stare at each other in the mirror for a long moment, Carmilla tracing her fingers on my soul mark, admiring how pretty the constellation Orion is. She places a gentle kiss on the star coordinates and wiggles her eyebrows at me, nodding over to the shower. I laugh, silently agreeing with her, as we stumble into the shower for round two.

Carmilla wasn't at all discreet with public displays of affection as we both left our dorm, so she literally had her hand pressed in between my pants and my ass. I quickly took it out so I wouldn't become distracted when we made it to our friend's table.

"There you are." Perry greets us, a wide, relaxed smile on her face. "Sleep well?"

"Very." Carmilla hums, resting her head against mine.

"I bet you both did," Lafontaine adds with a snicker.

Danny looked beside herself.

"So. Um," I began, giving Perry my brightest, most innocent smile. "Do you mind… coming over to our dorm later? The. Um. The bedframe's broken. It was rickety. Didn't last long."

Kirsch's mouth dropped open.

"Oh, dear. What on earth were you doing?"

Each other.

Crap, Laura! Where did that come from?! Innocent! I'm an innocent human bean! I'm not guilty!

"W-we were doing yoga! Couples yoga! W-with really complex… um… positions." I ramble, and
the entire table was in stitches. Carmilla slapped her head.

"All night?" Danny snorts, and I noticed that she slowly inched her hand towards a donut. She rears her hand back, and then suddenly, the tasty treat was flying straight at us, hitting my arm where our soul mark was. It burned and glistened upon impact, an array of beautiful stars quickly glitching out. Our yellow and blue souls were warm with pleasure. I staggered backwards and Carmilla caught me.

"I knew it!" She cheered, bouncing excitedly, "Carmilla and Laura, sitting in a tree, F-U-C-K-I-N-G —,"

"Alright, how old are you, five?" Carmilla huffs, rubbing her arm, as she probably felt the after-effects of the buzz.

"You two idiots were so loud we were all up all night." Lafontaine mumbled, rubbing their eyes, "Christ, Lau. You've gotta dirty mouth."

I blush, smiling sheepishly as I looked down at my feet.

"She's not even ashamed!" Kirsch exclaimed with a laugh, slapping the table.

Carmilla gave me a dull look, "Who's idea was it to come down and be with their family instead of lying in bed all day? Oh yeah," She poked my nose, "Yours."

I chuckled at her, my heart full of love, and I gave her an eager, passionate kiss on her lips.

Everyone groaned.

The cool summer air gently kissed my skin, and I sighed happily. I hummed a gentle tune as I watched the scene unfold before me, my heart swelling with love. Carmilla was playing with the child in the sand, a beaming smile on her face, as she helped create the sandcastle. The beautiful child was like a miniature version of Carmilla—their gorgeous raven-haired locks, pale skin, and crystal blue eyes.

They shrieked with laughter as Carmilla suddenly got up to chase them, shouting words of love and adoration. Carmilla finally caught the child several moments later, spinning them around and placing loving kisses on their cheek. The child, in turn, placed sloppy kisses on her soul mark, patting it with their tiny hand.

Carmilla's kind eyes trailed over to me, and she smiled sweetly. She whispered something to the little child, who wiggled out of Carmilla's arms and hurried over to me. It was in that moment I realized my swollen belly, and I let out a noise of surprise when the babe within kicked me. The child's eyes widened with excitement, as they hugged my belly, placing kisses over the bump.

I was in tears by the time Carmilla came over to us, and she captured my lips into a kiss, stroking my belly.

"Someday, my love. This will be us someday." She cooed softly, holding the tiny child in her arms.

I sniffed, unable to keep my emotions at bay as I began to regain consciousness. What's going on
with me? I've been having that dream for the last few weeks; it's April now. Granted, it wasn't the same dream; every night the dream changed into a different scenario with Carmilla and our child. It was as if I was watching someone else's life through their eyes—I couldn't believe that it was happening to me.

Feebly, I lifted my shirt, only to be disappointed that I wasn't pregnant. Why was I so emotional about this? Carmilla and I talk about our future all the time—we've even started to look at houses to buy after we graduate in May.

I heaved a deep sigh when I realized the truth. Ah, crap. My baby fever is really bad today.

I wiped my eyes, turning on my side opposite of Carmilla. It was still very early in the morning, and she was a grumpy cat if I ever disturbed her. I buried my face into my yellow pillow, wishing that my thoughts would calm themselves, but the little child with Carmilla's raven haired curls stayed at the forefront of my mind.

"Cupcake?" Carmilla chimed quietly, turning on the lamp. "What's the matter, love?"

I mumbled something incoherent, muffled by my sniffles.

"Laura. I know you're awake." She soothes, placing her hand on my shoulder. "Hey. Did you have a bad dream?"

"N-no. I had a good dream." I mumble, snuggling up to her.

"Then why are you crying?" She asks, taking a piece of hair out of my eyes.

"B-because I'm happy! I didn't want it to end!" I hiccupped, and she chuckled.

"Well, tell me. What was the dream about?" She asked with a yawn, placing a kiss on my cheek.

I blush, taking a moment to recollect my thoughts. "W-we were on a beach. And you… were building a sandcastle with a little child. They had raven haired curls just like you. And your eyes. And your smile." I sigh, wiping away a tear. She smiled at me. "Then you were chasing them around and played with them, and… you looked… so happy. And when the little child came over to hug me, that's when I put the dots together that they were our child, and that I was pregnant with another one." I shake my head, burying my face in her neck, "It was so real, Carmilla. I… I wanted it to be real."

"Oh, baby." Carmilla soothed, giving me a kiss. "Have you had this dream before?"

"Multiple times throughout the week. It's like… one moment I'm happy and the next I'm sad," I sniff, "I… I know we can't right now, Carmilla, but," I stare at her with an intense gaze, "I want a baby."

"Who says we can't?" Carmilla mumbles, smiling sweetly.

"B-but, Carm," I try to argue, "We're still in college. Our dorm room isn't big enough for a baby. Our jobs right now don't give us the proper salary to raise one, either. W-we're so young," I babble, "It's not realistic."

"I know that, sweetness, but think about it. We'll be graduating in a month." She says with a smile, "We'll… quit our jobs and find better ones, move out and buy a house in the suburbs. Someplace that's close to Silas and Mama can visit."

"You've been… thinking about this?" I ask tentatively, giving her a kind smile.
"I'd be lying if I said no," She says with a gentle smile, kissing me softly. "I'd love to start a family with you. It would be a blessing. I'd like for us to already get started on our future after we graduate."

"You really want to be a mommy?" I ask sweetly, playing with her curls.

"Yeah," Carmilla's lips curled up into a cute smile, "Picturing you with a bump and preparing a nursery is a comforting thought."

"Yay," I cheer softly, clapping my hands, "I think you'd be a great mom."

"I know nothing about raising a kid. I'd be horrifying." She grumbles, "I can barely take care of myself."

I playfully slapped her shoulder, "Don't be like that. I'm sure our kid will love you. You'd be like, the no-nonsense type mom who doesn't allow our kid out of the house past nine-thirty. But if they do something incredibly sweet like draw a picture, you'd melt into a puddle."

Carmilla then raises an eyebrow, "Do you want to adopt or go through an IUI?"

"...I want to experience what it's like to be pregnant, Carm." I smile tearfully, "It's always been my dream to be a mommy."

"Hmm. I do enjoy the thought of you having an adorable bump," She chimes, stroking my hair. Our noses touched. "Do you feel better?"

"Now that we've talked about this, yeah. I'm sorry for waking you up."

"It's fine. You needed me. I was more than happy to help," She captured my lips into a kiss, "We'll start preparing for our future this weekend, eh?"

I squealed happily and kissed her again. I love her so much—I'm so lucky to have her in my life.

She moaned softly as she squeezed my shoulder, propping herself on top of me. Neither of us were tired, emotionally wound up from our conversation. She peppered my face with kisses, before leaving a trail down my neck, something that she loves doing the most.

"Carm, I thought you were tired," I giggle, slipping my hand underneath her shirt and feeling her breast.


I blinked at her, "Did my baby talk turn you on?"

She blushed, her eyes twinkling at me, "A little bit."

I giggled, heat pooling in my stomach. Looks like she wasn't the only one. "Well, if we're going to do this, we have to be very quiet. Think you can handle that?"

"You're asking me?" She uttered with a laugh, her eyes challenging. I smirked. She gently lapped her tongue around my breasts, fiddling with my bra string. She slung it off no problem, taking my nipple in her mouth and sucking on it. I feebly reached for my pillow and moaned into it, already feeling wetness in my clit.

She let out a guttural noise, something that was close to being animalistic, sending shivers down my spine. She slipped off my panties, and I was completely naked underneath her. She removed the pillow from my face and kissed me, slow and steady, a string of spit coming from her mouth. I
giggled softly at her frustrated state, how easily turned on she became by the simplest things.

She held my gaze for a moment, cupping my face in her hand, her eyes wild with emotions. This was the woman I would one day have a family with. That I would begin my future with.

Carmilla's hands traced down from my breasts and onto my thighs, spreading open my legs for her. She anxiously tugged at the fabric of my pants, and I grinned. I happily took them off, giving her ass a smack, claiming rightful ownership.

She bit her lip, wincing as she desperately tried to hide a moan. I giggled at her expense. She began to grind her hips against mine, as I grasped onto the fluffy downs, feeling her arousal as well as mine wet the bed.

Carmilla decided to be a tease and graced her fingers around my clitoris, while placing hiccups on my abdomen. She then spread my legs as wide as they could go, and placed her tongue on the wet folds. She sucked, kissed, and licked every inch of it, and I couldn't help it. I broke my own rule by yelling out her name.

"Fuck, Carm, you feel so good." I grunt, grasping onto the headboard.

"Loser." She teased, pulling me in for a sloppy kiss. They tasted salty.

"This is a win-win situation for the both of us." I giggle, and then moaned, "Carmilla, please."

"What do you want?" She husked, causing my heart to swell.

"You. It's always been you." I husk, gasping as she slid her two fingers up my clit. Carmilla's lips crashed into mine and I bit down on hers, causing her to moan. She was grinding her hips again, each thrust sending waves of pleasure up my spine.

"F-fuck!" She cursed, panting in exertion, "Come for me, baby."

"Give me a second," I could only whimper in response, wanting nothing more than to be filled completely with Carmilla's love. To get drunk by her, lost in her. Carmilla leaned her forehead against mine as she pinched my nipples, moving her fingers inside me at just the right spot. And, finally, I did let go. A pleasurable wave coursed through me as I had my orgasm, squeezing Carmilla's shoulders to steady my soul.

Thank goodness, we fixed the bed last week.

I let out a moan as I came down from my respective high, writhing underneath her. Carmilla hummed softly as she kissed me, squeezing my nipples. I was barely holding onto my consciousness as I felt Carmilla nuzzle her face into my breasts, promptly falling asleep again. My heart was racing as my fingers found their way into her hair, and I smiled lovingly at her.

"Goodnight, love." I chuckled, and curled up beside her.

I didn't wake up until later that morning, with the alarm going off, and I let out a heavenly sigh. Carmilla had her arms wrapped around me still, our clothes in disarray around us. I wiggled out of her grasp, placing a loving kiss on her soul mark before leaving. She mumbled something incoherent, her face a confused grimace when she no longer felt me in her embrace, and blindly reached for my pillow to cuddle with it. This action only caused me to coo at her, wanting nothing more than to cuddle with her all day, but we had to attend classes today.

I hummed in content as I hurried into the shower, getting ready with my usual routine. I changed into
a comfortable pair of jeans and an animal print top, tying my hair up into a bun. I breathed out a sigh, realizing that for a while, I've been so blissfully happy. It was a welcome change. After so many years of sadness, these last few months I've spent with Carm felt like a lifetime already.

A panicked thought came through my mind—was it too early for this, to be wishing that we'd make a baby together? We've only been physically together for eight months. We don't have enough money to be financially stable on our own. If I keep thinking about this realistically I'd make myself sick with worry. My mind may be at war but I know my heart and soul have made their decision.

Besides, I'm sure our friends and family would be thrilled that a new addition would be coming soon—they'd drop everything to take care of us.

My hands gently caressed Orion's constellation, admiring how much more detailed this one is than the others. Surely that meant for something. I let out a sigh as it burned again, feeling at peace. Everything is going to be okay.

The jar of origami stars and Carmilla's lucky guitar pic caught my eye as I picked them up, smiling. I thought it was just me that was going crazy whenever I noticed the heavenly glow coming from this jar, but Carm notices it as well sometimes. It shines even brighter now that we have our stars, almost as if it's become a part of us. We couldn't explain the mystical properties surrounding this mysterious jar, but we decided that we were better off leaving it be. The jar was a symbol of our love—it brought us together at both of our darkest times.

I placed it gently back in its place, and began to brew myself a cup of hot cocoa. I heard Carmilla stir in our bed, letting out a tired yawn.

"Good morning, sleepyhead." I giggled, looking at her grumpy frame from the corner of my eye.

"Yeah, yeah," She grumbled, stark naked, with no regards to privacy. It amazed me how much she's grown emotionally, and she isn't afraid to show me her scars anymore. They are all beautiful, just like she is. She wrapped her arms around me from behind, nuzzling her face into the crook of my neck. "Bed. Cuddles. Now."

"We can easily cuddle right here, my love. I just got ready for the day." I reprimanded her, giving her head a gentle pat.

"I love you sooooo much." She cooed, making me chuckle. Her grip tightened around my waist, as she happily nibbled on my ear.

"I love you too, baby." I agree, squeezing her hand. I guess talking about our future caused her to be a little extra loving today. I didn't mind it—usually I was the cuddly one. With ease, I maneuvered with her to create a second cup of hot cocoa.

"Hey, Carm. How many kids do you even want?" I ask, taking a sip.

"Hmm. Four."

"F-four?!" I shrieked, almost dropping my TARDIS mug.

"I'll carry two and you carry two," She mumbled, cheeks turning pink, "Regardless… I'd be happy with just one healthy baby."

"Jesus, Carm, we'll never have any free time to ourselves," I say with a giggle, "You're such a sap. You're looking forward to having one big happy family, huh?"
She blushes and hums softly in agreement, burying her face in the crook of my neck. I turned around to face Carmilla, who's tired eyes glistened for a moment.

"Are you okay?"

She chuckled tearfully, "Just thinking about how lucky I am that you're mine." She husks, squeezing my ass. I blush, giving her a peck on her cheek. "I can't wait to start our future together."

"Who says we aren't starting it right now?" I ask playfully, squeezing her shoulder, "Stop trying to seduce me back into bed."

Her eyes widened as I caught her hand slipping into my pants, and she gave me a pout. "I have no idea what you're talking about, cupcake." She husks, her hand feeling around my private parts.

Holy Hufflepuff, she's so horny now. What kind of monster have I created?

"Carmilla." I grunt, desperately trying to keep a serious face. Her touch sent shivers up my spine.

"Laura." She replied, equally serious.

"Ah, crap," I mumble against her lips, and suddenly we were between the sheets again. I love it when our mornings begin like this.

April was an odd month for me. Growing up, my dad wasn't big on celebrating birthdays after mom died. So, I just wasn't used to the idea of a big party being thrown for me. I would be turning twenty-one in a few days, which is a scary thought. I'd be officially an adult soon. Carmilla's older than me by eight months; she's a Sagittarius, which explains her untamed sex drive. That girl can't go a few days without needing her fix from me.

I chuckled, shaking my mind out of the gutter. I didn't want my friends to go all out and plan a birthday party for me. I was fine with just having a tiny get-together or if they baked me a cake. Where we were didn't matter—I just wanted to have a fun time. But knowing Carmilla, she'll likely splurge, and there's nothing I can do about it.

It was still amazing how we've only been together for eight months and yet I have every aspect of her personality mapped out. She was no longer a mystery to me. I read her like an open book.

I stretched out my arms, staring at the notes I've taken from the chalk board. The teacher was blabbing away about some theory, and I desperately tried to pay attention. It wasn't that the subject was hard—economics was an easy concept, all we needed to worry about was memorization. My mind just wasn't in the right place to focus today.

A happy smile appeared on my face at the thought of our future baby. I've never once wanted to have children, but since Carmilla came into my life, I realized that she's the only woman I was ever meant to love. And since we're finally at peace, all that's left is to live out our happiness. The dreams have been becoming more vibrant and detailed, and I couldn't shake them out of my mind. That must have meant unconsciously, I have already decided that I was ready to have a baby, long before I verbalized this to Carm.

Unconsciously, my hand slipped over to my stomach, causing me to sigh.

Lafontaine curiously turned their gaze towards me, a worried look on their face. I waved them off with a weak smile. Nothing new here. Just having an existential crisis.

I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket, smiling when it was Carmilla.
Succumbus ;) (2:15 pm): Hey, love. We're meeting Mattie and Lilita for lunch today. Just thought I'd remind you.

Cupcake (2:17 pm): Hi, baby. Yes, I do remember. Are you sure about this? You know they said this wasn't necessary. What's past is past.

Succumbus ;) (2:18 pm): I know, but I need to do this. For closure. Besides, Mattie does want to tell you her background, so... this works out.

Cupcake (2:22 pm): Okay. This is your call. I'm so proud of you, honey. You've really come a long way. Promise me that after today we'll no longer dwell on the past?

Succumbus ;) (2:23 pm): Agreed. I love you, mommy.

Cupcake (2:25 pm): Why do you call me by that nickname now? I'm not pregnant.

Succumbus ;) (2:26 pm): Yet.

Cupcake (2:30 pm): :0

Succumbus ;) (2:32 pm): :)

Cupcake (2:33 pm): :) I rolled my eyes at her texts and smiled. She knew how to push all the right buttons to get me to cave. The professor smiled and announced that class time was over. I sighed with relief, quickly stuffing my books inside my backpack and hurried out.

I met Carmilla in the courtyard, and she pulled me in for a passionate kiss. She squeezed my shoulders as her tongue danced around my mouth, and I saw stars for a moment. A few students wolf-whistled as they walked past, to which Carmilla displayed the middle finger at them.

"Wow," I uttered, biting my lip. I love it when she pulls me in for a heated moment of passion.

She chuckled, her kind eyes twinkling at me, "I just missed you, is all."

"Hmm," I agreed, kissing her again. "Come now, love. Mattie and Lilita are waiting for us."

"Right." She smiles, linking her arm together with mine. We hurried off campus to the nearest bus station.

We made it to Panera on time, with Mattie and Lilita waiting for us, already with a table prepared. Both women smiled at us, pulling us into a warm embrace.

"It's been too long, dears," Lilita claimed, giving my shoulder an affectionate squeeze. "Now come on, show us them!"

Carmilla rolled her eyes. It was chilly this morning, so we wore jackets on the ride here, but we took them off since it was warm in the restaurant. Mattie's eyes sparkled with delight as she saw our stars, and poked them with her finger.

"They're beautiful." She gushes, squealing like a four-year-old.

"I'd go through hell and back if it meant I'd be blessed with sharing her soul." I say, giving Carm a kiss. She blushed. Her hands slipped around my waist, pulling me closer. Lilita smiled at our actions,
and we sat opposite of them.

The waitress came to take our orders, a tall, brown haired girl smacking her gum. Her eyes widened in shock when she noticed our soul marks, and her expression grew envious. She hurried off before Mattie could get her last word in.

"It's comforting," Lilita began, struggling to keep her emotions at bay, "Seeing my darling Carmilla so in love with you. For many years, the poor girl suffered. There would be days when she would wake up screaming from the horrible nightmares that plagued her soul, filthy demons, they were," She sighs, and I squeezed Carmilla's hand. "Not once did she ever open up to me. I… I wanted to help her, to guide her in the best way I can, but her heart was so sore. Only the hope that she would one day meet her soulmate gave her strength."

"I'm sorry if I was ever cross with you, or made you feel that you were useless," Carmilla frowns, reaching for Lilita's hand, "Living with you those years were some of the best of my life."

"Even with Ell?" She asks softly.

"Yes, even then. You never hurt me or emotionally abused me. You respected my wishes to be left alone and I learned to cope."

"Do you think of her often?" Mattie asks. I gazed curiously at her.

"Of course, but not in vain anymore. When I think of her I remind myself how blessed I was to have been gifted such a great friendship. She might not have been my soulmate, but she taught me how easy it was just to be happy—to accept life as it were. We were never meant to live a lifetime together. It would be foolish to wish for what could have been now, when I have my beloved soulmate right before my eyes." She smiles at me, leaning over to brush her thumb on my cheek.

"Every day, I thank the Moon I managed to save you in time. If I had been a second too late…" Mattie whimpered, unwilling to finish that statement.

"God sent me an angel—and you wrapped your wings around me that night, hiding me from every evil," Carmilla assured, smiling gratefully at her, "We are not sisters by blood, but our roots run so much deeper than that. Not a day goes by where I think of how much I love you."

"I love you too, Carmilla. You've really come a long way since then."

"Carmilla, if I may ask… why did you attempt to commit suicide the first time? At your previous foster home?" Lilita asks.

"I was too much for them, simply put. My emotional state was a mess, and I would lash out at the most unnecessary of things. They wanted to put me back in the system, and I had horrible flashbacks. I figured death would be a better option to their prayers," She breathed out a sigh, "I was so stricken by my own demons I became mute instead."

"I remember the first time I heard you laugh," Mattie eased, "You were in your bedroom with Ell. You girls were looking at a video game of sorts, becoming very competitive. You were smiling because you've beaten her and she was teasing you all afternoon. Then suddenly I caught her pouncing on you, like an adorable cat, and she started to tickle your stomach." She places her fist underneath her chin, "The laugh that bubbled out of your mouth was so precious I started crying."

"No wonder you couldn't control your emotions at dinner that night." Lilita chuckled at her, giving her shoulder a gentle pat. "We still keep in touch with Ell's parents, from time to time."
"You do?" Carmilla asked in surprise.

"Yes, yes. Those two lovebirds are always traveling. In London one moment and then in Canada the next. It's good for them. They asked about you on Facebook, and when we show them the pictures that you take with Laura, their reactions were the sweetest."

Carmilla seemed to let out a breath, "Oh, good. I was always so scared because I thought they hated me."

"Hate you? How could they? They loved you as if you were their own."

"It's… silly, but I just figured they hated me because I felt that I was the reason their daughter died." She uttered, letting the statement hang in the air.

"Carmilla Margaret Karnstein," I snap at her, glaring pointedly, "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard you say."

"Cupcake—,"

"No, that's ridiculous. Ell's death wasn't your fault. The two of you were just being kids and happy because of your piano recital. She got a little careless and wanted to race across the street with you. The oncoming car was unaware that there was a tiny human rushing towards the next block. No one's to blame for this situation, and if her parents did hate you, it would be a waste of their time. You created an unnecessary scenario in your head. We go over this all the time."

She smiled softly at me, "You always know what to say." She murmured, resting her head against my shoulder.

"I do my best." I assure her.

"Laura, what color was Carmilla's soul?" Lilita asked with interest, while Mattie raised a curious eyebrow.

"Blue—it was so blue," I reply, "Pure, loyal, endless. I've always associated blue with sadness, but with Carm, it's the color that gives her strength."

"Fascinating," Mattie utters. The food came to our table, and we happily began to much on our panini's and hot sandwiches. I casually slipped my hand underneath the table to grasp Carmilla's, and she smiled gratefully.

"Mattie, how does your story tie into Carmilla's?" I ask.

"Oh, that's a trip." She sighs deeply, looking gratefully at her mother, "I was born in Africa, into a poor family in an equally poor village. Sometimes I would go for months without eating—Carmilla and I had that in common," She sighed, "My mother died giving birth to me, and my father physically abused me. I didn't have a safe space to come home to. Being a woman in Africa is difficult, because you have only two choices: marry off, and produce many sons. It doesn't matter who you are or what status your family name was, or if you had a soulmate. Lilita was on a missionary trip doing humanitarian work when she found me. I was beaten half to death, raped beyond any sense of purity. I was so skinny you could see the ribs protruding from my body." A tear slid down Mattie's cheek as she struggled to contain her emotions. "I hated being alive."

I let out a quiet gasp and grasped her hand from over the table.

"It wasn't easy, claiming Mattie as my own," Lilita says, "I needed to create some grand excuse how
she was related to me so I could rescue her. It took me at least two years to fill out all her paperwork, consult with her caseworker, create her green card to come to Austria. But the day she came was the happiest of my life."

"And though I never voiced it, it was mine as well." Mattie assured her, grinning broadly. "You taught me that I am worth something."

Carmilla smiled, a peaceful look on her face. "And mama, I don't think I say this enough either, but you are the bravest woman I know. I look up to you and admire everything that you've done for me and Mattie. You… you've done more than just give us food, water, and a roof over our heads. It must have not been easy, dealing with my dangerous mood swings, or Mattie's PTSD, but you managed to keep us both afloat. We… we learned what it was like to have a family. I gained a mother and a sister. For that, I will always be grateful to you."

Tears glistened in Lilita's eyes, as she suddenly got up from her chair and wrapped her arms around her daughter. "Oh Carmilla." She sobs, "My glittering girl."

"I love you so much, kitten." Mattie beams, holding Carmilla's hands in her own. "I feel so at peace now that you are!"

My heart thudded in my chest as I realized Carmilla finally found the closure that she needed. It was always there for her, but the tired soul was just too afraid to talk about it.

I fell in love with her a little bit more in that moment.

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Laura's gentle, adorable snores made Carmilla giggle, as she became the big spoon to cuddle with her. The curtains were drawn, and only one lamp was on to give them light. She had her laptop beside them, as they were intent on watching movies morning came. But with the added stress of the day, it wore her out and they only got through five movies.

She had the day planned already. It was the weekend, so that meant they could get away with sleeping in late, and Carmilla could surprise her with breakfast in bed. Then, she would have her hang out with Perry and Danny while they prepared the cake for her. She knew Laura didn't want anything fancy, or any special presents—just spending time with her loved ones was a gift. But Laura deserved the world, and if the powers were vested in Carmilla, she would do so. They would end the night by going to a club, a small one near campus. Laura didn't want to drink, they were simply going there for some foosball and entertainment.

Heaven help her—she was so whipped for this girl.

Her eyes trailed over to her laptop, chuckling when the clock struck twelve. The church bell across campus hummed its eerie tune. Laura was an adult now—officially twenty-one years old.

She gently rubbed Laura's arm as she placed kisses on her cheeks, and slowly kissed her lips to wake her. Her soulmate didn't wake up right away, though her lips did kiss back. Carmilla moved on top of the girl so that way she was straddling her, and proceeded to leave a trail of kisses down her neck.

"Carm?" Laura mumbled, rubbing her eyes.

"It's twelve am. Happy birthday, love." She soothes, peppering her face with kisses.

"In seven hours, at least." She yawns, but nonetheless smiled. The way her eyes sparkled made Carmilla's heart melt.
"No wonder you're so chipper in the morning," Carmilla grumbles, making Laura giggle. "How do you feel now that you're twenty-one?"

"Not any different than before," She admits, shaking her head off sleep, "I'm just another year older." Carmilla smiles, the notion meeting her eyes. She places a kiss on the younger girl's forehead. "Do you see me?"

"I see you." Laura giggled, burying her face into Carmilla's neck. "I'm so happy." She claims, letting out a blissful sigh. "I'm so blessed to have fallen in love with you."

"You're such a sap," Carmilla said playfully, and kissed away a tear that fell down her face. "Don't cry, love, the day hasn't even started yet."

"Hehe," She says, "Sorry, I just got off my birth control pills. My emotions are a mess. I'm preparing my body for the baby."

"Have you started looking at baby supplies without me?" Carmilla teased, and Laura looked at her without shame. "I saw your search history on google, you nerd." She then tapped her lip, "Not to mention you have started baby-proofing the dorm even though we won't be here for long."

She shook her head, "Don't worry, I didn't sign any paper work yet. I'll be sure to do that with you."

"You really want to be pregnant during the summer time?" Carmilla asks, stroking her soulmate's belly.

"It's the perfect excuse to stay indoors and rest instead of being outside in the heat." She grins broadly, and Carmilla rolls her eyes. "I'd rather deal with morning sickness than suffer outside."

"Cheeky." She laughs, giving her a kiss. "I love it how excited you are about having a baby. It's so adorable. For your sake, I hope we're blessed with a little bun in the oven several months from now."

"I've been praying every night before I sleep." Laura admits quietly, her cheeks flushing.

"That's beautiful, Laura." She smiles, and with a yawn, rests their foreheads together. "Now, let's go back to sleep. I have a fun day planned for you."

"Yay! I'm so excited! Can you tell me what we're doing?"

"No. It's a surprise."

"C'mon, just a little hint."

"Nope, sorry, cupcake." She grins cheekily, and closes her eyes. Laura pouts, sleep making her will to fight even harder. She let out a mix between a yawn and a sigh, before snuggling up to Carmilla again.

"We're going to have a baby!" Laura sang quietly, her eyes closed.

"Soon, love. We'll have a precious bundle of joy this time next year, I promise. Now come on, it's time for sleep." She soothes, rubbing Laura's back. Carmilla couldn't wipe off the smile on her face for the rest of the night.

It was nearing nine o' clock when Carmilla woke up again, and even though she wanted nothing more than to stay in bed with her adorable soulmate, she had a birthday to prepare. She quickly changed her outfit into something comfortable, and hurried down to the campus cafeteria.
She rubbed the sleep from her eyes and smiled gratefully at the chef who prepared a meal specially for her. She bumped into Perry, who happily informed her that the cake was ready for them, and space they rented out at a local restaurant.

Laura was already up, wearing nothing but her bra and underwear. She was cleaning the little messes they made in their dorm room and dancing to some embarrassing 90's song. Carmilla couldn't help but smile as she admired her, and wondered how can someone be so beautiful by just doing a simple task.

"E-eep! Carm!" Laura shrieks, dropping the feather duster. Carmilla laughs, placing their breakfast on their bed and walking over to hug her.

"God, you're so cute." She breathes, kissing her gently.

"And you're so gorgeous." Laura blushes, "All mine." She coos, giving Carmilla's lip a bite.

"Let's feed you before we spend all day in bed."

"I wouldn't mind that," Laura laughs, snuggling with Carmilla.

"Now, now. Stop using your adorable-ness to seduce me. I have a whole day planned and you're not going to ruin it." She claims, squeezing Laura's ass.

Laura giggled in reply, before they ate breakfast in bed and she admired the romantic aesthetic. It was heart-shaped blueberry pancakes with a dollop of Nutella, and strawberries. The plate was decorated with flowers and cute origami stars. They finished several minutes later, and Carmilla ordered Laura to go have fun at the local shopping center. Perry and Lafontaine would be taking her out and she had the opportunity to buy whatever she pleased with Carmilla's credit card. Laura outright refused as expected, saying that the breakfast was more than enough, and Carmilla kissed away her tears when she started to cry.

It was difficult, sometimes—Carmilla loved that girl so much and she wanted to give her the world. Laura was used to living the simple life, and if she spent something more than necessary, she would go into a panic. It just reminded Carmilla that not all soulmates had a perfect relationship; and that eased her heart a little bit.

Carmilla spent the rest of the afternoon with Danny and Kirsch, making sure everything was set up for the evening that they had planned. Those two idiots had trouble keeping their hands off one another, which was adorable and incredibly annoying. She wondered briefly if this was how Lafontaine felt when her and Laura were stuck in that phase.

The seconds ticked on by until she saw Perry's car pull up, and Carmilla let out a breath she didn't know she was holding. Then, the moment she saw Laura's face, she lost it again, and forgot everything she meant to say to her beloved. Carmilla was certain Laura couldn't have gotten any more beautiful since their date night, several months ago, and yet here she was. With her face coated with the right layer of make-up, a lovely royal purple dress that hung close to her curves, and she wore heels to give her an extra inch. Their stars shining proudly on Laura's arm. It was in that moment that Carmilla no longer saw Laura as a young girl—she had blossomed into a woman, a powerful, brave, selfless woman that shared her soul. The doe-eyed, deer-in-the-headlights look was gone, and so was the baby fat on her cheeks. She no longer carried the weight of the world on her shoulders, and she opened her heart to anyone who needed it.

She was a woman who Carmilla would one day call her fiancé. Wife. A mother to their children someday. The simple word of 'soulmate' suddenly meant much more to her, and she cherished it.
This woman was her *angel*. Laura had wrapped her precious wings around Carmilla when no one else could, and for that, Carmilla would bless her lucky stars every day.

"Carm, why are you crying? I'm the one who's getting wooed, here," Laura giggled, poking her soulmate in the cheek.

"I just love you a whole lot, is all." Carmilla babbled, wiping her eyes.

"I love you a whole lot, too." Laura smiles, giving her a kiss.

Danny cupped her hands to her mouth, "Hey, lovebirds. We haven't even gotten to the cake yet, enough with the sappiness. My tooth is starting to ache." Kirsch chuckled and placed a kiss to her cheek, giving Carmilla a sideways smile.

"I know you said you didn't want anything special, but I saw this at the bakery and I couldn't help myself," Carmilla urges, and rubbed Laura's arm. "A cupcake for a cupcake."

"Oh, Carm!" Laura sniffs, as the cake was revealed on the table. Twenty-one candles were lit and placed on the rainbow frosting, with chocolate filling—her favorite.

"Hey, now, don't give her all the credit. We helped design the cake, little nerd!" Kirsch laughs, releasing his grip on Danny to give Laura a hug.

"Thank you. All of you… r-really." She murmurs, tears streaming down her face.

Carmilla squeezed Laura's shoulders, and began to rub circles on her back, "Laura, baby? Is everything okay?"

"Y-yes, I'm fine, everything's fine," She laughs tearfully, "This is just the first birthday I've celebrated in four years. O-or since my mom died, at least. I promised myself I wouldn't get emotional over this but here we are, whew. Sorry."

"No apology needed, L," Lafontaine smiles, "We're your friends and we love you. Of course, we wanted to make this day as special as you are."

This caused another wave of tears to spread down Laura's face, and Carmilla held her tighter. "Thank you. There's something that I need to get off my chest before we do anything, first," She says, wiping her eyes, and took Danny's hand, "Danny. You were my first friend at Silas. I was in a dark place when we met and you were so gentle and kind… i-if it weren't for you, I would've never realized just how much people cared about me. E-even though we're not soulmates, or have romantic feelings for each other, I'm just so grateful you're in my life." Laura admits, "And I hope that we're sisters for a long time."

"Me too, Lau." The red-haired woman smiles, giving her a hug.

"Kirsch. You're the best dude-scort anyone could ask for," Laura says, smiling as Kirsch pumped his fists in joy, "You're so funny, and humble and I think of you as the big brother I never had. I'm so glad that you found a soulmate in Danny and loved her even when you were mourning over S.J. I'm sure that right now, she's looking down on you from Heaven and is so proud of how far you've come."

"Thank you, little nerd." He sighs, wrapping his arms around her.

"Perry. I know you were Carm's friend first before mine, but I feel like we've known each other for years. I can come to you asking for advice on anything, and you'll deliver. We have so much fun
baking and sharing stories from our pasts. I can trust you with my soul and you'll take care of it, and I can't as for a better best friend."

"Aw, and I feel the same, sweetie. You're so brave—you've come such a long way from the lonely girl we once knew." Perry chimes, giving her shoulder a squeeze.

"And last, but certainly not least. Lafontaine," Laura eased softly, taking their hands in hers. "You're quite possibly the weirdest human I've ever met, and God knows how Perry puts up with you, but I love you for it. Your science metaphors and conspiracy ramblings keep me up for hours, and I admire your blunt humor. Not to mention I can't thank you enough for being there for Carm when I wasn't."

Lafontaine smiled, "You're welcome, L."

"Where's my declaration of love?" Carmilla asked jokingly, wrapping her arms around Laura's waist, spinning her around.

"You get one every day, Karnstein. Stop being such a brat." Danny chuckled, giving them a smile.

