The Minister's Daughter

by This_Is_A_Good_Sign

Summary

Carmilla is new to town after her father had accepted a new job. She was always compared to her brother, considering Will was always considered the perfect child.

She makes an interesting group of friends, and more happens to her than expected.

Notes

This is my first multi-chapter fanfic.

See the end of the work for more notes.
It was a warm July day when Carmilla got out of her dad's car. She'd been sitting in there for 15 minutes not wanting to get out. Carmilla was new to this small town. Her dad had gotten a new job and uprooted his family from the big city to this small suburb.

Her mother and brother had arrived the day before, while Carmilla offered to drive up with her dad. She mostly just wanted a reason to stay in the city longer. She was tired and mad. She didn't want to be here.

Once out of the car, she leaned against the driver side door, looking up at this new, white, two story house. She sighed loudly and dramatically.

"Come on, kid. You'll love it here!" Henry Karnstein said.

He looked down at his daughter and smiled as he wrapped his arm around her shoulder. She didn't return the smile, but exhaled sharply as she pushed herself off the car.

"Which one is my room?" she asked.

"Top of the stairs and to the right." He explained, while pointing at the last window on the second floor.

"Great."

Carmilla started walking towards the new house. She had just stepped on to the porch, when her dad called her name.

"Carmilla!"

Carmilla turned slowly, to face her father. Her eyes were rolling to the back of her head, but were blocked by her dark sunglasses.

"Yeah?"

"Just try, that's all I'm asking. And you might want to change your attitude before you speak to your mother. You know she's already on edge with the move and unpacking."

"Fine."

"That's the spirit." Henry mumbled under his breath, sarcastically, as he watched his daughter enter the house with her head low and shoulders slumped.

Carmilla entered the unfamiliar house and sighed again. She missed the apartment they had that looked over the city.
She tried to familiarize herself with the house. Straight ahead was a bright, white and blue kitchen. The sun shining brightly against the newly painted cabinets. To her right was the staircase to go upstairs.

She turned to her left and walked into the living room. It was a spacious room with a brick fireplace and white walls. The two couches had already been set in place creating an L shape with a small table in between and a large coffee table in the middle. She looked around noticing her mother had been working very hard since she arrived because there were only a few boxes left in this room. Mostly everything was either unpacked and put away or set out. A large family photo hung over the fireplace. Carmilla stared at it remembering the day it was taken. All four members of the Karnstein family smiling big at the camera. She was eight years old and her brother, Will, had just turned six. Her thoughts were immediately interrupted.

"Carmilla!"

Carmilla put on the best smile she could as she turned towards the voice. Lilita Karnstein walked into the room from the kitchen.

"Hi, Mother."

"Why is your father standing out in the yard?" Lilita asked, looking outside the large bay window that had a view of the front yard.

"I don't know. Realizing he made a mistake?"

"Carmilla Karnstein, please, do not start."

"Mother, I don't want to be here!"

"It's not your decision to make. We had to move here, sweetheart."

"It's not fair!"

"Life isn't always fair, Carmilla."

The fact that her mother's tone stayed neutral made Carmilla's blood boil. Why was everyone okay with this? Her blood started to rise to the surface, and she was about to shout at her mother, when Henry walked in.

"Carmilla?" Henry said.

"What?!" Carmilla shouted.

"There is no need for that attitude and do not raise your voice towards me or your mother. Your room is upstairs to the right. End of the hall."

"So you've mentioned." Carmilla stated, sarcastically.

"Go, now!" Henry said, sternly.

"Fine!" Carmilla shouted as she stomped out of the room.

She made her way up the stairs muttering under her breath. When she reached the top, her brother, Will, popped his head out of his room.

"Kitty, isn't this great?!"
"Fuck off, Will!" she said before slamming her door shut.

She stood behind the door and stared at this new room. All her belongings were already in there and it seemed her mom had started to unpack for her. Her bed was against the wall across from her door and her desk setup immediately to her left. She had two windows. One window that looked over the street and another that looked at the house beside theirs. She walked over to window to look at the house next door. She was met with a closed window and white curtains. Luckily her blinds had already been installed and she pulled the string to cover her room from what could possibly be nosey neighbors. She made her way over to her other window and looked out to see nothing but stillness. No one was outside and nothing was moving. Not even a car drove by.

"It's too fucking quiet," she muttered to herself. With the silence consuming her, she bent down in front of her to turn on her stereo. She had two decently sized speakers. She took out her phone and plugged in her AUX cord. She knew exactly what she needed to listen to at this moment and hit play. The music of The Distillers blared around her, playing the music as loud as she could, for as long as she could.

Within 5 minutes, she could hear her mother screaming her name, but she ignored it. She laid down on her bed with a huff and just let the music take over her existence. She pulled her black comforter around her trying to calm down and realize that it was true; she had no choice in this move and she was permanently stuck there for the next two years before she could go off to college. That's when she heard banging on her door.

She got up, and walked over to the door, pulling it open, and being face to face with her mother.

"Carmilla Karnstein, turn that music down right now!"

Carmilla knew she would be in more trouble if she argued. She didn't say anything and walked over to the volume on her stereo turning down so she couldn't even feel the bass of the drum.

"Sorry." She said, not even tempting sincerity.

"I don't know why you listen to that devil music anyways. It's terrible." Her mother complained.

"Because I like it."

"It's foul and has terrible language. You should try listening to William's music. It's also rock music and very clean."

"You mean that contemporary Christian crap? Are you serious?"

"We do not use that word, Carmilla and you know that. When you're done brooding over this new change and finish unpacking your room, I expect you to be downstairs to help unpack the rest of the house. Do you understand?"

Carmilla knew if she gave any sarcastic remark, she would not like the outcome. Carmilla and her mother rarely got along. Carmilla just usually played nice so her mother wouldn’t annoy her as much. But when Carmilla’s mom was mad or upset with her, she knew the outcome was never good. She quickly let go of her anger for one second to reply as nice as she could.

"Yes, mother. I understand. I also apologize about my music being too loud."

"You're forgiven. Now get to work. I hope you like this paint color, even though your father and I are not pleased about it."
Carmilla was grateful when her parents let her choose her new room color. They had the walls painted a deep red color. It contrasted nicely with all her black furniture. Black being her favorite color.

“Well I like it.” Carmilla said with a satisfying smile.

“I’m sure you do.” Her mother said, coldly. ”Anyway, at 6:30, we have to head over to the church for a welcoming dinner and I expect you to dress ladylike.”

“Why can’t I wear this?”

Carmilla was wearing black ripped jeans, and black t-shirt that has seen better days. She has a red flannel wrapped around her waist, a silver studded belt poking out under the tie and old combat boots.

Her mother smiled, and looked at her daughter as if she was crazy for even asking permission to wear what she had on.

"I expect you to wear the new dress I bought you."

“What new dress?"

“It’s in your closet dear.”

Carmilla looked to her right and could see the dress in her bare closet. It was the only thing in there. It was white with blue flowers on it. It was not her style and could possibly be the ugliest dress Carmilla had ever seen.

"But mother..."

"No buts Carmilla. Your father is the new minister of this church and we have to make a good impression."

With that, Lilita walked away and Carmilla closed her door turning and pressing her body against it. She looked at the dress again and frowned. Carmilla hated anything that was white. Pushing the dress from her mind for the moment, she moved to one of the boxes and opened it, relieved to see her books. She turned her stereo back up, but not as loud as before, and started unpacking her books onto her bookshelf.

Chapter End Notes

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"Carmilla!" her mother shouted, from downstairs.

"We need to leave now if we want to get there on time, so let’s get moving!"

Carmilla had been going through all her boxes to find something dark to cover her shoulders. The dress was a little too big, and she had to safety pin the straps so the dress would stay up. She also couldn’t find any of her shoes. She decided to give up. With a heavy sigh, Carmilla went downstairs in her new white dress. It held tightly in the bust and then flowed down below that, causing a pouffy effect that she thought made her look pregnant. She was uncomfortable. Her pale skin looked almost ghostly white against the color of the dress. There were printed flowers in blue, and she felt like they were creeping up the dress as if to choke her. The only thing she was grateful for is that this dress had pockets.

When she hit the landing of the stairs, the rest of the family was spread out on the two dark brown leather couches, laughing and talking. She could see her dad smiling at her mom, and Will laughing at whatever had just been said. She felt like an outcast viewing her happy family.

I don’t belong in this family. They’re so happy, smiling, laughing and I feel like I could scream, cry and runaway. They look like the perfect family and I don’t fit in, Carmilla thought as she watched her family from the bottom of the stairs.

Her father saw her first and stood.

"You look beautiful, princess." He said, smiling. He walked over to her and pressed a light kiss to her temple.

"Um thanks."

Carmilla shifted her weight scared to tell her mother she didn't have any shoes. "Uh mother, I don't know where my shoes are packed and I don't have a sweater to cover my shoulders."

She hated the sound of her voice when she actually had to care about her appearance. She never cared but when it came to church, for her mother's sake, she had to. She had to hide a lot of things about herself because of her family’s involvement with the church. She couldn’t stand it.

"I know, dear. I've got a new pair for you in here, along with a new sweater. Come join us."

Carmilla entered the living room and knew the only reason her mother didn't just leave the extra items in her bedroom was to see her reaction. Carmilla could see a sky blue sweater on the coffee table and white heels on the floor just waiting for her. She had to swallow her anger. She didn't wear pastels ever and that's because she hated them more than anything. Her mother had a huge smile on her face. She was excited and thought she had picked something out that Carmilla would actually like, even though Carmilla told her constantly how much she hated to wear bright colors.

"Well, darling. What do you think?" Her mother asked excitedly.

Carmilla looked to her father. He seemed apologetic and shrugged his shoulders. His way of saying he had no word in this and that he was sorry. Will started laughing knowing how much she hated this.
“What are you laughing at?” Carmilla asked.

“Oh, kitty, you’re going to look so beautiful.” Will replied, sarcastically.

“William, stop it.” Her father said, sternly.

Carmilla’s dad always stood up for her, which she was always grateful for.

Carmilla put on the best fake smile she could even though she felt the torture and dread spread through her body.

"Thank you, mother. It's lovely." She said while slipping on the sky blue sweater and the pasty white heels.

"I thought the blue would go perfect with your skin and add contrast to the navy on the dress."

"It's very nice. Thank you, mother."

"I'm glad you like it, now we better get going. I refuse to be late for this."

“Relax, Lilita. We have plenty of time.” Henry said, while standing and ushering his family out the door. Carmilla was the last one to step out with her head down and fists clenched.

“Hey, Kid.” He said while locking the door. Carmilla didn’t speak, but turned to look at him.

“I’m really sorry about this, but you know how important appearances are to your mother. Especially first impressions.”

Carmilla was done talking about it. “It’s fine.” She said and she descended the stairs to the car. *Let’s just get this done with,* she thought to herself.

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After a half hour drive, they finally arrived at the church. It had an eerie feeling to it. It was an old brick church, with a white steeple, surrounded by trees and a wooded area. The parking lot was just grass, with white posts sticking up to indicate parking spaces. On the left side of the church stood a white building. It had an L shape with multiple entrances, connected to the church. Behind the church was a medium sized, old graveyard. The whole area gave Carmilla the creeps. A few cars were already parked in the grassy parking lot, when they arrived. They could see the lights on in the L shaped building.

“Here we are.” Henry said, as he opened his car door.

“It’s very dreary dear, but lovely.” Lilita smiled at her husband.

They all got out of the car and Will ran up to his dad to tell him he loved it.

“I’m glad, son.” Carmilla didn’t say anything, she just looked around.

“Well as you can see, this is a very old Southern Baptist Church. It’s over a hundred years old. Let’s go see the inside of the church. I got the keys the last time I visited the congregation when they told me I had been accepted as the new Minister.” Henry stated.

They followed Henry up the 6 steps to the porch of the church and waited for him to unlock the large
oak doors. They stepped inside to a little foyer. To their left and right were tables holding all kinds of information, Sunday School books and other things. They had a board on the wall with their recent activities and photographs. The carpet was dark grey and the walls were half wood molding and white. More white, Carmilla thought.

“So this is where everyone comes in, in the morning. To the left and right are two classrooms for little children. They have speakers in them for the adults to listen to my sermons while they watch the kids. And here is the entrance to the sanctuary.”

There were two doors in front of them on opposite sides. In the middle was a wall that held old church photos, consisting mostly of the congregation through the years. Some in color and some in black and white. The family went in first while Carmilla studied the pictures. I wonder if there are any sinners in these photos. She smiled at herself. She followed the rest of her family into the sanctuary. The grey carpet from the foyer followed down two aisles to split three rows of pews. The pews were all made from wood with beige cushions to sit on. The church had six stained glass windows, displaying the Stations of the Cross. The pulpit was in the front on a little platform, an organ to its right and a piano to its left. Directly behind the pulpit was a choir loft. In the middle of the choir loft was the Baptism pool. It had a landscape painted as a backdrop.

“These four doors to the left and right are just more rooms for classes and other activities. They mostly use it for storage, now, but it used to be the Sunday School classrooms. Behind the choir loft are the bathrooms, newly redone. So, what do you think?”

“It certainly is smaller than our last church, but I like it.” Lilita smiled.

“That was my favorite attribute. It’s small, but the congregation was much more warm than they were in the city. They actually have more of a community here with the same regular members coming to worship each Sunday. Kids, what do you think?”

Will spoke up first. “I love it, Dad! Are there any kids here my age?”

“Oh they have a huge youth program, Will. You two will love it. I already met some of the guys and they’re happy to show you around.”

“Awesome!”

“Carmilla?”

Carmilla was in the choir loft, looking at the landscape. She thought it was stupid looking and didn’t understand how it fit in with the Baptism pool.

“Carmilla!” Her mother said sternly and got her attention.

“Huh? Oh… yeah, it’s great, Dad.”

“Thank you, honey. There are only a few teens here your age, but I’m sure you’ll like one of them. I’m going to introduce you to one of the deacon’s daughters. Her name is Laura and she said she would be more than happy to show you around.”

“Great.” Carmilla said, sarcastically.

“Carmilla Karnstein, you better be nice to her.” Lilita said, with a harshness to her voice.

Carmilla ignored her and the family turned to exit through one of the side doors.
“This leads us to fellowship building.”

They walked along the sidewalk in front of the L shaped building and went in the front doors. To their right was a long hall with 5 classrooms. They were in front of what looked to be a nursery, next to that seemed to be a room for early elementary aged kids. The classrooms turned more adult towards the end. They turned around a corner to their left and entered a large kitchen followed by rows and rows of tables.

“Pastor Henry, we’re glad to finally have you here!” A man said, excitedly as soon as they entered.

“Thank you, Mr. Hollis. My family and I are so grateful for this new spiritual journey.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes. She hated comments like “spiritual journey” or that this was “G-d’s will”.

“Pastor, please don’t call me Mr. Hollis. That goes for the rest of your family.” He smiled at Lilita, Will and Carmilla. They smiled warmly at him except for Carmilla. She rolled her eyes trying to ignore the situation until she got a stern look from her father. She changed her attitude and gave a small smile to the large man in front of them.

Mr. Hollis, stepped forward with his hand out. “You must be Mrs. Karnstein. Welcome to Greenland Baptist Church.”

“Thank you very much, Mr.?”

“Please, call me Rich.”

“Nice to meet you, Rich.”

“And who are these beautiful children?”

“This is our son, Will and our daughter, Carmilla.”

“It’s nice to meet you both and welcome to Greenland Baptist. You kids will love it here. How old are you two?”

Carmilla knew this game and let Will speak for her. He was always so eager to talk to church members. Carmilla ignored them at all cost, slipping out of the room before anyone could talk to her.

“I’m 14 and my sister is 16, but she’s turning 17 soon.”

“Well, happy early birthday to you, Carmilla.”

“Thank you.” Carmilla mumbled, barely making eye contact. She felt her mother nudge her in the back and she smiled at Mr. Hollis.

“Well, we have a bunch of kids here around those ages. I assume you will all be going to the same school when it starts up next month.” Rich turned to Henry, “I’ll make sure they’re both in good hands.”

“Thank you, Rich.”

“My daughter should be on her way with a few of her friends. She’s about your age, Carmilla.”

“That was the girl I told you about. Laura is her name, right?”

“Yep, my little Laura.”
Great, I get to hang out with little Laura, Carmilla thought to herself as she rolled her eyes.

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More people arrived and the family was constantly being reintroduced to member after member. Apparently, there were a lot of families that had kids and the majority of them were coming with Laura. The age range of this church went from babies to the elderly and everything in between. Before lining up to eat, the family was introduced to the whole congregation. Henry stood up and made a small speech. Carmilla barely listened. It was too religious for her tastes. He then led the congregation in prayer. Carmilla took this opportunity to look around the room. It seemed everyone’s eyes were closed with some “Yes, Jesus” being whispered. She continued to look until she locked eyes with Mr. Hollis. She smiled at him, bowed her head, and closed her eyes.

Once the prayer of eternity was over, people started to line up for the table that had been laid out. Pots, pans and bowls of food were aligned along the large counter with plates and silverware at the end. Everyone was meant to bring a dish of their own specialty. People were laughing and smiling as they put as much food on their plates as possible. At least this food looks delicious, Carmilla thought as she loaded up her plate with chicken, mashed potatoes, rice and vegetables.

“What can I get you two to drink?” A woman, with a toothy grin asked when they reached the end of the counter.

Something with alcohol would be nice, Carmilla thought while smiling to herself.

“Coke for both us, please.” Will answered.

They walked together to the table setup in the front, where their parents were sitting with Mr. Hollis. He was loud and smiling, and their dad was laughing. They sat down with Carmilla sitting as far away from Mr. Hollis as possible.

“So, Will, which grade will you be going into this year?”

“I’m starting high school this year, Mr. Hollis!” Will said, with excitement in his voice.

“Well that sounds great! What about you, Carmilla?”

“Oh, uh, I’ll be a junior sir.”

“Just like my daughter, Laura. She’s a straight-A student, invested in the school’s newspaper program, along with a few clubs.”

“She’s a great girl, Carmilla. I thought it was so nice of her to offer to take you around.” Henry added, looking at Carmilla.

“Sounds great.”

“I will warn you though,” Rick paused to take a sip of his drink, “She can be very animated when it comes to the things she loves and she tends to ramble. She can also be a little clumsy, but overall she’s a good kid.”

“Duly noted, Mr. Hollis.” She sounds like a dweeb, Carmilla thought. I don’t need someone to show me around. I’m better off on my own, I’m always better on my own. Now I have to hang out with this girl who sounds like she is just going to annoy the crap out of me.

“Ah, here she is now. Laura, honey, come meet the Pastor’s family!” Henry shouted.
Carmilla didn’t even bother to look up. She just continued to eat her food, with her head down.

“Hi, Mr. Karnstein. Nice to see you again.”

“Nice to see you as well, Laura. Let me introduce you to my family. This is my wife, Lilita.”

“Nice to meet you, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“Likewise, dear. I love your dress.”

“Thank you.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes. *It’s the daughter she’s always wanted.*

“And this is my son, William.”

“Hey, Laura. Nice to meet you.” Will extended his arm as he shook Laura’s hand. Carmilla finished chewing her last bit of food before she was introduced.

“And this is my daughter, Carmilla.”

Carmilla looked up and was surprised by the beautiful woman standing in front of her. Honey brown hair and smile that could light up any room.

“Uh… hi.” Carmilla stuttered.

“It’s nice to meet you.” Laura smiled a little bigger as she made eye contact with Carmilla.

“It’s definitely nice to meet you.” Carmilla replied. *Maybe things won’t be so bad after all.*

Chapter End Notes

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Laura and Carmilla stared at each other a little longer before Rich cleared his throat, bringing both girls back to reality.

"Laura, why don't you get some food and join us?"

"Oh! Actually Dad, Laf and I ate before we got here because we were starving."

"Why would you do that when you know there was going to be food here?"

"We were hungry and it was hours ago. I thought I would be hungry by the time I got here, but no such luck. I’m sorry, Dad.” Laura hesitated, smiling to the Karnstein’s, embarrassed, before she spoke again. “I'm going to go find Laf and Perry."

Laura started to walk away from the table.

"Uh, Laura, aren't you forgetting someone?"

Laura looked back at her father confusion stretched all over face. Rich nodded his direction in the way of Carmilla. Carmilla had been hoping Laura would save her from this table, but put her head down when Laura started looking in her direction. She was playing with the extra gravy left on her plate when she heard Laura say to her father, "Oh, of course! Silly me."

He smiled at her.

"Uh, Carmilla? That's how you pronounce it, right?"

Carmilla looked up from her empty plate with a small smile on her face.

"Uh... Yeah. You got it." Carmilla replied.

"Oh, good. I hate when I mess up someone's name."

Carmilla just stared and hummed as a response.

"Anyway... If you're done eating, would you like to meet a few other people our age? They're really great. I promise."

"Why not, cupcake..." Carmilla answered, with a slight exhale and smile.

"Carmilla, her name is Laura. Do not start with the pet," Lilita stopped herself for a moment, smiling
she continued. "Nicknames."

"Sure, Mother."

Carmilla got up with her cup and plate in hand while a tall, silly, puppy of a teen boy came up to the table.

"Hey, good looking." He said to Carmilla with a smile.

Carmilla immediately rolled her eyes. "Pleasure," was the nicest thing she could come up with that wouldn't make her mother mad.

"Kirsch, don't start with the flirting. This is Carmilla, Pastor Karnstein's daughter." Laura said, coming up beside Carmilla. She smells so good, Carmilla thought before shaking any thoughts like that from her mind.

Kirsch immediately stood up straight and turned to Henry. "Good evening, Pastor and Mrs. Pastor," he said, with a smile.

"Mrs. Karnstein is fine," Lilita said.

"Everyone this is Kirsch. He plays football at the high school. One of the best quarterbacks in the county," Rich said to the table.

"Well isn't that great! It's nice to meet you, son," Henry said, looking at Kirsch.

"Kirsch, this is Will Karnstein. You're a year older, but would you mind showing him around sometime?" Rich asked.

"No problem, Mr. Hollis. Hey, Will, come on. I'll introduce you to some of my bros."

"Awesome! Thanks, man." Will got up and followed him, with a huge smile on his face.

"Anyways, Carmilla, let's go!" Laura said, pulling them away from the adults.

When they were a few tables away from their parents, Laura started talking. "Sorry about Kirsch, he can be a little extreme, but I promise he's a really nice guy."


"So my friends are outside. Why are you still holding your plate?"

"I don't know where the trash can is, sweetie."

Laura paused for a moment at the second nickname. "Oh, right, it's over there by the other door."

"Thanks."

Carmilla walked away from Laura and couldn't help but feel eyes on her back. She turned quickly to see Laura move her eyes to something on the counter, a blush forming on her cheeks. Carmilla laughed to herself and dumped her plate. On her way back, she stopped at the woman serving drinks. She asked if she could have more Coke. The woman smiled and got her a fresh cup with ice and poured the Coke into it.

"Thanks," Carmilla smiled. She walked away with her new filled cup and rejoined Laura.
They walked outside where there were a lot of kids running around, one almost knocking into Carmilla, causing her to lift her cup so it wouldn't spill.

"Billy! Watch where you're going!"

"Sorry, Laura," Billy replied.

"Sorry about that," Laura said to Carmilla.

"No harm done."

"So my friends should be right over there," Laura said, pointing in the direction on the other side of church. There looked to be two people hanging out by a car. One moving her hands frantically while the other just nodded, illuminated by the street lamp near by.

Laura started walking slowly while Carmilla followed. Carmilla kept her head down, looking at the grass. Even though she tried to act confident and strong, she was always awkward and shy around new people.

“Hey guys!” Laura said, with a smile on her face.

“Hey Laura!” “What’s up, L?” the two responded.

“Guys, this is Carmilla, Pastor Henry’s daughter!” Laura said, holding out her hands to put Carmilla on display.

“Oh! Hi, Carmilla. I’m Perry.”

Carmilla finally looked up to see a wide-eyed, smiling person with curly red hair staring at her.

“Nice to meet you,” Carmilla replied.

“And this is Susan,” Perry added, pointing to the person beside her. She was little shorter with short red hair. Carmilla liked the way it was cut.

Carmilla noticed how this “Susan” flinched at her name coming from Perry’s lips.

“Please, call me Lafontaine or Laf.” they said awkwardly.

Carmilla couldn’t help but notice the way Perry’s body went tense at the name of Lafontaine but she wasn’t sure why.

“Nice to meet you, Laf.”

“Nice to meet you too, Carmilla.”

There was an awkward pause while everyone looked around at each other, smiling and nodding. Finally, Laura piped in and saved the day.

“So, Carmilla is going to be going to school with us. I figured we could all get together one day before school starts so we could show Carmilla around.”

“Yes! That sounds fun. I can start planning now,” Perry said, rushing to the closest car nearby and getting out a notebook.

“Calm down, Perr,” Laf interrupted, “She just got here. We can just drive around and show her stuff.
If she sees something she likes or wants to do, then we will stop. There really isn’t that much to do.”

“Actually, anything is fine. I know nothing about this town so I’m down for whatever,” Carmilla answered.

Perry quickly put her pen to her notebook and started jotting things down as fast as she could, talking to herself out loud.

“Carmilla, I would just like to point out that you’ve unlocked the crazy with this one. She will now never leave you alone and make sure you like everything she does. She will help you with almost anything and will be very animated about it. Exhibit A,” Laf said, pointing to Perry.

Carmilla laughed and smiled. She looked over at Laura, who smiled at her also.

“Laura!”

They turned to see Rich walking towards them.

“Yeah, Dad?”

“Everyone is heading out or heading home.”

“Oh, okay.”

“Hi girls!” Mr. Hollis said to Perry and Lafontaine.

Carmilla couldn’t help but notice how, again, Lafontaine seemed to flinch the term girls. She also didn’t miss the way Laura’s eyes became a little sympathetic towards Lafontaine.

Perry looked up, “Hi Mr. Hollis. You’re looking well.”

“Well thank you Perry. How are your folks?”

“Oh, everyone is fine Mr. Hollis. They wanted to come tonight, but mom had to work late and dad had some extra errands he needed to run. You know mom and dad, always busy.”

“Well, I hope to see them Sunday.”

“You will, Mr. Hollis. They wouldn’t miss Pastor Karnstein’s first sermon!”

“And Susan”, again more tension in their body. “How is your family?”

“All good, Mr. Hollis. All good.”

“Splendid.”

There was another pause before Rich turned to Perry.

“Perry, you’re working really hard over there.”

“I’m making a list of places to take Carmilla to when we show her around the town. I’ve already got about 10 things.”

“Well, don’t forget the Pavilion!”

“Already on there, sir. Top of the list.”
“Good. Well Laura, I’m heading home. Don’t stay out too late.”

“I won’t Dad.”

“Bye girls and nice meeting you Carmilla.”

“Uh yeah, you too.”

They all said bye as Mr. Hollis walked away. “So what is the Pavilion?” Carmilla asked, curiously.

“It’s an amusement park. It’s in it’s last season though. They’re going to tear it down,” Laura replied.

“Why?” Carmilla asked.

“They’re not making any money. It’s a shame. It’s been here since the 1950’s, but it only has a couple of roller coasters and I guess people now want the big ones that turn you upside down and all around.”

“Huh. That suck… uh stinks,” Carmilla corrected herself. Her mother hated it when she used any type of “profanity”. She couldn’t use the words like “crap” or “sucks”. She even got in trouble once for saying “shut up” to Will.

Laura started laughing. “What’s so funny?” Carmilla asked.

“Carmilla, you can say ‘sucks.’ We all use worse language than that.”

Carmilla chuckled and was about to reply when she heard her name being called. She could see her mother walking towards them. “Carmilla, we’re ready to go.”

“Uh, looks like I have to go. It was nice meeting you guys. I guess, I’ll see you Sunday.”

“Carmilla?” Laura piped up.

“Yeah?”

“I can give you a ride home if you like. I just have to drop off Laf and Perry, but we could get to know each other a little more if you wanted.”

“Thanks for the offer, but I would have to ask my mom…”

“Mrs. Karnstein?” Laura practically yelled, walking over to Carmilla’s mother.

“Yes, dear?”

“Could I give Carmilla ride home?”

“Uh, sure dear, if it isn’t too much trouble.”

“Not at all, ma’am.”

“Okay, but I don’t want her to be out late. We do have things to do in the morning and still have to unpack.”

“Not a problem at all,” Laura said, smiling.

Laura walked back over to them, smiling. “Alright, lets go!”
“Wait, my mom was okay with it?”

“She didn’t seem to have a problem. Does she normally?”

“What? Uh, no. Thanks for asking.”

“No problem!” Laura smiled.

“Hey Laura!” Carmilla saw the Puppy run over to Laura and pick her up, hugging her.

“Kirsch stop!” Laura said while, laughing. “I’ll see you Sunday and you better be nice to Will. None of that Zeta bros shit, where you mess with him, haze him? Whatever you call it.”

“Scouts honor!” Kirsch said, while crossing his fingers. “Bye guys! See you Sunday.” Kirsch yelled as he walked over to a large black truck.

They all got into Laura’s Jeep. It was a dark green color with tan brown leather seats. The top was pulled back and it looked almost brand new.

“Nice car!” Carmilla said while settling into the front seat.

“Thanks. I had to beg my dad for it. He wanted me to get something more sturdy and something that didn’t have detachable walls, but I loved this car as soon as I saw it and I offered to help pay for it. He really can’t say ‘no’ to me.”

Laura started the engine and pulled out of the grassy parking lot onto the street. “So Perry, I’m going to drop you off first since you are the closest.”

“No problem, Laura. Carmilla, will you write down your email please?”

“Uh, why?”

“So I can send the itinerary for our day out. Also, this way I can get in touch with you incase changes occur.”

“People do have cell phones for this,” Carmilla added with a little snark, but it went unnoticed.

“Oh good. Add your number, too. Emergencies and stuff.”

Carmilla looked at Lafontaine, who just said, “I told you so” with a shrug and a smile. Carmilla took the notebook out of Perry’s hands and jotted down her email and phone number. She handed back to Perry who gasped sharply.

“What?!?” Laura said, slamming the brakes.

“Sorry Laura. It’s just, Carmilla you have beautiful handwriting.”

“Seriously, Perry. If I ruin my brake pads because of you, my dad will kill me. But the day I start stopping at your short gasps will be the day I get into a car accident.”

“Sorry, Laura.” Perry said again.

“I think I got a burn from my seatbelt when it locked.” Lafontaine added, rubbing where the seatbelt stopped against her chest.

“Oh don’t be so dramatic,” Perry said. “Anyway, Carmilla, did you take calligraphy or something?”
“No. When I learned how to write in cursive, I just really liked it so it stuck.”

“That’s interesting.”

“I guess. So what do you guys like to do for fun?” Carmilla asked, trying to take the attention away from herself. She hated when she felt like more than one pair of eyes were watching her, and she really didn’t like to talk about herself. These people were still new, and she still felt nervous. However, every time Laura looked at her and smiled, she couldn’t help but smile back, a little nervousness floating away.

“I love to be organized with everything,” Perry said, quickly.

“No kidding,” Carmilla said under breath. Laura heard her and stifled a laugh, looking at Carmilla with a smile.

“I also love to bake. Do you like brownies, Carmilla?”

“Yeah. They’re pretty good.”

“Well, I make the best ones you ever tasted. The list of things I can make goes on and on…”

“And on and on and on,” Lafontaine said, cutting Perry off. “Perry, you will have plenty of time to tell Carmilla all about the goodies you make when we hang out.”

“Which we will soon,” Laura added pulling up in front of Perry’s house. “I will see you guys soon and will send out my itinerary when it’s completed. Thanks for the ride, Laura.”

“No problem. Bye, Perry.”

“Bye, Perr.”

“It was nice meeting you, Carmilla.”

“It was nice meeting you, too!” I think, Carmilla thought to herself as Perry got out of the car.

They waited until she was inside the small house before Laura pulled out of the driveway and continued driving. Lafontaine leaned forward between the two front seats.

“I like science experiments.”

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“You asked what we were interested in. I’m interested in science, mostly biology, and I love to do all kinds of science experiments.”

“So you’re science geek?” Carmilla asked, smirking.

“If by geek, you mean genius, then yes! I love to see how things work together or lack for a better term, backfire.”

“Lafontaine almost set the school on fire last year,” Laura said.

“HEY! I got the fire extinguisher in time and everything was fine!”

“They almost got expelled, but Mr. Johnson, the science teacher, loves Lafontaine’s eagerness in class so he stood up for them.”
Carmilla noted that Laura didn’t refer to Lafontaine as she and would wait until the appropriate time to ask why. Maybe there is a little more culture to this small town than she thought there was.

“What about you?” Carmilla asked Laura.

“Um, I have a lot of interests. My favorite tv show is Dr. Who and I could watch it over and over again.”

“She has!” Lafontaine piped in again and Laura tapped her breaks to make Laf’s seat belt lock.

“Keep it up, Laf.”

“Okay, okay. I’m sorry.” Laf said, while rubbing her clavicle where the seat belt had dug into her skin.

“I love music, all kinds. I like being out in the sun, playing soccer or softball. I don’t know, I kind of like everything.”

“There has to be something you hate,” Carmilla added.

She could see Laura look back at Lafontaine in the mirror. They made eye contact and Lafontaine shrugged.

“Well, I think there are a lot of things that people hate, and maybe if I get to know you a little better I’ll share them with you.”

“Why can’t you do it now?”

“It’s personal.”

After that, the car ride got very quiet. No one said anything to anyone. Lafontaine and Carmilla just stared out of the windows while Laura kept her eye on the road. They pulled into a neighborhood and before long, pulled into a driveway of a larger one story house.

“This is me! Nice meeting you Carmilla and Laura, I will see soon.”

“Nice meeting you, too.”

“See you, Laf!”

Again, they waited until Lafontaine was in the house before Laura started to pull out of the driveway.

“So where do you live?” Laura asked.

“Oh, um, 2604 Commodores Street.”

“Hey, that’s not very far from me. I’m on Harbor Drive.”

“Cool.”

“You don’t know where that is, do you?”

“Not a clue.”

“It’s about a ten minute walk from your street,” Laura said, smiling.
“Ah… cool.”

Laura smiled and started driving. It was silent for a moment before Carmilla spoke.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Uh, sure.”

“I noticed that Laf seemed to flinch every time someone referenced her as a ‘she’ or ‘Susan’ and I noticed you referred to them with a pronoun. What’s that all about?”

“Oh, well I think that is something Lafontaine will tell you when they’re ready. It’s not really my place to say.”

“Oh, okay. I hope I wasn’t prying.”

“No, not at all. Laf is just a private person, as am I.”

“As am I,” Carmilla repeated.

“So what do you like to do for fun? What was the city like? How are you liking this small town compared to the city? Do you miss home? Do you…”

“Whoa, calm down there cutie. You’re going to hurt yourself.”

“Sorry, I tend to ramble.”

“Your dad warned me at the church.”

“Of course he did.”

“The city was awesome. We lived high enough to have a skyline and I miss that so much. I just got to this small town today so I’m not sure how I feel about it yet. I just miss home so much. It’s so quiet here and you have to drive everywhere. I looked out my window this afternoon and there was no noise and nothing going on. In the city, people were always on the street and cars were always honking or engines roaring.”

“I’m sure it’ll be an adjustment for you.”

“Yeah, but it’s like my mother said, we have no control over the decision and I just have to suck it up and deal with it because I can’t change it.”

“Do you get along with your mother?” Laura asked.

“That’s a question for another day, Cupcake.”

“That seems like a no.”

“Well maybe if I get to know you a little better, I’ll share that information with you.” Carmilla repeated Laura’s words and Laura just smiled, changing the subject.

“So what do you like to do for fun?”

Carmilla had been reminiscing about the city when Laura asked.

“Huh?”
“It was the only question you didn’t answer.”

“Hm, well I love to read. I have a huge book collection at home. I find it better than television. I love music and play the guitar. I’ve been trying to write my own stuff, but my mom gets mad anytime I make sound above a whisper apparently. But I’m hoping with the house, it’ll be a little easier. She didn’t want the neighbors to complain in the city.”

“Ah, what kind of music do you play?”

“Something that probably doesn’t interest you.”

“What does that mean?”

“I think it’s pretty clear we have different tastes in music.”

“Oh you think so, huh?”

“Yeah, you look like a One Direction, Taylor Swift kind of person.”

“There is nothing wrong with a little Taylor Swift in your life, but I honestly like everything. My iPod, when on shuffle, might surprise you. Besides, you’re the one in that pretty white dress while I’m wearing a black one.”

“Did you get to pick yours out?” Carmilla asked.

“Yes, of course.”

“Ah! Well see my mother made me wear this. I hate white.”

“Wanted to make a good first impression?”

“Exactly.”

“Which house is yours?”

Carmilla hadn’t even noticed her neighborhood coming into view. She was too busy looking at Laura.

“Uh, that one right over there.” Carmilla pointing to the only house without a light on outside.

“Well, when we hangout I will have to give your music a listen,” Laura said.

“I don’t think you’ll like it, but we can give it a shot.”

They sat there in silence before Laura blurted out, “Can I have your number?” She immediately started to ramble. “I mean so I can get in touch with you when we hang out and everything. It’ll make it easier than email, but believe me Perry is going to email you like crazy and…”

“Breathe, Cupcake. Here.”

Carmilla passed her phone to Laura and Laura passed her phone to Carmilla. They both put in their numbers and handed their phones back.

“Cool,” Laura said.

“Well, I guess I’ll see you soon.” Carmilla said, getting out of the car.
“I hope so.” Laura said, smiling.

“Good night, Laura.”

“Good night.”

Carmilla walked to her front door and waved as Laura pulled out of the driveway. She composed herself before going inside. She was smiling and actually felt a little bit of happiness about being in this small town. She felt like she had already made at least one friend, which never seemed to come easy for Carmilla.

Her parents were sitting on the couch, chatting quietly when Carmilla entered. “Glad to see you home in one piece,” Henry said.

“Yeah, here I am.”

“I hope you were polite to that young girl,” Lilita added.

“I was on my best behavior Mother, but it’s late so I’m going to head upstairs to bed. Good night.”

“Good night, sweetheart,” her father said, with a warm smile.

When she got upstairs, Will popped his head out of the door. Carmilla could hear his Christian Rock Music and she rolled her eyes. “Carmilla, I’m hanging out with Kirsch tomorrow and we’re going to play football if you want to come.”

“I’m good Will, but did you like Kirsch?”

“Yeah, he was really nice. He’s going to be a sophomore this year, but said I could still hang out with him and he’d show me around the school.”

“That’s good, Will.” Carmilla said, while smiling at her brother. She turned and started to walk down the hall.

“Hey... Carmilla?”

“Yeah, Kid?”

“We’ll be okay here, right? I mean the people are really nice and even though I miss my friends and our apartment in the city, it doesn’t seem too bad.”

Carmilla thought of Laura and smiled. “Yeah, Kid, I think we’re going to be okay. Good night, Will.”

“Good night, Carmilla.”

And with that, Carmilla walked into her room, ripped off her hideous dress and put on her pajamas. She walked to the stereo and plugged in her phone, checking to make sure the volume was low, and put her music on shuffle. Alexisonfire started to blare through her speakers and she was content.

Laying down on her bed, she thought of Laura and her friends. She was still nervous that she wouldn’t fit in with them, but the next thing she heard was her music fading quietly as a text message came through. She looked at her phone to see an email from LolaPerry1@gmail.com light up her phone and a text message. She decided to check Perry’s email in the morning and looked at her texts messages.
It was from Laura:

**The Rambler:** It was really nice meeting you. Glad we got to hang out a little.
Carmilla: Me too. Good night, Laura.
**The Rambler:** Good night, Carmilla.

As she laid in her bed, she started to think about Laura’s smile and how nice it was. She thought about how nice her smell was and wished she could be closer to her. Then she thought about how nice her body looked in that black dress. It was skin tight and…Carmilla changed her thoughts instantly.

*No! I cannot have these thoughts. I would get into so much trouble. I just like her as a friend and nothing more. Resist temptation. I must resist temptation.*

Chapter End Notes

Quick shout out to my friend Kristin, who keeps helping me with editing! Turns out, I like commas A LOT. But I'm grateful for her help!

I'm going to try and get a new Chapter out every Monday or Tuesday of every week.
A few days have gone by and the family was grateful that the house was finally unpacked. Everything is where it's supposed to be, and Lilita has finally finished nagging everyone about every detail that wasn't perfect. It was a bright, sunny Saturday morning and Carmilla was sound asleep under the covers.

"Carmilla! Get up! We've got things to do!"

Lilita waited at the bottom of the stairs, as the silence carried on. "Carmilla!" She practically screamed.

Carmilla woke with a jump! "Wha...? What?" She turned to her right and almost jumped out of her skin. "Will! Don't do that! You almost gave me a heart attack!"

"Sorry, but get up, please! Mom's in a mood..."

"Fuck..." She looked over at the clock, 9:00 AM. “How can she be in a mood this early?”

"I don’t know, but she's been screaming for you for about 10 minutes so I assume you hurry.”

Carmilla slowly rose out of bed and stretched her arms above her head. Her back popped and she sighed in relief. She checked her phone, still no texts from Laura. She hasn’t heard from Laura or any of her friends since the night at the church. She was surprised because she thought she would at least hear from Perry, but after replying to her email she never received a response. Typical Carmilla. Moves to a new town and still can't make a friend. What's wrong with me? Will has been hanging out with that puppy everyday since the church gathering and has even managed to make a few other friends because of him.

"CAR-MILL-A!"

Her thoughts were interrupted by her mother and she hurriedly ran downstairs.

"Finally,” her mother sighed as she started to walk down the stairs.

"Sorry Mother. I was sound asleep," Carmilla said, as she sat down at the kitchen table. The kitchen was always bright in the morning. The sun reflecting off the white painted walls through the large kitchen window that looked over a fenced-in backyard.

"William! Henry! Breakfast is ready." Lilita shouted sweetly. They both came from the living room, smiling. They looked almost identical. Both had short brown hair, a wickedly nice smile, dark hazel eyes and soon Will would be just as tall as their dad or taller.
"Look at my handsome boys," Lilita smiled as they entered the kitchen. Carmilla rolled her eyes to herself. Lilita always yelled at Carmilla, but when it came to Will and their dad, she was as sweet as can be. She placed a plate of eggs and bacon in front of Carmilla.

"Thanks, Mom." Carmilla smiled.

"Of course, sweetheart."

Will and Henry sat down at the table, while Lilita placed their plates in front of them, giving her husband a quick peck on the cheek. Carmilla always faced her dad at the table, while Will and her mother faced each other. Carmilla started eating, while the rest of the table looked at her. Her mouth was full of eggs when she spoke, looking around at her family.

“What?” she said, as if she couldn’t figure out what she had done. Her mother looked mortified, while her dad just gave her a stern look.

“Why don’t you finish your bite dear and then say grace.”

Carmilla swallowed. “Yes Mother.”

William, Lilita and Henry smiled at each other and grabbed hands. How do I seriously belong in this family? I just want to eat. What’s it like not to say grace before you eat? I hate saying prayer. I never know what to say. Henry cleared his throat as Lilita and Will took Carmilla’s hands. They all bowed their heads and closed their eyes waiting for Carmilla to start. Carmilla never closed her eyes nor bowed her head. She never really understood the point. Henry slowly opened his eyes and looked at her again, she quickly bowed her head. She might not really understand prayer, but she tends to keep her own religious beliefs to herself.

“Uh… Dear God, thank you for this beautiful, sunny, morning. Uh… thank you for this food. Uh… watch over us today and yeah… Amen.”

“Amen,” the other three said as they let go of their hands and started eating. Carmilla was grateful that was over with and as per usual received no comments about her prayer. Will always gets complimented by his prayers. It must be nice to actually feel appreciated. I hate saying grace so much that I believe Mother keeps asking me to do it to piss me off. Why does she do that?

“Carmilla?”

“Yes Mother?”

“I want to take you and Will shopping today so we can get you two new attire for our first day of church tomorrow.”

Damn it. Fuck! I hate shopping and she knows that. “Alright,” Carmilla replied, no enthusiasm in her voice as she took a bite of bacon.

“Henry, Will needs a new suit desperately, so if we find one he likes, may we splurge a little?”

“Of course, honey. His has gotten a little ragged and I think Willy-Boy here has grown a few more inches.”

“My growing boy,” Lilita said, her eyes sparkling while she looked at her son.

There was silence again. Carmilla got up to refill her apple juice when she noticed Will fidgeting. She sat back down and he stopped, a small look of determination in his features.
“Dad?” Will turned to Henry, with a hopeful look in his eye.

“Yes, son?”

“I’ve been hanging out with Kirsch a lot, as you know, and we’ve been playing a lot of football at the high school.” Henry nodded, smiling. Will continued, “Well, Kirsch told me that I’m a pretty good kicker and if I practiced with him once a day or every other day, he could get my kicking leg even stronger. As it turns out, the JV kicker they had lined up for the season moved away on short notice and the kid they had last year got bumped up to varsity so they need a new JV kicker. Basically what I’m trying to ask is, can I go to tryouts?”

“Of course you can!” Lilita said with a big smile.

“Sure son.”

Will beamed. “Thank you!”

“Sounds like you and Kirsch have become pretty close,” Henry stated.

“He’s a really cool guy and really funny. He’s made me feel very welcomed.”

“That’s great to hear and what about you Carmilla?” Henry turned his attention to his daughter.

“Um. What about me, Dad?”

“Weren’t you going to hang out with Laura…” He paused for a moment. “And, let me think. Lola? And Suzanne? Did I get it?”

“Laura, Perry and Su… Lafontaine,” Carmilla replied.

“I need to learn these member’s names better. Anyway, weren’t you getting together with them?”

Carmilla lowered her head. “I actually haven’t heard from any of them so I guess they’re busy or something.”

“Kirsch did say they worked at the campground, so maybe they’re just busy.” Will looked at Carmilla with a little bit of sadness. He was a good kid with a good heart and he always tried to get Carmilla to be more social, but no matter how hard she tried, Carmilla felt like she was better off just sticking to herself. The church gathering was the first time Carmilla really put herself out there and tried to make friends. Of course, she failed.

“Thanks Will. Maybe you’re right.”

“Or you said something to upset one of them,” her mother looked at her, pointedly.

And here comes the Lilita Karnstein two cents and the worst part is she’s probably right. It is always my fault anyways.

“I don’t think that’s true, Mother.” Will always tried to stick up for Carmilla, but she never understood why.

“You’re right, Mother. I probably said something wrong. I’ll think back and then apologize.”

“Good girl.”

They finished their breakfast in silence. Carmilla sat, there thinking hard about what she could have
possibly said to make them not want to talk to her. It’s probably just me or maybe I offended Lafontaine or something. No, they probably just don’t like me.

Carmilla shook the hollow feeling in her heart as she started to take her plate to the sink. She cleared the rest of the table, knowing it would make her mother happy. She had to keep her happy if she was going to get through a day of shopping with her.

“Kids, I want to leave in an hour so make sure you’re ready,” Lilita said as she left the kitchen with Henry’s arm wrapped around her shoulders.

“Let me help you,” Will said as he placed his plate in the sink.

“It’s okay, Will. I got it. I assume you set the table anyways.”

“Yes, I did, but I don’t mind.”

Carmilla just really wanted to be alone. She had to get her negative thoughts out of her head before she left with her mother. The only thing that usually calmed her was humming songs to herself, but she only did that when she was alone.

“I know you don’t mind because you never do, but seriously Will, it’s okay. Thanks though.”

“Okay.” Will started to walk out of the kitchen. Carmilla found her brother annoying and overly praised by her mother, but she always held a soft spot for him. She remembers the first time she saw that little baby boy through the window at the hospital. Her dad was holding her and pointed to Will and right away she knew who her brother was. She made a vow to herself that she would always protect him and take care of him. That vow never changed, no matter how annoying he was.

Will stopped at the doorway to the kitchen and turned back to his sister as she started to hum to herself. She was scrubbing the dishes and loading them into the dishwasher.

“Hey, Carmilla?”

She stopped humming immediately, thinking she had been alone. “Yeah?”

“Kirsch says the campground gets really crazy in the summer and that all three of them have crazy work hours. I’m sure you didn’t say anything to make them mad and I’m sure they liked you. I honestly think they’re just busy.”

Carmilla felt a lump grow in her throat. She never understood why he was so sweet to her. She didn’t turn around nor did she stop loading the dishwasher.

“Thanks, Will.”

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Lilita, Will and Carmilla loaded into the car to go to the mall. Carmilla hated shopping, but what she hated more than that was being forced to shop for a new dress with her mother.

Carmilla sat in the backseat while Lilita and Will took the front seats. They were talking about what kind of suit they should get Will, when he decided to plug in his phone. A Christian song blared through the speakers and Carmilla just wanted to get out of the car.

