Heart of a Lion

by HighwayVagabond

Summary

Sixteen years ago, Lou had a baby girl and gave her up for adoption. Fast forward to now, when life is just getting back to normal after the heist and she is getting ready to marry Debbie, her daughter shows up at their door. Due to a change in plans, Lou and Debbie end up being responsible for the teenager. Does it really take a village, or does it just take eight female criminals?

Notes

Hey! I'm crazy excited to bring this story to you all! Should I be starting a third fic? Probably not. Will I update regularly? Probably not. Regardless, I'm really proud of this and I hope you like it too!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Every Friday night, the team gathered at the Miller-Ocean loft for Chinese food and copious amounts of alcohol, and tonight was no different. Soft, classic rock flowed into the space from the record player in the corner while all eight women talked and laughed.

Lou was at her usual spot on the metal stairs, sipping from her bottle of Stella Artois and watching as her friends-turned-family bonded. When her crystal blue eyes fell on Debbie, she found that the brunette was looking back at her with complete adoration in her eyes. Lou shot her fiancé her trademark smirk, which earned her a wink in return. Rose was going on and on about her latest fashion show, not realizing that Debbie’s attention was elsewhere as her hands waved in the air emphatically. Politely excusing herself from the conversation, Debbie stood up from where she was perched on the edge of the coffee table and strode to the blonde woman on the stairs. When she got to Lou, she took the bottle of beer from her hand, replacing it with her own glass of wine, and took a long sip.

“What’s mine is yours, I suppose.” Lou chuckled, tilting her head slightly.

Lighting flashed outside the window, followed by a monstrous clap of thunder that caught a fairly intoxicated Amita off guard, causing her to jump and spill her drink. Both Tammy and Daphne erupted into a fit of alcohol-fueled giggles, and Amita blushed brilliantly before caving and laughing with them.

“Who would have thought that this would be our family?” Debbie sighed, the four glasses of wine she had that night breaking her usually stoic façade.

Lou hummed in response, lifting the glass to her lips and draining the red liquid in one gulp.

The next morning, everyone except for Lou was a hung-over mess. It wasn’t because the blonde didn’t drink as much as the others- hell, she probably drank a significant amount more than everyone else- but the Australian was known for never getting a hang-over, which everybody else resented. Daphne was the last to drag herself downstairs. Her makeup was smudged at the corners of her eyes and her brunette curls were sticking out from her ponytail in various directions.

“I’m never drinking again.” The actress muttered.

“Oh, sweetheart.” Tammy responded amidst a laugh as Daphne perched herself on her lap and took the coffee from her hand. “You and I both know that’s not true.”

“You’re so supportive, dear.”

Daphne took a generous gulp of the steaming hot liquid and grimaced as she swallowed. Without a word, Lou slid a bottle of aspirin across the table and Tammy caught it just before it fell over the edge.
“Fuck you.” The brunette muttered, holding out her hand as her girlfriend placed three of the pills into her palm.

“Would you shut up? Some of us are trying to sleep.” Constance groaned from her face-down position on the couch, attempting to throw one of Debbie’s decorative pillows at them, but only being successful at sending it to the ground about two feet in front of her.

“Hey, that’s a Florence Broadhurst!” Debbie scolded, motioning to the pillow.

“That literally means nothing to me.”

Just as Debbie opened her mouth to speak, there was a knock at the door of the loft, earning another irritated groan from Constance.

“Just take a battering ram to the thing, why don’t they?”

Lou rolled her eyes and pushed herself up from the table, striding to the door. She opened the metal door in one fluid motion, revealing a tall, teenage girl with light blonde hair that was pulled into a ponytail and striking blue eyes.

“What’s up, kid?” Lou asked, her brow furrowed.

“I’m looking for Louise Miller.” The young girl responded confidently, steeling her jaw.

Lou’s eyes flitted over the girl, taking in her scuffed combat boots, ripped skinny jeans, Bon Jovi t-shirt, and weathered black leather jacket.

“That’s me.”

An emotion that Lou couldn’t quite place flashed in the younger blonde’s eyes, but it was gone as soon as it appeared. Clearing her throat, the girl pulled a manila folder from her brown canvas messenger bag and stuck it out towards the Australian. Confused, Lou took the folder and opened it, her eyes still on the teenager, looking for an explanation. Debbie had now approached the two blondes, standing slightly behind Lou and looking over her shoulder.

“I need you to sign the first and last page.”

“What is it?” Lou asked.

“It’s a cessation of parental rights.”

Somewhere in the loft behind them, Amita spit out her coffee.

Lou froze, her wide eyes glued to the girl in front of her. Now that she got a good look at the teen, she realized that it was like she was looking at a younger version of herself.

“Lou?” Debbie called, her voice laced with confusion.

Swallowing hard, the Australian attempted to speak.

“You’re…” Unable to form the words, her voice trailed off.

The young blonde pulled a pen out of the inside pocket of her jacket, clicking it and handing it to the woman in front of her with a cold expression.

“I’m your kid.”
Debbie paced the floor of her and Lou’s bedroom with her arms crossed over her chest. She looked to Lou, who was sitting at the foot of the bed, her elbows on her knees and her head bowed slightly as she was lost in thought.

“So… you didn’t think to tell me that you had a daughter?” Debbie challenged, breaking the silence.

“It was a few months before we met, Deb. I didn’t think it mattered.”

If Debbie wasn’t so furious, the broken and troubled tone of Lou’s voice would have shattered her heart. Instead, it just softened her a bit, causing the bite to leave her voice.

“And what about when we got together? Or when you asked me to marry you? Were you ever going to tell me?”

Slowly, Lou shook her head.

“I didn’t want to think about it…about her. I couldn’t think about the fact that I gave her up.”

Debbie could remember every single time she had seen Lou cry, and a huge part of the reason for that was because it hardly ever happened. Until now, she had only witnessed her cry three times. When she saw a tear roll down the blonde’s cheek, Debbie released and sighed and knelt down on the floor in front of her, taking her hands in her own.

“I’m so mad at you.” She whispered softly. “But I love you, you know that, right?”

With a small smile, Lou nodded.

“I love you too.”

Debbie returned the smile and placed a lingering kiss to the crown of Lou’s head.

“She looks just like me.” Lou choked out.

Debbie nodded and gave her fiancé’s hands a reassuring squeeze.

“She’s beautiful.”

“So, where’s your accent?” Constance blurted, eyeing the newcomer.