"I think I fell in love with you before I even knew what love was," Laura began, her eyes serious and boring into Carmilla's, "Because of you, I learned how to find closure with my mother, and overcome my triggers. You make me feel safe. With you, I don't have to pretend to be something I'm not. You've seen me at my worst and didn't judge me for it. These past seven months with you… have felt like an entire lifetime, and I wouldn't trade anything for the world. I know we're young, Carm, and that we haven't known each other for long, but… that's why I can't wait to start our future together, after today. I can no longer imagine a future without you in it. And every day I bless the Moon because our stars were made for each other."

"Damn." Lafontaine cursed, and Perry smiled gently, the action lighting up her eyes.

Carmilla smiled, chuckling as Laura wiped her eyes with her thumb. "Every day I fall in love with you a little bit more," She claims, giving her a kiss. "Let's get to that cake before Kirsch eats it all himself."

Kirsch made an impatient whine, causing Danny to slap his arm, and the group of friends sang happy birthday to Laura.

"Make a wish, dear." Carmilla uttered softly.

"Why would I make a wish when I have everything I've ever wanted?" She asks, patting her stomach discreetly, "And everything that will soon come?"

Warmth fluttered in Carmilla's chest, as it usually does whenever they talk about their future baby. They hadn't even agreed on a sperm donor yet, or signed paperwork, but damn did she wish they were living that reality now. It made her all bubbly and giddy.

"Rhetorical, then." She chuckles, placing a kiss to her cheek. Laura steadied herself, hyper-aware of the environment around her as she blew out the candles, happy tears streaming down her cheeks now. She let go of her and watched as Laura cut the cake, and smeared it all over Carmilla's face. The laugh that bubbled out of Laura was beautiful. It was lively, warm and rich, and Carmilla loved every second of it. She adored it so much that she took another piece of fondant and poked Laura's nose, causing their friends to groan and roll their eyes.

Perry watched in horror as they suddenly started chasing each other, making a mess of things in their wake. "Cakes are meant to be eaten, not played with!" She screeched, and Lafontaine shook their
head.

"Let them be, Perr. They're at the highest point in their relationship right now, do you really think they'd listen to anything we say? Lighten up a bit, babe." They soothed, placing a peck on their neurotic girlfriend's cheek.

The rest of the night went by smoothly, as Laura opened all her wonderful presents, thanking all her friends for putting so much thought into her special day. They then took the party to a club (not exactly Laura's ideal, but she had to face her fears somehow) and she allowed herself to loosen up. Things were different now—she had awesome friends, and a loving soulmate to take care of her. So, when they stumbled into their dorm room, laughing, with less clothes on than before, and beyond any recollection of what just transpired, she realized she just didn't care. She didn't care what happened yesterday, what will happen tomorrow, or what will happen days after. All that mattered was this moment, and her soulmate's kisses setting her heart on fire. She was convinced that heaven was a place on earth—and it was with Carmilla.

Chapter End Notes

4 MORE DAYS UNTIL THE CARMILLA MOVIE. 4 MORE DAYS. 4 MORE DAAAAAYYYYYYYYYS.
Carmilla sighed in content, fixing the hairpins in her cap and glancing at herself briefly in the mirror. This is it. Today’s the day.

*I’m graduating college.*

It was a bittersweet feeling in her chest as Carmilla remembered those sad, lonely years upon her first arrival here. The only time when she truly started to appreciate her reason for being here was when Laura came into her life.

Laura. Her beloved soulmate. The love of her life.

The thought made her smile and reminisce at how far she's come. Carmilla buckled down and focused this semester, wanting not only to prove to her mama but prove to herself that she is capable at achieving excellence here. That she wasn't at Silas on a free ride. She wanted to battle her demons and face the real world.

And she did.

With a masters in Philosophy and a 4.0 GPA average to boot, Carmilla salvaged the rest of her senior year and scored every test with flying colors.

Laura's love encouraged her. Inspired her. She wanted to prove not only to herself and her mama and Mattie but also to Laura, that she could do this.

*And I did.*
Smiling, Carmilla stepped away from the mirror and poked her head into their dorm. It looked… less cozy now, because there were boxes all around the floor and their jar of stars was packed safely in a separate box. The only thing that was left was their humble bed, which had surely seen the end of its time because of all their recent sex-capades. If they were to have one more round on it, the poor thing would surely split in half.

Carmilla wouldn’t dare be the one to explain that to Lafontaine.

They were entering a new chapter in their life now, and Carmilla was happy. They would be moving back with mama and Mattie, still on campus, but Carmilla's original bedroom was much bigger than this home away from home. Talk of moving into their own house was often discussed, and they both agreed that until they saved up enough money living with Carmilla's family was the easiest option for now.

Still, though. This dorm held a lot of memories for Carmilla and her love. They shared kisses and cocoa and stars and dancing. Sad nights were more bearable since they had each other to comfort. The terrace was where their souls fell in love. It's silly to feel sentimental about a metal object, but Carmilla would miss it.

Sighing, Carmilla walked over to the terrace and sat on the rickety steps. She leaned her elbows back, soaking up the warm, spring air. It was amazing to think that at one point in her life, she used to come here because she was feeling dangerously sad.

And now she had no reason to be.

Because she is in love with life.

"Hey." Chimed a gentle voice, and Carmilla turned to face her.

"Hey."

Gods, Laura looked beautiful. She always did. Today, she was looking exceptionally radiant. Clad in Silas's red and gold colors, her graduation gown hung tight around her curves (it made Carmilla's heart race knowing that Laura wouldn't be having those curves for long, and their tiny human would be growing inside of her soon) and her hat fit perfectly thanks to Perry's spectacular sewing skills.

"You aren't saying anything," Laura anxiously blurs, "Did I put it on wrong?"

"I look ridiculous," Laura sighs, hands pressed firmly on her hips. "I do, I look ridiculous. T-this stupid gown took me forty minutes to get on because I got the zipper stuck—,"

Carmilla silenced her with a languid kiss. "You look beautiful." She murmurs on her lips.

Laura relaxed in Carmilla's embrace, sighing, as she rests her head on Carmilla's shoulder. "I can't believe we're finally graduating today."

Carmilla hummed in reply, "Feels like I've been stuck in this damn school for three centuries. It's… strange. I thought I'd be happy to leave once I've finally passed all my credentials, but… there's a part of me that wants to hold onto my youth for a little while longer."

"I feel the same way," Laura says, "I spent… so many holidays, sad and lonely in this room… this was the first year where I was happy and experienced what life was like on campus. I wasted all those years when I could have been making new friends or new memories."
"You were grieving," Carmilla replies, cupping her cheek, "As was I."

"I know," Laura mumbles dejectedly, "But now that I'm happy I just have this urge to shake my past self and tell her that everything is going to be okay. That she is safe and loved and cared for."

"It's a test of courage that you're able to think of that now," Her soulmate grins, resting their foreheads together. "I am so proud of how far you've come."

"I'm proud of you, too," Laura beams, "We have a family now. Kirsch, Danny, Lafontaine, Perry... And another tiny human on the way soon." She laughed tearfully, "I'm not even pregnant yet, but I love them so much already. Is that weird? I just... feel like their essence is here with us." She then wiped her eyes, "Shit. I can't cry. I'm going to ruin my make-up."

Carmilla gently tapped Laura's soul mark underneath her robe, where the constellation Orion was. There were, in fact, other constellations in their soul mark; Leo, Cassiopeia, Ursa Major, Hercules... but for the oddest reason, Orion burned the brightest. Yes. She understood. She could feel their presence here as well.

"We will have our little one soon, Laura. This time next month. We've already made our appointment," Carmilla kissed her tears away, letting out a relaxed sigh.

"I'm going to marry you someday." Laura says quietly. It wasn't a proposal—it was a promise. A known, wonderful fact they both know will happen. Yes, they may be doing this a bit backwards—planning for a baby usually happens when a couple is already married, own a home, or have stable jobs. But this time around, Carmilla and Laura are bonding over their future child, and in turn it's helped their souls grow so much stronger. The rest of the chips will fall as they may.

"Of course, you are." Carmilla grins, and kisses her again. She then slowly trails her hands down Laura's arms, and mutters into her ear, "Forty minutes to get you into that, huh? Bet I can get you out of that faster."

"We're going to be late for our own graduation," Laura huffs, "Our friends are waiting for us. We have to be down in the courtyard in a half hour."

"I bet you can make me come in less than that."

"C-carm!" She squeaks, "Holy Hufflepuff."

"Gods, you're so cute." Carmilla mumbles, and within seconds, Carmilla found herself propped on top of the bed to give it one more round.

"Looking good, frosh!" Lafontaine cheers, giving the two girls finger guns. "Nice after-sex glow."

Perry glares at them, "Do I need to print out a powerpoint for you to understand what tact means?"

Danny made a face, "Disgusting. Now I have an image of you two lovebirds feeling each other up."

Shamelessly, Carmilla and Laura high fived each other, having become numb to their friends'
teasing.

"Happy wife, happy life." Carmilla winks.

Kirsch blinks. "When did you two get married!"

"They've been basically married since the second sign, Kirsch. Honey. Where have you been the last couple of months?" Perry gently pats his arm.

"Oh—married as in figuratively, okay—totally get it now."

"I'd be surprised to see if their bed survived the final round."

"Uh. Hi. Still here. Can we stop it with the coffee hour? And talking about our super-hot sex life."

Laura blushes, hiding her face in her hands.

"Super-hot sex life, huh?"

"Oh god."

They lingered in the courtyard for a bit until it was time to go into the main gym, where the graduation ceremony would be held. Their friends dispersed for a moment to greet their families and Carmilla watched as Laura anxiously looked about the room for her father.

"Cupcake," Carmilla placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, and nodded to the front door. "Look."

Laura sighs with relief as she catches eyes with her dad. Sherman Hollis was definitely a sight for sore eyes, and it was great that he was still alive to see another day. To finally see his beloved daughter graduate from college. They couldn't greet him now, as he came late due to traffic, but at least Laura got the chance to wave at him.

The students would sit alphabetically, so unfortunately Laura couldn't sit with Carmilla. She had to sit in front of her. Which was alright—it would just be for an hour.

_Breathe in._

_Breathe out._

Her mother made a speech.

Her sister did too.

They were both beautiful. Powerful. Exceptional. Carmilla was the first one to rise to her feet when they finished. They talked of Silas and what this school meant to them. Of their struggles, of their dreams, of their goals. Carmilla knew them all. Loved them all. And god, she was so, so proud of them both.

Then, it came time for the Valedictorian to give a speech. Lafontaine—whom Carmilla loved so dearly. Loved to the point where words could no longer describe the adoration she had for them.

"My name is Susan Alberta Lafontaine," They began, smiling softly, "Though, close friends and family know me as Lafontaine. They/them. I am top of my class. High honors. Biology degree. But those are just words. For most of my life... I have lived in a binary state of being. I need to—I mix chemicals in a lab all day," they joke, and Carmilla shakes her head, "Everything needs to be precise. Exact. One wrong move and suddenly my eyebrows are wiped off. With science, everything needs to make sense. Equations, data, anything that goes on in the lab, there can never be a missing
link. There can never be a mishap. But… this year, something changed. I realized… I've… come to realize," they look at Carmilla and smile, "It's no fun to live life that way. No matter how much you try to fight it, there always will be bumps in the road. You can't live in denial and have yourself believe that everything is okay when your life is falling apart. Nor can you live in a world where… everything is black and white. There's… so much that's out there for you. You may think that your content with your life and then suddenly… someone special changes everything. This special someone pushed me out of my little lab and reminded me that… hell, I'm only human," they chuckle, as does the crowd.

"And that's all that we are, too. Human. We feel. We see. We cry. We love," they lock eyes with Perry, "We live in this insane world where soulmates exist and those who are lucky enough to have one are blessed. They are blessed. They live in a world where the binary doesn't matter. Where results no longer matter. Where labels or equations or finding out what makes sense no longer matters. Because the answer to that is love. It's always has been to love and to be loved. And why should that be something questionable? Why should you, if for an unforeseen reason beyond explanation, are not be blessed with a soulmate, feel bitter and pity for those who do? Why should you waste your time on senseless anger and violence and fear when it only gets you nowhere? Do you know what happens, when a soulmate's love dies? Crash course—their soul mark is ripped. Gone. Scientists, for years, have tried to figure out why this is so. Have traveled beyond many waters and talked with many souls and have found nothing. But I ask this of you, and remember this, if nothing else, from today: be kind to one another. Regardless if you have a soulmate or not. Be kind. Regardless if you love someone or not. Be kind. Because that, I can assure you, is not something that needs to be tested in a lab. It is something that we are all capable of doing. Because we are all—human. And that is something good."

There was silence. Carmilla heard Laura's quiet sniffle three rows up, and she wiped her own tear from her eye. Perry stood up and clapped.

Then Kirsch.
Then Danny.
Then even Mel.
And soon, the entire audience was on their feet, cheering for Lafontaine, and Carmilla tipped her hat in acknowledgment towards their dear friend.

Laura turned back to smile tearfully at Carmilla, and her soulmate winks. "I love you." She mouths, and Carmilla repeats the same sentiments back.

Then it came time to call their names. It was tiring to wait for another hour as they all went up, and Carmilla was the first to her feet when it was Laura's turn. Carmilla swore she saw a halo of light dancing around her head.

Carmilla seemed to go last, but she had no reason to complain. In fact, she so excited. Her fingers tapped against her knee and she locked eyes with Mattie, who was beaming proudly next to her mother.

"Karnstein, Carmilla." She announced, and Carmilla let out a sigh of relief. The applause was thunderous.

"You got this, Caaaaaarm!" Laura exclaimed, causing the crowd to laugh.

"Yeah! You go get that diploma, angry hottie!" What the hell, Kirsch.
A quiet sob escaped her lips as she turned back to smile at her beloved friends, and she realized that she had found her chosen family. They were broken and bent and burnt, but they were still good. They loved her. And she loved them.

"I'm so proud of you, sis." Mattie grins, handing her a rose and her diploma. "You did it."

Then, she locked eyes with Sherman, who smiled happily at her. "That's my daughter-in-law."

He mouthed to an elderly man standing next to him, and he chuckled in response, a knowing twinkle in his eye.

Carmilla's heart swelled.

Daughter-in-law.

*Sherman thinks of me as a daughter.*

Carmilla was in a daze as she traveled back to her seat, but her heart was full, and she felt so much love for her family.

So, so much love.

*I have a family now. I did it. I really did it.*

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I drew out an anxious breath, unable to stop my knee from shaking. I haven't been able to sit still for the past week, not since our doctor cleared me for an IUI or an *Intrauterine insemination.* We've decided to go through with an IUI, since it was less expensive than in vitro fertilization; we've done our research and decided this was the safest option.

"Laura."

While the month of May moved slowly, a lot of things happened to us. We've all graduated with our degrees, thankfully which took my mind of things for a while. Lafontaine was Valedictorian of our class and even made a speech. It was an emotional day because even my father came to visit, to support all of us. Carm and I moved out of our tiny dorm room into her old bedroom in Lilita's home for now. It was difficult at first to not wake up every day and get ready for classes. We were still looking at houses, though we haven't made a clear sale on one just yet.

I still had my old job, keeping the money I made in tips just in case of emergency, and sent out resumes to different vendors. I was so lucky to have such an accommodating boss to work with my new schedule now. Lilita helped me write a resume, her critique sparkling up my mediocre words, giving me advice and comfort when I needed it, and I was due to start an internship job at a journalism company come next fall. They weren't hiring right now, but they were sure to keep my name in mind.

Things were looking up.

And then, finally, we started the baby making process (choosing a sperm donor, finding the right treatment center that would support us, writing out the paperwork that would ensure our safety and insurance). We decided not to tell everyone right away, and to wait until we knew for sure. It was hard, keeping something this important a secret, but we didn't want to let anyone's hopes up.

"Laura."
While classes were long since over, students still roamed the school to prepare it for the grand Centennial Anniversary, in celebration of Silas University being founded in June of 1916. Though, attending a fancy party was the least of my worries right now.

I am stressing hardcore.

"LAURA!" Carmilla exclaimed, jerking me out of my nervous pace. I was so startled by her outburst that I started to cry. "Shit, love, I didn't mean to yell. Please relax. Everything's okay." She said, bringing me onto her lap. My shaking hands folded into her chest.

"Breathe. Remember to breathe, Laura." She soothes, and suddenly I was transported to all those months ago. My, how far we've come since then. She places her hand on my chest, "Fuck, your heart is racing. Focus on the sound of my voice, creampuff. Can you do that for me?"

I nod, burying my face into my soulmate's neck. I knew that we were in public. I was also knew that had little time to waste until the doctor came to bring us into the labs. I had to be strong for the both of us—there was no chance in hell that I was backing down now.

"W-what's taking so long?" I mumble wearily, wiping my eyes.

"I know, we've been here for a while," Carmilla sighs, making soothing circles on my shoulder. "But it'll all be worth it in the end, I promise." Carmilla's phone beeped in her pocket, and I peeked over her shoulder. She had thirteen missed calls from Lilita, and twenty-six unread messages from Mattie. We were meant to help prepare with the party, but Carmilla put her foot down and bailed last-minute. We didn't specify where we were going; and we were determined to keep it that way.

"At least let them know we'll be there." I hiccupped, taking my shaking hand in hers.

"Not right now, I need to be with you," She sighs, placing a loving kiss on my forehead. A nurse came over to us, handing me a cup of water. I took a gulp. "Thank you." Carmilla smiles, patting my stomach.

"I'm sorry," I whimpered, the words tumbling out of my mouth before I could stop them. "I-I keep on having those dreams, with me pregnant and you taking care of our precious child every day. A-and every morning I just cry because nothing's real yet. I'm sorry I've been so anxious and impatient lately. I-it's like I'm no longer in control of myself. I-I know this c-can't be any easier on you."

"Hey, hey, deep breaths, baby. You're rambling," She says, giving my cheek a kiss. "Everything is going to be okay. We will have a baby."

"What if I'm not meant to have a baby, Carm?" I fret, beyond hysterics at this point.

"It won't come to that, love. I have a good feeling about this. Do you see me?" She asks, and through my tears, her hand cupping my cheek.

"I see you."

Carmilla kissed me, but this one was soft and gentle—a promise. A cough separated the both of us, and the doctor smiled kindly. "We have the room ready for you now."

A fresh wave of tears came down my face, as Carmilla pulled me closer, and we followed them into the lab.
Holy crap, Carmilla just put a baby in me.

I let out a huff as I checked out my body in the mirror, looking for any signs that something was different. To be honest, I wasn't sure what I was looking for. There was no bulge—there wouldn't be for another twelve weeks, praying that everything went well. What was that old saying about pregnant woman? That they glowed? Was it too soon to tell?

I wearily eyed my dress hanging on the door, and wrapped my arms around myself. I wanted nothing more than to cuddle with Carmilla for the rest of the evening—emotionally, I was in no state to attend a fancy party.

"Hey, cutie, we have to be down in a half hour. Just checking in on you—," Her lips curled into a small frown, "Laura, you haven't even stepped in the shower yet?" I blinked at her, trying to force back the unwanted tears. My hands flew to my stomach, and Carmilla wrapped her arms around me. She then crouched down and placed her lips on my belly button. "Hey. You in there. This is your mama talking—do you mind sticking around for the next nine months? Your making your mommy very unhappy and therefore, I'm unhappy. You know I love you but we can do without the stress, thanks."

I laugh tearfully, "Carm, the baby isn't even a baby yet."

"Still. The sperm just fertilized my egg and right now magic is happening. They're only just beginning to grow, and I want to let them know from day one that they are loved. Even if they are a tiny ball of goo right now."

We've decided that since we wanted our baby to have a little part of Carm and a little part of me, we would fertilize one of her eggs, instead of mine. We were blessed that the doctors were so accommodating.

"We have to wait four weeks until we know for sure." I breathed out a sigh, and she held me tighter.

"Four weeks until you start showing the symptoms, two until we get the phone call," Carmilla states firmly, kissing my stomach again. "You have two mommies who are rooting for you. Be strong for us, little one."

"This will be the longest two weeks of my life." I groaned, and she chuckled knowingly.

"I know, Laura." We held each other for another moment until Carmilla's phone buzzed in her pocket, and she groaned. "Okay. I love you, but you really need to seriously get dressed now before Mattie has my head on a silver platter."

I smile warmly at her, and nod weakly. I had to girl the hell up and do this, for Carm's sake. She was representing Silas tonight alongside Lilita. I didn't have any tasks to take care of; she didn't want to place any more stress on my shoulders—she lied to Mattie and said that I woke up feeling ill, so I wouldn't have any responsibilities tonight.

This is supposed to be a night of fun. That's what Mattie assured us, even though there were representatives from the government showing up. Silas University was well known around Austria, with her mother being revered among every generation.

Patting my stomach once more and sending a prayer to the heavens for strength, I decided to finally get dressed. The longer I waited the greater chance I had in psyching myself out.

I zipped myself up in the beautiful, royal blue gown and tied my hair into a braid. I barely had time to add an inch of make-up before deciding that this was enough. Swallowing thickly, I put on a pair of heels and walked out of the bathroom.

Carmilla looked radiant. She wore a satin red dress that hung close to her curves, and her lips were painted a matching shade. She's usually more comfortable in a suit, but she wanted to wear the dress for Mattie's sake, since the woman took the effort to get it custom made. Her hair, instead of the usual curls that I love, was straightened. It was a welcome change.

She was putting crystal earrings in when she turned to me, and her jaw dropped in awe. "I'm always amazed by how beautiful you seem to get every day."

"You flatter me," I chimed sweetly, taking my purse from off our bed.

"It's the truth," Carmilla chuckled, linking her arms with mine, "C'mon, creampuff, let's turn a few heads."

Silas was beautiful on its own, with its rich history and wondrous architecture, but when the campus is all decked out for a party it turns into a different world. We heard the music the moment we stepped out of Saint Jerome Hall, with students walking along in clusters besides us. There were blurs of fancy tuxedos, sprinkles and glitter, and every color of the rainbow sewed within each handcrafted dress. The air was full of laughter and excitement for the evening.

"Bow chicka bow, wow," Kirsch called, a beaming smile on his face. "The Queens of Silas are slaying tonight!"

I giggled at him, momentarily taking a double look at how all my friends were dressed up for the evening. Lafontaine was dashing in a light blue tux, with a pink bow tie, with Perry wearing a matching pink dress. Danny wore a white dress to compliment Kirsch's outfit. I took notice of how close they were standing, with Danny's hand caressing Kirsch's forearm. It was a telling, yet stubble indication that they were very close to the final sign. Their soul marks could appear at any given moment, and it made me giddy with excitement for her. They wouldn't be leaving each other's side even if the apocalypse was neigh.

"Well check you out! You all look amazing! Ooh, we need someone to take our picture!" I exclaim, hopping up and down.

A random couple decided to stop by and help, all six of us getting into silly positions or making funny faces. We then saw Mattie's furious look in the distance after a moment, and she came charging at us.

"Where the fuck were you?" The older woman growled, in a state of disarray.

I winced at her tone, unconsciously placing my hand on my belly. Carmilla pulled me closer.

"Mattie. I told you. Laura wasn't feeling well, and I had to take care of her this morning," At this news, my friends nervously glanced at each other, unsure of what was going on.

"I smell bullshit. We made plans. You agreed with them. Mama and I expected you to stick with them. We have representatives visiting Silas tonight. You were meant to meet with them beforehand."
"I'm sorry, alright? I'm here now, can't you just let this go?" I squeezed her hand when I noticed that Carmilla was starting to have trouble staying calm.

"I will if you give me a solid reason why you bailed earlier." She glares, and Carmilla tensed.

"Do you honestly think I skipped out on my responsibilities on purpose? I'm not like that anymore, Mattie! You of all people should know that!" She hissed, clenching her jaw. One more push and she'll blow our cover. There was a beat of silence.

I took a step forward, "Mattie. We just can't explain right now, and you'll have to accept that. Please. Is now really the time or place to be arguing?"

She drew out an angry, agitated breath. "Fine. But Carmilla, you seriously need to come with me. Mama is about to go in a rage."

"Alright! Just. Give me a minute." Carmilla grumbled, and her sister walked away. I sighed, taking her shaking hands into mine. "I'm sorry I can't be with you tonight."

"That's okay," I soothed, "I'm okay. Don't worry about me."

"I always worry. That's my job," She eased, giving me a knowing smile. I giggled, and pecked her gently on the lips. She then turned to our friends, "Alright, dimwits. If I see a speck of hair out of place when I get back, I'm going to unleash hell. Understood?"

"Understood, your grouchiness." Lafontaine chuckled, playfully saluting her.

"Don't worry Mistress of the Snark, she's in good hands." Danny smiles, waving Carmilla off.

"Make me proud, baby." I urge, giving her another kiss and shooing her away. The longer she stayed, the more at risk we both were. She lingered for another second, before sighing and hurrying off to find Mattie.

Danny rounded on me, "So she's a little intense. Laura, anything you'd like to share?"

I panicked, taking a step away from her, "I-I can't."

"The fuck? Laura, we're your friends. No, we're more than that by now. We're your family. And family doesn't keep secrets from each other." She practically growled.

"For the past two months, you and Carm have been acting so strange. At first, we thought it was nothing, but then when you would skip out on our weekly lunch dates and when we made plans to hang out altogether… we knew something was wrong." Lafontaine stressed. "We thought that if this kept up, we'd have to create an intervention."

"B-believe me, I-I would tell you if I could, but it wouldn't be fair to you all if it were no longer true!" I whimpered, tears glistening in my eyes. I immediately retracted that statement at the blank looks I received in return.

"Oh? Oh!" Perry gasped, her eyes widening at the quick realization. They flickered to where my hand was placed. Then, a soft resounding, "Oh."

There was a beat of silence, "Perr?" Lafontaine asked, confusion written on their face.

She gave me a knowing smile, my shoulders relaxing, before addressing the group. "We've started off the night on the wrong foot already. Please, let's not continue it. Are we all in agreement that
from here on out there will be no unnecessary drama?"

"Aye." We all murmured, and shuffled into the tent to find our seats.

Our table had a beautiful view of the lake, with a brilliant bouquet of flowers in the center. Perry switched into mother mode for the rest of the night, shooting looks in my direction, and often taking hold of my hand if she saw that I was starting to shake with nerves. I tried to enjoy myself and listen in to my friends' conversation, but my mind was too busy.

The food we ate was reminiscent of the country club style aesthetic. Everything was fit into small portions and tasted like cardboard; ugh. Or maybe everything tasted bad because I was making myself upset. When the waiter came by to fill our glasses of champagne, I hesitated for a moment, before politely declining. Even though this was just a few hours old, I can't do anything that will hurt the baby. This earned a few odd stares from the group, but Perry squeezed my hand. Either way, this shouldn't have been a shock to them—I haven't had a full glass of wine in the last ten months.

My eyes searched around the room for my soulmate, and I found her standing beside her mother, talking to a sophisticated looking man. Poor Carmilla had a bored look on her face, fighting to keep an interested stance. She must have felt my gaze on her, as she slightly tilted her head, her lips curling into a small smile. I lean back in my chair, giving her a tiny wave. She averted her attention when Lilita pinched her elbow, and a disgruntled frown quickly replaced that smile.

"—what do you think, Lau?" Danny asks, and suddenly my attention was focused back on my table.

"Sorry, what?" I blink.

"You haven't been paying attention to a word I'm saying, have you?" She eased gently, and I flushed.

"I-I'm sorry." I mumble, placing a hand on my stomach. The unconscious motion helped manage my bubbling stress.

"Don't be, little nerd," Kirsch chuckled, "We were talking about the Alchemy club incident the other day. Apparently, they created a serum that made all the campus garden flowers mutate. The board is deciding to disband the club or have them do community service to make up for the damages."

"Only at Silas." I giggle, shaking my head. This place was weird as hell.

"Hard to believe we've just graduated from this place." Danny sighs, leaning onto Kirsch's shoulder, "I can't imagine my time spent anywhere else. I'm going to miss this. For the past four years… this campus has been my home."

I smile weakly at her, "I've only found my home until recently. I'll go wherever she goes. But I understand how you hold a sentimental attachment to Silas."

"Why did you come here, then?" Danny asked.

Calmly, I replied, "My mom was an alumna here. Graduated two decades ago."

She gave me a calculated stare, and then relaxed her shoulders, "I didn't want to say anything at the graduation, because I thought people would think I'm crazy, but I felt her presence. Amongst all those parents waiting for their kid to graduate, I just knew that she was the proudest of them all. And if she were anywhere in the crowd, it would have been beside your dad."
It took all my strength not to cry in that moment, as I let out a steady breath, and quietly thanked her. It was then I realized how fucking tired I was. Emotionally and physically. This past week I've been nothing but a ball of stress, unable to sleep because I wasn't sure how to prepare myself for the insemination. I put too much pressure on myself over something that had a fifty percent chance of failing, or a fifty percent chance of success.

I needed to remind myself that there are other ways to start a family, and that this was only the first step.

There was no harm in sending another little prayer to the heavens.

When I opened my eyes again, I noticed that Perry and Lafontaine came back from their journey to the buffet table. They had a worried smile on their face, "Doin' okay, Hollis? We lost you for a second."

"Just tired." I mumbled sleepily.

Perry checked the time on her phone, "It's only nine."

I flushed with embarrassment. Only nine? Jeez, it's only been four hours since this stupid party started and it's still going strong? I let out a tired groan, checking to see if Carmilla was sitting at our table, and sure enough she was still missing. Everybody was dancing on the main floor, the fancy guys from the government all talking in clusters with Lilita and Mattie. I didn't see her anywhere. Panic shot through my heart when I started to worry about her. Where did she go?

Perry gently placed her hand on my knee, noticing my blatant anxiety for my missing soulmate. I managed to breathe in and out slowly, as I focused on how Mattie began to walk towards the center stage after the last song ended. Students hurried off the dance floor so everyone could see her.

"Hello, students and graduates of Silas University! How is everybody doing tonight?" She called out happily, and we all cheered. "As you all know, I'm Mattska Belmonde, CEO of Silas. Thank you all for showing your support at this year's Centennial Anniversary. It's hard to believe that this place has been here for far longer than the city, starting off as a refugee camp during the war all those years ago. And now, here we are, with Silas U a National Landmark in 2016!" Mattie exclaimed, and we all cheered again. "To commemorate this evening, we have the governor of Graz here to give us a plaque, reminding us all that Silas encourages: the pursuit of knowledge, happiness, and integrity in every aspect of life. It is truly an honor to be receiving a reward such as this. On behalf of everyone, thank you, sir." She waited a beat before continuing, "Now, as you all remember, we've overcame quite a few hardships this year. The most notable being the late Sarah Jane George." I briefly looked at Kirsch, who had a blank expression on his face. "Though, you all surprised me. Even though this was a difficult time you all prevailed, coming together as a community and spending hours at the community service center. You followed the new rules set for your safety and every day I saw at least a handful of people stop by her shrine. My mother and I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude, for being such kind, selfless, and brave souls. To commemorate her life and in lo of, the loved ones we've lost, my sister, Carmilla Karnstein herself, has agreed to perform for you all tonight. She will play for you all in hopes that your soul will no longer have to wait a thousand years, to find its other half."

My breath hitched as she stepped away from the stage, and my beautiful soulmate took her place. The spotlight shone at just the right angle, the light making our stars almost sparkle.

"I'm not the… greatest with words, especially in a large crowd such as this," She mumbles half-heartedly, "So I'll let my music speak for me. This not only goes out to my beloved soulmate, but to everyone who is still waiting for theirs. Be patient with each other—when the time comes, you will
I sighed happily as I watched her take a seat by the piano, and her fingers gracefully slid across those ivory keys. My heart soared when she sang the first verse.

Heart beats fast

Colors and promises

How to be brave

How can I love when I'm afraid to fall?

But watching you stand alone

All of my doubt, suddenly goes away somehow

I looked across the room to Lilita, who had her head resting on Mattie's shoulders. Lilita looked as if she was trying to hold back tears, while Mattie had a peaceful smile on her face.

One step closer…

There was a special moment when Carmilla played, where she became completely enthralled by her own music. Where she slipped into her own world. Where nothing else mattered. I have been there a few times with her, but it's hard to describe in my own words, the powerful emotions that consume her soul.

I have died every day, waiting for you

Darling, don't be afraid, I have loved you for a thousand years

I'll love you for a thousand more

That verse was like a shot through my heart, and it wrapped around my entire being. Waiting for each other all our lives did seem like a thousand years, and a little piece of ourselves died until we saw each other. We were both broken, worn, and bruised. And yet somehow, months later, we have survived the apocalypse unscathed.

Time stands still

Beauty in all she is

I will be brave

I will not let anything, take away

What's standing in front of me

Every breath, every hour has come to this

Carmilla used to sing because she needed to. It was the air she breathed and it was the water she drank. It was a security blanket, wrapping around her, protecting her from every evil. But it wasn't enough to rescue her, and when I did, she sang for joy. To celebrate her life. Watching her perform now, it was like I was listening to her for the first time, back on that terrace, all those months ago.
was the night my soul knew that she was mine.

*And all along I believed, I would find you*

*Time has brought your heart to me, I have loved you for a thousand years*

*I'll love you for a thousand more*

She was spilling her soul, speaking the truth that was rooted deep within our hearts. The weeks leading after that day I was no longer in control of my mind or my body. They were consumed by the very fabric of time, writing letters to Carmilla, praying that she would realize that waking up to live another day was worth it. I felt her pain, her tragedy everywhere I walked. I didn't recognize it at the time, but looking back I knew, and my soul ached for her. Now that we're together, we have a lifetime to make up for.

*One step closer,*

*One step closer*

I hadn't realized I slowly got up from my seat, making my way to the center of the dance floor. The lights dimmed around me, with one spotlight shining down. Carmilla turned to smile at me, tears glistening in her eyes, as she got up from the piano, the music playing in the background. She slowly walked down the stairs, stopping for a moment in front of me. Time slowed to a stop as she cupped my cheeks with her hands.

*I have died every day, waiting for you*

*Darling, don't be afraid, I have loved you for a thousand years*

*I'll love you for a thousand more*

It was like we were flying. She waltzed with me, placing her hand on my belly, giving it a gentle pat. Tears were glistening in my eyes as she spun me around, and magic was in the air. I knew it was magic because in that moment, I felt deep within my soul, that I had nothing to worry about. The blessed holy Mother had answered my prayers.

*And all along I believed, I would find you*

*Time has brought your heart to me, I have loved you for a thousand years*

*I'll love you for a thousand more*

I quietly sobbed onto Carmilla's shoulder as the song ended, my soulmate whispering loving words of comfort. Everyone cheered, whoops and hollers coming from our friends, but we were still stuck in our own little world.

"Do you see me?" I ask, placing my hand on her heart.

"I see you." She smiles, resting her forehead on mine, and sighs happily. "I see both of you." She whispers, and I let out a gentle sigh of relief.

Amazing.
Promising Forever

Chapter Summary

Laura and Carmilla spend the weekend at her father's home. There, they discover two wonderful surprises waiting for them. Carmilla feels blessed and thanks her lucky stars that so many wonderful things are happening to her now.

Chapter Notes

i'm sleep deprived bc i stayed up until 1am to register for classes for next semester only to end up getting two, ahahaha. lemme kno what you guys think, imma take a nap now. naps are wonderful.

also hollstein is gross but i love them. hope you enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Well I found a woman, stronger than anyone I know
She shares my dreams, I hope that someday I'll share her home
I found a love, to carry more than just my secrets
To carry love, to carry children of our own
We are still kids, but we're so in love
Fighting against all odds
I know we'll be alright this time" -Perfect, Ed Sheeran

Carmilla wished for sleep to hold onto her for several more minutes, but the light shining through her curtains had other ideas. She let out a yawn, stretching her arms and glancing over at her soulmate. Laura was fast asleep, curled up in an adorable position. She chuckled softly, caressing her love's cheek.