“Isn’t this great music, Carmilla? Like I said before, it’s rock, but it’s tasteful and it helps you worship the Lord.”
Carmilla didn’t reply. She couldn’t think of anything nice to say or that sounded convincing. She knew it was better to stay silent. Luckily, she was smart though. She pulled her headphones from her pocket and plugged them into her phone. She put the volume low, just incase her mother tried to talk to her. She scrolled through her music and settled on Garbage. She always found calmness when it came to Shirley Manson.

She stared out the window looking at all the different buildings and neighborhoods that they passed. She really wasn’t looking forward to this. Then a huge sign caught her eye: Pond Rivers Family Campground.

“That’s where Laura works,” Will exclaimed as they drove by.

I hope she is actually busy. I wonder if she’s there right now. I wonder what she does there. Carmilla pondered and before she knew it, they were turning into a large parking lot. Being from the city, the Karnstein children weren’t accustomed to malls. They were used to just walking around until they found a window that they liked.

Lilita parked the car and they walked inside. There were people everywhere and Carmilla couldn’t stand the amount of noise that was vibrating off the walls of the stone structure. Lilita pulled her children by the arms to Nordstrom.

“I think we’ll do Carmilla first,” Lilita stated, walking in. “Get the hard part out of the way and then we will start looking for a new suit, William.”

“Okay mother,” Will smiled.

“Great,” Carmilla said under her breath.

Lilita walked them over to the women’s collection. They had all kinds of dresses and Carmilla was starting to have a little hope. Her mother immediately went to the brightest yellow she could find.

“What about this one, dear? It would look so beautiful against your skin.”

“Um… Mom?”

Lilita looked at the dress. “Okay, even though it would look lovely on you.”

Carmilla tried again. “Mom?”

“Yes dear?”

“Can I just go through them and pick out a few?”

“Carmilla, I know you will only pick dresses that are black. I don’t want you wearing a black dress to church service tomorrow. You’ll look like you’re attending a funeral and it will be depressing. We want to look good and happy tomorrow.”

“What if I promise not to pick out any black ones? Please?”

Carmilla was pleading in her head for her mother to say yes. She was about to be 17 and her mother still insisted on picking out her church clothes.

Lilita exhaled, pinching the bridge of her nose. “Fine, but I want to see everything. William and I will wait in those chairs by the fitting rooms.”

Carmilla smiled wildly. “Thanks Mom!”
Carmilla moved forward and actually hugged her mother. She didn’t realize she had done it and couldn’t remember the last time she actually had physical contact with her mother, other than holding her hand at meals to pray.

“You’re welcome, sweetheart.” Lilita whispered in her ear. William was happy to see this and joined in on the hug.

“Get off of me, twerp.” Carmilla laughed as she felt his arm wrap around her.

“Carmilla do not call your brother names.”

They broke apart and Carmilla was just about to start wondering when Lilita stopped her. “There are rules, Carmilla.”

“What?”

“Nothing skin tight. Nothing too short. It needs to be a little above the knee or longer to be appropriate. Don’t even think about picking out a black dress. We are not going to a cocktail party, we are going to church. Navy is fine, if I can tell that it is navy. You will also try on the yellow dress, regardless, because I want to see what it looks like. Now come get William and I before you try anything on.”

“Yes, Mother.” Carmilla turned and started going through the dresses. If I can’t get black, I’ll get my second and third favorite colors, purple and red. She can’t have a problem with those, right?

Carmilla stopped in front of red dress. It was bright red and seemed to cut at the bust. It was her mother’s favorite kind of dress. She found her size and picked it up, draping it over her arm. She kept wandering through, and then she found a really nice black dress. I can’t get black, mother will kill me, but it is nice. Has lace. Maybe if I just mix it in with the clothes I have one, then she won’t notice when I walk into the dressing room.

Carmilla grabbed a few more dresses, one was a dark purple, a navy dress and the horrible monstrosity of yellow.

She went to her mother first, as told.

“Off you go!” Lilita said, pointing to the fitting rooms.

Carmilla put on the yellow dress to get it over with. “Mother, can you help me zip this up?”

Carmilla opened the door and her mother zipped her right up. She looked at her reflection and wanted to puke. The color was so bright, it made her skin look translucent.

“Oh dear,” Lilita said, while William started to laugh. Carmilla shot him a death glare.

“Well you were right, sweetheart. This is terrible. How did you get so pale?”

“She never goes outside,” Will pointed out.

“Shut up, Will.”

“Carmilla, stop saying that. We do not say ‘shut up’ in the Karnstein family. Now turn around so I can get you out of this dress. It makes you look like you’re sick.”

Carmilla tried on the purple one and then the navy one. All three hated the purple one and they agreed the navy one was nice, but as Lilita pointed out, kind of boring. Carmilla was down to the red
one and the black one. She liked them both and decided to go for the red one. She zipped up the side of the dress and it fell beautifully against her body. She liked this one a lot, but was nervous about her mother.

She stepped out slowly, and as soon as her mother saw it, she went wide eyed.

“Carmilla Karnstein, are you out of your mind?”

Even Will seemed a little stunned.

“What? I like this one a lot.” Carmilla stated, trying to sound innocent.

“First of all, you are not wearing a blood colored dress to church especially our first day of church. They will think you’re Satan worshipper.”

“Mother, it’s just a color and it looks nice on my body.”

“Carmilla Karnstein, if you do not take that dress off right now…”

Carmilla was mad, but knew it wouldn’t only make her mother more mad if she retaliated. She exhaled, “fine.”

She did really like this dress, but knew it would be too good to be true. It was the first dress, in a long time, she actually felt comfortable in. She unzipped it and pulled it off. "I’m going to come back for you,” she said as she put it back on the hanger. She looked back to the her last dress. The black one.

“Carmilla, are there anymore,” her mother asked through the door.

“Just one.”

“Well let’s get a move on please. We still have to pick out Will’s suit and that will take even longer. I would like to do something else today besides stay at the mall.”

“Of course, Mother.”

Carmilla quickly put the black dress on. It had a very beautiful neckline that was lace, with her skin transparent underneath it. The bodice of the dress was black and the length was just to her knees, with a little extra length of lace at the bottom. Carmilla put her hair down. It clung to her body, but didn’t look inappropriate, or at least Carmilla didn’t think it looked inappropriate. Before she stepped out, she decided to warn her mother.

“Mother, please don’t be mad, but I really, really think you’ll like this one.”

“Why would I be mad, sweetheart?”

Carmilla slowly opened the door and stepped out. Will was the first one to see her and his jaw dropped.

“Wow, Carmilla. You look beautiful.”

“Thanks, Will.” Carmilla waited, and her mother finally turned around. She looked at her daughter and smiled. It put a little relief in Carmilla’s stomach.

“Sweetheart.” Lilita walked towards Carmilla and around her. She rested her hand under her chin, her index finger tapping her lips. She smiled again.
“Well, I hate that it’s black, but I can’t deny how beautiful you look in it. You look so grown up. What happened to my little girl? The one who didn’t nag me about dresses and actually liked color?”

Carmilla laughed lightly and lowered her head.

“It’s perfect. It’s the right one, even if it is black.”

Carmilla looked up and smiled brightly at her mother. “Really?!”

“Yes, sweetheart. I can’t deny you this dress. Especially since it seems you like it so much.”

“I do. Thank you, Mother.”

“Now, hurry and change. We need to get Will a suit.”

Carmilla ran into the fitting room, smiling. She can’t believe her mother actually let her get a dress she wanted. She changed quickly and handed her mother the dress, as they started walking over to the men section, Will leading the way.

Will started browsing immediately. Mother would eventually, of course, pick out the suit for him. Unlike Carmilla, he never had to ask because he almost always picked out things that she liked anyway. They were almost the same person except Carmilla always felt like Will cared about her, whereas her mother, she thinks wished she didn’t exist at times.

Carmilla found a chair and sat down. She draped one leg over the armrest, and leaned body down to rest on the opposite, with her leg hanging over the end of seat with her foot planted firmly on the ground. She pulled out her phone: no texts or emails. Shocker, Carmilla thought as she looked at her brother and mother. They were talking amongst themselves, sharing ideas about what to get when Carmilla exhaled.

“Carmilla?”

She immediately sat up straight, knowing it would make her mother mad if she saw her sitting lazily.

“Yes, Mother?”

“Here is some cash. We’re here after all, might as well get you some clothes for school.”

“Do I have any restrictions?” Carmilla asked, sarcastically.

“No restrictions.”

“Do you want that dress?”

“Yes.”

“Then lose your sass.”

Carmilla cleared her throat, and lowered her head. “Sorry, Mom.”

“Now get whatever you need. Possibly something that doesn’t have a hole in it. Speaking of which,” she grabbed a credit card from her wallet, “get yourself a new pair of boots. The ones you’re wearing are getting ratty.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

Carmilla grabbed the cash and credit card and started to walk away.
“Carmilla, be back in an hour. William and I will be here.”

“Yes, Mother.”

And with that, Carmilla turned and strolled out the store, putting in her headphones to block out the noise of the mall.

Her mother had given her $60 in cash and the credit card for boots. She decided to shop like she did when she was in the city, and only stopped if something in the window caught her eye. She picked up a new pair of black jeans and a couple black tops, while Brody Dalle’s voice blared through her headphones. It was her latest obsession and she couldn’t stop listening to Brody or the Distillers.

She walked into the shoe store and saw a perfect pair of black combat boots. They were almost the exact ones she had on and she was happy when they fit perfectly. She liked being able to shop by herself. There weren’t any gasps of annoyance from her mother. No long, disapproving sighs. She got to look at anything she wanted and she felt great.

She paid for the boots without a problem and started exiting the store, putting her headphones back in, when some bumps right into her knocking her down.

“What the fuck?!”

“Oh my gosh. I’m so sorry.”

Carmilla was still on the ground when she shouted. “Watch where you’re going you fuck…”

Carmilla was cut off by a familiar voice.

“Carmilla?”

Carmilla looked up to see Laura and Lafontaine looking at her. Laura extended her hand to help Carmilla up.

“Hey Laura. Hey Laf.”

Lafontaine smiled at her and nodded their head. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand. Her hands are so soft. I wonder what it’s like to hold her… No, no. Stop. Carmilla had zoned out, but came back to because Laura was talking a mile a minute.

“Carm, I’m so sorry. I wasn’t paying attention because I was talking to Laf and my head was turned. I’m so so so sorry! I really didn’t mean to.”

“Relax, cupcake, I’m fine. I might have a sore as… butt tomorrow, but I’m okay. Sorry about my language before. I was surprised is all.”

“Oh please, that’s not even close to the worst thing I’ve said, but I am sorry.”

“It’s fine.”

Then Carmilla remembered that she hadn’t spoken to Laura since church. She felt sad all of a sudden and decided it was probably best if she left. Tension was starting to grow among the three from the awkward silence. Carmilla decided to break it.

“Well, it was nice seeing you guys. I guess I’ll see you both at church tomorrow.”

Laura was looking down at her feet before looking back up at Carmilla.
“Yeah, I guess we’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Bye Laura. See ya, Laf.”

Laf smiled again. “Bye Carmilla.”

“Yeah. See you tomorrow.” Laura said, shyly. Almost as if she didn’t know what to say.

Carmilla smiled and with that walked to the other side of the mall. She tried to let music contain her thoughts so she wouldn’t have to be disappointed, but her thoughts were too powerful. I wish they would have at least acknowledge the fact that they hadn’t texted me. Maybe my mom is right, maybe I’m right. Maybe they really just don’t like me and only invited me out to be nice to the new minister’s daughter. Or maybe they felt like they had to. I don’t know, but I’ve gone 16, almost 17 years without friends by my side. What’s another 17?

Carmilla finally reached Nordstrom and saw her mother and Will were outside the store, waiting for her.

“I’m sorry if I kept you waiting.”

“We actually just finished. I see you did well on shopping. Any holes?”

Carmilla shook her head no.

“Great! Well let’s get going. I’m ready for lunch and ready to get out of this mall.”

They left the mall walking to the car. Carmilla was holding the items she had bought, while William carried her dress and what she assumed to be his new suit. Lilita held nothing, but her purse, per usual.

They had just reached the car, when Carmilla felt a slight buzz in her pocket.

**The Rambler:** I am really sorry I haven’t texted you. I honestly just didn’t know what to say and I don’t really know what to show you in this town because I’ve lived here my whole life and I find it unbelievably boring.

**The Rambler:** And my job is really insane right now because it is a summer job, at the campground. I don’t know if I told you that, but my hours are crazy. I work in the arcade so there are just screaming children everywhere and I don’t mean to sound rude, but after a shift of that, I just want to go home and sit in silence so I don’t have to deal with life for a while.

**The Rambler:** But I am off tomorrow and every Sunday, so if you want, maybe we could hang out after church tomorrow? I can even invite a few more friends from school. That way you can meet more people.

**The Rambler:** I mean if you want.

Carmilla couldn’t help but laugh. She really was a rambler. Carmilla could see Laura typing more when the bubbles appeared on her phone. Carmilla shot a quick text in response so she’d stop rambling.

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Laura felt her phone buzz in her hand while she was typing. A big smile played on her lips.

**Hottie in a White Dress:** Tomorrow should be fine. Just have to ask my parents.

Laura smiled some more. “Sounds good, just let me know. I’ll see you tomorrow, regardless. And
you know, you can text me, too.”

Laura continued to smile as she looked over at Lafontaine, who was staring at her with an eyebrow raised.

“What?” Laura asked.

“I think someone has a crush on the minister’s daughter.”

“Laf, no I don’t and keep your voice down.”

“Why? No one can hear us.”

“Lafontaine, please.”

“Okay, okay.”

“You have to admit she’s hot.”

“Well, considering my cup of tea is my best friend from kindergarten, I’ll have to disagree. She is attractive, but not my type.”

“Whatever, she’s cute.” Laura smiled.

“And let me repeat, the minister’s daughter.” Laf said, sternly.

“Oh whatever. It’s not like I’m going to act on it. Besides, she looks like she attracted to cool guys that ride motorcycles and have tattoos.”

“Laura, you have a tattoo…”

“Shhh! You know everyone knows my dad.”

“Alright, I’m just saying.”

“Look, just let me have my crush.”

“Ah. So I was right, crushes on minister’s daughter.”

Laura looked down at her phone.

**Hottie in a White Dress:** Maybe I was nervous to talk to you too. Maybe I don’t like a lot of people. Maybe it just takes a cute girl to talk to me before I can muster up the courage to talk them. Whatever it is, I’ll see you tomorrow, cutie.

*Was she just… is that? Is she flirting with me?* Laura thought.

“What did she say about tomorrow?” Lafontaine asked, looking at Laura.

“Oh she said it should be fine, but she’ll have to ask her parents.”

“Awesome.”

“Yeah, awesome.”

And again, shout out my friend Kristin, who I'm basically considering my editor at this point.
The First Sunday

Chapter Summary

Get ready for some Hollstein

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's so late. Had a lot going on this week.
Another shout out to Kristin for all the editing.

Later that evening, after dinner was consumed and her new clothes put away, Carmilla asked her dad if she could hang out with Laura after church. She debated who to ask, but knew her father was the choice. Lilita always asked too many questions and was less understanding. She went to her Henry's study, that was a small room, attached to the living room. Henry smiled brightly at his daughter giving her the okay, but a small amount of her excitement died down once she received the okay.

“Dad?”

“What is it honey?”

Carmilla looked down at the floor. She struggled with the words.

“What if they don’t like me?”

“Who wouldn’t like you?”

Carmilla looked at her dad and rolled her eyes.

“Yes because everyone back home loved me. I was so popular, wasn’t I? It was hard for you to keep people away from me,” Carmilla replied sarcastically.

“We’re in a new town, Carmilla. Now you can try and reinvent yourself and be whoever you want to be. I’m sure they will love you.”

Carmilla gave a small smile and hugged her dad. She ran back to her room to text Laura the good news. She received emojis back of smiling faces and party hats with confetti.

_Maybe they will like me. It would be nice for once._

Carmilla awoke the next morning with a huge smile on her face. She couldn’t remember the last time she was excited to go to church. Well in reality, she could care less about church, but she was excited to see Laura.
She jumped out of bed and ran straight to the shower. She wanted to look her best, which she usually never cared about, but there was something about Laura that made her want to look good. She knew she had been flirting with Laura, but it was harmless friend flirting. *Because I don’t flirt with girls. I shouldn’t flirt with girls. It’s not good. Boys, I flirt with boys. That’s what I’m supposed to do.*

She repeats her mantra about flirting while she gets ready. She feels nervous again, but tries to shake it off.

“Carmilla, you look beautiful,” Lilita said, as she saw Carmilla walk down the stairs.

“Thank you, mother.”

“There are pancakes and bacon in the kitchen. We have 20 minutes before we need to leave.”

“I’m ready, Mother.”

And with that, Carmilla entered the kitchen. The brightness of the sun hitting the white walls didn’t seem as bright as usual. Carmilla was about to sit down at the table when Henry’s voice spoke loudly from the door.

“Who is this beautiful girl?” he asked, beaming.

“Ha ha, Dad,” Carmilla replied, rolling her eyes.

“Well, this can’t be my daughter. My daughter almost fist fights anytime she has to wear a dress and she never looks this happy in the morning. Will, what did you give your sister?”

Will seemed half awake when he replied with, “What?”

“Dad, can we not make a big deal about this? It's the dress I got yesterday and, surprise, I really like it.”

“I’m surprised your mother let you buy a black dress.”

Lilita entered the room, smiling. “Well, she looked so beautiful in it that I couldn’t say no. Especially when our little ball of spontaneous rage hugged me after I told her she could pick out the dress she wanted.”

“Carmilla Karnstein, you hugged your mother?”

“Let it go, please. Are you trying to affect my image?”

They all sat around the small kitchen table, enjoying their pancakes and bacon. They seemed like your average happy family, no struggles or cares. That they all loved each other equally. Carmilla couldn’t remember the last time she laughed so hard with her family, whether her dad was picking on her, or her brother. She felt really happy for the first time in a long time. *Maybe this town really isn’t so bad,* Carmilla thought, smiling at something Will had just said.

Once breakfast was consumed, Carmilla bolted upstairs to get together her stuff together for her afternoon with Laura. They had agreed they would just go from church and that Carmilla should bring a change of clothes. She grabbed a pair of her old jeans, a Ramones t-shirt and combat boots. She stuffed them into her backpack, along with her wallet, phone and accessories as her mother called for her. She checked in the mirror one more time before leaving her room. *I hope Laura likes this,* Carmilla thought.
When they were settling into the car, that is when Lilita noticed Carmilla’s backpack.

“Sweetheart, why do you have your backpack?”

“Oh, did Dad not tell you?”

Carmilla and her father made eye contact in the rearview mirror. Carmilla was hoping he would so she didn’t have to talk to her mom about it.

“Clearly, he did not,” Lilita replied.

“Oh, well, I’m hanging out with Laura after church. She and Lafontaine invited me.”

“And did you not think to come and ask me if that was alright? To check if I had any plans for us after church,” Lilita asked, clearly not amused with this decision being made without her.

Carmilla started to get nervous. Please don’t take this away from me. Please let me have a chance. Please, please, please!

“Lilita, I think it’s important for Carmilla to make friends here. She didn’t have a lot in the city and I think she deserves this opportunity.”

“Well I thought we would have a nice family lunch to celebrate your first day at church. I thought it would be a nice thing to do.”

“Lilita, we can do that tomorrow. I told Carmilla she could go, so she’s going.”

“I think it’s too soon. She didn’t get out that long ago and…”

“Lilita, stop.”

Carmilla could feel her eyes starting to water. She lowered her head. I knew it was too good to be true. She’s not going to let me go and I will still have to be happy at lunch. She doesn’t trust me around girls and never will, not since…. Carmilla’s thoughts were interrupted by her father’s voice.

“Lilita! She’s going. Carmilla, you have your stuff with you, right?”

Carmilla nodded her head, making eye contact with her father again. He could see her eyes were red and her eyes starting to water.

“Carmilla, your father asked you question,” Lilita said, turning her head to her back to look at Carmilla.

“Yes, sir. I have my stuff.”

“Then it’s settled. Carmilla, go out with Laura and have a good time. Meet new people, make new friends. Do whatever you want, but you’re going.”

Carmilla felt some of the tension in her shoulders released as she sighed.

“Thanks, Dad.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Well, where are you going with Laura?” Lilita asked. Great here comes the twenty questions I wanted to avoid.
“I’m not sure, Mom.”

“Well, how will I be able to get in touch with you if you don’t know where you’re going?”

“Uh, I have a cell phone, remember?”

“Fine. Who’s going?”

“I don’t know. I guess it’ll be Laura, Lafontaine and Perry.”

“I want to know who’s going, Carmilla.”

“Fine.”

“Lilita, leave her alone. She’ll be fine. Now, Will, what are you doing this afternoon?”

“I was going to ask Kirsch if we could play football, if that’s okay with you and Mother.”

“Suck up,” Carmilla whispered under her breath, but grateful the attention in the car had been shifted to the good kid and off of her.

By the time they had reached church, Carmilla was relieved to see Laura standing next to her Jeep with Perry and Lafontaine. She bolted from the car almost immediately and walked over to them.

They all smiled brightly. Lilita and Henry sat in the car, watching their kids run to their new friends.

“I think it’s too soon,” Lilita said, watching Carmilla like a hawk.

“It was over a year ago, Lilita. Let it go. We didn’t agree on it then and we still won’t agree on it now. Let’s just have a good first day.” Henry patted Lilita’s leg.

She finally took her eyes off of Carmilla and turned to look at her husband. His dark eyes were looking back at her and he smiled. “You’re right,” she said, smiling back at her husband. She gave him a quick kiss.

“We have good children,” Lilita said, starting to unbuckle her seatbelt.

“And don’t forget it,” Henry replied, opening his door.

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Carmilla followed Laura, Perry and Laf to their Sunday School class. She hated Sunday School, but knew she had no control over it. Carmilla walked into the classroom to see two large folding tables put together, to create a big square. There was a large whiteboard on the wall and few different books scattered on a bookshelf in the corner. In the middle of the table were extra Bibles, Sunday School books and pens and pencils. Shit, I forgot my Bible. Mother’s going to kill me. Carmilla looked around the table noticing almost everyone had a Bible in front of them. Carmilla tried not to panic.

They all started to sit around the table, and Carmilla just stood back. Laura was sitting at one of the corners, while Perry sat on the adjacent corner, and Lafontaine next to Perry. Laura patted the seat to her left for Carmilla to sit. As Carmilla made her way over, a giantess of a red head sat down next to her.

“Hey, Laura,” the giant said.

“Oh. Hey, Danny. How was your week?”
“Insane. The campground is just crazy.”

“I know. It’s been absolutely miserable, but at least they let us get overtime.”

“True.”

Carmilla saw how the two girls looked at each other and decided not to pry. She sat next to Lafontaine.

“Who’s the giant?” Carmilla asked, noticing Lafontaine didn’t have a Bible either.

“Oh that’s Danny. They’re really good friends. I would say best friends, but I know more about Laura than anyone,” Lafontaine replied.

Carmilla didn’t say anything. She liked Lafontaine, well little she knew about them, but was hoping to sit next to Laura. Lafontaine seemed to notice that Carmilla wasn’t saying anything, just watching Laura. They cleared their throat and whispered to Carmilla.

“You know, you shouldn’t worry. Laura isn’t interested in Danny, no matter how hard Danny has tried.”

“What are you talking about?”

Lafontaine was taken back and quickly tried to change the subject. “Oh, nothing. Don’t worry about it. I don’t mean anything. Pretend I didn’t say anything.”

“Relax, bio-nerd.”

With that their teacher walked in. “Good morning, class.”

“Good morning, Ms. Roberts,” everyone replied at different times.

Carmilla was embarrassingly introduced to the class and couldn’t help notice the way Laura smiled at her when she was forced to stand up. Luckily, the embarrassment ended when the teacher pointed out they only had 30 minutes to get through their class and discussions. Carmilla didn’t pay attention. She had heard every Bible story over and over again, so much that she didn’t care enough to listen nor participate. Before she knew it, Ms. Roberts was asking for prayer requests before they closed their class in prayer.

Some kid, that Carmilla didn’t know, volunteered to saying closing prayer. Everyone bowed their heads except for Carmilla. She was looking around the room, trying to get a grasp of her surroundings. Then she felt a pair of eyes on her, coming from the right. When she looked over, Laura lowered her head quickly, cheeks blushing and a smile on her face. Carmilla couldn’t help, but smile. God, she is too cute... I’m allowed to say that, right?

Carmilla brought her focus back to the class as they collectively said, “Amen”.

Carmilla started walking into the church, when she felt a small tug on her arm. “Hey, you should sit with us,” Laura said, beaming.

Right as Carmilla was about to answer, Lilita came out of nowhere and replied for her.

“That’s awfully nice of you Ms. Hollis, but our family sits together during church. You will see her afterwards.”

And with that, Carmilla watched as her, Lafontaine, Perry, Kirsch and the giant red head named
Danny took the last pew in the back of the church. She sat in between her mother and Will, in the front.

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Church went by rather quickly. Carmilla didn’t pay attention to her father’s sermon, but then again, she rarely did. She kept thinking about Laura and then trying her hardest not to think about Laura. She could feel eyes on her, hoping it was from Laura, but couldn’t tell considering her mother liked to make sure to pay attention. At one point, Carmilla tried to sneak a peek behind her. She turned her head slightly and made eye contact with the couple behind her. She smiled and turned round. *What are you doing? If mother catches me, I’m done for. I just want to know if Laura is looking at me…*. She stared out into nothing as her thoughts continued. She was staring straight ahead, instead of at her father, and Lilita nudged her and she looked up at her father quickly. She tried to pay attention, but she just couldn’t. Before she knew it, they were singing their last song and closed in prayer.

Once the prayer was over, Mr. Hollis stood up to address the congregation.

“Good morning everyone.”

“Good morning, Rich,” the congregation greeted.

“Pastor Karnstein, before you go, we just thought it would be nice if you and your family could stand up here for a moment.”

Mr. Hollis paused and looked in the direction of Carmilla, her mother and Will. *Oh no*. He waved them over and Will led to way standing over with their father. Carmilla followed and it even seemed like Lilita wasn’t sure about this decision, but kept a large smile on her face the whole time. Mr. Hollis continued when the family was together.

“First of all Pastor, I wanted to thank you for that beautiful sermon and we have a little tradition here at Greenland Baptist.”

*Please don’t be embarrassing. Please don’t be embarrassing.*

“Since some of the members couldn’t make it out to the church for your welcoming meal, we thought it would be nice if you guys could stand here and shake everyone’s hands. We just want you to meet everyone and feel welcome.”

“Well Mr. Hollis, I usually stand at the backdoor for this, but I can do it today.”

And so they stood and were welcomed by each person in the congregation. Carmilla really didn’t liked to be touched by people she didn’t know and yet, handshake after handshake and welcome after welcome were given. Laura was the last person in line and instead of shaking Carmilla’s hand, she just smiled.

“Ready to go after that?”


“Sure thing, kiddo.”

Henry handed over the keys and Carmilla almost ran out of the church. She got her bag, gave her keys back to her father and met Laura and the gang at her Jeep.
“So Kirsch and Danny are going to ride together. And we’ll be in my Jeep,” Laura said, pointing to herself, Lafontaine and Perry.

“Sounds great, where are we going?”

“Oh, we’re actually going to go to Kirsch’s place. His parents are out of town visiting a family member so we have the house to ourselves and we figured it was a better way for you to meet people,” Laura said enthusiastically.

Carmilla laughed, “Why would he go to church if his parents were out of town?”

“Because someone in this gossipy church would tell his parents, and then he would be in trouble,” Lafontaine added.

Laura started the car and they pulled out of the parking lot. Laura had the roof off of her jeep and Carmilla smiled as her hair blew in the wind.

“So how far away is Kirsch’s place?”

“About 20 minutes. He lives in the middle of nowhere and his house surrounded by woods.”

“What?” Carmilla didn’t like dark places, and was still adjusting to non-city life. She wasn’t sure she could handle the woods just yet.

“Don’t worry, his parents are rich business people, so they have a lot of acres. It’s not really woods, but they live in a secluded area,” Perry added.

“Okay.” Carmilla took a few breaths, she wasn’t sure why she felt nervous. The car got quiet again, so she decided to break it. “So what do your parents do?” Carmilla looked around the car, asking almost anyone. Perry, of course was the first to speak.

“My parents own a bakery, which one day I will take over. They make pastries for all kind of occasions and sell products to the local grocery stores. And today is your lucky day, Carmilla, because you will get to try my extra special brownies.”

“Oh, I’m not really into special brownies. I tried one once and it messed me up for the day. I got in so much trouble.” Carmilla started laughing while everyone just looked at her. Perry had the widest eyes of all.

A beat passed before Lafontaine started laughing hard. “Dude, do you honestly think Perry would make ‘special’ brownies?”

“Oh, I didn’t know. She said special so I assumed…”

“They’re just her brownies. She calls them special because they really are the best brownies in town.”

Carmilla chuckled again and Lafontaine started speaking.

“My dad is professor at the local community college, while my mom teaches at the middle school.”

“What do your parents teach?”

“My father teaches Theology courses as where my mother teachers English.”

“That sounds pretty cool.”
“Actually it gets in the way, most of the time. They don’t really understand.”

“Understand what?” Carmilla asked.

“Oh, uh, a lot of things. They don’t understand a lot of things.”

“Isn’t that just parents being parents?”

Lafontaine tried to laugh, but it came out more of sigh. “I guess.”

Carmilla took that as a hint to drop it, while Laura picked up the conversation almost immediately.

“My father works for the Police Department. It’s why he can be overprotective and super annoying.”

“I just see him as a very jolly person,” Carmilla smirked.

“That’s because while he’s grounding me, he’s trying to see the good in everyone.”

“Well maybe you should stop getting grounded.”

Laura smiled at Carmilla. “Well, where would the fun in that be?”

Carmilla laughed and smiled. “Well, what about your mom?”

You could cut the tension in the car with a knife almost immediately. Laura’s smile was gone and she stared out at the road. No one said anything until Lafontaine cleared her throat.

“Uh, we don’t really talk about Laura’s mom.”

“Oh. Okay. Shit. I’m sorry, Laura.”

Laura looked over at Carmilla with sad eyes, before giving her a quick smile and looking back at the road. “No harm done. You didn’t know.”

Laura turned on the radio while they continued their drive to Kirsch’s place. Carmilla notice that they were only passing woods at this point when they started to turn right onto a dirt road with a gate. Kirsch was standing there.

“What took you hotties so long?”

“Oh shut up Kirsch.”

“I’ve been waiting for like an hour, grandma!”

“Kirsch, you know they have more strict traffic cop patrol on Sundays. I don’t need to get grounded again because of another speeding ticket.”

“It must suck to be a cops kid. Good thing I live in the middle of nowhere, so no cops should be showing up.”

“That’s exactly how I like it,” Laura said with a smile.

She drove forward down a long road surrounded by trees. Carmilla felt a little uneasy. “So what exactly are we doing at Kirsch’s house?” Carmilla was curious. He lives in a place where no cops should show up.

“Well,” Laura started, “You see. Most of the kids our age work at the campground and it’s closed on
Sundays because this is a religious town. People can still stay in there, but they can’t check out until 3 and nothing is open on Sundays except for the grocery store. So anytime one of our parents are out of town, we have a little get together.”

They reached the end of the long road and there were a few cars in the driveway. Carmilla could hear the music *Country music? Seriously?*

Everyone got out of the car and Carmilla followed. “Country music, seriously?” Carmilla was looking at Laura.

“Hey it’s not all bad, but Kirsch is a country boy.”

“So I should be expecting belt buckles, cowboy hats and cowboy boots?”

“He’s not that country. In fact, none of us are, but we’re a different group than you think.” Carmilla looked at Laura, confusion written all over her face. Laura just chuckled to herself. “Come on, Carm. Let’s get changed.”

Carmilla didn’t notice that they had all brought a change of clothes. They entered the house and immediately went upstairs. “You can change in Kirsch’s room,” Laura said, pointing to what could only be described as a football players room.

Carmilla closed the door. He had trophies, footballs and jerseys everywhere. She looked around, taking in her surroundings. She saw pictures of Kirsch with Laura and the rest of the gang. It made her smile. *I wonder what it’s like to have a close group of friends like this. The only pictures I have of home are of my surroundings with only strangers in them. Or her… No don’t think about her. She’s not important, she’s nothing. She was friend and you got carried away. Don’t let her ruin this like she has ruined everything else.*

“Carmilla, are you okay?”

Carmilla heard Laura’s voice through the door. “Uh, yeah, just a moment.”

Carmilla quickly got out of her dress, folding it nicely before she pulled on her normal clothes. It felt good to be in jeans and a t-shirt. Not to mention her combat boots. She placed her shoes in the bottom of her bag, laying the dress on them as nicely as she could. She opened the front pocket and pulled out her favorite leather cuff and her anchor necklace. She felt like herself again. She opened the door quickly and saw Laura leaning against the banister.

“Whoa,” was all that Laura could say as she looked Carmilla up and down. Carmilla smiled and noticed no one else was around. “I could say the same thing, cutie.”

Laura was wearing skinny jeans, a grey t-shirt and flats. Laura smiled.

“So this is what the minister daughter actually looks like?”

“You saw me at the mall, Laura.”

“Yeah, but I was embarrassed there. Now I’m relaxed. Nice shirt.”

“You like the Ramones?”

“Just because I’m not from the city, doesn’t mean I’m not cultured.” Laura smirked.

“I’d like to take a bet on that.”
They laughed. Laura grabbed Carmilla’s bookbag.

“Why don’t I take your bag to the car and you can meet some new people.”

“Oh, no that’s okay. I can take it to the car.”

“No I insist.” With that, Laura ran down the stairs. Lafontaine emerged from another room in khakis and a white button down. “Did you even change?” Carmilla asked.

“Hey, I got rid of the bowtie and put on sneakers.”

“Big change,” Carmilla said sarcastically.

“Ha ha. Let’s go down stairs, Joey Ramone.”

Carmilla followed Lafontaine down the stairs. She saw three pizza pies on the counter along with almost any type of soda you could imagine. There were a few guys standing in the corner talking to each other and a couple girls sitting on the couch. Carmilla felt out of place. She wasn’t used to be in social situations with people her own age, not even when she went to school.

“I’ll do introductions, if you like,” Lafontaine offered and Carmilla just nodded.

“Hey, everyone,” Laf shouted to the group! “This is Carmilla, her dad’s the pastor at Greenland. Make her feel welcome.”

They all said “Hey” or “Hi” and Carmilla just waved. They went back to their conversations while Carmilla just stood and nodded, looking around at the large living room. To her right were all windows, looking over large open fields and a pool. They had a large fireplace and a few couches and chairs. Laura walked up behind her, nudging her. Carmilla looked up and saw Laura smiling, she couldn’t help but smile back. Laura sat in one of the big chairs and patted the arm rest, looking at Carmilla. Carmilla couldn’t help but follow, as she lowered herself to sit on the arm rest.

“So did Lafontaine actually tell you anything or just announce you like prized cattle to group?” Laura asked.

“Uh, I was announced.”

“Okay, well the three girls over there are Sarah Jane, Mel and Elsie. Sarah Jane is Kirsch’s girlfriend. Mel and Sarah Jane have been best friends since we were kids. Elsie and I don’t get along, and honestly, she’s kind of trouble. I would avoid her.”

Carmilla looked up to noticed the blonde was looking at her, smiling. Carmilla smiled back before turning back to Laura. “Noted.”

“And the group of bros over there are Kirsch’s Zeta bros slash some football team members. The one with dark hair is Theo, then there is Brad and Matt. They’re actually all really nice guys. And then the guy standing with Laf and Perry over there is JP. He’s like Lafontaine and they tend to get into some science type trouble, but they’re good friends. Do you want to personally meet anyone or are you good for right now?”

“I’m good, but starving. The pizza smells delicious,” Carmilla said.

“Then pizza you shall receive.”

Laura got up and Carmilla followed. They walked to the counter to see cheese, pepperoni, and a
meat lover's pizza. They both chose pepperoni and were talking about how delicious it was when the Red Giant appeared.

“Oh, Carmilla, this is Danny. Danny, this is Pastor Karnstein’s daughter, Carmilla.”

“Nice to meet you,” Danny said, while sticking out her hand.

*Why does everyone want to shake hands here?* Carmilla begrudgingly shook Danny’s hand with a quick “Nice to meet you, too.”

“Danny and I go way back. Not as far as Lafontaine, Perry and I, but back to… when did we meet again?”

“Sixth grade, Hollis. Someday I’ll get you to remember our story.”

Danny wrapped her arm around Laura or better yet, just laid it on her shoulders. It seemed like Laura only came up to this girl’s hip. Danny and Laura started to chat amongst themselves and Carmilla started to feel alone again. Everyone was talking to someone. So she quietly sat and ate her pizza. She felt her anxiety kick in and just stared at the counter, thinking about nothing except how alone and awkward she felt.

She felt a hand on her shoulder and looked up to see Laura.

“You okay?”

“Uh, yeah. Sorry.”

Carmilla grew quiet as she sat there, looking at her hands. “It’s hot in here, isn’t it?” Carmilla started to blush and felt her face warm. She doesn’t know why she is so embarrassed.

“Not really. It’s quite cool, actually.”

Carmilla started to tug on her shirt collar. “I’m really warm.”

“Do you wanna get some air?” Laura looked concerned, but Carmilla was relieved.

“Yes, please. That sounds great.”

Laura led Carmilla out to the back yard. They sat on the edge of the pool. Laura took off her shoes, rolled up her pants and put her feet in the pool. She looked up towards the sky smiling.

Carmilla smiled, and then frowned. “Laura, can I tell you something?”

“You can tell me anything.”

“I’m not really good at the whole friends things. In fact, I’ve never really had a friend before. I mostly just stick to myself so this is a weird situation for me to be in.”

“You’ve never had a friend before? I find that hard to believe.”

“Uh, once people get to know me, they don’t really tend to like me. I mean I had one once, but after an incident, I was forbid… I mean she moved away so I couldn’t see her.”

“And that was it?”

“Yeah. Like I said, people don’t tend to like me. I can be really shy and awkward.”
“Well, I like you.”

“You don’t know me, Laura.”

“So then let me get to know you.” Laura smiled at Carmilla. The sun was hitting Laura just perfectly that it took Carmilla’s breath away. Her honey brown hair seemed to glow in the sunlight and Carmilla couldn’t take her eyes away.

“I don’t know where to start.”

“So start at the beginning.” Laura said.

Carmilla looked at her curiously for a moment and then exhaled. “Alright, I was born on October 15th, in the city…”

“Oh my gosh. Carmilla, no.” They both laughed. They started chatting about their lives. Carmilla talked about what it was like to grow up in the city, what she did for fun, the places she’d go. Her favorite books, writers, and movies. Laura rambled on about the TV shows she watched and what it was like growing up in a small town. Carmilla noticed she didn’t mention anything about home. She mostly just talked about school, Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Kirsch.

“I met Lafontaine and Perry in first grade. We all seemed to bond over the weird things we liked and it just stuck. We’ve been inseparable ever since. I became friends with Kirsch in fifth grade. He can be a little much sometimes, but all you have to do is tell him to chill out and he calms down. And then Danny joined the group in sixth grade.”

“You mean the red head giant?”

“What?”

“She’s huge! You come up to like her hip.”

“Well, you should see her parents. She’s actually short in her family.”

“That’s crazy. So are you and her, like a thing?”

“What?! Danny and I?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Lafontaine mentioned something…”

“Remind me to have a conversation with Lafontaine later, but no. Danny has tried numerous times, but I constantly tell her I’m not interested. She doesn’t seem to get it. I think she thinks she can change my mind, and even though she’s sweet and caring, she can be majorly overbearing. She tries to protect me, and I constantly tell her my dad does that enough for the world. She lets it go until something else happens where she thinks I’m in danger, and it sparks again. We have little fights often, but we always make up.”

“Oh, okay. Good to know.”

“What about you?”

“What about me?”

“Gotta boyfriend?”

“Oh, no.”
“A girlfriend?”

A quick shot of pain went to Carmilla’s heart. I did once, until mother found out. I’m not allowed to like girls. I like boys. I like boys.

“I’m not interested in anyone and I don’t swing that way.”

“Okay. Are you sure about that?”

No because I think you’re really cute.

Carmilla was just about to answer when the back door swung open and the puppy of a man was standing there.

“Hey, you guys! We’re going to watch a movie! Come on!”

Laura smiled at Carmilla. “Wanna watch the movie?”

“Sure.” Carmilla smiled.

Laura dried her legs off and they entered the house, sitting next to each other on the floor, with their backs against the couch.

“Laf, hand me that blanket please.”

Lafontaine threw Laura the blanket and she covered her legs.

“Have you cooled down,” Laura asked offering some of the blanket to Carmilla.

“Yeah, thanks.”

As the movie progressed, Carmilla could feel her heart beating harder and harder through her chest. Laura had slowly inched closer to her as the movie played on. Carmilla shifted and put her hands on the ground to steady herself, Laura’s body heat radiating them under the blanket. She felt a finger brush against hers under the blanket. She looked at Laura, who kept her eyes trained on the screen in front of them, a small smirk on her lips.

Is that her finger? What do I do? I was told to avoid this, but for the first time in a long time, I miss this connection with someone. I like boys. I like boys. I like boys. She said this over and over again to herself as she connected her pinky finger with Laura’s. They stayed like that through the rest of the movie.
Carmilla wasn't sure what the movie they had just watched was even about. She could only pay attention to her and Laura's pinkies under the blanket.

She felt like her heart was going to explode because it was beating so fast. The movie came to a close and Carmilla noticed it was already 5 o'clock. To most people, this would still be considered early but in Lilita Karnstein's house, it was late.

"Do you need to leave?"

Carmilla looked over to Laura. She didn't understand why Laura seemed to always show her concern.

"Uh, I don't think so. I just have to make a quick phone call. Is there a place that's a little more quiet?"

Kirsch had turned the music back on, louder this time and people started to sing along with whatever country song was playing from the stereo.

"Yeah, around that wall is the office. It's almost as if Kirsch's dad knew he'd have a loud son."

Carmilla looked confused again so Laura continued. "It's soundproof."

"Oh, okay. I'll be right back."

Carmilla unhooked their pinkies, got up and turned the corner into the large office. It had huge windows, just like the living room. Everything was made of oak it seemed, from the chairs in front of the desk to the desk itself, even the large ceiling to floor bookshelves. It was peaceful to her. Carmilla took out her phone and looked at it. Better go with Dad. He's much easier to deal with than Mother.

. Carmilla dialed Henry's number and waited for him to answer. Please answer. Please answer. Please answer. Please answer.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Dad!"

"Hey, Kiddo. How's it going?"

"Surprisingly really well!"

"That's my girl! I knew you wouldn't have a problem."

"Thanks. Look I was just calling to know what time I should be home?"

"Whenever you want sweetheart!"
"We know that is not the Lilita answer," Carmilla said, still hoping she didn't have a curfew.

Henry started laughing through the phone and it always made Carmilla smile.

"That is true," he said still laughing.

"So when should I be home?"

"Carmilla, I hate to tell you this, but you have two parents. Mom would say 8 o'clock sharp, and I would too if I didn't think you were having a great time."

"I mean, I'm having a good time-"

"Carmilla, stop. I know it's a great time because you've never called to ask how late you can be out. You only ever call if you want one of us to come pick you up. So because of this, Carmilla Karnstein, I'm not giving you a curfew."

"Seriously?!"

"I mean, I don't want you out all night, but you're with church kids so I figure you're okay. You also haven't started school yet, so yes seriously. Stay as long as you like."

"Thanks, Dad! Thank you so much!"

"You're welcome, Kiddo."

"Wait, will you breaking the news to Mother?" Carmilla asked, her voice now full of concern.

"Just leave your mother to me, Princess. Now get off your phone, like some loser, and go hang out with your friends!"

"Okay. Thanks again, Dad. I love you."

"Love you too, Carmilla." And with that Carmilla hung up her phone.

\textit{Friends. I have friends. Well, at least Laura, I think. But friends.}

Carmilla stood there and smiled to herself, while looking at her phone. The idea of friends brought a lot of happiness into her heart that used to be so bitter and sad.

"I'm going to assume everything is alright based on that beautiful smile you have on your face?"

Carmilla almost jumped out of her skin at the sound of Laura's voice.

"Jesus, Laura, don't scare me like that!"

"Did the minister's daughter just use the Lord's name in vain?" Laura asked, smiling at Carmilla.

"Do you have a problem with that?"

"No. I'm just used to hearing it when girls are under me, not standing next to me."

Carmilla's heart skipped a beat and Laura just winked. They stood there for a moment, looking at each other. The only thought in Carmilla's head after her initial shock was \textit{I like boys. I like boys. I like boys.}

Laura exhaled and they both laughed for a second.
"So, seriously. Is everything alright?" Laura asked.

"Yeah, everything’s fine. I just wanted to call my dad to see when my curfew was."

"And?"

"He told me I didn’t have one and to enjoy myself."

"Well then I guess we have plenty of time." Laura smiled and Carmilla couldn’t help but smile back. Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand and took her back to the party.

The music seemed to be even louder and Carmilla noticed the vibe of the house had changed. Where there had been pizza on the counter, it was now full of bottles and cans of beer. A few more people had arrived than there were before, people were dancing around and drinking.

"Kirsch, you started early?" Laura asked while walking over to him.

"Well it wouldn’t be a day off, parents away party if I didn’t!"

“Very true,” Laura exclaimed as she walked over to the counter grabbing one of the beer bottles. She turned around holding one out for Carmilla, but Carmilla shook her head.

“So the minister’s daughter doesn’t drink?”

Carmilla laughed, actually laughed hard at what Laura had just asked her.

“And what exactly is so funny?”

“Sweetheart, of course I drink. But I don’t drink cheap beer. Kirsch?”

“Yes, Carmsexy?”

“Call me that again and I will make you wish you never had.”

Kirsch’s eyes went wide and he started stuttering. “Uh… sorry, bro… Uh I mean, woman. Uh… no, I mean sorry…”

“Relax, beefcake,” Carmilla said, patting his shoulder. He physically relaxed and said, “What do you need? Me casa is your casa. Or something like that.”

“Do you only have beer?”

“For us? Yeah, but my parents have a secret liquor cabinet. I don’t even know the last time they were in there. They’re gone a lot.”

“Mind if I take a peek?”

Laura watched Carmilla with what could only be described as curiosity.

“Be my guest,” Kirsch said as Sarah Jane wrapped her arm around Kirsch.

“Hey babe, did you meet Carmilla?”

“Yeah, hey again,” Sarah Jane said before leaning in to give Kirsch a kiss.

Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand again. “Where’s the cabinet, Kirsch?” Laura asked.
“Last cabinet on the far right in the kitchen, but keep it on the down low. I can’t have their entire stash going missing because of the Zetas.”

“No problem,” Laura smiled and they walked over to the kitchen. The kitchen was white, marble and large. It had two stainless steel ovens, a stainless steel refrigerator and cabinets all around.

Carmilla walked over to the far right and opened the cabinet. She saw a larger amount of liquor than she expected. Almost everything was there except for vodka.

“So, liquor, huh?” Laura leaned against the kitchen’s marble island. “And how does a young religious girl get involved in the downward path of alcohol?”

“I don’t know why you assume I’m so innocent?”

“I never said you were.”

Carmilla grabbed a bottle of whiskey and made her way to the fridge. She saw a can of coke and opened it. She poured the whiskey and coke together in a red cup and put the bottle back.

“And what about you, Laura?”

“What about me?”

“Your father seems to be pretty religious and here you are, at a party, beer in your hand, apparently getting a lot of speeding tickets and being grounded.”

“I like to have fun. If it were up to my dad, I would be at home doing my summer reading.”

Carmilla took a long gulp of her drink and sighed. She missed the way alcohol coursed through her body. She missed the taste and soon, she hoped to feel the numbness. Carmilla hung out with people in the city, but they were ex’s friends, not hers. She drank to get rid of her cares so she wouldn’t worry about her “problem”.

“I don’t know how you drink that,” Laura said, pointing to the red cup.

“Wanna try it?”

Laura walked over to Carmilla, and stood within inches of her. Why is she standing so close? She smells so good. If only I could lean in and no. That’s ridiculous. I like boys. Laura looked into Carmilla’s eyes, smirking. “Do I wanna try what, exactly?” Laura then looked down the length of Carmilla’s body and she licked her lips.

They made eye contact again and Carmilla felt like she had lost her voice. There was a loud bang, when the door flung open and Perry was standing there. Carmilla jumped and moved backwards, away from Laura.

Perry stood for a moment before speaking, looking between the two. “Kirsch is moving the party outside. One of the Zeta’s brought burgers and hotdogs. So Kirsch decided to barbeque,” Perry said, feeling the tension in the air.

“That’s great, Perry. We’ll be out in a minute.”

Perry stood there a little longer before leaving. Carmilla exhaled. I’ve got to be careful. If someone goes to my mom and tells her that I’m flirting with Laura, I’ll have to go back. I can’t go back. Not to that place.
Carmilla’s eyes were wide and she started to breathe heavily. Laura grabbed her arm to try and get Carmilla’s attention.