Lou’s daughter was standing in the living room, observing the loft, and avoiding the six pairs of eyes that were glued to her. When Constance spoke, it had been the first words that anyone had said since Lou and Debbie disappeared upstairs to talk. Amita smacked Constance in the arm, giving her a wide-eyed look.

“I was born in the states. I didn’t even know that she was Australian.”
“Cool, isn’t it?” Constance observed with a smile.

The teen cocked a questioning eyebrow and crossed her arms over her chest, and every woman marveled at exactly how… Lou Miller it was.

“I guess so.” She shrugged.

The sound of footsteps on the stairs gained everyone’s attention, and they all looked up to see Debbie coming down the stairs with Lou slowly following her. The blonde had the manila folder that the teen had given her in her hand. When they both made it down the stairs, Lou cleared her throat, attempting to keep her usual cool and confident demeanor.

“Why do you need me to sign these? I already signed away my rights.”

The young blonde let out an incredulous scoff and nodded.

“Well, those papers were contingent on me getting adopted. Since I didn’t, I’m technically a ward of the state. I’m trying to get emancipated, but since I’m not the kind of orphan with dead parents, you basically have to give me up a second time.”

There was a bitterness in her voice, and it cut into Lou, making tears burn at the back of her eyes.

“You didn’t get adopted? I was told they had a family lined up.”

With a sigh, the teen glanced around the loft briefly, becoming uncomfortable under the weight of everyone’s stares.

“People don’t usually want the baby with a hole in her heart. Now can you just sign the papers so I can leave?”

Lou’s eyes widened and her jaw unhinged a bit.

“You had a- “

“It’s all fixed now.” The girl snapped, cutting the older blonde off. “Please, just sign them.”

Realizing that there was no point in arguing anymore…that this girl’s mind was made up, Lou took the pen that she was holding out and signed the papers. Snapping the folder shut, she handed it to her daughter with a shaking hand.

“Well, I wish you the best…”

“Lenna.” The girl finished. “My name is Lenna.”

“Calling case 5760 to the bench.”

Releasing a nervous breath, Lenna stood from her chair in the back of the courtroom and moved to stand in front of the judge. The bailiff took the paperwork from her hand and gave it to the judge, who glanced over what was in the folder before closing it and leaning forward, clasping her hands in front of her. She was an old, grumpy looking woman who wore too much eyeshadow and over lined her lips. Lenna resisted the urge to shudder under the intensity of her gaze.
“What means do you have to support yourself, young lady?” She questioned, looking at the teen before her over the top of her glasses.

Lenna cleared her throat and smoothed down the blazer she wore, which she had bought specifically for that day.

“I work at an art gallery downtown after school and on the weekends.”

“I see.” The judge nodded. “And do you have a place to stay?”

“I will be staying with my best friend and her family until I can find a place of my own, your honor.”

Without another word, the judge looked back at her file before glancing up.

“What about Louise Miller? She is your biological mother, is she not?”

Confused at the sudden turn in conversation, Lenna nodded.

“Yes, your honor. She signed away her parental rights.”

“Which can be undone by a judge, such as myself.”

“I’m not sure I’m following you- “

Lenna could feel her heart begin to race and her breathing becoming staggered. She had worked too hard to get emancipated to have it denied.

“Who is your biological father?” The judge asked, cutting the young woman off.

“I’m not sure. There was no name on my birth certificate.”

With a curt nod, the judge snapped her file shut once again and pinned Lenna with an even more intense gaze than before.

“Young lady, I am going to be honest with you.” She began. “Based on what I see in your file, you do not have the means to support yourself, nor do you have the maturity to legally be an adult. Not to mention, you have a parent right here in the city-”

“She doesn’t want me.” Lenna challenged.

“Do not interrupt me.”

Lenna swallowed hard as tears threatened to spill over and she felt like the walls of the courtroom were beginning to close in on her.

“I am waiving the cessation of parental rights and remanding you to the care of Louise Miller. A social worker will drop you off at her residence, where you will stay unless your case-worker deems her unfit pending an interview and home inspection. Case dismissed.”

The judge banged her gavel against the bench, causing Lenna to jump at the harsh noise. She gathered all of her paperwork and exited the courtroom, furiously blinking tears from her eyes. The case-worker that Lenna had had for about three months, Amy, was waiting outside the courtroom with a sympathetic expression on her face.

“I’m sorry, Lenna. I know how badly you wanted this.”
“Let’s just go.”

“What do you think about a month in Spain?” Debbie proposed, glancing up to Lou who was sitting on the couch, flicking a lighter and staring off into the distance.

“Lou.” Debbie called, snapping the blonde from her trance.

“Yeah, yeah that sounds good, Love. Whatever you want.”

Debbie sighed and looked back at her travel magazine. Lou had been out of it since Lenna showed up at their apartment two days ago. Whenever she tried to bring it up, Lou would change the subject immediately, causing the brunette to give up on her efforts and trust that if Lou needed to talk about it, she would.

A harsh knock at the door had Debbie up and out of her chair and to the door in seconds. She opened the door and her golden-brown eyes widened when she saw a defeated Lenna accompanied by a small, meek looking woman in frumpy pantsuit.

“Hello, I’m Amy Kaiser. Are you Louise Miller?”

Lou was now on her feet as well, walking towards the door.

“It’s Lou.” The blonde corrected, her voice laced with confusion.

“Ah, nice to meet you, Lou.” Amy greeted, shaking her hand, and then Debbie’s, who introduced herself as well.

“What’s going on?” Debbie asked, looking to Lenna, who was avoiding any form of eye contact, and then back to Amy.

“Unfortunately, Lenna’s request for emancipation was denied, and the judge waived the papers you signed the other day, ordering that she be placed under your care.”

“Under our care.” Debbie repeated, feeling Lou stiffen next to her.

“Yes, ma’am.” Amy nodded.

“I’ll return in a month to do a home inspection to determine if you are fit to take care of Lenna permanently.”

Lou and Debbie stood there, wide-eyed, blinking slowly. Awkwardly, Amy cleared her throat.

“Well, I should be going. Lenna, you have my card in case you need to get ahold of me.”

Without any more of a goodbye, the social worker departed, leaving a very nervous and fidgety Lenna behind.

“Come on in, kid.” Debbie insisted with a forced smile.

Hesitantly, Lenna stepped into the apartment. Debbie glanced into the hallway behind her, shocked to see that there weren’t any suitcases sitting there.
“Is that all you’ve got?” She asked, gesturing to the duffel bag in Lenna’s hand.

“Uh…yeah.” Lenna responded.