It's been two weeks. It was now the July 4th weekend, with the campus decked out in red and white to honor those students who traveled from America. Carmilla never cared much for the holiday, and not to mention she wasn't a huge fan of fireworks. Those loud booms still triggered her.

Carmilla researched what symptoms to look out for post IUI, and she thanked her lucky stars that so far everything checked out. Laura was always tired, wanting to do nothing but sleep and cuddle all day. She felt nauseous from time to time, but it was never to the point of vomiting—it was just hard for her to eat certain foods. She woke up in the middle of the night once because her breasts were sore, and Carmilla panicked when she saw her hunched over. She would then worry with these symptoms if she's on her period and start to cry—which, in turn, would always led to Carmilla assuring her that she wasn't.
A massage and an Epson salt bath helped soothe her. The worst part was the cramping, where Laura would double over in pain and there wasn't much Carmilla could do.

Even with these telltale signs that Laura was pregnant, their OBGYN warned them not to take a pregnancy test. There was a chance it still could come out negative, and the added stress of failure to not conceive would ruin Laura. Their safest option was to wait for the call on the fourteenth day.

Carmilla wasn't nervous. Her very soul was sure that this was a success, because she as well felt the magic during the party. They were expecting, and it made her want to cry and laugh all at once.

She was just nervous about keeping this from her family. As each day went by it became harder to stay silent, with Laura struggling to maintain her composure in public. They could get away with staying inside this week, but Carmilla knew her friends were worried about them. Calls were strained, and arguments often broke out over the littlest things.

Her relationship with Mattie was… nonexistent. They haven't talked since the night of the party. Usually Carmilla was used to these long brakes from her sister, but this time she knew she fucked up.

Carmilla let out a sigh, realizing there wasn't much she could do. All that was left was to wait for the inevitable.

She shook her head, and positioned herself so that her hand was resting on Laura's belly, and she kissed her belly button. "Good morning, baby," She whispered, smiling, "Today's the day we find out the truth if you're really a baby. Your momma and I don't need any more evidence—you're making your presence very clear. I'm so proud of you for being so brave—it must have been hard for you, figuring yourself out. I just wanted to let you know that I'm very excited for you—and that I love you so much already, little one." She chuckled, kissing Laura's stomach again.

She felt Laura stir, and she tilted her head to see her soulmate smiling sleepily at her. "Hey."

"Hey." Carmilla smiled, still not leaving Laura's belly, "How're yah?"

"I'm just tired, is all," Laura yawned, stretching out her arms, "I think I want to go back to sleep."

"Be my guest." She chuckled, and then frowned when Laura winced and clutched her stomach. "Ow. Ow." She mumbled, "I-I hope these aren't period cramps." She sighed, gripping Carmilla's arm. "Carm, what day is it?"

"July 4th. Do you want me to check for bleeding?" Carmilla asks, and Laura weakly nods. She pulls off Laura's underwear, and checks the bedsheets between them for wetness. They were okay—no red splotches to be seen. Laura lets out a sigh of relief, tears glistening in her eyes.

"We did it, baby." Carmilla assured, giving Laura a kiss. "Please, no more stressing."

"I just… I can't believe it!" She exclaimed, wrapping her arms around Carmilla's neck, "It worked!" She let out an excited squeal, "I missed my first period!"

"And on the first try, no less," Carmilla smiled, peppering her face with kisses. "God, I'm so relieved."

"There's a little bun in the oven. There's no denying it now," Laura sighed, patting her belly. She then smiled, leaning up to kiss Carmilla, "You're a mom."

"So are you, cutie," She chuckled, "I love you so much."
Laura hummed in reply, the two soulmates kissing each other for a moment more. Carmilla knew Laura was beyond exhausted at this point, so she didn't push for sex—just staying in bed and comforting her love was good enough. Carmilla positioned herself so that way she was on top of Laura, their lips never parting. When she needed air, she would kiss Laura's cheeks, her nose, before kissing her again.

Laura had her hands lost in Carm's hair when her cell phone rang on the night table, and she groaned.

"I won't answer unless it's the treatment center."

"I know this is mean, but I hope it isn't any of our friends." Carmilla grumbled, kissing Laura's forehead.

Laura said nothing in reply, though her eyes lit up when she read the caller ID. "Oh! It's my dad!" Carmilla made no turn to move, as she continued to kiss everywhere but her lips. Laura smiled at her soulmate, but gently ushered Carmilla to not distract her. "Hey, daddy!"

"Laura-bear! I'm glad you answered. I was just thinking about you, and thought I'd call." He chimed. "I was wondering if you and Carmilla had any plans for this weekend?"

"Well, we were going to hang out with some friends and Carm's family, but if you want us we can make the time." Carmilla stopped kissing her; she had her arms wrapped around her belly and her chin was resting on her shoulder.

"Good. We need to catch up. Plus, Carmilla seemed to want a word with me alone at the graduation, so now would be a more appropriate time to speak with her."

Laura turned a cautious eye towards her soulmate, "What did you want to ask my dad?"

Carmilla's cheeks were tinted pink, as she played with the hem of Laura's shirt. "It's a surprise, baby."

"Oh, okay," She frowns, confused. They never kept secrets from one another, and this one was killing her.

"How soon can you come today?"

"Hmm, let's shoot for 7:00 pm?"

"Good. Remember to pack for two overnights. I wouldn't want you driving home in the dark."

"Alright, daddy." She giggles, "See you soon. I love you."

"You have no idea how much it means to me to hear you say that. I love you too, pumpkin."

He hung up first, and Laura plugged her phone back into the charger. She opened her mouth to ask something from Carmilla, but then a sharp pain bubbled within her stomach.

"Come on, bubba, you're not making this any easier on the both of us." She mumbles, and Carmilla chuckled, patting her stomach.

"I'll get you a heating pad and some tea?"

"That sounds lovely."
"Are you hungry?"

"I'm afraid to eat." She mumbles, and Carmilla decided not to push her. She gave Laura another kiss and patted her belly before climbing out of bed.

As she hurried out of the room, she debated on changing for the day, but decided that she was much more comfortable in her baggy sweatpants and t-shirt. Besides, they weren't going anywhere until tonight.

Carmilla smiled again, thinking to how much things have changed. It's hard to believe it's been almost a year since Laura came into her life. She'd matured since—all she worried about then was if she would live to see another day, and questioning her purpose in life.

Then came the letters. The pining. The flirtatious exchanges, and loving kisses. Everything was happening so fast between them and yet so naturally. Time was an illusion. But not love. Soon she felt ready to reveal her scars, her dangerous past, and suddenly she learned to accept herself. It didn't matter whether they fell in love within days, months, or years. Laura's soul was meant for Carmilla's. She was the missing piece to her puzzle all those years.

Not only did she gain a soulmate, she now has a beloved group of friends, and a mother and her sister who love her very much. The love that consumed Carmilla daily filled her with warmth and happiness, and it gave her hope.

Before Laura, she didn't think she had a future. Now she can't wait for it to begin, and make things between her and Laura even more official. The term girlfriend just didn't hold the same merit as her feelings did. She knew it wasn't necessary for soulmates who were romantically involved to marry, since the ancestral gods blessed their souls forever, but it was still a desire of hers. It made her feel like she was truly an adult, facing the real world on her own.

Carmilla walked into the large kitchen and noticed Mattie reading the newspaper on island table. She sighed internally, knowing she owed her dear sister an explanation, though she wasn't looking forward to it.

"Good morning, sister of mine." She said evenly, going underneath the sink for a heating compress.

Mattie looked at her in surprise. "You're up early. Who are you and what have you done with my sister?"

"Laura has cramps. I'm doing whatever I can to soothe her until they pass." She mumbles, pouring water in to a pot.

Mattie gave her a sympathetic look, "That time of the month?"

Carmilla bit her lip, her mind at war. She decided to put her worries to rest and confide in her sister. "No, actually. I've done my research and thankfully these normally occur post IUI, given the examination was a success."

There was a beat of silence. Mattie sputtered out her coffee, looking at her sister with wild eyes. "P-post I-U—," She struggled to find her voice, as she did the connections in her mind, "S-so
"Yeah, I'm... sorry we kept this a secret from you. Laura was in a state of stress and the party wasn't the appropriate place to explain the situation."

"Oh, now I feel like a jerk." Mattie mumbled, shaking her head, "I'm so sorry, Carmilla."

"It's fine, I accept your apology, darling." She chuckled, "What's past is past."

"Well, well, well. Look who's all blossomed and matured. I remember the days where you would hold onto grudges for weeks." Mattie smiled, pulling her sister into a hug. "Are you certain it worked?"

"Laura and I have never been sure about anything, but the doctors assured us to wait for the call later tonight. Right now, all I can do is take care of her. Please don't tell mother. I know you're weak at this, but the last thing we need is mother harping down our necks."

"How long do you expect me to wait with this?" Mattie groaned, giving her sister an adorable pout.

"At least until two weeks, when she starts showing pregnancy symptoms. That way everything is solidified." Carmilla begs, and a smile swept across her face, "It just hit me again. I'm going to be a mom."

"And a hella awesome one at that, dearest," She chuckled, "You're a good soul, Carm. I'm sure that child of yours will have the greatest life, because they will have two mommies who love them very much."

Tears glistened in Carmilla's eyes, "Given both of our pasts, I sure as hell hope so, Mattie."

"Now are there any other secrets you're dying to share?" Mattie said jokingly, after the two sisters hugged. "Actually, yeah. I'm going to propose to her. At her father's house. He invited us for the weekend."

Mattie let a happy laugh escape her lips as she held onto Carmilla's arm, "Jesus, Carm. Say one more thing and I'll have a heart attack." She then kissed her sister's cheek lovingly. "I'm a vampire." She said with a serious face, and then the two girls burst out laughing.

"You're full of shit, Carm." The older woman giggled, punching her sister lightly. There was a fleeting moment of silence as they smiled at each other. Then, "Did you dream of your soulmates, Mattie?"

Her face lit up, "I-I did! I was so surprised, love. I wasn't expecting them to greet me last night. Both of them. Carm, I... I have a feeling I'm going to meet my loves soon. Everything is so clear and explicit now." She says with a blush, her eyes lighting up with excitement.

"I have a feeling, too. You're annoyingly cheerful nowadays," Carmilla smiled, and Mattie shoved her playfully, "The chances of having two soulmates are about as rare as finding one. Consider yourself blessed, Big Sis."

"When did you get so wise, little monster?" Mattie asked, affectionately ruffling Carmilla's hair.

"Love is a powerful drug, Mattie." She chuckled, and shut off the boiling pot of water. She poured it
into the heating pad and into a mug for Laura. "Are you scared?"

"A little. But I know wherever they both are, they're in the same boat as I am. I just didn't expect to ache for them this much." She muttered, placing a hand to her heart.

"In time, Matska. They'll come to you." Carmilla reasoned, squeezing her sister's shoulder. Mattie smiled.

"Carm, I love you sweetie, but these cramps REALLY HURT!" Hollered Laura's voice from upstairs.

"My lady awaits." She smiles, and gave Mattie waved her off.

She appeared in the doorway several moments later, with her soulmate curled in a fetal position. She had her face buried into her yellow pillow, and she let a quiet moan escape her lips.

"I'm sorry I took so long, baby. I was talking with Mattie." She assured, "She knows."

"So does Perry," Laura says through her teeth, panting. "I-I didn't tell her. She just... knew and she's been talking to me, giving me words of encouragement all week."

"Guess we're both bad at this keeping-it-a-secret thing," Carmilla chuckled, and carefully placed the heating pad on Laura's stomach. She sat up, gingerly taking the mug into her hand. "Thank goodness this is the last day of cramping. I don't think I can handle seeing you in pain any longer."

"This is just bubba's way of saying hello, remember?" Laura assured them both, squeezing Carmilla's thigh. She sighed tiredly, sipping at her drink. "What do we tell my dad?"

"I think its safe to wait until after the call. If he pesters about your health, I'll pull him aside."

"My hero." She coos, and kisses Carmilla's cheek.

"My shining star." Carmilla replies, and snuggles with her.

She convinced Laura to rest for the better half of the morning, until they got ready to leave in the afternoon. Carmilla did most of the packing while Laura showered, though she did put in the toiletries they needed. It was a joke between them that Carmilla would be getting her period soon while Laura wouldn't for the next nine months. An extra package of U By Kotex was thrown into the luggage just in case for Carm.

It was five pm when the couple were all ready to leave. Mattie and Lilita watched them set up the car from their doorstep out of courtesy.

"Are you sure you're up for leaving, dear? I've seen that you weren't feeling well these past couple of days." Lilita called out, worry creased in her brow.

"I'm fine, Lilita. It's nothing to stress over. Thanks for your concern. Carm will take good care of me." She assured, giving the older woman a hug.

"I don't doubt that. Stay safe, dears. You know to call us if you need anything."
"We will." They both replied, giving each other knowing smiles.

The car ride was fun. Carmilla blasted ridiculous musical showtunes from her radio, singing loudly off key. Laura took several naps throughout the ride, which Carmilla didn't mind at all. Laura lived in a small town just two hours away from Graz, but it might as well have been in the middle of nowhere. The population was only 3,000 people at most, and surrounded by a large peninsula. If someone didn't know where they were going, they'd drive right past it.

A large honking woke Laura from her nap, and Carmilla looked guiltily at her. "I'm sorry baby, we're stuck in traffic." She mumbles, taking Laura's hand in hers. "How are you feeling?"

"Just tired and hungry, like always," Laura yawned, rubbing her belly. "I'll call my dad and let him know we're almost there." She fished around her backpack for her phone, before leaning back in her seat. Carmilla took this moment to admire her, even in her sleepy, worn out state of being. Her hair was frazzled at every corner and she had dark circles under her eyes. Her body was only beginning to adjust to another life within her. Still, she looked nothing short of beautiful.

Her eyes widened as she stared at her phone for a long moment.

"What is it, love?" Carmilla asked, placing a hand on her thigh.

"The treatment center left a voicemail, around 6:30pm. Th-they got the results back." Laura managed weakly, taking a deep breath. She started to hyperventilate.

"Honey, we both agreed that we didn't need any further evidence that you are pregnant. The signs have been here since day 6."

"I-I know, but Carm, we can't just rely on my body alone for the results! That's what doctors are for!" She frets. Laura's eyes watered, the tears an unstoppable force. "Carm, what if these symptoms are all just stress? W-what if I've already lost the baby? I-I don't know if I would be able to live with myself if that were true!" Ah, and finally the truth comes out. "I want to have a baby, Carmilla!" She was spouting nonsense, Carmilla reasoned with herself, because of all the stress these past couple of days. Her heart broke in two as her love cried, the weight of the world falling onto her shoulders. Laura hunched over as she sobbed, hiding her face from Carmilla. She was creating all these unlikely scenarios in her head and they were spiraling.

It made tears glisten in Carmilla's eyes as well, as she recalled Laura hasn't done this since all those months ago.

"Laura, baby, no," Carmilla mumbled, and once they received a green light, she pulled to the side of the road. She got out of the car, and came over to the passenger side to hug her soulmate. Laura was freaking out, unable to calm down on her own. Carmilla rubbed Laura's belly, squeezing her shoulders tight. "Why didn't you tell me any of this?"

"B-because I was already being a b-brat to you. I-I was needy and n-never gave you a break. I feel guilty."

"Have I ever raised my voice towards you out of anger?" Carmilla asked sternly, and Laura shook her head no. "Besides, I'm not going anywhere. Not now. Not ever."

"How did I get so lucky?" She asked softly, as her sobs lessened to quiet sniffles. She breathed out slowly, snuggling up to Carmilla.

"Because you're a good person, Lau. A good person who deserves good things," She then smiled and kissed her stomach, "Things like this little one." She paused, "Our little one."
Laura let out a sigh, wishing those negative thoughts of doubt would just go away. Ignorance is bliss. If they struggled to conceive this time, they could always try again. Or adopt—there's no shame in doing that.

"I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to apologize for." Carmilla assures, squeezing her shoulder. "Hey." She coos, placing her hand under Laura's chin, tilting her head up.

"Hey." She utters, and press their lips together for a slow, but heated kiss. Carmilla let out a huff, positioning herself so that she was on Laura's lap, and her hands were properly cupping Laura's face. Laura let out a giggle as she continued to kiss her, tightening her hold on Carmilla's neck.

She would've gone further if the universe allowed it, but Laura's phone rang in a panic. Carmilla let out a frustrated groan, catching herself before falling backwards in surprise. With all the stress of the baby and graduating from Silas, and finding a new home to live in, they haven't had a chance to do any love making. It was slowly killing her, because she wanted to be more sexually active with her soulmate. But there was a time and a place.

Laura shrieked and reached for her phone, stopping to catch her breath. She reached for Carmilla's hand, who instinctively took it.

"Hey, daddy," She utters, blinking back tears. "Yeah, yeah we're fine. We got stuck in traffic—just got out of it. We're twenty minutes away. I-I'm fine. No. It's just hot in the car. Okay. Thanks for waiting to eat until we got there. I love you. Bye." She sighed, ending the call with a weary swipe of her thumb. She then pouted, "I-I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gotten carried away with that."

Heaven help her. How can someone be such a dork one moment and then turn into a vixen the next and then go back to being a dork? Laura amazed her.

"This isn't the best type of environment to make love to you, anyhow. It's alright creampuff," Carmilla sighs, and gently places a kiss on Laura's lips, "The sooner we get to your dad's, the better."

Laura grumbled incoherently as Carmilla stepped out, knowing she was right. They rode the rest of the way in an awkward silence.

It was almost ten by the time they pulled into the Hollis driveway. Laura was asleep again, and Carmilla squinted to see the old man sitting at his doorstep. Carmilla had only been here twice, but she decided she liked this house. It was a time capsule, charming and mysterious. It had all the Hollis characteristics one would expect from the family: a cluttered living room, hard wood floors worn throughout the years, and family photos decorating the walls. It was a lost cabin in the middle of the woods, far away from civilization, but close enough to nature.

"Hello again, sir," Carmilla chimed softly, careful not to wake Laura. The old man's eyes lit up, as he hopped off the steps and went over to give her a hug. "Sorry we're late."

"No worries, Carmilla. I'm just glad to see that both of my kids are safe." The young woman's heart swelled at his words, and she smiled. "I'll take care of your luggage. You carry my little girl to her bedroom. You remember where it is, right?"

"Yes, sir," She said again, and hurried over to the passenger seat. Laura was mumbling in her sleep, hands curled on top of her belly. Carmilla gave it a pat and kissed her forehead, before picking her up bridal style. Sherman smiled at the two girls as he put the suitcases down, going over to gently caress Laura's arm. He then leaned in to kiss her hair, smiling with pride.
"Sweet dreams, little monkey." He coos, and picks up the suitcases again.

Carmilla couldn't help the tears that glistened in her eyes. After years of sadness and miscommunication torn between them, they were just now reconnecting and mending their hearts. It was a beautiful sight to behold—the two souls needed each other, now more than ever. It was clear to anyone that Sherman loves his daughter, and he was doing whatever he could to make up for all those lost years.

Laura's bedroom was on the top floor, besides her father's. It was no bigger than their old dorm at Silas, but was just a tad childish. The walls were painted a pastel yellow with white accents, with Harry Potter memorabilia splashed everywhere. Her bed was tucked into the corner, with a giant stuffed dog that has seen better days in the center.

Carmilla placed Laura onto her bed, making sure that she was cuddling with her old toy. She made a small noise of delight before snuggling up with her pillow, and snores escaped her lips.

She chuckled and walked out of the bedroom, making her way downstairs. Papa Hollis was already in the kitchen, their suitcases lined up by the coffee table. He smiled when he greeted her.

"Would you care for some tea?" He asks, holding up the packets.

"That'd be nice, thanks. Earl Gray." She says, and he nods.

They lapsed into a comfortable silence. Carmilla listened to the crickets chirping outside, to the pots clanging in the cabinets. She allowed her head to rest against the countertop, closing her eyes. "I know that I… often say this, but it's never enough," Sherman admits, pouring boiling water into a pot, "Thank you. Truly. It's a father's joy to see his daughter finally growing up, coming into her own and falling in love with her soulmate. She's been through so much, my precious Laura, and you've done more than what I could've. I'm… I'm a coward, Carmilla." He sighs, and the woman perked her head up. "I should have been there for her. I should have known what to do, or what to say… but like the bastard I am, I shut her out. I grieved over the loss of my soulmate, thinking that my worries were more complicated than Laura's. But… but the child lost something as well. She lost a mother." He bit his lip, "And that day… that day when I thought I was going to lose her forever… I'll never forget the look on her face. How angry she was. How sad she was. Not a day goes by where I regret everything."

"Sir, if I may," Carmilla eased softly, getting out of her seat and coming over to place a comforting hand on Sherman's arm, "Yes, you are a coward for shutting her out when she needed you most. The both of you were struggling and grieving—everybody reacts differently to the death of a loved one. But… if it'll ease your soul, Laura's already forgiven you. She's moved on and accepted what happened to her mother. She's been through so much, my precious Laura, and can't get out of bed. And I need to comfort her. But she understands now that no matter how much we wish to change, the past is in the past. The best way to solve a problem is admitting it. And then… talking about it. With my issues, sometimes Laura and I stay up for hours and I just vent them to her. And she listens. And I feel better. Not one hundred percent, but hey… it's better than keeping everything all up in here." She smiles, pointing to her head.

Sherman sighs, pouring the water into a mug for Carmilla, and then another one for himself. He then smiles, patting her shoulder, "You're something special, kid. Wise beyond your years."

"Yeah, well," Carmilla utters, bashful, "When you've been around the block as much as I have, you tend to grow a thick layer of skin." He nods knowingly.

They settled back onto the couch, a cup of tea both in their hands. He then gazes curiously at her,
"So what is it that you wanted to ask me?"

"I. Um. Oh," She utters, taken by surprise. She blushing, fiddling with the tea bag, "Right." He gives her an expecting look, smiling kindly at her, "Sir. I, uh... was wondering if..." She then covers her face in embarrassment, "I-I'd... I-I'd..."

"Deep breaths, kid," He chuckles, knowing what was about to come. Father's instinct.

Carmilla breathed, tears glistened in her eyes, "I love your daughter, sir. I love her with every fiber of my being. She's my angel, my saving grace. My little piece of sunshine that I always have with me. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. Every day, I want to remind her how beautiful she is, how the way she smiles lights up the whole room. How every time she touches me I feel alive. How she makes me feel that I am worth it, even during the days when I'm at my worst. I'm a changed woman because of your daughter, sir. If it weren't for her, I'd be long gone," She sniffles, wiping her eyes, "So please, sir. May I take your daughter's hand in marriage?"

"As if I'd say no," He assures, giving her a hug, "You two dorks are already bonded!"

"I-I know that. B-but I still want to do this right."

"You're doing just fine, Carmilla," Sherman replies, "You have my blessing."

"Thank you." She sighs with relief, and laughs softly. "Thank you."

"I have one condition," He begins, gazing at her with a dewy expression, "Can you propose with her mother's ring? It's what Eileen would have wanted."


"My baby girl's getting married." He sighs, closing his eyes, "Oh, happy day."

_Your baby girl's also having a baby_, Carmilla thought with a smile, _Though I think we should hold off on that one for now._

"Well, I do love talking with you, but... this old man is tired. It's way past his bed time." He said, after they shared a moment of silence. Carmilla chuckled.

"No worries, sir." She smiles, patting his knee. "Have a good night."

"You too, kiddo." He chimes, getting off the couch. He took their mugs and brought them into the kitchen. Carmilla trudges up the rickety stairs and into Laura's bedroom, collapsing on top of the girl. She doesn't say anything, the two of them automatically snuggling up to each other, Laura's stuffed toy in between them. After two stressful weeks, the mothers-to-be finally had a good night's sleep.

The sounds of Laura singing in the shower aroused Carmilla from her sleep, as she tiredly stretched her limbs. They've slept on dorm beds smaller than a twin, but the constant squeaks from the wood in the middle of the night made it difficult. She cracked her knuckles together, shaking her head to get off the last bit of sleepiness. She checked her phone to see if anyone had contacted her, and sure enough there were several texts from Mattie, a random meme from Lafontaine, and a long paragraph from Perry worrying about Laura. Carmilla sighed and replied to all of them.
Her soulmate appeared after a few moments in the door way, looking much better than yesterday. She blow-dried her hair and the dark circles from her eyes were gone. She covered herself with a large towel.

"Well good morning, cutie." Carmilla smiles, reaching out for Laura. Her soulmate happily accepted the hug and melted into her. "Sleep well?" Laura nodded, letting out a blissful sigh.

"No more cramps," She murmured, "Though I feel a little bloated."

"I love your tummy." Carmilla assures, pinching at the tiny bulge that rested just above Laura's thighs. She snuggled closer to her, placing a loving kiss on her cheek. "It helps make this a little more real."

Laura sighed deeply, peering up at Carmilla, "I'm sorry about last night. All the stress came up to me, and… I attacked you. You didn't deserve that."

"Don't worry about it, love. We all have our moments. We were both not in the right state of mind," She smiles and caresses Laura's cheek, "Let's move on and enjoy the weekend with your father."

"Speaking of… how do we tell him, Carm?"

"Well… do you want to wait until two weeks when you start showing the symptoms, or after we listen to the voicemail?"

"After we check the voicemail. Tonight." She says, nodding.

"Alright, baby. Go get changed and we'll meet downstairs." Carmilla says, placing a kiss on Laura's stomach. Laura smiles at her, giving Carmilla another kiss before hurrying over to her closet. She watched for a few moments as Laura got ready for the day, before leaving the room. Sherman had his feet up on the couch, reading the daily news. He had a coffee in his hand and a tired expression on his face. But, nonetheless, there was a smile on his face. He was at peace.

"Good morning, sir." She eased, giving him a wave.

"Hello, Carmilla," He greeted her, smiling, "I… er… am not the greatest cook, so I'm afraid we'll have to go out to eat. I was thinking of surprising Laura by taking her to her favorite diner."

Carmilla smiled, "That's fine, Sherman. I could easily cook for you two, whenever you'd like."

"I couldn't ask you to do that," He waved her off. "You're my guest."

They glared at each other for a moment, before they burst out laughing. He then took out a small velvet box, "Here, kid. Give this to my daughter whenever you're ready."

Carmilla's heart raced, as she came over to his side and grasped it in her hands. She gasped softly at the beautiful ring. It was a golden rim, with a sparkling diamond in the center and a ruby coated around it. "This is gorgeous. Thank you, Sherman."

"Only but the best for my Laura." He chimes, closing the lid and patting her hand. Carmilla agreed wholeheartedly.

She smiles and carefully slides it into her purse. A moment later she felt Laura's arms wrap around her waist and snuggle close to her. She placed several kisses on her neck and hummed happily.
"Well you're awfully cuddly this morning." Carmilla coos, turning around so she could comfortably hold Laura. She rubbed her stomach. "Hey."

"Hey." Laura said quietly, resting her head on Carmilla's shoulder. Carmilla took notice on how her disposition changed, and her heart sang with relief. After two weeks of stress and pain, it was nice to see her love back to normal. They swayed back and forth for a bit.

"Where's a hug for your old pop?" Sherman asked, half serious and half joking, because he didn't want to disrupt this adorable moment.

Laura giggled, detaching herself from Carmilla and giving her dad a hug. "Good morning, dad."

"So, Laura, I'm sure you remember how your dad cannot cook to save his life. I was hoping you'd like to stop by your favorite diner for old time sakes?"

Laura's eyes lit up, "It's still there? The Lumberjack?"

"And they always ask about you, sweetie," He says, "Are you hungry now?" As if on cue, Laura's stomach rumbles, and she rubs it affectionately. "That settles it." He says, eyeing her with a smile. There was something different about his daughter he couldn't quite place.

Without any further interruption, the little family traveled through Laura's childhood town. She was yapping excitedly the whole way, pointing out things that she remembered or fond memories that she and her father shared. Carmilla watched on in blissful silence. They pulled up into the diner's parking lot, another time capsule stuck in the 90s. It had a large sign with a cartoon lumberjack on it, eating a giant mound of pancakes.

Laura squeezed Carmilla's hand as a sudden flash of memories coursed through her soul. The Hollis family spent many birthdays and anniversaries here. She sucked in a hard breath, suddenly feeling shy as she hid behind her soulmate when Sherman swung the door open.

"Lord, bless my soul I must be going crazy, or is that Laura Eileen Hollis?" Sputtered a stout old woman, kindness in her eyes and a beaming smile. There was a younger man beside her, who became startled by her shout. He dropped the plates he was carrying and hid underneath the counter. "Luis, what's gotten into you? I've raised you better!" She exclaimed, smacking the boy. He let out a pathetic groan.

"She's just staying for the weekend, Mrs. Kransky. I thought I'd show her things from her childhood while we're here." Sherman offered.

"Bob! Get your ass into the kitchen, we have VIP guests!" Mrs. Kransky called, cueing everyone in knowing laughter. She then came out from behind the counter and embraced Laura. "Look at you! Goodness, when you first walked in here, I thought you were your mother! Oh, you're glowing, darling! You've even got the tummy!" She cooed, patting Laura's stomach and giving her a knowing wink. "The Hollis sweet tooth was infamous for my sweets, after all."

"It's ridiculous how this girl can gorge on entire box of Oreo cookies in under a minute if you don't stop her," Carmilla chuckled. She stuck her tongue out, blushing with embarrassment.

"What is this, pick on Laura day?" The tiny woman mumbled.

Mrs. Kransky smiled at her, "So you must be the famous soulmate I keep hearing about. The one who patched up our precious Laura's heart and made it whole again."
"All in a day's work, ma'am," Carmilla smiles, placing a loving kiss on Laura's cheek. "My name's Carmilla. Pleasure."

"Ooh, and she has good manners too! You hold onto this one, Laura-bear. She's a keeper."

"It's not like I have a choice in the matter." Laura giggled, causing Carmilla to pout. "Oh, stop that grumpy cat, you know I love you."

"That's right, don't you forget it."

"Never." She coos, the two of them sharing a kiss. They would've continued further if Laura's stomach hadn't growled again, and Mrs. Kransky clapped her hands together.

"Well! That's a mighty roar if I ever heard one! I'm going to whip up your favorite, dear, how does that sound?"

Laura's eyes sparkled, "Four stacks of blueberry pancakes with a Nutella spread?" She jumped up and down happily, "Ohmigosh!"

"Think you can meet your old record, dear?" Mrs. Kransky laughed, and Laura's face grew serious.

"I can beat it." She assured, and Carmilla gave her a questioning look.

"I… think I'm going to regret asking this, but what's going on?" She asked, as the little family piled into a booth by the window.

Sherman patted Laura's hand from across the table, "At the carnival every summer The Lumberjack had a pancake eating competition. When Laura was just a tiny kid, she would win each time—beating her record each year. The most she's ever done was eight stacks of pancakes in under four minutes." He says, nodding to the pictures adorning the walls. "Wasn't worth the tummy ache afterwards, though."

"Nobody could beat me. I was the champ." Laura supplied, patting her stomach.

"Don't push yourself so much this time, okay?" Carmilla whispered, her hand sweeping across Laura's. "Be mindful of the tiny human."

"Of course, Carm," She whispers back, giving her love a kiss. Luckily, Sherman had his head turned and was in deep conversation with Luis Kransky.

"Laura, you remember Luis, don't you?" Her father chimed, patting the dark-skinned boy on the shoulder. He smiled shyly at her.

"How could I not? We had loads of fun in elementary school together! It's good to see you again, Luis." She smiled, still cuddled up to Carmilla.

The boy chuckled bashfully and scratched his head, "I look back on them, and… those were some of my fondest memories. I'll never forget how you stood up to those bullies for me."

"They were being jerks—laughing at you because of the color of your skin? Where ever they are now, I hope karma kicked them in the ass," She replies, "What're you doing now?"

Luis smiled, sliding into the booth next to her dad, "Not much. Saving up for college, working here to support my mom. I have dreams of becoming a big-shot lawyer, though finding pity on a small-town boy can only get me so far," His eyes grew soft, as he looked between Laura and Carmilla,
"Not everyone gets the lucky ticket out of here."

"Your time will come, kid. Here's my mother's card. She has connections in high places," Carmilla says, handing over a card from her purse, "Give her a call."

Luis's eyes grew wide, "Dr. Morgan?! The Dr. Morgan? She's your mother?!"

"Adopted mother, but our ties run deeper than blood." Carmilla utters, and Laura squeezes her hand.

"T-thank you," He says gratefully, placing the card carefully in his pocket, "Oh, I'm an idiot. What would you like to order?"

"I'll just have your homemade waffles and bacon. With orange juice."

"And you, Papa Hollis?" Luis asked.

"French toast and sausages is fine for me, kiddo."

"And you're getting the Lumberjack Deluxe, right Laura?"

"My body is ready!" Laura exclaimed, gripping her fork for extra emphasis. Everyone laughed at her knowingly. They all slipped into conversations of their own, Laura sometimes dozing off or staring out into space, admiring the scenery. Carmilla couldn't help but smile at how at peace her soulmate was, now that she's back in her hometown. She had spent so many years of sadness holed up in her home, not realizing that the people here had been desperately trying to reach out to her.

Carmilla would often catch Mrs. Kransky stopping her work to smile at her, hovering close by. Even the elusive Bob poked his head out of the kitchen to smile at the tiny woman (he was practically a giant, with a balding head and large ears) and hung around her father for a long moment, giving him a gentle look. Luis and Laura talked animatedly about stories from both of their pasts, from insane teachers to school pranks to childhood crushes. Carmilla decided that she liked Luis.

Finally, their food was brought over and Laura began to hop excitedly in her seat. Luis handed her the infamous meal with a smile, taking out his stopwatch. Carmilla watched in awe as Laura dug in without a moment's hesitation, scarfing down each bite with fervor. Sherman let out a booming laugh as he was suddenly struck with memories of this exact moment happening years prior.

Four minutes and thirty seconds. That's how long it took for Laura's plate to be licked clean. It was an adorable sight to see Laura snuggle up besides Carmilla, her hand resting on her now protruding bulge.

Carmilla chuckled and caressed her belly with affection. "Now I have a food baby on top of my real baby. I hope they don't mind." Laura said, giggling with delight.

"I'm sure they like the extra protection," She replies, "Let's name them… Bartholomew."

"Ew. Okay, definitely not letting you pick the names when we have our kid." Laura says, crinkling her nose. Sherman came back from chatting with the other employees and customers, smiling at the two girls.

"Alright, you two. Have any plans for the day?" He asked, taking a sip of his orange juice.

"I was thinking I could show Carm my elementary school, and things around town."
"Sounds like a great idea. And what do you say we end the night by going for a ride on the lake?"

"You still have our boat?" Laura asks with a smile.

"She needs a few patches here and there, but I'm sure with a little push we'll get her working." He replies, giving Carmilla a knowing wink.

"That sounds awesome, dad!" Laura cheers, though she winced at the sudden movement and places a hand on her stomach. "On second thought… let's not do any strenuous activity for a while… ouch…"

Carmilla could do nothing but shake her head and give Laura a loving kiss.

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The rest of the day passed on, filled with interesting activities. Laura would show her soulmate around town, making friendly talk with all the shopkeepers who once knew her as a little girl. She was even allowed into the elementary school for a few moments, getting into an animated discussion with her former kindergarten teacher.

It was when Laura mentioned briefly that she wanted to visit her mother that the mood shifted. Nodding, Carmilla eagerly took her hand and they traveled several miles south of the town, to a secluded grave site.

Carmilla held onto Laura as they walked underneath the metal archway, noticing how the sun was setting in the distance. She searched her soulmate's face for any kind of expression, but found nothing.

They finally came across a large tombstone, with an array of flowers displayed on it. An adorable Christmas photo of the little family was placed between it, as well as several memorabilia from Laura's past. She watched as Laura took out something from her pocket, eyes widening in shock when it was her lucky pic.