“Hey, Carmilla? Carmilla, are you okay?”

“What? Oh, yeah I’m fine. Sorry. We should go outside. I don’t know why anyone would trust Kirsch with a fire.”

“Give him credit, he may not be the brightest person, but he is a good at burgers. Besides, we’re next to the pool. Every time he decides to barbeque, we just tell him, we’ll throw him in the pool if he catches himself on fire.”

Carmilla couldn’t help, but laugh as they made their way out the kitchen and into the backyard.

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Once outside, Perry pulled on Laura’s arm and away from Carmilla.

“Are you insane?” Perry asked, eyes wide as she looked at Laura.

“What?” Laura asked, dumbfounded. She pulled her arm out of Perry’s grasp.

“Are you seriously trying to go after her?”

Laura exhaled. “Perry…”

“No, Laura. I know you like to think you can have every girl, but she is the minister’s daughter!”

“Perry, it’s fine. She claims ‘not to swing that way’, even though I’m pretty sure she’s lying.”

“Laura, don’t do this. It won’t end well.”

“Says who? I’ve managed to keep all my other hookups and girlfriends at bay without my dad finding out, so why would this be any different?”

“Let me reiterate, she is the minister’s daughter!”

Lafontaine came out from inside the house and walked up to them.

“Whoa, Per, your nostrils are flaring.”

“Do you know who Laura is trying to go after?” Perry asked. Laura rolled her eyes and took a sip from her beer.

“Carmilla?” There was a pause, where Perry just stared at Lafontaine. “Am I right?”

“She can’t go after her, she’s the minister’s daughter.”

“Perry, relax. If Laura wants to go after her, then let her. She likes her.”

“It’s not right. She’s new in town and we should just be friends with her.”

“Laura? You want Laura to just be friends with her? This Laura?” Lafontaine points to Laura.

“Guys, I’m right here!” Laura said, staring at them both.

“Look, will you two just relax. Carmilla is hot and who cares if I try. I like her.”
“You don’t even know her,” Perry reminded her.

“Look at her!” Laura pointed to Carmilla, who was standing next to Kirsch, by the grill. She had a shy smile on her face, while she helped Kirsch set up the charcoal and lighter fluid.

“She’s hot. She’s kind and I know there is something in there that is bursting to get out. I just want to figure out what it is.”

“Laura, I don’t think now is the appropriate time to get all Veronica Mars on her,” Perry crossed her arms.

“Look, Per…”

“No, both of you look. I like Carmilla, she’s hot, she’s smart, she’s gorgeous…” Laura trailed off, staring at Carmilla some more. Carmilla looked up and they smiled at each other.

“Oh, Laura?” Lafontaine snapped her fingers in front of Laura’s face.

“Right. Anyway, like I said, she told me she wasn’t interested in girls. And let me reiterate that I’m not buying that, but I could be wrong. Just let me be me. Okay?”

Lafontaine automatically put her hands up and said, “I didn’t have a problem with it to begin with.”

“Perry?”

Perry looked at Lafontaine and then just shrugged.

“Fine. But if you get into trouble with her, I’m not bailing you out this time. You almost took Laf and I down with you the last time.”

“I know. I’m sorry. There won’t be any trouble, I promise.”

And with that, Laura started to walk back over to Carmilla.

“Perry, you’re not her mother. Don’t worry about it so much.” Lafontaine said, as they wrapped their arm around Perry’s shoulder.

“I know. Just after her mother… I just think she needs someone to watch out for her that isn’t a big, happy, cop. She needs tough love every once in a while.”

“Perry, they’re just flirting so just let them flirt. Maybe Carmilla can actually help Laura.”

Perry looked over and saw Carmilla smiling at Laura.

“Yeah, maybe.”

“Come on, let’s go be teenagers and have some fun!” Lafontaine took her arms from around Perry’s shoulders and extended her hand, which Perry happily took it as they went to join the rest of the party.

Carmilla saw Perry pull Laura, and immediately started to get nervous. Oh no, she knows something’s up. Wait, is something up? I mean we weren’t doing anything. All I asked is if she wanted to try my drink. Maybe Perry just needs to talk to her about something else. I’m sure that’s it.
“Hey, Carm… Carmilla,” Kirsch yelled. “Could you give me hand?”

“Yeah, sure.”

Carmilla grabbed a bag of charcoal from Kirsch and helped him walk over to the rather large grill.

“Nice, right?” Kirsch asked, smiling.

“Sure.”

“Sure? Dude, this is one of the best quality grills anyone can own.”

“Uh, dude. I’m from a city. Mostly it was a little grill that you could use on a fire escape so yeah, this is nice.”

“Wait, have you never grilled before?”

“Nope.”

“But you have had a grilled burger before, right?”

“I think so? I honestly don’t know. We didn’t have one. Maybe once on a vacation.”

“Oh, dude, get ready to help me and have the best burger of your life.”

Carmilla started helping Kirsch load the grill with coal. He set lighter fluid all over it and lit a match. She could feel the warmth take over her body and she stepped back at the rather large flame.

“Hey, watch it,” she said, taking another step back.

“Oh, shit. Sorry bro, I should have told you to step back. I can be forgetful sometimes.”

“And yet you’re the man playing with fire.”

“Don’t worry. Laura told me-”

“She’d push you in the pool. I know the drill and am prepared to do so if need be.”

There was a pause as Kirsch started to lay down some hamburgers and hotdogs.

“So, what was it like in the city?” Kirsch asked, trying to start a conversation. He was an overall nice guy, who liked to make sure everyone was comfortable.

“It was amazing. We lived in an apartment so high up that it looked over the span of the city. I miss that view, especially at sunset. You could see the sky change colors and watch the city come alive.”

“That sounds really awesome.”

“Yeah, too bad I won’t see that again.”

“Don’t say that. Look we might not have skyscrapers that look over the city, but we have the beach. Have you ever seen the sunrise or set over the water?”

“No, actually, I haven’t.”

“Then you can still have your beautiful sunsets, it’s just a different landscape.”
Carmilla smiled at Kirsch and then saw Laura behind him. They made eye contact and smiled. *I wonder if she would watch the sunrise or set with me,* Carmilla thought as she noticed Lafontaine snapping their fingers in Laura’s face. Carmilla turned her attention back to Kirsch, who was smiling at her.

“Got a thing for Laura?”

“What? No. I mean she’s cool and all, but I don’t swing that way. I like boys.”

“Do you? Because I couldn’t help but notice you guys got a little touchy, touchy under the blanket.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m just saying, your hands were a little too close to not be doing something.”

“Nothing happened.”

“You do know if you are gay, it’s totally cool, right? I mean I’m bisexual. I have Sarah Jane right now, but you see Theo over there? A lot more was going down in the locker room after practice, if you know what I mean.”

“Stop.” Carmilla put her hand up before she heard more details than she liked. “Why are you telling me this?” Carmilla was getting antsy.

“Because you’re among friends here and if you like Laura, you should just go for it.”

“Well, I like guys so you can keep the lesbian fantasy to yourself.” Carmilla started to get defensive. She needs the subject to change. She won’t admit that she likes Laura. She can’t.

“I like boys. I like boys. I like boys.

“Look, I’m not trying to get in your business. I’m just going to tell you that this group of people aren’t as ‘straight’ as you think. However, we all keep it within the group. If we have a problem, we only go to each other. We watch out for each other and protect each other. You’re safe with us and no one here would spill any secrets.”

Carmilla wasn’t sure what to do. She had never been around someone accepting before.

“I don’t really talk about it. So can we just keep that conversation between you and me?”

“Carmilla, it’s safe with me and if you want to talk about it or anything just let me know.”

“Why are you being so nice to me?” Carmilla practically whispered, her head lowering. Kirsch could notice the small amount of sadness in her eyes when she asked this.

“Well, isn’t that what friends are for?”

“You wanna be my friend?” Carmilla asked, a small amount of anticipation was growing in her stomach.

“Yeah. I mean, I’ve hung out with Will and he’s told me a lot of stuff about what the city was like for him. He told me about his friends, but when I asked about you he went kind of quiet. I figured you didn’t have the same kind of life as him.”

“He is the favorite.”

“Well, he’s cool and all, but I like your vibe. You just seem like a really cool, down to earth chick…
I mean lady, woman. Girl? Whatever, like I said, if you wanna talk, I’m here and if you wanna eat, I’m also here.”

Carmilla smiled at Kirsch and he smiled back before getting back to the grill.

Carmilla saw Laura walking up to her and she started to get butterflies in her stomach. She’s so beautiful. Maybe with Kirsch as my friend, I can have these thoughts and then talk to him about them. Maybe it’s not so bad to look at her hips as she walks or enjoy the smell of her perfume. Who am I kidding? I can’t have these feelings.

“Did Kirsch bore you?” Laura asked, looking at the burgers.

“Hey!” Kirsch said.

Laura just smiled. “Kidding Kirsch.”

“Yeah, you better be.”

Laura looked back at Carmilla and nodded her head towards the chairs behind them. Carmilla simply nodded.

“Thanks again, Kirsch,” Carmilla said, looking at Kirsch with hopeful eyes.

“Anytime, bro… uh, Carmilla.”

Laura led the way as Carmilla followed, laying down on a pool lounge chair. She noticed people were starting to get into the pool. Laura pushed her chair closer to Carmilla, before sitting down.

“I didn’t know this was going to turn into a pool party,” Carmilla said, keeping her eyes trained straight ahead instead of at Laura.

“Oh, it always does. Do you wanna go in?”

“I don’t have a bathing suit.”

Carmilla saw Laura shifting and standing up beside her. She pulled her shirt over her head and looked down at her.

“Who says, you need one?” She started to unbutton her pants and Carmilla’s heart started pounding against her chest. She moved her eyes back to the people in the pool. I have to avoid temptation even when it’s right next to me. Don’t look at her. You must avoid temptation.

“Do you wanna go for a swim, Carm?”

Carmilla looked over to see Laura still standing there with her shirt off and her pants unbuttoned. Man she is hot. Look at her body. I wish I could touch… I mean she’s an attractive woman with a nice body. That’s all. Get it together, Carmilla.

“I think I’m okay. You can go if you like, but I’m content right here.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Please, don’t let me hold you back.”

“You’re not holding me back.” Laura zipped and buttoned her pants back up. She then put her shirt back on and Carmilla was able to breath again. Okay. Relax. She’s got her clothes back on, not that
I’m ever going to get that image out of my head. Carmilla decided to break the awkward silence.

“I actually don’t like the water,” Carmilla said, envious of the people playing.

“What? How can you not like it? It feels so good on a hot summer’s day.”

“City kid, remember? Ever since I was a kid, it terrified me. I went to the beach once with my family when I was like 8 or 9 and even with my dad holding me, I would freak out and run back to the blanket under the umbrella.”

“You act like you don’t even know how to swim,” Laura said, thinking it was all blaise.

Carmilla’s eyes went a little wide and Laura looked over at her, smiling with her mouth open wide in shock. “Oh my gosh, Carmilla! You don’t know how to swim?”

“Look, it’s not a big deal.”

“Carmilla you’re almost 17 and you can’t swim.”

“City kids don’t really learn how to and you definitely don’t swim in public pools, unless you don’t mind a little bit of everything in the water.”

“Carmilla, that’s just crazy! Come on!”

“What?!”

“Come on!” Laura held out her hand.

Carmilla took it and Laura started dragging her towards the pool.

“Laura, please no. I don’t want to go in. I don’t have a swimsuit.”

Laura stopped dead in her tracks, taking her shirt off again, staring at Carmilla while she did it. This time she shimmied out of her pants and threw them to the side. Carmilla stood still. Excited and confused. Laura moved closer to Carmilla, reaching around her. Carmilla felt hands on her bottom as Laura took her cellphone and wallet out of her back pockets and put it on top her discarded clothes. Laura then grabbed the hem of Carmilla’s shirt and lifted it over her head. She tried to keep her eyes glued on Carmilla’s, but couldn’t help looking down at her porcelain skin. She smiled.

“I’ll teach you how to swim.”

“I really don’t want to. I have a fear of water. I don’t know why, but I seriously can’t get in that pool,” Carmilla pleaded.

The next thing she knew, Kirsch came running towards them and pushing them both into the pool. Carmilla went under, scared, trying not to panic and started flailing. She couldn’t get out from under the water until she felt an arm pull her up. She was coughing and frightened.

“Kirsch, what the hell?!” Laura yelled, and then looked at Carmilla. “Are you okay? I’m so sorry. I wasn’t expecting him to do that.”

Carmilla just looked at Laura, realizing she was glued to Laura’s side, as Laura held her above the water.

“It’s only 3 feet, Carm. You can put your feet down on the bottom and stand.”
Carmilla did as she told, saddened by the loss of Laura’s body heat. “Kirsch, seriously! I could kill you for that! She’s still in her jeans for Christ’s sakes.”

“Just thought I’d give you guys a little nudge,” Kirsch said, smiling at Carmilla.

Carmilla rolled her eyes, starting to register she was in the pool, soaking wet. Laura looked at her and started to giggle to herself.

“And what’s so funny, Laura?”

“You look like a wet cat.” Laura giggled some more before she got serious again. “But all cuteness aside, are you okay?”

“My mom is going to kill me if I come home soaking wet.”

Laura faced Carmilla and smiled. “Then I guess we will need to dry them.” Laura led Carmilla out of the pool. Carmilla’s pants were glued to her legs. Laura found two towels in a cabinet near the pool and handed one to Carmilla. They grabbed their clothes and started to head inside.

“Burgers are ready!” Kirsch yelled as they closed the door.

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Laura escorted Carmilla to the laundry room.

“Stay here and try to get out of those pants. I’ll go get you some of Kirsch’s sweats. You can put your pants in the dryer. 30 minutes ought to do it.”

And with that, Laura was out the door on a mission to find sweats. Carmilla took her pants off as quickly as she could. She had her shirt with her, so she took off her bra and put her shirt back on. Laura walked in a few minutes later with a pair pants and stepped back outside so Carmilla could change. Once she was done, they decided to go get some burgers while they waited for her pants to dry.

They sat quietly while they started to eat their burgers, except Carmilla couldn’t stay quiet for too long after the first bite.

“Oh my gosh, these are amazing!”

“Right? Kirsch makes amazing burgers.”

“Yes, he does. My compliments to chef.” Laura smiled and took another bite. They sat in a comfortable silence before Laura spoke.

“I’m sorry, by the way.”

“For what?”

“I shouldn’t have dragged you towards the pool. I should have known Kirsch was going to do that because he almost always does when I’m about to go into the pool.”

“Why?”

“He thinks it’s funny. But yeah, I am sorry.”

“It’s okay. You’re right, I’m almost 17 and I can’t swim. Besides I can’t get too mad when there was
a pretty girl there to rescue me.”

Laura blushed and bowed her head. *Why did that feel so natural?*

They finished their burgers and hung out, watching people splash around the pool while they waited for Carmilla’s pants to dry. Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Elsie were playing a game of chicken. Carmilla couldn’t help but smile as she watched Perry on Lafontaine’s shoulders take on Danny on Elsie’s shoulders. She even cheered a little when Perry won.

An alarm went off on Laura’s phone. “Pants should be done.” They went back in and Carmilla managed to put her pants back on and grabbed her bra. It was still damp, but luckily the heat from the drier made the room warm, so it wasn’t as bad. She walked out of the laundry room to a waiting Laura.

“Ready to go?”

Carmilla looked at the clock on the wall and nodded her head. “Yeah, I guess it’s getting kind of late. How long is the drive back?”

“About 40 minutes. Do you need to call your dad?”

“Nope, he didn’t give me a curfew. Do you need to call yours?”

“Please, I guarantee he has my phone tapped and knows exactly where I am.”

“It must be hard to have a cop for a father.”

“Oh, you have no idea.” Laura smiled and they went to say their goodbyes to everyone around the pool.

Kirsch gave Carmilla a bone crushing hug. “Sorry for pushing you in the pool.”

“No worries, beefcake.”

“Well just remember, I’m here if you want to talk about anything. Don’t get into too much trouble.”

“Ha ha, Kirsch. But could I get your number, just in case?”

“Sure, bro.”

Kirsch took Carmilla’s phone and entered his number. Carmilla heard a ring and Kirsch picked up his phone. “Looks like we’re officially friends,” Kirsch said.

Carmilla smiled, “Yeah, friends.”

Carmilla saw Perry giving Laura what looked like a lecture. Carmilla slowly walked up to the group as she heard Perry tell Laura to “behave.”

“I’m ready to go. Are you guys?” Carmilla asked.

“Oh Lafontaine and Perry are actually going to stay a bit longer and get a ride from Mel,” Laura said, as she watched the other two girls nod.

“Oh okay.”

They all said their goodbyes and before Carmilla knew it, she was back on the road with Laura.
They had put the roof back on the car and were just listening to music. They were resting their arms on the middle console, when Laura hooked her pinky with Carmilla’s. Carmilla looked at Laura again, but her eyes were trained on the road. The car ride back was quiet, almost motionless with their pinkies glued together.

Carmilla noticed her neighborhood and Laura stopped a house away from Carmilla’s.

“I had a good time with you today, Carm.”

“Yeah me too. Thanks for letting me hangout with you and your friends.”

“Well they’re your friends too now,” Laura said and Carmilla smiled. She looked down at their pinkies and smiled. She felt Laura shift and when she looked up, Laura was inches from her face.

“Tell me to stop, if you don’t want this,” Laura said, looking into Carmilla’s eyes.

Carmilla didn’t say anything as she looked into Laura’s eyes. Laura leaned in and pressed her lips against Carmilla’s. Carmilla kissed Laura back almost immediately as they leaned over the centered console. Laura brought a hand behind Carmilla’s head to pull her closer. Carmilla couldn’t get enough of Laura. Her smell, her taste, everything. She was mesmerized by this beautiful girl that was kissing her. But then reality came crashing down and hard. Carmilla pulled away, her eyes wide as she looked at Laura. She grabbed her bag by the strap and opened the car door.

“Carmilla, wait-.”

“I have to go.”

And with that Carmilla shut the car door and started walking to her front door as quickly as she could. She knew Laura would wait until she got inside to drive away, but she had to calm down before entering the house. *What the fuck did I do? What did I just do? Mom’s going to kill me. She’s going to send me back. I can’t go back. Nothing happened. It was a mistake. A simple mistake. I like boys. I want a boyfriend, not Laura. I like boys.*

And with that, Carmilla entered her house not even looking back at the girl she had just kissed.
Carmilla entered the house as quietly as she could. It was now past 1 am, and she hoped everyone had gone to bed.

She closed the door and locked it as quietly as possible. When she turned around, she noticed the living room and kitchen lights were off. The only lights on were the two small wall lamps around the small wooden table in the foyer. She put her keys down and quietly took off her boots and sighed. She leaned back and rested the back of her head against the door. *What did I do? What did I just do? I was taught how to avoid temptation! I knew what was happening and I couldn't stop it! She told me to stop her! Why didn't I stop it before she kissed me?! Her soft lips, her smell... It's like I was in a trance..."

"Carmilla?"

Carmilla jumped at the sound of Henry's voice, hitting her head on the door.

"Ow! Shit," she said, while rubbing her head.

Henry looked at her and shook his head. "Language, Carmilla. Your mother will have both of our heads if she hears you talking like that."

"I know, Dad."

"It's late."

Carmilla just nodded her head, trying to stay as calm as possible.

Henry smiled. "You must have had a really good time."

Carmilla smirked. "Yeah, it wasn't bad. Sorry I'm home so late."

"Don't worry about it. You were with church kids, so I wasn't worried."

*You know nothing about THESE church kids*, Carmilla thought.

"You alright, sweetheart?"

Henry looked at his daughter, concern written all over his face.

"What? Oh. Yeah, Dad I'm fine. Uh, just tired. Why are you still up?"

"You think I wouldn't wait up for my daughter?"

"You never did before."

"Oh, I did. You just always ran straight to your room. Mind too consumed with wonders to notice your old man."

"Sentimental much?"
Henry laughed and hugged his daughter. Carmilla hugged him back and tighter than she meant to. When they broke away, he looked down at her again noticing the worrisome behind her eyes.

"You sure you're okay?"

"Yeah. I'm just going to go to bed."

“Okay, sweetheart.” Henry let go of Carmilla. She started walking towards the stairs, before she turned around.

“Aren’t you going to bed, Dad?”

“I was in the middle of a Bible study. I’m going to finish that and then I’ll be heading to bed myself.”

“Oh. Okay. Goodnight, Dad.”

"Goodnight, Kid."

Carmilla went up the stairs as quietly as she could. She noticed her parents bedroom light was on, but decided to ignore it. *If I went in there, mother would read me like a book and know what I did within 5 seconds.*

She went in her room and went straight to bed, trying to forget about Laura and what she had allowed to happen.

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Once Laura got home, she started to panic.

*I told her to stop me and she didn't. Maybe it's me. Maybe she doesn't like me? No that doesn't make sense, she stayed by my side the whole night. Something happened to her. Something to make her fear me. Should I text her?*

Laura thought it over and started laughing to herself. *I don't text. She'll contact me when she wants and when she's ready.*

With that, Laura hopped into bed with only one thought on her mind: Carmilla. She smiled as she slowly fell asleep, the taste of Carmilla still on her lips.

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A few days have passed and Carmilla hadn't heard from anyone, not even Laura. She wasn't sure if she felt relieved or sad by this fact. She laid in bed that Thursday morning, staring aimlessly at her ceiling. The word “friends” being tossed around in her brain, sometimes sincerely and other times sarcastically. It had been happening every morning since Sunday. *Did I actually make friends or were they just being nice? Of course, they were probably just being nice. Story of my life, really.*

She decided she needed a distraction and tried reading a book, but it couldn’t hold her interest. She read the same line over and over, not absorbing a single thought about what she was reading. She gave up and decided to go downstairs. *Maybe TV will help distract me,* She looked at her alarm clock and noticed it was almost noon. Her mother wasn’t going to be too happy that she laid in bed all morning, but she slowly descended down the stairs and into the living room, plopping on the couch.

Carmilla started flipping through the channels, making sure she was watching something “family
approved”. There was one rule in the Karnstein house that hadn't changed since she was a little girl: they were only allowed one TV and that was to be shared in a family space. "If you can't watch it in front of me or your mother, you shouldn't be watching it," Henry had explained countless times to his daughter and son.

She zoned out for a minute, Laura’s kiss on her mind again. She stared at the window while some station played in the background. She thought about how soft Laura’s lips were, a small smile spreading across her lips.

"Oh, Carmilla. I'm glad you finally decided to grace us with your presence. I was just about to go upstairs and wake you," Lilita said. She looked over to the TV and turned back to her daughter. "Honestly Carmilla. I know we want you two to watch family shows, but cartoons are a little below your level."

Carmilla looked at the TV and started to laugh. "I wasn't really watching it. I just zoned out for a minute."

"Well you need to eat and get ready. We have to run over to the high school."

Carmilla groaned. "Why?"

"We need to get you and William registered, make sure all your transfers are okay. I don't want either of you having to repeat something."

"Fine. Where is Will?"

"William is already at the high school. He made the football team and they have practice. Now, there are sandwiches in the kitchen. Please don't make us be late. We have to be there in an hour."

"Of course not, Mother."

Carmilla turned off the TV and went to the kitchen. She noticed the turkey sandwiches laying on the counter. She quickly grabbed one and ran upstairs.

"Carmilla Karnstein, have you ever heard of a plate?" Her mother yelled, watching her daughter run up the stairs.

"No!" Lilita heard before the slamming of a door.

Carmilla got ready as quickly as possible and running down the stairs with 10 minutes to spare. "Ready!" She yelled as she reached the bottom.

"Carmilla, you have mayonnaise on both sides of your mouth."

Carmilla stuck her tongue out and licked both sides on her mouth, consuming the rest of her sandwich. "Okay, now I'm ready."

"You're just like your Father." Lilita said, handing over a napkin. Carmilla noticed the small tone of disdain. Henry was a great man, but he had little quirks that Lilita didn't like, especially now that she kept seeing them in her daughter.

They locked up the house and made their way to the car.

"Where is Dad, by the way?" Carmilla asked as she buckled her seatbelt.

"He needed to make some visits. He's going around and meeting the elderly members of the church."
Apparently there are a selected few who have gone to Greenland their entire lives, but are too feeble to make it to Sunday service."

"Sounds boring."

Lilita huffed and the rest of the car ride was silent.

They approached the school and it was bigger than Carmilla would have expected. A two story, red brick school. The colors of the school standing out proudly as Carmilla and Lilita made it through the entrance.

They made their way to the office and saw Will sitting with Kirsch.

"Hi, Mother. Carmilla." Will said, smiling brightly.

"Hi, Son. Good practice?"

"Great practice! I made every field goal I kicked."

"That's my son!" Lilita smiled. That smile was only reserved for Will. It was genuine and full of pride. Carmilla only saw it once. The day she came back from being in that horrible place.

Lilita moved her way to the desk and Kirsch stood up, giving Carmilla a warm smile and a big hug.

"Hey, Beefcake!"

"Hey, Carm-sexy."

She punched him in the gut, lightly and he pretended to be hurt. "Okay, I get it. No sexy."

"Damn straight."

"Carmilla!" She heard her mother's stern voice.

Shit.

"Watch your mouth!"

"Sorry, mother."

"Hi, Wilson." Kirsch cringed at his name when Lilita addressed him.

"Hi, Mrs. Karnstein."

"Teaching my son to play good ball, I see."

"Yes ma'am! Will's a great kicker! You're going to love watching him play."

"I don't doubt that. Wow, Carmilla. Look at his arms and shoulders. The primitive by way of the Neo-Classical." Lilita smiled, but Kirsch was clearly uncomfortable.

"Uh, yeah well I work out. The whole team does. You should know though that kickers are always smaller, but your son's kicking leg is made of iron."

"Mrs. Karnstein?"

Lilita turned around and walked back over to the desk. The three of them stood there awkwardly for
a moment, until Lilita broke their silence.

"Well it seems everything is in order and they said they would have someone show you kids around. Wilson, would you mind giving the kids a ride home when they're finished? I have errands to run."

"Uh, sure thing, Mrs. K!"

Lilita sneered at the nickname and Kirsch automatically started to stutter. "My apologies. Sure thing, Mrs. Karnstein is what I meant to say."

Lilita smiled and left. Will walked out after her, talking about going to the locker room to shower and clean up.

Once they were alone, they looked at each other and smiled.

"Sorry about mommy dearest and the muscles thing." Carmilla said, after another moment of silence.

"Yeah, bro. What was that?"

"She was doing it, to show your body to me. To remind me... I mean as a way for me to ask you out because I like guys."

Kirsch looked at Carmilla and hesitated before speaking. "Do you, though? Like guys, I mean?"

"Of course I do! You're just not my type is all."

Kirsch grabbed his heart and pretended to be heartbroken when they heard the office door open. Carmilla noticed the light brunette who made her way to the desk. The woman pointed behind her to Carmilla. Laura was quick to turn around and a small smile crept up on her face.

What the hell is she doing here?! Carmilla's thoughts running wild. She looked over at Kirsch who just smiled.

"I guess I'm showing you around the school," Laura said, after walking over to them. "Hey, Kirsch."

"Hey, Laura."

"So you ready to go?" Laura asked, looking at Carmilla.

Carmilla nodded and starting following Laura out of the office. She turned back around to say goodbye to Kirsch.

"See ya, Beefcake."

"Later, Carm-sexy."

She was almost out the office door when she heard Kirsch's voice again. He walked up to her and smiled. "Seriously, if you need anything or need to really talk about anything, remember I'm here and I'll always listen and help when I can."

Carmilla just smiled and felt her eyes started to water. The only person who had ever been this caring to her was her father and maybe Will. "Thanks, Kirsch. That means a lot." And with that, Carmilla did something she never thought she'd do willingly. She walked up to Kirsch and gave him a hug. He reciprocated almost immediately saying his goodbyes and heading toward what Carmilla figured was the locker rooms.
She turned around, Laura looking right at her.

"So?" Laura said.

"So I guess you should show me around, Cutie."

Carmilla stilled at the nickname, while Laura just smiled. *I have to stop using that nickname. No wonder she keeps getting the wrong idea.*

They walked around for what felt like hours as Laura explained the setup of the school. It had a Y and X structure. The first set of halls is off the Y section. To her right was the cafeteria and down the right hallway were the Health and ROTC classrooms. Down the left was the art and theater classrooms.

"Now when you walk into the school from the front, the theater is immediately to your left and the basketball court/gym to your right." Laura continued to explain as Carmilla just nodded her head. Carmilla could only think of Laura's kiss while she watched Laura explained. She felt uncomfortable, but couldn't figure out why.

As the walked down the stem of the Y hallway, they came to a big X with halls going in every direction. Carmilla looked up to noticed a glass dome and a balcony that looked over the ground floor.

"So the library is through those doors to your right. Down that hallway on your right is where a couple classrooms are and the cosmetology rooms."

"Cosmetology? Are you kidding, Cup... Laura?"

"What, didn't have that in your fancy city school?"

"Well, yeah, but not at high school."

"Well here at St. Charles High, girls and boys can graduate with their high school diploma and their cosmetology license. And you can get your haircut there for super cheap!"

"Yeah, I think I'll stick to the professionals."

"And how do you think professionals get their start?" Laura said, the sound of annoyance to her voice.

"Okay. Okay. You win!" Carmilla out her hands up to surrender.

"Anyway. Straight ahead are the biology classrooms also known as Lafontaine's heaven."

Carmilla laughed and looked at Laura. *Her eyes don't seem as bright today* Carmilla thought. "And down the left hall there are the chemistry rooms and few other classrooms. Upstairs behind us is all the math classrooms. The rest of the subjects are spread around and that's it."

Laura huffed and Carmilla looked at her. They stood there awhile as Carmilla noticed the school mascot, a shark, was tiled into the floor. The words "Saint Charles High School" surrounding it in teal, navy and silver.

"Are these the school colors?"

Laura looked at the floor and nodded. "Yeah. We're juniors this year so our color is navy blue."
"What do you mean, 'our color'?

"You know for school spirit days and pep rallies? We wear navy!"

"I don't know if you noticed, but I'm not exactly a person who screams school spirit." Carmilla smiled and Laura finally smiled at her like she had before.

"Well next year, you'll fit in fine!"

"Oh yeah? Why's that?"

"Seniors wear your everyday color: black."

Carmilla looked down at herself, noticing her black tee, black pants and combat boots.

"Well, I guess next year I'll have to wear a different color." Carmilla smirked and Laura stepped forward, closer to Carmilla.

Carmilla stilled as she felt her pinky be wrapped around Laura's. "I don't know?" Laura whispered in her ear, "I think you look pretty sexy in black." Carmilla smiled, feeling her cheeks redden.

"Is that right, Cupcake?" She heard herself reply, getting lost in the smell of Laura.

"Yep."

Laura pulled back and looked at Carmilla in the eyes. Both of their heart rates picked up before Carmilla took a step back, unhooking their pinkies.

"I should probably find Kirsch to get my ride home. Mother won't like it if we’re late."

"Kirsch is probably gone already, but I can give you a lift."

"I mean he has to take Will and I both home so..."

Just then, as if on cue, Carmilla heard her phone chime and checked her phone.

**Beefcake:** I figured you could use alone time with Laura. I'm driving Will home and know Laura will be happy to give you a ride.

Shit. I can't be alone with Laura. Bad things happen when I'm alone with Laura.

Laura was looking at her. "Well, wouldn't you know it. You were right, Laura. Kirsch left, so I could use that ride home."

Laura's smiled widened as she started walking down the hall. Carmilla walked behind her with her hands behind her back. She looked up for a moment and was surprised to see a new side of Laura. **Damn she had a nice ass. How did I not noticed this before. She's wearing the same jeans she wore at Kirsch's party. Shit, I'm so screwed.**

Carmilla's thoughts were interrupted by Laura's voice. "Are you, Carmilla Karnstein, the minister's daughter, ogling my ass?"

"What?"

"I think you were staring at my ass."
"I thought I saw a spider." Carmilla kicked herself mentally. *Could I be anymore lame? A spider, for fucks sake?*

Carmilla didn't have time to think anymore as Laura's eyes went wide and she starting swiping her hands on her jeans.

"Carmilla? Is there seriously a spider? Get it off!"

"Relax, Laura. I'm sorry. There's no spiders."

Laura exhaled. "Sorry. I hate spiders. Not as much as roaches, but it's a close second!"

"You don't know roaches, until you've seen city roaches. I was walking down the street with Will once and I swear I saw one that was like 4 inches. It was huge! Will screamed like a girl, in fact he had the same reaction as all the other girls around us. I stomped it. It was disgusting."

Laura looked at Carmilla with disgust. "And then I found five dollars," she immediately blurted out.

"What?"

"Well I've been told if you're telling a story that you thought was funny, but isn't or telling a story that's gross and the other person doesn't like it, you add a quick little lie at the end. For example, like, 'then I found five dollars' or 'then I threw up all over myself'. It's a subject changer or a conversation saver."

Laura just smiled. "I guess I'm not the only one who rambles."

"Hey!" Carmilla said, defensively.

"Well, at least I know one thing," Laura said as she and Carmilla exited the school.

"What's that?" Carmilla asked.

"Someone in this lesbian relationship will be able to kill the bugs and it won't have to be me this time."

Carmilla just smiled and shook her head. She let the word lesbian slide for now.

They got into Laura's Jeep and she started to drive to Carmilla's house. The car was silent again, but somehow their pinkies managed to get back together. For some reason, even though Carmilla believed it to be wrong, she felt comfort by Laura's pinky. That the world maybe wasn't so bad.

They pulled up to the house next door to Carmilla's.

"Well, here we are," Laura said, putting her Jeep in park.

"Here we are," Carmilla repeated.

Carmilla looked down at their hands again and smiled, but the air felt familiar. She looked up to see Laura closer to her. She immediately put her hand up, telling Laura to stop.

"I can't," Carmilla said, not looking at Laura.

"Why not?"

"I want to, believe me. I want to kiss you so bad, but I can't. It's wrong."
"Says who?"

"Everyone? The Bible? God? My mother. I can't, Laura."

Laura looked at Carmilla. She was surprised to hear what she's just heard.

"Carmilla, it's not wrong. It's human nature."

"No! It's wrong and I must resist temptation! I have to resist temptation at all costs. I like boys, Laura! I like boys!" Carmilla was practically screaming, but tears were running down her cheeks.

Laura looked at her, sadness had take over concern. She quickly pulled Carmilla into a hug.

"It's okay, Carmilla."

"It's not," Carmilla whispered into Laura's shoulder.

"It will be."

"I'll never be okay, Laura. I'm fucked up! I must resist temptation."

Carmilla quickly pulled herself away from Laura. "I like boys, Laura. I like boys." She whispered. Tears started to well up in her eyes again as she repeated her personal mantra to herself out loud. Laura listened to every word and pulled her into another hug.

"You're not fucked up, Carmilla. You're not anywhere close. Trust me, I'm more fucked up than you'll ever be."

Carmilla looked up at Laura. "What do you mean?"

"It's a story for another day."

They sat there quietly while Carmilla tried to calm down. She wiped the tears from her face before she spoke.

"Laura?"

"Hm?"

They both stared at the road in front of them. Carmilla took a few deep breaths, starting to feel calm.

"I do like you. I think you’re so beautiful, smart and caring. And I mean it when I say I want to kiss you because I haven’t stopped thinking about you since I left this car on Sunday."

“I haven’t stopped thinking about it either.” Laura smiled.

“But I can’t do this, Laura. I can’t be with you."

“I don’t understand why."

“Because it’s not right. It’s not normal."

“Carmilla, that’s not true. It’s not true at all."

“You don’t think I know that? I’ve been telling myself the same thing for years trying to fight my feelings for women.”
“Why?”

“Because I have to. I have to be normal. Look I don’t expect you to understand.”

“So help me to understand.”

“It’s a story for another day, Laura. I can’t. I can only be friends with you. For now, at least. I just need a friend.”

Laura exhaled and looked down. Carmilla could see all her thoughts cranking her head before she shook it and looked at Carmilla.

"Then that's what I'll be."

“What?”

“You said you never had a friend before and that’s what you need. So that's what I'll be… for now.”

Carmilla looked at Laura and they both smiled at each other. "I'll see you Sunday, Laura."

Laura just nodded as Carmilla got out of the car. She watched as Carmilla walked up to her door. Carmilla turned around and gave a shy wave before going inside.

What did her parents do to her? was Laura's only thought as she drove home.

Chapter End Notes

Giving thanks again to Kristin for helping me with my story by editing it every week!
You're the best!!!
Chapter Summary

New friendships start to develop while we learn a little more about Carmilla's and Laura's pasts

This is a long chapter guys... Get ready!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Carmilla entered the house smiling. She put her stuff down on the little table when she saw Lilita walking out of the kitchen, her mouth was shut tight and she stared at her daughter.

"Uh. Hi, Mother," Carmilla said, making eye contact.

"And where were you?"

"Where you dropped me off. The school, remember?" Carmilla's sarcasm rolled off her tongue before she could even stop it.

"Don't get smart with me young lady!"

"Sorry."

"Well I remember specifically asking Wilson to drive you home, but he arrived an hour ago with William. My daughter was nowhere to be found."

"Well, Laura was showing me around school-"

"Of course, Ms. Hollis, showed you around," Lilita interrupted.

"Apparently she does it for new students. Anyway Kirsch texted her to see if she could drive me home because he had somewhere to be so she agreed to." Carmilla lied. She couldn't exactly tell her mother that Kirsch told her to have alone time with Laura.

"Carmilla, why are you lying?"

"I'm not lying."

"Oh really?"

Carmilla lowered her head and nodded. She was about to apologize when Lilita spoke.

“Well let us just see where he needed to be. Wilson, could you come downstairs for a moment?"

Carmilla could hear his heavy footsteps walking down the hall.

Shit! Shit! Damn it, Kirsch!
"Yes, Mrs. Karnstein? Can I help you with something?"

"Oh, nothing dear. Just needed to prove a point to my daughter. You may go back to William."

Kirsch looked to Carmilla. He was clearly confused and slowly turned around, making his way back to William’s room. Lilita waited until she heard the door shut before she spoke again.

"I assume he just needed to be here," she said, a definite tone in her voice.

"Okay, so Laura offered to drive me home and I accepted. Why is that so bad?"

"You know the ladies at the church love to gossip for good Christian women. I've heard some rumors."

"What kind of rumors?" Carmilla was starting to get nervous. *Did the neighbors see Laura and I kiss? Do we even know the neighbors? Do the neighbors go to our church?*

Carmilla's thoughts stopped when she looked back to her mother. "Oh several different things. Apparently little Ms. Hollis can be quite the troublemaker. In reference to my daughter however, there are rumors that she's been seen around the town flirting with girls."

"And?"

"Carmilla. You are no longer who you thought you were, and I won't be having Ms. Hollis taking you back down that path. You are normal now and better than that."

"I'm not falling down a path."

"Then why lie about Ms. Hollis driving you home?"

Carmilla's mind went blank. She couldn’t think of anything to say. She didn’t want to lie, but she had already dug that hole. Her brain was working too hard.

"Let me repeat," Lilita said while walking towards Carmilla, "Why lie about Ms. Hollis driving you home? If you’re not going back to your old ways, then there would be no reason to lie."

Carmilla's mind finally caught up. "Because I knew if I told you I got a ride home from a girl you would immediately accuse me of something that isn't happening."

"Well I have to look out for my beautiful girl." Lilita slowly brushed some hair away from Carmilla’s face. Carmilla’s body stilled at the touch. "One day, you are going to make a very handsome man very happy."

"Of course, Mother."

"Maybe Wilson could help. He's a little slow, but he has energy and he is handsome, not to mention a football player."

"He has a girlfriend, Mother."

"Well that's a shame. However, you could probably persuade him."

Carmilla just shook her head and looked at the floor. She felt shameful for her lying. She felt shame over her kiss with Laura. Shame that she couldn’t control her actions. She decided to do the thing she thought would be right. "Maybe he could find someone else on the football team for me to date."

Carmilla said with as much confidence she could, knowing that it is what Lilita would want to hear.
"There's my girl." Lilita gave Carmilla a hug. Carmilla tried to hug her back, but there was barely any passion. Lilita let go and smiled at her daughter. "My beautiful, sweet girl. You are going to make some boy on that team very happy."

And with that she walked back in the kitchen, telling Carmilla that dinner would be ready in a few hours. Carmilla ran up the stairs as quickly as she could and slammed her door. She laid on her bed and stared at the ceiling, trying to make constellations out of the stucco. She felt like crying at the thought of having to ask Kirsch about a boy on the football team, but she forced herself not to. She rolled over on her side to face the wall, curling into a ball. She decided taking a nap would be a better way to clear her mind from all her thoughts when she heard a small knock on the door.

“Yeah?” She asked. She kept her back towards the door, worried it would be her mother. She couldn’t face her again after that conversation.

“Hey Carm-se… Are you okay?”

Carmilla was starting to feel comfort in Kirsch’s voice. She slowly turned over, not ready to face the fear that was starting to bubble up in her.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” her voice was shaking.

“Are you sure?”

Carmilla didn’t like being emotional in front of people, which is why she was surprised when she had gotten a little emotional in front of Laura earlier that day. She had never felt that comfortable with someone before.

“Yes. I’m fine,” Carmilla said through gritted teeth. *I’m just falling for a girl that I can’t have because I’m straight and I like boys.*

“Okay. Well I just wanted to let you know that since next week is the last weekend before school starts, I’m going to be throwing a party at my place. We do it every year, but my parents will be out of town so it’s going to be a blast. Do you wanna come?”

“Yeah, Kirsch, that sounds great!” Carmilla smiled for the first time since being home.

“Great! And just so you know, Laura will be there.” He smiled at her and she threw a pillow at him, when a voice came from the hallway.

“Ms. Hollis will be where?” Lilita’s voice rang through her door and Kirsch looked at Carmilla. His eyes were wide; Carmilla shrugged.

“Oh, Mrs. Karnstein. I’m having a little end of the work year slash start of the school year party next Friday. Well wait, not this Friday. Like not tomorrow, but the Friday of next week.” He stuttered, nodding his head and smiling.

“Well that sounds like a good time, even though I don’t think my daughter’s decision will be weighing on the fact that Ms. Hollis is attending.”

“Oh, of course not, Mother. I was actually just about to ask Kirsch if any of the football players will be there. So Kirsch, will there be?”

Kirsch’s face was confused again, “Uh, yes? The whole team will be there.”

“Perfect,” Carmilla said. She tried to sound as enthusiastic as possible, but it came out rather flat.
“What Carmilla is trying to ask is, are any of these boys single?” Lilita asked, smirking at Carmilla.

“Uh, yes ma’am.”

“Good. I hope you can help me find someone suitable for her. She needs a strong man to carry her.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes. She didn’t understand why her mother always wanted her to be a damsel in distress.

“Well, actually, Mrs. Karnstein. Most of the guys, including myself, are in the Zeta Omega Mu club and we actually have full respect for women. We believe that women can take care of themselves and fully respect that. We’re against sayings that claim women to be helpless and needs a man to make her a better. Women can protect and carry themselves, you know?”

Carmilla stared at Kirsch, surprised by what just came out of his mouth. Lilita looked like she got a little smack to the face.

“Well, that sounds very interesting Wilson. I believe you will do a great job at helping Carmilla find her boyfriend.”

“Uh, it ain’t no thing, Mrs. K. I mean Mrs. Karnstein.”

Lilita smiled and walked away down the hall. Kirsch stepped into Carmilla’s room, slowly and quietly closing the door.

In a harsh whisper, Kirsch spoke. “Dude, what was that?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Are you sure, Carmilla? I mean, I’ve never heard a mom talk like that before. Why is she pressuring you so much?”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Do you even want to be in a relationship? Let alone with a guy? I thought you and Laura-”

“Kirsch!” Carmilla yelled to shut him up. She was standing now and started walking over to him. “Laura and I are just friends. I’ve told you before and I’m telling you again, I’m straight. I want to date a guy. So I’m hoping to find someone interesting at your party.”

“Okay, Carmilla. If that’s what you want.”

Carmilla stopped and walked back to her bed, she plopped down.

“It is.” I guess

“Well okay. I have a few guys who you might like. I mean, they’re all beefy, like me.”

“It’s fine Kirsch. The more muscle, the better.” Carmilla’s tone was none enthusiastic, trying to dismiss the conversation.

“Please don’t yell, but are you sure you don’t like-”

“We’re just friends.”

“I mean I’ve seen the way you two light up when you look at each other.”
“Kirsch, please! We’re just friends. Look I can’t wait for your party. I’ll see you on Sunday at church.”

“Okay.” Kirsch felt deflated and confused. “I’ll see you Sunday, Carm-sexy.”

“Bye Beefcake.”

And with that Carmilla rolled over in her bed again to face the wall. Well I guess I’m going to meet a guy at this party. It’s a good thing. He can distract me from Laura. Laura. Carmilla exhaled while getting up from her bed. She plugged her phone into her stereo and scanned through her music. She knew what she wanted to listen to, but thought maybe something else would spark her interest. When she reached the bottom, she went to her playlist. Guess all my body needs is Brody Dalle’s voice. She clicked on the Coral Fang album and played the one song that usually made her feel better. As “The Hunger” filled her room with music, nothing helped her shake the feeling of having to meet a guy at this party. She knew it was what she had to do, but deep down, all she wanted was to sit next to Laura with their pinkies crossed.

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The night of the party came quicker than Carmilla thought it would. She barely saw anyone over the past week because they were all working to close out the summer. She managed to talk to Laura a little bit on Sunday, but it seemed they all had to rush off to work afterwards. Apparently the last Sunday of the season was the craziest.

Carmilla was in her room getting ready. Her mother told her to wear a dress, but she decided against that. She decided to go in something a little more her. She put on her new black jeans that fit her tightly, a low cut black V neck and a red flannel shirt. Her combat boots were her only accessory. She was just finishing up her hair when she heard the doorbell ring.

She quickly ran down the stairs hoping to beat her mother, but saw her opening it as she reached the bottom. Lilita opened the door expecting to see anyone but Laura.

“Oh, hi Mrs. Karnstein.”

“Hello Ms. Hollis. Can I help you with something?”

Laura scrunched her brows in confusion, but lightly chuckled. “I’m here for Carmilla.”

Laura looked behind Lilita to see Carmilla standing there. Lilita turned around to look at her daughter and Laura took that time to glance Carmilla’s body up and down. She licked her lips as she checked Carmilla out.

“Sweetheart,” Lilita said, “I thought Wilson was going to pick you up.”

“The party is at his house, Mother. That wouldn’t make any sense.”

“And he couldn’t send one of the players from the team to pick you up.”

Carmilla noticed Laura staring at her, a slight frown on her face. “Look, Mother.”

Henry walked into the foyer. “Whoa, what party is happening out here? Hello, Laura.”

“Hi, Pastor Karnstein.”

“How are you doing? Ready for school?”
“I’m doing well now that my summer job is finished. I guess I’m ready for school. Thank you for asking, but I think Carmilla and I should be heading out.”

“Oh yes, to Kirsch’s party!” He said, a smile ever present on his face. He turned to Carmilla. “Are you ready to go, Kid?”

“Yeah, Dad. Just need to get my keys and wallet.” They were behind Lilita, who leaned against the small table. When Carmilla tried to reach for her keys and wallet, Lilita did not move, making it almost impossible for her to grab the items she needed.

“Lilita, is there something wrong?” Henry asked. She didn’t answer, and Carmilla and Henry both knew that meant there was about to be an argument. Henry turned to Laura and smiled, “Laura, would you mind waiting in your car? Carmilla will be out very soon.”

“No problem, Pastor Karnstein. It was very nice seeing you, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“You too, Ms. Hollis.” With that, Lilita slowly started to close the door.

“Carmilla.” Lilita said, her voice stern.

“What? The party is at Kirsch’s and Laura lives like five minutes away. It makes sense for her to take me to the party.”

“Wait, what is the problem exactly?” Henry asked, looking back and forth between Carmilla and Lilita.

“Our daughter wants to go to this party with a lesbian,” Lilita said, bluntly.

“Dad, she’s not a lesbian. Even if she is, she’s still my friend. I don’t see what the problem is.”

“Lilita, you have to stop gossiping with the women from the church. They try to tell me stuff all the time and I just ignore it because it’s usually a lie or based on false pretenses. Even if Laura is a lesbian, I don’t see why Carmilla can’t hang out with her. Besides, it’s just a car ride.”

“Mother, please. She’s waiting.” Carmilla was getting antsy. She just wanted to go and get out of here.

“Carmilla, just go. I’ll talk to your Mother.” Henry walked to the door and opened it for Carmilla.

Carmilla started walking feeling the relief of getting out of there. “Carmilla.” Her mother stopped her by touching her arm.

“Yes, Mother.”

“Don’t forget to have Wilson introduce you to some boys. William told me there are few that are interested in you.”

“Will do, Mother.”

And with that Carmilla continued out the door. She waited outside for a brief moment, listening to her parents through door.