Debbie glanced to Lou, who was still staring wide-eyed at Lenna. The young blonde was very aware of her mother’s eyes on her, and she shifted uncomfortably.

“Look.” She started. “I can refile for emancipation in six months, and until then, you won’t even know I’m here. Just point me to wherever you want me to sleep, and I’ll stay out of your way.”

Lou shook herself back to attention and gave the young girl a confused look.

“Do you really think that’s how this is going to work?” She asked.

Lenna shrugged and nodded as if it was completely normal.

“You don’t want me, and I don’t want to be here. So, in six months, I’ll be gone and you’ll never have to hear from me again.”

Taking the initiative, Lenna started up the stairs and went to the closed door of one of the spare rooms.

“Does this one work?” She called down, peering over the railing.

Completely shocked at how dismissive the teen was being, Debbie and Lou nodded simultaneously. Without another word, Lenna opened the door to the room and shut it behind her, leaving the loft silent.

“What the hell just happened?” Debbie asked, her eyes still on the door that Lenna had disappeared behind.

Lou searched the depths of her mind for the words, but came up with nothing. After some of the initial shock wore off, they sat at the dining room table and waited for the teenager to emerge from her room. Little did they know that the girl in question was curled into the fetal position on her bed, completely numb as she attempted to process the events of the day.
It was three-thirty in the morning, and Lou was seated at the dining room table with a tumbler of whiskey in her hand and her laptop- the only source of light in the apartment- in front of her. Nine-ball had been able to hack into the state adoption records upon request from the blonde, which was what Lou was reading. The farther she got into the file, the angrier she became, and the tighter her grip on her whiskey glass grew.

**Name: Lenna Marie Carter**

**Birthday: 04/17/2002**

**Biological Mother: Louise Catherine Miller**

**Biological Father: Unknown**

When Lou had first read that Lenna’s last name was Carter, she became confused. Granted, she wasn’t the most well-versed on the adoption process, but she was expecting the girl to have her last name. Her curiosity had driven her to the third page of her records, which was the page that incited a burning, unadulterated rage deep in her chest. The page was signed by a representative from New York Health and Human Services- a social worker, Lou assumed. The nonchalance of how the report was written made Lou want to rip someone’s head off. Angrily, she threw back the rest of the whiskey in her glass and slammed it back down on the table. She paused, hoping that Debbie didn’t wake up and come downstairs. Once she deemed the brunette was still sound asleep in their bed, she looked back to the screen and re-read the social worker’s report for what was probably the tenth time.

*Upon the discovery of a Ventricular Septal Defect, Jack and Beatrice Carter opted to reverse the adoption process of Lenna (Miller) Carter, claiming that they were not in a place to support a chronically ill child. The child will be returned to Saint Agatha’s Home for Children, where on-staff medical professionals will be able to give her the treatment she needs.*

The words “chronically ill” stuck out to Lou and made her chest constrict. Lenna looked like an average sixteen-year-old, although a little pale, but that was more than likely a genetic trait instead of a symptom of her condition. She scrolled through what Nine-ball had sent her, sighing in disappointment when she realized that there were no attached medical records. Google then became the Australian’s best friend. She typed in the name of Lenna’s condition and clicked on the first
website that popped up, her breath hitching in her throat as she started reading.

**Ventricular Septal Defect** is a hole in the septum between the ventricles of the heart, causing oxygenated and deoxygenated blood to mix. This affects the oxygenation of various tissues in the body. Symptoms include: shortness of breath, blue tint to lips, skin, and nails, as well as trouble gaining and maintaining weight.

Lou continued to read, her need for more alcohol growing as her eyes glossed over the words before her. *Medication, Congenital heart failure, surgery.* Slowly, her fear and concern faded a bit when she read that most symptoms are controllable, and since Lenna survived the condition as a baby, the chances of her condition getting worse were slim.

Lou continued to delve into Lenna’s file, unaware of the fact that the sun had now risen, and its rays were now filtering into the apartment. It wasn’t until Debbie’s arms wrapped around her neck and the brunette’s lips landed on her temple that she realized what time it was.

“You never came to bed.” Debbie stated lightly.

“I know, babe, I’m sorry.” Lou sighed, leaning into the brunette.

“Did Leslie get you the file?”

Reluctantly, Debbie let go of her fiancé and moved to the kitchen to put on a pot of coffee. Lou nodded and slammed her laptop shut before pushing it away and letting her head fall into her hands.

“I can’t believe what I read, Debs.”

Silently, Debbie poured them both a cup of coffee and moved back to the table, placing Lou’s cup in front of her as a way of urging her to continue.

“First off, she was almost adopted, and then she got really sick.”

Debbie watched as anger flooded the blonde’s features, but let her continue speaking.

“They gave her back. They gave that beautiful little baby girl back and left her in a group home. She was sick and needed a family, and she had no one.”

“Lou…” Debbie started, her voice trailing off as she searched for the right words. “You can’t blame yourself for that. You thought there was a family waiting for her.”

“Well there wasn’t, and I gave her up anyway. I didn’t even hold her, Deb. I let them take my little girl away from me. She almost died, did I tell you that? She had a hole in her heart and it almost killed her.”

“But she didn’t die, honey.”

“You’re right, she didn’t.” Lou nodded. “And now it’s time for me to make up for lost time.”

Debbie gave her fiancé a brilliant smile before taking a sip of her coffee. She had a feeling she was going to like Mama Bear Lou.

Unbeknownst to the two women in the dining room, a certain young blonde was standing directly over them on the second floor. Tears were staining her cheeks, but unlike last night, they were happy tears.
“Do you need a ride to school, Lenna?” Debbie called from the kitchen when she heard the clomp of the teen’s combat boots on the stairs.

Lenna rounded the corner into the kitchen and shook her head.

“No, I like to take the train.” She insisted.

“Are you sure, kid? We don’t mind.” Lou added as she entered the kitchen herself.

The teen nodded and gave the older women a small smile.

“I’m sure.”

An uncomfortable silence fell over them when no one knew what to say next. Lenna was the one to speak first as she rubbed the back of her neck nervously.

“I want to apologize for the things I said yesterday. I was upset, and I judged you two hastily. I shouldn’t have done that.”

The two women blinked at her a few times, taken off guard. The previously cold and stand-offish teen was now making an effort, very obviously taking herself out of her comfort zone.

“It’s alright, sweetheart. We understand.” Lou smiled.

Lenna nodded quickly before checking her watch, her eyes widening.