"Hey, mom. It sure has been a while, huh?" She smiles, "…that's my fault. I'm sorry I haven't visited as much. And there's never a good reason for it. But… there's something important I need to tell you. I'm… I'm pregnant." She whispers, placing an unconscious hand on her belly, "Y-you're going to be a grandma."

Carmilla gazes softly at her, squeezing her shoulder. "Ripping it off like a band-aid, eh cremppuff?"

Laura giggled, leaning into her. "This time will be a little bit easier, before we tell my dad. I feel her presence here, but she can't exactly say anything back, obviously. This is my soulmate, Carmilla. She's been the cause of my happiness and has been taking care of me for all this time, mom. Oh, I wish you could meet her—she's so lovely."

"Do you think… your mom would like me?"

"Of course!" Laura replies, "You've got my dad wrapped around your finger. My mother would love you. Because I love you."

Carmilla hummed happily, resting her head on Laura's shoulder as she then started to babble to her
mother about all the shenanigans they've gotten up to within the past year. It was such a beautiful, tender moment that Carmilla reasoned should only be between Laura and her mother. If she was ever brought up in conversation, she would nod or make a small noise of agreement, but other than that she said nothing.

She felt her phone buzz in her pocket, and knowing who it was, gave Laura a gentle kiss and told her she'd be back.

"Everything all set, pops?" She asked warmly.

"Yes, ma'am. All that's missing is you two lovebirds."

"Thank you so much for this. Really—it... I've never had a loving father in my life before, and you've just been so wonderful to me."

He laughs softly, "You're going to make me cry with talk like that. You, of all people, deserve good things. And I'm glad I'm someone new in your life that you could trust."

"Those words mean so much to me, Sherman. I'm honored that you think of me as a daughter."

"And I'm honored that you think of me as a dad."

Smiling, Carmilla ended the call and walked over to her girlfriend, who was placing the lucky pic besides the small photo. Laura turns to smile at her, "I hope you don't mind. I know you... once had this as a source of comfort on lonely nights before giving it to me, and then I held onto it, but I supposed now it would make sense for my mother to have it. As a gift from the both of us."

"It's a beautiful idea, leibling," Carmilla smiles, giving her a kiss, "I'm sure she loves it." They held each other for a long moment, listening to the cricket's chirp around them before getting up, and heading back to their car.

Finally, after all these years of sadness, Laura was at peace with herself.

Throughout the day, Carmilla's thoughts kept on swirling around in her mind. She was imagining all the different sorts of ways where she could propose to Laura, and wondered if she should have proposed earlier in the day, like at the diner. Or if she should have dropped to her knee as they took a stroll in the park.

She felt within her purse at the velvet box once more, sighing with resignation. It was like the universe was toying with her. Everything was waiting on the edge of their seats with bated breath on what was going to soon come.

Carmilla anxiously looked at Laura and her father, who were setting up the boat to set sail. Laura laughed at something her father said and carefully climbed onto the boat. She called out to Carmilla, who's feet seemed to move automatically to her love's voice. She listened, and with the help of Papa Hollis, she climbed onto the boat after her.

It was when the sun had finally settled beyond the horizon, and the beautiful display of stars that were just shining above them, when Carmilla decided it was time. Her heart was beating in her chest as she patiently waited for Laura and her father to finish talking. She nervously played with the hem of her shirt, an old habit she thought she broke.

She bit her lip as Sherman wiped away Laura's tears, wondering what they were talking about that made her cry. Probably her mother. Or the last time they saw each other. Laura wrapped her arms around her father in a large hug, the air between them filled with nothing but happiness. All
was well—the universe was in balance once more.

Sherman chuckled as he placed a loving kiss on Laura's forehead, squeezing her shoulder. He then turned around to smile at Carmilla, and nodded. He walked over slowly to where she was sitting on captain's seat, giving her a hug.

"Go get her."

Carmilla drew out a nervous breath. She climbed out of the tiny room, and strolled over to where Laura was leaning against the railings of the boat. She wrapped her arms around her, hands caressing Laura's beautiful bulge. It was tiny, and would go unnoticed by the public, but Carmilla couldn't take her eyes off it. Laura turned and smiled at her, giving Carmilla a kiss. She shivered and Carmilla rubbed her arms to keep them warm. They both tilted their heads to the stars, staring out into space for a few long moments.

"It's comforting… to think how small we are in comparison. All the lives we've lead… the people we've been… nothing to that light." Carmilla utters softly, and Laura turns to smile at her.

"I like our stars better." She smiles, her fingers tracing along their soul mark, "In every universe… it's been set in stone. We'll always find each other, no matter how many times we are reborn."

"I've never looked at it that way." Carmilla replies, smiling back. Laura stills for a moment, staring intently at her. "What?"

"You have something on your mind."

She eased, placing her hand over Carmilla's heart, "And I can feel your heart pounding."

She smiled, placing a loving kiss on Laura's nose, "You know me better than I know myself." In her mind, she had the scene planned, and she decided to stall the inevitable for three more seconds. "May we listen to the voicemail?"

Laura blinked in surprise, as if she'd forgotten, and nodded. She pulled out her cellphone from her pocket. Things were about to change for forever.

"Here we go." Laura uttered, squeezing Carmilla's arm.

"Hi, Laura Eileen Hollis, this is the IUI Treatment Center. We thank you for being patient with us and trusting us with our services. We are happy to inform you that the tests came back positive, and the examination has been a success. You are two weeks pregnant (or fourteen days)! We're expecting the due date to be February 7th, 2017. Congratulations!"

Laura was crying at full force now, almost dropping her phone onto the ground in shock. Carmilla laughed happily and crashed their lips together, twirling her love around. Sherman Hollis came out from behind the steering wheel in a panic when he heard the noise, unsure of what was going on.

It all happened in slow-motion for Carmilla. She dropped down to Laura's belly, placing several kisses on her bulge and whispering words of love towards their tiny unborn human. She then took Laura's hands in hers, and peered up at her in awe.

"Laura. Before you came into my life, I didn't know what love was. I didn't think I was worthy of finding someone whom I would cherish with all my heart and soul. I was weak, tired, and lonely the days leading up to meeting you. I had reasoned with myself that death would be a suitable option for all the suffering I've been through. But then an angel came to rescue me. She's kind, selfless, and
companionate. She wrapped her own broken wings around my soul and healed it, opening her heart to mine. I need you like I need the air to breathe. Water to drink. And food to eat. Even if the whole world burns, I'll never stop loving you. You're my rock. My soulmate. My cupcake. My precious sunshine. The mother to our little babe," She choked on a sob, kissing Laura's belly once more, "You would make me… the happiest woman on this Earth if one day I get to call you my wife. Will you marry me?"

Tears streaked down Laura's cheeks as she struggled to manage her voice, and she weakly turned to see her father's beaming smile.

"Oh, Carmilla," She choked out, blinking away her tears. Her hands were shaking under Carmilla's grasp.

"Yeah?" She soothes, rubbing Laura's elbow, and she nods, emotions clogging her throat. "You don't have to speak, baby, I know your answer." She whispers, placing the ring on Laura's finger. Laura launched herself into a hug right then, a new wave of tears falling down her cheeks. It was the combination of being back in her hometown, the confirmation that yes, there really was a tiny human growing within her, and Carmilla's proposal that left her a bubbling mess.

Carmilla held Laura tight in her arms, peppering her face with kisses to wipe her tears away. Sherman couldn't stay on the sidelines any longer as he joined in on the hug, praising any unforeseen gods that were looking down on them in that moment. Through his tears, he saw an angelic figure looming on the side of the boat, and smiled lovingly. His beloved had come for a short visit, but the emotions on her face were indescribable. She fluttered over to Laura and kissed her forehead, giving her a loving hug as well. She then made sure not to leave without giving love to her own soulmate, who's soul was overflowing with happiness.

As quickly as she came, the angelic figure left, but the growing family stayed huddled in their loving embrace for the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

also, side note: ELISE IS GOING TO BE ON MURDOCH MYSTERIES JUST LIKE NATASHA WAS, AAAAAH I'M SO EXCITED AND HAPPY FOR HER. LOWKEY TRYING TO STOP MYSELF FROM SHIPPING NATASHA'S CHARACTER WITH HERS BUT WHOOPS HERE WE ARE. i'm a mess.
Chapter Summary

Laura's pregnant. Carmilla becomes emotional that so many wonderful things are happening to her. They decide to tell their family the good news.

Chapter Notes

oof, I know, yell at me in the comments. I'm horrible. This past month kicked me in the ass and I needed to focus on school, so the one sacrifice I had to make was this story. I haven't forgotten about it, I promise! This is my pride and joy. I have no intentions of abandoning it any time soon. I have just been busy working on two other projects- my infamous Cassie's Choice, or Almost Adults fan fiction that's in-the-works, and my gift for my secret Santa. So I hope you'll bear with me while I get back into the grove of uploading :) Hope you all have a safe, healthy, happy holiday season.
Enjoy guys, gals, and non-binary pals.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“The decision to become a parent is to decide to forever have your heart walking around outside of your body.”- anonymous.

Everything felt... off.

I let out a huff, curling up besides Carmilla, hoping to fall back asleep. But no matter what I did, I couldn't shake off this uneasy feeling. My stomach bubbled with discomfort as I placed my hand on top of the tiny bulge.

"C'mon, bubba," I mumbled, "Why can't you let mommy sleep?"

I groaned when the tiny human completely disregarded my plea. It's... hard to believe I'm four and a half weeks now. The signs are glaringly obvious, and no amount of excuses could hide the truth.

The IUI was a complete success. I am pregnant.

A happy giggle escaped my lips.

I yawned and wearily checked the time on my phone, sighing when it read 4:00 am. Ah, well—it wasn't like I was going to get a good night's sleep anyway.

I turned towards Carmilla, who was blissfully asleep, mumbling something incoherent. I debated waking her, but she just looked so cute so I decided against it.

I stopped inside of the bathroom for a second and clicked on the light, staring at myself in the mirror.
I lifted my shirt, my tiny bulge out for the world to see. I smiled, rubbing my belly and turning my body around so I can look at every angle. Carmilla did make a comment the other day that my breasts have grown, which was a good sign. Even my butt looks bigger, but maybe that's just where all the junk food has been going.

It was fascinating how quickly your body changes even in the first few weeks of pregnancy.

I snapped out of my revere and quietly tip toes into the kitchen. "Hmm. What do you want to eat?" I utter softly, patting my belly. I've found myself doing that a lot, talking to my baby—and whenever Carm catches me in the act, she has this adorable look on her face and kisses my stomach.

I grin as I poke my head in the fridge, and pull out a packet of frozen chicken. I then pull out a waffle and put it in the microwave. Chicken and waffles is probably the weirdest craving I've ever wanted at 4am.

My stomach growled impatiently and I decided to pick at the food while it was almost finished cooking in the pan. The microwave finally set off after a moment, and I took out the breakfast delicacy. The chicken was completely cooked as I took it out of the pan, placing it on top of the waffle. I didn't hesitate to take a bite.

It was already wonderful, but something was missing. I shuffled into the fridge for a few moments more until finding the peanut butter jar, and shrieking in victory. This was going to taste so good!

I spread it all over my snack, taking a large bite. Within a matter of seconds, I immediately regretted my decision, and my stomach churned in discomfort.

I spat out whatever was left in my mouth as bile rose in my throat, and I ran towards the bathroom. I threw open the lid of the toilet and vomited, holding on for dear life.

Ugh. Is this what they call morning sickness? It's much worse than what the movies make it out to be.

There was a shuffle from our bedroom and Carmilla worriedly stepped in.

"Laura? Baby, are you okay?" She asked, crouching down to my level.

"Caaaaarm," I moaned, as she held up my hair, and rubbed my back. "I feel like I'm dying, Carm."

"You're not going to die, don't be so dramatic," Carmilla rolls her eyes.

"But it hurts so bad." I vomited.

"I've got you, love." She coos, and pats my stomach, "It'll be over before you know it."

"I've tried sleeping but bubba kept on waking me up. First, I thought they were hungry, so I fed them, but that only made my tummy upset." I bemoaned, vomiting again.

"I know I heard," Carmilla soothes, "You know you could've just asked me to make you something?"

"I-I didn't want to wake you." I uttered, panting slightly. I moaned and rested my head against the toilet seat.

"You're silly," Carmilla chuckled, as she positioned herself so that I was on her lap and she had her arms wrapped around my belly. We stayed like that for a few long moments until I felt that I had
completely emptied all the gunk, and I let out a relieved sigh. I relished in the feeling because I knew that today was going to get even worse from here.

I washed out my mouth and Carmilla carried me to our bedroom. Carmilla caressed my stomach, which helped a bit. I snuggled closer to her, giving her a grateful kiss.

I smiled at her.

"What?" She asked, lulling her head.

"How did I get so lucky?" I cooed, giving her another kiss. "You're so good to me."

"I am in love with no one, and never shall… unless it should be with you," She chimes softly, running her fingers through my hair. I gaped at her for a moment, the true sincerity of her words taking my breath away.

I love her so much. I smiled, letting out a relieved sigh as my stomach finally settled. "What time is our appointment today?"

"We still have time, love. We're supposed to be there at ten o' clock. Go back to sleep."

At four weeks, we were finally going in for our first ultrasound. We would get the chance to see our little babe on the big screen.

I hummed softly in reply, cupping my hand on her cheek. "Hey, Carmilla. Are you happy?"

The smile that appeared on her face was brighter than a thousand suns. "I am happy."

"Do I make you happy?"

"You make me very happy, Laura. You're my best friend. My lover. My soulmate. My fiancée. The mother to our child," She coos, rubbing my belly, "I can't imagine my life with anyone else."

"Good. You're stuck with me forever."

"There are worse places to be." She teased, and I playfully slapped her shoulder. "Now c'mon cutie, let's go back to sleep."

I couldn't. My mind was too awake, and the faint bubbling notions in my belly kept me on high alert. It felt like someone was poking me with a sharp stick. I could make a run to the bathroom at any given moment. I poked her cheek again, and she mumbled my name.

"Carmilla. Do… you think I'm going to be a good mommy?"

There was a beat. Then came Carmilla's curious eyes. "Why would you ask something like that?"

"I don't know… anxious, I guess. It's one thing preparing for a child and it's another raising one." I uttered quietly, lifting my shirt and stared at the bulge. "What if they hate me?"

"Oh, Laura," She soothes, "Nobody's perfect at raising a child. There's no educational handbook on this. But I know for a fact you'll be an excellent mother. Our baby will never hate you. You'll shower them with love at every given opportunity. You know as the saying goes: you've never really fallen in love unless you've been blessed with a child. And I can't wait for the day when we welcome this little one to the world."

Tears glistened in my eyes as I giggled, "You're going to be an awesome mom too, Carm. We're
going to be the best family in the whole world. Everyone's going to be jealous of us."

Carmilla's eyes sparkled with delight, "Can we be those types of parents that show up at every school function to cheer our kid on, and embarrass them because of how proud we are?"

I smiled, nodding my head, "Yes, baby. You even have my permission to get into arguments with the other parents when they start to brag about their kids." The raven-haired woman gave her a kiss and snuggled closer with me. Our tiny human was so small, and yet we both had so much love for them already. It was a miracle.

"What gender would you like the baby to be? Do you have a preference?" Carmilla asked with a yawn.

"It doesn't matter to me. Just a healthy, happy baby is fine. But whenever I imagined myself having children, I'd always picture a little baby boy in my arms."

"A boy, huh? With my looks and your smile, he's going to have all the ladies falling for him." Carmilla chuckled, "I should get my gun ready."

"Or other boys, Carm. We shouldn't limit who his soulmate will be." I reminded her, and she smiles. I hit her shoulder playfully, "And you don't have a gun, silly."

"We'll love and support him regardless." She nods. She then raises an eyebrow, "I can easily get one. Scare off all their potential suitors—no one will ever be good enough for our kid." I giggle at her.

We both grin at each other. Carmilla yawns, hiding her face in the crook of my neck. "Don't worry about staying up for my sake. Go to sleep, Carm."

"Happily." She mumbles, closing her eyes. I smiled at her, my mind still on alert with excitement for what's to come, and shuffling through baby names.

Life is good.

I dozed off for an hour or two, but I was rudely awakened by bubba. It was time for the both of us to get up as Carmilla helped me in the bathroom, and we got ready for the day. It was Lilita's birthday today, so we decided that as a present we would gift a pregnancy test and a picture of the ultrasound. It would be the perfect way to reveal the next chapter of our lives—we couldn't have timed this better.

I took another nap while Carmilla drove us to the hospital.

"Alright baby, this is it," I cooed to my stomach, blinking my eyes away from sleep, "We finally get to see you."

"Thank you for being so brave, little one." Carmilla adds, giving the bulge a kiss as she helped me out of the car. Her face was shaped in a grimace—like she was holding back tears.

"Aw, Carm, it's okay to cry, honey." I laughed, squeezing her shoulder.

She chuckled, taking my hand and we walked into the hospital, "I know, it's just. It just hit me again. The amount of love I have for our tiny human is overwhelming sometimes."

"Believe me, I know the feeling." I soothe, rubbing the small of her back. She gives me a gentle smile.
We waited in the common room for a few moments, but it wasn't so bad. I smiled and looked around at the expecting mothers and their partners. They were all in different stages of their pregnancies, and I watched as one husband had to help his wife in and out of a chair. I can't believe our tiny human will grow to the point where I wouldn't be able to see my toes.

"Karnstein-Hollis?" The kind nurse called, and we smiled at each other. I smiled in shock when I realized who it was. It's Natalie! She got her job at the local hospital! God, she looked so different now; so matured.

"Here we go."

The room wasn't as bad as I imagined it. In movies and television shows, they make it seem so foreboding. There were multiple children's drawings hanging on the walls, and the nurse wore a pleasant smile on her face. She pats the examination table. "Whenever you're ready, Laura."

My throat clogged with emotion and I felt like I was going to cry. Every little movement I felt inside my belly made me self-conscious, and I saw the entire world suddenly change around me. This precious babe was going to be raised in a world where soulmates exist, where they will be loved and cherished with every fiber of our being. Where one day I would have to say goodbye to my little babe and watch them grow, fall in love with their own soulmate. Such was inevitable, but can't a mother be selfish and wish that they would stay little and adorable forever?

I gasped quietly as the cool gel hit my skin, and Carmilla grasped my hand tight. Her lip was quivering, as she too was struggling to hold back tears.

"Ah, there they are. Do you see the little black blob?" Natalie chimed softly, and I placed my hand on my belly. "There's your baby. It looks like they're dancing a bit."

"We did it, love. We really did it. I'm so proud of you both." Carmilla praised, peppering my face with kisses. "Oh, just look at them. They're beautiful."

"Gods, I love you so much, Carm." I weakly managed, and she gave me a loving kiss.

"I love you too, Laura. You and our beautiful baby."

I swallow thickly as my soulmate kisses me, and all is right in the world. I tore my eyes away from her and look at the screen again, at the tiny black blob in awe. They couldn't have been larger than the size of a raisin, but everything had been set in stone.

As the nurse moved the gel to another part of my stomach, I couldn't stop the tears from falling down my face this time. Carmilla's hands were shaking as she buried her face in the crook of my neck, and we held each other in that embrace for a long time.

They're here. Our tiny human is really here.

Throughout the afternoon, we did nothing but cuddle in bed. We only got up if we had to pee and we decided to order take out instead. We had several copies of the ultrasound, and we were clutching onto one of them like a safety belt. It was a very raw, and emotional time for the both of us. Perhaps more emotional than the day after our Marking.

We were both drowning in the revelation that our tiny human was alive and healthy.
It was nearing the time when we would attend the party and I was growing nervous. The nausea hadn't subsided, and no matter how much foundation I tried to cover my cheeks, they were still an unholy shade of green.

I was huddled over the toilet with my dress halfway on, desperately wondering why the world won't stop spinning.

Yeesh, no amount of pregnancy books prepared me for how terrible these first few weeks of morning sickness would be.

Carmilla leaned against the doorway, dressed and ready to go for the evening. "We can always leave a bit later, my love."

I grumble something unintelligible, shaking my head and cleaning out my mouth in the sink. "No, we've promised Mattie we'd be there. If we leave later I'm going to fall asleep, and I'm hungry." I then turn around, "Sip me up?" She smiles and does so, hands making gentle caresses on our soul mark. Her eyes then lingered at my breasts, which were jutting out slightly larger than before. I roll my eyes at her. "You pervert."

She chuckles shamelessly, "What? I can't admire the view? You know I can't help myself sometimes, cupcake. You're exquisite." She claims, giving me a kiss. "The thought of our baby growing inside of you and changing your body is turning me on in ways that I can't explain. I... won't be able to keep my hands to myself tonight." She utters in a low voice, and I sighed, pouting at her.

"Caaarm, you know I want to make love to you, but I'm so nauseous and I don't want to risk throwing up or hurting the baby."

Carmilla's grip on me tightened, "The doctor said sex was good for the bay. We just must be cautious and slow." She says, wiggling her eyebrows.

I smiled lovingly at her, caressing her cheek, "You make a compelling argument. Alright. We'll give it a go tonight, since you've asked so kindly." I giggled, and she happily gave me a kiss.

She smiled at me, placing her soft lips to my ear, and uttered, "You're so beautiful." I sighed happily, the bubbling sensations in my belly subsiding for now. They were replaced by a swarm of butterflies.

We arrived at the restaurant on time, with everyone waiting for us at the table. It was good to finally see our friends again—Danny, Kirsch, Lafontaine, Perry... I realized in that moment how we've been neglecting them, and mentally vowed to spend more time with them this summer.

"Mama!" Carmilla chimed happily, rushing over to give Lilita a hug. "Happy birthday."

"And here I thought you'd forgotten about me." She teased, pinching Carmilla's cheeks.

"Never, mama. Here's your present. I know you didn't want anything, but open it any time you like."

"My glittering girl," Lilita beams, taking the neatly wrapped photo and placing it beside her. My stomach was doing flips because the woman hardly had a clue what precious cargo would be in there. "And, Laura! It's wonderful to see you again to. Give your mama a hug!"

I giggle softly, each movement more uncomfortable than the last as I went over to hug her.

"Are you okay, dear? You're looking awfully tired."

"Rough night, Mama. I had trouble sleeping." I mumble, slumping my shoulders.
"Carmilla, sweetheart, why did you make your soulmate come to dinner if she's unwell?" Lilita clicked her tongue, and Mattie shared a knowing smile with me.

"I tried to stop her, honest. But she's a stubborn mule, doesn't take no for an answer."

I glare at her, "I'm not dying, Carm. I can easily take care of myself." I roll my eyes, holding onto her for support. I mentally sigh—this was going to be a long night.

Mattie placed her hand on my shoulder, giving us a knowing smile, "Whenever you want to leave, you may go."

I say nothing in response, biting the inside of my cheek. "Where is everybody else?"

"All of your friends will be coming in twenty minutes. They hit traffic on the way here." Lilits reasoned, eyeing me cautiously. She's so onto us.

When we realized we were still standing beside our table, Carm and I sat opposite of her family. The waitress came by to refill our drinks and took our orders. My emotions were still on an all-time high from earlier this morning, and I struggled to keep a straight face. Slowly, I reached out for Carmilla's hand, and she squeezed it tight.

"Do you need to vomit?" She whispered, and I shook my head.


"Alright."

Several more moments pass, and thankfully our friends finally made it to the restaurant. They were loud and obnoxious as usual, but a welcome sight to see.

"Frosh!" Lafontaine exclaimed happily, running over to us. I giggled happily as they gave me a bone-crushing hug. "It feels like it's been nine thousand years!"

"Just two months, dear," Perry said gently, giving me a wink, "Not since the graduation."

"Two months too long. We were all off doing our own thing when we should have been spending time with one another." I say, giving Perry a hug too.

"The funny thing called life gets in the way, Lau," Danny chimes, giving me a kiss on my cheek once she got close enough, "But summer's just begun, so we have two months to make up for it!"

"Two months until the inevitable realization that we all have to grow up and live adult lives now that college is finished." Kirsch mumbles, making us all chuckle in agreement. I smiled happily at them both, quickly checking for any signs of soul marks. It looks as if nothing's happened yet, but with the way they're practically hanging against one another, it would be any day now. Kirsch's hand never left Danny's side from the moment they got into the restaurant. Poor things—their soul marks must be burning right now.

"Well, either way, it's good that you're all here," Lilita chimes, giving them all pleased smiles, "It warms my heart that my glittering girl now has a group of friends who love her, and that your relationship will last for a lifetime. I was beginning to worry."

"Your daughter is incredible, Dr. Morgan," Perry eased, and a blush creeped up Carmilla's face, "She's come such a long way from the days when we first met her. I knew from the moment we met that she was special and I'm glad she's in our lives."
"Shit, Perr, you mean that?" Carmilla asks, lip quivering.

The curly haired woman smiled, beckoning Carmilla for a hug. "I think of you as the sister I never had."

"Ugh. You're going to make me cry, Curly."

"Hey! What about me? I should take full credit for starting this friendship, you know. I was the one who saw her being all lonely in the first place!" Lafontaine protested.

"Shut up and join the hug, Einstein."

I laugh, sharing a happy smile with Mattie.

We all settled at the table, as the waiter came to take our meals. I felt myself nodding off, realizing just how emotionally exhausted I felt.

"You okay, baby?" Carmilla asked gently.

I nod, "Yeah. I'm just sleepy." I then whisper, "I want to tell them, Carm. Poor Mattie looks like she's about to burst."

Carmilla turns over to her sister, who is anxiously gripping her fork and shooting cautious looks towards us while the rest of the table is off on their own conversations.

"We'll end her suffering," She soothes, and clearing her throat, she gently taps her empty glass of wine. "So, because we're all growing up, does everyone want to come out and say what plans we all have for the future? Hopes, dreams, and all that?"

They all smile and nod. Lafontaine pipes up, "I don't care where I am. S'long as I'm with Perry."

She chuckled and gave Lafontaine a kiss, "What they mean is, we found an apartment near Silas University that we're moving into come this fall. It's close to their job at the science museum and it has a nice scenic view. I'm not quite sure what I want to do, but I am debating on starting my own bakery soon."

"Bro, I'd totally eat there." Kirsch said with wide eyes. "Well, D-Bear and I are planning on moving back to her parents' city. And—we have exciting news! Babe, tell them!"

"I got into the police academy!" Danny said with an excited screech, "After months of waiting, I finally got the callback. They want me to start working in the fall. Gosh, I'm so relieved and so excited."

The table erupted in a chorus of cheers, and Kirsch was beaming. "It feels like everything is finally falling into place. Several months ago I didn't think I'd be here and now... I don't think I could have done anything without you. Thank you, Kirsch—you've been my rock throughout this whole time and I couldn't have asked for a better boyfriend. I love you so much."

"I love you too, babe. God. I can't wait until we finally have our soul marks." Kirsch replied, giving her a kiss. "We've basically revealed everything about each other. No more hidden secrets between us—there's nothing that should be holding our souls back now."

"That's right, you're the last ones to jump on the bandwagon," Carmilla gave them a knowing smile, "How're you feeling?"
"Besides my neck feeling like someone is pressing a hot metal plate against it, I'm fine. I just feel jittery one moment and then I'm crying the next. Basically, it's like I've been on my period for the last month." Danny grumbled.

I giggled knowingly, "This'll pass, dear. The hardest part is the emotions leading up to the memories. Then once it's all over, smooth sailing."

Lilita smiled and coughed politely, "Well, I suppose now would be a good time to relay my news to you all. Which is partially why I invited you lot to dinner tonight." We curiously turned our gazes to her, "I have a summer home down by the shore Carmilla, Mattie, and I used to visit when they were younger. It's been vacant for years and I feel terrible that I just don't have the time to visit any longer. Which is why, Carmilla, I'm giving full ownership and the keys over to you so you could bring your friends and visit whenever you'd like."

Carmilla's mouth gaped open in shock, "… you're serious about this, mama?"

Lilita nods, "Please, it'd bring me great joy to see you using it. You're a young adult now and you're living your life. I trust that you'll be able to make many happy memories there."

"Oh, mama!" She exclaimed, jumping out of her seat to give Lilita a hug, "Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

"You're welcome, love. I know you'll take good care of it."

"You're welcome, love. I know you'll take good care of it."

Then, Danny's eyes trailed over to my hands, and she let out a shriek. "Oh, my god. How come I didn't even notice the ring on your finger this whole time?!"

Lafontaine sputtered out their drink, "What in the name of Shrillex—,"

"Surprise! We're engaged!" I exclaim, waving my hand around happily.

"Oh, this is wonderful!" Perry squealed, and everyone got up from their seats to congratulate us. We were being loud and inconsiderate to the other partygoers, but we didn't care. "We're all so happy for you!"

"What's the second half of the announcement, little nerd?" Kirsch asked, ruffling my hair.

I smirked and nod over to Carmilla, who handed Lilita her present. "Here's the first half of your gift. The second half… won't be here for the next eight months."

Lilita's breath hitched as she tore open the nicely wrapped box, taking in a lungful of air before she screamed happily. There, in her hands, was the ultrasound and positive pregnancy test I took earlier.

"Y-you're going to have a baby!" I nod, tears welling in my eyes, "I-I'm going to be a grandma?!"

"I'm four weeks." I manage weakly, as she pulled me into a hug.

"I never thought I'd see the day when I'd become a grandma. A-after so many years of sadness, this
is the happiest day of my life. I don't think I say it enough, but thank you, Laura. Thank you for being so brave and for saving my daughter. Thank you for falling in love with her. Thank you for seeing the goodness in her when so many others have not. Just... just thank you. I love you so much and I'm honored that you're my daughter."

"I-I'm honored that I get to call you my mom." I hiccup, smiling as Lilita bends down to hug my tiny bulge.

"You're a very special baby. I hope you're ready, because I'm going to spoil you rotten," She praises, making us all laugh. "Grandma Lilita is going to be better than all the other grandmas out there."

"Ma, stop it. You're making a scene." Carmilla grumbled, rubbing the back of her neck.

"Let me live in this moment, darling. Who knows how long I must wait until Matska finds her soulmates, so you're all I have right now."

Mattie stuck her tongue out, "Oh it must be so hard being the favorite child, Mircalla." She said in jest.

"Absolutely exhausting."

I giggled, squeezing her arm as everyone calmed themselves down after that announcement. The air suddenly shifted as it was no longer tense, and we were all talking about what we wanted to do for the summer.

It was settled that we all agreed on spending time together at the beach house, and my heart swelled with love.

We said our goodbyes and Carmilla half carried me back to the car. I dozed off for a bit on the ride home, grateful that I was no longer feeling nauseous for the time being.

"I hope you're not too tired," Carmilla hummed into my ear, giving me a gentle kiss as she picked me up out of the car, "Because I'd still like to take you up on that offer."

"Ooh! Yes, please!" I giggle, crashing my lips into hers. "I've been craving you all night."

"And I will happily oblige."

We closed the doors behind us, temporarily forgetting about all or worries, counting all the stars on our skin that were our blessings.

Chapter End Notes

Nikki is very emotional right now. Nikki is talking in third person bc this chapter took an emotional toll on her. Please do Nikki a favor and leave a kudos or a comment. It'll make Nikki very happy.
Those Summer Nights

Chapter Summary

The Scooby gang celebrates the first week of summer by going to Carmilla's beach house. Emotions are high as Danny and Kirsch are moments away from the final sign, and Laura's morning sickness puts a detour in their original plan.

Chapter Notes

kind of ironic how this chapter is going up when it's 20 FREAKING DEGREES OUTSIDE. we had flurries of snow yesterday and over the weekend it stuck about 2 inches. man, I miss the summer. kind of glad I'm reliving vicariously through these dorks. figured I'd upload a chapter today, after ya'll had to wait a month. hope you enjoy, loves. leave a comment or two <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Carmilla pinched the bridge of her nose and drew out an exasperated huff. Why, on Earth, did everyone decide they would all pack into one van? Really, she loved her friends, but perhaps this was a bit much. Plus, it was hot, everyone was cranky, they should have left an hour ago, and now she must deal with a crying soulmate because Lafontaine went a little too much on the teasing earlier that morning.

"C-Carmilla, Lafontaine's being mean." Laura sniffs, burying her face into Carmilla's neck.

"They didn't mean it love, don't take the things that idiot says seriously. Ever." She grumbles into her hair, peaking at the mad scientist who sheepishly rubbed scratched the back of their neck.

Perry hissed at them, "You know Laura's extra sensitive and sick now that she's pregnant! Lafontaine, what do I always tell you? T.A.C.T!"

"Everyone's stressed out, I was only trying to lighten the mood…"

"By telling my fiancée that she should watch her weight before the ground cracks under her feet?" Carmilla snaps, "And then follow that up with another short joke?"

Kirsch shook his head at them, "Not cool, bro."

"Ugh! Alright, I know I fucked up. I'm sorry, Laura."

Laura smiled weakly at them, "I-It's okay… I know you didn't mean it. I didn't mean to yell at you either—my emotions are a mess right now."

Lafontaine smiled at her in relief, giving her a hug, "For the record, you're not tiny. You're fun-sized."

"Alright," Perry said, clasping her hands together, "Let's regroup for twenty minutes, and then hit the
road. Who's driving first?"

Like children, everyone put their finger on their nose. Danny wasn't quick enough, and she bemoaned at her fate.

Laura quickly zigzagged to the bathroom to dish out all the contents from her stomach, though nothing came out. She was just feeling nauseous. Carmilla came in seconds later and closed the door so they had privacy.

"Are you sure you're okay, love?" Carmilla asked gently, to which she received a sigh in return.

"I-It's just… ever since we told them we're pregnant, they've become so protective of me. I mean, I get it… what happened is a miracle… b-but I don't need to be watched twenty-four seven!"

Carmilla chuckled, leaning against the counter as Laura splashed water on her face, "I know that, but this is something new and excited for all of us. We're just a bunch of twenty-something year-olds who want to make sure that our beloved creampuff is healthy and taken care of. Quite frankly, none of us know what we're doing. This is uncharted territory. Not many soulmates have the opportunity of conceiving so quickly after getting their soul marks."

"…touché," she mumbled softly, thinking it over. "I am blessed that we do have all this emotional support. We're so lucky to have such loving friends."

"Loving friends who would fight tooth and nail to become the godparents of this little one," Carmilla chuckled, patting Laura's bulge, "Would you feel more at ease if we had a home of our own to come back to?"

Laura nods, "I would. I know we've been looking, and I know not to rush this process… we kind of did everything backwards, here. Usually people buy a house before they propose, and vice versa."

Carmilla was quiet for a moment. "Do you regret anything?"

"Carm! How can you… how can you say something like that?" She asked, her lip quivering, "After everything we've been through? I don't care where life takes us… as long as you're in it… I'll be happy. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Carm. You and our little human."

She coos, taking Carmilla's other hand and placing it on her stomach. She then rests their foreheads together and sighs, "Love is timeless. I no longer worry about how fast I've fallen for you, or how long we've known each other. My heart belonged to you the moment you sang those lovely words to the sky all those months ago."

"And my heart was yours the moment you stopped to listen." Carmilla hums, giving her a loving kiss.

"Whatever happens next, I know we'll be able to face it together." She replies, embracing her for a few moments.

Then, jolting them apart, there was a loud crash and the car horn went off, followed by several superlatives from Kirsch.

"Except for… that." Carmilla grumbles.

Laura giggled, taking her hand, "Come on, grumpy cat."

The rest of the ride to the beach house went off without a hitch. As it turns out, it thankfully wasn't
that big of a problem—the float Kirsch was trying to fit on the trunk of the car fell over and it needed an army of people to fix.

They all paused to take a breather within the hour at a rest stop, Laura the first to escape the car to find the nearest bathroom. She almost didn't make it. After getting themselves situated and their tummies filled, they were set off on the road again.