“You need to get over this lesbian thing with Carmilla. She’s going to a party with her friend. Don’t you even care that after all these years Carmilla has finally made some friends? In the city, she always kept to herself. When I’d ask her what she was doing on a Friday night, she’d point to whatever book she was reading. She has friends now. When was the last time you saw her hang out
with someone more than once?” Carmilla could tell through the door that he was furious.

“When that Ell girl was in the picture, may I remind you, we saw them kissing.”

“It was just a kiss, Lilita. We don’t know what they were doing. Carmilla said she didn’t mean for it to happen and that it was an accident. What more do you need?”

“Oh please, that was no accident. You don’t walk in on two girls kissing like that and it being an accident.”

“So then she had romantic feelings for another person. It’s not the end of the world. For all we know, she’s bisexual.”

“No, our daughter is straight. I’ve made sure of it.”

“What do you mean, you’ve made sure of it?”

“Nothing. All I mean is, she has talked to me about this party and told me she was excited to meet potential young men.”

“Why is this your concern?”

“I want the best for my daughter. She’s going to make a man very happy one day.”

“Yes, she might, but stop pushing her. It’s only going to make this harder. I haven’t seen Carmilla happy to see someone in a long time. She’s even getting along with Kirsch. Let’s just give her some space. Laura’s taking her because she lives close. It’s not the end of the world.”

It was silent for a moment and Carmilla was just about to walk away when she heard Lilita sigh, “Okay.”

“Good. Now come on, Wife, make me some dinner.”

She heard her mom laugh and descended down the front steps and made her way to Laura’s Jeep. She could see Laura checking herself in her mirror. She felt more shame for thinking how cute Laura looked. She just felt guilty and wrong.

She got in the car and saw that Laura was concerned. “Everything okay?” Laura asked.

“Peachy.”

“Do you wanna talk about it?”

“No.”

Laura waited a few minutes to see if Carmilla would say anything else. Nothing but silence hung in the air. “Okay.” Laura turned on the car and backed out the driveway for their 45 minute drive to Kirsch’s house.

After about 10 minutes of silence, Carmilla looked over at Laura. She was wearing a white t-shirt with a black bra and jeans. Her skin looked tan under the white shirt and she couldn’t help, but stare. Laura smiled.

“What?” Carmilla asked, starting to smile.

“What are you staring at?”
“A pretty girl.”

Laura smiled and put her arm down on the arm rest. Carmilla smiled and also put her arm down, connecting her pinky to Laura’s. I’m just going to enjoy tonight. No cares, no struggles. I’ll talk to Kirsch about getting some numbers, but I’m just going to enjoy my time with Laura. It’s our last night together before school starts.

“I hope my mother didn’t make you feel uncomfortable, Laura.” Carmilla couldn’t stand the silence.

“She’s a little intense. She’s kind of the opposite of your dad.”

“She’s just very particular. She thought I was going to the party with a boy, but I don’t know why. The only guy I talk to is my brother or Kirsch. She apparently would really like it if I dated Kirsch, but she doesn’t seem to understand that he’s seeing Sarah Jane.”

“Actually, he broke up with SJ.”

“What, when?”

“This past week. He said she was just a little too much for him and that she seemed to flirt with Elsie more than he liked. He said it went fine and they decided to be friends.”

“Well, I guess that’s good. Wish he would have told me.”

“All in good time, Carmilla.”

They pulled up to the gates of Kirsch’s house and realized cars were along the road. Kirsch was standing there, welcoming the guests.

“Hey, Laura.”

“Hey, Kirsch.”

“Carm-sexy.”

“Beefcake.”

Laura looked at them with a confused expression.

“It’s how we greet, isn’t that right, Beefcake?”

“Yes ma’am, Carm-sexy.”

“You guys are weird. Anyway, Kirsch, where should I park?” Laura asked.

“There’s a spot for you in the garage. Here’s the buzzer for number three.”

“Thanks. See you inside?”

“Yep, just got a few more cars to get in.”

And with that Laura started driving up the road. “What does he mean, number three?” Carmilla asked.

“Oh, Kirsch has a five car garage, but only his car is in it because the family only owns two and since his parents are out of town, he leaves the good parking for his closest friends.”
“How long have you guys been friends?”

“6th grade. We grew up at the church together and we always had a strong bond. We’ve also gotten into some mischief together that led my dad having to intervene, but for some reason, every time we get in trouble, our bond grows.”

“That sounds nice.”

“It is. He’s my big brother. He always looks out for me.”

Laura pulled into the space and hopped out of the car. Carmilla walked over to her and smiled. “You look really nice tonight, Laura.”

“Thanks, Carm. You don’t look so bad yourself.”

“Shall we?”

“We shall.”

They walked in through the garage to a mob of people. The music was loud and the lights were low. Everyone seemed to know Laura, greeting her and hugging her. Laura introduced Carmilla when she could, but they slowly made their way over to the counter top. It was loaded with alcohol.

“Hey, Laura.”

“Oh, hey Theo! How are you?”

“I’m well.” Theo turned to Carmilla and smiled. "It’s Carmilla, right?”

“Yeah, good memory.” He smiled and chuckled.

Someone in the background yelled for Laura. She turned and smiled saying “Hey!” as she walked away. Carmilla looked back at Theo, feeling a little uncomfortable.

“So how long have you been in town?”

“Oh, uh. About a month now.” Carmilla did not want to continue this conversation and she immediately started looking around for Laura. She couldn’t see her through the mix of people.

“Do you like it?”

“What?”

“I said, do you like it?”

“Oh it’s not bad. It’s pretty good. I do miss the city though.” She continued to look around.

“I’m sure.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Oh, just like Kirsch, I was born and raised here. Can’t imagine being anywhere else, actually.”

“It is nice here.”

They both stood there awkwardly, not having anything else to say. Carmilla was still uncomfortable and just wished Laura would come back.
“Well, Kirsch told me we might get along pretty well. Save a dance for me later?”

Carmilla didn’t really want to agree, but smiled shyly. “Um, sure.”

“Excellent.” And with that he went back to the party.

Carmilla automatically grabbed the bottle of whiskey, pouring half a red cup full. She then grabbed a coke and filled the rest of the cup. *This is going to be a long night.*

“Got enough alcohol or would you rather just drink from the bottle?”

She turned around to see Kirsch with a beer in his hand.

“What can I say, I like whiskey.”

“You’re crazy.” Kirsch was bobbing his head to the music.

“Have you seen, Laura?”

“Oh, Laura? That girl you don’t have a crush on and are just friends with? That Laura?”

“Very funny Kirsch. Where is she?”

Kirsch just smiled as Carmilla felt hands covering her eyes and a sweet voice speaking in her ear.

“Guess who?”

Carmilla just smiled as she grabbed Laura’s wrist and turned around.

“I’ll leave you two alone.” Kirsch spotted Theo and made his way over to him through the crowd.

“What are you drinking?” Laura asked, looking at Carmilla’s cup.

“Whiskey and Coke.”

“Wanna make me one?” Laura smiled and Carmilla just nodded.

“Do you even like whiskey?”

“It’s not my favorite, but it works.”

Carmilla made Laura’s a little less strong and handed it to Laura. Laura smiled and grabbed Carmilla’s hand and started walking. She couldn’t tell where they were going until they were outside.

“Look who I managed to find.”

“Hey Laf. Hey Perry.”

“Hey Carmilla.”

“How’s it going?” Carmilla asked, sitting down on a deck chair next to Laura.

“It’s going well. It was just too hot in there, so I had to come outside. I didn’t want to pass out.” Lafontaine said, wiping their forehead.

“Oh don’t be so dramatic. Carmilla, just ignore them. They are a little hypochondriac,” Perry said,
smiling at Lafontaine.

“Hey, we do faint in the Lafontaine household and you know that.”

Perry just rolled her eyes before speaking to Carmilla. “So, Carmilla. I feel like we haven’t been able to see you. Work has just literally been insane.”

“Laura told me it gets crazy at the end of the year. No worries. I’m used to doing things by myself.”

“Well don’t expect to do too much by yourself now that school is starting,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla.

Carmilla smiled back. “So what do you guys do at the campground?” Carmilla hadn’t heard much about it. She knew it was by the beach and that people could rent beach houses or park their RV’s. Other than that, she knew nothing.

“Well Laura and I work in the arcade,” Lafontaine answered. “It’s a hell of nightmare with asshole parents and bratty kids. But when it comes to playing free video games, you really can’t pass that opportunity up. Right, Laura?”

“It’s true. The games can be a lot of fun and Laf and I know how to win most almost all the games. The only problem I have, other than the parents, is the noise. Luckily, I’ve learned to ignore it and it can surprisingly become very quiet in there.”

“I didn’t know they had an arcade.” Carmilla actually really liked arcade games. She wished she would have known sooner.

“Oh yeah. They have an arcade, three pools and a recreational building. Not to mention putt putt golf, basketball courts, and a skateboard park.” Laura smiled at Carmilla.

“I wish I would have known. That sounds kind of awesome. What do you do Perry?”

“Oh, I work with the kids in the Kid Camp. They’re not as bad. We mostly just do games, activities and crafts.”

“So pretty much everyone works there?” Carmilla asked.

“Yeah, but it’s off season now, so they let us all go for the summer, even though it stays open throughout the year. It’s a family-owned business so they’re really good to their employees and we get a lot of good benefits, not to mention a raise every year.” Perry explained.

“Sounds pretty cool.”

Perry gasped, receiving everyone’s attention. “Guys, I totally forgot!” She then got a devilish look on her face.

"I brought a small little party favor for everyone," Perry said, while smiling.

"Perry, your didn't?" Laura was starting to get excited.

"Well I had to do something, it is the end of the year party!"

Carmilla was confused why Lafontaine and Laura seemed to become extremely excited. Perry reached into her bag and pulled out two brownies, ripping them in half. She gave a piece to Lafontaine and Laura. Then she ripped the other in two, giving a half to Carmilla.
"Brownies? Okay. Well, Lafontaine did mention you made the best!" Carmilla said. She was just about to pop a bite into her mouth when Perry spoke.

"Oh, Carmilla?"

Carmilla looked at her, still holding the brownie to her mouth.

"I should warn you those are actually special brownies. There's pot in there."

"Oh?" Carmilla thought. *I shouldn't, but honestly I just want to have a good time.* She shrugged and took a bite. Laura smiled taking a bite herself.

"Oh my gosh, Perry. Special or not these taste amazing!" Carmilla said, taking her last bite.

"Thank you. I do have some skills up my sleeve."

They all finished their small halves of the brownies when Kirsch came up, joining the group. His arm was around Theo.

"Perry, care to share?" Kirsch asked, smiling.

Perry pulled out another brownie, breaking it in two for both of them. Kirsch smiled broadly at Theo. Carmilla watched as the fed each other their brownies.

"Uh, Kirsch?"

Kirsch stopped and looked at Carmilla. "Hey Carm-sexy! Having fun?"

"Yeah, Beefcake. Just a quick question though, where's my brother?"

"Oh. He's inside, upstairs in the game room playing video games with a few of the JV players. Don't worry. Everyone has a Zeta with them to make sure they don't see the craziness of the party. He's in good hands."

"Good, thanks Beefcake."

Kirsch smiled and nodded. Theo gave Kirsch a quick peck on the lips. Carmilla looked around to see who would be staring at what she just witnessed, but either no one noticed or no one cared. Everyone was just going about their business. She felt a little more comfortable with that.

Carmilla stood, she could feel the drug helping her loosen up. She looked down at Laura and smiled.

"Refill?"

"Definitely. We will see you guys later. Thanks again Perry." Laura said, standing next to Carmilla.

"Yeah, thanks Perry."

"No problem guys. Let me know if you want or need more, I have plenty. Maybe we'll see you guys on the dance floor later?"

"Oh, definitely." Laura smiled.

They walked back inside and Carmilla was relieved that there was no country music playing. She made another drink for Laura and herself when a blonde came up behind her.
"Care to make a girl a drink?"

It was Elsie. Carmilla thought back to what Laura had said when SJ came out of nowhere and wrapped her arms around Elsie's waist. "Elsie don't bother, she's Laura's."

Elsie winked and they backed away laughing.

Carmilla found Laura, she was standing there with Danny.

"Hey. Thanks." Laura said taking the drink from Carmilla's hands. "You remember, Danny?"

"Yeah, Big Red? How's it going?"

"Big Red?"

"Don't mind her, apparently everyone gets a nickname," Laura said.

Carmilla watched Laura while she talked to Danny, and felt like she didn’t have any input for their conversations. She kept her focus on Laura the whole time, starting to feel a little buzz from her brownie. She liked the way it made her feel.

Laura turned to smile at her, "Wanna dance?"

Carmilla just smiled, "Why not?"

Laura grabbed her hand and pulled her to where everyone was dancing, saying bye to Danny.

"See ya, Fang Face." Danny said, smiling at Carmilla.

"Good one. Bye, Xena."

She was twirled around to face Laura who was dancing very close to her. Carmilla barely moved, feeling Laura all around her. She smiled at Laura.

"You know usually when I ask a girl to dance, she actually dances," Laura said.

"I'm not a very good dancer."

"I don't believe that. Just move your hips like this."

Laura swayed her hips left and right and Carmilla followed, but before she knew it, the song had changed and a much slower song came on.

Laura rested her arms on Carmilla's shoulders, while Carmilla just stood there.

"Carm?"

"Yeah?"

"You can put your hands in my hips."

"Right. Sorry, still not a dancer."

She put her hands on Laura's hips, pulling her a little closer. She followed Laura and was worried she was feeling too comfortable with this. She started looking around.

"Carmilla, don't be nervous. No one here is going to say anything."
"You don't know that. Someone could be a spy. Hell, if my brother saw."

"According to Kirsch, he is upstairs playing video games. He's not going to see anything. Now breathe."

Carmilla inhaled and exhaled deeply. She locked eyes with Laura.

"Now what's the one thing you notice most about this group?"

Carmilla looked around and started to relax. The majority of the people were dancing with the same sex. She looked over to see Perry’s head resting of Lafontaine’s shoulder. She smiled.

“I didn’t know they were together.” Carmilla said, looking over at Laf and Perry.

“They’re in denial. They claim not to be, but they’ve known each other forever. They started coming to the church when I was about 8. We’ve been best friends ever since, but those two are a lot closer than I have ever been with anyone. But this party is our haven. You're looking at the very large, but very private LGBT school community. Trust me, we're safe here."

Carmilla just smiled and loosened up even more. She wrapped her arms around Laura's waist and pulled her in. Laura rested her head on Carmilla's shoulder and gave her a little peck to her neck. She smiled and continued to dance. She started to feel relaxed as they continued dancing.

The music picked back up and they all started dancing again. At some point, Lafontaine and Perry had made their way over to them. They danced together, Lafontaine doing silly dance moves like the wave. Perry just jumping around and Laura swaying her hips against Carmilla as much as possible. They were hot and sticky, but Carmilla couldn’t have asked for anything else.

"Can we go get some water?" Carmilla asked.

"Yeah, sure. You’re okay right? Not going to throw up in my car or anything right?" Laura asked.

"I can hold my alcohol sweetheart. We’ve just been dancing for a while. I need some water."

This time Carmilla grabbed Laura's hand and held on tight to not lose her. They made their way back to the kitchen, Carmilla walking to the refrigerator to see if there was any cold water.

"You want one?" She turned to ask Laura, but Laura wasn’t there. She quickly grabbed two bottles when she saw Laura standing really close to another girl. Carmilla felt her stomach drop a little. This girl was a tall brunette with dark tanned skin. She was taller than Laura and Carmilla noticed Laura's shy smile. It was the same smile she received whenever she called Laura by a nickname. She noticed this girl kept pulling Laura close to her, holding her by her waist. Carmilla closed her hand into a tight fist. She saw the girl lean forward and try to kiss Laura. She looked down at the counter, the thought of Laura kissing someone else made her mad. Calm down. She’s not your girlfriend. You don’t even like girls. You should focus on meeting boys. Boys. Boys. Boys. She had enough. She saw the bottle of whiskey in front of her and quickly grabbed it. She took a big swig, feeling the burn down her throat. She swallowed and looked back towards Laura. She could see Laura was starting to push away a little.

"Hey! Man the dance floor was crazy. Whoa, are you okay? You look like you're about to punch someone!" She heard Lafontaine, but couldn’t take her eyes away from Laura. Lafontaine looked over to where she was staring.

"Oh shit. That fucking bitch actually decided to show her face here."
Carmilla turned to look at Lafontaine. "What?"

"Her name is Chelsea and she's Laura's ex. She always toys with Laura like this. Has for a few years now. I'm going to take that bitch down."

Lafontaine was the one getting mad now. "Whoa, Laf. Calm down. What's happening?"

"All I can tell you is if you want a chance with Laura, save her from that horrible person."

Carmilla looked over and saw Laura pushing the girl away harder now. Carmilla grabbed the two waters and started to head towards Laura. "Thanks Laf. I've got this."

She walked over and gave a water to Laura, wrapping her arm around her shoulders.

"Hey, Cupacke. Is there a problem?"

Laura just looked at Carmilla.

"Excuse me, we're having a private conversation so you can leave." Chelsea was glaring at Carmilla for interrupting her chat with Laura.

"Oh, I think I'll be staying. It's pretty clear she's not interested if you have to keep pulling her close and she keeps backing away. I have a suggestion. Why don't you fuck off."

"Carmilla, stop. Please, she's not worth it." Laura pleaded, her eyes hadn't left Carmilla.

"Why don't you fuck off," Chelsea said.

Carmilla laughed low and looked Chelsea in the eye. "Make me, bitch."

Chelsea pushed Carmilla by the shoulders. Carmilla just lowered her head and laughed. She noticed another person had joined her. Lafontaine now stood on her right, she kept Laura safe on her left.

"Carmilla, please. Seriously she's not worth it."

Carmilla looked at Laura and noticed how much she was actually pleading.

"Okay Laura." She put her arm in front of Lafontaine before they could do anything. She looked back at Laura and smiled. That's when she felt a sting to her cheek. Chelsea smacked her across the face, her ring tearing some skin on Carmilla’s cheek.

Carmilla stood up straight and passed the waters to Laura. "You're going to regret that."

"Chelsea! What the... Why would you do that?!" Laura was furious.

"She was interrupting us baby." Chelsea pulled Laura close, but Laura pulled back as far as she could. Carmilla grabbed Chelsea’s hand, prying it off of Laura and put Laura behind her.

“Chelsea, why don’t you just get the fuck out of here. You’re not wanted here anyway.” Lafontaine said, her hands balled up into fists.

“Oh please, Susan. What are you going to do?"

Carmilla heard her use the word Susan in a teasing way and lost it. She punched Chelsea square in the jaw before she could stop herself. Chelsea fell straight to the ground, cupping her cheek. Carmilla bent down in front of her face, grabbed her shirt and got to her eye level.
"Make fun of my friend again, and this will turn out worse. Touch Laura or me again, I'll make your life a living hell. Now get up and get the fuck out of here before I beat you so hard, you won't remember who you are!"

Chelsea stood up and started to leave. As she passed Lafontaine, she tripped. Carmilla noticed that Laf had tripped her on purpose and couldn’t help, but add a little smile. Then she started to notice the sting her hand. She looked down to see her knuckles were starting to bruise. She needed air, it was suddenly too hot in the room.

"Carmilla?"

"Air. I need air."

"Come on." Laura grabbed her arm and pulled her outside. Once she was out, Carmilla bent over and took deep breaths. "Carmilla, are you okay?" Laura asked, while rubbing her back.

She stopped immediately and looked at Laura. She stood up straight and hugged her. Laura hugged her back.

"Carm? Let me look at your cheek and your knuckles. We've got to get it cleaned up before you can go home."

Carmilla sat on one of the deck chairs, towards the outdoor lights, while Laura brought out a first aid kit. She wiped the blood away and sighed.

"It's just a little scratch. I doubt it'll be noticeable by the end of tomorrow. I told you, Carm. She isn't worth it."

"She was pulling at you, she made fun of Lafontaine. I don't like people being messed with." Carmilla was whispering now. She looked Laura in the eye. "I wasn’t going to fight her, but then she called you baby and Lafontaine ‘Susan’. I just lost it. Lafontaine said she is your ex girlfriend."

"She was my first girlfriend. When we started dating we were inseparable. Everyone just thought we were best friends, but behind closed doors, we were much more than that. I thought I loved her. I found out after about year that she was cheating on me with a girl from another school. So I dumped her."

Carmilla just nodded. Laura took that for her to continue.

"She always made me feel like I was so special. We dated a few times off and on because she swore she wouldn't do it again. Of course, she did. I don't know what it is, but I seem to always take her back. She has a power or something. But I think with you here, she won't be trying anytime soon."

Laura smiled and Carmilla chuckled.

"Your knuckles are going to probably bruise, Carm."

"It’s okay. I’ll just hide my hand or something."

They both stood up as if to head back into the party.

"Thanks for protecting me and standing up for Lafontaine,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla.

They made eye contact one more time and Carmilla only had one thought floating through her head. *I'll blame the alcohol and brownies tomorrow.*
She cupped Laura's face. "I will always protect you." She leaned in and kissed Laura. Laura wasn't expecting it and took a step back. She looked at Carmilla.

"Are you sure? Are you sure you want to do this?"

"I've been sure since you kissed me in your car."

Laura flung forward and wrapped her arms around Carmilla's neck. Carmilla smiled into her kiss with Laura. All her pain and sadness started to wash away. She got lost in the taste of alcohol on Laura's breath. Carmilla slowly moved, bringing Laura with her to sit back down on a deck chair. Laura straddled Carmilla's lap as the kissed deepened. She couldn't stop kissing her. She was washing away all her guilt in her kiss with Laura. Carmilla had a feeling she would regret this decision tomorrow, but couldn't stop herself. She needed this.

Their kissing slowed down to light pecks. Laura shifted to Carmilla's side and nuzzled against her. They stayed there for a while, looking at the night sky. They didn’t speak, as they enjoyed being snuggled together. Carmilla hadn’t felt this comfortable in a long time as she pulled Laura close to her. Please, don’t ever leave my side. Carmilla thought as looked down at Laura.

Laura looked up and gave her another quick peck to her lips. “Ready to go?”

Carmilla just nodded. She was about to get up when Laura pulled her back down and kissed her. She kissed her back, and smiled. They got off the chairs and noticed a lot of people had started leaving. Kirsch saw them walk in and smiled at Carmilla with an “I know what happened outside” look and Carmilla just flicked him off. Carmilla felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned around to see Lafontaine looking shy.

“I didn’t get to say it earlier, but thank you.” they said.

“What are you thanking me for?”

“I heard what you said to Chelsea. How did you know I despised the name Susan?”

“Well when we first met, I noticed you flinched when Laura’s dad kept calling you that. You also introduced yourself as Lafontaine or Laf, so to me, that’s your name.”

“Yeah, I’m actually nonbinary. I prefer ‘they’ and ‘them’ pronouns.”

“Okay.”

Lafontaine looked at Carmilla like she had three heads. “That’s it? Just okay.”

“Am I supposed to react different?”

“You are the minister’s kid.”

“So? My father taught me to love everyone. You are who you are Laf and I will help people to remember that.”

“Thanks.” Lafontaine smiled and gave Carmilla probably one of the most awkward hugs she’s ever experienced. “It means a lot to me.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“I’ll see you Sunday, Carmilla.”
“That you will, Laf.”

Kirsch told Carmilla that William had gotten a ride home from Theo and was relieved to know she got to have her car ride home with Laura. The drive home was quiet, but peaceful. Instead of just their pinkies, Carmilla took the initiative to hold Laura’s hand. She laced their fingers together when they pulled up at a stop light. Laura looked down and smiled and Carmilla couldn’t help, but smile at her. Laura drove up to a few houses down from Carmilla’s.

“Thanks for the ride, Cutie.”

“You’re always welcome. Thank you for helping me with my ex. I know you didn’t hit her for me, but-”

“Of course I did. It’s just when she called Laf, ‘Susan’, it was the icing on the cake.”

Laura smiled. “I better get inside.”

Laura nodded and, for the first time, Carmilla moved in. She gave Laura a peck on nose, then her cheek. She looked at Laura who smiled. They leaned in, both smiling, and kissed each other goodnight. “I’ll text you tomorrow, Creampuff. I’ll see you Sunday.” Laura nodded again and gave Carmilla another quick peck.

Carmilla ran inside and up to her room. She didn’t feel guilty or bad. She had no remorse or shame in her body. She laid down on her bed and for first time, I feel normal.

Chapter End Notes

Props to the editor!
Carmilla awoke next morning to Lilita's voice telling her it was time for breakfast. Carmilla had a slight headache and as she tried to push herself up, she felt a sting in her hand.

"Ahh, shit!"

She looked down at her hand and noticed her knuckles bruised. How am I going to hide this?

She made her way to the bathroom to look at her reflection, grateful that she had the tiniest scratch to her left cheek. It wasn’t swollen or bruised and at that moment she gave a quick thanks to higher power her father believed in. She washed her face quickly and headed downstairs. She heard her mother screaming her name again.

"Carmil... Oh and there is my daughter. Alive are we?"

"Yes, Mother."

"What time did you get home last night?"

"Around 2, I think."

"And who drove you home?"

"Lilita!" Henry's voice was heard from the living room. Lilita's face dropped as she made her way back into the kitchen. Carmilla took this as a sign to sneak into the living room. She plopped down on the couch next to Will, tucking her left hand under her other arm to hide the bruising.

"You know, Carmilla, if your mother saw you plop on the furniture like that..." Henry started.

"I know. I know." Carmilla rolled her eyes.

"And if she sees you rolling your eyes..." Will was smiling at her.

"Shut up, Will!"

"Carmilla, don't tell your brother to shut up. It's not ladylike." Lilija had entered the room. "Now, breakfast is ready and we won't be eating in the living room like savages. We have a table to gather around."

They made their way to kitchen table. Eggs, sausage and hash browns had been made for this Saturday brunch. They also passed around the food until everyone was situated. Henry cleared his throat as Carmilla started to eat. Again, everyone was looking at her.

"Carmilla, dear. Out of your almost 17 years as our daughter, how do you always forget to thank God for your food and ask for his blessing?"

Carmilla hurriedly chewed and swallowed the food in her mouth. "Sorry, Mother."

Luckily they didn’t hold hands this mornings as they lowered their heads while Henry blessed their food. When he finished, Carmilla went right back to eating.
"So, kids, how was the party last night?" Henry asked, stuffing a forkful of eggs into his mouth.

"It was great, Dad! I played video games with some of the guys on the JV team."

"I hope they weren't violent video games, William."

"Oh no Mother, just Mario Brothers."

Carmilla noticed for the first time that Will had just lied. He always played violent games and seriously doubted they were playing Mario Brothers upstairs.

"And Carmilla?" Henry asked, smiling at his daughter. "I noticed you got in late last night."

"Uh yeah. I had a great time."

She thought back to her kiss with Laura and smiled. She already missed being next to her.

"Look at that smile! I think she met someone!" Lilita said, smiling at Carmilla.

"Lilita stop." Henry said, sternly. Lilita ignored him and carried on.

"Who is he, Carmilla?"

Carmilla panicked. She didn't know what to say. She just smiled at her mother.

"I don't want to jinx it Mother."

"So you did meet a boy?"

Carmilla swallowed hard and just nodded, trying to smile as best she can. She hadn't seen Lilita this excited in a long time. At least, not towards her. Carmilla made eye contact with Henry. She could tell he knew she was lying, but he didn't say anything.

The rest of breakfast went by quietly. Lilita was disappointed that Carmilla didn't go any further in details regarding this "boy". Carmilla made her way back upstairs to take a shower. She checked her phone and instantly smiled.

**The Rambler**: Good morning... Or rather afternoon... Beautiful. Call me if you get a chance.

Carmilla instantly picked up her phone, hitting the call button. It rang a few times before Laura answered.

"Hello?"

"Hey, cupcake."

"Hi Carm, how you feeling?"

"I'm alright. Did you sleep well?"

"I definitely fell asleep with a memory of a good kiss on my mind."

Carmilla smiled. She noticed her door was open and slowly made her way to it. She looked out in the hall and could hear everyone's voices downstairs. She sighed with relief.

They were quiet for a minute, before Laura finally spoke.
"Are you okay... uh, with everything that happened last night?"

"I mean I shouldn't have punched that girl."

"Carm?"

"I mean my hand is all bruised and so far I've managed to hide it from my Mother, but that will only go on for-"

"Carmilla, you know what I'm talking about."

"Oh do you mean when we were dancing? I'm not very good at it, but yeah it was good."

Carmilla smiled as she heard Laura exhale. She enjoyed teasing her. The silence lingered.

"I guess I should go," Laura said, sounding defeated.

"Laura, I'm sorry, I'm just teasing. To answer your question, I haven't stopped thinking about it and I can't wait until I can kiss you again."

She could tell Laura was smiling and waited. Laura let a light laugh. "Good. Well, I was calling because Lafontaine is having a very small get together tomorrow at their house."

"Are their parents out of town?" Carmilla asked, hoping she could convince her mother to let her go.

"No, but they have a large basement that they made for Laf and their friends to hangout in. I was wondering, if you would like to come with me?"

"Yeah! Of course!" Carmilla was smiling wide and then shook her head. "I mean, yeah that would be cool. I will have to ask my Mother though."

"So you're going to make me wait?"

"I guess I'm going to have to. Is that a problem, cupcake?"

"I usually don't let girls make me wait, but there's something about you that makes me not mind waiting as much."

Carmilla heard a soft knock on her door. "Just a minute," she yelled.

"Sorry, cupcake," she whispered, "but I have to go. I'll text you later with an answer."

"Okay, beautiful, but don't make me wait too long. I guess I'll just think about your hands on my hips with your lips against mine in the meantime."

Carmilla smiled and exhaled slowly. "I'll talk to you later."

She hung up the phone and opened her door. She held onto the door with her arm, to hide her bruised knuckles.

"Who were you talking to?" Lilita asked.

"Uh, no one." Carmilla smiled.

Lilita was amused, but then had a spark go off.

"Was it this mystery man?"
"Possibly." Carmilla smiled, remembering what Laura had just said to her, causing her to think about their kiss again.

"Are you going to see him soon?"

"Uh, yeah, about that. He actually invited me to hang out with some others at Lafontaine's house tomorrow after church. Is it alright if I go?"

"I'm sorry. Remind me, Darling, who is Lafontaine?"

Carmilla cringed at having to say this name. "Susan. Susan Lafontaine, from church."

"Oh the short girl with the short red hair? Always running around with the curly haired one?"

"Perry. Yes, that's the one."

"Talk to your father, but if this boy is taking you, then it's fine by me."

"Thank you, Mother."

Lilita smiled and Carmilla quickly grabbed her phone.

Carmilla: Mom approved! Gotta ask my Dad!

The Rambler: Let me know! I hope he says it's okay.

Carmilla made her way downstairs, feeling light on her feet. She saw Will sitting in the living room watching a football game.

"Hey, Bro, where's Dad?"

"Bro? Really, Carmilla? You've been hanging out with Kirsch too much."

Carmilla rolled her eyes. "I've seen him like fives times. Where's Dad, Loser?!"

"Ah... There's my sister. He's in his study."

"Thanks."

Carmilla made her way to the small room that was off the left corner of the living room. The door was closed. Probably wants to block out the sound of the television.

"TOUCHDOWN!" Will screamed and did a little dance.

*Fucking, nerd. Can't blame him for blocking out Will either.*

Carmilla tapped lightly on the door.

"Yeah?" She heard Henry say.

She slowly opened the door. "Hey Dad-"

"One second, Carmilla."

She made her way in, closing the door behind her. She sat in one of the chairs in front of Henry's desk. This was the smallest room in the house and Lilita was sure it was a walk in closet when they moved in. Henry made sure to call dibs on it as his office. It had a wall bookshelf behind a large
"Tell me, why did you grow up so fast?"

"What?"

"I remember when you were a little girl and you used to come in my office, grab a book and sit in the corner. It was always pleasant for about 15 minutes before you started running around trying to get my attention."

Carmilla just laughed. She always liked to be around her dad.

"Do you remember that one time you wanted to show me how you learned how to do a handstand? And you-"

"Smacked my face right into the wall and fell?" Carmilla laughed. "Yeah, Dad, I remember."

"Will you do me a favor, Carmilla?"

"I will tell Will to keep it down."

"Well that, yes please. But my favor is, when you get bored, will you come in and read while your old man works? I know it's small in here, but it always made me feel peaceful."

Carmilla just smiled. Henry's eyes were watering a little bit and Carmilla wasn't sure why he seemed emotional, but she couldn't help but agree. She always felt peaceful and she concentrated better when she was with her father.

"Sure, Dad. I'm sure with school, I'll have plenty of reading to do."

"Good." He wiped his eyes and smiled. "So! What does my daughter need?"

"I just had a question for you."

"Shoot, Kid."

"Lafontaine is having a small get together at their place tomorrow after church and I was wondering if I could go?"

"What did your Mother say?"

"She said yes."

"And did she say that because she thinks you're going with some boy?"

"Maybe...?"

"Carmilla."

"Please, Dad?"

Henry exhaled. "I don't like it when you lie, Carmilla."

"I'm not lying. I met a guy at Kirsch's party and he's going to be there."
"I'm okay with it, but since it's a school night curfew is 10, no later."

"Sure thing! Thanks, Pops!" Carmilla got up and walked to the door. She opened it to hear Will scream "TOUCHDOWN!" again.

"Carmilla?"

"Yeah, Dad?"

"Please tell my son, who I love dearly, to lower his voice."

Carmilla smiled and closed the door. "Yo, twerp! Keep it down! Dad's trying to work!"

"Sorry, Dad!"

Henry just smiled as he looked back at his sermon. "My crazy kids," he said to himself as he looked at his most recent picture of his family on his desk. He studied it a while and went back to work.

**Carmilla:** Got the okay from, Dad!

**The Rambler:** Great!! Rest those beautiful lips Carmilla. I expect them to be on mine tomorrow by 12:30 ;)

Carmilla just smiled.

**Carmilla:** Keep it in your pants, Hollis.

She paused and waited for Laura to reply. When five minutes had passed, she texted her again.

**Carmilla:** I can't wait to kiss you either.

Carmilla joined Will on the couch when she felt her phone buzz.

**The Rambler:** I'll have you know that I always keep it in my pants. It's the other girls who have hard time keeping it in theirs. See you tomorrow, beautiful.

Carmilla smiled as she watched the game with Will. *Now I just have to find a boy who is invited to go to this party and I won’t have to worry about me and Laura. Who can I ask?* She pondered for a long time, before turning to Will.

“Hey Will?”

“Yeah?” He replied, but his eyes never left the television screen, glued to the game being played.

“Kirsch is still single, right?”

“Yeah, Him and SJ broke up like a week or two ago.”

*Perfect.*

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The next morning, Carmilla and Will were hurried out the door as quickly as possible.

“Sorry, guys, but I have to get to church a little earlier today,” Henry said, pushing them towards the car.
“Is everything alright, Dad?” Will asked, buckling his seatbelt.

“Yeah, you seemed panicked,” Carmilla added.

“Not panicked, we’re just running behind.” He slammed his hand on the horn when Lilita finally emerged. “Kids, if I ever have a heart attack, it’s because I’ll be in a hurry waiting for your Mother to get out the house while she’ll be cleaning something that doesn’t need to be cleaned at that exact moment. Remember that.”

Carmilla and Will just laughed as Lilita got in the car. “What’s so funny?” Lilita asked.

“Nothing, sweetheart. Please tell me you’re ready to go.”

“Yes, Henry. I’ve been ready.”

“Sounds like Mother found a spot to clean,” Carmilla said with a snark.

“Tone, Carmilla. And if you kids would pick up your shoes, I wouldn’t have to move them so I don’t trip and fall on the way out.”

“Sorry, Mother.” Will and Carmilla said in unison.

They arrived at the church and Henry got out of the car as fast as possible. Carmilla thought she would have to spend the morning alone when she noticed a green Jeep already in the parking lot. She walked over to the car, seeing Laura sleeping. She knocked on the glass and Laura woke with a startle. When she saw it was Carmilla, she smiled widely and opened the door.

“Hey!” She said, wiping the sleepiness out of her eye.

“Hey,” Carmilla said, enjoying the view of Laura waking up. “I didn’t expect you to be here so early.”

“There’s a Deacons meeting this morning, so I drove my dad here. His car is in the shop for an oil change or something.”

“Oh. Are we still on for after church?”

“Of course. Dad’s going to get a ride from someone so I don’t have to worry about taking him home. Everyone loves my dad, so it’s never a problem.”

Laura got out of the car and stood really close to Carmilla. She slowly started to put her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders, leaning in for a kiss, when Carmilla took a step back.

“Are you crazy, Laura?” Carmilla grabbed Laura’s arms and put them back down by her side.

“What?”

“I can’t do that here. We can do that in private or around the group. Not here. If my Mother saw-”

“She’d do what?” Laura interrupted.

“It’s not important, but I can’t do that here.”

Carmilla looked around making sure she didn’t see her brother or her mother. Luckily, the parking lot was empty. However, she felt her guilt starting to rise. This is wrong. This is wrong and I’m so messed up. I can’t do this. I shouldn’t be doing this. This is wrong. She was starting to breath a little
heavier as panic settled in.

“Carm? Are you okay? I’m sorry. I forget my place sometimes.”

“It’s fine. Just know that church is off limits.” She was still breathing heavy and she leaned forward, trying to catch her breath.

“It’s okay, Carmilla. It’s okay.” Laura grab her hand and dragged her away from her car. Carmilla realized Laura was walking them to their Sunday School classroom. She led them in and closed the door. There was still about 20 minutes before anyone would be showing up. Carmilla sat on the floor, against the wall. Laura sat next to her, keeping her hand on Carmilla’s knees. Carmilla could feel her heart rate calming down.

“Sorry,” Carmilla finally muttered out. “Sometimes, I can have little panic attacks.”

“It’s okay. Should I get you something?”

“No, please don’t leave. Just stay with me.” Carmilla grabbed the hand that was resting on her knee, and laced their fingers together.

“I’m here, Carmilla. And I’m sorry about trying to kiss you.”

“Like I said, church is off limits. I want to Laura, but with my dad and everything, I can’t. I just got scared that maybe someone had seen us and I can’t deal with that right now.”

“I understand. I’m sorry. I can lose my bearings sometimes.”

“Does your dad even know you’re gay?”

“Absolutely not. He has walked in on me a few times closer to girls than I should be, but he’s so nice and affectionate that he is oblivious to things that are actually happening. He thinks I’m more of a touchy, feely kind of girl. He thinks I hold their hands because we’re friends. I’ve had to do it with Laf a few times and they always looks so uncomfortable, but they do it anyway.”

“So you’re in the closet?”

“Carm, we all are. You, Me, Kirsch, Laf, Perry, etcetera. It’s just not the right time or place for any of us.”

“I wonder what it’s like to be in a family where you aren’t considered a freak if you get caught kissing someone of the same sex?”

“Is that what your mother called you? A freak?”

“What? No. No. She just have different ideals. It’s not important.”

“Will you tell me what happened?” Laura looked at Carmilla. Her eyes were wide.

“One day, Cupcake, but not here. It isn’t safe here.”

Laura decided to let it go. She’s slowly learning more and more about Carmilla and realized it’s hard to get information about her life out of her. She was just about to ask Carmilla a question, when she heard a light chuckle from Carmilla. She smiled.

“What?” She asked.
“I have to figure something else out before we even go to Laf’s.”

“And what would that be?”

“I told my Mother, so she’d get off my back, that I met a boy a Kirsch’s party. I didn’t give a name and I know she’ll be expecting him to take me to the party. Know anyone who would?”

“I mean, there’s Theo or a couple other Zeta guys, but I get the feeling you’d kill them within five minutes of having to sit in a car with them.”

“I guess I could ask Theo. We did exchange numbers at the party.”

“Yeah, I guess you could do that.” Laura seemed a little disappointed.

“Laura? You know I would rather go to the party with you, but with my Mother.”

“I know, Carmilla. It’s okay.” Laura smiled, but it never reached her eyes.

Carmilla got up and walked towards the door. She opened it and peeked out into the hallway. It was deserted. She closed the door and walked back to Laura, giving her her hand to pull her up.

“Don’t pout, Cupcake. It doesn’t look good on you.”

Laura rolled her eyes, but Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist and leaned in for a light kiss. It didn’t last long, but Laura smiled.

“Better?” Carmilla asked.

“Better. But we are at church Ms. Karnstein, and church is off limits.”

“But someone had a cute little pout on her lips and I just had to take care of it.”

Laura pouted again.

“Nice try, Cupcake.”

“It’s not going to work this time?”

Carmilla smiled and leaned down again. Another light kiss was placed on Laura’s lips. “That was the last one,” Carmilla smiled, pulling Laura close to her. She was just about to lean in for another kiss when the door slammed opened and they jumped apart quickly. Kirsch stood there was a huge smile on his face.

“Mornin’, Ladies.”

“Fuck, Kirsch, you scared the shit out of me,” Laura said, catching her breath.

“Damn, Beefcake. Don’t do that.”

“Language, ladies. This is the Lord’s house. Besides, A) you should be glad it was only me and B) maybe you shouldn’t make out in the Sunday School classroom,” Kirsch teased.

“We weren’t making out,” they both said in unison. “And keep your voice down, Kirsch.” Carmilla added. Kirsch shut the door.

“Guys, like I would say anything. I don’t want my parents knowing what Theo and I have done time
and time–"

“Kirsch! We don’t want your details.” Laura said, holding up her hand. She looked at Kirsch and a lightbulb went off in her head. She looked at Carmilla and got a big smile on her face.

“I have an idea. Oh, Kirsch, you’re going to make today a very good day.”

“Why’s that?”

Carmilla caught on to Laura’s idea. It was perfect. Carmilla explained that her mother thought she met a boy at Kirsch’s party and all the details of that. She also told Kirsch that her mother was expecting a boy to drive her to Laf’s. He looked a little confused.

“Wait, so I have to pretend to be your crush?” Kirsch asked, looking at Carmilla.

“No, no Beefcake. Just take me to Laf’s party so my Mother won’t ask any questions. If I annoy you, you can pull over and let Laura take me the rest of the way. I just need to leave with a guy and right now, you’re the only guy who doesn’t annoy the crap out of me.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” Kirsch said, smiling.

“So, you’ll take me?”

“Of course, Bro. No worries.”

Carmilla smiled.

Sunday School and church went by quickly. Carmilla had brought clothes with her and changed at the church in the restroom. Luckily, she managed to get away from Laura in the process. She came back out in black jeans and a dark purple t-shirt. Lilita noticed her right away.

“Carmilla? Is this what you’re wearing?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“I think you should have brought something more ladylike. No boy would like this.”

Carmilla felt an arm wrap around her shoulder, knowing the arm of strong muscles, only wishing it was Laura’s.

“Actually, Mrs. Karnstein, I like Carmilla’s style.” Carmilla just smiled and wrapped her arm around Kirsch’s waist.

“Wilson. Are you the fine gentleman who is taking my daughter to Susan’s house.”

“It’s Lafontaine, ma’am,” Kirsch corrected, “and yes I am the lucky guy.”

“Well.” Lilita just smiled as Pastor Karnstein walked up. Kirsch dropped his arm from around her shoulder, but she didn’t let go of his waist, trying to make this convincing.

“Pastor K. Great sermon!”

“Thank you, Kirsch. I’m glad your parents were here today.”
“Me too.” Kirsch looked down at Carmilla before looking back at Henry and Lilita. He could see Laura in the background, waving her hands telling him to wrap it up. He looked down at Carmilla. “Uh, should we go?”

“Yeah, sounds good. Bye!” Carmilla waved to her parents, keeping her arm tight around his waist. When they turned around she whispered, “Put your arm back around my shoulders.”

“What? Oh yeah.” He wrapped her up again. “This is so awkward Carm-sexy.”

“I know, but let’s at least try to make it convincing.”

They reached his truck and Kirsch opened the door for her. She climbed in and he quickly got in. They waved one more time to a concerned Henry and an elated Lilita. Laura was quick to follow them out of the parking lot.

About thirty minutes later, they were pulling into Lafontaine’s driveway. Carmilla was grateful to get out of the car and away from the country music Kirsch made her listen to. She swore if she had to hear more song about beer or country women, she was going to lose it. Laura was pulled in a few seconds later. They made eye contact and Laura moved her finger, mouthing to Carmilla to “come here”. Carmilla did as she was told and moved her way to Laura’s car, getting in the passenger seat.

“I was told to go pick up some pizzas, but I figured you wouldn’t mind coming with me?”

“Not at all, Cupcake.”

Laura started the car and backed out of the driveway. About halfway there, Laura pulled over and stopped the car.

“What are you doing?” Carmilla asked, but soon Laura’s mouth was on hers. Carmilla kissed Laura back almost immediately. They kissed passionately for a few minutes, and were breathing heavy when Laura pulled back.

“Sorry. I just couldn’t wait any longer,” Laura said, lacing her fingers with Carmilla’s.

“Don’t be sorry.”

“It’s okay if we hold hands, right?”

“Yeah, of course, but only in private places.”

“No problem.” Laura gave Carmilla one more kiss before she started her car and drove off again.

---------------------------------------------

They both arrived to the party about 30 minutes later. Lafontaine immediately grabbed the pizzas.

“About time, you two. It took you long enough.”

“Yeah, sorry. I got distracted,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla.

Lafontaine noticed their lips were swollen and their cheeks were pink. “Gross,” they muttered and Laura rolled her eyes.

They made their way down to the basement. Once the basement door was closed, Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand, lacing their fingers together. The usual small group of people were there: Kirsch, Perry, Danny, Theo, SJ, Elise and of course, Lafontaine. There was, however, a new girl that
Carmilla didn’t know. She was tall, blonde and had an athletic build.

“Oh my gosh, Betty! You’re back?” Laura let go of Carmilla’s hand and ran over to this Betty to give her a hug.

“Yeah, I got back in town a couple days ago.”

“How was Europe?”

“Amazing! I have so many stories to tell you.”

Betty looked up at Carmilla and smiled. Carmilla just stood there awkwardly. She felt uncomfortable.

“And who’s this?”

“That’s Laura’s new toy,” Elsie said, grabbing a piece of pizza.

“Shut up, Elsie.” Laura snarled. She walked over and grabbed Carmilla’s hand, bringing her towards Betty.

“This is Carmilla. Carmilla Karnstein. She’s new in town.”

Betty looked at her and then her facial expression changed into surprise. “Wait. Karnstein, as in our new minister Pastor Karnstein.”

Carmilla let go of Laura’s hand. “Damn, Hollis. You just love a challenge, don’t you?” Betty winked.

“It’s not like that,” Laura said.

Betty extended her hand and Carmilla took it. “Nice to meet you, Carmilla.”

“Likewise.”

Carmilla left to grab a piece of pizza. She felt Laura slide up beside her. “You okay?” she asked, concerned.

“Just another new person. I have to adjust,” Carmilla said, not meeting Laura’s gaze.

“Do you remember what I told you? About the type of people I hang out with?” Laura asked.

“Yes.”

“Then look at the couch, Carm.”

Carmilla looked at Laura before glancing back at the couch. Betty was kissing Danny like no one else was in the room. Danny’s arms were wrapped around Betty, holding her close.

“They got together at the end of last semester. Betty has family in Germany so she was there all summer. I guess this is the first time they have seen each other since Betty got back.”

Carmilla exhaled. Even though she trusted this group, new people just made her nervous. “It’s okay, Carm.”

Carmilla looked at Laura and just smiled. “I’ll be okay. I’m just not good around new people. It takes time for me.”
“I understand, but you’re not alone. We can hold hands here and kiss. No one will say anything. As you can tell by the amount of clearly horny women on the couch. Good God.”

Carmilla looked over and saw that SJ and Elsie were now making out too. “Guys!” Laf shouted and all four looked at them. “Danny, I understand you and Betty haven’t seen each other all summer, but calm down. Elsie stop trying to compete. I don’t want my parents coming down and seeing this.”

They all looked guilty and at different times said, “Sorry, Laf.”

They all gathered around, eating pizza and drinking soda. Carmilla and Laura sat with their backs against one of the couches, Carmilla’s legs out in front of her, while Laura sat crossed leg with her right knee resting on Carmilla’s left thigh. Carmilla noticed how light Laura’s presence was. They way her face lit up when she laughed. She’s so beautiful.

Lafontaine eventually put on the first Harry Potter movie. By this time, everyone had moved around and switched seating locations. Carmilla and Laura were snuggled up on the couch. Carmilla sitting facing front, while Laura tucked herself against Carmilla’s body. Her knees pulled up and rest of on Carmilla’s thighs, her head in Carmilla’s neck. Carmilla had her arm around Laura’s shoulders. She felt so calm and relaxed. She then felt a small kiss to her neck, taking her focus away from the movie. She looked down at Laura, who just smiled. She leant down and gave Laura a quick kiss on the lips before returning her attention back to the movie. That was not enough for Laura. She cupped Carmilla’s cheek and brought their lips back together, Carmilla smiling into their kiss. They stayed like that until someone cleared their throat. Lafontaine was glaring at them so they went back to their original positions.