“I have to go. I don’t want to miss the train.”

She began walking to the door, before she snapped her fingers and turned on her heel, still moving towards the door.

“I have to work until six tonight, so I won’t be back until seven-ish, and I don’t have a cellphone.”

Lou and Debbie shared a quick look before they both nodded.

“Okay, just be careful. Have a good day.” Debbie responded.

“You too. See you guys later!”

When the door closed behind the teenager, Debbie released a slow breath and turned to Lou.

“You thinking what I’m thinking?” She asked.

Lou nodded, taking a sip of her coffee.

“Time to call in reinforcements.”

“Shut the fuck up.” Lucy, Lenna’s best friend gasped, her jaw nearly hitting the lunch table.
“I know.” Lenna nodded. “I tried to get emancipated, and ended up living with my bio mom and her… wife? I’m not sure if they’re married or not- I haven’t asked.”

“Lenna, that’s insane.”

Lenna couldn’t help the smile that tugged at her lips. She had had a rocky start with Lou and Debbie, and it’s not like she was about to call them her moms any time soon, but after hearing what Lou had to say to Debbie this morning, she figured she might as well give it a chance. The bell rang through the cafeteria, signaling that their lunch hour was over. With a groan, Lucy stood from the table, followed by Lenna.

“Time to go fall asleep in chemistry.” The redhead laughed, earning an eye roll from Lenna.

“You’re going to blow us all up if you don’t start paying attention.”

“We could only be so lucky.”

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Tammy stood in front of her two very nervous best friends with her hands on her hips. Lou was anxiously wringing her hands in her lap, and Debbie’s knee was bouncing erratically.

“Step one of having a kid.” Tammy announced as she began to pace slowly. “Do. Not. Hover.”

“But-” Debbie jumped.

“No, Deborah. Do not hover unless you want to have a stroke within two weeks. Half the time, they’re doing things that you don’t want to know about anyway. Last week, I found Connor playing with dog shit in the front yard. Do I have a dog, Deb?”

With wide eyes, Debbie shook her head.

“Exactly.”

Lou began to speak, but Tammy cut her off.

“Rule number two… sharp corners mean injury and possible death.”

“Tam-“

“One minute, she’s running around the living room, and the next she’s on the ground with a bleeding head wound!”

“Tammy!”

“What, Lou?” Tammy yelled back.

Lou smirked at her friend, her eyes twinkling in amusement.

“You do remember that Lenna is sixteen, correct?”

“Oh, yeah.” Tammy nodded. “Then just make sure she uses protection.”

Lou’s eyes widened comically, causing both Debbie and Tammy to double over in laughter. As they
were laughing, the front door opened and Lenna strode in.

“What’s so funny?” She asked.

“Nothing! Nothing is funny.” Lou responded, jabbing Debbie in the ribs with her elbow.

“Uh… Okay.” Lenna chuckled, shaking her head.

“How was your day, kid?” Debbie asked as she composed herself, cleaning up the mascara that had run around her eyes.

“It was good. Work was fun.”

“Are you a paintball target?” Tammy joked, gesturing to Lenna’s paint covered grey hoodie and black jeans.

Lenna looked down at her clothing and laughed.

“I work in an art gallery.” She elaborated. “I mostly just paint backdrops and prepare canvases. Just grunt work.”

“Well I’m Tammy.” The woman announced, introducing herself. “I would hug you, but- “

“Oh, no. I totally get it.” The teen insisted. “I’m Lenna.”

Tammy gave her a warm smile, her mind blown at how much the young girl reminded her of Lou.

“Why don’t you go upstairs and change, Len. There’s pizza in the kitchen if you want some.”

Lou surprised herself as she spoke, taken aback by how natural it all felt. Lenna’s eyes widened slightly when she heard the shortened version of her name and how easily it had rolled off of her mother’s tongue. Burying her shock, her forced a smile and bounded up the stairs.

“She seems really sweet.” Tammy observed.

Lou nodded proudly and reached over and grabbed Debbie’s hand. Tammy got comfortable in one of the arm chairs in the living room and the three of them fell into easy conversation. Minutes later, Lenna came back downstairs, her paint-covered clothes replaced by red, plaid pajama pants and an old Nirvana t-shirt. Her hair was pulled back into a loose bun instead of the ponytail that it had been in previously.

“Eat something, please.” Debbie called, gesturing to the kitchen.

Gracefully, Lenna turned on her heel mid-step and started for the kitchen, emerging seconds later with a piece of pizza. With the ever-present Miller Confidence, she sauntered into the living room and sunk into the only chair left, crossing her legs, one over the other. Tammy was staring at the young blonde, her mouth agape. Discreetly, Debbie kicked her under the coffee table, making her aware that she was probably being creepy.

“What?” Lenna asked, a small, uncertain smile on her face.

“You’re just…very much Lou’s daughter.” Tammy responded, shaking her head in near-disbelief.

Lenna glanced to Lou, who sent a quick, reassuring wink her way. The older blonde did a double-take before reaching out to Lenna and pulling her arm down, exposing her forearm.
“You have a tattoo?” She observed.

Lenna nodded and allowed the Australian to examine the black and grey lion’s head on her forearm. Debbie leaned closer, glancing over Lou’s shoulder.

“It’s beautiful.” She commented.

The teen swallowed her final bite of pizza before smiling proudly.

“Thank you.”

“Why a lion?” Lou asked, still admiring the intricacies of the tattoo.

“When I was a baby and in the hospital, I didn’t have a name. Really, all they knew about me was that I had a heart condition. I guess the nurse in the delivery ward was German, because she started calling me “Lenna”, which means “lion-hearted”. They didn’t think I was going to survive, so a name wasn’t all that important. When I proved them wrong, the name stuck and the family that was supposed to adopt me kept it.”

Tammy was basically sobbing now, being the teddy bear she was. Debbie swallowed thickly, willing away the tears that burned at her eyes, and Lou was just staring at the young blonde in complete awe.

“It’s a happy story, you guys.” Lenna laughed, taking her arm back as Lou released it. “I’m fine now. I take my medicine, and I’m basically just like any other teenager… I just can’t, like, run a marathon or anything.”

Lou leaned back onto the couch, her eyes still glued to her daughter. After Tammy had composed herself, she began asking Lenna a slew of questions, which led to the four of them talking well into the night. It wasn’t until Lenna’s bright blue eyes began closing reluctantly that Lou tapped her on the knee and insisted she go to bed. Nodding, Lenna stood from her chair and bid everyone goodnight. Just as she reached the foot of the stairs, Lou’s voice stopped her.