Carmilla was the one who drove this time. She was starting to feel a lump in her throat the closer she drove to her old family beach home, as memories came to the forefront of her mind. Memories that came from a simpler time, and yet a darker time, where she was sad and lonely and didn't truly appreciate the beauty of the world around her.

Now, as she drove past the white sandy beaches, palm trees, and brightly colored houses, she was hit with a wave of euphoria. She had the opportunity now to experience the place of her childhood with her beloved soulmate and friends.

"Carm, darling," Laura soothes, squeezing her arm, "Do you need to pull over?" She was sitting in the front seat while their four other passengers were lazing in the back.

Of course, only Laura would know this place from their shared memories. Her eyes were twinkling with excitement.

"I'm fine, cupcake." She chuckled, and payed attention to the road.

Their fellow passengers were silent for a moment, before they all slowly began to wake up.

"Yo, Elvira, are we there yet?" Danny asked sleepily.

"We're literally two blocks away."

"I'm hungry."

"There's still chips in the grocery bag, Lafontaine."

"I need to take a piss." Kirsch announced boldly.

"Why didn't you piss an hour ago?!"

"I didn't have to go then!"

"Oh, hey look, it's a cute dog!" Danny exclaimed, grinning at Carmilla, "Hey mom, can we pull over to say hi to the dog?"

"Mom, oh my god," Laura was cackling.

"Honestly, you're all acting like children." Perry frets, "I have a headache and frightfully tired as well, but that doesn't mean we have to shout out our abnormalities! Just. Be. NORMAL!"

The car ride went silent, as Carmilla turned to raise an eyebrow. "You okay there, Raggedy Anne?"

Perry visibly wilts, "I just got my period and my panties are soaked, thank you very much."

"...I seriously hope you brought a pair of emergency pads, just in case."

The raven-haired girl shook her head, "I did, sweetheart. But... but as the mother of the group, it's my job to make sure everyone else is feeling alright before me."
"Aw, Perr," Laura soothes, reaching over to place a gentle hand on Perry's knee, "We love you and we're grateful, but please, if you're in pain say something so we can help. We're all a team—we have each other's backs no matter what situation. Got it?"

She sniffs, and Lafontaine gives her a reassuring kiss.

"I think we would all feel better if we take a break and regroup later this afternoon, bros," Kirsch says, "Whether it's grocery shopping, or going down to the beach, or out to a restaurant—we're all not in the right state of mind to do anything now."

There was a chorus of agreements. Carmilla safely pulled into the driveway minutes later, and everyone breathed a healthy sigh of relief.

"Don't fight over which room's the biggest, guys. We'll settle that later!" Carmilla called out, as everyone piled out of the large van. Laura was giggling at her. "What?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking about how you're going to be an amazing mom. You handled that situation in the car very well, baby."

Carmilla sighed, pulling Laura into a hug. "I was ready to blow a fuse, to be honest. If you weren't with me, I would have screamed my head off at those idiots."

"Put it in perspective. We were all tired and worn out from traveling. Arguing would have made the situation much, much worse," Laura sighs, giving her a gentle kiss, "I'm so proud of you."

"The amount of faith you have in me is infinite, dear. I'd be nowhere without you," They held each other for a moment, listening to the breeze from the sea, and feeling the sun beat down on their skin. The universe bustled around their bubble but they stayed put, soaking in each other's love. Their quiet reverie was broken when Carmilla let out a yawn, and Laura smiles.

"Nap time for my broody lesbian," she giggles, taking her soulmate's hand.

"I don't brood. It's called pondering—I ponder about a lot of things. Like how infinite is the number of stars in the sky? Or how many licks does it take to get to the center of a tootsie roll pop? Or why do we never see baby pigeons? Do they just like… pop out of the egg that size? Or… or—,"

"Okay, Plato, save your questions about the theory of the universe for another day." She smiles, as they approached an empty bedroom that wasn't taken yet.

"But I'm not even tired—,"

"Bed." Laura demanded, and without any further instruction, they collapsed onto the sheets. Sleep took Carmilla the second her head hit the pillow.

The gang didn't do much once everyone woke up; Lafontaine and Perry went out for a grocery run because the other two parties were incapable of doing anything strenuous. The final sign was looming among Danny and Kirsch, ready to slap both lovebirds in the face at any given moment. Within the next several hours or day their world was about to be changed forever.

Laura, meanwhile, was dealing with morning sickness, unable to eat any of the foods that Carmilla provided for her.
The house was quiet, as if they were all secured in a tiny pocket of the universe. No wars, pain, or hatred existed here. Just happiness.

The raven-haired woman desperately tried to go back to sleep, but she felt well rested; it would be a pointless battle to fight. She quickly checked the time on her phone, and it read 8:30 pm. Lafontaine and Perry must be back by now with the groceries, or they were here briefly and then decided to go out to eat.

Carmilla yawned and turned over to Laura, who was fast asleep. She had her hands draped over her belly, a habit she picked up on lately. It was adorable, how much she loved their tiny human already even though it was barely the size of a peanut.

"I'm going for a walk, little one," She whispered to her belly, "Take care of mommy while I'm gone, okay?"

Stretching, Carmilla lifted herself from the bed and decided to go for a walk in the house. Despite her gloomy disposition about the world all those years ago, she did have happy memories here. It was a haven, for her younger self. Lilita didn't ask her any questions about school or if she made new friends. Mattie didn't badger her to make crafts or play silly games. She would spend hours on the patio just reading her favorite books, for the umpteenth time.

It suddenly hit Carmilla that everything had now come full circle. Here she is, at twenty-two years old, with a loving soulmate and a child on the way. She was now happy, living life to the fullest and picking which battles to fight. She has a family, and a loving group of friends who dropped every plan they had for the summer to make new memories here.

Damn.

How did she get so lucky?

A sniffle broke her thoughts, as she turned a corner and saw Danny with her head in her hands, mumbling to herself. She was hunched over the sink in the kitchen.

"You alright, big red?" She asked gently, knowing the tall woman's emotions were a mess right now.

"Wouldn't you like to know."

"Um. Because I'm your friend and I care about you? Where's Kirsch?"

Danny slumped her shoulders, "We got into a stupid argument, and… he's cooling off. Taking a shower."

"Danny. Take a couple of breaths for me, okay?" Carmilla soothes, mimicking her, "In a few hours, this all will be over with."

Danny winces, clutching at her chest, "Did it hurt this much when you went through the final sign?"

"Yeah, babe. Hurt like a bitch. But I promise, it'll be worth seeing your soulmates memories through their eyes. Come on, let's walk and talk," She replies, taking Danny's hand. The tall red-haired woman reluctantly agreed. They exited the backdoor and walked out into their own private beach, the waves crashing against the shore at high tide. They were quiet for a moment, until Danny sniffled, and Carmilla squeezed her hand, "What's got you all worked up?"

"It's just… it's really stupid."
"Feelings are never stupid, sweetheart. Bottling them up is."

"I just… it's just…" Danny drew out a breath, "Everything is happening so fast. We're all… we're all growing up, Carm. Hell. Look at you and Laura. Ten months ago, you both were struggling college students unsure of when you would see the light of day and now you're both just… so mature, and in love, and… starting your future. Lafontaine and Perry are moving into their own home, Kirsch and I are joining the workforce… I'm just so overwhelmed with knowing that we're no longer kids and we have to act like adults now," She sighs, "Adults who have to own up to our past mistakes and learn from them."

"…is this about your parents?" Carmilla asked quietly, and Danny nods.

"They married young. Younger than we were, and… had me out of wedlock. Their relationship was rocky to begin with because my dad was a sociopath and got himself into all sorts of trouble. Even though they were soulmates, they weren't meant to… fall in love. Yes, their souls were bonded with each other, but their hearts were not on the same wavelength. I didn't know what a solid relationship looked like until I saw you and Laura…" She admits quietly, shaking her head, "And fuck, was I envious." She shook her head, "My parents stayed together all those years to take care of me and my other siblings, just for the sake that they were soulmates. It was more of a business relationship than anything else. When I finally had the opportunity to go to Silas, is it… bad that I desperately wanted to leave them alone? That this was my one ticket out, and I took it without looking back? I-I know they gave birth to me and tried to love me, b-but now that I think about it, I-I don't know who they are anymore!"

"Whoa, hey, sweetheart," Carmilla said, alarmed at her shriek, Danny was crying now.

"What if my relationship with Kirsch turns into… into that mess? I don't know if I could face him or you guys if w-we didn't get our soul marks tonight!"

Carmilla stepped in front of Danny, taking her arms tightly, "You. Listen. To. Me," she hissed, "You are not your parents. Father Time and Mother Earth never make a mistake. You weren't a mistake. Yes, they were never meant to fall in love, but does that mean you'll fall in the same footsteps? Riddle me this, ginger giant. Do you love Kirsch?" Danny gave her a weak nod, "Do you see yourself within the next five or ten years with a large family, a white picket fence, and growing old with him? Does the thought of making him smile or making love to him fill you with joy?" Danny's lip quivered, but she nods nonetheless. "Then you will get your soul mark tonight. Your love for Kirsch is pure and valid and reciprocated. I see the way that boy looks at you, dear. Honestly, it's like looking at a mirror."

"It's the way you look at Laura." Danny said with a giggle, and Carmilla smiled.

"Right. Because if she ever needs anything, I swear I'll move the sun and the stars for her, after what that girl has been through," Carmilla sighs, "The hardest part is not receiving the marks. Or the painful seconds that await it. I realize now, why we are all blessed to live on this Earth. When you love someone—truly, unconditionally love someone—the greatest gift is sharing their pain with you. Reliving their life. Going through their struggles. Achieving a deeper level of understanding than any human is blessed to have. It's a sense of… relief, almost. You trust them not only with your heart and mind, but with your soul—the most powerful essence of life—and it's an unbreakable bond. It's not to be feared or intimidated by. Having your soul shared by someone else who loves you just as unconditionally is something to be celebrated. Out of all the seven billion people on this planet Earth, you and Kirsch are bonded for life," Carmilla took a deep breath, tears glistening in her eyes, "Every day I thank my lucky stars and bless them because I'm so grateful for the life I live now. No longer do I feel sad, worthless, or angry. I have a soulmate who reminds me every day that I am worth it,
that I am precious and that she loves me," She shook her head, the tears coming down her face like waterfalls, "If I had known all those years ago, that I would one day share my soul with someone as pure as Laura's, then I would have happily gone through all that pain in a heartbeat."

Sniffling, Danny pulled Carmilla into an embrace and held her tight, "You're the one who's supposed to comfort me. Now I have to comfort you."

"My, how the tables have turned," She chuckled, shaking her head, "I feel so… at peace with myself, Danny. And one day you'll be at peace with yourself, as well."

"You really think so?"

Carmilla nods, "You deserve happiness, Danny. Everyone does." She then squeezes her hand, "Give yourself a break from all the stress and anxieties of your day and just live your life. We wouldn't want to have grey hairs at thirty now, would we?"

"Thank you, Carmilla. Y-you're an amazing friend."

"As are you." She smiles, "You've come a long way from the anxious, overprotective gal I once knew. You've matured. Grown, since SJ has passed. I'm sure she's looking down on you now and is so proud of everything you've accomplished."

"… I miss her, Carm." She sniffs. "I miss her every day."

"But do you regret the things you've once said or wish that you could change the past?" Danny shook her head, "Then there's your answer."

"I love Kirsch so much," She sighs, as Carmilla wiped away a tear with her thumb, "I never… never thought I would love another person this much with my whole being."

"Are you scared?"

Danny huffed, looking at her seriously, "Yes."

"Hey," She chuckled, "That's okay."

They both took a deep breath at the same time, letting it out slowly. "Everything's going to be okay." Carmilla assured her.

They shared a hug, and stayed on the beach for a few more moments, listening to the quiet.

Then, alerting them from their reverie, came Laura's tearful shout, "Carm! Carmilla!

The raven-haired woman snapped her head to see her soulmate running towards them, "Laura? What's wrong?"

She was struggling to breathe, clutching her stomach, "I-it's Kirsch! He's hunched over in pain! I think its… I think it's starting—,"

A scream of anguish pierced through the air. Danny sped past them without a second to waste.

Carmilla held onto Laura so she could catch her breath, before they both went back to the beach house. "Oh, god, when you started screaming like that I thought something was wrong with the baby."

"I-I'm fine. I was vomiting when I heard a thump in their bedroom. He had fallen off the bed," Laura
sighs weakly, "I tried lifting him up but that didn't exactly bode well for me. Thankfully I tested Lafontaine and Perry so they'll be here any second. They were checking out the boardwalk."

Carmilla let out a sigh of relief, "Well, on the bright side at least the universe decided to give them their soul marks in the beginning of the trip so they could enjoy the rest of it."

Laura nods, "What are the chances that four mated pairs end up as best friends their senior year of college?"

"Perhaps in the grand scheme of things, we were all meant to meet each other somehow. Same as we met in several lifetimes before this one. Is that a strange thing to say?"

"No, I don't think so." She replies softly, giving Carmilla a kiss. "Come on. Let's go witness a miracle."

In her life, Carmilla never thought she'd get the chance to watch a pair of soulmates earn their tattoos, let alone receive her own. She felt like she was brought back in time, as Laura held Kirsch's hand, and she remembered that fateful night.

She knew everything would be okay. Danny and Kirsch loved each other—their relationship was meant to be forever from the beginning. It was interesting, and told a wonderful story; two souls who originally hated each other, their truths and ideals always at war. Never once seeing eye to eye. Always on opposite sides of the battlefield.

Then, like magic, something changed. The fate of the universe was suddenly speeding headfirst, into the future, with Danny struggling to hold on tight. She bottled up her emotions because she wanted everyone to see the outside of her, admire her for the strong independent woman that she became, when on the inside she struggled with reality.

Ghosts from her past haunted her and she allowed fear to rule her life.

She was slowly falling, loosing every bit of herself until Kirsch came into her life, and accepted her soul with every inch of himself. To him, it didn't matter what happened in the past. The Danny he met on the first day of freshman year was still the same Danny he fell in love with now—his soul just didn't recognize her yet.

Kirsch was a simple soul. He loved to live in the moment. He never took anything for granted. He was a good brother, a good friend. He loved Danny because she challenged him. She shined like a beacon, all bright and new and different. The more Danny pulled away, the harder Kirsch pushed into her tight bubble.

Teaching her to step out of her comfort zone. To live a little. Enjoy life, not live it under anyone else's influences. Danny invested so much time trying to fix everyone else's problems that she failed to find peace with herself.

*Perhaps that is why the gods blessed their souls,* Carmilla thought happily as she watched Danny hold onto Kirsch, kissing him with fervor, they go together like yin and yang.

Laura's eyes glistened with tears, "Danny… look! They're so pretty!"

The red-haired woman gasped as a beautiful swarm of dragonflies began to form on Kirsch's chest, and she started to cry. "Kirsch, you're doing so well, baby."

He all but grunted in response, losing consciousness again.
"It's almost like they're alive." Lafontaine whispered, in awe. "Amazing."

"Indeed." Carmilla smiles, checking the time. It was half past nine. He should be shifting through the last bit of memories. "How are you holding up there, Danny?"

"H-he's so… beautiful," Danny whimpered, caressing her soulmate's hair, "It's like I'm falling in love with him all over again. Oh, my god. This is my soulmate. I have a soulmate."

"You do, love. And he adores you so very much." Laura giggled, squeezing her hand.

We all waited in painful agony as the soul mark fully took form, and Kirsch slowly regained consciousness. He coughed, shaking his head before sitting up abruptly.

"Hunh… ugh, D-bear?"

"I'm right here, Kirsch." She sighed with relief, placing a loving kiss on their soul mark. "Shh. Don't move so much. Relax."

"Your soul… it's…" He pondered for a moment, before smiling goofily, "I know I'm not the smartest guy in the world, but there's one thing I'm sure of. Your soul is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and I'm the luckiest bro to have been blessed by it. Your soul is so red. Blazing with passion and love and loyalty for everyone. It's so powerful I was nearly swept off my feet." He then furrowed his eyebrow, "You're amazing, Danny. I love you. Every part of you."

"I-I love you too, Kirsch," She whimpered, "I'm sorry it took me so long to say that."

"Well. On the bright side, at least we have the rest of our lives together for you to remind me, right?"

That was when the tears fell, and Danny buried her face into his chest, dampening his skin with her tears.

Carmilla hummed thoughtfully. All was well in the universe.

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It took an hour for Kirsch's and Danny's soul marks to appear. They were beautiful—a cluster of dragonflies, cascading from their necks to their chests. Carmilla pointed out the dragonflies usually symbolized maturity and loyalty, something that they both have in common and value together.

Dragonflies. Lotuses. Stars. They were all precious things that meant so much to us, that now when I see these objects in real life, I admire them all with new eyes.

I let out a content sigh, placing a hand on my stomach as I cuddled up to Carmilla. She wasn't sleeping, she just had her eyes closed. The late afternoon sun draped through the lacy curtains.

"Hey." I whisper, caressing my hands in her hair. "You tired?"

"Hmm. Yes. I couldn't sleep." She rumbled, turning over to face me, "How're you feeling?"

"I'm fine, for once. I'm not nauseous or tired or hungry. I'm okay. I think bubba's finally sleeping." I giggle, gently patting my stomach.

"Theoretically, at least. Our baby's the size of a little peanut right now. The only thing they need to worry about is growing another limb or two."

"When I was a child, I always imagined that babies had their own homes inside their momma's belly.
Like, with their own lawn and white picket fence and a dog or two. It would explain why everyone's stomach became so big," Carmilla chuckled, kissing my nose, "That is, until I learned about the reproductive system in middle school and my dreams were crushed."

"Well, you know what they say, innocence is bliss," She reasoned, and then her smile widened, "I wonder what kind of person they'll be. Or who they will look like."

"In my dreams, the baby always had your hair and complexion. Gods, you both were so beautiful. If they end up having my genes, I hope some of mom's transfers over to them." I mused, propping myself on one elbow.

"Have you thought of any names yet?"

"Eileen is a family name," I whispered softly, "So if I have a little girl, I'd like to bestow that honor to her."

"Eileen Karnstein-Hollis," Carmilla replies, and moves over to kiss my stomach, "What do you think, little cupcake?" She then lifts my shirt, smiling at the bulge that's already beginning to grow, "Your little bump just makes everything even more real. It's so cute." She then proceeds to blow a raspberry, making me giggle.

"I've been thinking of names too. I was hoping we could do something related to our stars," She says, placing several kisses on my soul mark. "Like Cosmo. Leo. Orion."

"Orion," I whisper softly, my heart fluttering. "Orion Karnstein-Hollis... it's such a beautiful name, Carm."

"Yeah? I like it too," She smiles, and kisses me slowly. Smiling into the kiss, I cup my hands on her cheek and sigh.

With a burst of energy, she's suddenly on top of me, and proceeds to tickle my sides. She places light, fluttery kisses on my stomach as I screeched with laughter, not expecting this tickle-attack.

"Caaaaaarm!" I let out a wail, flapping my arms around, desperate to stop her. "Come on, I thought you wanted to—,"

She could only cackle in response. As I laughed, I couldn't help but admire how carefree and playful Carmilla is. Perhaps it was the sunny atmosphere, the waves, the summer breeze, but that beautiful smile never left Carmilla's face from the moment we got here.

She's really come such a long way.

Gods, I love her so much.

I never thought I'd feel this kind of emotion—happiness, bubbling from every cell in my body, down to my core. It was addicting. Exhilarating. Exciting.

I'll never, ever, take it for granted.

I finally got the chance to capture Carmilla's lips into mine, and she hummed in response.

"I thought you were tired, creampuff," She said with a snicker, lifting off my shirt and tossing it aside.

"Not anymore." I say, pressing my hands on her stomach. I slowly inch their way to cup her breasts.
Carmilla was about to toss my panties onto the floor when Lafontaine let out a war cry, and a string of water suddenly hit the both of us.

"Lafontaine! I told you to wait until everyone was up!" Perry utters, exasperated.

"They ARE up!" They wailed, jumping around holding a water gun.

"Really, Lafontaine? Are you five?" Carmilla snaps, releasing me and giving them the middle finger, she sneakily maneuvered to our luggage. "Two can play at that game." She pulled out a brightly colored water gun, and proceeded to charge at them.

"Carmilla!" I huff, folding my arms.

"I'm defeating the evil cockblocker so their reign of terror ends!" She shrieks, as Lafontaine runs out of the bedroom.

"My hero…" I grumble, and mumble to my stomach, "This is it. Your mommy's gone mad."

"Oh, let them have their fun." Perry chuckles, coming over to the bed and giving me a hug, "Good morning, dear."

"Who are you and what have you done with Perry?" I smile, listening to Carmilla and Lafontaine's laughter echo throughout the house.

"This vacation is all about having fun and relaxing. I've decided that this time I'm just going to… how do you say… take a chill pill, and not worry about a thing."

"That's good, Perry," I nod, hopping off the bed and staring at the mirror for a second. "It's… it's amazing how much my body has changed even after a few weeks… some nights I still can't believe it."

"You have the most ADORABLE bump already," Perry gushed, jumping up and down excitedly, nonsensical noises coming out of her mouth. "Have you decided who the godparents will be yet?"

"Perr."

"Because, well, you know Lafontaine and I would drop everything to take care of this little one."

"Perry…"

"And we'll take them out for walks, bring them to the playground, read them bed-time stories…"

"Perry!" I laugh, squeezing her shoulder.

"I just. I just love you so much, Laura, and I can't wait until the baby gets here! I've never experienced anything like this!"

"How do you think I feel?" I reply, and I give her a wink, "And who says the baby can't have more than one godmother?" She let out a squeal, engulfing me in another hug.

We would have stayed in our happy bubble for a few moments, had it not been for Danny's yelp in the next room. Oh dear. This was getting out of hand.

My eyes widened as we hurried down the hall, to see Carmilla and Lafontaine squirting water at the two recently bonded soulmates.
Poor Kirsch looked like a drenched dog.

"Oh, come on!"

Lafontaine and Carmilla snickered, ready to hit them with another wave of water, when I angrily cleared my throat and got in between them, "Really, is this necessary? Danny and Kirsch would like their privacy. Imagine if they did this to us after we recently bonded and wanted some this moment to themselves! Could you take this outside where there's not a risk of anything breaking or someone getting hurt?"

Carmilla grimaces, sheepishly rubbing her neck, "Yes, dear."

"Now. Apologize."

"I—wh—Lafontaine started it!"

"I don't care who started it, I'm ending it!"

"Damn, preggo," Kirsch mumbled in shock.

Carmilla rolled her eyes, "I'm sorry, guys." She then elbowed Lafontaine.

"Oof! Ugh. Yeah, I'm sorry too."

There was an awkward pause before Carmilla tries to use her water gun, "Ah, damn. I'm out of ammo." She smirked, "Race ya to the water hose!"

I giggled softly, once again admiring how playful she is. It's nice that she now has the chance to behave like a child, soaking in the innocence that she missed out on all those years ago.

"Well. So much for a relaxing morning…" Danny grumbled, and I went over to hug her.

"I'm not sorry about that. This is the first time I'm seeing Carm so relaxed and enjoying herself… she deserves it. But I do know that she shouldn't have barged in on you both. Perry and I are going to make breakfast. What do you want?"

"Ooh! Pancakes, please!" Kirsch exclaimed, "With a healthy dollop of Nutella, bananas, strawberries…" We all stared at him, "What? I'm a growing boy."

"That you are, Kirsch. Never change," I giggle, giving them both kisses on their cheeks, "It'll take us about a half hour. You decide whether you want to eat in here or in the kitchen."

"Okay. Thanks, sis." Danny eased, regarding me with a loving expression.

Sis. Danny thinks of me as her sister.

I smile back at her, tears glistening in my eyes. Memories of all those months ago raced in my mind, days when we were both sad and struggling to face another day. Days when we were so desperate we wished that we were each other's soulmate.

I am so grateful to have her in my life. Now I know how to love her, and it's wonderful.

"I'll give you extra strawberries just for calling me that." I winked, hugging her tight.

She laughed. Kirsch looked disgruntled.
"Alright, alright. The pancakes aren't going to cook themselves!"

The rest of the afternoon went by with no further calamities, as we left Danny and Kirsch alone to recuperate. After eating our breakfast, Lafontaine and Perry showed Carmilla and I the places they explored yesterday. Turns out this side of the bay was filled with nightlife, clubs, and places to hang out and meet new people. There was one long boardwalk strip with a carnival that resides all year round, attracting people from all over the world.

Danny and Kirsch felt well enough to visit us later that evening down on the beach, and all six of us laid out our blankets to enjoy the view.

As we all trudged back to the beach house, our tummies full and our hearts content, Carmilla pulled me aside. "Hey. May we try something new?"

She looked nervous. Her eyebrows were furrowed and she picked at her fingernails, "Of course, Carm. What?"

"Go skinny dipping with me."

I blink. "Now?"

She let out a breath, "Please say yes before I throw up."

"Okay. But… may I ask why?"

"B-because, I… I'm going to be wearing a bikini tomorrow and show off my scars. They haven't… they haven't seen my scars yet and I'm frightened of their response."

"Carmilla," I reply softly, taking my hands in hers, "Danny, Kirsch, Lafontaine, and Perry all love you so very much. They wouldn't care about your scars. They love you for the person that you are. It wouldn't matter to them." I smile, "But if it'll make you feel more comfortable in your own skin, we'll do this."

She hummed with agreement, giving me a languid kiss.

We made sure that our friends had in fact walked into the beach house and all the lights were off. We turned around, making our way back to the private beach.

We went by the rocks, before Carmilla stopped. Blushing, she turned her back towards me. "D-don't look."

"It's nothing I haven't seen before, I tell myself, but comply. I take my clothes off as well.

I peek to make sure Carmilla's finished changing and she lets out a low, nervous breath. Underneath the light of the moon I can see every imperfection so clearly.

And I fall in love.

I let her move into the water first. She wades in the shallow area, letting it rest just above her hips. She's directly within the moonlight's reflection, and I can't help but notice as our soul mark practically comes to life. The constellations like Orion and Leo seem to dance on her skin to the beat of the universe. I feel the tingling sensation in my own skin, and I realize that mine are too.

I've seen Carmilla vulnerable many times. The night we first met. When she told me her whole life; the night of our marking. But this is vulnerability of a different kind. Here, it's as if I'm seeing into
her soul. All her worries, her anxieties, have left her heart and she's trusting them with me. She's bequeathing to me all earthly cares.

I hold them, keeping them safe in a locket in my heart.

Words can no longer describe the love that we have for one another.

It is as infinite and boundless as the sea.

Our bodies our merely a vessel to contain it.

Time is an illusion.

But not love.

I allow the water to glide my way towards her, wrapping her in a tight embrace. I've found my happy medium; her, me, and our little baby.

I press my lips to her skin, kissing every scar on her back. Talking to them. Telling them all how much I love them. Because they're apart of Carmilla.


They know her better than I ever will.

Carmilla's eyes are gentle. She turns around, and allows me to do the same thing to her stomach, her wrists, her chest. She wraps her arms around my waist and places her forehead against mine.

Her lips curl into a smile, "Do you see me?"

I gape at her. We haven't said that to each other in a long while. It was a beloved mantra that helped us get through the days post SJ's passing. We asked if we saw each other because it was a miracle that we were even together. I only had my imagination to go by when we were writing each other letters.

Now I don't need to rely on maybe's or some-day's.

She's mine for all eternity.

"I see you."

Nothing more needs to be said.

Gently caressing my fingers on her breasts, I grind my hips onto hers. She lets out a gentle moan and buries her face into my neck, her nails digging into my skin. It still amazed me how I could make her undone with one simple movement.

"Please." She whispered, her voice laced with neediness.

I brought my lips to her nipples, kissing them. Sucking them. Giving them the same treatment I will soon give her clit.

I then traced my lips up from her chest and onto her soul mark, tasting the very fabric of the cosmos. The light of the moon seemed to waltz in a fantastic display around us, cloaking us in a blanket of protection.
It was… celestial.

Suddenly it no longer mattered what happened yesterday. Or today. Or what will soon come tomorrow.

Carmilla bemoaned my name and pressed her lips against mine, kissing me as if it were her last. Drinking me up like it was her unlawful addition.

I felt her come, the action burning me to my core and engraved in my heart. She grinded her hips against my fingers, telling me which way to go without words.

And then, time snapped back into place like an elastic band.

Everything was still.

She came back for me.

A little snort escaped my lips. Then, a hiccup. And soon I realized tears were falling down my face as I laughed, overwhelmed with the sheer intensity of what took place.

Star-struck.

Carmilla was doing the same, giving me playful kisses on my cheeks, before finding my lips. Once she caught her breath, she then cupped my cheeks in her hands and wiped away my tears with her thumb. She then traced every single crevasse of my face, mapping it out so she would never forget. "You're here. You're really here." She said just above a whisper.

"Silly," I mumble, giving her a loving kiss, and placed my hand on her soul mark. "I've always been here."

Where I was always meant to be.

"Mine." Carmilla whispers, tears still glistening in her eyes.

"Yours." I reply.

She then places her hands on my stomach underneath the water, taking my hands with hers.

"Ours." We say together.

From the corner of my eye, I swore the Moon smiled at us.

Chapter End Notes

please help save net neutrality. im freaking out about this. i've done everything i could. spread the word if that's all you can do. we still have hope to hold onto.
It's a year since Carmilla and Laura's souls fell in love. A year since they began writing letters. A year when they were both tired, sad, and lonely. Now, here they are, happy and in love, ready to welcome a new tiny human into the world.

"Are you sure you don't want any help?" I ask wearily, placing a hand on my stomach. I wished I had the energy to help Carmilla and my friends move things into our new home. But I had come down with a cold because of the changing weather, and I often felt so tired and sore. I'm eighteen weeks (four months), and I already have a belly because of my shortened height. I'm excited because our last doctors visit mentioned I would begin to feel movements, but I haven't felt any flutters as of late.

Just that I want to sleep every day.

"No, love. You're sick. We're almost done, go relax on the couch, okay?" Carmilla urges, giving me a hug.

"But I haven't done anything." I sniff, tears welling in my eyes, "And I feel so bad and you guys are all working so hard—," My sentence is cut off with a sneeze.

"Laura, of course you've helped. You're the one who picked out the house and made the down payment. Also, all the interior design choices were your ideas. We're just doing the heavy lifting."

"I just… I just don't like feeling so useless."

"I know sweetheart, give us a few hours. Then we'll have a house. You just rest until then."

I buried my face into her neck, "I-I've missed you all day. I'm sorry I'm being so needy."

"I know, I know. I've missed you too, darling."

"Yo! Karnstein! Where do you want this sign?" Lafontaine asked, poking their head in the doorway; their expression softened when they saw me, "Hey. Are you okay, frosh?"

I smile weakly at them, "I'm fine. I'm just out of sorts because of the baby."

"Aw. Oh! Hey! The nursery is finished! Do you want to check that room out?"
I clasp my hands together, "You're the best, Renny!"

Lafontaine blushes, giving me a happy smile.

Carmilla gave me a languid kiss, "Go rest, okay?"

Reluctant to let her go, I followed them out of the office room and walked up the stairs. We found a lovely plot of land that was still close to the campus and was a perfect starter home. Three bedrooms, two and a half bath Tudor style wood. If we ever wanted to do home renovations we had a large backyard to expand and mess around with, complete with a swing set and patio. I fell in love with it the moment we pulled up.

It was bigger than my old family home that dad still lives in, but it still had that rustic charm that I adored. Carmilla liked that she finally had an entire room dedicated to her books and music. It's equivalent to a man cave, but much more sophisticated.

Her personal oasis.

I smiled at the animal stickers adorning the colorful door and stepped in, gasping in delight. The nursery was beautiful. Accented blues, purples, and greens made up the walls, with more neon colors making their way to the furniture. A large green dresser sat in the corner, besides a crib, and there was a large window with a furry blue ottoman resting underneath it. I peeked into the closet, smiling as it was already filled to the brim with baby clothes, toys, and all the necessities we've shopped for weeks prior. The floor was hard wood, but a soft fuzzy rug with star patterns (in lieu of our soul marks) was in the center. I could just picture playing with our little baby on this rug, making them smile and laugh and creating memories. On the dresser was pictures of Carmilla and I.

It was still hard to believe that any of this was real.

I let out a deep sigh and sat on the ottoman, leaning my head back.

I must have dozed off because when my eyes snapped open again, it was dark out and raining heavily. Upon hearing the thunder clash, I also heard another sound downstairs.

The sound of something breaking. Glass.

Panicked, I shot up and hurried down the stairs to inspect the damage.

The movers seemed to have left and it was just Carmilla, Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Kirsch in the living space. I didn't stop to appreciate how beautiful the house looked because I was too focused on the crime scene.

I couldn't help the screech that escaped my mouth.

"L-Laura, it's not what it looks like!" Kirsch said in a panic.

"WHO DID THIS?!"

"Cupcake. Please, we're all so tired—,"

"That mug was a gift from my mother and you carelessly dropped it!" I exclaimed, tears glistening in my eyes.

"Lau, honey, it wasn't on purpose—," Perry tries.

"It was my favorite TARDIS mug!" I sniffed, hands shaking as I desperately tried to push past
Our friends guiltily regarded one another, their shoulders sagging in defeat.

Danny let out a groan and picked up the broken pieces, placing them on the counter top. "Laura. Seriously. This is an easy fix. Stop being a little brat—it was just an accident and we're sorry."

"Stupid butt face," I grumbled, as the tension in the room disappeared.

"Yeah, real mature, coming from the girl who's going to be a mommy," She chuckled, "Do you accept my apology?"

I mumbled a response softly, unable to look at her.

"Sorry. What was that?"

"Ugh! You're forgiven."

My soulmate hummed thoughtfully and gave our friends a grateful smile, "Thank you all for your help today. We'll meet up tomorrow to celebrate."

"Or when the two of you are done christening the house," Lafontaine said with a wink. Perry gave them a disgruntled look. Kirsch laughed.

"We'll keep in touch."

Seconds later they all hurried out, leaving us by ourselves.

"Alone at last," Carmilla said happily, and then smiled at me in bewilderment, "Laura, why are you still crying?"

"I-I don't know!" I blubbered, wiping my nose, "I feel gross, my feet hurt, I'm tired, and your son is making me devour everything in sight. I'm so hungry."

"My son?" She eased, placing a hand on my stomach, "You're pretty serious about that, huh?"

"It's a mother's instinct," I grumble, "Every time I think of the dream now, our baby's features start to become more masculine. I swear we're having a boy."

"Well, we won't know for sure until your next appointment, when we get to see this little bugger again. Do you want to know early on or do you want to keep it a surprise?"

"No. I want to know now—so I can win this stupid bet," I say, wiping my eyes and turning to my broken TARDIS mug, "... I overreacted with that, didn't I?"

"Just a smidge," She replies, "But we all understand. Your body is growing along with the baby; it would make sense your emotions would be all out of whack as well."

I sigh into her shoulder. I feel bad. Really bad. Sometimes I don't even know I'm acting out until it's too late. One moment I'm crying and the next I'm ready to bite someone's head off.

I was fine on our summer vacation trip, we all enjoyed the beach and made new memories on the boardwalk and relaxed in the sun. Carmilla faced her fears by showing off her scars and no one batted an eyelash. As each day passed on my appetite grew, as did my belly. It was now visible enough that I can't wear a baggy shirt to hide the bump. I can't fit into my old clothes anymore.
There was a clap of thunder and I jump, tightening my grip around Carmilla. She kisses my hair, and we made our way over to the large window.

"Do you know what day it is?" Her voice rumbled through our home.

"September 19th, 2017—a year post the night you first sang to me." I reply, voice thick with emotion, "How ironic is it that we've moved in on the night your soul found mine?"

"Oh, that explains a lot," Carmilla says, and I playfully shove her. "You wanted nothing more than to cuddle with me in bed all day and let all the movers to the work, hmm?"

I nod shamelessly, "I'm sorry. I should have communicated that instead of bottling up my emotions."