The movie ended and Carmilla noticed the time. It was around 6 o’clock and she was grateful she still had plenty of time with Laura. They kept to themselves mostly, chatting a little between a lot of kissing. Carmilla was feeling hungry again and made her way back to the table to get another slice of cold pizza.

“I’ll go heat these up,” Laura offered.

“No, Cupcake, it’s okay.”

“No, seriously. I’ll only be gone for a minute.”

Kirsch walked up and asked if Laura would heat up a slice for him too. She agreed and bounced up the stairs. Carmilla just stared at her before acknowledging Kirsch, who was just grinning from ear to ear.

“What, Beefcake?”

“You seem very happy today.”

“I’m doing pretty well. Thanks for earlier, by the way.”

“No problem. But I need to ask, how long are we going to pretend?”

“Would you kill me if I asked for a while? It keeps my mother off my back.”

“It’s not a problem, but I think we will need to make a bargain.”

“A bargain?” Carmilla asked.

“Yeah you know a wager for my services.”
“And what would that be?”
“I want a lunch out of this.”
“Seriously? Your bargain for being interested in me is for food?”
“Hey, I’m a football player and we eat a lot.”
“Sure, I can buy you lunch. I’ll even throw in a dinner.”
“Cool and I’m still calling you Carm-sexy.”
“As if I would give up the opportunity to call you Beoefcake. So no worries. You call me Carm-sexy and I buy you a couple of meals. Deal?” Carmilla put out her hand for Kirsch to take.
“There’s one more thing.” He had a smirk on his face and Carmilla couldn’t read it.
“What, Kirsch?”
They heard the door open and Laura descended the stairs. Carmilla watched her and smiled.
Laura handed Kirsch his plate, followed by giving Carmilla’s hers. “Thanks, Laura.” Kirsch took a big bite of his pizza and smiled. Carmilla took her slice, giving Laura a light peck on the cheek. “Alright, Kirsch, what’s our last wager?”
“Admit I was right.”
“Right about what, exactly?”
“That you like Laura, and you’ve had feelings for her this whole time and you don’t like guys.”
Carmilla exhaled and looked at Laura. Laura was looking at her and she smiled. Her eyes glued with Laura, Carmilla spoke. “I like Laura and I do have feelings for her.” Laura smiled. “I like you too, Carm.” Carmilla smiled.
“And?” Kirsch asked.
“And what?” Carmilla asked, still looking at Laura.
“You don’t like guys. That you are in fact a lesbian.” He whispered.
Carmilla took a deep breath. Saying I don’t like guys goes against everything I was taught. I’m supposed to avoid temptation. I’m supposed to like boys, but I like Laura. Fuck temptation. I will never lie to that face.
Carmilla exhaled slowly and her eyes never leaving Laura, she said something she never thought she would hear her say out loud.
“I like Laura. I have feelings for her and you’re right, Kirsch. I am a lesbian.”
Laura’s smile got wider and she inched towards Carmilla. Laura set her plate down, and grabbed Carmilla’s to set it down as well. She wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders, gave her a quick peck on her lips and hugged her.
“Was that your first time saying it?” Laura asked, looking into Carmilla’s eyes.
“Yes,” she whispered.

“Are you okay?”

“As long as you’re here, as long as you’re with me, I’ll be okay.” Laura smiled and gave Carmilla another kiss.

Kirsch cleared his throat. “Carm-sexy. We have a deal.” He put his hand out, waiting for Carmilla to shake it. “Deal,” she said, smiling and shaking his hand. He grabbed her and pulled her into a big hug. “Knew I was right,” he whispered in her ear.

“Whatsoever Beefcake. Put me down.”

Kirsch did as he was told, turned around to face the group and walked away.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Laura asked, resting her head against Carmilla’s shoulders.

“I’m actually more okay than I thought I’d be.”

Laura lifted her head and smiled.

---------------------------------------------------------

The rest of the night went by too quickly as they were leaving Lafontaine’s house.

“So, should I drive you home?” Kirsch asked Carmilla.

“Kirsch, you live on the other side of town. I’ll give her a ride home,” Laura said, reaching for Carmilla’s hand.

“Probably who you would rather go with regardless,” Kirsch said, smirking.

“Aa, don’t pout Beefcake. I’ll see you tomorrow at school and I’ll take you out for a nice lunch on Saturday after your practice.”

“Alright, I guess it’s fine. Good night guys.”

Kirsch got in his truck and drove off. “Shall we?” Laura asked, pointing to her car.

Carmilla nodded and got in the passenger’s side. They talked about school and their anxieties, but nothing out of the ordinary. They just have first day jitters. Before Carmilla knew it, she was back at her house. She looked at the clock.

“You know, I still have fifteen minutes before I have to go inside.” She wiggled her eyebrows.

“And what could we possibly achieve in that time?” Laura smiled and Carmilla tilted her head towards the backseat.

They moved and got comfortable with Laura sitting on Carmilla’s lap. She kissed her with all the power she could muster. Laura hummed frequently while kissing Carmilla before pulling away and resting her forehead against Carmilla’s. Their breath was ragged.

“I’m proud of you, by the way,” Laura said.
“Why is that?” Carmilla gave Laura another quick kiss.

“For admitting you were a lesbian.”

“Oh. Yeah. I don’t know if I identify as a lesbian, to be honest, but I do like you. But I think you should know, I’m going to struggle with this.”

“It’s okay. It’s never an easy process. That’s why I only hang out with the people we were just with.”

“It makes sense. I guess I’m just nervous my mother will find out of something.”

“You’re safe, Carmilla. I promise they won’t find out. I’ll protect you.”

Carmilla smiled and nodded, looking towards the clock. “I’ve got to go, Cupcake.”

Laura kissed her again before getting off her lap. “Okay. Do you need a ride to school in the morning?”

“No, Mother will take Will and I. Can I meet you somewhere?”

“My locker is 378. Meet me at 8 and I’ll walk you to your class.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Laura smiled while Carmilla gathered her stuff and got out of the car. She walked around to the driver’s seat, and Laura rolled down the window.

“I’ll see you in the morning, Cupcake.”

Carmilla leaned in and kissed Laura again. They kissed for a few more minutes before Carmilla pulled away. “I really, really have to go, Laura.”

“One more?”

Carmilla laughed and shook her head. She leaned in and gave Laura one more quick peck.

“Goodnight, Laura.”

“Goodnight, Carm.”

Carmilla smiled and gave her one more kiss. She felt like she was floating on cloud nine as she walked to her front door. Laura was the only thought on her mind and she opened her door, turned around and waved. Laura blew her a kiss and drove away.

Both girls were so wrapped up in each other that they didn’t even notice the figure standing in her parents window. Henry wasn’t sure what he felt after watching his daughter’s exchange with Laura, but the world seemed to become a little darker.

Chapter End Notes

Props to Kristin, the best editor in town!
The First Day

Chapter Summary

Sorry it's so late!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Carmilla tiptoed back into her house and quietly went up the stairs.

"Carmilla?"

She stilled and turned around toward her parent's bedroom.

"Oh, hey, Dad. I guess I should have expected you'd stay up."

"I always wait, Carmilla."

Carmilla noticed he was being rather stern and short, instead of smiling and being the goofball he usually was.

"Is everything alright, Dad?"

Henry took a deep breath in and exhaled. He closed his eyes and grabbed the bridge of his nose.

"Dad? Do you have a headache? I can get you some water..."

"No, I'm fine. Did you have a good time at Lafontaine's?"

"Yeah. We ate pizza, talked and watched a movie."

"So you're getting along with everyone?"

"Yeah! They're all great!

"That's good." He smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes. Carmilla's stomach had butterflies as she watched her dad.

"You sure, you're okay, Dad?"

This time he gave her a genuine smile and nodded.

"Yeah, Kid. Get to bed. School in the morning."

"Right. Well..."

He looked at her for a moment and then walked towards her. His body was tense and rigid. He stood in front of her and looked at her again. Carmilla felt scared for the first time looking at her father. He wrapped his arms around her and held her tight.
"I love you, Carmilla. Don't ever forget that."

"I love you too, Dad. Even though you're freaking me out. I feel like something is wrong."

He kissed the top of her head and took a step back.

"I'm sorry. I hope I didn't frighten you. It's been a long day. Get a good night's sleep and I'll see you in the morning."

"Ok, Dad. Night."

She hugged him one more time and then went into her room. She was too tired to think about the way her father was acting and before she knew it, she drifted off to sleep with the thought of Laura on her mind.

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After a long car ride with her mother grilling her about Kirsch, she was finally at the school. She and Will stepped out of the car with Lilita wishing them a good day before she drove off.

Will saw a few guys from the JV team and went over to them. Carmilla felt alone again. She was nervous for her first day. She looked at her watch and noticed it was five til eight and started her search for Laura's locker. She felt like everyone was staring at her. Everyone seemed bright and perky. They stared at her like she was the most terrifying person they've ever seen.

Her pale skin shined brightly under her V-neck black tee. Her black jeans with no holes at Lilita's request and a brand new pair of boots her mother had gotten her as a first day of school surprise. She also decided to put a black beanie on top of her head along with a studded leather bracelet. The only color she had was her burgundy backpack and the red flannel that she had stuffed into it.

Why is everyone staring at me? Have they never seen someone in black clothes before? I miss the city where I just blended in. Seriously? Stop looking at me! I need to find Laura. She'll make it better.

She finally found Laura's locker and waited. She had a couple minutes before it was eight. School starts at 8:20, so that gives us plenty of time to... To what? I can't kiss her here. What if someone from the church teaches here or they know someone who goes to the church. Oh no, I hope she doesn't kiss me... I mean, I want to but I can't.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a girl clearing her throat. She looked and saw someone a little taller than her. This girl was staring at Carmilla and she was tired of feeling eyes bore into her skin.

"Can I help you?!" Carmilla asked with snark.

"Excuse me."

"What?"

"Well, Darling, you're standing in front of my locker."

"What did you call me?"

"Alright, let's try this new girl. I know your locker isn't here because I am the Class President. My name is Matska Belmonde, but everyone calls me Mattie. And you're the new girl, Karnstein, right?"

"Carmilla."
"Well, Carmilla, would you mind stepping aside so I can get into my locker."

Carmilla huffed and pushed herself off the locker. The girl quickly put things into her locker and Carmilla just stood there. Where the hell is Laura?

She looked down at her phone. "8:05"

Mattie got up and started to walk away, but she turned around immediately.

"Hey, New Girl!"

Carmilla was leaning on Mattie’s locker again and she turned her head towards Mattie. "I like your spunk," Mattie said with a wink and a smile. "Don't let any of these kids get to you and if you have a problem, well you know where my locker is."

Carmilla just smiled and Mattie kept walking. She stared at her a moment before she saw the light brown hair coming her way. Carmilla immediately smiled. All her nerves were slowly dying because of that one smile. Laura ran up to her and pulled her into a hug. Carmilla stiffened and Laura let go.

"Relax Carm, it's just hug. Friends hug, don't they?"

Carmilla exhaled.

"And good morning to you too, Cupcake."

"Sorry I'm late. There was a lot of traffic getting into the parking lot this morning."

Carmilla gave a small pout. "Oh no, why is this beautiful girl in black pouting at me?" Laura asked with a small wicked look in her face.

"I might have missed someone and was looking forward to twenty minutes with them before class."

Laura just smiled. "Give me your schedule, goofball."

"Goofball? No, no, no, Carmilla Karnstein is not a goofball, Cutie."

"Oh, silly me. Let me see your schedule, Sexy."

"Better," Carmilla said, handing over her schedule.

Laura looked it over and then handed it back to Carmilla with a small smile. "Well, there's good news and bad news," she said.

"What's the good news?" Carmilla asked.

"We have our first class together and our lunch."

"What could possibly be bad?"

"Well not bad, but you have biology with Lafontaine so get ready for all the exciting bio talk. But we only have those two chances a day to see each other. After lunch, we have to wait about 3 1/2 hours to see each other."

Carmilla grabbed her heart, dramatically. "How will I ever survive?"

"Not funny, Carmilla. You'll miss me."
"Oh will I?"

"You just don't know it yet. We have ten minutes before class and I need your help with something."

Laura started walking and Carmilla smiled and quickly followed Laura to an empty bathroom.

"I don't know what I can help you with in here, Cupcake."

"I just wanted my good morning kiss."

Carmilla just smiled, but shook her head. "As much as I would love to, Laura, I can't. School is off limits as well."

"Well church was off limits and you kissed me there."

"That's because you were pouting instead of smiling. Sadness does not look good on you."

Laura started to pout and Carmilla laughed. "I see what you're doing, Cutie. Not going to work."

Laura put her head down and gave Carmilla puppy dog eyes.

"Aw, Cupcake, you do a cute dog impression," Carmilla said, sarcastically.

"Are you seriously not going to kiss me good morning?"

Carmilla just smiled and nodded her head towards one of the stalls. She pulled Laura in and gave her a quick kiss which lingered longer than expected.

Laura pulled away and smiled. "I told you girls couldn't keep it in their pants around me."

"This is the one and only time this happening. Now let's go to class."

Laura opened the stall door and Carmilla was quick to follow. They walked and talked their way to their first class of the day, English. Carmilla immediately went to a desk in the back, while Laura was about to make her way to the front.

"Carm?"

"I'm not a front row kind of girl. I like the back." She pulled her notebook out and started setting up for herself while Laura exhaled and sat down next to her.

"You don't have to sit back here, Laura."

"It's only one class, one semester. I can do it. I can be the cool, mysterious kid who sits in the back."

Carmilla just laughed. "Ok, Laura. You're cute, but let's leave the cool and mysterious to me."

Laura was about to say something with their teacher spoke at the front of the class. She was a tall woman with dirty blonde hair and a deep southern accent. She introduced herself as Ms. Bourne, and she already seemed to know a bunch of the students in the class. She seemed kind enough to Carmilla.

They went over a small syllabus and then the first round of reading material was passed. Carmilla picked up her copy. *Frankenstein. Of course. Glad I've already read this.* Before she knew it, the bell rang and she exited with Laura looking at her schedule.
"Oh, Carm, I forgot to tell you! We get a ten minute break between first and second block where we can just hangout for a minute. Let's go find the gang."

"I need to find my next class, Laura. New kid, remember?"

"I'm amazed you think I'm going to abandon you on your first day. I'll get you to class, on time."

She followed Laura towards one of the halls in the front of the school. She could already see the Ginger Squad, Kirsch flailing his arms around and Betty standing very close to Danny without actually touching her.

"Morning, Guys," Laura said with a big smile.

"Yo, Carm-sexy, let me see your schedule."

"You let him call you that, Elvira?" Danny asked with a teasing tone.

"Of course I do because you're my Beefcake, aren't you?" Carmilla asked while scratching Kirsch's head, like a puppy.

"You guys are strange," Danny added.

"Whatever, Xena. Don't be jealous."

"Yo, Bro, we have math together next!" Kirsch interrupted, handing her schedule over to Laf and Perry.

"Sweet, Bra!" Carmilla mocked.

"Alright! We have bio and lunch together!" Laf joined in.

"And we have creative writing together, Carmilla," Perry added.

"Awesome!" At least I won't be totally alone. Carmilla thought.

Carmilla looked at Laura and smiled. She gave Laura a hug and kept her arm around her shoulder lightly.

"Ms. Karnstein, school is off limits."

"What? Friends don't lounge on each other? Besides I'm tired so I'm just gonna lean."

Carmilla rested her elbow on Laura's shoulder. Laura pulled away. "Gosh, you have a boney elbow."

At that, the bell rang to announce the end of break. Kirsch grabbed Carmilla by the shoulders.

"Come on, Carm-Sexy! Let's get to class, Bro!"

"I'll see you at lunch!" Carmilla yelled towards Laura who just laughed as she watched Kirsch drag her down the hall.

------------------

The rest of the school day went by rather quickly. She got through math okay, but Kirsch was driving her insane. They were told to work on a few problems to go over what they had learned last year. Kirsch kept scratching his head and looking at Carmilla for help.
"I'm really bad at math, Carmilla. Could you help?"

"As long as you stop shaking your leg and scratching your head."

"Deal."

At lunch, Carmilla realized she needed to bring her own food. The cafeteria apparently had a reputation for mysterious meats and expired fruit. As soon as she sat down with a tray, Laura pushed it away giving Carmilla half her sandwich.

"Don't ever eat this stuff. It's terrible! I should have told you that before."

"No worries, Cutie."

Biology actually wasn't that bad. Turns out that even though Lafontaine was very excited about biology, they actually just shot the shit the whole time and cracked jokes. The teacher only went over safety precautions and Carmilla felt like she didn't need to pay attention.

At the end of the day, she sat next to Perry for creative writing. She had been looking forward to it all day. She and Perry seem to get along fine, but Perry seemed a little stand off-ish. Carmilla just shrugged. *First day. She's probably just tired.*

Before she knew it, she was meeting Laura at her locker.

"Hey, Cupcake."

"Hey, Carm. How was the first day?"

"Not bad. I'm just glad to be going home."

"Ugh, again?!" Mattie was standing next to the two. "Need my locker, new girl!"

"Sorry your majesty. Would you like a trail of rose petals leading up to your locker tomorrow so you feel special?" Carmilla asked.

"No need for that, Kitty Cat. Maybe Laura can just stroke your back to calm you down. She apparently does that a lot."

"Back off, Mattie," Laura said, her body tense.

"Oh, I'm so scared of little Laura Hollis." She took a step towards Laura, but Carmilla stood in front of her.

"Leave her alone."

Mattie opened her locker and put her stuff away. She closed her locker and turned to Carmilla. "I knew I liked your spunk. Looks like you might have found a good one, Laura. Make sure to keep this Kitty in her cage."

And with that Mattie walked away. "Fucking bitch," Carmilla muttered under her breath before turning to Laura. "Are you okay, Laura?"

"Oh Mattie had done that to me for years, Carm. We're rivals. She always win class president and I refuse to be her Vice President."

"What did she mean by keeping me in my cage?"
"What?"

"A lot of people have made comments about me being your toy and Mattie told you to keep me in my cage. Why?"

"People just like to make fun of me, Carm. Don't worry about it."

"Well maybe we should meet at my locker tomorrow? Get away from this sass. Not to mention, I'm surrounded by freshman who seem to timid to cross me."

Laura gave a light laugh. "Sounds good, Carm. Do you need a ride home?"

"Oh, no. I'm sure mother is already waiting. I should actually get going, but text me tonight?"

"Okay."

Carmilla looked around a deserted hallway and gave Laura a quick peck. "See you tomorrow, Cutie."

"Bye, Carm."

Laura ran her fingers down Carm's arm and grabbed her hand. They let their hands drift apart as they walked away from each other. Carmilla was smiling as she exited the school and ran up to Will. His head was hung low and his shoulders were slumped.

Carmilla walked over to him. "Mom not here yet?"

"No."

The silence lingered and, even though Will annoyed Carmilla, she couldn't stand that he seemed sad.

"How was your day?"

Will just shrugged and kicked his shoe a little. Carmilla wrapped her arm around her brother's shoulder and he turned into her, hugging her tightly. "It'll be okay, Will."

"I miss home. I miss my friends back home."

"I know."

"And no offense, but you never had friends before and now you have tons. I used to have a lot of friends, but now I don't have any."

"That's not true. You've got the team and Kirsch."

"He always hangs out with you."

"Will, we just have a certain thing in common. Trust me, before you know it, you're gonna have tons of friends and most likely a cute girlfriend."

Will let go of his sister and looked up at her, a small smile on his face. "I mean, I am the best looking guy here."

"Of course you are! You're a Karnstein."

Will just shook his head. "Thanks, Kitty."
Carmilla just nodded and pushed Will. "Now get off of me, you're ruining my image."

Will just laughed again a Lilita pulled into the car lane.

As they got it in Lilita was rambling and apologizing for being late. "And did I see my children hugging when I pulled in?"

"Absolutely not," Carmilla said.

"Gross!" Will added.

"Keep up the fake facade you too... I know I did. Everything alright?"

"Everything's fine, Mother," Will said with a small smile, looking back at Carmilla. She smiled back.

"Well, we'll talk about school over dinner tonight so your Father and I can hear it at the same time.

Lilita turned on Christian rock music and Carmilla just rolled her eyes. *God, I hate this shit music. I wonder what Laura is listening to; probably Taylor Swift or something along the lines. She smelled good today and her smile could light up the world.* Carmilla's thoughts about Laura was interrupted when Lilita called her name.

"We're home, sweetheart. Stop daydreaming. And I want you two to finish your homework right away!"

Carmilla and Will ran inside and up the stairs. Before Will could close his door, Carmilla stopped him.

"Hey, Will?"

"Yeah?"

"It's going to be okay. You've got practice tomorrow, right?"

"Yeah training right after school."

"So you'll see all of your friends tomorrow and make me proud by hitting on some cheerleaders."

Will just laughed. "I'll do my best." With that, Will closed his door.

Carmilla threw her stuff in her room and grabbed her copy of "Frankenstein". She had to read the first two chapters for tomorrow and decided to go to her dad's den. She knocked on the door and went inside.

Henry was playing a game of Solitaire when Carmilla came in.

"Hey, Dad. I knocked."

"Sorry, sweetheart, I was about to win this game and finished. Back to notes. What can I do for you?"

Carmilla waves her book in the air. "Thought I'd do some reading?"

Henry just smiled and pointed to the chair. Carmilla smiled, but walked over to the windowsill instead. She kept her back to him, but could te he was staring. She tried to ignore it, but after a while it started to bother her so she turned around. Henry smiled at her.
"It's hard to read when you're staring at me, Dad."

"Sorry, I was just seeing that little girl."

"Do you want me to run around and be weird to get your attention?"

Henry chuckled. "I would pay to see that."

Carmilla just smiled and went back to her reading. Henry went to his notes. They stayed silent until they heard Lilita call for dinner.

"Carmilla?"

"Two more pages and I'm done with my reading." She didn't even look up from the page.

"Alright, love."

Carmilla finished up her two pages and made her way to the kitchen. Everyone had already gathered and were eating. *They already said grace! I can just eat!*

Carmilla sat down at the table and started to put food on her plate. She was just about to take a bite when Lilita looked at her.

"Sweetheart, I know you're going to say grace before you eat. Just because you weren't with us, doesn't mean you skip it."

"Right, Mother."

Carmilla lowered her head and said a quick prayer. She basically just thanked for the food. She lifted her head and started eating.

"So, how was the first day of school?" Henry asked, with a smile on his face.

Carmilla noticed Will slumped in his seat a little bit.

"Uh, it was good! I luckily have class with most of the kids from church."

Henry and Lilita looked at Carmilla like they had two heads. She knew they were expecting Will to talk first, but since Carmilla knew how he felt she decided to take wheel.

"And who you have class with?" Lilita asked.

"Well I have math with Kirsch."

"Oh, really? Did you sit next to him?"

Carmilla deflated a little bit, "Yes, Mother."

"Did he do anything sweet for you?"

"He helped me find my math class, but he struggles with math so I helped him."

"Sounds like maybe he could be your study buddy." Lilita was smiling.

"Yeah, maybe."

"Who else do you have class with?" Henry interrupted.
"Oh, I have bio with Lafontaine and creative writing with Perry. Then I also have English with Laura."

"Ms. Hollis?"

"Yes, Mother. She's my friend."

"And did you sit with her?"

"Yes. Is that a problem? We also have lunch together."

"Do you have lunch with Kirsch?"

"No, Mother."

"I think you should change that."

"I can't change lunch, Mother. It's set. Dad?"

"Lilita, leave her alone. She's not changing her lunch. She's fine."

"Do you really want her having lunch with her?"

"What difference does it make? Let her be. I'm done talking about this. Laura is a great girl and I think," He paused for a moment and looked at Carmilla. "I think she's a great person for Carmilla."

Carmilla smiled and Lilita dropped it for the time being. "Fine. William, my beautiful boy, how was your first day?"

Will kept his eye on his plate. "It was okay. Nothing spectacular."

"Will, it'll be okay son. It was the first day and the first day always sucks," Henry said.

"Henry, we don't say sucks."

"Yeah, I told Will he'd have a hot girlfriend in no time," Carmilla teased. She got Will to smile again.

"Well of course he will," Lilita said, smiling at Will.

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Once dinner was done and the dishes were cleaned, Carmilla ran upstairs to work on her math homework. She heard a soft knock on her door and Will popped his head in.

"Can I come in for a sec?"

"Yeah, Will, what's up?"

Will entered the room while closing the door behind him. He looked around and then sat down on the edge of her bed.

"You said earlier that your group of friends all had something in common. May I ask what it is?"

Carmilla exhaled. "It's complicated, Will."

"Oh okay."
"I would tell you Will, but it really is just complicated."

"Okay."

Will got up and started walking to the door. He stopped and turned to look at her, leaning on her desk, doing math homework.

"Carm?"

"Yeah, Will?"

"I saw you two together."

Carmilla's heart started beating fast and she stood up. "Saw me with who?"

"You know who."

"Where?"

"At that big party Kirsch threw last week. You were dancing."

"Yeah, Will. Friends dance, it's not big deal."

"Carmilla, I know it's more than that, okay? Will you just listen? I know Mother believes it's wrong and it's sinful... I'm just trying to tell you that I'm okay with it."

"What?!"

"I'm okay with you and... With you two."

Carmilla just stared at Will. "You're going to tell on me, aren't you? So she can send me back and you can be the perfect kid again?"

"What? No. I didn't agree with that and I tried, but with dad gone!"

"Just get out Will."

"No, you're safe with me, Carmilla. I swear I won't tell."

She looked at him, but didn't say anything. "I swear. I just think you should be more careful next time."

Carmilla exhaled. "Thanks, Will."

"I know you feel weird right now and you're probably trying to figure a lot of stuff out right now, but I want you to know, I'm not letting her send you back there."

Carmilla stood there, flabbergasted. "Thanks, Will. And just promise me, please, that you won't tell anyone."

"Cross my heart and hope to die."

Carmilla laughed. "I gotta get back to these math problems."

"Alright, but Carm?"

"Yeah, Kid?"
"Can you and I get dinner sometime this week? Just you and me?"

"Sure, Will."

They both smiled and then Will left. Carmilla finished up her math problems and then got ready for bed when her phone buzzed.

**The Rambler:** I had more homework than expected. Also my dad took me out for dinner.

**Carmilla:** That's okay. I'm actually about to head to bed, though.

**The Rambler:** Oh, okay. Need to get your beauty sleep.

**Carmilla:** How else am I going to keep you interested?

**The Rambler:** By putting those lips to mine.

**Carmilla:** It'll be the weekend before you know it and then they will be all yours.

**The Rambler:** They better be... Good night, Carm.

**Carmilla:** Good night, Cupcake.

Carmilla plugged her phone in and decided to play a little Dave Brubeck. She fell asleep almost immediately as the rest of the world followed.

Chapter End Notes

Props to Kristin, the editor
Chapter Summary

Some fluff, some angst and not to mention little back story.

Longest chapter yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It had been a couple weeks since school had started. Carmilla had devoted most of her time to her studies over the past few weeks. She and Will have always been straight-A students, a rule that Lilila paid close attention to. Carmilla took mostly honors classes, causing her downtime to be consumed with readings and studying. The only honors class she didn’t take was math. Lilila was usually understanding when it came to her math classes because she also wasn’t very good at math. It was the only class Carmilla was allowed to have a lower grade in.

Carmilla had barely seen Laura except for church and small amounts of time in school. These two locations didn't offer that much alone time. Laura was starting to get annoyed. Carmilla had explained to her time and time again how important her studies were to her, and as much as Laura tried to understand, she started to feel like Carmilla was pulling away.

It was Thursday night three weeks after school had started. Carmilla had spent that week preparing for her math test with Kirsch. She had to ace it. She had to be perfect. The test had come and gone and she finally was able to relax.

She was watching a sports channel with Will, when her phone rang. She looked at the caller ID and smiled.

"Who is it, dear?" Lilila asked, entering the living room.

"Oh, it's, um, it's Kirsch."

Lilila smiled brightly. With that, Carmilla quickly got up from the couch and ran upstairs. As soon as she was in her room and the door closed, she answered.

"Hey, Cupcake."

"Am I?" Laura asked. Carmilla could notice the tone in her voice.

"Are you what, Cupcake?"

"Am I still your 'Cupcake'?"

"Of course you are, Laura."

She heard Laura exhale and it wasn't the first time she heard this over the past couple of weeks. However, she didn’t say anything. There was a long pause before Laura spoke.
"How did your math test go?"

"I think I did okay, considering Kirsch kept trying to cheat off my paper."

"That's good. I'm glad." Her voice was flat and there was no enthusiasm.

"But now that it's over, I think I need sometime with my Cupcake."

"Well I have a test tomorrow."

"But you don't have one tomorrow night... Or Saturday... Or Sunday after church..." Carmilla lingered.

"Come on, Laura. I told you my classes were important to me. I'm test free for like a week and I've missed you. I'm sorry it's been hectic, but I have to get straight A's! Will might drop the football team because he's struggling so much."

"Really?" Laura asked, finally seeming interested.

"Yes. Please don't be mad, Laura. I have missed you, it's just with my mother, grades come first. Look, can I make it up to you? I'll do anything as long as you're not mad at me."

"Why, anything, Miss Karnstein?" Laura sounded mischievous.

"If it makes you smile and laugh, then yes, anything."

She could tell Laura was smiling on the other end of the phone. "Well, next week is spirit week."

Carmilla smacked her head into her forehead. "Yeah," was all she could say.

"And each day is a different dress up day," Laura continued.

Carmilla kept smacking her forehead against her hand. "Yeah."

"So next week, to make up for being a good student, you're going to be a better student and dress up with me every day of the week. There will be no excuses and you will dress up in what I tell you to. Deal?"

Carmilla exhaled loudly, "Deal. You better be happy I find you attractive and feel bad that I haven't been giving you attention."

"Oh I am, Sweetness. I'm so excited, Carm!"

"I bet you are, Cupcake. See you tomorrow at my locker?"

"I'll be there!"

"Good night, Cupcake."

"Good night, Beautiful."

Carmilla went back downstairs and headed into the kitchen. She decided a late night snack was in order when she saw her dad doing a crossword puzzle at the kitchen table.

"Hey, Daddio."

"Hello, Sweetheart. What are you doing?"
"Late night snack, you?"

"A challenging crossword puzzle."

"Hmm," she said while grabbing a snack cake from the cupboard. "Do you want one?" She asked, looking at Henry. He smiled and shook his head. "This old man can't handle too many sweets anymore."

"It must suck to be old," she smiled.

"Watch it, Kid."

Carmilla laughed as she started to exit. "Oh, Carmilla?"

She turned to see Henry looking at her. "I know you missed prayer meeting and youth group last night because you were studying. In fact, a lot of kids did, so I'm having all the youth over on Saturday. I figured it was a good way for us to get to know the church better."

"Oh, okay. So like everyone?"

"Yep, even some of the parents are coming. I also want to get to know Kirsch better. I want to know what his intentions are with my daughter." Henry smiled a moment and then looked at Carmilla. She shrugged, almost speechless. He continued, "I also would like to get to know Ms. Hollis."

_Don't call her that. I only call her that as a joke, but wait..._

"Why?" Carmilla asked, not sure what to say.

He smiled. "Is your mother around?"

Carmilla looked into the living room, but didn't see Lilita. She shook her head no.

"I want to know what Laura's intentions are as well."

Carmilla started to get nervous as her heart started beating faster. "Why?" She asked, trying to be nonchalant.

She didn't know that Henry was thinking about the night he saw his daughter kissing Laura outside, but it was the only image in his mind. Instead of being bothered by it, even though he felt like he should be, he smiled. "I think you guys are pretty close and I know you haven't had many friends in the past so I'm curious to get to know her is all." He smiled again and Carmilla felt a little less nervous.

"Okay," she said. "I'm going to head to bed. Night, Dad."

"Night, Kiddo."

Carmilla ran back upstairs, starting to worry about her father's words. _I want to know what Laura's intentions are as well_, Carmilla thought this over and over again until she fell asleep.

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Carmilla awoke the next morning, still fretting about Henry's words. She still didn't understand what he meant. She watched him all morning and noticed he was still his cheery self. She tried to shake the feeling off even as she walked up to her locker, seeing Laura waiting.
"Hey, Sweetness."

"Hey, Laura."

Carmilla opened her locker and started getting organized for her day. Laura touched her arm and felt Carmilla's body go stiff.

"Carm, are you okay?" Laura asked, keeping her hand on Carmilla's forearm. Carmilla just exhaled before she slammed her locker closed.

"Carm?"

Carmilla looked at Laura. "Can we just go somewhere? Like, I don't know, skip class, jump in your Jeep and drive?"

"Carm, we can't skip class especially when I know how important your grades are to you. What's bothering you?"

Carmilla exhaled deeply and just shrugged. "It's nothing. Let's get to class."

Laura didn't protest and followed Carmilla to English, walking behind her, making sure she didn't bother Carmilla. They entered the classroom silently, which was unusual because they were always told to use their inside voices. They sat waiting for the bell to ring. Carmilla didn't say anything and stared at the board ahead of her, knowing Laura was staring at her, worrying.

What did he mean? Her intentions? Does he know? There's no way he knows. We've been careful. I've barely even kissed her since school started. We've haven't even had a moment alone together. I don't know what to do. 'I want to know what her intentions are...' He did say friend...

Carmilla's thoughts were interrupted when Ms. Bourne starting addressing the class.

"We are going to the library this morning. I want you to find a partner, while we do some research on female writers. I know we've been reading Frankenstein, and you will be introduced to more female writers as the class continues. I figured today would be a good day to look into more history or catch up on your reading. Take your stuff with you so you can head straight to break when class is over."

The class gathered their belongings and started heading for the door. Carmilla started thinking again when Laura tapped her shoulder.

"Carm? Wanna be partners?"

"What do you mean partners?"

"In the library? What Ms. Bourne was just discussing?"

"Oh, right. Yeah, Laura, sounds good."

The two were still silent as they made their way to the library. They were the last to enter and Laura grabbed Carmilla's hand, pulling her to a more private area.

"Laura? Where are we going?"

Laura didn't answer and kept pulling. She lead her to the back corner and sat down. Carmilla followed, sitting next to Laura.
Laura waited a few minutes before she spoke. "Do you want to talk about what's bothering you?"

"Nothing is bothering me, Laura."

"Bullshit. You always say, 'Good morning, Cupcake.' Today, it's been Laura. You only call me by first name when something is bothering you or you want my full attention. What's wrong?"

"Fine. It's something my dad said to me last night."

"What did he say?"

"Well he told me about the youth group gathering at our place this weekend and asked me about Kirsch, saying he wanted to know what his intentions were with me, which I now have to explain to Kirsch, which should be interesting, since he's been talking to Natalie but fucking Theo nonstop."

"He's doing that again?"

Carmilla gave Laura an 'are you kidding me' look. "Right, sorry, not important," Laura immediately corrected herself. Carmilla scooted closer to Laura and rested her head on Laura's shoulder. Laura laid her head on top of Carmilla's, weaving their fingers together as she waited for Carmila to continue.

"Then he asked about you," Carmilla continued.

"What about me?"

"He asked what your intentions were and when I asked why. He said that I hadn't had a lot of friends before and he wanted to get to know you better."

"That's all?"

"That doesn't worry you?" Carmilla asked, picking up her head and looking at Laura.

"No, Carm. I thought you were going to say he saw us kiss or something. He wants to get to know the girl who befriended his daughter. It's no big deal."

"But why would he say intentions?"

"Carm, how many friends did you have in the city?"

"Honestly, I kept to myself mostly. I read a lot in my room or my dad's study. Almost every Friday, he'd knock on my door, tell me Will's exciting Friday adventures and then asked me what I was doing. I would just point to my book."

"You never went to the movies? Or sleepovers? Or anything?"

Carmilla shook her head. "Laura, I told you. People don't like me when they get to know me. I was always better off being by myself. I got picked on for my good grades and no one really wanted to hang out, especially after... I mean yeah, I was a loner. Hanging with you and the gang is all new to me. This is all new to me."

"You know that's a ridiculous thing to say, right?" Laura asked.

"What?"

"That people don't like you."
Laura rested her hands on either side of Carmilla's cheeks so they were looking into each other's eyes. "Everyone here loves you, Carm. You're not a loner and you're possibly one of the coolest people to ever join our group."

Carmilla smiled, "Maybe you're right. I mean I am awesome." Carmilla smirked and Laura laughed. "So I shouldn't worry about my dad?"

"I don't think so, no."

Laura leaned in, giving Carmilla a quick peck on the lips. Carmilla kissed Laura back, pulling her closer. "God, I've missed your lips," Carmilla whispered, resting their foreheads together.

"They've missed you too," Laura replied, sarcastically.

Carmilla gave a low chuckled when they heard someone clear their throat.

"I've got to hand it to you, Hollis. You've managed to keep this one longer than two weeks." Mattie was smiling at them.

"What do you want, Mattie?"

"Well as you know, school elections are coming up and I'm here to make a little bargain with you."

"What?"

"Well I know that your kitty cat here is the minister's daughter and we wouldn't want rumors spreading around, would we?"

"Mattie, please-" Carmilla pleaded.

"Hush, Darling, the future president is talking. So, Hollis, I'll keep this little secret of yours if you don't run for reelection. What do you say?"

"How can I trust you?"

"Because I know, you know plenty of things about me before the elections ruined our friendship. I know if I told them about you and Carmilla, you would have plenty of things to retaliate. I'm not going to take those chances. So, do we have a deal?"

"Well I wasn't planning on running, so yes."

"Excellent." Mattie smiled wide and looked at Carmilla, who was racked with nerves. She got down to eye level with her. "Carmilla, no need to panic. I promise, I'm not going to say a word." She patted Carmilla on the head and walked away.

Laura could see Carmilla's breathing becoming heavy and her body starting to shake, "Carm, she won't tell anyone, because I know her biggest secret of all. Her father is one of the Chairs at the seminary school in the next town over and if I told anyone what she did, this small church town would be up in arms. Look at me."

Carmilla looked and started to relax. "She won't say anything, I promise. She hasn't told anyone I'm gay and we have a lot of history."

"Were you two a thing?"

"Oh, gross. Fuck no. We used to be best friends, but when she won the election, she dropped me like
Carmilla nodded and gave a small smile. "I believe you. I think I've had enough stress for one morning."

They decided to work on their research and it helped distract Carmilla. The day went by pretty fast. She was just happy Kirsch was on board for playing her fake boyfriend.

"No problem, Carm-sexy. I got you."

"Okay, Beefcake, but don't call me that in front of my parents."

Kirsch crossed his fingers. "Scout’s honor!"

"Yeah, pretty sure you shouldn't be crossing your fingers."

"Right, I meant," Kirsch saluted Carmilla instead, "Scout’s honor."

"Close enough, Beefcake. Close enough."

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The week had flown by and it was now Saturday morning. Carmilla could hear her mother screaming her and Will’s names from downstairs. It was only 10 and Carmilla rolled over, trying to block out the sound.

“William! Carmilla! I need you to get up now!”

Carmilla continued to ignore her and tried her hardest to go back to sleep. She was so tired from the week and just wanted to sleep a little longer. There was a knock on her door, but luckily she could tell it wasn’t Lilita.

“What?” she moaned, pulling the black covers closer to her face.

“Come on, Kitty. You know it’s bad when Dad practically begged me to get out of bed.”

“No,” she grunted.

“Don’t make me do it, Kid,” Henry said, poking his head in around the door frame.

“Please let me sleep. It’s my only day to sleep in.”

“Your mother is going crazy, trying to clean the house and set up for this party.”

“Carmilla!” Lilita yelled again.

“Come on, Kid.”

Henry entered the room and ripped Carmilla’s covers away. She curled her body into the fetal position, trying to keep warm, but she didn’t get up and kept her eyes closed. “Seriously, Carmilla, please get up and help us, help your mother. I think her head might actually pop off her neck.”

“Daddddd,” she whined.

“Last call before you get mad at me. Please get up.”
Carmilla opened her eyes, saw the sunlight and closed them again. “No,” she said, slowing starting to drift off.

“Okay, I tried. You can’t get mad at me though.”

The next thing Carmilla felt was water being poured onto her face. “What the hell?!” She practically screamed, jumping out of bed.

“Language, Carmilla.”

Will was laughing and she punched him hard in the chest.

“Ow, that hurt Carm.”

“She’ll be up. Why would you do that?!”

She was mad and tired, trying to wipe the water off with her shirt.

“I warned you, Kid. Your mother needs both of you guys to help. You know how she is with cleaning. She’s made breakfast so get dressed, and make your way downstairs.”

“Fine!” Carmilla practically shouted before pushing the men out and slamming her door.

“Carmilla, we do not slam doors, now come down for breakfast,” she could hear Lilita say from what she assumed was the bottom of the staircase.

She quickly put on a t-shirt and a pair of black sweatpants. She didn’t care about appearances right now because she was barely even awake. She went down to the kitchen where Henry sat, his newspaper out and an amusing smile on his face. Lilita was setting the table, while Will took his seat.

“What’s so amusing, Henry?” Lilita asked, putting down a plate of eggs.

“You should have seen Carmilla’s face when I poured water on her to wake her up.” He and Will started laughing and she couldn’t help but smile a little.

“Ha, Ha, Dad. Give me some eggs.”

After breakfast, everyone got to work. Carmilla was cleaning the kitchen when Lilita walked in.

“Well it’s evident that I haven’t been in your room for a while,” she said.

“What does that mean?”

“It’s an absolute pigsty, Carmilla. I don’t know how you live in it. Will always keeps his room pristine and spotless, but you have clothes everywhere and a path to your bed.”

“It’s so I can get to my bed easily,” Carmilla stated, as if it was the most obvious thing.

“Well I don’t like it. Finish up here and then clean your room.”

“But, Mother, no one is going to see it.”

“You don’t know that. What if someone needs to use the upstairs bathroom and happens to peek in? I would never let someone see my child’s room in such a disastrous state.”

“Can’t I just keep my door closed?”

“We have an open door policy here, Carmilla. Even if there is someone in your room. And
considering, Kirsch will be here tonight, I assume you two will want to be alone for a little while. I won’t allow him to see a room you can’t keep clean. What will he think?”

“Um, that I’m a teenager and not his future wife?”

“We don’t know that,” she smiled. “Now finish up the kitchen so you can get started on that horrendous hole you’re calling a room.”

“Yes, Mother.”

Carmilla quickly cleaned the rest of the kitchen and made her way upstairs. She opened her door and she honestly hadn’t noticed how much her clothes were covering the floor. She exhaled immediately, put on Courtney Love and got to work.

A few hours later, she was done. Everything had been picked up, dusted and vacuumed. Lilita was happy with the results and told Carmilla to get ready. “Guests will be arriving in an hour.”

Before she knew it, a few people had made their way into their house. Kirsch was the first to arrive. He informed the Karnstein’s that his parents were running late, but would stop by later. He offered to help Lilita in the kitchen, but she refused. They sat on the couch together and laughed at how awkward of a night it was about to be.

“Beefcake?”

“Yeah?” Kirsch had just picked up a cracker with cheese on it, munching on it loudly.

“At some point tonight, I want to be alone with Laura. Think you could help me with that?”

“Absolutely.”

“Thanks.”

Everyone had gathered in the living room. She was hanging in a circle with Kirsch, Laf, Perry, Danny and Betty. They were all goofing off and laughing. Kirsch would sometimes wrap his arm around Carmilla when her parents were near, but would let go soon after. Carmilla was now just waiting on Laura.

“Where is she? I hope she’s coming. I wonder if I could sneak upstairs and get my phone. This stupid dress doesn’t have pockets though. She looked down at her red sundress. She hated it.

The doorbell rang, distracting Carmilla. She quickly walked over to the door and open it. Mr. Hollis smiling at her. “Hello, Carmilla!” He practically yelled.

“Good evening, Mr. Hollis. How are you doing?”

“Fine, fine.”

“Please come in.”

Carmilla noticed Laura wasn’t behind him and she deflated. Where is she?

Rich noticed the amount of shoes on the floor. “Should I discard my shoes?”

“Oh yes, please.”

“Rich! I’m so glad you could make it.” Henry had made his way to the door.
“Thank you for inviting me, Pastor.”

“And where is Laura?”

“She’s outside. I thought she was right behind me.”

Carmilla’s heart lightened.

“Oh, silly me. She probably needs help bringing in one of the desserts we brought.”

“Oh. I can help her, Mr. Hollis.”

“Well thank you, Carmilla.”

Carmilla nodded, quickly throwing on her boots and almost running out the door. She could see Laura’s car at the curb. The door facing the street was open and she could tell Laura was bent over looking for something on the floor.

“Hmm.”

Laura was searching for something that she seemed to lose on the floor. Her back was out to the street, hidden in the shadows of the night sky. She didn’t notice Carmilla until she felt hands on her hips, pulling her back against the front of Carmilla’s body. She got a quick kiss to her neck before she turned.

“Hey, Cupcake.”

“Hi, Sweetness.” Laura smiled wide and stepped aside closing the door. Without the glow of the car light it became darker.

“You are the last to arrive, Ms. Hollis.”

Carmilla stepped closer to Laura, smiling.

“Is that right?”

“Yes, and you made me worry you weren’t coming.”

“I texted you saying I was on my way. It’s not my fault, you didn’t have it with you.”

Laura was now pinned against the car, Carmilla’s hands firmly on her hips. Carmilla leaned in closer, her lips a breath away from Laura.

“Well this stupid dress, Mother is making me wear, has no pockets. Alas, my phone had to stay upstairs.”

“Kiss me, Carm.”

Carmilla leant in and kissed Laura sweetly. They kissed for a few minutes before Laura put her hand on Carmilla’s lips. Carmilla kissed her hand.

“We should get inside. Can you help me take in these desserts?”

“Sure, Cupcake.”

Laura handed her a plate of brownies, while she pulled out another plate of cookies.
Carmilla just smiled and walked with Laura to her house. It wasn’t until they were on the porch that Laura realized Carmilla’s look.

“Do you normally wear dresses and combat boots?” She asked, sarcastically.

“Shut it, Creampuff.”

“Why? I think it suits you very well. Gives you that sexy, punk vibe.”

Carmilla gave Laura a quick peck before making their way inside.

“Oh, Carmilla, there you are. I think Wilson was starting to get worried.” Lilita noticed who Carmilla was standing with. “In fact, I think you should go find him. Hello, Ms. Hollis.”

“Hello, Mrs. Karnstein. You have a lovely home. Thank you for inviting me over.”

“Thank my husband,” she said. Her tone lacked any warmth and Carmilla looked at Laura.

“I’m sorry.”

“No worries. I know she doesn’t like me.”

“That’s not true-”

“Carmilla! Put that in the kitchen and find Wilson. He’s worried.”

“Yes, Mother.”

She made her way to kitchen, and Laura followed. There were already a couple different desserts on the kitchen isle. Carmilla thought it was ridiculous for only 10 guests. Mr. Hollis and Perry’s parents were the only other adults at the moment.

She made her way back to the living room, finding Kirsch. He looked guilty.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered.

“For what?”

“I knew you were outside with Laura, so I decided to try and distract your Mother. She is not an easy woman to please and asked where you were. So I acted like I was worried. I didn’t think she break you apart as soon as you walked in together.”

“No worries, Kirsch. That’s just Mother.”

They heard a light tapping on a glass and saw Henry standing at the entrance to the living room.

“It looks like everyone is here. We have everything ready in the dining room up. Lilita has made a meal of a salad, along with roasted chicken, mashed potatoes, a few different vegetables and rice. So I hope you all are hungry. Shall we?”

Everyone smiled as he made his way over to the doors still shut behind him. Carmilla had only seen the dining room when they moved in, but Lilita had it renovated along with the rest of the house. Four china cabinets were leaning against each wall, filled with both of her grandparents fine china. Carmilla was surprised Lilita didn’t use any of those dishes but their standard every day plates. The large oak table sat in the middle of the room. Henry sat at the head, with Mr. Hollis to his left. Mr and Mrs. Perry sat to his left, followed by Perry, Lafontaine and Danny. Lilita was sitting opposite
Henry. Will was to her left, followed by his close friend Eric. Then Betty, Kirsch, Carmilla and Laura. The room was small, so the space was a little cramped, but that didn’t seem to bother Carmilla as she kept close to Laura.

She hated having to act interested in Kirsch, but knew she must. He kept her arm around her chair for some time before Henry cleared his throat. He said grace and then everyone started passing around the food.

“Everything looks great, Mrs. K!” Kirsch said, practically salivating.

“Thank you, Wilson.”

They had polite conversations as the meal continued. Carmilla and Laura kept sharing brief glances, with a quick smile before going back to eating. Henry had noticed, but decided to distract himself by continuing his conversations with Mr. Hollis. They were just about finished when Carmilla felt a hand on her thigh. Her body went stiff since it was coming from Laura’s side instead of the side Kirsch was on. She quickly grabbed Laura’s hand and pushed it away. Shaking her head.