“Hey, wait a second. I almost forgot.”

With a sly grin, Lou pulled a small box out from under the couch and walked over to Lenna, placing it in her hand. Lenna’s brow furrowed in confusion and she opened the box, and gasped lightly.

“You didn’t have to get me this.” She insisted, her voice no louder than a whisper.

“My number is already programmed in, as well as Deb’s and Tammy’s. I’m sure that once you meet everybody else, they’re going give you their numbers too.”

“This is too much. These phones are so expensive.”

“Don’t worry about it, honey.” Debbie responded, waving her off. “Besides, we’ll need a way to get ahold of you.”

Unexpectedly, Lenna threw herself into Lou, hugging her tightly. Once the shock had worn off, Lou returned the hug with equal fervor.

“Now go to bed, you have school tomorrow.” The Australian said softly.

With a nod, Lenna began up the stairs, stopping at the top.

“Hey, um… would you want to drive me to school tomorrow?”
Lou smiled brilliantly, the hopefulness in Lenna’s voice not going unnoticed.

“I’d love to, Len.”

“Cool.” Lenna nodded. “Goodnight, you guys.”

Simultaneously, the three women bid her goodnight. They watched as she made her way to her room and closed the door behind her. Letting out a relieved breath, Lou turned back to her fiancé and best friend with a teary smile.

“I could get used to this.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments are greatly appreciated :) Thank you so much for reading! x
Chapter Notes

I am so into this story! I hope you're all enjoying reading it as much as I am enjoying writing it. Thank you for all of your kind words!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The calm, tranquil energy of another easy Friday night in the Miller-Ocean loft was disrupted when the door flew open and the sound of a rolling skateboard filled everyone’s ears. As usual, Constance was the last to show up to what Amita has officially deemed “girls’ night”.

“What is up, my ladies?” Constance called as she burst into the apartment, announcing her presence— as if everybody wasn’t already completely aware that she had arrived.

Laughing and shaking their heads, everyone greeted the youngest of the team warmly. Was she loud and obnoxious? Yes. Did that mean they loved her any less? Of course not.

“Where’s the kid?” She asked, flopping down onto the couch with about the same amount of grace as a toddler.

“She’s upstairs, asleep, and if you so much as think about waking her up I will cause you great bodily harm.” Lou responded, her voice light regardless of the fact that she meant every word.

Constance squawked in disbelief, shaking her head.

“It’s seven thirty on a Friday night!” She argued. “Is she sick or something?”

Lou and Debbie shared a look. The blonde attempted to keep her expression neutral, but she couldn’t help the grimace that overcame her features. Debbie swallowed hard and looked to the group of women sitting around them.

“Len woke up late this morning and forgot to take her heart meds.” The brunette sighed. “But she’s fine, just tired. Luckily she caught it before her blood pressure got too high.”

Lou thought back to that morning and the way Lenna came rushing down the stairs, her long, blonde locks untamed from sleep and her eyes wide. Her alarm hadn’t gone off, and she had missed the train. Of course, Lou was able to drive her to school, but by the time they made it through the downtown Manhattan traffic, she was half an hour late to school.
When the teen had gotten home later that afternoon, having gotten the evening off of work at the
gallery, her skin was pale and clammy, and she all but dragged herself across the apartment floor.
Almost immediately, she had complained of a headache, and when her eyes landed on the bright
orange prescription pill bottle on the kitchen counter, Lou and Debbie both watched as realization set
in.

“What happens if her blood pressure gets too high?” Tammy asked, her voice dripping with concern.

“It’s not polite to talk about someone who isn’t awake to defend themselves, ladies.” A tired, teasing
voice answered.

Lou’s eyes snapped up to find Lenna slowly making her way down to the first floor of the loft in her
black sweatpants and matching sports bra. Instantly, the Australian’s eyes landed on the faded
vertical scar that was directly in the middle of Lenna’s chest. The teen had mentioned the multiple
surgeries that she had had as a small child, but the reality of it didn’t set in for Lou until that very
moment.

Lenna stopped at the foot of the stairs and yawned as she ran a hand through her hair, which
cascaded in gorgeous, champagne blonde waves to her mid-back. All eyes were on her, flooded with
concern.

“Jesus, you guys.” She scoffed lightly. “I’m fine. There is nothing to worry about. It happens all the
time.”

“Did you take your blood pressure?” Debbie questioned sternly.

“Yes, Deb.” The sixteen-year-old sighed, moving to the kitchen for a bottle of water.

“And what’s it at?”

Lenna hesitated. Slowly, she opened the bottle of water and took a drink, buying herself time. It was
a tactic that Lou used all the time, so Debbie was quick to pick up on it.

“Lenna.” She warned.

“One fifty-five over ninety-six.”

“Len, what the- “

It was Lou who jumped in now, her voice raised an octave higher than its normal pitch. Lenna
effectively cut her off, moving into the living room from the open kitchen.

“It’ll go down over the next couple hours, Lou. I swear, there’s nothing to worry about. I feel fine.”

Lou let out a reluctant sigh, but relaxed nonetheless. With a satisfied nod, Lenna sat down between
her two guardians. Within minutes, she had assumed position of laying across their laps, her head
in Lou’s lap and her legs draped over Debbie’s. The three of them had lounged like that plenty of
times over the past few days. The first time Lenna had laid like that was on the second day that she
was with them, having jokingly complained about how there was never enough room on the couch,
and eventually sprawling over the two women. She had expected Debbie to scoff in protest, but the
brunette just rested her arms over her shins, occasionally patting her leg comforting. Lou had
stiffened a bit at first, but soon relaxed into the furniture. Now, the position was completely natural,
and Lou had become accustomed to running her hands through Lenna’s hair when it was down.

“Wait, so…” Constance started. “Will your heart, like…. Explode if you don’t take your meds?”
Nine-ball sent a well-placed jab with her elbow directly into Constance’s ribs, and Amita smacked her in the back of the head.

“Ow! God, it was just a question.” The pick-pocket exclaimed, rubbing the back of her head.

“You’re all allowed to ask questions.” Lenna insisted, turning her head to the side so she could look at the other women in the room. “But no, it won’t explode. Really, I’d just pass out before anything major happened. Worst case scenario, the pressure in the ventricles of my heart gets so bad that the hole in the septum reopens.”

“Damn, girl. That’s hardcore.” Nine-ball chimed in, earning an eager nod in agreement from Constance.