"It's fine, cupcake. We're here together, aren't we?"

I smile at her and turn to the digital clock on the stove, and gasp. "It's eleven-eleven. That was the time I made the last origami star. It was... raining just like tonight."

Her eyes filled with tears, as she stared at the precious jar we had out on the living room table. It was glowing with its own magical light. Unbreakable. Endless.

"Hmm. Come to think of it, I never did finish that song."

"Oh, please," I reply, smiling, "Sing for us."

"Hopefully if I do, I'll get to feel him," She then took a step away from me, "Would you care for a waltz?"

"Such a gentlewoman." I curtsied, taking her hand.

Her soothing voice sent ripples of emotions through my soul.

> Look at the stars
> Look how they shine for you
> And everything you do
> Yeah, they were all yellow

She twirled me around. I had a flash of a memory where, all those months ago, of a time where I was sad and lonely.

> I came along
> I wrote a song for you
> And all the things you do
> And it was called Yellow
> So, then I took my turn
> Oh, what a thing to have done
> And it was all yellow
I leaned my head on her shoulder, my other hand on my belly. And it was in that moment I finally felt the tiniest of flutters, and I gasped in delight.

Your skin

Oh, yeah, your skin and bones

Turn into something beautiful

Do you know

You know I love you so?

You know I love you so?

I peered up at Carm with a tearful expression, and she swallowed thickly. She got down on her knees, wrapping her arms around my waist and placed her head on my belly.

I swam across

I jumped across for you

Oh, what a thing to do

'Cos you were all yellow

I drew a line

I drew a line for you

Oh, what a thing to do

And it was all yellow

It was here that the lyrics truly resonated with me. I never imagined I’d have a soulmate. Or become a mother. Now that I have both desires I never thought I’d long for, I love them so much and I couldn’t be happier.

I owe so much to Carmilla.

My heart.

My soul.

And now, our baby.

There was another gentle flutter, and Carmilla began to press kisses where she felt them in between lyrics.

And your skin

Oh, yeah, your skin and bones

Turn into something beautiful
Do you know
For you I'd bleed myself dry?
For you I'd bleed myself dry?

Here, I'm sure she's referring to me, but she could also be talking about our baby. I'd do the same. I'd do anything for them.

It's true
Look how they shine for you
Look how they shine for you
Look how they shine for

She smiled at me, tears cascading down her face.

Look at the stars
Look how they shine for you
And all the things that you do

"Oh, Carm," I manage weakly, wiping away the tears from my eyes, "They love the sound of your voice."

"I can feel them," She whimpered, kissing my bump again, "It's like little... butterflies, swarming about in here. Yes. Hello. I'm your momma."

"They heard you. I feel it in my soul that they did," I sputtered out a giggle, "They're like doing summersaults right now. They won't stop moving. My precious boy. We love you so much."

Carmilla cooed to my stomach once more before standing upright, and pulling me in for a passionate kiss. "What happened next, Laura?"

"We've recited our story a million times, Carm."

"And we'll recite it a million times more. I'll never tire of hearing it," She places a hand on my belly, caressing it, "Our baby doesn't know about the letters his mommies wrote to each other."

"Where did you put them?"

"I laminated every one of them, they're in a binder." She quickly disappeared to her office across the hall, and came back holding a large black binder. She then led me to the couch, propping me on her lap with her hands wrapped comfortably on my stomach. "You read the first one." She murmured to my neck.

"Dear friend, thank you. I'm not sure if you play the guitar often, but this was the first night I've heard you. I loved your cover of Coldplay's Yellow. I was having trouble falling asleep and your soothing voice helped. Who were you singing for? Love, L." I swallowed the lump in my throat, remembering how that was the first good night of sleep I've had in years. I felt a flutter, and Carmilla's smile grew wider.
"This was the first letter your mommy ever wrote to me, little cupcake." She whispered gently to our baby.

"Here's yours," I say, tracing my fingers against her bold hand writing.

"I wasn't expecting anyone to be listening, cutie. This is a surprise. You're welcome; I'm glad I helped you somewhat. Some nights I just like to sit on the terrace and look at the stars. It's comforting. Thinking of the lives we've led. The people we've been. Nothing to that light. It's refreshing to know that there is someone looking at the same sky as you are, in the same moment of peace. In theory, I'm singing for my soulmate, having hopes that they are near. Listening. Wishing. Waiting. I hope that today will be better for you. Do you have a song request? —C."

"Your theory was correct. I was near. I just didn't realize until later. From then on, even though you weren't physically with me… I felt so at peace. Knowing that someone had noticed me was enough to wake up and face another day." I weakly manage, tears falling down my cheeks, "Your voice was the only thing that kept me going when my soul felt so tired and weak."

"As did yours," Carmilla assured, peppering kisses on my cheek and wiping away my tears, "Had it not been for you, I'd be in the heavens with your mother. Knowing that I would one day meet the gorgeous soul in my dreams was more than enough," She then whispered, "Love. Eros. Philia. Agape. Words alone can no longer satisfy my affections for you. In every universe, we'll always find each other, because you're the sun to my darkness. The missing piece to my soul. The number of stars in our sky do not compare to the ones in your eyes," I could barely contain my emotions now, as she held me, whispering loving words. "Every day I bless the Moon for bringing you both to me."

I gently caress my belly, overwhelmed by how time had come full circle.

It's been a year.

Feels like it's been thousands.

Once Carmilla and I cried ourselves out, we continue reading each other the letters, until I fall asleep in her arms.

00000

Carmilla blinked, heart launched into her throat. She stared at the email before her open-mouthed, tears glistening in her eyes.

Ms. Karnstein,

We are pleased to inform you that we are greatly intrigued by your resume and your achievements at Silas University. We are in fact looking for a music teacher to fill in for the new year. With your musical talents and experience with children, you are the perfect fit. Please let us know what day you're available to come in for an interview.

Kindest Regards,

Mrs. Cochrane, Principal of Sunnyside Elementary School

Bless her mother for having the greatest connections. At the centennial anniversary party those months ago, she had personally met Mrs. Cochrane and struck up a good repour with the elderly woman. She mentioned that she was a senior and wasn't sure where she would end up in life career wise, but she wanted it to be involved with music. Her gigs at Platinum Graz could only sustain them for so long.
This only solidified her feelings of growing up, and becoming an adult. Everything felt so real now. Letting out a happy shriek, she sent back a reply.

Mrs. Cochrane,

Thank you for reaching out. I am pleased to hear that you've been keeping me in mind. I am a little busy right now because my fiancée and I are preparing a wedding, along with prepping our home for a baby, so I cannot meet this month. But keep a spot open for me in late October, once everything has calmed down. My mother sends her love.

Cheers,

Carmilla Karnstein

Carmilla leaned back in her chair, letting out a breath she didn't realize she was holding.

This was amazing. Everything was finally falling into place.

She wiped her eyes and got up from her office chair, listening to the music that echoed through the house. It was a song that Laura was obsessed with now—and one that Carmilla despised with every fiber of her being because she played it so much.

She was still dressed in her pajama bottoms even though it was midday, though she didn't wear a top, just a bra, showing off her belly.

It was so adorable she just decided to lean against the fridge and watch as Laura was in her own little world. She spun around facing Carmilla now, and she let out a shriek. Carmilla laughed as she held her, placing her hands on her belly. Their baby was just in the womb and they already loved music so much just like their momma. They wouldn't stop moving around.

"Uh. How long were you standing there for?"

"Oh, a solid three minutes," She winked, "Leave the singing to me next time."

"I was in the mood and he loves music regardless," Laura pouts, caressing her belly. She then giggled, "But you're right, he's a lot more active when he hears your voice."

"They're just in the womb and they're already picking favorites," She chuckles, placing several kisses where she felt the baby move again. "Were you baking cookies?"

"Yeah! Celebratory cookies, because I know you'll be getting the response back from Mrs. Cochrane today," At Carmilla's happy expression, she squealed, "No! You already heard from her? What's the verdict?"

"She wants me in for an interview, babe. Ninety percent sure I got the job," She sighed, "Goodbye, Platinum Graz."

"One chapter of your life closed, another opened. I know how attached you were to that place, hon."

"Yeah. I mean, I may have hated my boss and the people I worked with, but it was the one constant thing in my life while everything else was changing around me. It was my safe space," She shook her head, "But now that I have new responsibilities in my life, that I want to love and cherish, I need to look at everything idealistically. A job that I work four days a week in with a minimum wage of ten dollars an hour wouldn't cut it for our growing family. I want to provide a healthy, financially safe life for the both of us, where we'll never worry about what's going to be on the dinner table the
next day."

"Carm…" Laura whispers, gripping her soulmate's arms, knowing what she's talking about, "Listen to me. Look at where we are now. You are not in that place anymore. You have a real family in Mattie and Lilita—who will stop at nothing to provide for us if we're ever in trouble. Friends in Kirsch, Lafontaine, Danny, and Perry who love us and will stop the universe if we needed someone to take care of our little baby. You don't have to feel obligated to having a job just to put food on the table; it needs to be something that you love and will continue to enjoy. Do what makes you happy, Carmilla."

"I am happy," She said, "For once in my life I feel in control of it and feel so loved. Everything's happening so fast that somedays I'm still pinching myself that this is all real."

"Hey," Laura cooed, "I'm real. Heartbeat and everything." She says, taking Carmilla's hand and placing it on her heart. "I'm so proud of you, Carm."

"You're not worried about having a job of your own?"

"My main concern is this little guy, raising him, loving him. I'm grateful that Lilita offered several jobs for me, but I just don't see myself working a nine to five right now. I would be bored to death in a cubicle."

Carmilla smiled, giving her a kiss, "I love you, cupcake."

"I love you too, Carm."

She chuckled, getting on her knees and kissing Laura's belly, "And I love you the most, little one."

"Can't argue with that there."

They finished baking the cookies for the rest of the afternoon, until it was time to go for Laura's doctor's appointment.

Mattie insisted on being there when they found out the sex of the baby, claiming that it was only fair because she was the first one they told. Begrudgingly, Carmilla decided to drag her along.

"My bets are on a girl." She said with excitement, clapping her hands as she piled into the car.

Carmilla let out a chuckle, "Oh, good luck winning that argument with Laura."

"What? You want a stinky boy?" She said in jest.

Laura narrowed her eyes at her future sister-in-law, "I am having a boy and his name will be Orion Cosmo Karnstein-Hollis! End of story."

"Mother's instinct, by the way. If you want to bet your life on that, be my guest." Carmilla chuckled. She took Laura's hands as she drove down the road, bringing it to her lips. She often got anxious while driving, so holding onto Laura's hand helped her nerves. "I personally don't care. I just want them to be here already."

"I second that." Laura quips, cueing everyone in knowing laughter.

"This is going to be a new experience for me. I've never seen an ultrasound before." Mattie murmurs, and Laura turns to smile at her.

"Me neither, until now. The Hollis's are a small clan so I never got to experience the joys of getting
excited over a new little cousin. Since mom passed, everyone just kind of… split apart from us. We haven't heard from our intermediate family since."

"Blood doesn't always make family, dear," Mattie chimes, giving her shoulder a squeeze, "You've gained a new sister in me."

"And a new mom. Lilita loves you as if you were her own," Carmilla adds, noticing how tears were glistening in Laura's eyes. "Aw, cutie."

"Happy tears, Carm. I'm so happy," She giggles, lifting her shirt, "I get to see my little boy again."

"Aren't you able to predict the gender of the baby sooner? Like at twelve weeks?"

"Yes, but we were at the beach house then, remember? We preferred waiting and going to our local doctor's instead. Isn't it ironic that Natalie ends up becoming an intern nurse here?" Carmilla asked Laura, and she smiled.

"Natalie, that copycat girl who always in everybody's shadow and was joined at the hip by SJ?"

"She was in the nursing program at Silas. Graduated with her masters' degree. Good for her—she was probably hit the worst with the aftermath," Carmilla shrugs, "It's good that she has closure now."

She pulled into the hospital's parking lot, "Alright gang, we're here."

"Laura! Carmilla!" Natalie exclaimed, smiling in greeting as they walked in. As Laura hugged her, Carmilla noticed how older the Chinese woman now looked. She knew very little about the relationship between her and SJ, but apparently, they were best friends since the age of three and did close to everything together. Gone was the baby face, the wide doe eyes, the innocent demeanor. She looked womanly and mature now, though there was an aura of sadness that Carmilla saw around the girl which resonated with her.

She grew a backbone.

"When I heard the news on your Instagram, I was so happy I started crying! Congratulations!"

"Well, isn't she a spunky little thing." Mattie murmured, looking flustered.

Carmilla grinned. "Youuuuu like her."

"I just met her!"

"Or maybe you didn't. I know your dreams are only just beginning, and perhaps Natalie's are too. Laura didn't mention anything about a soulmate when they hung out," She chuckled, "Come on, let me have my fun. It's not every day I see the big bad corporate wolf a flustered mess." They trailed behind the two chatting friends, and Mattie rolled her eyes. "You were totally checking out her ass!"

"Shut up, kitten."

"Bite me."

Mattie groaned and tackled her sister, nearly slamming them both against the wall. Laura gaped at them in shock.

"Are you two serious? Come on, act like adults, we're in public!"
"Fine, mom." Mattie bemoaned.

"Don't take that tone with me, young lady!"

"I am five years older than you."

"Regardless!"

Natalie giggled, causing Mattie to blush and sputter nonsensical words.

"Loser," Carmilla said between a cough, "You're soulmates."

"What?" The nurse asked in bewilderment.

"Uh. You have really pretty eyes."

"Oh. Um. Thank you?"

Carmilla slapped her head. Mostly out of shock and exasperation.

There was an awkward pause until they all stepped into Natalie's room. Carmilla held Laura's hand as she situated herself onto the bed (which was a little more difficult now that she had a bigger belly) while Mattie shyly stayed in the corner.

"Are there any questions or concerns you two have regarding the pregnancy so far?" Natalie asked as she set up her equipment.

"Nope. Everything's been good. Aside from bubba keeping me up at night with the usual cravings or feeling tired most days, the second trimester has been going smoothly."

"No morning sickness?"

"I feel nauseous sometimes, but's never to the point of vomiting."

"Good. That means everything's going smoothly. Are you beginning to feel them move around?"

"They have a good ear for music. I enjoy singing to them," Carmilla smiles, placing her other hand on Laura's belly.

Natalie smiled, though her eyes were wistful. "I'm really happy for you Lau. I know we weren't as close when we were in college and I regret that. We were both battling our own demons and I wish I could've been a better friend to you."

"You were grieving, Nat. I understand. Let's just accept that we're both different people now who can start a new relationship on a clean slate."

She nods, "Yeah. And you want to know what's selfish? I... wanted SJ all to myself. I loved her, both in a platonic and a romantic way, but I knew my feelings would never be reciprocated because she wasn't my soulmate nor was she blessed with the mark. I became obsessed with her because I feared her rejection, instead of being grateful for the relationship we had." She sighs, "Kirsch was good for her. He wasn't her soulmate, but he made her smile in a way I never could. And I'm glad that they had each other, even if it was for a little while."

"The people that touch our souls never leave us, dear," Mattie spoke up, for the first time since arriving in the room. "Never take for granted the people that are in your life. You never know when the Moon comes to throw everything out of orbit."
"Boy, do I know the feeling." Laura mumbles, making Carmilla chuckle. They share a knowing smile.

"Yeah. Thanks." Natalie blushes, before turning back to the ultrasound. It was finally becoming clearer now, and Carmilla could see that the tiny black blob had grown a few sizes.

"There he is, that's our beautiful baby, Carm." She whispered, as Natalie placed gel in a different spot.

"Oh, now everything feels so real, Laura," Carmilla then pats Laura's stomach and kisses it, "You're getting so big, little cupcake. I'm proud of you."

Natalie smiles at the couple and clears her throat, "Alright. You two might want to look at this," the screen zoomed in on the baby's gentiles, "It's a…" Laura started to cry. "It's a boy!"

"Laura, you were right!" Carmilla exclaimed, giving her a passionate kiss. "We're having a boy!"

Laura just continued to cry, happy beyond belief. Her soulmate cooed, kissing away her tears and caressing her blonde hair.

A little boy.

Orion.

As they all piled into the car, Laura was still crying, but she was in control of her breathing and mumbling words of praise to their baby.

Mattie was in the backseat, admiring the photos.

"Alright. Who are we going to call first?"

"I—want—to—call—my—," she said in between hiccups, "Daddy."

"Take it easy, Laura. Breathe. Your dad won't be able to understand if you're crying after every word." Carmilla chuckled, and Laura did what she was told. Taking several deep breaths, she blew into a tissue and calmed down. Carmilla gave her a kiss before using her cellphone to call Sherman.

He answered after the first ring.

"Hey, future-daughter-in-law. What's up, fam? (That's what the kids are saying these days, right?)."

Carmilla and Mattie laughed. "Good effort. Are you free right now by any chance?"

"I was about to head over to my shift at the garage, but my boss won't kill me if I'm late. Is everything okay?"

"I'm pregnant!" Laura blurts, causing Mattie to slap her head.

"Um. Sweetie, I already know I'm going to be a grandad. Happiest moment of my life when we found out, apart from when you were born." He says, which only made tears fill Laura's eyes all over again.

"What my fiancée means is, we found out the gender of the baby today." Carmilla chuckles. "So, our emotions are a little raw right now."

"Oh, you did! I'm so excited! Is it a boy or a girl?"
"D-daddy, we're having a boy. You're finally getting a son."

There was a pause. Then, Sherman began to cry. "Laura—,"

"Y-you finally get to play football with him, and teach him how to fish, go shopping, go hiking, and teach him how to fix a car—,"

"Laura, honey. I love you so much. I can't—I'm just so—," he then sputtered out a laugh, "I'm going to be a grandad! There were days when I worried we would never speak towards one another and now you're telling me that I have a grandson! Laura!"

"I love you too, daddy."

They talked for a little while more, before Sherman had to leave for work.

Carmilla and Mattie said their goodbyes, and Sherman ended the phone call.

It was in this moment that Carmilla truly stared at her beloved, soaking in her love. Laura rested her head back in the seat, closing her eyes to take a deep breath. She then admired her swollen belly, where her son was growing, and an overwhelming feeling of pride washed over her.

It was as if Orion had been there all along, guiding them from the very beginning. Watching over Laura. She already knew he was going to be beautiful.

She just couldn't wait to see him so she could properly thank him.

Chapter End Notes

yo who's pumped for that natlise video on Wednesday???!?! *raises hand*
Chapter Summary

Laura and Carmilla start their forever. The next chapter of their journey, one that will surely be filled with laughs, joy, and new memories, begins now. Their souls couldn't have been happier.

Chapter Notes

happy new year, creampuffs! I wanted to have this story done before 2018, but there were family matters I needed to attend to. so here we are. the final stretch. I wanted to wait until next week, partially because I don't want this to end, but after someone messaging me on anon saying they miss my fic, and that it's snowing and all my plans are cancelled today, I might as well upload. *shrugs*.

oh! also, there's a scene in this chapter inspired by a scene in The Oasis and The Island by StarlightAlien. I loved it so much I thought I'd borrow it and put my own spin, so credit goes to the author.

leave kudos and comment or whatever.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"Wise men say, only fools rush in. But I can't help falling in love with you."

Carmilla was tired.

She had been shopping with her family for wedding gowns for—she wearily checked her watch, grumbling—at least five hours now. Lafontaine and Perry were already bickering about the table placements, to what color the drapes should be at the party.

There were too many fingers in the pie, but Carmilla wouldn't have it any other way. She trusted them all, and knew they would pull themselves together. They didn't want a grand wedding, even though Lilita insisted everything will be paid for and taken care of. Carmilla still stuck by her gut and wanted to have a wedding she could afford with her and Laura's money.

They wanted to get married in the small campus chapel, which was a special place for them both. Silas was a place they both held deep in their hearts. Then, in the large dining hall, they would have the reception. This, Lilita was more than happy to accommodate for.

She wished she could see Laura, but her soulmate was on the opposite side of the store searching for her own dress with Danny and Kirsch.
Carmilla's stomach grumbled. "Can we take a lunch break?"

"No!" They both said at once, and Perry pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Carmilla. Dear. We should have had these gowns picked out a month ago."

"Well, I'm kind of busy taking care of my pregnant fiancée, and we were just moving into our new home, so my priorities are kind of skewed right now! Excuse me for being a good soulmate!"

Lafontaine grumbled, placing a hand on Perry's shoulder. "Lay off, Perr."

The curly haired woman sputtered, and if this were a cartoon, steam would be coming out of her ears.

Carmilla lulled her head, "Perry, if we had it my way, Laura and I would have eloped by now. But we're doing this for you all, because you're our family, and it's meant to be a happy day for all of us," She let out a deep sigh, "I'm sorry I'm being difficult. I just… really want to wear a suit, okay? These frilly dresses aren't cutting it for me."

"Why didn't you just say so, Carm?" Lafontaine asked in bewilderment.

"You didn't give me a chance to," Carmilla shrugged, "Besides, it's Laura's moment just as it is mine. It's always been her dream to walk down the aisle in a dress—we've already discussed this."

"I understand, Carmilla," They said, taking a deep breath. "Okay. I guess we should all have a lunch break now."

"Can't make decisions on an empty stomach." Carmilla agrees, slapping her best friend on the shoulder. From the corner of her eye, she saw Danny running over to them, huffing. "Danny? What's wrong?"

"Laura needs you." She said. "It's important."

Carmilla was gone within seconds.

"You can't see the bride in her dress before the wedding!" Perry screeched, but it fell upon deaf ears. She hurried into the changing rooms, noticing that Kirsch's face was twisted with worry.

"It's good that you're here, bro—she just started crying and wanted you."

"Thank you, Kirsch. Could you give us a minute?" He nods, patting Carmilla's shoulder before walking away. She pulled gently at the curtains, hearing the sniffles from behind, "Cupcake?"

"Carmilla…" Laura began, but she stopped herself and placed her hand on her stomach. A fresh wave of tears streamed from her face.

She looks beautiful. Her dress was pearly white, with gorgeous beads on her chest and frills at the bottom. It was adorable how her belly jutted out for all to see, the dress fitting her curves nicely. She had wanted a dress that didn't have sleeves so she could show off her soul mark. Carmilla wanted a suit that did the same.

"Wow." Carmilla managed weakly, at a loss for words.

"He loves it too. I just… felt him kick, for the first time."
"Does it hurt?" She asks, placing a hand on Laura's stomach.

"No. Just a gentle nudge, but it's much more forceful than the flutters. Right here, Carm." She said, directing Carmilla's hand to where she felt their baby.

"Hello, Orion. Doesn't mommy look so gorgeous in her dress? Oh, I wish you could see her now. She's so lovely." There was another kick. Carmilla's heart skipped a beat.

"This is the one." Laura said, smiling through her tears, "I can't wait to get married to you."

"I love you." Carmilla sighs, kissing her stomach. "I love you," she says again, standing up and kissing Laura's soul mark, "I love you." She proclaims, pressing their lips together in a passionate dance.

Laura giggled, wrapping her arms around Carmilla's neck and kissing her fiercely. She was no longer crying, but a wave of emotions coursed through her entire being with all the devotion and love for this woman.

They would have gone further, had it not been for an anxious Perry interrupting them. "Are you two serious? In the middle of the changing room? Have some dignity!"

"That's been gone for a century." Kirsch mumbled, and Danny slapped his arm.

Laura and Carmilla smiled at each other, their hearts ablaze with love. They honestly couldn't care about anything else.

It was the night before the wedding, one last night of freedom before the young souls had to face responsibility and their lives ahead. Carmilla and Laura partied separately with their respective group of friends (Lafontaine, Perry, and Mel joined Carmilla in the fine art of bar-hopping; while Laura, Kirsch, Danny, and Mattie snuck in and out of movie theatres, and gorged on pizza). They were also meant to sleep in separate houses (Laura in their new home, while Carmilla stumbled into her old room at Mama's house).

But like always, things don't usually go as planned.

Laura couldn't sleep. Orion was awake, tossing and turning in her belly. She was so overwhelmed with emotion that the last thing she remembered was sitting on her toilet, crying, and calling her soulmate to keep her company.

Carmilla grumbled, wishing she hadn't drank so much because now she had to deal with a headache the next morning. Her phone had just reached one percent when Laura was ringing it.

"Laura?" She sat up, alarmed, at the soft crying she heard from the other line.

"Please come home." She whimpered, "We miss you."

Suddenly she was no longer tired. Traditions be damned, she was missing her soulmate, and wanted to be with her son. She was too intoxicated to drive, so she just threw on a jacket and took a cab across town.

She fumbled for the keys to her home, but when they just didn't seem to open the door, she growled in frustration and decided to climb the terrace to their bedroom.

Carmilla lightly rapped her hands on the window, peering in to see where her soulmate was. "Psst. Laura!" She picked up a small pebble and threw it against the glass.
Laura jolted awake on her bed, panicked for a moment, but sighing with relief when she saw who it was. "Thank god you're back. I-I got so worried because I then realized you were drunk, and you had to get here on your own, and I could have easily driven to pick you up but I'm just so tired, and—," Carmilla cut her off with a kiss.

"You talk too much, cutie." She chuckles, and Laura rolls her eyes. She then wraps her arms around Laura's stomach, which she loved how it was beginning to harden and grew considerably within the last several days. "Momma's here and she loves you, baby."

"He was starting to get upset because you weren't here. It would have been his first night sleeping without you," Laura murmured, wiping her eyes. "I couldn't sleep. Perry's going to be so mad at us."

"We'll deal with that in the morning, love," Carmilla yawns and sleepily takes Laura's hand, "Time for bed, Mrs. Karnstein."

Laura had a dopey, love struck look on her face. "After you, Mrs. Karnstein."

When morning rolled around, their souls were both at peace, meanwhile Perry's wasn't.

"Really? Really? You two couldn't go one night without sleeping next to each other?"

Carmilla groaned and buried her head in Laura's embrace, "If we're really quiet, perhaps she'll go away."

"Ssh. Not so loud. She'll catch on to the fact that you're here." Laura giggled, giving Carmilla a kiss.

"Kinda too late for that, dudes." There was another voice—Kirsch—from the doorway.

"Hey! I've got an idea. Let's get married right now so we won't have to go through the rest of the day and we can just cuddle in bed."

"You're so wonderful and smart, oh my god. Okay." Laura paused for a moment, unable to stop her giggles. "I do."

"I do." Carmilla repeats, peppering her face with kisses.

Perry groaned, stomping over to the bed and forcibly taking the covers off. "Get. Out."

"Alright mom. I'm going. Sheesh," Carmilla grumbles, begrudgingly getting out of bed. Happy, Laura followed suit, before spinning Carmilla around and pulling her in for a passionate kiss.

"Do you see me?" Laura asks, her eyes filled with adoration. Carmilla smiles, cupping her cheek and kissing her nose.

"I see you."

"Out!" Perry screeches, pushing Carmilla out through the doorway. Danny and Laura laughed all the while.

Lilita had really outdone herself with the chapel. It looked beautiful, much more pristine from the last time they were here. Or had it always been this glamorous and Carmilla just didn't notice? Flowers were decorated on every pew, with stained glass windows letting the afternoon light shine through. It was a contrast from the foreboding, gothic exterior on the outside.

Carmilla smiled at their friends who were in the audience, people whom she would have never had the courage to talk to had it not been for Laura. Lilita was sitting in the front row; her mother was
already going through two packets of tissues. Lafontaine stood beside her, as best person, while Danny stood on the opposite, as maiden of honor. They would both make wedding speeches once the reception came along.

Betty and Elsie were on the opposite side, surrounded by a mass of Summer Society girls, and when Carmilla smiled warmly at them, they waved enthusiastically, cueing the crowd in knowing laughter.

There was just so much love in this room Carmilla's heart was about to burst.

She was so lucky.

"Hey. You don't look as nervous as I thought you'd be." The minister said with a chuckle, giving her a kind smile. He was a clean-cut, sophisticated man who knew Lilita for a long time. Carmilla often wondered if there was anything going on between the two; she wouldn't have minded, Sheridan was a sweet man. It was clear that he regarded Lilita with more fondness than what a strict business relationship should have been.

"What? You never been to a wedding where the bride knew exactly what she was getting herself into?" Carmilla asked with a chuckle, letting out a relaxed sigh.

"Well, in a sense. This is my first wedding where the couple are soulmates that have achieved their soul mark. It's… quite an honor." He admits, clasping a hand on Carmilla's shoulder, "When Lilita told me that her daughter, the same one who struggled for years was finally in love it sounded too good to be true."

"Some days I feel like I'm in a never-ending dream," Carmilla replies, "This past year has been… honestly the only year I've ever been truly alive."

"You deserve nothing but the best. It pained me that because of my business I haven't been around much, but know that I always asked about you. You were always in my thoughts."

"Thank you, Sheridan." Carmilla smiles.

As more people filed into the chapel, and the seconds ticked on by, Carmilla focused on her breathing. In and out. One, two, three, four.

Everything is going to be okay.

"I also heard that you were expecting. Congratulations. Starting parenthood early, eh?" Sheridan asked, snapping Carmilla out of her thoughts.

She laughed and nodded. "We sort of did everything backwards, but Laura wanted a baby. Everything kind of fell into place after that. It's almost as if… Orion was meant to be with us all along."

"I understand. You never know the meaning of love unless you have a child. Did you ever stop to think about how happy your life is now, because of everything you've gone through when you were younger? Happiness is resting just above your fingertips because now you have the capability and are willing to understand happiness. I truly believe in the saying, things happen for a reason, because without sadness, there wouldn't have been joy. And you deserve all the joy this world should offer. You're free now, Carmilla. Not many souls get to experience this type of freedom."

"I never take any day for granted." Carmilla replies, tears welling in her eyes.

"Good."
The choir suddenly began to sing, and the audience hushed considerably. Perry arrived first, in a gorgeous, peach colored dress, and lotuses in her hair. The wedding march played as she walked down the aisle. Carmilla smiled at Lafontaine as they had a star-struck look on their face, their mouth gaping open.

"Whipped." Carmilla snickered, elbowing them. They glared at her.

Kirsch appeared next, looking dapper in a black suit and red tie. Carmilla looked at Danny for her reaction; her face was even redder than her hair. He smiled lovingly at her and linked arms with her, giving Carmilla a thumb up. The crowd laughed at his goofiness.

Mattie came down the aisle next, a stunner in an orange gown with her hair dolled up and ready to walk down the runway. She made every jaw drop in the chapel. She was the second maiden of honor, simply because Laura didn't have the heart to give that title to Danny alone. She loved them both so much like they were her sisters.

Mel appeared after her, a little shocked as well by her beauty. Carmilla smiled when Mel broke down crying that she was going to be a bridesmaid—even though they weren't close friends, she respected Carmilla, and was honored to be a part of the wedding.

Following suit was Natalie, the last bridesmaid, and Kirsch shot a surprised glance in Carmilla's direction. She nodded slowly. Natalie deserved to be there just as everyone else did.

Then, everyone grew quiet. There were several gasps in the crowd as they all stood up, and Carmilla turned her head to see the most gorgeous woman she's ever lay her eyes on.

There she was.

Her long, golden hair hung past her shoulders and was practically a halo. She wore a veil on her face, but it did nothing to mask her beauty. Her soul shone brightly like a beacon throughout the entire chapel. Her dress hung onto her body comfortably, with her stomach jutting out for the world to see. She was standing beside her father, who had a proud look on his face.

Have you ever seen somebody so beautiful that you just wanted to cry? Well. That's what Carmilla did. She couldn't help herself.

Lafontaine squeezed her shoulders in a loving manner, while the rest of her family began to make obnoxious kissing noises and laughed kindly.

There was a pause as Carmilla struggled to control her emotions.

Laura might as well have been floating. Nothing else mattered. She grasped her hands, bringing them over to her stomach because she knew that feeling their baby calmed Carmilla.

She breathed again, letting the air out slowly. Orion kicked the palm of her hand, letting her know that yes, this was a miracle, and yes, he knew he was loved.

Carmilla let out a content sigh as she rests their foreheads together, soaking in her love.

No words needed to be spoken.

They were at peace.

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"Wait! Stop!" Perry exclaimed, as Betty took her hands away like she was touching hot coal. "She's perfect."

I internally sighed with relief. We had all been doing make-up for two hours straight, which was the longest time I've ever spent looking in front of a mirror. It would have been shorter if I hadn't kept on getting up to use the bathroom. Orion was sitting right on top of my bladder.

"Laura," Natalie said, her voice thick with emotion, "You're beautiful."

I sucked in a breath, really looking at myself in the mirror. I never in my life took so much time or effort in my appearance. Coating my face in make-up just never appealed to me. It wasn't that I liked the way I looked, it was more… I focused so much time on being sad and hating everything that was in my life I realized I just didn't care. Nobody gave in the effort to reach out to me, so why should I bother?

I wasn't… super-model pretty. Just average.

That is, until Carmilla. Carmilla loved my soul for what it is—with every fiber of her being. She accepted me on my worst days, and on my best days, she praised Mother Earth for blessing us. It was because of Carmilla's appreciation for my soul I decided to take better care in my appearance, and I ultimately ended up feeling better about myself.

My eyes widened in surprise at the beautiful woman staring back at me.

That was… that was _me_?

Orion kicked my side forcefully, as if he was saying, "yes, mommy, you're beautiful and I love you."

"Ack! Oh, no, please don't cry. You're going to ruin your make-up," Natalie stressed, taking a cloth and dabbing my cheeks.

"I-I'm sorry," I whimpered, hiccupping, "I just spent most of my life hating my body and my soul until Carmilla came into my life. I-I never really appreciated myself for the person that I am until recently. I'm emotional."

"You've got nothing to apologize for, Laura," Perry giggled, giving me a hug. "No matter how far we've come in life, we're all a working progress. But know that we're all very proud of you. I'm sure Orion is especially."

"He's so excited, he hasn't stopped moving around since we got here." I reply, patting my stomach. It's easy to tell when my baby is tired, upset, or happy. I can't explain it—it's a mother's instinct.

There was a knock at the door. "Is it safe to come in now?" My dad asked jokingly, peeking through the door. He then took one look at me and started to cry as well.

Natalie rolled her eyes, "Oh. Great—now I'm crying." She said softly, and gave us some privacy.

"I'm sorry, I'm probably ruining the moment but," He huffed, shaking his head, "You look just like your mother in that dress."

"Minus the bump." I said with a giggle.

"Actually, no. She was four weeks on our wedding day with you and we didn't even know." He revealed, coming over to give me a hug, "Like mother, like daughter."
"And you never told me this because...?" I asked, giving his shoulders a squeeze.

"You never asked," My dad chuckles. "We spent most of our honeymoon in bed because your mother had a serious case of morning sickness. We couldn't send back the tickets because there would have been a two-hundred-dollar fee."

"Carm and I decided we won't go on a honeymoon. We can't risk travelling with me so late in the pregnancy, and she wants to get jump-started on her career. Perhaps once the baby is older we'll leave for a weekend to Paris."

"You know I'll fight tooth and nail to look after your little boy." He smiles, placing a hand on my stomach.

I laugh, "Oh, you'll have to wait in line. There's also Lilita, Mattie, Perry, Lafontaine… and that's not even scratching the surface."

"I'm sure grandad privileges trump any excuses those losers can come up with." He beams, and I lean into his embrace. I can just picture it now—my dad and my son having a grand time, playing sports, going fishing; it was great that Orion had a father-figure in his life when most little boys do not.

Oh, little one, you are going to be so spoiled.

A quiet, tender moment passed between us. Then my dad shook his head and sighed deeply, tears welling in his eyes.

"What's wrong?" I ask, cupping his face in my hands. It was then I realized how much he's aged. For a man who just reached sixty, his eyes were tired and he looked much older. His soul ached for his wife, but he knew he had a purpose to fulfil on this Earth, so he kept going, just for her.

"I just… I'm so sorry."