Laura decided to make it a little game. She would randomly put his hand back on Carmilla’s thigh and Carmilla would push it away. It started to become silly when Carmilla smiled, as she pried the hand away again. They were laughing and giggling together.

“Laura,” Mr. Hollis said, giving her a stern look.

She kept her hands to herself while they remained at the dinner table. Once dinner was consumed, they all went separate ways. Lafontaine’s and Kirsch’s parents both came late, apologizing about business and work. The grown ups took over the living room, while the gang headed up to Carmilla’s room.

“Wow, this is definitely you, Carmilla,” Lafontaine said as they entered.

“You like, red, huh?” Laura asked, making her way to Carmilla’s bed.

“It’s not red, it’s a deep burgundy that took me a while to figure out which one I liked best.”

Danny and Betty curled up against the far wall, snuggling each other.

“Keep it in your pants Xena, you’re the first thing someone will see when they open the door.”

“Relax, Fang Face. We know how to separate. We do it all the time in my room.”

Kirsch, Lafontaine and Perry got into a biology discussion, so Carmilla made her way to her bed, sitting next to Laura.

“For the record, I like your room, Carm. It’s very you.”

Carmilla smiled, “Thanks, Cupcake.”

They sat on the bed and chatted for a while, getting closer and closer. It was around 9 o’clock when people started to depart. Danny and Betty were the first to leave followed by Lafontaine and Perry.

Kirsch stood awkwardly in the room. “I feel like I should get going, but it’s only because I want to give you two some alone time without your parents walking in. Wait, I have an idea.”

“Kirsch, you don’t have to do that.”
“No, I’ll wait out in the hall, near the bathroom. It’s next to your room, so if I see your mom or dad coming up, I’ll walk out of the bathroom and act like I just used it. Should I give you ten minutes?”

“You really don’t have to Kirsch. Laura and I understand-

“No Bro. You’ve been studying with me all week for that math test and considering the amount of texts Laura was sending to me, she has missed you. So I’m giving you 15 minutes or as long as I can.”

Kirsch quickly left the room and closed the door behind him.

Carmilla looked at Laura, and smiled.

“Why have you texted Kirsch saying you miss me?”

“I didn’t, I was just curious to know if you two were together or not.”

“Aw, don’t be jealous, Cupcake. He’s worse at math than I am.”

“I’m not jealous. I’ve just missed you.”

“I’ve missed you too, Cupcake.”

Laura straddled Carmilla’s lap, innocently and smiled. Laura leant in and started kissing Carmilla. Carmilla quickly wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist, pulling her closer. They were making out and Carmilla started to have a few flashes of the last time a girl was sitting on her like this in her bed. She quickly stopped, pulling her lips away from Laura.

“I can’t.”

“What?” Laura asked, confused.

“We can’t kiss here. I can’t kiss here, in my house.”

“But you were fine with it like two minutes ago when you had your tongue in my mouth.”

“It’s complicated Laura, but I can’t.”

“Carm, we’re all alone here. And I like making out in here, it seems kind of naughty.” Laura laughed lightly and started moving her face down to Carmilla’s. She captured Carmilla’s lips again and Carmilla kissed her back before realizing. She pushed Laura off of her.

“Carm?”

“I can’t. I can’t Laura. I can’t.”

Carmilla was breathing heavy now and she was starting to shake. She tried to calm down, but all she could see was her mother walking in and grabbing the only other girl she has ever kissed, off of her. Asking her what she was doing. She said it was an accident, that nothing was happening. She pushed the girl out of their city apartment before Carmilla could even explain. Henry asking Carmilla what she did and she couldn’t answer. Lilita screamed that she caught Carmilla kissing this girl. Carmilla screamed it was an accident and she gave into temptation, that she didn’t want to.

“Carm?”
She could hear Laura, but couldn’t find her. Her mother slapping her face hard. She was crying.

“Carmilla? Carm, please. Listen to my voice, Carm.”

Carmilla’s memory started to deteriorate as she saw Laura staring at her with concern. She just looked at her and then leaned forward, crying on Laura’s shoulder. “It’s not right, Laura. It’s not right. I’m so broken. I’m a disgrace.”

“What’s not right, Carmilla? You’re not broken nor a disgrace. You’re beautiful and perfect. Shh. It’s okay, Carm. I have you and I’m never letting go.”

Laura quietly rocked Carmilla until she calmed down. Her eyes were still full of tears, but Laura held her face and kissed her sweetly. “It’s okay, Carm. It’s okay.”

“I’m sorry,” Carmilla whispered.

“Don’t be. What happened?”

Carmilla shook her head and rested it on Laura’s shoulders again. “It’s a story for another day, Cupcake.”

She kept her head on Laura’s shoulder, while Laura rocked her. She was getting lost in the smell of honey. Laura’s perfume consuming her. Carmilla finally started to calm down, and was starting to drift off in the crook of Laura’s neck.

Kirsch quietly knocked on the door before quickly entering and the girls separated immediately. Laura made her way to the desk chair while Carmilla sat on her bed. Krisch sat down on the floor, but next to Carmilla. The door opened and Henry popped his head in.

“Laura, your father was looking for you.”

“Oh, thank you Pastor Karnstein,” she smiled and looked back at Carmilla.

“I believe he is ready to go,” Henry added.

“Sure thing. I will be down in one second.”

Henry nodded and closed the door quietly. Carmilla was surprised by this notion because he always followed Lilita’s rules. Especially the rule about the door being open. Kirsch stood and made his way to the bathroom again.

Laura walked over to Carmilla’s bed, but before she could sit down, Carmilla stood up and grabbed her. She kissed her, hard. Laura’s arms snaked around her shoulders, while Carmilla moved her hands to Laura’s hips. She hugged her and held her close, not letting her go. “I’m sorry I ruined our small time together, Laura,” Carmilla said into Laura’s ear.

“Shh. Don’t be sorry, Sweetness.”

Laura broke the embrace and looked at Carmilla with a smile. Carmilla was pouting and Laura tapped her pouting lower lip with her finger. “Put that pout away. Maybe tomorrow after church we could get lunch?”

“I think I would like that very much,” Carmilla whispered.

“Carm, please smile. It’s okay.”
Carmilla tried to smile, but only her mouth moved. It never reached her eyes. “Besides, tomorrow at lunch, we can plan our amazing outfits for spirit week!” Laura’s smile widen.

Carmilla shook her head, but a small smile graced her lips, finally reaching her eyes. “Can’t wait,” she said, sarcastically.

She kissed Laura one more time. She checked her reflection in the mirror and decided she looked presentable and that she hadn’t been crying. She opened the door and noticed Kirsch standing there. He was still hiding out around the bathroom. The three of them made their way downstairs.

“There she is,” Rich said, getting off the couch, heading towards her door.

“Sorry, Dad. We were just having a discussion about spirit week.”

“No worries. Well, thanks for having us Pastor and Mrs. Karnstein. It was a lovely evening.”

“Thank you for coming, Mr. Hollis.”

“Lilita, please call me Rich.” He smiled. Laura said a quick thanks and followed. Henry, Lilita, Carmilla and Kirsch were standing in the foyer.

Kirsch stretched. “Well, I should get going. Thank you for having me over, Pastor. Mrs. K.”

“Oh, Wilson, thank you for coming.”

“Glad you could make it, Son,” Henry said, extending his hand.

“I’ll walk you out,” Carmilla offered and Lilita’s smile got brighter. She could hear her mother saying “Good girl. That’s how I raised you.” in her head.

Kirsch gave Carmilla a big hug once they reached his car.

“Thanks for everything, Beefcake. I know this is annoying.”

Kirsch opened the door to his drunk and leaned against the frame, facing Carmilla. “Bro, are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“You have a thin bedroom wall. Do you wanna talk?”

“No, Kirsch, I’m okay. Really. Thanks again for everything.”

She started to leave, but Kirsch grabbed her wrist, pulling her towards him. “Please don’t lie to me. Whatever you tell me, I would never tell anyone, not even Laura. Not even if she begged.”

“I’m fine, Kirsch,” she said, yanking her wrist.

“Okay. But please remember, I’m here if you ever need or want to talk. Okay?”

“I know, Kirsch. Text me when you get home, so I know you got there.”

“Will do, Carm-sexy. Call me if you need me.”

“Roger that,” Carmilla said, saluting Kirsch.

“I thought that was Scout’s honor?”
Carmilla just rolled her eyes and laughed. That’s when she saw her mother standing in the living room window, watching her. Kirsch caught a glimpse of it too and smiled.

“Should I kiss you or something?” He asked, causing the temperature to change from normal to awkward.

“Is she still watching?”

“Oh, yeah.”

Carmilla exhaled. She really didn’t want to. She told Laura she wouldn’t do that, but with Lilita watching, she felt like she had to. To wash away his misdeeds earlier with Laura. “Maybe you should,” she said, looking down.

He lifted her chin. “I won’t tell Laura.”

Carmilla nodded and he put his arms around Carmilla’s waist. “Is this okay?” *No! Please stop. I don’t want to, but I have to. I have to get rid of this sin and shame I feel from earlier.*

She nodded again and wrapped her arms around Kirsch’s shoulders. “You should probably smile,” he said. She put on her best fake smile and he smiled back. “Well, here goes nothing,” he said, leaning down.

He was a good kisser, but her insides were cold. She hadn’t kissed a boy in sometime and now she remembered why. She felt empty, not full and warm like she did when she kissed her or Laura.

They kissed for a few moments before Carmilla pulled away. Kirsch had a goofy look on his face. “What?” Carmilla asked.

“It’s taking all my nerves to not wipe my mouth right now. I feel like a child who just kissed their first girl on a dare or like I kissed my sister.”

Carmilla just laughed and pushed him by the shoulders. “Thanks for the compliment.”

“Well, it seems to work for Laura, so you don’t need to worry about my opinion.”

Carmilla’s smile faltered a little. *Laura.*

He got into his truck. “Good night, Carm. I promise, I won’t tell Laura.”

“Thanks, Kirsch. Get home safe.”

Kirsch started his engine and drove away. Carmilla waited until he had turned the corner before she walked back inside. Lilita greeted her with a large smile.

“Well, my oh my, Carmilla. I saw that little smooch.”

“You were spying on me?”

“No my Darling Girl, just happened to pass by the window. How was it?”

“It was nice.”

“Just nice?”

“Mom, we’re still getting to know each other.”
“Lilita, leave her alone,” Henry said, coming down the stairs.

“Fine. Fine, but that’s my girl!” Lilita added.

Henry gave her an apathetic smile before going to his study.

Carmilla just went upstairs, and got ready for bed. She could hear laughter from Will’s room. *I guess Eric is staying over. I wish Laura could.*

She took a shower and finished getting ready for bed. She checked her phone. She received a text from Kirsch telling her, he got home safely. She also had a text from Laura.

**The Rambler:** I already miss you and I wish we were cuddled together on that black blanketed bed of yours. I can only imagine what it feels like to curl up next to you, and fall asleep. I’ll see you in the morning, Sweetness. And please don’t worry, I’m holding on to you and never letting you go.

Carmilla smiled, as she got into bed. She started to drift off when she realized how calm she had become. She took a deep breath in and smiled again. Laura might not physically be next to her, but her perfume still lingered on her pillows and comforter. *I hope to know what it’s like to lay next to you one day, Cupcake.*

Chapter End Notes

Shout out to best editor in town, which would be Kristin!
Carmilla woke up late that Sunday and rushed to get ready to Lilita’s dismay. She caused the rest of the family to be late as well. After their extremely long car ride with Lilita raving about how important it is to be on time, they pulled into church fifteen minutes late.

“Get to Sunday school,” Henry said, as Will and Carmilla bolted out of the cars. Carmilla slammed the door open to her Sunday school class.

“Glad you could join us Ms. Karnstein.”

“Sorry, Mr. Hollis? What are you doing here?”

“We do have subs here, Carmilla. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts on a second honeymoon this week and a half. She asked if I would cover. Will you please take your seat. We were just discussing the courage to talk to others about being a Christian.”

Carmilla nodded and quickly headed towards Laura. Danny was sitting on her right side, and she quickly sat to Laura’s left. Laura smiled at her and grabbed her hand under the table. Carmilla squeezed it back with a smile. They were staring at each other when Mr. Hollis cleared his throat before continuing. Both girls jumped and looked down at their booklets, bashfully. Carmilla could see Laura writing something in her book and then felt a quick poke to her side. She squirmed at the tickle feeling of Laura’s finger.

“Carmilla, are you okay?”

“Yes, Mr. Hollis. I’m sorry. Last interruption, Sir, I promise.”

Some of the other students, who Carmilla didn’t care for anyway, glared at her. Geez, who thought people actually paid attention to these lectures?

Laura tapped her shoulder this time and then pointed to the notes field in her Sunday School book. In bubbly handwriting, it said, “My dad is fine with us getting lunch after church. Did you get the okay?”

“Shit,” Carmilla whispered and quickly grabbed her mouth. Laura was the only one who heard and quickly clenched her jaw so she wouldn’t laugh out loud. Laura continued writing. “I’ll take that as a no. Please ask, I want alone time with you. Just me and you.”

Carmilla made eye contact with Laura and nodded. The class went by quickly and they both left to head into church. Carmilla could see Lilita at the front of the church with Will and Eric. She quickly slid into the back pew surrounded by her friends with Kirsch to her left and Laura to her right. She could tell that Lilita was looking for her and she quickly turned her attention to Kirsch and smiled.

“Hey Carm-sexy, why ya staring?”

“Mother is watching, Beefcake. Now smile.”

Kirsch looked up and gave a quick wave to Lilita, who smiled in return. Laura huffed and Carmilla quickly put her hand on her thigh and gave it a quick squeeze so Laura knew she was still there to be
with her and not Kirsch.

Carmilla barely listened to her father’s sermon. She was more focused on Laura and her body being practically pushed up against her side once the rest of the group joined. The last row was smaller than the pews in front of them and with six people scrunched up together there was no space for comfort. Danny sat on the far left, followed by Lafontaine, Perry, Kirsch, Carmilla and Laura. Carmilla liked being able to sit this close to Laura without getting in trouble. Carmilla exhaled and crossed her arms. She hid her left hand under her right arm and slowly started to rub Laura’s arm with her index finger. Laura looked over to Carmilla and gave her a quick smile which Carmilla returned. Carmilla looked down at Laura’s dress. It was a white sun dress with yellow flowers on it. The top of the dress cut right at the top of her breasts and because Carmilla was so close, she couldn’t help, but look down her cleavage. She bit her bottom lip, enjoying her view, still rubbing her finger up and down Laura’s arm.

Carmilla quickly noticed Henry stumbled over a few words and she quickly sat up straight. They made eye contact. Shit. I hope he didn’t notice. I mean he’s further away so there is no way he could tell where I was looking. It was just a glance. It was out of curiosity... for science. Oh man, I’ve been hanging out with the ginger nerd too much. Focus on the sermon, idiot.

She snapped back into reality when she felt Kirsch put his arm around her. She looked up at him and smiled. Weird, I usually have to tell him to do stuff. Wait, this is good. Makes it more normal. Normal is good. He should look interested in me. I wish my arm was around Laura. I want to pull her close to me and kiss her temple or her lips. Laura’s lips. They’re so smooth and light. She’s a good kisser. I wish I could kiss her now.

Laura looked up at her and nodded her head in the direction of the front of the church. Damn it, Carmilla, pay attention to your Father’s sermon.

Henry was continuing what their Sunday School class had been about. He was expressing ways for people to be good Christians and how to reach others by being good Christians. She took some mental notes on what he was saying to sweet talk him into letting her get lunch with Laura.

Before she knew it, Henry was leading them in their closing prayer. He walked down the left aisle as he normally did on the exit prayer. He did this so he could greet everyone as they left. Lilita used to make Will and Carmilla stand with him in the city, but for some reason, Henry decided they didn’t need to do that anymore and would let the kids do as they pleased.

“Carm? Are you going to ask your dad?”

“Sure thing, Laura. Just give me one sec-”

“Wilson, it’s so good to see you!” Lilita practically pushed Laura out of the way to talk to Kirsch.

“It’s good to see you too Mrs. K., even though it hasn’t been that long since I last saw you. I hope we didn’t leave too much of a mess behind.”

“Not at all. Will you be taking my daughter to lunch?”

“Uh, actually, Mother, Laura invited me to lunch. Is it okay if I go with her?”

Carmilla looked around and saw Laura on the other side of the pew talking to Lafontaine and Perry. Her smile was bright and it brought warmth to Carmilla’s heart. She stared at her.

“Carmilla!” Carmilla quickly turned to look at Lilita.

“But why not go to lunch with Wilson?” Lilita asked.
“It’s okay, Mrs. K. I actually have some homework to do because I let it pile up. Besides, I think it’s
good that Carmilla spend time with Laura. They are friends after all. I don’t want all her time to go to
me. She should hang out with her friends.”

“Please, Mother.”

“Go ask your father, even though I rather you go to lunch with Wilson than,” Lilita paused and gave
a disgusted look towards Laura, “her.”

Carmilla squeezed her hands into fists. Kirsch immediately noticed this notion and quickly took
charge of the conversation. “We’ll have lunch together at school, like we always do.” Kirsch smiled

“Correct, Kirsch.” She glanced at Laura quickly and saw her laughing at something Lafontaine said,
her back towards them. Carmilla started playing with Kirsch’s tie to give Lilita a little show.

“I’ll see you tomorrow at lunch?”

“Sure thing, Carm-se... I mean Carmilla.”

Carmilla smiled. She gave Kirsch a quick kiss to his cheek, grabbed Laura and quickly made their
way to the church doors. Laura approached Henry first.

“Great sermon, Pastor K. I agree that we can’t expect people to come to Christianity, if we aren’t
good Christians ourselves. We shouldn’t let the media and politics interfere with our Christian
beliefs.”

Did my dad say that? Oh she is just as smooth as Kirsch in impressing my parents.

Henry looked very pleased and amused by Laura’s words. “Well Laura, it’s good to know that some
of the youth actually pay attention to my sermons. I’m glad you agree. Hey, Kid.” He turned his
attention towards Carmilla.

“Hey, Pops. Great speech as always. Uh, I agree with Laura.”

“Oh, I thought you weren’t paying attention. You looked rather distracted.”

Carmilla lowered her head and thought of a lie quick. “There was a bug on the floor. It caught my
interest.”

“Okay.”

Well he definitely didn’t buy that.

“Anyway, Dad, would it be okay if I went to lunch with Laura?”

“What did your mother say?”

“That she was disappointed that I wasn’t having lunch with Kirsch.”

“Yes, that is probably what she said.”

“So, can I, oh wonderful Father of mine?” Carmilla smiled. He looked at Laura, who gave a hopeful
smile.

“Sure thing, Kid. Just be home no later than nine, for your mother’s sake.”
Carmilla lunged forward and gave Henry a hug. Laura saw the smile plastered on Henry’s face and it made her smile. Carmilla gave Henry a quick kiss on the cheek.

“Thanks, Dad. I love you.”

“I love you too, Carmilla. Now get out of here. You’re embarrassing me,” he said, while pulling at his suit and brushing off his shoulders.

Carmilla rolled her eyes and they quickly headed off to Laura’s car. Henry watched as they excitedly talked with each other. He smiled.

“What has you smiling so big, Henry?” Lilita asked. He saw Carmilla give Laura a quick kiss to her cheek, just like she had given him. He had never seen his child look so happy.

“Nothing, Dear. Carmilla just gave me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. I told her to get lost because she was embarrassing me.

Will quickly ran up to them. “Is it okay if I go to Eric’s? He wants me to try this new video game.”

“Did you finish your homework, William? I know you had some.”

“Yes, Mother. I finished it yesterday morning after we had breakfast.”

“Go, Will. Have fun.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

Everyone was out of the church and Henry was locking up. “We’re getting old Lilita. Our kids don’t need us anymore,” he said, while locking the front door of the church.

“I’ll believe that when they stop asking me for money.”

Henry laughed as he wrapped his arm around his wife. They went to the car and drove themselves home for a quiet afternoon.

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“Hey, Cupcake? Can we make a pit stop at my house so I can get out of this dress? I didn’t have time to pack anything because I struggled to get out of bed this morning.”

“Sure thing, Sweetness. Is that why you were late?”

Carmilla nodded. “School is keeping me busy with not a lot of sleep. Since we had the youth gathering yesterday, I had to get up early to help my mother clean. I lost hours. I’m just exhausted.”

“Well, I’m taking you to a secret location where will be able to take a nap after lunch. Does that sound good?”

Carmilla smiled and nodded as Laura pulled into Carmilla’s driveway. “I’ll wait here,” Laura offered.

Carmilla ran inside to change. She quickly put on an old pair of black jeans that were ripped at the knees. A Joan Jett t-shirt and her denim jacket. She threw on some old white Converse that were scuffed and dirty. She grabbed her bookbag and quickly made her way back to Laura’s jeep.

“Carm?” Laura asked as she got back into the Jeep.
“Yeah, Cupcake?”

“You always look really good in jeans and a t-shirt.”

“Thanks.” Carmilla smiled and Laura backed out, and pulled onto the main highway. Carmilla leaned over the armrest and gave Laura a kiss on the cheek. After about 30 minutes, Laura was driving further than Carmilla had expected.

“Uh, Cupcake, where are we going?”

“To a quiet place that I used to go to when I was little.”

“Okay. How far away is it?”

Laura got off the highway, onto a side road that was surrounded by woods. Carmilla didn’t like the woods and started to look around.

“We’re almost there, Sweetness.”

Carmilla exhaled. Laura turned down an old dirt road. It looked just like Kirsch’s driveway, but she knew it wasn’t. They had gone in the opposite direction. They pulled up to small old cabin and a run down looking barn that hadn’t been touched in ages. It gave Carmilla the chills.

“Laura, this looks like a place where people die in horror films.”

“Oh calm down wuss, it’s my dad’s cabin.”

“When was the last time he was here?”

“When I was around 10, as far as I know. That was our last family trip here, but I think he comes once a year and just doesn’t tell me.”

Laura’s voice was small, and Carmilla noticed right away she was talking about her mother.

“We don’t talk about Laura’s mom.” She could hear Lafontaine’s words in her head. What do I do?

Laura was still quiet as she sat in the driver’s seat, staring at the cabin. Carmilla did the only thing she could think to do. She took Laura’s hands in hers and gave them a quick squeeze. Laura looked at her and smiled.

“Do you want to go inside or just find somewhere else to eat?” Carmilla asked. She was concerned.

“It doesn’t matter. Whatever you want to do, Carmilla.”

“Laura?”

She could see Laura’s eyes starting to water. She quickly got out of the car and ran to the driver’s side. She opened Laura’s door and pulled her into a hug.

“I’m sorry, Carm. I just wanted a place where we could have privacy. A place where no-one would bother us or be in our business. A place where we wouldn’t be looked at if I held your hand. Just some simple quiet time where I could kiss you if I felt like it or sit in your lap or snuggle into your side. I thought I could go in there, but I just don’t think I can. I thought this would be a good place because then it really would just be you and me, but now, I don’t think I can muster the courage to go in there. I thought I could, but clearly not. I’m sorry.”
“Laura, I would love to be able to have all that privacy too, but it’s not what’s important to me right now. I just want to be sitting somewhere with you and talking. Just being with you, makes me happier than I have been in years.”

Laura kept her head down and Carmilla pulled her closer to her. “Come on, take me to a restaurant and you can tell me all about the torture I’m about to go through for spirit week.”

Laura laughed and had a weak smile on her face. Carmilla smiled and wiped the few remaining tears off her cheek. She gave her a quick peck to her lips and made her way back to the passenger seat.

“I’m sorry, Carm.”

“Do you want to talk about it? About what happened here or what it used to be like here?”

“Soon, I promise. It just… it takes a lot to talk about my mom. Hopefully, one day, I can bring you back here. It actually is a nice cabin.”

“It looks like it, but the horror movie vibe is freaking me out,” Carmilla added. Laura seemed sad again, “Cupcake?”

“Yeah?” Laura looked over to Carmilla.

“I’m really hungry. I missed breakfast,” Carmilla whined.

Laura laughed. “Okay, you big baby. Let’s go. There’s a diner down the road.”

Lunch went by quickly with barely any talking. They mostly just looked at each other and smiled or played footsie under the table, laughing. Once their food came, Laura munched on her salad, while Carmilla scarfed down her burger and fries, as if she had never eaten before in her life.

“Calm down there Honey or you’ll give yourself a stomach ache,” the waitress said, looking at Carmilla, as she refilled their waters. Carmilla just smiled and continued to eat.

The next thing Carmilla knew, she had a full belly as they pulled into Laura’s driveway.

“Dad?” Laura asked, as she opened the door.

“In the kitchen, Laura.”

Laura’s house was much smaller than Carmilla’s, but it felt nice and cozy. There was a staircase to her left and a small living room to her right. The kitchen was straight back and Carmilla followed Laura in that direction. Rich was standing in his uniform, eating a sandwich.

“Hey, Honey. How was lunch?”

“It was good, Dad.”

He looked up to see Carmilla standing in the doorway. “So, this is what the real Carmilla Karnstein looks like. I had a feeling dresses weren’t your thing.” He beamed at her and she laughed.

“How could you tell?” Carmilla asked with a little sarcasm in her tone.

“You just look more comfortable in this than I have ever seen you before.”

She smiled. “Guilty.”
He laughed. “Well, what are you guys planning on doing?”

“Laura, here, is dragging me into Spirit Week with her. I have no say in the matter at all.”

“You agreed,” Laura said, pulling cookies out of the cabinet.

“Don’t let her boss you around, Carmilla. She’s good at that.”

“Hey!” Laura exclaimed, bumping her hip hard into Rich’s leg. Carmilla just laughed while Rich tried to act like his small daughter’s hip actually hurt him.

“Alright, well I’m off to work. Have fun with that Carmilla.”

“I’ll try, sir. Have a good work day.”

He smiled and looked down at Laura. “I’ll see you tonight, Honey.”

Carmilla noticed that Laura looked sad again. “Promise?” Laura whispered, looking up into her father’s eyes.

“Just like I promise every shift.” He smiled weakly at her and she nodded.

“I love you, Laura.”

“I love you too, Dad. Be safe.”

He kissed the top of her head. “I always am. Now give your old man his good luck hug.”

She smiled and hugged her dad.

He patted Carmilla’s shoulder as he passed her and she gave him a shy smile.

“Have fun you two. Don’t tear down my house, please.”

And with that he exited the house. Laura turned and smiled at Carmilla, but it wasn’t the smile that brought warmth to her heart. It was hollow. She moved over to Laura and hugged her.

“You okay, Cupcake?”

Laura just nodded and gave Carmilla a kiss on the cheek. “Just an emotional day or something. Who knows, it’s probably PMS. Let’s go upstairs.”

Carmilla nodded and held Laura’s hand, intertwining their fingers immediately. Laura looked down and smiled before making her way up the staircase.

Laura cleared her throat. “So, my dad’s room is the first room to right at the top of the stairs. Then straight from the top of the stairs is our study. Next to that is the bathroom and then down the hall and practically across from my dad’s room, is my room.”

Laura led Carmilla to her bedroom door. Carmilla noticed the cute construction paper on it that said, “Laura’s room” in sparkling blue gel paint. It had stickers of daisies and animals on it. She smiled and couldn’t keep in her light chuckled.

“Hey, don’t laugh at me. I made it when I was 10 and I have never had the heart to take it down,” Laura said.
“I’m not laughing at you Cupcake.”

“You’re smirking though, Sweetness. What if I just-”

Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla lightly. She wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s waist bringing her closer to her. Carmilla hummed, deepening the kiss. They heard the front door open and jumped apart.

“Sorry, just got forgot my wallet. I know, I know, I was a cop who was driving without his licence,” he yelled, from the bottom of the stairs.

“Laura, will you check my dresser?”

She smiled at Carmilla and then moved to his room. “Nevermind, I found it. I’ll see you later Honey Bear.” And he closed the door.

“Honey Bear?” Carmilla asked.

“What? He’s called me that since I was a little girl. What does your dad call you?”

“Kid.”

Laura lightly laughed and opened her bedroom door. The walls were a light tint of sky blue. There were white clouds painted all around it. It was a small room, but just like the rest of the space, it felt homely. The bed had a yellow cover over it, with a small white bed side table next to it. She had a small desk that looked out the window and a white bookshelf. Carmilla was not fond of white, but to her, it suited Laura.

“Well, this is my room.”

“It’s very cute, Cupcake. Very you.”

“Are you making fun of me?” Laura asked, coming to stand in front of Carmilla.

Carmilla’s heart skipped a beat, looking down to Laura’s lips. “No, ma’am.”

“Good.”

Laura gave Carmilla a quick peck. “I would hate having to punish you for that,” Laura whispered against her lips.

Carmilla exhaled slowly, trying to calm her breathing. Wow, that was hot. I wonder what she’d do to me? Carmilla quickly shook her head at the ideas that were coming to her mind and just stood in the middle of the room. Laura grabbed her laptop and sat down on her bed, looking at Carmilla. They made eye contact.

“Uh, where should I sit?” Carmilla asked, taking her shoes off.

“Next to me, Silly.”

“I’m not silly, Laura.”

“Okay. Next to me, Ms. Broody. Better?”

Carmilla smirked. “Very funny, Cupcake.”
“Come here, Sweetness,” Laura said, patting the bed beside her.

She laid down next to Laura, who was sitting with her back against the headboard. She brought up the school’s website.

“So, spirit week… let’s take a look at these days.”

Carmilla could tell Laura was excited as she started to dread her decision.

“Tell me, why am I doing this again?”

“Because you blew me off to study with Kirsch,” Laura said, with a hint of sarcasm.

Carmilla rolled her eyes and sighed deeply. “I didn’t blow you off, Cupcake. I had to study. I’m terrible at math. How many times do I have to explain that?”

“Carm, don’t get snarky. I was kidding. You agreed to it because I have a pretty face and you felt bad for having to study so much.” She looked at Carmilla and batted her eyelashes.

“Well,” Carmilla paused for a moment and then smirked, “You do have a pretty face.”

Laura smiled and Carmilla lifted herself up on her elbows so she could kiss Laura. Laura lowered her head, rubbed her nose against Carmilla’s and then quickly went back to her computer, leaving Carmilla with nothing.

“Oh good! Here it is.”

“Tease,” Carmilla mumbled.

“What?”

“I said, tell me please. Tell me what the days are and the pain I’m about to experiment.”

“Uh huh, sure.” Laura squinted at Carmilla, but smiled. Carmilla smirked and made a hand motion telling Laura to continue. Laura looked back at the computer.

“So, Monday is twin day, Tuesday is army day, Wednesday is celebrity day, Thursday is tacky tourist day and Friday is school colors day for the pep rally.”

“And what will I be wearing this week?” Carmilla asked, sounding bored and unenthusiastic.

Laura got up and put some clothes into Carmilla’s bookbag. “This is what you’ll be wearing tomorrow. You cannot look until you get home.”

“I’m not sure if I’m nervous, scared, or excited.”

“Now, do you have any army pants?” Laura asked, ignoring Carmilla.

“Oh, that would be a negative, Lieutenant.”

“It’s Captain to you, Ms. Karnstein.” Laura winked.

“Pardon me, Madam. Captain Hollis, I do not have army pants.”

Laura grabbed a pair from her closet and stuffed them into Carmilla’s bag.

“How do you know those will fit?” Carmilla asked.
“Carm, we’re practically the same size. They might be like a size too big, but I’m sure you have a black belt in your wardrobe somewhere. Now, we don’t need to worry about celebrity day, I’ll text you details on what to wear the night before. I can give you tacky tourist stuff Wednesday night. And spirit day. Do you have anything navy?”

“I’m sure I can find something,” Carmilla answered, looking through Netflix on Laura’s computer. “Now, can we just cuddle up and watch a movie? I’m sleepy.”

“Fine,” Laura exhaled. “But I want to get comfy first.”

Laura went to her dresser and pulled out some sweatpants and a t-shirt. Carmilla noticed Laura struggling with the zipper on her dress. “Carm, will you help me?”

Carmilla exhaled slowly as Laura backed up to the bed. This made her nervous.

“Oh, sure.” She quickly stood and started to undo Laura’s zipper. She ran her fingertips along Laura’s back as she pulled the zipper down. She could see the goosebumps rising on Laura’s back and arms from her touch. “I’ll give you some privacy,” Carmilla mumbled.

Carmilla quickly stepped out into the hallway and closed Laura’s door. She waited while looking at pictures of Laura and her dad that were hanging on the wall. There was one picture of Laura when she couldn’t have been older than 3 in a woman’s arms. This must be her. She had light brown hair, the same color as Laura’s. Laura also had her smile. Carmilla noted the uniform the woman was wearing and the big smile on Laura’s face as she looked at her mother. I’ve never seen her smile that big. I wonder what happened to her. The rest of the pictures were just of Laura or Laura and Rich. She smiled. Laura opened her door.

“You were a cute little cupcake.” Carmilla smiled, leaning against an empty space on the wall.

“Making fun of me again, Sweetness?”

“Absolutely not. It’s cute. You’re cute.” She pulled Laura into her arms and wrapped her arms around her waist. Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders and smiled. She leaned in for a kiss, which Carmilla happily returned. They kissed for a little bit before Laura pulled back. “Let’s watch a movie, Carm.”

Carmilla nodded and followed Laura back into her room. She lay on the bed and Laura quickly laid down next to her, cuddling up into her side. Laura selected Footloose and Carmilla didn’t object. Before they both knew it, they had fallen asleep. Carmilla’s arm firmly wrapped around Laura’s shoulder, the other over her head. Laura had fallen asleep curled into Carmilla’s side, her arm around her waist and her head in the crook of Carmilla’s neck.

Carmilla woke with a small jump. Laura shifted, mumbled and pulled herself closer to Carmilla. Carmilla looked down at Laura. She looks so cute. I haven’t slept that well in a while. Laura moved and stretched before opening her eyes and looking at Carmilla. She smiled and rested her head on the pillow so she was face to face with Carmilla. Carmilla turned on her side and leaned into Laura. They kissed for a while, not letting things get too heated. Laura was concerned from the last night, when she had straddled Carmilla’s hips. They stayed on their sides before Carmilla broke the kiss.

“I think I should be heading home, Cupcake.”

“You’re sure, Sweetness?” Laura asked as she leaned in for another kiss.

“Uh huh,” Carmilla said, kissing Laura more. They kissed a few more minutes and then stared into each other’s eyes. Laura chuckled and gave Carmilla another quick kiss before sitting up. Carmilla
followed as they made their way downstairs and to Laura’s Jeep.

It was a quick drive over to Carmilla’s house.

“Thanks for the ride, Cupcake.”

“Any time, Sweetness.”

Carmilla checked and didn’t see anyone looking out at the driveway. She kissed Laura goodnight and opened the door.

“Don’t forget to check your bag before you go to sleep, but no texts. I just want to see you wearing it tomorrow for school.” Laura smiled.

“Will you be wearing the same thing?” Carmilla asked.

“Same thing, but different house.”

“What does that mean?”

“I’ll think you’ll understand it when you get to your room. Just make sure to wear a black skirt, which I’m sure you have and a white button up.”

“Now, I’m nervous,” Carmilla said, as she got out of the car and headed to the driver’s side.

“Don’t be. Goodnight, Carm.”

“Goodnight, Cupcake.”

Carmilla leant in and gave Laura another quick kiss. Then she made her way inside. She could hear a football game coming from the living room. Will was doing a dance.

“Let me guess, another touchdown?”

“Hey, Kid,” Henry said, as Carmilla plopped down beside him.

“Carmilla, don’t plop on the furniture.” Lilita gave her a stern look.

“Sorry, Mother.”

“If you’re hungry, there are some sandwiches in the kitchen along with chips.”

“Thank you, Mother.”

Carmilla got up and made her way to the kitchen. “Carmilla, will you bring me some chips?” Will asked. She noticed his eyes did not move from the television.

“Get them yourself, Loser.”

“Carmilla, get your brother some chips!” She rolled her eyes at Lilita’s voice.

She came back and almost through a plate of chips on Will’s lap as she dug into her ham sandwich. “Did you have a good time with Laura?” Henry asked.

“I did, Dad. Thanks for letting me go.”

“Of course.” Henry smiled at Carmilla.
“What did you guys do?” he asked.

“Well we went to lunch at this little diner outside of town. Then we went back to her house, talked about spirit week and then watched a movie.”

“Spirit week? Are you telling me, Carmilla Karnstein, my quiet, keep to herself daughter who hates anyone with a pulse is participating in spirit week?”

“Hey don’t blame me, Dad, blame Laura. She’s making me do it. Tomorrow is twin day, so we’ll be going dressed a like. I don’t know what it is yet, she just put stuff in my bookbag and told me what to wear it with tomorrow.”

“And why aren’t you doing this with Wilson?” Lilita asked. “It would be so cute if you two did it together.”

“Actually Mother, Kirsch is going to be my partner during spirit week,” Will said, trying to help Carmilla out.

“And you didn’t think you should suggest that Carmilla be with Wilson?”

“Well it is kind of customary for guys on the football team to pair together. It shows how strong we are as a team. He also told me Laura and Carmilla were going to partner up and if I wanted to be his partner. A whole rival against them kind of thing.”

Carmilla looked at Will. He winked at her before turning back to Lilita. “He’s very competitive, Mother. He thought it would be fun to go against them to see who has the better outfits. Speaking of which, who are you two going to be tomorrow?” Will asked Carmilla.

“I haven’t looked yet.”

“That should be interesting,” Will laughed. “Laura has very interesting tastes.”

“I know, it’s why I’m worried,” Carmilla said.

They finished watching the game and all headed upstairs to their respectable bedrooms. As soon as Carmilla closed her door, she opened her bookbag. She pulled the army pants out and saw a small note on top of the other clothes.

When did she do this?

It read, “Hey Carm. I know this dressing up thing really isn’t your style and you’re probably going to hate me when see what I have planned for tomorrow, but thanks for participating with me. It means a lot to me. Sleep tight, Sweetness.”

Carmilla smiled and put down the note. She pulled out a long black cape of some sort. “What the-?” She realized it was actually a robe. “Okay. I’m already not liking this.”

Next she pulled out a wooden stick. “Oh no, this is a wand.”

She pulled everything out of her bag. She had a blue and silver scarf and tie, followed by a pair of knee socks. The last thing was a golden badge that read “Prefect.”

“Oh you’ve got to be kidding me, Cupcake!” Carmilla groaned, looking up at the ceiling.

Chapter End Notes
My editor is out of town and will not bother her. There are probably a lot of extra commas which I apologize for.
Spirit Week

Chapter Summary

Posting a day early this week because I'll be out of town tomorrow!

Enjoy the fluffiness of this chapter guys because the angst is coming

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 1: Twins Day

Carmilla awoke that Monday morning full of dread. She couldn’t believe Laura was going to make her dress up as a character from Harry Potter. Sure, she had read the books and enjoyed them, but that didn’t mean she wanted to dress up as a character. She laid in her bed, staring at the ceiling. There was a light knock on her door.

“Get up, Kid. Don’t make me get the hose.”

“I’m not a dog,” Carmilla snarled at the door.

She got out of bed anyway, and made her way to the bathroom. She took a quick shower and got dressed. She wore what Laura told her to. She wore her black skirt, white button up and knee socks. She didn’t have any nice flats, so she chose to wear her Converse. Everything else, she left in her bag.

She made her way downstairs and into the kitchen. She grabbed a bowl and headed towards to table to make a bowl of cereal. She had started eating when she looked up and saw Will standing in full Quidditch uniform. Carmilla immediately started to laugh.

“Shut up!”

“Will?”

“Sorry, Dad. Carmilla’s laughing at me.”

“Why is she-” Henry started to speak and then froze. He got a huge smile on his face and tried his hardest not to laugh.

“It looks good, Son.”

“Thank you, Dad. Kirsch is going to pick me up and he will be wearing the same.”

“Oh is he taking you and Carmilla to school?” Lilita walked into the kitchen, dressed in business attire.

“Mother, Laura is taking me to school,” Carmilla said, going back to her cereal.

Lilita was about to say something when she got a stern look from Henry. There was a quick knock at the door and Henry went to answer it.
“Good morning, Kirsch.”
“Good morning, Pastor K. Is Will here?”
“Where else would he be?”

Kirsch walked into the kitchen and Henry followed. Kirsch went to Carmilla first and gave a quick kiss to her forehead. Carmilla tried to act like she enjoyed it, but she knew her body went stiff.

“Morning, Love,” Kirsch said, smiling down at her.

“Morning.” She smiled.

Kirsch turned around to see Will standing in his Quidditch robes. “Bro! We look amazing.”

“Yeah, we do!” Will fist bumped Kirsch.

“Good morning, Wilson.”

“Oh, my apologies Mrs. K. I didn’t see you. Good morning to you, too.”

“Would you like some cereal?” she asked, wearing a charming smile.

“Sure thing, Mrs. K. Thank you.”

He took the seat next to Carmilla, when there was another knock on the door. Henry made his way to the door again.

“Good morning, Laura.”

“Good morning, Pastor Karnstein. Is Carmilla ready?”

“She’s just finished up breakfast. Come on in.”

Laura slowly walked into the kitchen. Look at this dork. This very cute and sexy dork. Laura was almost identical to Carmilla, except she was wearing her robe. Hufflepuff. Why am I not surprised?

“Hey Laura.”

Laura looked up at Carmilla. “Hey, Carm. Where is your robe?”

“It’s upstairs, Laura. Don’t worry.”

Carmilla quickly finished her bowl of cereal and made her way to the sink. She was about to just leave the bowl and wash it later when Lilita looked at her. She quickly washed the bowl and put it on the dish rack.

“I’ll get my stuff and be right back.”

Laura nodded. As she made her way upstairs she could hear Kirsch, Laura, Will and Henry all talking together. She quickly grabbed everything she needed and headed back down the stairs. She didn’t know how to tie a tie so she just left it hanging around her neck.

“Ready,” she said as she stepped off the last step.

“Oh no you’re not, Carm. What’s up with your tie?”
Carmilla shrugged. “I don’t know how to tie one.”

Laura smiled and fixed Carmilla’s tie for her. Carmilla looked at Laura suggestively. “My dad taught me. I have to do his ties all the time.”

“Makes sense.”

“Now, the robe Carmilla.”

Carmilla’s cheeks started to blush as she let Laura pull it out of her bag. Laura helped her get her arms in the sleeve and put it on her shoulders. She took the “Prefect” badge and pinned it to the robe. Will walked out and started laughing. Carmilla sneered at him, but it only made him laugh more. Henry followed and just like he did with Will, tried to hold in on his laughter.

“I’ve got to get a picture of this,” he said. “Everyone in front of the fireplace!”

The four of them made their way in front of the fireplace and all smiled. Lilila did not partake in these festivities. She thought they were a little immature and she refused to be a part of it.

“Kirsch and Laura, I think you guys should come over every morning this week. We’ll make you breakfast and then that way, we can get pictures of these crazy outfits.”

“Sounds good, Pastor K. I’m always down for a free breakfast,” Kirsch said, smiling.

“Thank you, Pastor Karnstein,” Laura added.

“Alright, Teens. Get to school!”

They all hauled out of the house, saying goodbye and made their way to their specific cars. Carmilla followed Laura and got in the passenger seat. They were quiet for a moment before Laura pulled the car over.

“What are you doing, Cupcake?”

“I just wanted to say thanks.”

“Why?”

“I can tell you’re uncomfortable.”

Carmilla shifted. “It’s fine,” she mumbled.

“We can change, if you want,” Laura offered.

“Cupcake, I told you I would do this and I’m going to do this.”

Laura smiled. Carmilla leant in and they shared a gentle kiss before Laura got back on the road. The fact was, Carmilla was nervous. She tried to keep up this cool persona and this was going to kill it. *Is this worth it? She said we could change. I could get out of this.* Carmilla looked over at Laura and smiled. *Yeah, it’s worth it.*

They pulled into school and Carmilla immediately relaxed. Apparently everyone took this very seriously and she saw people dressed the same in all kinds of outfits. They quickly made their way inside and found the ginger squad. Perry and Lafontaine were dressed up as mad scientists. Betty and Danny decided to dress in match soccer uniforms. There were a lot of students from Hogwarts at school, some more intricate than her owns.
Carmilla waited for Laura by her locker before they had lunch together. She leaned against it, playing a game on her phone when a figure approached her.

“Well, well, well,” Mattie said, with a light chuckle.

Carmilla turned to see Mattie. She was dressed in business attire, including black stiletto heels. Carmilla didn’t say anything. She pushed herself off the lockers and moved down so Mattie could get in.

“Thank you,” Mattie said and Carmilla nodded. Mattie quickly switched her books and notebooks and closed her locker. She turned to Carmilla.

“I just hope you know, I would never out you.”

“Says the girl who threatened to out me.”

“Says the girl who hasn’t said a word to anyone about it. Look, I was just threatening Laura so she wouldn’t run, but I would never purposely out you. Laura is right, just so you know. She knows my deepest darkest secrets, as I know hers, along with many others.”

“So why aren’t you friends anymore?”

“Oh Kitty cat. There’s so much about your Laura Hollis that you don’t know.”

“I think I know Laura pretty well, thanks.” Carmilla went back to her phone and texted Laura to see where she was.

“Well, I do know one thing.”

Carmilla looked up. “What’s that?”

“It’s cute how she has you wrapped around her little finger.” Mattie booped Carmilla’s nose with her on finger, smiled and walked away. Carmilla didn’t have time to think, she just smiled when she felt a hug from behind. She shifted to see Laura.

“Hey, Sweetness!”

“Hey, Cupcake!”

“Lunch?” Laura asked.

“Please.”

The rest of the school day went by rather quickly and Carmilla had a ton of homework to do. Laura drove her home, but stopped a few houses down from Carmilla’s.

“Thanks again for doing this Carm.”

“I said I would and I did. And if you must know, Cupcake, I actually had fun dressing up in this.”

Laura smiled and nodded her head towards the backseat. Carmilla practically jumped into the back, pulling Laura on top of her. Laura straddled her lap and stilled.

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“Is this okay? Me sitting on you like this?”
“Why wouldn’t it be?”

“Well, the last time I did, I was at your house and started to have that panic attack.”

Carmilla remembered what Laura was discussing, but shook her head. “It’s okay, Laura. Just doing that on my bed brought back some bad memories…” Carmilla didn’t want to talk anymore. She didn’t want to think about the feeling of that girl being pulled off her lap, the sting of her mother’s hand on her face. She leaned in and started kissing Laura. It was rough and sloppy instead of the usual kisses they had. Laura stopped her.

“Are you okay?”

Carmilla just nodded going back in to kiss Laura, but she was stopped again.

“What was the memory?”

“It’s nothing. Now can we kiss?” Carmilla leaned in again and tried to kiss Laura. Laura moved her face to cause Carmilla to kiss her cheek. Fine. If I can’t kiss her lips, I’ll kiss somewhere else.

Carmilla leaned in and started to kiss Laura’s neck. She could feel Laura’s breathing deepening at the sensation of her lips. Laura stopped trying to stop Carmilla and enjoyed the feeling of Carmilla’s lips. Carmilla licked her way up to Laura’s ear and tugged on Laura’s earlobe with her teeth. Laura hissed at the sensation before pulling Carmilla in for another kiss.

“This topic isn’t over just because you’re good at kissing,” Laura said.

Carmilla shifted so Laura was on her back in the backseat, Carmilla still on top of her. She slowly slipped her tongue into Laura’s mouth. The kissing beginning to get more and more heated. Deep ragged breaths and light moans were the only sounds to fill the car. Laura hugged Carmilla’s body close to her as she smiled into their kiss. Their deep kisses became light, feather kisses, as they tried to catch their breath. The windows had fogged over a little bit and they both smiled at each other. They kissed a few more times before letting themselves calm down. They climbed back into the front seat and Laura drove Carmilla home.

“I’ll see you tomorrow morning, Cupcake.”

“Bye, Carm.” Laura pulled out of the driveway while Carmilla made her way to the door.

**Day Two: Army Day**

Carmilla woke up to a slight poke to her cheek. She huffed and rolled over, pulling the covers over her head. She heard her door close and sighed. More sleep. Sleep good.

There was another poke to her cheek and then a tap on her nose. Carmilla groaned, but kept her eyes closed. Then she felt her bed shifting, the comforter being pulled down and hands slipping around her waist. She smiled as she pulled Laura closer to her.

“Come on, Sweetness. We need to get up.”

“No. Sleep. Sleep good.”

Laura laughed. *How is she so cute when she’s not even trying?* Laura thought. There was a loud knock on the door and they both jumped. “Carmilla, up, now!” Henry yelled through the door.
“I’m awake,” she yelled.

She rolled over and looked at Laura. “Morning, Cupcake.”

“Come on, it’s army day!”

Carmilla sat up and Laura started dragging her out of the bed. She reluctantly held on for as long as she could before Laura gave a strong tug and pulled her to the floor. They started laughing as Carmilla tackled Laura, to get her down on the floor.