“It’s terrifying.” Rose corrected, her accent thickening on the emphasized word.

“You’re all forgetting one really important detail.” Lenna announced, causing them all to look at her with raised eyebrows.

Confidently, Lenna pointed to the tattoo on her arm and smirked.

“Heart of a lion, remember?”

“What do you say to a shopping spree?”

Lenna looked up from the textbook she was reading, her eyes landing on Debbie, who was leaning against the kitchen counter, waiting for her answer.

“Yeah, I can go with you. That would be fun.”

Debbie chuckled and shook her head.

“No, Len. I mean for you.”

The teen swallowed hard and then glanced to her left at Lou, who gave her an encouraging smile.

“For me?” She stammered, confused.

“Your room is ridiculously plain, and you have nothing more than a duffle bag of clothes. Tammy and Daphne are in the city for some press thing, but they offered to meet us on Fifth Avenue after.”

“Fifth Avenue.” Lenna scoffed, her mouth hanging open in disbelief. “That’s where rich people shop.”

Lou and Debbie shared a knowing glance and said nothing in response, leaving a very confused Lenna with no choice but to accept.
“Holy shit.” Lucy gasped, having tagged along for the day. “You’re Daphne fucking Kluger.”

Daphne shot the redheaded teen a one-thousand-watt smile and pushed her sunglasses to the top of her head.

“The one and only.”

“Lenna, how the actual hell did you neglect to tell me – your best friend- that your mom is friends with Daphne Fucking Kluger?”

“Why are you saying her name like that?” Lenna asked, cocking an eyebrow.

“Because she’s Daphne Fucking Kluger.” Tammy teased, looping her arm through Daphne’s and placing a quick kiss on her cheek.

“I am… so confused.” Lucy breathed, her jaw still on the pavement.

“Calm down, she’s just Daph to us.” Lenna laughed, rolling her eyes.

“Hey, I kinda take offense to that.” Daphne scoffed. “I was almost nominated for a Golden Globe once.”

“Talk to me when you win an Oscar.” Lenna shot back with a shit-eating grin.

“Alright, ladies.” Debbie chimed in, clearing her throat. “Let’s not forget the mission.”

“The mission?” Lenna laughed.

Debbie gave the young blonde a sly smirk.

“Are we about to turn Gallery Geek into Gallery Chic?” Lucy hollered excitedly.

“I like this kid.” Debbie laughed, starting into the first store on Fifth Avenue.

Lenna hung back, waiting for Tammy, while Lucy and Debbie walked ahead and began talking animatedly about what Lenna should try on.

“Should I call Lou and have her come rescue me?” She whispered.

“Come on, Len.” Daphne responded, pulling the teen away from Tammy and further into the store. “Go crazy.”

Five hours later, Lenna and Debbie entered the loft completely weighed down by shopping bags. Lou watched with an amused smirk as they all dragged themselves into the living room and all but collapsed onto the couch.

“I think my feet are going to fall off.” Lenna groaned, pulling at her boots, but giving up when she realized she was too exhausted to get them off.

“So, shopping went well, I see.” Lou laughed as she knelt down in front of her daughter and removed the combat boots from her feet, then moving to Debbie and taking off the brunette’s heels.
“So many bedspreads.” Lenna muttered, her eyes widening at the traumatizing memory of Tammy explaining which fabrics would be easier to remove stains from. “So many different patterns.”

“So much Daphne.” Debbie added, throwing her head back against the couch.

“Do I get to see the new wardrobe?” The Australian asked.

Debbie laughed jovially and smiled.

“Just go look at your clothes and replace the heels with combat boots and the trousers with skinny jeans. If anyone ever doubts that Len is your kid, we’ll just have to show them your closets.”

“How many The Clash t-shirts did you get?”

“Only two.” Lenna shrugged.

“She wanted four, but I told her to just take yours.”

A pillow went soaring across the living room, hitting Debbie square in the chest.

“Those are my shirts!” The blonde bellowed.

“You have fifteen of them, Lou!” Debbie fired back.

Lenna chuckled and pushed herself up from the couch before pulling her hair back into a ponytail.

“I should probably get this stuff upstairs.” She sighed, gesturing to the pile of bags, all of them proudly displaying designer logos.

“Do you need help?” Debbie offered.

Lenna shook her head as she loaded her arms full of the bags awkwardly. She started up the stairs, before freezing on the first step and turning back around. Quickly, she oved back into the living room and dropped a kiss on the top of Debbie’s head, and then one of Lou’s cheek. Both women were caught off guard by the action, but once the shock wore off, their chests filled with warmth.

“Thank you for today.” Lenna smiled.

Without another word, the teen bounded up the stairs, leaving two women smiling brilliantly in her wake.

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On Sundays, Lenna had the gallery to herself. Technically, it was closed, but she used the time to prepare canvases, as well as work on her own paintings. Although she was done at noon, she didn’t make it back to the apartment until one thirty. The second she closed the door to the loft behind her and turned around, car keys flew through the air towards her. Shockingly, she caught them- but not without a bit of juggling.

“Uh…what?”

Her eyes fell on Lou, who was standing before her in her usual leather pants, high-heeled boots, and blazer. Today, her blazer was a bright red and made out of velvet. The older blonde had her arms
crosed over her chest and a defiant smirk playing at her lips.

“It’s time for your first driving lesson.”

Lenna scoffed and shook her head. “What does Debbie think we’re going to do today?”

Lou’s smirk grew and she shrugged.

“Bonding.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments are greatly appreciated. I love you all xx
Hi! How is everyone?  
I just want to thank you all for being so kind and supportive of this story. The response has been overwhelming. And to think, I was skeptical as to if anyone would actually enjoy this!  
Without further ado, here's chapter 4! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Now just lightly give it some gas.”

Before Lou could even finish her breath, the white Bronco lurched forward, and came to stop just as quickly, sending both passengers forward. Lou caught herself on the dash with both arms outstretched and released a shaky chuckle.

“I’m sorry!” Lenna burst, her breathing becoming erratic with panic.

Lou turned to face her daughter on the bench seat and placed her hand on Lenna’s shoulder comforting.

“It’s okay, Len.” Lou assured her. “Just press on the gas slowly. It’s an empty lot, so you don’t need to worry about hitting anything.”

With a nod and a steadying deep breath, Lenna loosened her death grip on the steering wheel and allowed herself to relax as she pressed her foot to the accelerator. Slowly, the vehicle began rolling forward, eventually picking up speed.

“There you go!”