"Papa…" I worried, pulling him into a hug.

"I-I missed out on your childhood because of how much I missed your mother. I didn't get to meet all your milestones, your accomplishments in school… it's the one regret I have in life, and I'm sure Eileen will beat me for it the moment I see her in heaven. I swear I won't be the same man that I was then and make sure to be in your son's life as much as I can. I promise, okay? I'm never leaving your side like that ever again. You deserve better. Orion deserves better."

Ah, shit. There's no use stopping the tears. I'm crying now.

"I love you, Laura."

"I love you too, daddy."

Perry shrieked the moment she came back in, "It'll be fun, they said. It'll be easy, they said. It'll be a magical time, they said. Well nothing seems to be going right and Sherman, I adore you, but if you don't leave this room right now I will come after you with my hairdryer."

The old man chuckled at my friend's antics and placed a loving kiss on my forehead. "I'll meet you downstairs."

It only took a few moments to situate everything once again, before Perry checked her watch. "Right on time. Go, leave this room now before I redo your entire wardrobe. Please."
"Thank you, Perr." I say warmly, as she helped me get off the chair. I then eye the high heels warily, and flinch, "Do I have to wear those death traps?"

"Yes, they're going to complete the look. It'll only be for a few hours."

I grimace at my swollen feet, and pray for their freedom.

I then place a comforting hand on my belly, smiling when Orion gently nudged the palm of my hand.

Alright.

Let's get married.

It wasn't until I felt my dad grasp his hand in mine that I felt the nerves bubbling in my soul, and I let out a deep breath.

Okay.

"Don't let me fall, dad." I murmur, looking at him with tearful eyes.

"Never." He grunts, squeezing my hand. "I've got you both."

What happened next was something I will always remember for the rest of my life. As the crowd gasped in awe and I saw my family standing before the alter, my eyes found Carmilla's.

She was crying. Large, billowing tears cascaded down her cheeks as Lafontaine held onto her, keeping her afloat.

Love. Eros. Philia. Agape. Words can no longer describe what I feel for her. It's unquenchable—every day I'm left wanting more of her love, her touch, her soul. She's my shining star just as much as I am hers.

How fortunate are we to live in a world where our souls are bonded for life, joined in perfect unity?

She's my beloved soulmate in every sense of the word.

I'm besides her now, cupping my hand in her cheek as I wipe away her tears. She chuckles weakly, resting her forehead against mine, her hands pressed on my stomach. Suddenly it was as if we were the only two people in the room. Everyone else disappeared along with the wind.

"We are gathered here today, to celebrate the union, of Laura Eileen Hollis and Carmilla Margaret Karnstein. It is a love that transcends… all boundaries. Exceeds all expectations. War, violence, crime, do not exist in this realm. Just love. Love that was found in the stars above, and then followed their souls here, of all places. A love this pure is something that people search lifetimes for. Centuries. And yet, these two lucky souls have bonded so young, after struggling for most of their lives. The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves. If there is anything better than being loved, it is loving." He smiled at the crowd, "If anyone for any reason, wishes that these two souls should not marry, speak now or forever hold your peace."

Silence. No one dared to move. The tension in the air was palpable.

"Good," The minister chuckled, turning to Carmilla, "You may say the vows that you have prepared for your fiancée."

Carmilla let out a grunt, wiping her eyes with her knuckles, which cued everyone in knowing laughter. "Laura Eileen Hollis," She began, taking my hands in hers, "I don't want to start off this
vow so grim, but… there was a time in my life where I feared I would never see the light of day. I hated myself. I used helplessness as an excuse for all the… horrible things I did. Fear and hatred where what I’ve always known. I punished myself because I believed that I meant nothing to anyone. There was so much sadness in my soul, forged upon years of self-deprecation and anxiety. I didn’t know what… happiness was. I didn’t know what that felt like or what it did to a person. I was foolish at one point to believe that I didn’t even deserve happiness. I wish I knew then that my mission of self-destruction was not only affecting me, but… the ones I love as well,” She turns to Mattie and Lilita, smiling warmly at them, before turning back to me, "You are an angel, Laura. You swooped down, and you… you listened to my tale of woe. You didn't cast me aside or think less of me when I showed you all the scars on my body. You held me as I cried, you brought me up when I was down, and only asked for my love in return. When you kiss me, it just cracks me open and everything comes pouring out. I never know what to say or what to do besides hold you in my arms and love you forever. It was you all along, my love, that saved my soul. I think back to that night… the darkest night of my life, where the sun didn’t shine and the world was silent. But then… even in my darkest hour, you were there. Your soul consumed me, shaking me out of my dangerous mind. I dreamt of you that night, and I will continue to dream of you, even when my soul leaves this Earth,” She was crying again, and so was I. "I love you."

I closed my eyes, swallowing thickly as her words resonated deep within my soul. When I opened them again, there were soft sobs echoing throughout the chapel, and my heart ached when they were coming from Lilita. My dad hugs her tightly and wraps his arms around her shoulder.

"Carmilla Margaret Karnstein," I began, once I could find my voice. "Because of you, I know what love and happiness is, and that I am deserving of it. My soul is yours and I trust you to keep it safe even when my time has come. When my mom passed, there was a strong part of me that didn't want a soulmate. I couldn't bear to live like my father had, broken and confused without his love. For the longest time, my soul was angry and bitter because the world took the one good thing that meant the most to us. I was so nervous that loving you would be the end of me, that the moment I lost you I would suffer a fate worse than death. But… I realize now the purpose of having a soulmate. It is not to mourn the loss of them when they die, but to reflect upon the life that we had together and remind ourselves that we are blessed to even be given one. Our time on this Earth is short, but the universe makes it worthwhile by giving us something to look forward for.” I shake my head, choking back a sob, "My one regret is that I ever doubted your love, back in those days after SJ had passed. I was scared and lost and confused when I shouldn't have been. Because even though you weren't physically with me, the knowledge that someone cared enough to look at the sky, and sing my soul a lullaby was enough to encourage me to see a better tomorrow.” I took in a breath, chuckling weakly as she wiped my eyes away with her thumb, "I love you, too."

"May I have the rings?" The minister asked, nearly in tears himself. Kirsch smiled widely, holding onto the small pillow and handing it to them. He gave both girls loving kisses on their cheeks as he walked past. The audience cooed.

"I give you this ring, that you may wear it, as a symbol of the vows we have made this day. I pledge you my love, and respect, my laughter and my tears. With all that I am, I honor you." I say, taking my fumbling hands and placing the gorgeous golden band on her finger. Engraved inside was a cluster of stars, and the date our souls found each other.

Carmilla chuckled, repeating the same back to me; she brought my hand up to her lips and kissed it gently. The gentle action made me swoon.

"Do you, Carmilla, take Laura to be your partner? Do you promise to walk by her side forever, and to love, help, and encourage her in all she does? Do you promise to take time to talk with her, to listen to her, and to care for her? Will you share her laughter, and her tears, as her partner, lover, and
best friend? Do you take her as your lawfully wedded wife for now and forevermore?" The minister asked, and Carmilla was beaming.

"I do."

I sighed heavenly, as the minister repeated the words in my direction, and I stared deeply into her eyes. There was a polite cough as I must have dozed off, and I felt Carmilla squeeze my hand.

"Uh, what? Oh. Sorry," I mumble, cheeks flushing red. At least that took away the seriousness of the ceremony. The audience laughed. "I do."

"By the power of your love and commitment, and the heavenly hosts that blessed your souls to be together, I now pronounce you wife and wife. You may seal your vows with a kiss."

"Ugh. Finally!" Carmilla grumbled, and jumping a little in excitement, we both met each other halfway. Our lips tasted salty with our tears, and the roar of the crowd made our ears ring, but none of that mattered.

I've never been happier—from this day forward, I got to call Carmilla Karnstein my wife.

In one sweeping motion, she dipped me towards the ground and kissed me with suave and vigor.

I was giggling all the while, too consumed with emotion to say anything. When she hoisted me back to my feet, she wrapped her arms around my belly, peppering it with kisses.

"Your mommies are married now, little one. I can tell how excited you are. I love you so much." She whispered, and everyone's heart probably grew three sizes in that moment.

"Everything's happening so fast. I was just getting used to calling you my fiancée. Now you're my wife."

"Thinking of divorcing me yet?" Carmilla asked jokingly, as she wrapped her arms around my shoulders.

"Never. If last night's any indication, we wouldn't even last a day without each other."

"Good. Because I plan on loving you for years to come."

"I'll hold you to it."

"Is that a challenge?" She states with playful seriousness, rubbing noses with me.

"If this is, then surely I will beat you."

"Oh, game on, baby." She let out a large, happy laugh that lit up her entire face.

It was so beautiful I think I fell in love with her again, for the umpteenth time.

There was laughter behind us, as Lafontaine tapped Carmilla's shoulder, "Come on, kiddo, surely you're planning on going to the party after this? The party that we all put together for you?"

The audience chuckled amongst themselves.

"Oh. Right. That." Carmilla mumbled, and I kissed her cheek.

"We'll stay for a few hours and then leave when no one is looking." I whisper in her ear.
"I heard that!" Perry shrieked. "You're not leaving your own wedding reception!"

The main dining hall was gorgeous. The main theme was stars and space, so beautiful constellations adorned the curtains and were centerpieces on the dining tables. Our bridesmaids and entourage went first, and I was beginning to feel lightheaded as the roar of the crowd buzzed in our ears. We were meant to go last and make a grand entrance.

"Hey." Carmilla smiled at me, giving me a kiss. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I mumble, fingers brushing against my belly. "I just realized how emotionally draining this all was and now I'm tired."

"Whenever you want to hit the hay, let me know. I understand how this all could be overwhelming while carrying the little one."

"I wouldn't change anything for the world," I told her earnestly, and chuckled, "Besides, we always have the opportunity to renew our vows without any stress of planning a wedding."

"I'd like that very much, Laura," She then gave me a shy smile, "Thank you."

"For?"

"For saying all those lovely things about me."

"I meant every word, Carm."

"As did I." She smiled, and then gently leaned in to kiss my earlobe, "And I promise to fulfill those vows until my dying breath."

I swallowed thickly, emotion lodging in my throat. When she said things like that, the sincerity of her love was laced with every word and fiber of her being. Orion kicked Carmilla's other hand and momentarily distracted, I wiped away my tears as she talked to him.

"And last, but certainly not least," The emcee's voice rang through the roaring crowd, "Please welcome, the newlyweds, Carmilla and Laura Karnstein-Hollis!"

"Let's put on a show, creampuff." She said wickedly, a wide smile on her face. I managed a laugh, allowing her to pull me into the room. She bowed with a spectacular flourish, and noticing my hesitation, swooped me in for a suave kiss. I happily relaxed in her embrace, all worries gone for a moment.

Carmilla and I were separated, but only for a second, because we had to greet the guests on every side of the room.

Everyone was smiling, happy, and wishing us on a long, fulfilling marriage. Orion was loving the attention as everyone also had the same idea of rubbing my stomach like I was the Buddha or something.

"Hey, so. I need a favor," Natalie mumbles shyly, after giving me a hug.

"Alright. Shoot."

"D-do you mind… um, going over to Mattie and telling her that she looks really pretty for me?"

I raise an eyebrow at her, "Dude. Why don't you just tell her yourself?"
"B-because it's just really intimidating being within a three-foot radius of her, okay?! I feel like with just one glare she's going to zap me into the pits of hell!" She whisper-shouted over the music.

"Oh, come on, she's not all bad."

"Who's not all bad?" Carmilla said from behind, wrapping her arms around me. "Hello, my lovely wife."

I shivered at her touch, leaning into her. "Hey. Our friend here has the hots for your sister."

"I do not! Shut up!"

"Go for it, my sister needs to get off her ass and start meeting new people. Don't be so afraid because she looks like she's about to eat you."

"Honey. If this is your encouraging speech, it needs a little work." I tease, as Natalie's face considerably pales.

"Forgive me. All my pick-up lines are used on you and they're usually well-accepted."

"That's because I've become numb to your flirty advances." I snicker, and she steps away in mock-disgust.

"But you two are like, the golden couple of Silas! And she's like… so out of my league. Way beyond it. I'm never going to have a chance with her." Natalie slumped, looking defeated.

"Hey, no. Don't talk yourself down like that before you've even tried. If I know my sister, is that she appreciates the chase and the effort of someone talking to her. She's so invested in her work that she hardly has the time to go out searching for her soulmate. Give it a chance, and hey, if it doesn't work out, there's plenty of other stars in the sky."

"Alright. Okay. I got this."

"Time to girl the hell up, Nat!" I cheer, giving her shoulder a squeeze.

What happened next was beyond any of our control, but it was still hilarious.

As the Chinese woman pressured herself into moving forward across the room, she was more focused on her internal monologue that she didn't notice the server coming in her direction. He just so happened to carry some wine, which spilled all over her, and she let out an embarrassed shriek. She attempted to regain her footing as the liquid squirted to the floor, but luckily Mattie was nearby, and she boldly swooped in to rescue her.

She ended up catching the smaller girl bridal style, while the audience cheered.

They stared into each other's eyes for what seemed like forever, until tears welled in Natalie's, and she shakily grabbed hold of Mattie's arms.

It was rare that anyone ever experienced witnessing the first sign, and I knew that their souls must have been jumping for joy at this moment.

"I-I like your face!" Natalie shrieked, cheeks blushing.

Mattie chuckled, holding her close. "It's not every day a pretty girl falls into my lap. Are you okay?"

"I-I'm okay now that you're here."
"Ooh! That was smooth!" Carmilla chuckled; she then smiled at me, "What did I say? I totally called that they were soulmates. And guess what? I was right!"

"Stop flattering yourself so much. I wouldn't want your ego to burst."

"You wound me, creampuff. I thought you loved me."

I roll my eyes at her, giving her a kiss. "I promised to love you forever and always, didn't I?"

"Mmmmm." She sighs, leaning her head on my shoulder.

"Good. Now don't forget it."

A few more people came up to us, and we both snacked on a few more pastries until there was a clanging of glass. The emcee stood up, and took a microphone from the stage, "How is everyone doing tonight?" Cheers from every corner of the room, "Awesome! Now, it's time for the moment you've all been waiting for. May Mrs. and Mrs. Karnstein-Hollis please come on stage for your first dance as wife and wife?"

I chuckled, as Carmilla bows with a flourish. "May I have this dance?"

"It would be an honor, darling." I coo, giving her a courtesy, before taking her hand. The lovely, a cappella version of Can't Help Falling in Love echoed through the dining hall. I wrapped my hands around her neck as we swayed to the beat.

Wise men say only fools rush in

But I can't help falling in love with you

Shall I stay?

Would it be a sin?

If I can't help falling in love with you?

Tears were already welling in my eyes as the beautiful voices filled my soul. This song never failed to make me cry, as I remember telling Carm once that my mom used to sing this to me all the time.

This was also the song that played when I professed my love for her.

I leaned my head on her shoulder, closing my eyes, as she sang softly into my ear. Her voice harmonized wonderfully with the others.

Like a river flows, surely to the sea

Darling so it goes

Some things are meant to be

Take my hand, take my whole life too

For I can't help falling in love with you

"Hey." She says, her voice just above a whisper. I take her head in my hands as she wraps her arms around me, pulling me close. "You know, back in the day, waltzing was pretty scandalous." She
chuckled, and I appreciated that she was trying to lighten the mood.

"How was waltzing scandalous?"

"Oh, you know. Partners were face to face. Chest to chest," She smirked and twirled me around, "All that, um. Whirling," Her voice sent my hairs to stand up on end, "In 1698 it may as well have been sex."

Like a river flows surely to the sea
Darling so it goes
Some things are meant to be
Take my hand, take my whole life too
For I can't help falling in love with you

I giggle at her, as she spun me around, "Lucky for us we don't live in that timeframe," I gently trace my fingers on her cheeks, "And lucky me, because I now have a beautiful wife."

"Silly. I'm the lucky one."

"Maybe, but know who's the luckiest." I smile tearfully, staring down at my stomach. The little bump was wedged between us, but it was an adorable sight.

For I can't help falling in love… with… you…

There was silence. Our hearts beating in our chests, souls vulnerable for the world to see. I let out a loving sigh as I trace my fingers on Carmilla's face, and she pulls me in for a gentle, meaningful kiss. Nobody dared to move or say a word; they were all in awe of what they just witnessed.

Or had time itself froze?

"May I cut in?" My dad asked kindly, as the music began again, and Unforgettable by Natalie Cole and Nat King Cole played. My dad's favorite. Our guests slowly became mobile again.

"Of course," Carmilla beamed, giving me a kiss, and my dad a hug. She then went to sit by her mama, and lean her head on Lilita's shoulder, who smiled and held both of her hands. It was such a simple, delicate moment for them, but it displayed how much their relationship has improved over the last few months.

My dad was singing the words to me as well, even though he wasn't very good. It brought us both back to a time when things were simpler.

"My little pumpkin, all grown up," He chimed softly, hand resting on my stomach.

"You know I'll always be your little girl." I smile, leaning my head on his shoulder. "Hollis genes. Can't grow any further than five inches."

He chuckled. "Remember all those times you began to cry because you tried to reach into the cookie jar, and you kept on falling onto the counter?"

I roll my eyes.
"Or the time when you started a kindergarten uprising because you believed that your teacher was stealing from the candy gram fund?"

*Oh, god. This must be what an aneurism feels like.* "Daaaad," I bemoan, shaking my head.

"What? Those were both fond memories. You were my little monkey, always sticking your nose into things that you shouldn't. Climbing on trees. Making forts out of pillows. A heaping bundle of energy. In your early years, your mother and I..." He sighs, smiling wistfully. "Those were our happiest. Watching you grow, learn the ways of the world around you. I only wish that when raising Orion, yours is just as happy."

I swallowed the lump in my throat.

"I miss her, daddy. I wish she could meet him."

"I'm sure she would love him as much as I already do."

I couldn't help the tears that streamed from my eyes. Carmilla had her moment when she saw me, and now I'm having mine when I'm dancing with my father. All those years I've wasted, being sad, hating him—I swear to make it up to him now, and repair this relationship. He deserves that, and nothing but the best.

Once the song ended, and my tears were washed away, it was now Lilita's turn to dance with me. Lean on Me, by Club Nouveau, played. These songs were so fitting to the relationships I have with my family.

"You know, there are two times in my life where I've ever seen my beloved Carmilla cry," She said warmly, "The first was when I told her I was going to adopt her from that god-awful system. And the second was today," She sighed, looking distant. "I don't often talk about my husband, but... your vows today struck a chord in me. And I realize that you are right. My beloved wouldn't want me to live mourn the loss of his existence. I was blessed to have his soul because the stars above made it so. That kind of love only happens once in a lifetime, and... I look at you, and how happy you are with my Carmilla. And I know that he wouldn't have wanted me to be so devastated by his passing that I missed out on the budding relationship you have with my daughter."

"What happened to him, Lilita?" I ask tentatively, squeezing her shoulder.

"Hastur was a Navy man, my love. Got on a boat to fight in the war, and... never came back. I was young. Bitter. He died for his country, but I felt that he left me behind. You can imagine how devastated I was when I heard the news from his companions. I'm not sure what's worse; witnessing your love die and then having your soul mark removed, or not knowing what happened to your love, but knowing that their time had come to leave this Earth."

"Hastur, what a name."

"Hastur Arammu Titaan. His friends called him, Hat," She said, and I giggled. "Of course, if I dared call him that, no hugs or kisses for a week. He was eccentric, a little odd, and mysterious. But always loving."

"I'm sure if he had a way to turn back time, he'd do so he could be with you." I assure, admiring how even after all these years, her words were laced with love.

"That boy would cross countries just to be with me. His ambition reminds me of a certain someone." She smiles, and we all look at Carmilla, who was boringly picking at the centerpiece.
"I'm sure he's telling my mom and SJ great stories from his time in the navy, up in heaven."

"I wouldn't doubt that for a second. He loved to hear himself talk." She chuckled, and once the song was over, her shoulders relaxed. She seemed to have a weight lifted from her chest—she was finally at peace, as well.

The song ended. "Thank you, dearest. For listening. I don't often talk about my beloved, but… I'm glad you listened to this old woman's tale. I trusted my soul with you and you kept it safe."

"Birds of a feather, flock together." I say lamely, and she laughs. Really, heartily, laughs at my joke. The smile lit up her face and her eyes sparkled. It was glamorous, and sounded like wind chimes.

"Can I have my wife back?" Carmilla asked, smiling at her mother.

"No. I'm kidnapping her and she's all mine." Lilita teased, causing Carmilla's eyebrows to shoot up in surprise.

"You'll have to fight through an army of people to keep her for long, mama." She said, the light banter between them made my heart soar.

"I could never dare compete against you," She says, her eyes still gleaming, "Enjoy the rest of the night, my loves." Lilita gives us both kisses before leaving with a grand exit.

"Well. That was…"

"…certainly something." I laugh, leaning into her. "I love your mom."

"Yeah, she's alright." She huffs, looking off in the direction where Lilita left. "I've never seen her so playful before. I don't know how you do it. Bring out that side in even the toughest of souls."

"She was hurting, just like you were, Carm. She put up walls to protect her heart from being shattered again. All she needed was someone to love her."

"Well. That's certainly what you do best." She sighs, giving my cheek a kiss.

"I try."

"Humble and gorgeous." She hummed, and I blush. Even now, she makes me feel so weak in the knees. More guests began to filter onto the dance floor, feeling bold and finding dance partners.

It was a wonderful night. We cut the cake (well, more like I took a fistful of buttercream and shoved it in Carmilla's mouth, while she just shrugged and licked it off her face) and encouraged everyone to start having dessert. Everybody gave great speeches, that either had us all crying or in stitches. (Danny and Mattie were both arguing that there should be only ONE bridesmaid, and that shtick went on for a while). Lafontaine made us cry as they remembered how scared we both were, and inexperienced about the whole soulmates business in general. They went on to tell the crowd their story, and claimed that even though they love Perry with every fiber of their being, they have never witnessed a love as beautiful and pure as ours, and that they were honored I call them my Renny.

"I'd like to propose a toast," my dad said, raising his glass, "To my beautiful kids. Carmilla, Laura, you deserve nothing but happiness, and I pray that the Moon will always be watching over you. And to my grandson, Orion. If you're anything like my daughter—hoo, watch out. You're already in for an adventure, little buddy."

I laugh at him, tears streaming down my cheeks as Orion kicked the palm of my hand. I raised my
water, while Carmilla raised her red wine along with everybody else.

"Thanks, daddy." I say to him, once everyone is done cheering and he comes over to hug me.

"You look so tired, love. Go home and rest." He says once he stared at my face for a moment.

"But the night is still young. And I didn't finish my cake." I mumble, poking at the half-eaten, delicious fondant cake.

"Your health is more important. I would much rather have you be in bed, resting, then exerting yourself to stay awake and pass out here."

"He does have a point, cupcake." Carmilla reminds, giving me a warm smile. I always found it astonishing how she could take in her alcohol—yes, she stopped drinking two hours ago, but she was enjoying herself at the bar all night. She then leaned in and whispered to me, "I'm sure it'll be a load off Perry's shoulders if we just head out."

I wearily turned to the curly haired woman, who was having the time of her life on the dancefloor, grinding herself against a bemused Lafontaine. Who knew that when Perry got enough drinks in her, she turned into a total dancing queen?

"Okay. Two votes against one," I felt Orion nudge me, "Make that three."

"The baby won't rest until you do." She said, giving me a kiss. "Time for bed, lovey."

I let out a tired yawn, "I don't care where we end up. As long as I'm… as long as I'm sleeping."

Carmilla chuckled, "You tell me, Sherman. What's cuter than a sleepy girl?"

He thought for a moment, "Two sleepy girls."

My wife (!) gasped. "You done me in. I am shook."

He laughed and helped us head outside. I don't remember much after that, everything kind of blanked out.

But the next thing I know, we're stumbling back into our home, and I am on our bed, cuddling with my yellow pillow.

I watch sleepily as Carmilla undresses herself, and shamelessly admire my wife. I suddenly had the urge to kiss her, all tiredness forgotten—that should be me taking that suit off.

I practically leapt from our bed, fiddling with her buttons and placing wet, open mouthed kisses on her neck before I could stop myself.

"I thought you were tired, cutie?" She husks, her voice laced with desire.

"Not anymore. It's these damn hormones, turning me into a horny teenager."

"Can't say I dislike this new turn of developments."

"You wouldn't, pervert," I chuckle, and then stare at her with lustful eyes, "Make love to me, darling." I whisper, hands feeling underneath her shirt.

"Do you even need to ask at this point?"
As we tumbled into the bed sheets, skin touching skin, naked and vulnerable, we spent the rest of our wedding night with our hearts overflowing with love. I mapped out every inch of her skin, kissed every scar on her body, named every constellation on our soul mark.

Emotionally spent, we cuddled beside each other, Carmilla wide awake and I was about to lose consciousness at any given moment. She traced her fingers on my soul mark delicately, as if I were porcelain glass. The notion was enough to make me lull my head.

"Go to sleep, dear." Carmilla echoed softly, her eyes were a sky full of stars and the universe on her lips.

"I don't want to miss another moment with you." I rumble, my words coming out in a jumbled mess.

"You'll see me in the morning—and then you'll have even more moments with me. Hundreds. Thousands. Trillions."

"Good. Because my heart wouldn't be able to bear it if I couldn't."

"Neither will mine," She sighed, feeling sleepy as well. "Lau. Do you see me?"

"I see you."

From the corner of my eye, the magical jar of stars on our bedside table glistened in the moonlight, creating its own heavenly glow. It was as if each star was bursting with energy, each with its own wish, calling, or prayer. The light of the moon filled our souls and our spirits, promising us of a future of tomorrows.

As I finally drifted off to sleep, I found myself back in that dreamscape, where the stars and the sun were in the same sky. I glance about, my heart bursting with an unexplainable emotion, and I see them.

My soulmate, with her gorgeous locks of raven hair, red lips, kind eyes. And my son, with equal features, but he had a goofy smile and even chubbier cheeks.

They opened their arms to me, ready and accepting of my love.

And then everyone else was there.

SJ, my mother, Hastur.

Those whom we've lost along the way and those we've gained.

My heart the fullest it's ever been in years, I allowed it to wrap around all the ones I love, and I fall back onto the grassy fields where I once wanted to escape in all those years ago.

But now, I find only peace.

Chapter End Notes

next chapter: five years later. buckle up, creampuffs.
Home is Where You Are

Chapter Summary

Five years have passed. This is Laura and Carmilla's life, and the one they will continue to grow. Their journey is only just beginning, and Carmilla couldn't be happier.

Chapter Notes

to everyone who went on this journey with me, thank you. this chapter is dedicated to all of you. thank you to Riley, who drew beautiful art for this story. Who always made me laugh and I'll always continue to be so proud of you on your journey. thank you to Luiza as well, for drawing beautiful art for this story. neither of you had to and yet you brought these characters to life again in a way I could not have. thank you to Skuylar, who's adorable and kind and knows just what gif to send to cheer me up. thank you to Morgen and Andy, whom I've only met recently, but have been my biggest supporters. thank you to Jen, for editing THAT chapter and assuring me it was accurate as it could have been, (ya'll know what I'm talking about) XD. Thank you to Gabi, Maria, Katie, for always encouraging me on the discord chat and for our late-night ramblings when we can't sleep.

I used to write this story to feel something. I needed a release, an escape, and I began this story during a time where I felt lost. Within the last year I've grown so much and I think it's time to put this one chapter of my life to a close. This has been my first w/w story that I ever wrote, which featured two ladies falling in love with each other, and I couldn't have been more excited with the result. But if I'm honest, this story is more than that. this is a story of life, of death, of hope. it is not only my story but all of ours, with the message that one day, we will all find soulmates of our own. Because through this story I've created a family of my own, a family of beautiful humans that even though we're oceans apart I feel like we've known each other for years. I owe so much to all of you.

all my love,

nikki.

“Family isn’t always blood. It’s the people in your life who want you in theirs. The ones you accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile, and who love you you no matter what.” -Anonymous.

Five Years Later
Carmilla mumbled softly in her sleep. It was late, she wasn’t sure what time it was, but she was just knew it was past the witching hour. She had trouble staying asleep for whatever unsung reason, and her mind was awake with some unexplainable anxiety.

The tiny babe within her womb was nothing more than a hopeful dream, but their soul was present, safe and tucked in with her kind and loving embrace.

She opened her eyes as she heard her bedroom door creak open, the sound echoing across the bedroom. Carmilla internally sighed as she heard little footsteps pad across the floor, and a tiny voice called out to her.

“Momma?” He whispered, poking her nose.

The action was enough to wake her up fully, and Carmilla focused her attention on her five-year-old son, Orion Cosmo, holding his blanket and rubbing his sleepy eyes.

“What’s the matter, baby?” The young woman asked, her worry increasing when she noticed his cheeks were stained from crying. Shaking her head, she made way to turn on the lamp besides her.

“Did you have a nightmare?”

Orion shook his head, wiping his eyes. It was incredible how similar he looked to her, even though Laura carried him for nine months; same raven hair, same blue eyes, same plump lips. A beautiful boy—everybody stopped to stare. He had dimples when he smiled, which made him even more adorable, and it was a trait passed down from Laura’s mother.

The next thing he said broke her heart.

“I-I had a dream th-that I was taking care of my baby sibling, momma. We… we were playing house, having a tea party… d-doing all fun stuff, an… And then I had to wake up!”

“Oh, my love,” Carmilla sighs, her heart heavy, “If it was a good dream, then why are you crying?”

“Because it was a good dream and I wanted it to be real.” He mumbled, hiding his face in his hands.

Six months ago, Carmilla and Laura started trying for a baby. They both agreed that at this point in their lives was a perfect time to add a new little one to their family. Carmilla had a wonderful job at the elementary school in town, teaching music to children. Laura worked at the local journalism company, *Austria Daily*, and was one of their top reporters.

Only… things weren’t so perfect. They had more trouble conceiving a little bundle of joy this time around. Each time they tried to obtain a new sperm donor, or go to an IUI, something went awry and success fell right out of their grasp. They had decided that this time around Carmilla would be the one to conceive the baby, and were eager to go on this new journey together, until they started running into complications.

It was starting to upset Carmilla, as she came very close to giving up. But it was Sherman who came to their saving grace, and pleaded with Laura to keep trying, at least one more time. He wanted Laura and Carmilla to have a large family, since he never got the chance to give her any siblings. He was just as determined as Carmilla for history not to repeat itself.

It would be fourteen weeks today, where they would visit the hospital and wait for the call of approval later in the afternoon. Until then, Carmilla couldn’t help but worry about her wife and her son. They were so in tune with each other’s emotions, it was amazing. Laura was stressing out
because of her job and trying for a baby, so therefore, Orion worried for her because he was the first one to notice she started talking less at family meals and she became more closed off in general over the last several weeks. It explained why he was extra loving towards her.

“C’mere, Ion,” she whispered, pulling him into a tight hug. “Keep praying to your guardian angel, okay? I’ll let you in on a little secret—mommy and I are trying, but it’s very difficult for us. This usually has a greater chance of success between a man and a woman.”

“But it isn’t fair.” Orion mumbled, wiping his buggers on Carmilla’s shoulder. *Gross, little one.*

“Life isn’t always fair, pumpkin. Why do you want another sibling so bad, anyway?”

“For mommy,” He admits, sniffing, “I don’t like seeing mommy so sad. I know she has our cousins to take care of but she wants another baby of her own,” he sighs, “And I’m lonely.”

Carmilla frowns, relating to the feeling all too well. “You have two mommies who love you and each other very much, okay? You should never have to feel lonely, Orion. You are blessed to live here. I want a little bundle of joy too, but you just can’t get a new sibling at the drop of a hat, do you understand? Be patient with us, little creampuff.”

“Okay,” Orion mumbled, wiping his eyes, “Will you talk to mommy about it?”

“Yes, Ion. I’ll talk to mommy,” She smiles, giving his forehead a kiss. She then pats the area beside her. “Now, come cuddle with me.”

Smiling weakly, he accepted her offer, and climbed his little body over hers, burying his face into her chest. Laura, jolted awake by the new body in the bed, moved closer so she could wrap her arms around them both.

“Hi, mommy,” He mumbled sleepily, tapping Laura’s face with his little hand.

“Hi. Go to sleep, darling. Do you want us to sing to you?”

He nods, snuggling into her embrace, and they hummed him a lullaby. Once Orion’s quiet snores filled the air, Laura let out a sigh, giving Carmilla a tired smile.

“This is the third time this week.” She says, and Carmilla frowns, tracing her fingers through her soulmate’s hair.

“He knows his mommy is upset and wants to comfort her,” the young mother says, “There’s nothing wrong with that. His company is much appreciated.”

“I wonder how he’ll react when he finds out he’s really going to get a little sibling,” Laura smiles, gently tracing her fingers on her son’s face.

“Probably cry. Or laugh. Or shriek so loud he’ll alert the neighbors,” Carmilla chuckled, and then her expression changed, as a thought came to her, “…he said he’s been lonely. Have we not been paying attention to him?”

“Maybe it’s because he starts kindergarten tomorrow. It’ll be his first full day without his mommies.” Laura yawns, “We’ll have a big dinner to celebrate.”

“I just… I want him to be happy. The thought of my son being alone in his room, sad because he doesn’t have a sibling to play with, makes my heart ache.”
“That won’t be the case anymore,” Laura uttered, “I hope.”

“Hey,” Carmilla says, catching a tear that was just about to fall down her face, “I have a really good feeling about this time. I’m pregnant, cupcake. The signs are all here this time. And if by some unseen god doesn’t make it so, we can always adopt. Give another little girl or boy a new home. Like Lilita did for me.”

“That idea doesn’t sound so bad, either.” Laura smiles, and leans over to kiss her wife, “I love you.”

“I love you too. More than all the stars in the sky,” Carmilla snuggles closer to her, even though they had a child wedged between them, “Get some sleep, cutie. We have a long day ahead of us.”

“Alright. Good night, Carm.”

“Good night.”

Morning came quicker than they would have liked.

The alarm clock rang once, twice, three times before Carmilla groaned and smashed it with her fist.

It was 7:00 am. Gone were the college days where she would sleep like a vampire well into the afternoon.

But that didn’t mean she had to like it.

She went to feel the middle of the bed to cuddle with her son, only to find it mysteriously empty. And that she wasn’t falling off the other side.

Hmm.

It was quiet.

Too quiet.

It took all of three seconds.

There was an excited shriek, and a huge weight that suddenly fell onto her chest without warning. “Wake up, wake up, wake up!” He giggled, “It’s the first day of school!”

Carmilla grumbles, burying her face into her pillow, “Five more minutes…”

“Nah-uh! C’mom, momma, you can’t sleep in! It’s the most important day of my life!”

“Right. And that can be delayed for several more minutes. Cuddle with me, Ion.”

“Momma…” He groans, as he is pulled back onto the bed. “Mommy is going to be so mad at us.”

“She’ll get over it.”

Orion smiles, as he rests his head on her chest and traces her soul mark. His fingers rest on the first constellation of stars, his namesake, just resting on top of her shoulder. “I’m glad mommy is your soulmate.”
“Me too, kiddo.”

“Coz then I wouldn’t have been born!”

Carmilla laughed, kissing his forehead. “You were always there, right from the night we received our soul marks, little one. The Moon just didn’t bless us to have you until several months later.”

“I’ve always felt that way too. Like I was meant to be yours.”

Carmilla smiles, squeezing his shoulder, “You’re a smart little creampuff. Have I ever told you that?”

“Lotsa times.”

“It’s true. You’re going to be the smartest kid in the whole school.” She said with confidence, and picked him up into the air. Orion giggled as she flew him around to mimic an air plane, before plopping him back down on the bed. She then heard clanging in the kitchen, and the wonderful smells of bacon and eggs filling her nostrils.