“Because of that, you get a smelly good morning kiss.”

“No, thank you.”

“You don’t get a choice.”

Carmilla started to kiss Laura. Laura could have cared less about morning breath as soon as Carmilla’s lips met hers. There was another knock on the door. Carmilla quickly got up.

“We have to be more careful, Laura.”

“I’m sorry, Carm. You did top me though and kiss me.”

“True, but still. You look adorable.”

“Get dressed. I’ll meet you downstairs.”

Carmilla gave her a small peck and then started getting ready. She put on the army pants that Laura let her borrow and they surprisingly fit very well. She put on a black crew neck t-shirt, a black belt and her black combat boots. She put her hair up into a messy bun and grabbed her aviator sunglasses. She looked in the mirror one more and time and made her way downstairs. She could already hear Kirsch in the kitchen talking to Henry. She smiled and made her way to the living room. Laura stood up and Carmilla took in her outfit. She wore brown boots with a dark brown shirt, a sandy brown belt and hat. She pulled a black hat out of her pocket and handed it over to Carmilla. She smiled and took it.

They made their way to the kitchen. Lilita made them all breakfast even though she was against this silliness of spirit week. She still had a certain demeanor to uphold and she would never look miserable in front of guests. They made their way around the table. Carmilla was about to sit down next to Laura, when Kirsch cleared his throat. She looked at Laura who seemed to deflate a little as she made her way over to sit next to Kirsch, across from Laura.

She tapped her foot against Laura’s, causing her to look up. Carmilla smiled at her and Laura sent a small smile back. Before they left, Kirsch had brought along black face paint. He put a line under both his eyes and did the same for Will.

“Kirsch, can we do that too?”

“I don’t know Laura. I chose this for Will and I… hmmm?”

Carmilla grabbed the face paint out of his hand. “Hey, not cool Carm-sexy!”

“Relax, Beefcake. You know you wouldn’t say no to me or Laura.” Lilita looked at her and smiled. She saw what she considered to be flirting between the two, but Carmilla was just trying to get the face paint to get the pout off of Laura’s lips.
They both applied black lines under their eyes and headed out the door. Will and Kirsch drove off and Carmilla stopped Laura.

“I have an idea. We can look more rugged than Will and Kirsch,” Carmilla said.

“How?”

Carmilla went to the bushes in front of her house and grabbed some dirt. She took a handful and started to rub it against her shirt and arms. She even rubbed a little on her face.

“Carm, I don’t like to be dirty.”

“Laura, you drive a Jeep.”

“Which I keep very clean, might I add.”

Carmilla grabbed another handful of dirt and started walking towards Laura.

“Come on, Cupcake. It’s just a little dirt.”

“Carm, stop.”

Laura was backing up, but she had a smile on her face. Carmilla was smiling brightly and started to walk a little faster towards Laura. Laura took off running and Carmilla was quick to follow. She through the clump of dirt in her hand at Laura, who started laughing. Carmilla was also starting to laugh and she grabbed another clump as she grabbed Laura’s wrist and rubbed it up her arm.

“Carmilla.”

“I’ll wash your clothes, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, adding more dirt to her shirt and neck.

“And what about my body? Who’s going to wash that?”

Carmilla stopped and her eyes went wide.

“Uh… I mean… I guess…”

“Relax, Sweetness, it was a joke.” With that Laura slammed two handfuls of dirt onto Carmilla’s head. Luckily the cap blocked most of it from getting in her hair.

“Oh you are in so much trouble,” Carmilla said, chasing after Laura.

“Girls?!” Henry’s voice boomed and the both stopped. They were panting and smiling at each other.

“Time to get to school before you’re late or my wife comes out here and scolds you both.”

“Sorry, Dad.”

“Sorry, Pastor Karnstein.”

They made their way to Laura’s Jeep, when Henry stopped them.

“Give me a hug, Kid.”

He pulled them both towards him and dropped a mound of dirt on both their heads. He started
laughing so hard at their shocked faces. Carmilla grabbed another handful and threw it as hard as she could at Henry. He just laughed as it hit his side. They could hear the heels clicking onto the porch, but didn’t stop. Laura got Carmilla and Henry, who had both stopped by the porch.

“I got you both-”

“Are you we done playing games, Ms. Hollis?”

“Oh. I um, I’m sorry Mrs. Karnstein.”

“You should be. My daughter has appearances to keep up, and now she’s filthy.”

“It was my idea, Mother. We have to look better than Will and Kirsch.”

“No, I do not want to hear it. Get inside-”

“Lilita stop. Girls go to school. I’ll see you later Kid and I’ll see you tomorrow morning Laura.”

“Sure thing, Pastor Karnstein. I’m sorry for the trouble I caused,” Laura said, looking down.

He walked over to her and smiled. “No reason to be sorry. Now you look like you’ve been on the field all day and to just make sure…” He patted her back and she could feel more dirt being smeared against her back, “…now you’re covered.”

Laura smiled and Carmilla honked the horn.

“Thanks Pastor.”

“Anytime Laura.” He pointed to Carmilla. “Just keep her happy.”

She paused and saw something in his eyes, but just smiled. “Of course I will.”

And with that she walked to the Jeep, and pulled out of the driveway. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand and intertwined their fingers. Lilita didn’t say anything as the car drove off. She went inside and slammed the door. Henry decided to just stay outside for a while. Probably for the best. he thought.

Later that night, as they gathered around their dinner table. Will and Carmilla both excitedly shared the stories of their day.

“Apparently whenever someone said ‘Crawl’, we all had to get down on the ground and crawl on our forearms down the hall.”

“That was a lot of fun,” Carmilla added.

“That’s because you said it every chance you got,” Will added.

“Can you blame me? It was either call it and watch everyone do it or someone call it and have to do it. I saved myself from crawling on that disgusting floor.”

“Wait. I heard someone was calling it but using different tones. Was that you?”

He lifted his hand for a high five and she quickly slapped his hand. “Thanks, Bro.”

“Well, I think that is enough of that.” Lilita finally spoke and looked at the both of them. Carmilla still had dirt smudge all over her and Will’s face paint was smeared down his cheeks. “Are you finished?”

They both nodded at their empty plates. “Good. Upstairs for homework and then Carmilla please shower. I don’t want have to clear up dirty sheets. Also William, make sure to wash your face.”

“Yes, Mother.” They both said. They rinsed of their plates and placed them in the dishwater. Going up the stairs and to their rooms. Before William closed his door, he made eye contact with Carmilla. She smiled at him.

“Good night, Will.”

“Night, Carm.”

**Day 3: Celebrity Day**

“No! There is no way in Hell I’m wearing that!” Carmilla said at the thing Laura was holding.

“Come on, Carm. It matches me and it’s cute!”

“No. Absolutely not. I’m already in a white long sleeve shirt for you and khakis. I can’t wear that.”

“You said you would Sweetness and you’re going to.”

“Laura,” Carmilla whined.

“Nope, now arms up.”

Carmilla pouted as Laura stood in front of her, in her room dressed, as a Hostess Cupcake, with the white icing swirl down the front of her costume. Laura kissed Carmilla’s small pout, but waited for her to lift her arms.

“Carmilla, arms.”

Carmilla huffed and put her arms in the air. Laura slide the yellowish color down Carmilla’s body and stepped back. Carmilla’s head was barely out of the hole for her face when Laura started to laugh.

“Okay. That’s it. No way.”

“No, Carm. It’s cute and we match.”

“Laura, you’re making me go as a Twinkie. I’m a giant Twinkie.”

“And it is adorable. Now come on!”

“I’m not going downstairs.”

“Oh yes you are. Now let’s go!”

Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand and pulled her downstairs. Kirsch and Will immediately started
laughing. Lilita rolled her eyes and headed back into the kitchen. Henry could barely control his laughter. His sides were shaking so hard, but he didn’t make a sound.

“I have to get a picture of this,” Kirsch said, holding out his phone.

“Take a photo and I will break your phone in half,” Carmilla said, glaring at Kirsch. He quickly put his phone back in his pocket. She heard a shutter sound to her right to see Henry’s phone out and pointed at her.

“Dad!”

“Kid, I know you wouldn’t let me take a picture, but this masterpiece is too much not to have a memory of. Laura, thank you.”

Laura smiled. “You’re welcome, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Laura the Cupcake and Carmilla the Twinkie. I’ve got to hand it to you Laura. I never thought anyone could get Carmilla to do something like this,” Will said, laughing again.

“Shut up, Will.”

“Carmilla! We don’t say that!” She heard Lilita yell from the kitchen.

“Sorry, Mother.” She turned to look at Will and Kirsch. “Well who are you supposed to be anyways?”

Kirsch was wearing a black t-shirt under a leather jacket that said Hall. He had white pants on and black converses. Will had on a black shirt that read Oates. Over his shirt was a leopard print button down and he wore pink colored jeans. He also had on black converses.

“We’re Hall and Oates. Oh Bro, the mustache,” Kirsch said. He pulled out a fake thick mustache and applied it to Will’s upper lip.

This cause them all to laugh, which William shook off. “Whatever, better than being a giant Hostess snack.”

Carmilla sneered. “That’s it!” She quickly took the Twinkie costume off. “I’m not wearing it until we get to school.”

“Fine,” Laura huffed.

Carmilla didn’t talk on the ride to school. She was fuming and couldn’t believe she had to wear this. She felt nervous and didn’t want people to laugh at her. She felt Laura’s hand in hers as she continued to drive. It calmed her a little bit, but she still didn’t like the idea. It wasn’t until they were pulling into school and seeing everyone else dressed up in all kinds of costumes, that she felt more comfortable with the idea. Especially when Danny and Betty came up to them at break.

“Hey Laura. Love the Cupcake look. Fangface.”

“Xena.”

“I’m honestly surprised Laura managed to get you into this.”

“You and me both,” Carmilla said, laughing. “What are you two supposed to be anyway?”

Danny was dressed up a cowgirl, while Betty was dressed up as a cowboy. Danny had on a bright
red cowboy hat and Betty’s was brown. They’re boots matched their hats. “Seriously, you don’t know who we are?” Carmilla shook her head.

“Carm. They’re Woody and Jessie from Toy Story.”

“Oh. Ohhh! Now I see it. Sorry I haven’t seen that movie since I was a kid.”

“Okay, well that’s going to change soon,” Laura said, giving Carmilla a pointed look.

“It’s one of Laura’s favorite movie series,” Danny said.

“Great.”

“Hey, Twinkie,” Lafontaine said, as she walked out.

“Didn’t you already dress as a mad scientist this week?” Carmilla asked, taking in the white coat.

“Ah, wait until you see my counterpart.”

A mummified version of Perry walked up as she tried to keep a straight face.

“Why am I not surprised?” Laura asked.

“Why would you ever be surprised? Perry is my Monster for the day.”

“And Carmilla, you’re a giant Twinkie?”

“Yes, Perry. My little Cupcake over here likes to torture me.”

“It is fun,” Laura added.

The bell rang as they made their way to class. Laura was going to history, but she dropped Carmilla off at math first.

“Are you done hating me now?” Laura asked, pulling at Carmilla’s Twinkie costume.

“I could never hate you. I just don’t like to be embarrassed.”

“Well our school goes all out.” Two boys passed them walking around with a White Castle bags. Carmilla started to laugh. “Harold and Kumar go to White Castle. Good one guys.”

They smiled at her and kept walking. “Anyways, Cupcake. I’m not mad.”

Laura smiled placed a chaste kiss to Carmilla’s cheek. Carmilla watched her walk down the hallway with a little swivel in her hips under cupcake costume.

Day 4: Tacky Tourist Day

That morning, Kirsch, Will, Laura and Carmilla gathered around the kitchen table. Kirsch and Will were in swim trunks with white tank tops. Carmilla and Laura were in Hawaiian shorts along with two different town shirts Laura hand. One was pink and said Myrtle Beach. The other was Yellow and said Daytona Beach. Carmilla decided on the pink one. They had all different types of swim related items, necklaces and flip flops.

Carmilla settled on have an inflatable pool tube around her waist, thick sunscreen under her eyes, a
straw hat and plastic sunglasses. She had one pair of black flip flops and added that to her look. Laura settled for arm floaties, a baseball hat, flip flops, thick sunscreen and another pair of plastic sunglasses. She lifted a shell necklace and wrapped it around Carmilla’s neck. Carmilla grabbed a rope bracelet and added it to Laura’s wrist.

Kirsch and Will both wore sneakers, baseball hats, sunscreen on their nose and under their eyes. Kirsch was going to carry around a pool float all day, where Will took two pool noodles.

Laura grabbed one last accessory which was two fanny packs.

“Oh come on, Laura. We can’t top that!” Kirsch whined.

“You should have thought more carefully.”

“You really should have, Beefcake.” Carmilla pulled out a plastic pair of binoculars. “I think we win today.”

Laura pulled out a map from the fanny pack and held it in her hands. “Alright Kids, I need a picture of this.” Henry gathered them in front of the fireplace.

“Look lost,” Henry said.

Carmilla and Laura looked at their maps while Kirsch and Will just stood there. He decided the boys could sit this one out while Laura and Carmilla went to town. They were several pictures of them looking at the map and using the binoculars to look around. Carmilla pointing at something and Laura smiling and vise versa.

“Okay, okay. Serious picture now. Just you two smiling at the camera.”

“Oh, Mr. Karnstein, would you mind taking one on my phone?” Laura asked.

“Not at all, Laura.”

She handed him her phone and he used that first to take a picture. “Smile big, girls!”

They looked at Laura’s phone and smiled. After a few more pictures were taken they were out. The boys looked sad. “Alright, Carm-sexy. You win today’s match.”

“I know Beef-cake. It’s okay.” She patted his arm and walked to Laura’s car.

Laura showed them the pictures he took of them. They look like huge dorks, but it made Carmilla smile. “Can you text me this one?” Carmilla asked. It was the two of them smiling in front of the fireplace. The first picture her dad took.

“Of course.”

Lafontaine walked into her biology class later that day to see Lafontaine in a similar outfit. It seemed tourists to everyone here involved people in some kind of pool floaty.

“Looking good!” Lafontaine said, taking in Carmilla’s look.

“You too, Science Nerd.”

They sat next to each other, working on some group questions when Carmilla felt her phone buzz
her pocket. She looked at the teacher’s desk to see she was working on her computer. She quickly took out her phone to see a picture from Laura. She smiled at the picture of them and saved it to her phone.

“Well look at the happy couple.”

“Shh, Laf.”

“What? You guys are cute together.”

“Thanks.”

Carmilla quickly set the picture as her home screen background, keeping a picture of her and Kirsch as her lock screen picture.

“Carmilla?”

“Yeah?” Carmilla put her phone back into her pocket to look at Lafontaine. They had a shy smile on her face, but it soon turned to a serious tone.

“I don’t think you know how much this means to Laura, but it means a lot to her. She had to be the third wheel last year to Perry and I. We didn’t mind, but I could tell she wished she had someone to do this with her.”

“Well, I told I would do it, so I did it.”

“Yeah, but she told me you barely fought her against any of it. That even though you weren’t thrilled about the Twinkie costume, you still wore it.”

“Well she means something to me. I couldn’t say no. I told her I wouldn’t say no.”

“Just don’t hurt her, Carmilla. She’s had enough people like Chelsea in her life.”

“Who?”

“The girl you decked at Kirsch’s party.”

“Oh, right. Well for once I just feel right when I’m with her and you guys. I don’t know. I haven’t had a lot of friends before so I guess I’m just trying to do this one right.”

“Well, you’re stuck with us now. Just don’t hurt her.”

“I won’t, Lafontaine. I promise.”

“Good!”

She felt another buzz in her pocket and looked down to see her dad had sent her some pictures from that morning. She laughed and showed all the pictures to Lafontaine. *I will never hurt this girl* Carmilla thought, looking at Laura’s face in every picture.

**Day 5: Spirit Day**

On Spirit day, Kirsch brought Eric over with him since he was also a freshman for Will. They all decided to do spirit day together. Eric was in all white to represent the freshmen at the school. Will
was wearing his white football jersey, with a big number 3 standing proud. He made sure to wear his white sweatpants and took a white sweatshirt incase he got cold. Kirsch was in his navy jersey, along with navy sweat pants. He was on the offensive line and his number was 59, that stood out in the silver lining of the white number.

Laura and Carmilla both wore navy shirts. Carmilla had convinced Lilita to take her shopping for new pants. She was wearing a pair of navy pants with white converses. Laura had decided to wear the darkest bare of blue jeans she had. They all decided to paint their faces. Carmilla and Laura had “SHARKS” written across their faces in navy. Kirsch had two navy lines under his eyes. They wrote “St. Charles” on his right arm and “Go Sharks” on his left. They did the same to Will. They gathered to have more pictures in front of the fireplace. All smiles.

The school day was pretty lame. Everyone was setting up for the big game and the teachers seemed to give everyone the day off. It was around 2 o’clock when people started to descend to the gym for the pep rally. Laura met Carmilla at her locker and they walked together.

Once inside they managed to find the rest of gang and joined them on the bleachers in the junior section. The principal stood in the middle with a mic in his hand. He introduced the cheerleaders first who did a little cheer. Carmilla laughed at how ridiculous it seemed, but Laura elbowed her in the side.

“We win nationals almost every year,” Laura said into Carmilla’s ear. “This is just the same stupid cheer they do every year to get us warmed up, but wait until they do their actual routine later. You won’t be laughing.”

Carmilla just looked at Laura and smirked.

Principal Burgess got back on the mic. “Alright everyone, I think it’s time we get these football players in here.” People started cheering, including the entire squad around Carmilla. She couldn’t help, but get into it too. Laura’s hand resting on her knee because they were being pushed together. Carmilla could see Will starting to line up and noticed he had changed into his navy jersey to match the rest of the team as Principal Burgess introduced each player. Will was the third player announced and their entire group jumped up, cheering on the young guy on the varsity football team. He ran to the bleachers and sat down, giving a small wave to Carmilla.

Kirsch was next as he huddled in with the rest of the offensive lineman and they did a little dance into the gym. People were screaming and laughing with them.

“And give it up for our quarterback, who got us to the championships last year. You know who he is. Give it up for Theo…” The roar for Theo almost made Carmilla deaf. *Man they really care about football out here.* Everyone was hollering and stomping their feet on the bleachers.

Principal Burgess started to tell everyone to calm down. “Alright, I think it’s time we decide who wins the spirit award! When I get to your section, I will count to three. On three, whichever grade makes the most noise, you will win the spirit award.” He went to the freshmen who made barely any noise, but they tried. Same with the sophomores. They were a little louder, but Carmilla was ready. He got to the juniors side and people started standing up. “Let me hear you, Juniors!” Carmilla and everyone else started screaming and stomping their feet. Laughing at how ridiculous they sounded.

Carmilla could see Kirsch at the bottom, getting trouble by a teacher for grabbing a chair and stomping it into the floor. She started laughing and couldn’t remember a time she had felt so happy to be at school. She never participated in sports in the city, but this felt right. Laura’s hand finding ways to rest on her knee or thigh, surrounded by the Ginger Squad, laughing and having fun. She smiled at Laura who smiled back. “I don’t know, Seniors. The juniors might beat you this year.” Everyone,
but the seniors started to boo. Principal Burgess walked over to the senior sections and they seemed
to make just as much noise. “Teachers, I’m going to need your help with this one.” They all stood in
front of the juniors side. “Okay, 1, 2, 3.” Carmilla cupped her mouth and started howling. They all
stomped their feet and clamped their hands. The bleaches were rumbling with noise. Kirsch standing
on his chair yelling himself, before getting in trouble again.

Principal Burgess and the teachers walked over to the seniors section. “Alright seniors, one more
time. 1, 2, 3.” The sound erupted until it died down, but it didn’t seem as loud to them. The teachers
and the principals huddled around. “I’m sorry seniors, but the juniors beat you this year!” Carmilla
and the rest of the class, stood up and cheered. He handed the spirit stick to Kirsch, who was once
again standing in his chair. “Kirsch, get down before you hurt yourself, which we all know you’re
prone.” He smiled and sat down.

After watching teachers make a fool of themselves by playing some silly games and after an
impressive cheer by the cheerleaders, the pep rally was over. They all headed out towards the cars.

“We’re going to the game tonight, right Sweetness?”

“Of course, Cupcake. I have to cheer my brother on.”

“Are your parents coming?”

“Definitely. My dad is so excited to watch Will play.”

Laura pouted. “I don’t have to sit with them Cupcake, and the bleachers are huge. We can sit away
from them.”

Laura smiled.

“Hey guys, we were going to get some dinner before the game, wanna come?” Lafontaine asked,
running over to them.

“Sounds good to me,” Carmilla answered.

Laura and Carmilla climbed into the Jeep and they followed Lafontaine out. “After the game, Kirsch
is having a party, by the way,” Laura said, once they were on the highway.

“I know. I already got the approval from Mom and Dad.”

“Is it because it’s Kirsch’s party?”

“Does it matter, Cupcake? I’m going with you not him.”

“Won’t your mom make you go with him?”

“She can’t make me get in the car with him. Besides he and I already talked about it. He’s taking
Eric, Will and Theo in his truck. Bros go with bros will be his excuse.”

“Your mother is not going to like that.”

“Well, I don’t really care. As long as I get to go with my Cupcake, nothing matters. I just want to
stop by my house before the party so I can change.”

“I think we can do that, Sweetness.”

Laura pulled up to a red light. Carmilla gave her quick kiss to her cheek and then to Laura’s lips.
They smiled at each other before there was honking behind them.

“Okay, okay we get it. Stop making out,” Laura mumbled. Carmilla looked behind to notice it was Betty and Danny. She rolled down her window and flipped them off, while giving Laura another quick kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Kristin is back and deserves an awesome shout out for helping put this chapter up as quickly as I could! Thanks Kristin!!
A True Confession

Chapter Summary

Okay guys there's a lot of angst in this chapter. A character finally opens up about their past.

There is mentions of abuse in this chapter so be aware and on alert.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After a nice quick dinner at local diner, the gang made their way back to the high school. People were loading into the bleachers for the first football game of the season. They still had another hour before the game started. Carmilla spotted Will by the locker rooms.

"Hey, Cupcake?"

"Yeah?"

"I'll be right back. Will's over there and I want to wish him good luck on his first game."

"Okay, I'll text you where we are in the stands."

Carmilla made her way over to Will, who was looking a little queasy. He was leaning against the wall in full football gear. His hands were behind his back as he bobbed back and forth against the wall.

"Hey, Bro?"

"Oh, hey Kitty."

"Excited?"

"Nervous."

"Ah. Well don't be."

"Easier said than done."

Carmilla nodded and then smiled. "Well if it's any indication, Kirsch has told me numerous times that you have the golden foot for kicking. So concentrate on your target and kick some Bulldog ass!"

Will smiled and started to laugh.

"Carmilla Karnstein."

Both of their faces went slack. "Shit," Carmilla muttered under breath.

"Do you know people from the church come to these games?" Lilita asked. Carmilla shook her head and looked at her feet.
"We can't have members of the church thinking I let me children talk with filthy mouths."

"What's wrong?" Henry asked, running up to meet his family.

"Nothing to be worried about, other than your daughter's potty mouth."

"What word was it this time?"

Carmilla looked up at Henry. "A three letter word in reference to butts."

"Ah," Henry paused, "Well definitely not the worst word I've heard out of your mouth." He laughed and gave his daughter a hug.

Lilita rolled her eyes. "Well, anyway, my William is going to be the star of the game tonight."

Will smiled, but was struggling to come up with any words.

"You alright, Will?" Henry asked, concerned.

"Yeah. Nervous."

"Well you'll do great son! Come on you three, let's let him prepare and make our way to the stadium." Henry wrapped his arms around Carmilla and Lilita.

"Hey. Carmilla?"

Henry let go of Carmilla's shoulder so she could make her way back to Will.

"What's up?"

"Can I ask a favor?"

"No I will not rub your back if you vomit!"

He smiled and shook his head. "I think I have something that might calm some nerves, if you'll help me."

"What's up, Will?"

"Would you..." He stuttered and mumbled something under his breath. Carmilla had no idea what he said.

"No wonder Mother hates it when we mumble. I have no idea what you just said."

Will exhaled. "Will you wear my other jersey? I know it's stupid, but it would just be something nice and I feel like it will help me in a weird way and-"

"Will? You're starting to sound like Laura. Of course, I'll wear your jersey!" She smiled at him.

He leapt forward and gave her a big hug. "Thanks, Carmilla! It means the world to me."

"Yeah, yeah. Now get off. You're ruining my look of not caring." She looked around to make sure her parents weren't in sight and then back at Will. She smiled. "Seriously, though. Kick some major ass tonight!"

"Thanks, Sis."
Carmilla smiled and started making her way to the stands, slipping the Jersey over her shirt. She checked her phone and saw a text from Laura.

**The Rambler:** We're right in the center of the stadium, towards the top. I'll be on the lookout and wave when I see you.

Carmilla made her way to the stands and started walking towards the center. She looked around and heard her name yelled. She looked up to see Laura waving her arms. She smiled and made her way up.

"Do you know where my parents are?" Carmilla asked, sitting between Laura and Lafontaine.

"Down on the right, close to the field."

Carmilla looked and spotted her dad's head. As if he knew, he turned around and smiled at her with a wave. He was sitting next to Mr. Hollis. Lilita took a quick glance and for appearance, gave the most polite smile she could muster with a quick wave of the hand.

"Carm, what are you wearing?" Laura asked, watching Carmilla.

"Oh, Will asked me to wear it. I couldn't say no. He looks so scared."

"Well according to Kirsch, he's got a metal toe or something."

"Golden foot, Cupcake. But yeah, I'm excited to watch him play."

Just then the announcements started. After the National Anthem and a few announcements, the cheerleaders started making their way over to the sidelines. The Bulldogs were called first from the visitors side to a bunch of boos from the home side.

The music changed to the jaws theme song and everyone started stomping their feet against the bleachers. Carmilla quickly joined in the festivities. The cheerleaders unwrapped a huge a paper banner with the school's name and mascot on it.

"And now, give it up to our home team. Ladies and gentlemen, let's make some noise for our very own St. Charles High Sharks!"

The crowd erupted as the team ran through the paper banner. Carmilla saw Will's number and gave an extra shout just for him. The two teams made their way to the field with the guest team having the ball first.

Everyone watched intently as the game carried on and erupted when the Sharks got the first touchdown. That's when Will made his way to the field for his first field goal.

The group counted to three and then quickly shouted, "Let's go Will," loudly enough that everyone around them was irritated at their shrieking.

"It’s a football game and that’s my brother," Carmilla said, to the people in front of her.

The football was lined up and Will started to run, kicking the ball straight through the uprights and over the crossbar, a perfect field goal. The crowd erupted and Carmilla couldn't remember a time she had been more proud of Will as she watch him jump in victory, getting a huge bear hug from Kirsch and some chest bumps from the other players.

By the time they got to halftime, the Sharks were up by 7 and everyone was enjoying the game.
Carmilla had noticed that Lilita kept looking back at her during the game so she had to keep her flirting down to a minimum. Lightly squeezing Laura's knee or giving Laura a quick smile. Luckily Laura was immersed in the game and barely paid attention to Carmilla at all.

They were down to the last two minutes and the game was tied. Everyone was holding their breath as the Sharks were third and 8 on the 20 yard line. They set up their play and the team only managed to move to the 15 yard line. The whistle blew for a timeout. Carmilla watched as Will took the field.

"Cupcake, what's happening?"

"It's basically down to Will. If he can kick this field goal, we win. If not, we go into overtime. It's a tricky shot because he's on the 15 yard line, but he should be able to do it."

"So we need to be cheering Will on?"

"If we want the best chance of winning, yes!"

The whistle blew again and the offensive line, lined up. The crowd started to slowly rise and quiet down as Will aligned himself. The whole thing seemed to go in slow motion. *Come on, Will! Come on! You got this!* Carmilla thought as the football was released and Will started to run. He kicked and they all watched as the ball spiraled right through the goal! The crowd erupted and Carmilla couldn't help but join. Will won the game and Carmilla smiled as she witnessed Will be hoisted into the air on his teammate's shoulders.

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Laura and Carmilla got to Kirsch's house about an hour after the game and the party was in full swing. The music was blaring and people were everywhere. They had made a pit stop at each other's houses so they could change out of their school colors. Carmilla had changed into leather pants and a loose black tank top with her signature combat boots.

She led Laura inside, taking her hand and leading them straight to where the alcohol was. Laura couldn't help but ogle at Carmilla's butt in her pants.

"Take a picture, Cupcake."

"Sorry. You just look... You look amazing."

"You're not so bad yourself."

Laura was in tight dark jeans and a blank tank top. She looked down at herself and frowned.

"I could never pull your look off, Carm."

"Laura, it doesn't matter what you wear. You're still the prettiest girl in this entire world."

Laura smiles at her.

"Now," Carmilla continued, "My brother kicked those Bulldogs' asses and it's time to celebrate!"

Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Betty made their way into the kitchen. Carmilla poured a shot of whiskey for everyone.

"Yo, Carm-sexy! You doing shots?!" Kirsch came in with Theo and Will right behind him.

"Damn right, Beefcake."
She poured three more handing them to Kirsch, Theo and Will. Will was hesitant to take it.

"I don't know, Carm. What if I get drunk?" He asked.

"It's one shot, Little Bro. You deserve it for that awesome save! I'm proud of you!"

Will smiled and took the shot from her hand. "One gulp. Hold your breath, take the shot, and breathe. You got this, Kid!"

"Alright, everyone!" Carmilla yelled and someone lowered the volume on the stereo. Half the house was looking in her direction so she stood up on the counter.

"Let's all raise a glass to toast the man who made this victory happen tonight! Will get up here!" Will got up next to Carmilla and everyone started to cheer. "He kicked some major Bulldog ass with his golden foot! To Will!"

"To Will!" Everyone shouted!

Carmilla looked at Will, clinked his shot glass and smiled. They down the shot and hopped off the counter.

"Thanks, Kitty."

"Anytime, Kid. Now go have some fun!"

Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist, pulling her as close to her body as possible. Laura continued to talk to the group.

"Want another?" Carmilla asked, whispering in Laura’s ear.

Laura nodded and Carmilla poured another. Carmilla handed Laura her glass and wrapped her arm around to take the shot with her. Laura laughed and they down their shots. Carmilla untangled their arms and moved in to kiss Laura. It got heated fast before Lafontaine started making gagging noise.

"Keep it in your pants, Karnstein!" Danny yelled.

"You're one to talk, Xena!"

Danny just smiled. "I'll drink to that," pouring another shot for them both. Danny and Carmilla toasted and took their shots.

"Carmmm," Laura whined.

“Yes, Laura?”

“Come dance with me," Laura said, pulling Carmilla close to her.

Carmilla let Laura drag her out onto the dance floor and the night seem to fly by in sweaty mosh pit of sweaty teens.

It was around midnight when the party started to die down. However, the gang stayed back and we're all sitting around the fire pit outside. The flames kept them warm as they sat talking. By this point, Carmilla was a little intoxicated. She felt great and relaxed, even though sometimes she felt a little off kilter. She had taken two more shots and was sipping on Laura's beer. Laura was curled into Carmilla's side. To their left were Theo and Kirsch. Across the fire sat Danny and Betty, smiling at each other, talking quietly. To their right were Lafontaine and Perry snuggled up together under a
"Hands where I can see them Ginger 1 and 2," Carmilla said, laughing to herself.

"You're one to talk. I now have vivid memories of Laura's hands all over your ass," Lafontaine shot back.

"Hey, I flaunt what I got," Carmilla replied.

"And you have to admit her ass looks really good in those leather pants," Laura added, smiling at Carmilla.

Carmilla gave Laura a quick kiss before wiggling her eyebrows at Lafontaine.

"I guess the minister's daughter really is a rebel."

"Laf, you have no idea," Carmilla laughed.

Will sat down between them, stumbling a little bit into the chair.

"Whoa, you alright there Little Bro?"

"Yeah, good. I feel really good," he said, slightly slurred and smiling.

"Alright, I'm gonna get you some water. I can't have you throwing up or going home drunk. I think even Dad would kill me before Mother had the chance to."

"No it's good. I have some, Kitty."

He smiled as he held up his water bottle.

"Kitty?" She could hear Danny ask.

"Mind your business, Jolly Red Giant!" Carmilla snarled.

"I think it's cute," Laura said, receiving another kiss from Carmilla.

"And that's why I like you the most, Cupcake."

"Okay, seriously, why Kitty?" Perry asked.

"Well when Carmilla was lit-"

"I swear to God, Will. If you finish that story-"

"Oh come on, Sis! It's not that big of a deal. Anyway, when I was little, Carmilla used to crawl around and meow at me. For some reason, it always made me laugh. From the time I was a baby til about 3, it always helped me stop crying. When I was learning how to speak, apparently, I struggled with her name so I started calling her Kitty. The nickname just stuck."

"Aw, that might be the sweetest thing I've ever heard," Danny said, full of sarcasm.

"Like one of you have never had a cute nickname!" Carmilla said, gritting her teeth from embarrassment.

"My dad calls me Honey Bear," Laura said.
"We all know that, Laura," Theo added.

The group laughed and Carmilla kissed the side of her head. She smiled. "You'll always be my, Cupcake," Carmilla whispered in her ear. Laura smiled and kissed Carmilla sweetly.

"Good."

The group went quiet for a minute before Lafontaine cleared their throat. "So, I've been thinking about telling my parents that I'm non-binary."

Everyone stared at them, but no one spoke. After another moment of silence, Perry stepped up with the question on everyone's mind.

"Do you think that's wise, Sweetie?"

"Well they've actually started calling me Lafontaine so I'm beginning to think the time is right."

"That's great, Laf! Congrats," Laura said with a smile and thumbs up.

"You better be careful," Carmilla said.

"Why is that?" Lafontaine asked.

"You could be sent somewhere if they take it wrong."

"What are you talking about?" Lafontaine stared at Carmilla. Carmilla laughed low and smirked.

"My mother."

"Carmilla, don't," Will said. He seemed to sober up quickly, but Carmilla shook him off.

"What? Can't tell them what Mommy Dearest did to me?"

Will didn't say anything. He took out his water and took a large gulp.

"That's what I thought," Carmilla continued. "My mom caught me making out with a girl on my bed in the city. She grabbed Ell by her hair and forced her out of the apartment. I was terrified and I didn't know what to say. She screamed, 'What were you doing?!' I couldn't say anything and I shook my head. She smacked me, hard, across the face."

Carmilla let out a hollow laugh.

"I swear her hand print was there for days. This red hand mark on my cheek. I was so scared though. Mother is very particular and she wasn't going to have a lesbian daughter 'ruin the Karnstein's name by having a dyke in the family'."

She used air quotes to express her mother's words. Everyone flinched.

"Carm?" Laura looked up at Carmilla wide eyes. "Has she hit you since?"

Carmilla shook her head. "It was the one time. I mean I had been spanked as a child, but that slap was much worse. Cut my lip on her ring and swear my brain rattled a little bit." She laughed again. Carmilla wasn't sure if it was the alcohol or the memory that made her laugh.

"Bro, where was your dad? Pastor K? He let that happen?" Kirsch asked, moving closer to take Carmilla's hand.
"Dad was in the middle of packing when he heard the commotion. He was leaving the next morning for a two month missionary trip to Africa. After she smacked me and cursed me as a problem, Dad came in and grabbed her, telling her to leave. He cupped my face and couldn’t believe what she had just done. He helped me clean my lip and ice my cheek, while I explained to him what happened. I told him the same thing I told mother. That it was an accident, and I didn’t mean to. That it just sort of happened. He didn’t say much, other than telling me how sorry he was. Mother came in before I went to bed apologizing for hitting me. That she had snapped and overreacted. I didn’t believe her, but dad did, so I pretended I did. He stayed with me that night, waking me up the next morning before his flight. He kissed my head and said he had talked to my mother. It clearly didn’t work, but my mother was always a great actress. Once he left, I felt all alone and she finally confronted me again. She said if she ever saw that girl around me again, she would take matters into her own hands."

"What did that mean?" Danny asked, concern written all over her face.

"Well, Laf you said I was rebel. Later that night, Ell texted me saying she was downstairs. I snuck out of the apartment and made my way to the first floor. She saw my face and immediately hugged me. Unfortunately, I didn’t think clearly because we didn’t leave the spot in front of my building. I let her kiss me and I kissed her back. It hurt because of my lip, but it gave me a moment of comfort I knew Mother wasn’t going to give me, especially since Dad had left. We had huge floor to ceiling windows in our living room. I should have known my mother would know I left and watch me from our window. That’s when I heard the door open and I knew it was her. I told Ell to run all the way home and not tell a soul what happened. She nodded and ran away. I assume she got home safely, but I have no idea."

"Why?" Laura asked, her voice small and eyes still wide.

"I never heard from her after that. I’m sure my mother scared her to never see me again. But when she came outside, Mother grabbed me by the arm and pulled me back into the apartment. She threw me against the wall once we were inside. I'll never forget her face. Eyes wide and frantic while her mouth was stretched into the thinnest line imaginable. She threw me in the hallway closet and made me stay in there until morning."

"Carm-se... Carmilla that's terrible. Why didn't you report it?" Kirsch had the same look as Laura. He gripped Carmilla's hand.

"I didn't have time. She opened the closet door the next morning and told me to look presentable. I asked her why, but she didn’t answer. I noticed my duffle bag was lying by the front door, but I didn't question it. I was scared she was going to hit me again or worse, so I went upstairs and did what I was told."

"Carmilla, are you sure you want to tell the rest of this?" Will asked. She looked at him and nodded. He put his arm around her shoulders and lowered his head.

"A man came about 30 minutes later. My mother told me I was going to get help and he was going to make me better. They took me to conversion therapy at some kind of pray the gay away camp. It was a strong religious environment with very specific rules that we had to follow at all times. Most of it never made sense, but we weren’t allowed to question anything. We all had opposite sex partners in each room. I was roomed with this guy Michael. He was really nice, but after a while, he either wouldn’t talk to me or try to make moves on me. I asked for a new bunk mate after he started to make me uncomfortable, but they told me that this was a good thing. That the therapy was working on Michael and I should be happy that he’s trying to make advances. That he was a boy after all and that I should welcome anything he throws at me.”
Carmilla didn’t realize she had tears running down her face until Laura cupped her face, wiping the tears away. “Did he…?” Laura asked.

“No, thank God,” Carmilla whispered. She took a deep breath. “He tried to once, but I kneed him in the groin which had him gasping for breath on the floor. They put me in a bunk by myself after that. I went to a lot of therapy sessions. We had to talk to a counselor every morning and report any homosexual thoughts we had throughout the day or night. We then would go to church and have to ask for forgiveness, pray, copy Bible verses and come up with a personal mantra that we were to use and repeat if any homosexual thoughts cropped up into our heads. I was told repeatedly how disgusting I was as a human, how disgusting homosexuality was to society. The things it would do to children if we allowed people to be gay. I think the guys had it a lot worse than the girls, though. I think it’s why Michael got a little crazy towards the end.”

“How long were you there?”

“Only a month. Mother had to make sure I was back before my father got home. I don’t believe he would ever approve of such a thing, but Mother believed it was for the best. To fix me. I just had to pass the programs. You got out if you passed. Luckily, I met this guy Josh. He was really cool and we became friends right away. The counselors thought we had something going on. I started to believe that I was actually attracted to him. After the first week, I had been brainwashed to believe I actually had an illness. I believed all of it. I thought I was disgusting and a disgrace until I met Josh. Josh told me I wasn’t disgusting, that I was beautiful. I guess in the camp’s standards, we dated. I thought I had actually been cured of my homosexuality. I left before Josh did though and continued to write him once I was home to make sure he was okay. My mother was very pleased, she believed I had been cured.”

“Do you know what happened to him? Josh?,“ Kirsch asked.

“He killed himself.” Carmilla said it as if it was the most obvious thing.

“He pinned a suicide note to his shirt and crashed his car into a tree, head on at full speed. His note said, ‘I’m going to my Maker, the spirit who made me this way.’ Most people thought he meant the Devil, but I knew he meant God. We would sit up late into the night sometimes and talk about how we truly believe that God loved us just the way we were and there was nothing wrong with us. That God had made us this way and that He had way more important things to worry about than whether someone was gay or not. Apparently, Josh’s therapy turned really bad when I left. He was caught making out with one of the other boys. They told him what a shame it was to do that to me. But I just felt bad that I couldn’t do anything to protect him.”

Carmilla smiled a sad smile before she looked up at everyone. They all had sad expressions on their face. The group was quiet. Carmilla looked at Laura, who had tears streaming down her face.

“I’m so sorry, Carm," Laura whispered, wrapping her arms around Carmilla’s neck. She pulled Carmilla into a hug.

“Guys, don’t feel bad for me. I never had a group like this in the city. Surprisingly, I was just told how wrong it was my whole life from my mother. My dad never had input on the subject, but mother had a lot to say.”

“Did you tell your Pastor K?” Danny asked.

“No. I’ve never told my dad. Mother made Will and I both swear never to tell him. She bribed us, basically. She got me a new stereo, new boots and a pair of sunglasses that I wanted. I took those for my vow of silence. The only thing I think she told my dad was that I requested to try a therapy
session for my mistake and that I went a couple of times and didn’t like it.” Carmilla shrugged.

No one knew what to say so they sat in silence. Carmilla started talking again. “Like I said, I’ve got you guys. For once, I found a community that goes to church, but you’re like me. You don’t judge me for being a lesbian. The mantra I was taught was hard to fight in the beginning, but,” Carmilla pauses and looks at Laura, “I could not deny this pretty face or my feelings for you any longer.”

Laura smiled and gave Carmilla a quick peck. Kirsch let go of Carmilla’s hand after a gentle squeeze and went back to Theo. Kirsch wrapped his arm around Theo and gave him a light kiss on his forehead. It seems like a round of kisses went to each partner for comfort. Lafontaine was the first to speak after everyone started to look into the flames.

“I’m glad we have you with us, Carmilla. That way we can protect you.”

Carmilla gave a shy smile and chugged the rest of Laura’s beer. “Well, I don’t know about you guys, but I could use another drink.” Carmilla got up and wobbled a little bit. Laura was quick to grab her elbow.

“No, Sweetness. I think you’ve had enough.”

“One more?”

“No, Carm. I have to get you home.”

“I don’t want to go home, Laura. Stay with me tonight. Protect me.”

“Carm-”

“Please, Laura. Will is staying here with Theo, Kirsch and a few others. If I go home drunk, I’ll get in so much trouble.”

“Okay, so why don’t we hang out here a little longer, you drink some water, sober up and then we’ll make our way back?”

Carmilla exhaled. “Fine.”

Laura and Carmilla made their way to the kitchen. “Laura.”

Laura grabbed two water bottles from the fridge. She turned around to see Carmilla sitting on the floor, her back to the cabinets and knees bent. Her arms were stretched out over her knees and her head hanging in between her arms. She was crying.

Laura immediately made her way over, sitting beside her and wrapped her in a hug. “Shh. Shh. Carm, it’s okay. It’s going to be okay.”

“Do you understand why I haven’t really opened up? Why I was so hesitant? I can’t go back there, Laura. I can’t go back there. I sugarcoated it for those guys, but they made me do awful things. I can’t go back there, Laura.”

“It’s okay, Carmilla. I won’t let that happen. No one will take you away from me or the group. Lafontaine was serious. We will all protect you, just like we have protected each other since we freshman year when we all realized we had sexuality in common. Nothing is going to happen to us or you. We won’t let that happen.”

Carmilla continued to cry. Not be able to control her breathing. She pressed against Laura’s chest,
while Laura tried to calm her.

“What did they do to you, Carm?”

“Other than the stuff that I mentioned? They made me watch pornography. They started with male gay couples first, so I wouldn’t be tempted to fantasize about women. After a few days, they slowly they incorporated straight couples, but by that point I was so mortified when they said jump, I’d say how high. They would make us watch it for hours, telling us what we were to do as women and what the men were supposed to do. They made us take sex education classes saying the important roles of men and women. The men did workshops, while they made us clean up around the camp. They needed to make sure we understood our roles in society. They told me to always remind myself how much I like boys and what it was that I liked about boys. If we mentioned that we had any homosexual thoughts to our counselors or they thought we were lying, we get a smack on our back by a belt. I can’t go back there Laura.”

Laura looked horrified. “Does your Mother know what they did?”

“No. The website she found talked about what I said outside. A lot of therapy, group therapy, Bible verses etcetera. When we finally got to the camp and all parents had left, we were forced to sign a piece of paper saying we would never tell anyone what happened inside the camp, for the protection of future teens in need who will end up going there. I only told Will because I was so traumatized when I got out.”

“Is he the only one who knew?”

“Now, other than you guys? Yeah. He helped me with my mantra, which was the only thing I kept from that camp because it was so embedded to my memory.”

“Which was what?”

“Basically it was, ‘I don’t like girls. I’m not supposed to. I must resist temptation. I like boys. I like boys. I like boys. I must resist temptation.’”

“Why would Will help you with that? It sounds like he made it worse.”

“He did it because I made him do it. He honestly thought it was what I wanted. He thought he was being supportive.”

“Do you still say that?”

“When I first met you, I said it all the time. Then you would flirt with me and my heart would skip a beat or I’d get butterflies in my stomach. Kirsch was the first one to ask me if I actually honestly liked guys.”

“What did you say?”

“I said of course I did. That I liked guys a lot and I asked him, by persuasion of my mother, to hook me up with someone on the football team.”

“Wait, is that why he made you confess you were a lesbian at Lafontaine’s?”

“It’s a possibility. He likes to be right after all. But remember that night I freaked out in your car and told you I couldn’t do it? I couldn’t be with you in that way? That I could only be your friend?”

“Yeah. I won’t lie, that did hurt a little.”
“I texted Kirsch later that night. He was home when I got there, but I was too upset about my feelings to talk to him. That night he told me the same thing you did, that it was okay if I was gay. That there was nothing wrong with me. He told me how much you really liked me and cared for me. It really helped me. I was just scared and still am to be perfectly honest.”

“Carm, we’re all scared. I don’t know if I’ll ever tell my dad or have the courage to tell him. Kirsch is terrified to mention anything to his father. His dad is a conservative with strong Christian values. When they go out of town on a weekend, wherever his parents are, they still find a church to go to on Sunday. Danny’s parents have never pressed the issue, but we don’t know how they feel. But it’s why we get along so well together, Carm. We’re all here for one another and support one another. Not to mention, you have me. I’m not going to let any of that ever happen to you ever again. None of us will.”

Carmilla nodded and stared at nothing for a moment. She shook her head and exhaled. “Thanks, Laura. Can we change the subject? I just have very specific images in my mind and I don’t think I can talk about this anymore tonight. I just want these memories to go away.”

“If only we could really clear our memories, like they do in Harry Potter.”

Carmilla chuckled low at Laura. “At least, Dumbledore would have been on my side.”

“You’ve read Harry Potter?” Laura asked, surprised.

“Don’t look so surprised, Cupcake. I enjoy the Wizarding World, I just don’t enjoy dressing up for the Wizarding World, like Monday.”

“Oh hush, you loved it,” Laura smiled.

“I think I just liked seeing you in that little skirt,” Carmilla smiled, sadly.

“Here have some water and calm yourself down there,” Laura said, offering the bottle she had gotten earlier with a light laugh.

Carmilla gladly took it and chugged half the bottle. “Thanks.”

Laura reached for Carmilla’s hand, holding it in her lap.

“Carm?”

“Yeah?”

“In all seriousness, I hope I didn’t make you feel any pressure before. I remember that confrontation in the car, when you said it wasn’t normal and it wasn’t right.”

“You didn’t pressure me, I was just dealing with all this stuff. I had been doing really well before all of that. I didn’t date anyone, but I kept my feelings for girls at bay. It’s why I stayed home and secluded myself.”

“So people did like you then?”

“No. I was mean to everyone and kept to myself. I just did what I was told. But you never pressured me.”

“Do you still think that?”

“Think what, Cupcake?” Carmilla took another swig of water from her bottle.
“That it’s not normal or right.”

Carmilla exhaled and scratched the back of her head. “Sometimes. I was taught to believe that and sometimes it’s a really hard thing to forget and let go of. That’s why when we were at my house, kissing on my bed, I panicked. It reminded me of that night and I couldn’t imagine that happening to you.”

“You could have just told me then, you know.”

“I really couldn’t, Cupcake. I’ll probably regret telling everyone this tomorrow, if I’m being honest.”

“Well you shouldn’t. I think it shows that you truly trust us as a group. I’m sad and sorry that happened to you, but I’m proud of you for finally opening up to us.”

Laura smiled and Carmilla smiled back. A small moment of silence passed, while Carmilla rubbed her thumb up and down against Laura’s hand.

“Can I kiss you?” Laura asked.

“You never asked before so why are you asking now?”

“I just want to make sure that it’s okay. Had I known about all this, I would have asked before.”

“Laura, it’s okay. Please kiss me.”

Laura leaned in a gave Carmilla a kiss to express all the sadness she felt for her. They kissed for a little bit before Theo cleared his throat. “Carmilla?”