Effortlessly, Lenna maneuvered the Bronco around the parking lot, occasionally making sharp loops around a lamp post.

“Slow down on the turns just a bit.” Lou instructed.

They continued to drive aimlessly around the parking lot for almost an hour before Lou figured that was enough for the day. Lou drove them home since Lenna wasn’t ready to drive on the street yet and couldn’t legally...as if that had ever stopped Lou before.

“So, when do I get to take the bike out?” Lenna asked with a smirk as they made their way into the apartment.

“Never!” Debbie’s voice bellowed.

“What she said.” Lou agreed.
“Oh, come on!” Lenna sighed, making her way to the dining room table where Debbie, Rose, Amita, Tammy, and Daphne all sat. She stood behind Debbie, wrapping her arms around the brunette’s shoulders in a makeshift hug. “It’s just a bike.”

“It’s a deathtrap and your mother is lucky she even gets to have one.” Debbie responded, playfully elbowing Lenna in the stomach.

Lou rolled her eyes and placed a kiss on Debbie’s lips in greeting before going to the kitchen and grabbing a bottle of Stella Artois from the refrigerator.

“Is this all wedding stuff?” Lenna inquired, her eyes landing on the multiple stacks of magazines, binders, and paint swatches that were scattered around the table.

Debbie nodded as she flipped to the next page of the binder she was holding.

“We can’t settle on a venue.” Amita groaned.

“Maybe if Lou would help…” Tammy added, glancing back at Lou with a teasing glint in her eyes.

“I’m in charge of the music and the drinks.” Lou stated, holding her hands up in surrender. “Those are the duties I was given.”

“I do need you to look at the suits I’ve drawn up.” Rose informed her, glancing over the edge of her sketchbook. “If only this damn dress was as easy as those were.”

Rose was frowning at her sketchbook with her brow furrowed in deep, furious concentration.

“Can I see?” Lenna asked, moving to stand behind her.

Lenna eyed the sketch for a few seconds before leaning forward with her palms on the table.

“Do you mind?”

Rose looked up and shook her head when Lenna reached for the pencil in her hand, giving it over without any hesitation.

“The skirt just doesn’t flow right.” Lenna muttered to herself before flipping to the next page.

She lifted her gaze to Debbie, examining her for a second or two before looking back to the crisp white page of the sketchbook. Lenna bit her bottom lip in concentration as she began drawing, the pencil moving in long, flowing lines. After a few minutes, she straightened back to a standing position and nudged the sketchbook towards Debbie with the eraser end of the pencil.

“What do you think about that?”

Debbie’s eyes widened when she took in the drawing. She had asked Rose to draw her a simple, elegant gown, but that was all the detail she had gotten into. Without even needed any direction, Lenna had created almost exactly what she had in mind. It was a long, flowing dress with an off the shoulder neckline, fitted bodice, and a skirt that just barely flared out flowed to the ground.

“It’s perfect.” Debbie breathed.

“Let me see.” Rose insisted, pulling the sketch toward herself.

Her jaw dropped and she looked to Lenna, back to the drawing, and then back to Lenna.
“I was thinking maybe some beading on the bodice. Or a sash with the base wedding color around the waist.” Lenna added, placing the pencil back down on the table.

“Where did you learn to do this?” Rose asked in complete awe.

Lenna shrugged nonchalantly and took her hair out of her usual ponytail, allowing it to fall down her back.

“It’s just like painting, really. Easier almost. It just comes naturally, I guess.”

Rose had passed the new sketch around the table, and each woman was equally as impressed as she and Debbie were. They all stared at Lenna in awe, both over her talent and the fact that she was so nonchalant about it.

“Who are you?” Daphne whispered.

Lenna let out a bright laugh and shook her head.

“Someone with homework.” She responded, heading for the stairs.

“Dinner at seven!” Debbie called after her, internally cringing at how domestic it sounded.

A couple seconds later, Lenna’s bedroom door closed with a short click. Rose sighed and continued to stare at the sketch before dropping it back down onto the table.

“Where’s the Nutella?”

“Thanks for letting me know, Tam. Good luck with the kids.”

With a sigh, Debbie hung up the phone and placed it back onto the kitchen counter.

“What did Tammy want?” Lou inquired, leaning against the counter with her coffee cup clutched in her hands.

“All three of the kids and Daphne are sick, and since Len babysat the other night, she just wanted to give us a heads up.”

As if on cue, the sound of a violent coughing fit filled the apartment, and both Lou and Debbie grimaced. It lasted so long that they were surprised to see Lenna still standing when she slumped down the stairs.

“I’m gonna be late.” Lenna mumbled, hurrying to the door with as much speed as she could muster.

She was wearing a black, slightly oversized hoodie under her leather jacket, with the hood up, and what Debbie recognized to be her flannel-lined jeans, which they had bought for the days that she needed to walk to the train in the harsh, New York winter. It was the middle of September—no weather for such an outfit.

“Stop.” Lou drawled.

Lenna came to an immediate halt, stiffening with her back still turned to Lou and Debbie.
“Turn around.”

With her shoulders now slumped in defeat, Lenna turned to face the two women, keeping her eyes glued to the ground. Debbie placed her coffee cup down and made her way to Lenna, immediately pulling her hood back and holding the back of her hand to her forehead. Lenna’s skin was clammy and pale, her eyes void of the usual vibrancy that they held. Debbie’s eyes widened when she felt the heat radiating off of her.

“My god, Lenna.” She exhaled, shaking her head.

“I’m fine.” Lenna muttered as a chill ran through her body, accompanied by a cough that was rooted deep in her lungs.

Lou strode over, mimicking her fiancé’s actions and placing the back of her hand against Lenna’s forehead.

“No. Absolutely no school. Upstairs.” She insisted.

“But- “

“Lenna, upstairs and in bed. I’ll be up in a couple minutes.”

With an exhausted sigh, Lenna dropped her backpack back in front of the coat rack where it always was and began the long trek back up the stairs. Lou moved back to the kitchen and put the tea kettle on the stove before grabbing the coffee mug that Lenna had claimed as her own.

“Do we own a thermometer?” Debbie wondered aloud, causing Lou to pause in what she was doing.

“I don’t think so.”

“Medicine?”

“Constance took the rest of the aspirin.”

A deep sigh floated from Debbie’s lungs and she grabbed her coat.

“What else should I get?” She asked.

Again, Lou paused. The tea kettle began to whistle behind her, and she used the time it took to grab it and pour the water into Lenna’s mug to consider her answer.

“I have no idea.”