“Mommy’s making breakfast!” The young boy cheered, and he hopped off Carmilla without a second to waste.

Chuckling, Carmilla decided that now was the time to get up and followed him.

She let out a deep, relaxed yawn. Domestic life had never looked so good on her.

Laura was by the stove, her movements sluggish as she moved the freshly cooked grub to three plates. “Ion, could you bring those to the table?”

“Yes, mommy!” He exclaimed, and with a burst of energy, jumped up to grab the plates with both hands.

Carmilla smiled at the exchange and wrapped her arms around her soulmate. “How’re you feeling, babe?” Laura asks, spinning her around and squeezing her arm.

“Tired,” Carmilla admits, “I’ve been cramping and my boobs are particularly sore this morning.”

Humming softly, Carmilla makes soothing caresses on Laura’s stomach. “Well, this certainly isn’t our first rodeo. We’ll stop by the hospital after we drop Orion off at school, okay?”

“Okay.” Laura breathed out, and she turned to smile at her, “Thank you for last night, by the way. Orion needed you and you knew the right words to say to him. They… helped soothe me, too.”

“Just doing my job, creampuff.”

“Well, you’re darn good at it, and I’m not looking for any new employees.”

“Good. When’s my promotion coming?”

“When you actually help doing the dishes after we eat.” Laura giggled, a bit of her old self shining back.

Carmilla snorts as she grips at her butt, causing Laura to gasp softly and smack her on the
shoulder. “Trying to cop a feel? You sneaky minx.”

“Is it a crime to give love and affection to my beautiful wife, whom I hardly spend any time with because of the responsibilities we have?”

“Hey. You signed up for this shindig when you agreed to be my soulmate.”

“Agreed? Um. Cupcake, we had no say in this. Did you already forget about the unseen celestial gods that aligned our stars?”

Laura rolled her eyes. Giggling, she shut off another one of Carmilla’s rebuttals with a kiss.

“Mommies! Your foods are getting cold!”

_I swear, sometimes he’s more of an adult in these situations than we are._ Carmilla thought with a smile, and went over to sit next to him. Laura followed suit, peppering the two loves of her life with kisses before sitting across from them.

The car ride to Orion’s elementary school was filled to the brim with energy. He was the eldest out of all his cousins (Danny and Kirsch had two girls that were nine months apart, and just turned four; while Perry and Lafontaine adopted a little girl who was Chinese-American, and she was homeschooled) so unfortunately, they were all too busy to see him off to school.

Even still, that didn’t upset him, as he knew kindergarten wasn’t an all-day affair and he would see his cousins later that evening. He was beyond excited.

As they pulled up into the school’s parking lot, a lump formed in Carmilla’s throat. _My little boy is growing up_, she thought to herself, as she remembered those early days when she would feel him kick and move around in Laura’s womb. Soon he would be hitting his teenage years, finding a partner, moving off to college… was it selfish of her to just want her precious son to stay small and adorable forever?

“Goodbye, mommies! I love you!” He cheered, waving his adorable little hands and jumping in his spot.

“Be careful in the world of men, Orion! They do not deserve you!” Laura called out, and, a little confused, their son giggled. They watched as he found his teacher and class for the morning, and already started to make friends with a little girl dressed in an Elsa costume.

He was going to be just fine.

“Carm,” Came Laura’s sweet voice, as she brought her back to reality. “You okay?”

Carmilla couldn’t answer. Tears sprinkled her eyes, as she sucked in an uneasy breath, and pulled Laura into a hug.

Carmilla wasn’t.

“Why does he have to grow up so fast? H-he’s getting so big. I thought I’d be prepared for this moment but I just can’t help but cry.” Damn these hormones. Had it not been for the stress of the baby, she wouldn’t be such a mess.

Laura laughed, caressing her hair and giving her a tight squeeze. “Laf so owes me twenty bucks. We were betting on how long it would take until you started to cry when we dropped our son off at kindergarten.”
“…you’re cruel.”

“And you’re so sweet.”

Carmilla wiped her eyes, “Can we have another baby, so we can go through these milestones all over again?”

Laura beamed at her, gently placing her hands on Carmilla’s stomach, “Who says there isn’t another bun in the oven here already?”

“For all our sakes, I hope so,” She then bent down and placed a gentle kiss right above Carmilla’s belly button. “You can do it, even littler creampuff. We’re all rooting for you.”

“We won’t know for sure unless we make that appointment. C’mon, my love.”

Taking one last look at the elementary school, and grateful that their bosses allowed them for a vacation day just for this special event, she followed Laura back into the car.

0o0o0o

Five Years Earlier

It shouldn’t have come as a shock to Carmilla, when Laura had put her foot down. She wanted a home birth. She refused to have her son in a hospital where so many bad memories had plagued her mind, and felt much safer at home. She also wanted to be off the morphine; she claimed she didn’t want to miss a second of her son’s birth, even though it would be painful.

Carmilla tried to have her say in the matter, but she ended up agreeing—hospitals made her anxious as well, so neither of them would be a happy camper in a high stress environment.

So, that meant extra precautions had to be made. Natalie, who had happily volunteered to become their midwife, helped care for Laura during the last trimester of her pregnancy.

The three weeks leading up to Orion’s birth were some of the most chaotic experiences Carmilla’s ever had.

Firstly, the cravings. Laura sent her wife on a wild goose chase almost every night because of how hungry she became.

“Carm?” She whispered softly, peering over at Carmilla as she read a book on the opposite side of the couch. It was late, and they should be getting to sleep soon, but they were both so comfortable. Carmilla looked up, smiling with interest. She loved how adorable Laura’s swollen belly looked, as it appeared nearly double in size because of her shortened height. She had trouble fitting into any other clothes besides leggings and the occasional flannel t-shirt.

Jeans were her worst enemy.

She was officially nine months pregnant—he could be popping out any day now.

“What is it, Lau?”

“I… I really hate to make you do this, since you look so comfortable, but…”
“Don’t worry about it. What’re you craving?”

“Uhm. Chicken wings.”

“Alright, I can get you those.”

“—dipped with Nutella and Cool Whip.”

Carmilla internally gagged. In what universe would that be acceptable food to eat?

“Look, I know it’s gross, so if you don’t want to get it I’ll just go and—,”

“Whoa, whoa, no need to get snappy. I’ll get it. You rest.” She urged, scrambling up from the couch to ensure that her wife stayed.

Laura grumbled, folding her arms. “I hate not being able to do anything because of this giant belly in front of me. I want him out now.” Sheesh; she was such a tiny ball of rage when she wanted to be.

Carmilla rolls her eyes, “Soon, love. He’ll be here before you know it. Orion’s just taking his time in there, aren’t you, bub?” She coos, rubbing her stomach. “I’ll be back.”

“I’ll be here.” Laura sighs, resting her head on the couch. She closed her eyes.

Secondly, the contractions. And Laura’s constant need to pee. That scared the shit out of Carmilla. Because sometimes she worried that the one time her wife heads over to the bathroom and her water breaks, worse case scenario Carmilla is nowhere near her.

Her first contraction was at a dinner party hosted by her mother. Everyone was talking in loud, happy voices until Laura doubled over, clutching at her stomach.

“Cupcake!” Carmilla exclaimed, getting out of her seat.

“I’m fine, baby. It was just a contraction.” She mumbled, breathing out slowly.

“But usually that means—,”

“Carmilla,” Her mother warned, giving her a stern look, “Her water didn’t break, the baby’s not coming yet.”

“Do you need anything? Can I get you a water—do you need to lie down?” Carmilla uttered, brain going into a panic.

Laura giggled and gave her a kiss, “I’m just going to lay on the couch, honey. Okay?”

“Okay,” She mumbled, unable to relax.

“Help me up?”

Carmilla shot an apologetic look at her mother before helping her wife get to the living room safely. She propped Laura’s head on a pillow and rubbed her belly. “Come back whenever you feel better, love.”

“I think I’ll just stay here. Natalie says keeping my feet up will help the baby situate himself on my uterus. I’ll start doing my stretches.”
Carmilla chuckled, giving her a tired smile. “We should seriously have a code word for when Orion decides to pop out.”

“What? Screaming, ‘the baby’s coming!’ isn’t good enough?”

“It’s not catchy enough, cupcake,” She replies, “How about… the stars are beautiful?”

Laura smiled warmly at her, “Just like the days prior to the marking?”

“Yeah.”

“Then, okay. We’ll stick to that.”

Carmilla gave her another kiss as she went back into the dining room, pulling up her chair. Everyone slipped back into conversation, until several moments later, Laura rushed across the room in a panic.

“What’s the matter, frosh?!” Lafontaine asked, hiding back a snicker.

“I-I need to pee!”

Sighing, Carmilla slowly brought her head and elbows onto the table.

“Seven more days, love. And then you’ll have a little munchkin on your hands.” Mattie claims, patting her arm.

And, lastly, the actual birth itself. Orion didn’t come in seven more days. He was four days late. Laura was bed bound, because she was tirelessly attempting to prompt the baby to flip over sideways and land safely on her uterus. Orion was taking his sweet time and wouldn’t budge an inch.

This often led to Carmilla coming home from work to see her wife in awkward positions with her midwife. Laura was positioned with her head on a giant yoga ball, her belly pressed against it, with Natalie holding a towel around her back.

“Um…”

“Hey.” Laura said sheepishly, peering up at her. Carmilla chuckled and leaned over to kiss her.

“How’re you feeling, cupcake?”

“Really tired. And frustrated—but we’re trying to get Orion in the right place. Nothing’s been working.” She huffed, and managed a weak smile at Carmilla, “How was work?”

“It’s been going well; Mrs. Cochrane is an excellent principal. She’s really helping me get used to the kids and the school. I like it a lot.”

“I’m glad,” Laura mumbled, shaking her head.

Natalie gave her shoulders a squeeze and smiled, “Alright, that’s enough for today. I don’t want to tire you both out.”

Laura practically slid off the ball, and onto her back. “Are we almost there?”

“Almost. I know it’s past his due date, but all pregnancies are different. He’s a late bloomer. Just several more exercises and he’ll be ready to go. You’re doing amazing, sweetie.”
Laura mumbled something into her hands, groaning tiredly.

Natalie and Carmilla helped her off the floor and back onto the couch.

“Thanks, Nat,” Carmilla said gratefully, handing her a couple of bucks. The midwife shooed her off.

“No, I couldn’t accept anything from you. You’re family now.” She says, blushing at the thought of Mattie.

“Please, take it. You’re doing this on your free time when you should be with my sister or with friends. You deserve it.” Frowning, Natalie accepted the tip.

She said goodbye to Natalie, and sighed when she heard soft sniffling from her living room. Laura had her eyes closed and tears were streaming down her face.

“Hey,” Carmilla soothed, kneeling beside her and placing her head on her stomach, “I’m going to regret this, but what’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry.”

“Why’re you apologizing, creampuff?”

“B–because we’re trying everything, and he’s still not here, and I feel like all I’ve been doing is crying and giving you a tough time and you don’t deserve that!”

“So right now, you’re basically crying because you’re tired of crying?”

“I-I just want to see my baby!”

“Laura…” The young woman smiled, leaning over to kiss her, “He’s going to come. I can feel it—either tonight or early tomorrow morning.”

“I’m just so tired, Carm.”

“This time tomorrow, we’re going to have a son. And I’ve never been so excited or proud to be sharing this experience with you. Laura, it just hit me again that I’m going to be a momma.”

“You’re going to be a damn good one at that. Our little babe is going to be so spoiled.”

They shared a good laugh, before Laura’s stomach growled, and Carmilla smiled. “Hungry? I’ll make dinner.”

“You’re so good to me.”

It was a long night. Laura couldn’t sleep because she kept on getting up to pee, and Orion was awake. Carmilla couldn’t sleep because she was filled to the brim with excitement, so she didn’t mind singing to Orion to help calm Laura’s nerves.

February 14th, 2017, at 1:00 am.

Laura’s water broke. Exactly seven days late.
Carmilla felt it first. The bed was considerably wet between them, and with an excited gasp, she leaned over to nudge her wife. She wasn’t sleeping, but it was clear that she was slowly fighting consciousness and her mind was beyond exhausted.

“The stars are beautiful.” She whispered, and Laura’s eyes snapped open. Tears glistened in them, as she sat up, groaning in pain.

“T-they are.” She mumbled, placing a hand on her stomach. Even though Carmilla only had her head resting, she could feel him doing gymnastics in there. “Oh god. Okay. The baby’s coming. Orion wants out.”

“Easy,” Carmilla soothed, getting up to reach her phone, “I’ll call Natalie, she’ll be here within minutes. In the meantime, breathe. Remember to breathe, Laura.”

Thank god it wasn’t a difficult birth. The second Carmilla called Natalie, Laura was already on the phone with Perry, and in a few moments, they had a whole entourage of family members in their home that filtered in one by one.

She couldn’t have thought of a better way to celebrate Valentine’s Day.

She held Laura’s hand the whole time. Whispering soothing words to her, sometimes singing to her, and other times placing a wet cloth on her forehead to cool her down.

There was a time in Carmilla’s life where she thought happiness was out of her grasp. Where she figured she was just destined to live in hell, suffering for past crimes she didn’t remember. But now that happiness seemed to be right around every corner, she had thought her heart was full enough.

She has a beautiful soulmate, who just so happens to be the love of her life.

She has friends she knows she’ll keep around for a life time.

She has a loving family—a mother, a sister.

But she knew nothing compared to hearing her son, little Orion Cosmo Karnstein, cry out to the heavens as he was born.

It was as if time had slowed, and the most overwhelming feeling consumed her entire soul.

_He’s here_, she thought, tears streaming down her face, _He’s finally here._

Her soul mark burned, the constellation of his namesake, and she let out a peaceful sigh.

_This is happiness._

“They’re perfect,” Laura weakly managed, as she held his tiny body. He was all clean; Mattie had cut the cord and helped Natalie clean all the gunk off him, “My little star. Orion. Yes, you’re finally here!”

“You were amazing, creampuff. I’m so proud of you.” Carmilla sniffs, leaning into her, as she placed her hand on his stomach. His tiny fingers latched onto hers.

“We did it. We made him, together,” Laura replies, leaning in to kiss her, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Laura.”
Even though she had dark circles under her eyes, her hair a frazzled mess, and she smelled like she hasn’t showered in a week, she still looked beautiful.

“Hey. You two might want to see this,” Natalie smiles, and lifting up the baby’s arm, Carmilla noticed a tiny distinct dot that was all too familiar. “He’s blessed with a soul mark. There’s a soulmate out there for him too.”

This time, both Laura and Carmilla’s eyes welled with tears, as they cried out with joy.

Carmilla’s heart overflowing with love, she thanked the heavens above.

Her soul was finally at peace.

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-The Present-

Mattie chuckled at her two soulmates as they bickered amongst themselves, and trailed between them.

How did she get so lucky?

Several years ago, she was certain she would never meet her soulmate and find happiness like Carmilla had. But now, she had been blessed with two, and she never took a single day for granted.

She always had an inkling that even though one partner would satisfy her, she dreamed of having a healthy, polyamorous relationship with two souls. It was a sensation that burned deep within her soul mark, and she only felt brave enough to tell Laura and Carmilla. Having two soulmates was about as rare as having one, and she knew with that came a lot of questions and controversy.

Why, scientists asked, are nearly half the population destined to live a life of platonic romance while the others are blessed to live a celestial one?

And why, they often pondered, are some so important that they are blessed with two?

It was one of the many wonders of the world humans were unable to solve.

But until then, soulmate or not, to love another or to not, Mattie believed that it’s best to stick to your own opinions and leave others be. It’s their life, and it’s not in anyone’s place to question something they have no answer to.

“I think we should get a Shiba,” Natalie urges, glaring at her soulmate, “They’re small, adorable, and will fit into our apartment.”

“Why do we have to get a dog? Why can’t we just get a cat? They’re lazy and we won’t have to worry about taking care of it besides washing the litterbox.”

“But my mom’s allergic to cats! She wouldn’t want to stay over anymore!”

“Good. Your mom’s annoying.”

“Look, I tell her every time—,”

“Mellie, Nattie,” Mattie rolled her eyes at her two wives, “If you two idiots don’t stop bickering, I will walk right over to the fish section and get a goldfish and name it Nemo.”
Natalie furrowed her eyebrows, “Um. Nemo was a clownfish.”

“Smartass.” Mel stuck her tongue out.

“Alright, look. This is supposed to be a crucial time in our lives. We’ve all finally moved in together, we all have good jobs, and we all have our soul marks. Can’t we tackle this next milestone without arguing?”

It was interesting how they all ended up together. They all had different personalities, all with different goals in life, but Mother Earth and Father Time must have seen some similarities, because their souls are bonded for life.

Mel was headstrong. She didn’t have a filter, often got herself into situations that was less than desirable, and often drank the most out of a social gathering. She loved life and being in the center of it. She said things that was on her mind and didn’t care about the consequence. But, underneath the sarcasm and sass, she held a strong loyalty to the ones she cared about and if you gave her a favor, she would pay you one in return. She kept her promises.

Natalie was more soft-spoken. She was very intellectual, able to calculate equations in seconds that would take Mattie hours, and had a keen sense of right and wrong in the world. She wanted to help people, save their souls, which is why she joined the nursing program at Silas and became trained up until she became a doctor at the local hospital. Gone were the drinking days of college, where she lived each passing day without a care in the world, and lived in the shadow of her best friend. Now, she had a voice, the events of her past hardening her soul but opening it to realize that there was more to life than being a follower.

Mattie was more structured among the two. Everything had a place, a time, and an order in which they went in. She spoke with clear diction and was resourceful with the world around her. She could make lemonade out of lemons. If the wheels started to fall off, she would find whatever she could to patch them back on.

Mel helped loosen that stiffness; she was bold, sexy, and confident, bringing down Mattie’s business-like nature. Natalie was a good listener. She understood loss, pain, challenges. If Mattie was having a dreadful day, she would always vent to Natalie, and Natalie would be there to comfort her without question.

They each had soul marks on the side of their ribs, just above their waistline. An open heart, with an anchor hanging from it’s tail end.

Carmilla was good at determining these sort of things, and she reasoned that the open heart stood for the love she has for both women, with the anchor symbolizing the trust and knowledge that she’ll always have her soulmates to trust and keep her grounded in this new life, something that she never thought she would be blessed with.

My, how did she get so lucky?

There was a soft yipping song that alerted her, and the three women turned their attention to the tiny creature.

It was a large cat, but a mixed breed of everything in between. The cat had these adorable ears that curled inward, which was black on one end and then white in the center. It had a goofy underbite that showed its teeth, and a beautiful, black and white coat.

Nonetheless, it was love at first sight for Mattie. “Oh, look at you, you precious little thing! Hi!
Yes, why haven’t I noticed you before? You’re such a good kitty!”

Mel snickered and leaned into Natalie, “Record this and use it for blackmail.”

“You’re cruel. I love that about you.” She brought out her cellphone.

“This little guy’s been here for a while,” Chimed the employee, as they walked over, “We had a trucker that found him on the road and he was nearly dead. Brought ‘em to the local animal hospital right on time. We call him Lucky.”

“Lucky! You are a very lucky kitty. You’re here and you’re safe! I’m so proud of you!” If anyone questioned that Mattie ever said these things, she would deny them profusely.

“Well. He’s the one. We’re taking him.” Natalie smiled at the employee, who nods.

Mattie rounded on her soulmates, "Do not misgender them! Their pro-nouns are they/them! Don't forget it!

“Great! This is my favorite part of the job. I love it when our furry companions find a home of their own. I know he’ll--ahem, they'll--be well taken care of with you three.”

It may have taken hours, and they may have started off in a rocky start, but they always come together in the end.

“Yes!” Mattie cheers, “For once, I actually have some news that will exceed my sister’s! Ooh, she’s going to be pissed!”

Natalie snickered, knowing of Carmilla and Laura’s plan to add another Karnstein to the household. She leaned over to Mel, “When should we tell her that baby number two is on its way?”

“Nine months from now.” She cackled in return, her heart happy.

Life was good.

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There was a clattering of glass.

A terrified shriek from a four-year-old.

And a distressed groan from an overworked father.

Danny’s right eye twitched.

*Happy place, you’re in your happy place. Fight. The urge. To investigate.*

And… crying from her other four-year-old.

Hoo, boy. She needs to check now.

Sighing, she stretched and closed her book, placing it back on the coffee table. She walked (or rather, hobbled, as best she could with her six-month pregnant belly) to the scene of the crime.

As she neared the door to her daughters’ room, she knocked. There was anxious whispering and things clattering around. Kirsch reappeared with a sheepish expression. “D-Bear. Babe. Hey. Love of my life. How’s it hanging?”
“What’s going on?” Danny narrowed her eyes, “You’ve been acting weird all day.”

“Me? Weird? Pshaw. No, you’re ah… you’re the weird one! I’m perfectly normal over here! Nothing’s, uh… nothing new to report.”

“Really? Care to explain why you have paint on your face?” She questioned, pointing to the blue smudge.

He was such an idiot.

A lovely idiot.

“I’m testing out a fresh look. What do you think, Danielle? Does this color go well with my eyes?”

“It’s stupid. Open the door.”

“I don’t think you wanna go in just yet—,”

“Open. The. Fucking. Door.”

Sighing, Kirsch slowly pulled the door open, and turned to his daughters, “Rosie, Claire! Hide and save yourselves!”

Two little red haired beauties rushed passed her, each coated with a generous amount of paint on their bodies.

Kirsch dared to smile at her, “See? Nothing’s going on.”

“Kirsch,” Danny mumbled, hating how easily she can get upset now, “Why are you lying to me?”

“What? No, no, no. Babe. You’ve got it all wrong. I’m not… I’m not lying to you. I just… the girls and I are working on a project and it’s not ready yet.”

“Can I at least see?”

“Honey, it’s for the baby,” He eased gently, “I’ve been holding onto the girls so they could do something nice for their little brother.”

“Okay. I trust you. Just… you know you’re going to have to clean everything, right? Including the girls?”

“I know, babe. That’s why I’m taking care of things so you can relax. Don’t worry about us so much. We’re going to be fine. Why don’t you take a break from the house and, I don’t know… treat yourself to a mani-pedi?”

“O-okay,” She sniffs, pulling him into a hug. “I’m sorry I overreacted.”

“Hey. I totally get it, D-Bear.”

“Don’t call me that.”

“I love you.”

“I hate you,” She mumbled without any malice, and gave him a kiss.
Their tender moment was interrupted by another shriek in the kitchen, and Kirsch sighs. “I’ll handle that.”

“My hero.” She giggled, shamelessly admiring his backside as he left. Taking a moment to debate with herself, she then decided to peek inside her daughters’ bedroom, and gasped in delight. They were working on a collage! A giant corkboard was placed in the center, with pictures of their family and friends scattered about. In the center, was the ultrasound with blue hearts painted around the figure of the baby.

She let out a sigh and leaned against the wall, placing a comforting hand on her belly.

She loved her family so much.

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Lafontaine, among being a lover of science, loved to garden. There was something exciting about planting something into the ground and watching it grow, into a tall and beautiful flower. Gardens held a special place in their heart, as it was a passion they shared with Perry.

They were blessed to eat all home grown, fresh food right from their backyard. They loved to host parties, and was glad that their family begged them to cook just because of how supreme their food tasted compared to everyone else.

It was their pride and joy.

Well, the first being their adopted daughter, Annie, who was the four-year-old one would ever meet. She had bright, intelligent brown eyes and short, jet black hair. They wished for the day when their daughter would one day join them in their passion for gardening, but as of now, she would just watch from her sandbox and quietly read her book. She was a quiet soul, didn’t talk much or showcase her emotions well, but she got along swimmingly with Orion. He loved her, whether it’ll someday turn into romantic love or stick to platonic, Lafontaine teases Carmilla that they give her a blessing to marry their daughter, and it was hilarious to see Carmilla’s face become even paler.

Lafontaine smiled, turning their head to check on her, and their skin paled.

The box was empty.

Shit. Where did that little monster go?

She was quick and feisty when she wanted to be, can easily find anything Perry tries to hide in the fridge or on the countertops. It was hard to keep track of her sometimes.

There was a satisfied gurgle from behind them as Lafontaine slowly turned their head, and watched on in horror as their daughter stuffed a fistful of dirt in their mouth. “Annie! We do not eat dirt, little Einstein! Dirt is bad!”

Grunting at them, she flung the dirt in their face and flopped right onto their lotus patch.

“Hungry!”

“I know, Curly. But there are better things to eat than dirt!”

“Wasn’t eating.” She mumbled, folding her arms.

“Oh. Oh, you were… playing pretend? Well why didn’t you say so? I can make a pretty
cool mud pie.”

Jesus, this kid was going to be the death of them.

They reached over for the hose and watered an empty patch of dirt without any flowers or vegetation. Annie watched as her parent mashed dirt together in their hands, eyes widening in wonder as it turned soft. They picked a leaf off the ground and placed it on top of their creation.

“Ta-da!” They cheer.

Annie stared at it for a long moment.

Then, with a shriek, she smashed both hands into the mud and rubbed it all over Lafontaine. The adorable giggles that came out of her mouth made their heart soar.

“Dirty Renny! Dirty Renny!”

“Oh, you’ve done it now, kid. You’ve unleashed… the tickle monster! It’s angry because you destroyed its food!” Cackling, and without any other cares in the world, they picked up their daughter and tickled her stomach.

On the porch, Perry watched on with a gentle smile on her face. Annie was a miracle child. They had decided to adopt a year ago and it only made them grow closer together. They had decided to have a child because even though they were living comfortably, the large house seemed lonely without a little one crawling around. (Not to mention, Perry was getting a case of baby fever)

She loved how mature Lafontaine became once Annie was came into their lives. Sure, their love to pursue the art of silence never failed, but they understood the responsibilities this new life gave them and handled them like a pro. It was as if Annie was always meant to be here, to complete their souls. Now Perry understood what Carmilla felt with Orion.

Lafontaine noticed Perry standing there and smiled sheepishly at her, rubbing the back of their hair.

“Hey, look Annie. Mommy’s home. Why don’t you give her a big hug?” They grin, and Perry visibly paled.

“Mommy!” She exclaimed, getting up from the dirt and skipping towards the curly haired woman.

Well, they did still latch onto their mischievousness from time to time. Them and Annie were a force to be reckoned with.

Perry forced a smile as her daughter wrapped her tiny arms around her legs, but internally groaned. She just put these jeans in the wash.

“Hi, my love.”

“Mommy! Renny and I were planting flowers today!”

“I can see that. And now you need a bath.”

Smiling, Annie held up a broken, dirt covered dandelion. “For mommy!”

Perry’s heart melted at the gesture. Bless them—they were so precious.
“Thank you, sweetheart.” She smiled as Lafontaine struts up to her, and casually presses their finger on her nose. She narrows her eyes. “That was covered in dirt, wasn’t it?”

“Perhaps.”

Chuckling deviously, Perry took out what she was holding behind her back—it was a water balloon—and flung it at them.

“Oh! Now this is war!” Lafontaine shrieked, “Every human for themselves!”

Annie let out a battle cry and bolted across the garden.

Perry laughed as she watched her two favorite humans run away from her, her heart full and happy.

Just another day in the Lafontaine-Perry household.

Another day in paradise.

0o0o0o

I bit my lip nervously as I drowned another bag of chips, pacing in the kitchen. Carmilla and I visited the hospital to make sure everything was all set, before resting for the rest of the day.

My body was feeling all sorts of weird, from my stomach, to my breasts, to my head—I couldn’t think clearly and was beyond anxious.

I mean sure, the signs were all there, but this wasn’t our first rodeo. Extra precautions had to be made.

I don’t think I’d handle it well if we lost another…

Don’t, chimed the motherly voice in my head, don’t blame yourself for that. It wasn’t your fault. I let out a gentle sigh. With one failed IUI cycle and one miscarriage, it’s a wonder how Carm is holding up better than I was.

I sigh, raising my head to the heavens and letting out a gentle prayer, “Please be real,” I whispered gently, “I love you and I’m rooting for you.”

“Hey, don’t eat that junk. It doesn’t do you any good, cupcake.” Carmilla mumbled, coming over to me dressed in her gorgeous red robe.

I blink, realizing that the bag of Doritos is now empty. I sighed and crushed the bag in my hands. When I stress eat I don’t even realize what I put in my body. Cookies, chips, any kind of sweets… I drown them all like a vacuum.

“Crap,” I mumbled, “I’m sorry. I didn’t even realize.”

“It’s okay. Just, who’s going to tell Orion someone ate the entire bag?” Carmilla asked with mock apprehension.

“He’ll live. We’ll get more.”

“Laura…” Carmilla frowned, wrapping her arms around me, rubbing my stomach, “Everything’s okay. I’m confiscating your phone for the next hour so you could relax with me.”
“I need it taken away—I haven’t stopped looking at it since this morning,” I groan, handing it to her, “Burn that hypnotizing technology; I don’t want to send selfies to potential stalkers.”

“You’re being ridiculous.” She chuckled and kissed my cheek, “’Mon. I’ll run a bath for you.”

“Join me?”

“Of course.”

I sighed blissfully as she led me to our bathroom, and turned on the water in the tub. She struts over, giving me a sly smile, “Hey. Wanna know what’s great now that the little booger’s in school? I get you all to myself now.” She husked, pulling at the collar of my t-shirt, and I blush.

“You’re crude. You only want me for my body.”

“What? No, I love all of you, cupcake. But right now, I especially want you for just your body,” She snickers, “Give momma some love, hmm? She works hard for the money.”

“You’re the equivalent to a horny teenager, do you know that? Our son is away on his first day of kindergarten and the first thing you want to do is me.” I giggle, giving her a kiss.

“You deserve to be treated like a queen, what with everything you do for us,” She says, nipping at my ear as she undoes a button on my shirt, “Let me take care of you.”

“You always take care of me.” I murmur, and welcome the familiar heat that pooled in my stomach. Gods, the things she still does to me.

She’s so sexy.

Nearly a half hour later, with both of us naked in the tub and high off our respective orgasms, I cuddled with her and let out a content sigh.

“Hey. You’re such a good mom, did I ever tell you that?”

“Many a times, dear. What? Now you’re suddenly overflowing me with compliments because I blessed you with orgasms?”

“You’re good at doing that, too.”

Carmilla laughed into my neck; we were sitting upright in the water, her hands wrapped around my ass and my hands wrapped around her neck. My head was buried in her chest. I loved intimate, vulnerable moments like this—words tumbling out of our mouths, hearts full of love. With Orion in our lives and responsibilities to tackle, we hardly have any time for ourselves, so we cherish the moments that we do.

“Hey. Laura,” I hum softly and gaze at her, “…am I a fool to admit that I’m… a bit scared?” She places a hand on her stomach, “…I just want them to be okay.”

“Of course it is, Carm,” I soothe, “but if it’s meant to be, it’s meant to be. We will have another baby, one way or another. Another little creampuff to take care of.”

“Did we all of a sudden switch bodies?” Carmilla asks tearfully, making me laugh. “Now you’re assuring me.”

“At least we’re both scared, even though we’ve done this before. That makes me feel a little
better. We’re going to be okay, Carm. I love you.”

“I love you too, creampuff.” She rumbled, her voice low and sultry. “Every day my love for you grows and grows.”

“Cool beans,” I say lamely, and she laughs again. We held each other for a moment more, until I heard the familiar ring from my cellphone, and my eyes widened. “Get it, get it, get it!” I exclaim, the tender moment gone, as I slap her arm.

“We don’t even have to listen to the voicemail, I’m pregnant!”

“It’s for prosperity, babe!” I shriek. She groans back.

It takes her seconds to climb back into the tub, as she presses play, and I bring my hands to my lips, heart beating behind my rib cage.

I only listen to the things I need to hear: congratulations, you’re two weeks pregnant, and—the due date is estimated to be around May of 2021.

Tears stream down my cheeks as I let out a delighted screech, and tackle Carmilla into a hug. She lets out a yelp and drops the phone into the water, but that was the least of our concerns.

“You’re pregnant, Carmilla! Orion’s going to have a little sibling!” I cheer, as she chuckles.

“I never doubted the little cupcake for a second. They made it. Congratulations, even littler one.” She mumbled, her voice thick with emotion. “You’re going to be a mommy again.”

“So are you,” I beam, and my eyes grow wide with excitement. “How’re we going to tell Orion?!”

We managed to go to Baby’s R Us and make it just in time to pick up our son. He jumped up and hugged us both, peppering our faces with kisses until we got into the car and drove home. It was amazing how like my dream he looked now, and how much of Carmilla’s features he had. But, it was adorable, because he had my chubbiness when I was little, and a sweet tooth that could not be tamed.

I loved him so much—he was growing up so fast right before our eyes.

“Hey little cupcake, how was your first day of school?” My wife asked, as got settled inside our home.

“It was awesome! I made new friends! And we did crafts! And… and I drew this for you!” He said, proudly holding up his macaroni art of a rainbow and little people underneath it, “That’s you and mommy, and that’s me!”

“Who’s that next to you, Ion?” Carmilla asks, pointing to the tiny blob in what looked like a cart.

“My future sibling,” He said confidently, “We’re going to be best friends.”

I cried internally. Ooh, he’s such a sweetheart! Carmilla squeezed my hand and smiled at me.

“We have a gift for you to celebrate your first day,” I weakly managed, holding out a small
bag with a giant giraffe on it.

“Yay! Gifts! Thank you, mommies!” He chees, hopping onto the couch.

Carmilla had a beaming smile on her face as she sat on his right, and I sat on his left.

He pulled out a binkie, frowning in confusion, “I… um, I already grew out of these, mommy. But thanks.”

“Keep looking, munchkin.”

He pulled out a baby toy, this time it was a lion face with a rattle, and shook it.

“I’m confused.”

“Well, you know what they say, third time’s the charm.” Carmilla said, as she was holding back laughter. I slapped her arm.

He then pulled out the blue t-shirt, and on it were the words written, *I’m A Big Brother.*

He struggled to read the words, “I’m a… beeeeg…”


“I’m a big,” He squints, “…broth? I’m a big broth? Isn’t broth in soup?”

This time, Carmilla doubled over in laughter, her cheeks red. “You’re such a good kid.”

“E R,” I sounded out, smiling widely, “The word is *brother,* Ion.”

“Brother. Okay. I’m a big brother,” Orion mumbled, and then the metaphorical lightbulb appeared over his head, “I’m a big brother! I’m going to be a big brother?!”

“Yes, kiddo. I’m pregnant. There’s another tiny human in here.” Carmilla says with tears in her eyes, and point to her stomach.

He starts jumping in his seat. Counting to ten in my mind, I smile as I watch our son let out an excited shriek and bolts off the couch. He starts running around the living room, crying out in delight, chanting those lovely words repeatedly.

He then collapses on Carmilla’s lap, wrapping his arms around her waist and crying happy tears, kissing her stomach.

“Aw, baby,” I laugh, patting his back, “I’m so happy you’re happy.”

“I’m going to wear that shirt every day until my new sibling gets here,” He wails, “Because I love my new sibling already.”

“You’re the best. You know that don’t you, Ion?” Carmilla says gently, tears in her eyes, “You’ve got a good head on your shoulders, you know right from wrong, and you’re such a loveable soul. Thank you for being so good to us.”

“I am blessed to have two mommies who love each other very much,” He proclaims, smiling all the while, “And a new little sibling. I’m so lucky.”

“You are, baby. Never take any moment for granted.” I sniff, wiping my eyes.
“I won’t,” He promises with serious eyes, and kisses Carmilla’s stomach. He then gets the itch to run off again, as he chants those exciting words, as Carmilla and I watch him from the couch.

I let out a content sigh and lean my head on my soulmate’s shoulder; she then cuddles into me, as I lean my head on her breasts and my hand on her stomach. I then lean into her and trace my other hand on her soul mark, a gentle smile on my face.

Home.

After so many years of searching, I finally found my home.

And she was a sky full of stars.

THE END

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