Before Debbie could answer, another set of violent and painful-sounding coughs tore through Lenna’s lungs, and they heard it loud and clear on the first floor.

“I’ll call Tammy.”

And with that, Debbie was on a mission, out the door with her phone pressed to her ear. Lou bounded up the stairs, taking them two at a time and attempting to not spill the tea she was carrying. Lenna had left her bedroom door open, and when Lou walked in, her heart sank. Lenna had changed back into her pajamas and was now curled up on top of her comforter, the fabric clutched in her hand, shivering furiously. Lou let out a sad sigh and placed the mug onto the bedside table and leaned over Lenna. She placed her hand on her shoulder and tried her best to bury the panic that rose in her chest when the temperature of Lenna’s skin burned through the thick material of her hoodie.
“Lenna?” She whispered, shaking her awake gently.

All that Lou got in response was a weak whimper as Lenna attempted to force her eyes open, only being able to keep them open for a second or two at a time. Lou again noticed the way the teen was shivering despite the beads of sweat that were forming on her forehead, causing strands of hair to cling to her face.

“Are you cold, angel?”

Lenna answered with a slow, barely noticeable nod.

“Okay, can you scoot this way a bit?”

Lou helped Lenna move closer to the edge of the bed, just enough so she could free the comforter out from under her. Gingerly, she covered Lenna with the blanket and made sure she was somewhat warm enough. Immediately, Lenna curled into a ball, pulling her arms and knees to her chest.

“Everything hurts.” She whimpered, her voice weak with exhaustion.

“I know, sweetheart.” Lou responded softly, smoothing down Lenna’s hair. “Debbie went out to get some medicine, she should be back soon and we’ll get you feeling better.”

Lou sat on the edge of the bed, her hand still running smoothly over Lenna’s hair, lulling the young woman to sleep. Just as Lou thought she had finally been able to get to sleep, Lenna’s exhausted voice filtered out, muffled from the comforter being pulled around her chin.

“Mom?”

Lou’s heart nearly leapt from her chest, but she maintained her composure. Swallowing thickly, responded.

“Yeah, baby?”

“C-can you hold me?”

Completely taken aback, Lou hesitated. After a beat, she stood up from her position on the edge of the mattress and walked to the other side. Careful not to make the bed shift too much, she slid under the comforter and propped herself up on pillows so she was just at a forty-five-degree angle. Without any hesitation, Lenna flipped over and curled into her mother’s side, resting her head on her chest and throwing her arm around her waist. Lou wrapped her arm protectively around Lenna’s shoulders, pulling her close and pressing a lingering kiss to her forehead.

“Get some sleep.” She whispered.

As Lenna faded out of consciousness, Lou got a good look at her room for the first time since she had been living with them. There was an intimidatingly high pile of sketchbooks teetering on the edge of Lenna’s desk, next to the laptop that Lou and Debbie had surprised her with the other day. One section of her carpeted floor was covered in cardboard, having been turned into a makeshift painting area. A primed canvas lay flat on the floor with multitudes of brushes and paint bottles lined up next to it. Held onto the wall by scores of thumbtacks were numerous sketches, some of which were people, but most of them were landscapes. She still had absolutely no idea how Lenna had become so talented. Of course, parents were always biased when it came to their kid’s talents, but Lenna was truly, genuinely, naturally talented.

The sound of the loft door closing broke Lou from her thoughts, and she listened as Debbie’s heels
clicked against the stairs, each click getting louder as she approached. Moments later, Debbie appeared in the doorway with a large, brown paper grocery bag in her arms. Her eyes fell on Lou and Lenna, and her heart soared. Lenna was clinging to her mother like a koala, while Lou held her protectively, making it clear that she had no intention of letting go any time soon, regardless of the fact that she was probably setting herself up to be sick next.

Debbie made eye contact with Lou, and the raw, unadulterated emotion in her eyes was almost overwhelming.

“She called me ‘mom’.” Lou whispered with a wide grin.

Debbie smiled brightly as she moved further into the room and placed the grocery bag on the nightstand next to Lenna’s untouched, long-forgotten tea. Slowly, she leaned over and gave Lou a quick kiss before kissing her fingertips and gingerly pressing them to Lenna’s forehead, not wanting to wake her. Lenna stirred a bit, letting out a breath that was really more of a wheeze. There was a distinct crackle in her lungs, and Lou all but flinched at the sound.

“Tam says it’s a nasty respiratory flu. She’s worried that Michael is going to need to go to the hospital.”

Lou’s eyes widened in a panic that Debbie had never seen before, and she rushed to console her.

“It’s only because he’s so young, babe. It hits kids harder than teenagers.”

Lou let the rationalization sink in before she relaxed back onto the pillows that were propping her up. The sudden movement jolted Lenna enough that she stirred again.

“Deb…is that you?” Lenna mumbled, barely awake enough to even open her eyes.

“Yeah, honey. It’s me.” Debbie smiled, sitting on the edge of the bed and brushing a strand of hair away from Lenna’s eyes.

“Medicine?”

Lenna attempted to push herself up, but was soon overtaken by another coughing fit. Debbie lunged for the grocery bag, digging for cough medicine, while Lou did what she could to comfort Lenna. Lou’s hand traced slow, relaxing circles in the middle of Lenna’s back as her body convulsed with each cough that tore through her lungs. Once the coughing subsided, Lou wiped away the tears that had spilled over from Lenna’s eyes and continued to rub her back. Swiftly, Debbie handed Lenna the medicine, waiting for her to place the pills into her mouth before lifting the mug to Lenna’s lips herself, knowing that Lenna’s hands were shaking far too much to go without spilling the tea. Gratefully, Lenna took a generous sip of the tea, humming at the soothing effect of the peppermint.

Without another word, Lenna laid back down against Lou, her eyes fluttering shut once again. Unlike earlier, each breath was shallow and accompanied by a light wheeze. Debbie frowned and looked to Lou, who’s eyes were glued to Lenna, as if she would disappear at any moment. Without hesitation, Debbie kicked off her heels and moved so she sat on the other side of Lenna with her back against the headboard. She reached over, and her hand found its place in Lou’s hair, raking through blonde tresses while Lenna slept fitfully between them. Lou and Debbie shared a quick, concerned glance before both of their eyes travelled back to Lenna, and Debbie sighed.

“This is about to get a lot worse before it gets any better.”
Thank you so much for reading! I love and adore you all! Let me know what you think in the comments :) 

End Notes

Love and adoration to all of you for reading this!

-Cam

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!