“What’s up?”

“I think Will had a little too much to drink. Kirsch is helping him out, but he’s asking for you.”

“Shit.”

Carmilla gave Laura one more peck before getting up. She walked back outside, Laura quickly behind her. She heard Will vomiting off to the side.

“Well, at least I know your tolerance is low, Baby Bro.”

“Not funny, Carmilla. I hate you so you much right now.”

“Don’t hate me, I gave you one shot. You drank whatever else you drank.”

Will threw up again and Carmilla rubbed his back. After a little bit of sputtering, Will stood up holding his arms over his stomach. “Are you good?” Carmilla asked.

Will nodded his head. “Sorry, I shouldn’t have let Eric give me two more shots.”

“Well, now you know.”

Carmilla wrapped her arm around Will. “You reek of alcohol, Will.”

“So do you.”

“You’re staying the night here, right?” Carmilla asked.

“Yeah. Mom and Dad already know.”
Carmilla saw Laura and the gang gathered around the firepit again. Laura had another beer. “I might just do the same, actually,” she said. They made their way back over to the firepit and everyone seemed to stopped talking. It bothered Carmilla.

“Guys, you can talk to me. I’m okay. It was a few years ago. It still only haunts me at times, but I’m better because I have you guys.”

They smiled at each other. “We’ve got your back, Fang Face,” Danny said, raising the beer in her hands.

“Definitely,” Perry added, raising her cup.

“You had mine, now I got yours,” Lafontaine smiled, adding to the mix of cups in the air.

“Thanks guys.” They all took a swig of their selected beers. Carmilla took a sip from Laura’s.

“Beefcake?”

“Yeah, Carm-sexy?”

“Can I crash here? I smell like alcohol and it’s a long drive back over there.”

“Yeah, all you guys can stay if you want by the way. It’s pretty late.”

They all nodded their heads. After they finished their beers, they all headed inside creating a huge slumber party in the living room. Laura laid down next to Carmilla, facing her, but making sure to keep distance between their bodies. Carmilla smiled at her and grabbed her hand, holding it close to her.

Everyone started to calm down and fall asleep. Carmilla was still wide awake, the visions of her past dancing in front of her eyes.

“Hey. You okay?” Laura whispered, causing Carmilla to jump.

“I can’t stop thinking about it, Laura. The visions are too strong.”

Laura sat up and rested her body on her elbows. “What can I do, Carm?”

Carmilla looked at Laura, her eyes starting to water. “Could you… Could you hold me?”

Laura nodded and opened her arms. Carmilla quickly scrambled over with her pillow. She cried silently against Laura’s chest. Laura rubbed her back in a soothing motion, finally helping Carmilla calm down.

They fell asleep nestled together. Laura’s body turned towards Carmilla, holding her tightly while Carmilla’s head rested against her chest, listening to her heartbeat.

Chapter End Notes

Shout out to Kristin!
A Quiet Weekend

Chapter Summary

This one is a little longer guys, so I hope you enjoy it!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The temperature in the hallway was cold. The luminescent light was too bright for Carmilla’s eyes. However, she knew she had chores and couldn’t stop. She continued to mop the hall back and forth as she was told. She was being monitored by one of her counselors.

Suddenly she was back in her old dorm room, and Michael was staring at her. They were both speaking to one another, but she couldn’t make out any of the words from her own mouth or his. She felt like she was underwater. He started walking towards her and pushing her against the wall.

“No. No!” Carmilla muffled in her sleep. She could feel a hand on her shoulder, slightly shaking her.

“No. Please, no! Stop! Stop!”

Carmilla jolted, sitting up in a frenzy. Her breathing was ragged and rapid. She couldn’t catch her breath and she knew her eyes were wide. She felt a shoulder on her back and she immediately flinched away.

“Carm?”

Carmilla didn’t say anything. She still felt like she was underwater. Her body was covered in sweat and she could feel the t-shirt she had on, sticking to her back. It was too hot. She needed to get out. She needed fresh air.

Carmilla got up quickly and tried not to step on anyone as she made her way to the backyard. She swung the doors open and tried to close them as quietly as she could. She sat down on one of the lounge chairs next to the firepit. The embers were still lit but slowly fading. It was much chillier now than it had been before, but she was grateful for the cool air. She started taking deep breaths when she heard the patio door open and close.

“Carmilla, are you crazy? You’ll get sick sitting out here!”

It was Laura’s voice, but she didn’t move. She felt paralyzed at the thought of a girl checking up on her, but the feeling went away quickly when she felt a blanket being laid on her lap and another one wrapping around her shoulders as Laura sat down beside her. Carmilla extended the blankets to cover both of their laps and their shoulders. They didn’t say anything, just stared out at the night’s sky. Laura scooted over a little closer to Carmilla. Their knees resting on top of each other. Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand and rubbed her thumb up and down. It was a few minutes before either of them spoke, the night still and quiet.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Laura asked.

Carmilla closed her eyes and shook her head. “I just want to forget it.” She slowly laid her head on
Laura’s shoulder and Laura kissed the top of Carmilla’s head. It was quiet for a few more minutes and Carmilla could feel Laura starting to shake a little bit. The cold air was seeping through the light blankets.

“Okay. Well if you’re not going to talk, can we please go back inside? It’s freezing out here Carmilla and seeing as we’re in Kirsch’s t-shirts and boxers, which I really hope are clean because he picked them up off the floor and smelled them before handing them to me. He was trying to explain that he usually never cleans his room and his mom likes to put his clean clothes on his bed, but he never puts them away so when he goes to bed, he gets in and then everything kicks to the floor and-”

“Cupcake, if I promise to go inside, will you please stop rambling?”

“Sorry. It was really bothering me and now I feel better because I expressed the problem to you and-”. Carmilla held up her hand so Laura couldn’t speak anymore. She honestly just wanted some quiet.

Carmilla sighed deeply before looking at Laura. She was staring at her, which caused Carmilla smile. She leaned in and gave Laura a light kiss against her nose, then her cheek, her ear, her neck and then her mouth. “You’re crazy, you know that?” she whispered against Laura’s lips.

“I might be, but you like me for some reason. Doesn’t that make you crazy?”

“Maybe a little bit, but I don’t ramble.” Carmilla pecked Laura’s lips.

“You love it when I ramble.” Another kiss.

They kissed for a few moments, slow and easy. Carmilla enjoyed the fact that they never seemed to rush when they kissed; even when things felt heated. They always kissed passionately but only for a few moments before Laura pulled away. Carmilla groaned.

“I’m sorry Carm, but I’m so cold.”

“I thought my kisses would warm you up.”

“No, but I know something else we could do to warm me up.”

Laura winked at Carmilla and Carmilla rolled her eyes. “Calm down, Cupcake. All in good time.”

“Then can we at least go inside?”

Carmilla nodded before getting up. She held her hand to help pull Laura up. Laura smiled and they walked back inside, trying to not step on anyone again. They made it to their spot and Carmilla laid on her back. “Come here,” she whispered, pulling Laura closer to her.

“Are you sure you don’t want to talk about it?” Laura asked.

Carmilla exhaled, knowing Laura wasn’t going to let this go. “I just dreamt I was back in that place. I haven’t thought that much about Michael and I dreamt that at first I was mopping the floors, but then somehow ended back up in my dorm room. Michael was there and he was staring at me like he always did before he tried anything. The determination in his eyes always scared me a little bit. Anyways, in the dream, he pushed me against the wall and tried to kiss me when I woke up. And that’s it. I just needed fresh air and now I just want to go back to sleep, Cupcake.”

“You know. You were talking in your in sleep, Sweetness.”
“I don’t talk in my sleep.”

Laura exhaled. “Well you did, but is there anything I can do to help make this better?” Laura whispered as she snuggled up into Laura’s side.

“Just stay here, next to me, wrapped up in my arms and try not ramble.”

Carmilla smiled, as Laura let out a light chuckle.

“Can you two lovebirds keep it down? Some of us want to sleep!” Perry’s voice expressed in a loud whisper.

“Sorry,” Carmilla and Laura whispered back. This time it was Laura who snuggled up to Carmilla, searching for warmth. Her head tucked under Carmilla’s chin. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura, rubbing up and down to help with the goosebumps that had formed. Laura snuggled closer into Carmilla as they slowly drifted off to sleep. Carmilla started dreaming of Laura and everything seemed better.

---------------------------------------------

There was loud music playing again when Carmilla awoke. The warm spot that had been Laura before was now gone. She frowned, wondering where Laura could have been. But then another sense kicked in and she immediately smiled. Bacon!

Carmilla got up and noticed that everyone else seemed to be up already. She cracked her back. The stiffness from laying on the floor made her back really sore. She could deal with the dull ache in her back and was more grateful she didn’t feel hungover.

She followed the smell to the kitchen, but it was empty. That’s when Carmilla noticed everyone was outside around a large table. She made her way outside and took a seat next to Laura as Laura started filling a plate for her with bacon, eggs and toast. Carmilla gave Laura a light peck on the lips.

“Morning, Cupcake.”

“Good morning, Sweetnees.”

Laura set the plate in front of Carmilla. “Breakfast?”

“Yes, thank you.”

“We already said grace, so you missed that,” Lafontaine added.

“You guys actually prayed before you started eating?” Carmilla asked, bewildered.

“Just cause we all have our own sexuality doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be thankful for the food we have. Some people haven’t eaten anything this morning,” Perry added.

That made Carmilla feel a little guilty. She lowered her head and said a quick prayer for others and her thanks to herself, before she started stuffing eggs into mouth, humming her satisfaction.

“Whoever made this,” Carmilla said in between bites, “my compliments.”

“Thank you,” Danny said.

“It’s the only compliment you’ll get from me, Xena.”
“Whatever, Elvira.”

Kirsch and Theo were the last to arrive as they made their way over to the table and sat down.

“Good morning, Carm-sexy. Sleep well?” Kirsch winked at Carmilla, knowing he was trying to point out the fact that Laura was practically on top of her at one point in the night, sound asleep.

“Slept great, Beefcake. Except at one point I was dreaming that a nail was being hammered into a piece of wood. Then I realized it was a bed smacking into the wall. Any idea why?”

Kirsch blushed, then got a huge grin on his face. “Let’s just say, sometimes a little rocking, helps me sleep better.” Carmilla lightly chuckled as she wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulder. Laura smiled. *I hope this is how it can really be someday. No nightmares, no thoughts. Just Laura and me with these dimwits on occasion.*

After a mid morning breakfast, everyone helped Kirsch clean up the place. It was left in a mess, but luckily only a few stains remained. Perry quickly worked on those as Lafontaine and Carmilla carried out all the trash bags and loaded them into the Kirsch’s truck.

“Why are we putting these here again?” Carmilla asked as she hauled two more bags into the bed of the truck.

“So he can take it the dump,” Lafontaine replied, throwing her own bags in.

“And why not leave it for the garbage truck?”

Lafontaine shrugged. “It’s easier.” They made a face like Carmilla should know that.

Carmilla shook her head and started walking back to the house. “Hey, Carmilla?”

“What’s up, Bio Nerd?” Carmilla asked while turning around. She saw Lafontaine standing against the truck with their head down. They scratched the back of their head and sighed.

“Laf? What’s going on?”

“Can I ask for some advice?”

“I’m not sure if I have any, but I can give it a try.”

Lafontaine smiled and bobbed their head. They exhaled again before they spoke.

“Do you think it’s a bad idea to tell my parents?”

“Oh. Laf, I think that’s your decision to make and none of us can tell you differently.”

“Everyone seems to be bothered by the idea. Or at least, that is how I felt last night when I mentioned it.”

“Well, I kind of killed your moment, so I apologize for that. However, you said they’ve been calling you Lafontaine, right?”

“Yeah. I mean my dad has been really good about it, and I can tell my mom is trying.”

“How did you tell them that?” Carmilla asked.
“Well, one day I came home from school and they were both home. Dad was cooking dinner while talking to my mom. They asked me to join them so I did, feeling a little tension in the air, but I ignored it. They said they had noticed that people were calling me Lafontaine or Laf now, instead of Susan or Sue. I explained that it’s a nickname that I like and it just sort of stuck with me. My dad asked if I would like them to use Lafontaine instead of Susan. I just nodded and said I would enjoy it. They both smiled and that was it.”

“Do they even know what non-binary is or what it means?”

“No. I doubt it, but in the past few weeks, I think the same Susan has only been said a couple times. It’s actually been kind of nice, but then I hear them talking to other people about me and they constantly only say Susan. Then it’s kind of like a kick in the gut.”

“Well I mean, they seem to be okay with calling you that. I don’t see what the harm could be in asking them to only refer to as Lafontaine. But I also don’t want to persuade you in a decision that can cause you pain. Like I said, you’re really the only one who can say something about it.”

Laf nodded again. “Can I ask you something else?”

“Sure thing.”

“That night, at the party, with Chelsea.”

“You already asked me this and I told you, it’s how you introduced yourself to me and-”

“No, no. Not that,” Lafontaine interrupted. “You stood up for me. No one has ever stood up for me. You didn’t even know me and you punched Chelsea square in the face for calling me Susan. Why?”

“Does it matter?”

“When you don’t know someone and didn’t even know that I prefered Lafontaine and then punched her for saying that, yeah I think it does.”

“Laf. I didn’t have friends. I just didn’t. I was blinded by rage and jealousy. She was all over Laura, and then when she called you that name, sent me over the edge. I had to protect my friend.”

“Thanks. And I want you to know that I have your back. With that information you gave us last night, I won’t let that happen to you again. Laura will mostly like claw someone’s eyes out if they tried and I would be right there to protect you.” Lafontaine smiled.

“Thanks, Laf. That means a lot me.” There was a quiet pause before Carmilla spoke again.

“Are we done with this Hallmark moment or do we need to find two other people to finish loading the trash into the truck?”

Lafontaine smiled, “Yeah, come on.”

They gathered the rest of the trash and everyone started to go home. Carmilla checked her phone as she got into Laura’s car and noticed it was dead.

“Will, is your phone on?”

“Dead,” he says, as he hops into the backseat of Laura’s Jeep.

“Cupcake, can I charge my phone?”
“Yeah, Sweetness.”

Carmilla plugged her phone into Laura’s car charger when Laura started the car. They waved bye to everyone still hanging out in the driveway. Carmilla took Laura’s hand in her’s as they drove. It was nice and peaceful. Carmilla felt comfortable, even with Will in the back. It was around one in the afternoon when Laura pulled into the Karnstein’s driveway.

“Thanks for the ride, Laura,” Will said as he got out of the car.

“No problem, Will.”

Carmilla just sat there, hand still glued to Laura’s.

“Carm?”

“Yeah.”

“I do have to get home.”

“Right, right. Sorry, Cupcake. Thanks for the ride.”

Carmilla started to get out when she felt Laura’s hand on her shoulder. “Excuse me, Miss. You forgot to pay your driver.”

Carmilla smiled and turned back towards Laura. Will was standing on the porch waiting for her, but she didn’t see anyone in the windows. She leaned in and kissed Laura.

“That’s better. I’ll see you tomorrow at church?”

“Sure thing, Cupcake. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Carmilla smiled and walked up to Will. She was happy she told the gang her biggest secret. She felt a weight lifted from her shoulders.

---------------------------------------------

“Where the hell, were you two?!”

Oh shit. Dad is pissed. Henry looked between Will and Carmilla. He was furious. His face was red with anger and his eyes wide with concern. He was standing taller than usual to get his point across.

“Well?!” he yelled.

“I told you I was staying at Kirsch’s, Dad. You said it was okay.” He seemed to calm down a little bit at that information.

“You’re correct. I forgot. You’re excused, William.” Will made his way up the stairs, to avoid getting in trouble. Carmilla started to make her way there, when Henry put a hand on his shoulder.

“You on the other hand.”


“Carmilla, you cannot spend a night alone with boys. It’s not safe.”
“Dad, it’s not like I was having sex with them and other girls were there too.”

“It doesn’t matter. We had no idea where you were or who you were with!”

“It was really late when people started to leave. Instead of Laura driving me back, I thought it would be safer to just stay there.”

“Carmilla Karnstein!”

Carmilla flinched at her mother’s voice from the top of the stairs. *Shit. Shit. Shit! And now I’m grounded!*

“Mother?”

“We knew William was staying with Wilson, dear, but that didn’t give you permission to.”

“I understand, Mother. But as I was just saying to Dad, it was late and I didn’t think it was wise for Laura to drive that late across town.”

“Of course, Ms. Hollis was there. And where did you sleep?”

“I slept on the living room floor along with everyone else!”

“Who was everyone else?” Lilita asked, grimacing.

“Me, Will, Laura, Lafontaine, Perry, Danny, Betty and a couple guys from the football team.”

“That’s a lot of girls on one floor,” Lilita said.

“Isn’t that a good thing?” Carmilla asked. “Shouldn’t I be sleeping in a room with girls instead of Kirsch?”

“Yeah, Lilita. I’m glad she wasn’t sleeping in a room with boys other than her brother,” Henry added. His voice was more calm now and the redness had gone down. He seemed to relax.

“Are you kidding me, Henry?! Our daughter, who has been seen kissing girls, should be sharing rooms with boys.”

“Lilita, she is 16 years old. She shouldn’t even be around a teenage boy, except for Will, after 10 pm!”

They did this a lot. They would discuss things about Carmilla as if she wasn’t standing there listening. She let them ramble while her mind started to drift back to Laura. She thought about how warm she felt with Laura wrapped around her body, snuggling up as close as she could.

“Carmilla!”

She snapped away at her thought of Laura kissing her neck in her sleep. “What?”

“Who did you sleep next to?!” Lilita asked, waiting for the answer.

Carmilla thought of two names as quickly as she could. “Will and Lafontaine!”

“Is that so? Are you lying to me Carmilla?”

“No, Mother. It was Will and Lafontaine.”
“Let’s just see about that, William?” Lilita yelled. He came to the top of stairs to see Carmilla cornered by Henry and Lilita.

“William, Darling? Do you remember who Carmilla slept next to last night?”

“Yeah. Me and Lafontaine, why?” He said it like it was the truest thing ever spoken. He didn’t stutter his words like he usually did when he lied.

“See?” Carmilla asked.

Henry shook his head. “Doesn’t matter. Carmilla, I love you. But next time, you better call me or text me where you are.”

“I’m sorry, Dad. My phone died and Will’s did too. Like I said, it was late.”

“I told you, Kid. I always wait.”

“I’m sorry I made you worry.”

“Go to your room, Young Lady and do your homework,” Lilita spoke.

“But.”

“No buts, Carmilla! You stayed out without telling us. I know you think you’re almost an adult, but you still live under this roof. Now upstairs, both of you!”

They both turned to head upstairs, but then heard Henry clear his throat. Will and Carmilla turned to look at him.

“This is your warning, Kids. Do this again and you’re both grounded. Understood?”

They both nodded their head and made their way upstairs. Carmilla pulled Will into her room.

“How did you know what names to say?” She was smiling.

“Like I went to my room. I was standing at the top of the stairs listening. I had a feeling Mother was going to ask certain questions, so I waited.” He smiled and patted himself on the shoulder. “I’m quite proud of myself,” he said, wiping off his shoulders.

“As am I, Baby Bro.”

They smiled and Will turned to leave. Once he got to the door, Carmilla spoke.

“Hey, Will?” He turned to look at her with his hand in the doorknob, but the door still closed.

“Yeah?”

“Thanks for everything.”

“It was just a little lie, Carmilla. A fiblet, if you will.”

“No. I mean for everything. For being there when I got back, for trying to keep me on track and for always having my back, even though that Christian rock music needs to stop.”

He smiled. “Well we can’t all listen to the deep wonders of singers you listen to.”

She chuckled. “It’s good shit Will and you know it.”
“Whatever you say, Kitty.”

She smiled and he slowly exited her room. She grabbed her phone to see she had a text from Laura.

**The Rambler:** Well thanks to your sleep over idea, I'm now grounded.

**Carmilla:** Why?

**The Rambler:** Because he drove around looking for me and then remembered he could track my phone. He saw that it was at Kirsch’s house and was not pleased that I stayed a boy’s house when his parents weren't home.

Carmilla kicked her boots off and laid down on her bed. She sighed. It felt so good to lay on her bed instead of the floor.

**Carmilla:** Ah. I got in trouble too, but the minister only gave me a warning.

**The Rambler:** Well lucky you, Sweetness. But dad works tomorrow so it's not like he's even going to be home. Do you wanna come over?

**Carmilla:** I'll have to ask my mother. It's most likely going to be a strong no though, Cupcake. I will let you know though.

**The Rambler:** :( Okay.

**Carmilla:** No pouting, Cupcake. If I can't kiss it away, then it is no good.

There was a knock on Carmilla’s. “Yeah?”

Her parents walked in and she immediately sat up, putting her phone behind her.

“I thought I told you to work on your homework,” Lilita said.

“Sorry, Mother. I'll get on that.”

“That's not why we're here, even though you should listen to your mother.”

Henry sat down next to Carmilla on her bed. Lilita looked around and tsked. “Carmilla, you really need to clean your room. It's filthy. That includes dusting young lady.”

Henry sighed. “Again, not the reason we're here. Kid, your Mother and I have been talking.”

Carmilla stomach started to turn in knots and her breathing got heavier.

“I'm going back. I'm going back for staying at Kirsch’s. Fuck! Fuck! Keep it together. Don't let her see you cry.”

“As you know, Kiddo, your mother just got that new job marketing for the town council. She thinks driving you kids to and from school in the morning and afternoon will become too much of a hassle.”

Carmilla looked at Henry, confused.

“And I figured the bus would not be an option for you.” He smiled at her.

She chuckled and felt some of her nerves settle.

“You got that right, Pops!”
“So I figured tomorrow after church, since the parking lot is big enough, I would give you a driving lesson. You already got your permit in the city and I talked to Mr. Hollis. He said you wouldn't have to retake that and he told me where the driving test takes place. So when you're ready, we can take you down there to get your license. Sound good?”

Carmilla smiled. “Yeah, Dad. Thanks!”

“There's more, Darling,” Lilita added.

“Yes, Mother?”

Lilita gave her a genuine smile. Carmilla hadn't seen that smile since Will was a child. “Well you know, Grandfather left money for all of us when he passed those few years ago.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Well your father and I made sure to check all our finances. We made sure to set aside all the money we figured for college and other things. So I'm going to use the money he left me to buy you a new car.”

“What?!” Carmilla jumped up.

“Well a new, used car, Sweetheart! For your birthday in a couple weeks.”

Henry was smiling. Lilita was actually smiling. Carmilla gave Lilita a hug. “Thank you, Mother! Thank you so, so much!”

“Well I think I've just died. I haven't seen you two hug like that in a long time,” Henry said, smiling.

Carmilla smiled and moved to hug Henry. “Thanks, Dad!”

“Of course, Kid. So tomorrow, after church?”

“Sure thing, Dad! Is it possible that afterwards I could hangout with Laura? Just get lunch?”

“Sure thing, Kid. If she doesn't mind waiting.”

“I'm sure she won't.”

“Lilita, you alright with that?”

Carmilla stilled and looked at her mother. There was no trace of a smile, but she nodded.

“Just make sure you clean your room and do your homework.” Her voice was strict, but Carmilla felt like there was a little kindness behind it. It made her felt odd, but she didn't fight it.

“Thanks, Mother.”

“I trust you, my Sweet Girl.”

With that, they headed out of her room. She got back to her text conversation with Laura. She didn't have homework and cleaning her room wouldn't take that long.

**Carmilla:** Guess who is getting a car!!!!! If I pass a driving test, of course.

**The Rambler:** Wait, what?!
Carmilla: My dad is going to give me a lesson after church tomorrow and if you don't mind waiting, we can get food afterwards?

The Rambler: Sounds like the plan, Sweetness. Dad’s calling. We'll talk later.

Sunday School and church went by rather quickly, but getting everyone to leave the church yard was a different story. Henry and Lilita drove separate cars that morning so Lilita and Will could go home, instead of having to watch a driving lesson. Carmilla was grateful. She didn't think she could take those cold eyes of her mother’s staring at her while she tried to learn.

Carmilla was waiting for Henry to come outside. She had already changed into a pair of purple jeans and a black t-shirt. She matched a black and white flannel over it with black converses. She was staring away at the road when she heard Henry come out.

“Ready, Kid?”

“Throw me the keys, Pops.”

They practiced for about 30 minutes when Laura’s jeep pulled into the parking lot. Carmilla braked abruptly because she got nervous. Henry got caught on the seat belt.

“Okay, Kid. Her car is on the other side of the lot so no need to stomp the brakes and give me whiplash.”

“Sorry, Dad. I got nervous.”

“It's okay, let's just drive around a few more times.”

Carmilla nodded and started to feel very nervous. Okay. Be cool. Be cool. You got this and you have to look good. Look concentrated for your father, but nonchalant for Laura. Don't look nervous. Be cool.

“Carmilla, what are you doing with your face?”

Carmilla looked at him. “What?”

“Well you're just sitting there going from smiling to lazy eyes to a little panic. Like this.”

Henry mocked Carmilla’s faces and gestures. Carmilla just started laughing and put the car into drive.

“I was not doing that!”

“Sure you weren’t, Kid. Let's just drive over to Laura. Show her your skills.”

She drove over to Laura with ease. Laura was smiling at her as Carmilla stepped out of the car.

“Looking good, Carm.”

“Thanks.” They smiled at each other.

“Well, hello again Laura.”

“Hi, Pastor Karnstein. Thank you for letting me take Carmilla to lunch today.”
“Not a problem at all. I’m glad you two are getting along so well. Just make sure you’re home before it gets too late, Kid. Do you have any homework?”

“No sir.”

“Okay, then just make sure you’re home around 8 or 9? Sound good?”

“Sure does. Thanks, Dad.”

Laura and Carmilla climbed into the Jeep as Henry got into the driver's seat of his car. He pulled away first and was waiting to turn onto the road when he noticed Laura’s car wasn’t moving. He was going to turn around to ask if something was wrong, when he peaked through the rear window. He saw Laura and Carmilla smiling at each other. Laura’s hand was on Carmilla’s cheek, holding it. He saw them exchange a quick kiss before separating. He smiled, put the car in drive and drove off.

“You don’t think he saw us, do you?” Carmilla asked as Laura started to pull out of the driveway.

“No, Carm. We’re fine.”

“But he didn’t move. He sat there. I swear I saw him looking.”

“Would he have done something if he did?”

Carmilla thought for a moment. “I honestly don’t know.”

“Well let’s not dwell on it right now. I have a few tests this week and I’m also grounded, so I probably won’t really see you again until next weekend. Can we just enjoy our afternoon?”

“Of course, Cupcake.”

Laura pulled out onto the main road when her phone started ringing. “Can you answer that, Carm?”

Carmilla didn’t register anything and answered the phone immediately. “Laura’s phone.”

“Laura?” She could tell it was Rich’s voice.

“Oh, hi Mr. Hollis-”

Laura grabbed the phone out of her hand before anything else was said. She slowly pulled over on the side of the road. Carmilla could only hear Laura’s side of the phone conversation. “Hey, Dad… No I pulled over… Dad I’m not stupid, I know you would be mad if I was driving and talking on the phone… I know, Dad. I know I’m grounded. Carmilla asked me for a ride because she couldn’t get a hold of anyone else… Dad! Okay. I’m just going to drive her to the mall where she needed to go.”

Carmilla made a face at her. *The mall? Really?* Laura rolled her eyes and made a talking gesture with her hand.

“Dad. Dad. How late do you have to work tonight? I’m asking so I know if I need to make you dinner or not… Okay, I’ll make sure to leave you something in the fridge. Be safe, Dad.”

Carmilla could see the sheepish look on Laura’s face again. She grabbed Laura’s hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. Laura smiled at her.

“Okay, Dad. I promise, after I drop Carmilla off, I’m going straight home… Okay… I love you too. Bye.”
Laura puts her phone in the cup holder and closes her eyes for a minute. Her hand is still locked with Carmilla’s.

“You okay, Cupcake?”

“Yeah, good.” Her voice was small and tired.

“You sure?”

She opened her eyes and smiled. “I’m sure. Do you mind if we get some food and then head to my place to watch a movie or something? I have a feeling my dad is going to drive by the house on an hourly basis to check to see if my Jeep is there.”

“Sure. Where do you wanna eat?”

“Chinese?”

“Drive the way, Cupcake.”

45 minutes later they were pulling into Laura’s driveway with a ton of Chinese food in hand. Laura went ahead and bought some for her dad when he would return home later that night. They laid out everything in the small kitchen island to have their own mini buffet. Vegetable Lo Mein, sweet and sour chicken, chicken and broccoli, white rice and egg rolls. They loaded their plates and made way to the small, comfortable living room, taking seats on the large couch. The last time Carmilla was there, they only stayed in Laura’s room so it was nice to venture out a little more into the living room.

After eating for a few moments in silence, Laura got up and walked towards the television. It was a large flat screen that hung on the wall.

“What do you want to watch, Sweetness?”

“Whatever your heart desires, Cupcake.”

“You’re going to regret that statement.”

“Why’s that?”

Laura pulled out Toy Story and put it in the DVD player.

“Are you kidding me? Toy Story?”

“What’s wrong with that? It’s a great movie and it’s hilarious!”

Carmilla just shook her head. “Are we 8?”

“Please, Carm. I’ll make it worth your while.” Laura smiled, innocently at her. She tried to give the best puppy dog eyes she could. Carmilla exhaled.

“Fine, but I’m going to make fun of it and you the whole time.”

“Whatever helps you get through it, Sweetness.”

About halfway through the movie, Carmilla was extremely bored. She was barely following the plot of the movie anymore. Sure, she had watched it with Will all those years ago, but nothing was holding her interest other than Laura. She took a quick glance at Laura, then felt the couch shift. Laura took their plates and made their way to kitchen. Carmilla tried to get off the couch.
“No. You stay and watch the movie. I’m just going to rinse these off and put them away before my dad gets home and I have forgotten.”

Carmilla nodded. This movie is boring. Like I like it, which I would never admit out loud, but I rather being kissing Laura or at least holding her hand. Something to distract myself from having to actually watch this children’s movie. It’s actually kind of sweet that Laura wanted to watch it though. Maybe I should try to enjoy it for her sake.

Laura walked back into the room and over to Carmilla. Her heart started pounding as she watched Laura sway her hips towards her. Laura sat down on Carmilla’s lap and started kissing her. Carmilla hummed into the kiss causing Laura to smile. Carmilla wrapped her hands around Laura’s waist pulling her closer, while Laura started rubbing her hands up and down Carmilla’s side. Carmilla could feel the goosebumps starting to rise and her breathing was becoming ragged. She quickly started kissing Laura’s neck so she could catch her breath.

“You smell good, Cupcake.”

“Thank you,” Laura’s voice was ragged. She was breathing hard and whimpering the closer Carmilla got to her ear. Carmilla noticed and decided to tease the spot just below her ear. Laura gasped which made Carmilla smile. She kissed it one more time before going back to Laura’s lips. Laura started to push Carmilla down on the couch, while Laura was still on top of her. Carmilla smiled again. She liked the feeling of Laura on top of her.

Laura started to kiss down Carmilla’s neck and collarbone. Carmilla let out breathless moans before she pulled Laura back up for a kiss. Laura’s hands were ghosting under Carmilla’s shirt, moving closer to her breasts. She put her hands on top of Laura’s to stop them.

“I’m not ready, Laura.”

Laura immediately sat up, still on Carmilla’s lap. “I’m sorry, Carm. I hope I didn’t push.”

“No, no, no, no.” Carmilla pulled Laura back down onto her so she could hold her. Laura cuddled into her side. “I’m just not ready to go all the way. I want to, eventually, just not now. You didn’t push, Cupcake.”

Laura nodded. Carmilla used her hand to lift Laura’s head so they could make eye contact.

“You’re good, Cupcake.” Laura smiled, and kissed Carmilla.

“Can we take a nap?” Laura asked. “I always feel so comfortable next to you.”

“That sounds great, actually.”

They drifted off to sleep on the couch entangled in each other’s arms.

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Carmilla awoke to light sound of keys jingling. “Shit, Cupcake. Get up.”

She frantically started to straighten herself out.

“Hm? What?” They heard keys hit the ground of the porch. “Oh shit, my dad’s home!”

“What are we going to do?”

“Get in the pantry. I’ll get him upstairs, because he’ll shower and then I can get you home. Quick.”

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Carmilla jumped into the closet next to the living room entrance. It was a tight squeeze. There were a lot of shelves with cans and other food supplies on them. She stood as still as possible so she could listen to Laura and Rich through the door.

“Hi, Dad.”

“Who’s here?” He asked, with a little amusement in his voice.

“What? No one is here, Dad. I was just watching Toy Story.”

“I heard a lot of shuffling.” Henry started walking towards the kitchen.

“I just wanted to make sure I picked up the house and lost track of time.”

He smiled at her. “And that is a lot of Chinese food.”

“I figured if I bought a lot, I could save some for you as well. I put the beef and broccoli in the fridge.”

“But there’s chicken and broccoli here. And you and I both prefer beef than chicken, when it comes to Chinese food.”

“Well you know, you have switch it up every once in awhile to see if your tastes have changed.”

“Uh huh.”

The door quickly opened to the closet and Carmilla turned to look at a shelf. “Hello, Carmilla.”

“Uh, hi, Mr. Hollis. I was actually just looking for some flour. Mother is trying to make some brownies and we ran out.”

“Must be hard to find that in the dark,” He said, humorously.

“It is, but I’m not seeing any. Thanks for your time and I will be heading out now.”

“How was the chicken?” He asked. Carmilla was happy to see a smile on his face.

“It was very good, sir. Thank you.”

“Do you need a lift home?”

“Oh no. I’m just about a 10 minute walk from here, I think I can manage. It was great to see again, Sir. Laura, I will see you tomorrow. Have a good night.”

Carmilla quickly made her way to the door. “Laura, give her a ride home please,” Henry said. He was still amused.

Carmilla stilled and saw Laura smile. “Thanks, Daddy,” she said with a quick kiss to his cheek.

“But you come right back and no lingering.”

“I’ll make sure of it, Mr. Hollis.”

“Have a good night, Carmilla.”

“Same to you, Sir.”
Laura drove Carmilla home. It was a little after 8 when they pulled into Carmilla’s driveway.

“Thanks for the ride, Cutie.”

“No, Cupcake?”

“Well you know, you have switch it up every once in awhile to see if your tastes have changed,” Carmilla teased.

“I was under pressure.”

“I could have come up with a better reason than that.”

“Oh, like looking for flour in a dark cupboard?” Laura laughed, lightly.

“Whatever. I think it was better than yours.”

“Whatever helps you sleep at night, Sweetness. See you tomorrow?”

“8 o’clock at the most beautiful girl’s locker.”

“So mine?”

“Where else?”

They gave each other a quick kiss. “One more,” Laura said, pulling Carmilla back into her.

They broke apart with a smile. “One more,” Laura said again and Carmilla gave her a few quick pecks before backing away completely and getting out of the car.

She saw Laura pouting through the windshield and walked to the driver side window that was already down.

“One more, Cupcake.” They gave each other another quick kiss and Carmilla left, waving to Laura.

_We’re gross, but I wouldn’t have it any other way._

Chapter End Notes

Big ol' shout out to Kristin for helping me edit!
Carmilla had gotten to school a little earlier than usual Monday morning. It was Lilita’s first day at her new job and she wanted to make sure she got there early for her big day. Carmilla couldn’t understand why, and when she asked she received a glare from her mother. “Because, Carmilla, when you arrive late on the first day of a new job, it is disrespectful. I plan on making a good impression because I’ve worked too hard not to have this job.” Carmilla regretted asking the question and rolled her eyes as she got into the passenger seat, Will getting in behind her.

While on her way to school, she pulled out her phone, sending a quick text to Laura. She tried to keep the screen away from Lilita’s face.

Carmilla: Hey, Cupcake. Mom is starting her new job today so I’ll be at school early. Do you think you can get there earlier than 8?

The Rambler: I’ll try, Sweetness, but I have to pick up Lafontaine today. Apparently their parents decided that they needed to also get to work early today. Must be something in the water. But I’ll see you as soon as possible.

Carmilla tucked her phone back into her pocket as she and Will separated inside the school. She made her way to her own locker first, deciding to put away the books she wouldn’t need until later. Once she was finished, she made her way over to her favorite spot.

Carmilla leaned against Laura’s locker with one leg bent at the knee, with her foot resting against the lockers. Her head was back and her eyes were closed. It was still too early for students to be there and the silence creeped Carmilla out. Whispered tones and soft walking sounds could be heard from every direction and it made her uneasy. She could hear the sound of heels coming up the hallway until she heard a very specific low chuckle she had grown to loathe.

“Well, well, well. What do we have here?”

Carmilla sighed. She didn’t want to deal with this right now. “What do you want, Mattie?”

“What I always want. My locker.”

Carmilla pushed herself off as she usually did and moved to the side of the lockers resuming the same position she had been in before. She closed her eyes again with a sharp exhale. It was too early to be awake, let alone too early to deal with Mattie.

“What are you doing here so early, anyways?” Mattie asked.

“My mother had to drop me off early, what’s it to you?”
“I don’t understand the attitude, Darling. It’s just a simple question. Someone needs a nap.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes and was relieved when silence filled the air again. After a few moments, Mattie spoke.

“You know, it's a little pathetic how much you stand here and wait for her,” Mattie said, opening her locker. Carmilla looked down to see Mattie kneeling in front of her locker. She was transferring books from her bag and switching them with other books from her locker.

“Oh and why is that?”

“You're not the first girl to be head over heels for Ms. Laura Hollis and you definitely won't be the last. I think she gets some sort of a sick twisted joy out of having girls wait for her by her locker. Which is strange considering she isn't out. Not that, that matters, everyone knows.”

“Knows what, exactly?”

“That she has decided to go down the merry gay way. Down the rainbow road. Either of those work for you?”

“Why would they?”

“Oh because I know how much you like her.” Mattie smiled mischievously.

“Yes, Mattie. You used to be friends. You saw us make out. Big deal. Are you going to hang that over my head now? What more do you want from us?” Carmilla's tone sounded bored. She just wanted Mattie to be quiet.

Mattie shut her locker and stood face to face with Carmilla.

“I want nothing, Dear. I'm just trying to keep you level headed. There are more girls out there who are much better than Laura Hollis. Perhaps you would be wise to remember that.”

“Like I would listen to you. You've done nothing but torment me about her since I got here.”

“Oh, Sweetie. You're so cute when you get frustrated.” Mattie patted Carmilla’s nose and smiled. Carmilla took a step back and glared at Mattie.

“Is there a point you’re trying to make?” Carmilla asked. Mattie exhaled.

“Look, I've only seen Chelsea stand besides Laura’s locker until she transferred schools. Then Danny came along and did the same. It's no rumor that Laura has been with a lot of different girls. She practically begged her dad for her car and I don't think it was to be able to drive to and from school. She used to tell Rich that she was staying at my house for the weekend. We were very close so he believed her, but she was actually driving to gay bars with a fake ID. Or at least, so I heard.”

Carmilla didn't know what to say. She was dumbfounded by Mattie's words. She shook it off. This is Mattie.

“Why would I believe you?”

“You would be wise to. She was my best friend after all. Ta Ta, Darling.”

Mattie smiled and walked away. Carmilla was so confused. Laura had only talked about Chelsea because she saw her at that party. Lafontaine had told her about Danny, but there was nothing about other girls. As much as Carmilla hated to admit it, she actually started to believe Mattie. She has been
very private. I mean I have too, but I told her about Ell. It took me a while, but I did. They only reason I hadn’t is because I was trying to convince myself that I was straight. She has had plenty of opportunity to tell me about it.

She felt a kiss to her cheek and turned to look at Laura.

“Hey, Sweetness.”

“Oh, hey, Cupcake.” Carmilla didn't look at Laura. She usually started talking as soon as Laura walked up to her, but she stayed quiet; her thoughts running wild.

“You okay? You seem broody.” Laura looked at Carmilla with worry.

Carmilla decided to ignore her thoughts and Mattie’s words that were on repeat in her head. “All good, Laura.”

Laura smiled and Carmilla couldn't ignore the urge she was feeling. She wanted to make sure she didn’t lose Laura. She didn't even look around. She cupped Laura's face and kissed her. Laura immediately kissed her back. It was quick and sweet, but Laura quickly pulled back.

“Whoa, Carmilla. We're at school.”

“Sorry. Sorry. I just… I had to.”

“Now I'm worried.”

“Why?”

“You don’t kiss me in public, unless we’re in my car. I don’t know. You don’t seem like yourself right now.”

Carmilla sighed. “I'm sorry. I was just distracted when you got here because I was too much in my head and wanted to give you a proper good morning.”

“Well good morning to you too.” Laura smiled.

Carmilla grabbed Laura's hand and dragged her to the nearest bathroom.

“Carm?” Laura giggled. “Carm what are you doing? Where are we going?”

She walked to the handicap stall and pulled Laura in. “Carm!” Laura laughed again and Carmilla smiled before pulling Laura close to her. She cupped her face and kissed her just as she had before. Laura quickly deepened the kiss wrapping her arms around Carmilla's shoulders as Carmilla's arms wrapped around her waist pulling Laura closer to her.

At the feel of Laura's tongue, Carmilla moaned softly. Laura was quick to pull away.

“Shh. You have to be quiet, Sweetness or this won't work,” Laura whispered.

“Sorry,” Carmilla whispered back, pulling Laura back into her. They kissed each other until they heard girls entering the bathroom. They stopped almost instantly with Laura still wrapped in Carmilla's arms.

“We'll wait them out and then leave,” Laura whispered in Carmilla's ear. She nipped on Carmilla's ear. It sent a chill down Carmilla's spine causing her to smile. She leant down and kissed Laura's neck causing a loud moan to drag out of Laura's mouth. She quickly covered her mouth as Carmilla
pulled away with a low laugh.

“Did you guys hear that?” They heard one of the girls in the bathroom say. They could hear footsteps walking down in front of the stalls.

“Run?” Carmilla asked.

Laura nodded and they quickly bolted out of the stall and made their exit, giggling.

“What a shocker! Laura Hollis making out in the bathroom!” Carmilla heard the girl say as they reached the hallway. She stopped laughing and turned to Laura.

“What?” Laura asked like she didn't hear the girl.

“What did she mean?” Carmilla asked.

“What did who mean?”

“That girl. What did she mean ‘surprise Laura making out in the bathroom’?”

“It's nothing, Carmilla.”

The warning bell for class rang as they stood in the middle of the hallway. Students passed by them to get to class, but they didn't move.

“Laura? What did she mean?”

“Carm, it's nothing, I promise. Let's get to class before we're late.”

Laura quickly started walking, but Carmilla didn't budge. She stayed and watched Laura. Laura turned around quickly and walked back up to her. The hallway was beginning to empty.

“Carm? It's really nothing.”

“It doesn't seem to be,” Carmilla said. She looked at the floor. She couldn't look at Laura.

“Carmilla, let's just get to class and I promise we'll talk later.”

“Why won't you just tell me? I'll understand.”

“Because we will be late to class. Please?”

Carmilla nodded and slowly followed Laura to their English class. She felt uneasy and knew something wasn't right. I'll ask Lafontaine or Kirsch about it. Hopefully they'll tell me.

They made it to their class just as the final bell was ringing. They took their seats next to each other at the back of the classroom, as their teacher started to hand out the new book they were going to be reading. Carmilla looked down to see To Kill a Mockingbird being placed on her desk.

They were told to read the first two chapters in class and were given questions to answer as they read. Carmilla quickly got to work, trying to keep her mind off the girl sitting next to her. After a few moments of successfully working, Carmilla felt a quick tap on her shoulder as Laura quickly put a piece of paper on her desk. It was a note.

“Carmilla, please don't be upset. I promise it's honestly not what you think. Will you at least look at me? I can't concentrate because I know you're upset and it's making me upset. I promise I will
explain, but please don't be upset. I'll make it better.”

Carmilla read it a couple times. *It's not what I think?* She looked up and made eye contact with Laura. Laura’s eyes were pleading and she did really seemed concerned. Carmilla was confused by what Mattie said and then the girl in the bathroom. Not to mention when Elsie called her “Laura’s new toy” and Betty said she really enjoyed a challenge when she found Carmilla was the minister’s kid.

“Please,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla didn't want her to be upset because she wasn't mad. She just wanted to know what all these comments meant.

“Okay,” she whispered back with a weak, sad smile. Laura gave her one in return and went back to her work. Carmilla noticed her staring at her book, but could tell she wasn't working. Laura’s gaze was frozen on the page, not moving. Carmilla quickly reached across the aisle and grabbed Laura's hand, giving it a quick squeeze before returning her hand back to her book. They both worked for the rest of the class in silence.

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The bell rang and they quickly gathered their things and walked out of the room together. They didn't speak as they made their way to their group of friends on the other end of the school. As they approached their group, they could hear laughter and everyone had smiles on their faces.

“Uh oh! Trouble in paradise?” Danny asked watching Laura and Carmilla walk up silently. She had a smirk on her face.

“Zip it, Xena,” Carmilla replied, her mouth in a frown.

“We're fine. Just a rough morning,” Laura said, taking a glance at Carmilla. Carmilla was looking at the student’s artwork that was hanging on the walls outside of the art classrooms.

“Did you guys already break up? That's a new record, Hollis,” Danny added. She still had her know it all smirk on her face and it made Carmilla's blood boil. *New record, Hollis*, was on repeat in Carmilla’s head and it grabbed her attention as she quickly looked back at the group.

“Danny, so not cool, Bro!” Kirsch glared at Danny.

“And not helping,” Laura muttered under her breath.

Carmilla quickly wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulders. “We didn't break up, Big Red. Not that it would be any of your business regardless. It's like Laura said. It's been a rough morning so why don't you mind your own business and go make out with your girlfriend!”

“Okay. Don't bite my head off or anything,” Danny retaliated.

Carmilla sneered and kissed Laura's temple. The bell rang and she looked at Laura.

“We'll talk later, Cupcake.”

Laura gave Carmilla a small smile at the nickname.

“Okay,” Laura said. Carmilla could see her worried expression.

“Kirsch, block us for a second?” Carmilla asked as she walked Laura to a corner. His body was large
enough to hide behind.

“We’ll talk after school. Okay, Laura?”

Laura was looking at the floor, but she nodded her head. Carmilla lifted her chin and gave her a small smile. “Everything is okay. Okay? Let's just talk after school.”

Laura nodded again and with Kirsch blocking them, she gave Laura a quick kiss. “I'll see you at lunch?” Laura asked, her eyes still closed from their kiss.

“Yes, Cupcake. Save me a seat.” Carmilla gave her hand a quick squeeze before they separated.

“Come on, Beefcake! Take me to class!”

“You got it Carm-sexy! See you later, Laura.” Kirsch raised his hand for a high five which Laura slapped back. Carmilla smiled at her and then departed with Kirsch. The only image she could see through the students was Laura still standing in the corner before disappearing amongst the other students.

She sighed loudly, her nerves getting the better of her.

“You sure you're okay?” Kirsch asked, pulling a slow walking Carmilla to class.

“Yeah. Fine,” Carmilla replied. Her voice was distant and she wouldn't make eye contact with him.

“Carmilla?” He asked, pulling her off to the side of the hallway. She stood there, looking at the ground. She didn't want to look at him or anyone for that matter. She exhaled sharply before making herself look at him.

“Come on,” she said, “We'll be late for class.” She tried to tug him along with her, but Kirsch stood his ground.

“Kirsch, come on! We're gonna be late!” She pleaded.

“Not until you tell me what's wrong.”

“Nothing is wrong! I had a rough morning and that's it!” Carmilla's voice was raising. She was getting defensive and started to put up her guard.

“Shit, did she hit you?” Carmilla was confused.

“What? Who?”

“Your mother. Did she hit you?”

“What?! No! I told you she only did that, the one time.”

“So what is it then?”

“Kirsch!” The bell rang and they were officially late to class.

“Do you wanna go somewhere and talk? We're already late. They wouldn’t know the difference.”

“We can't, Kirsch. We both are horrible at math and you know us skipping one class would put us behind. Can we please get to class?” She was begging him to go. She wanted to ask him about Laura, but couldn't stand the thought of it.
“Okay, but this isn’t over,” he said. They ran to their classroom and accidentally slammed the door open.

“What a way to make an appearance, Lovebirds, but you're late,” Coach Carr said. The entire class started to laugh and Carmilla glared, making her way to her seat.

“Sorry, Coach. Got held up,” Kirsch offered.

“Yes, getting here from the vending machines can be tricky,” Coach Carr added, pointing to Kirsch’s seat while the rest of the class laughed again.

Carmilla ignored the ridiculous people around her and remained distracted all throughout class. She couldn’t concentrate on a single thing Coach Carr was saying. She tried to focus, knowing that math was her worst subject, but the idea of taking notes didn’t seem appealing. She just sat there, thinking about Laura and what all these comments meant. Kirsch nudged her a couple of times, shaking her from her thoughts, but they soon settled back in.

The bell rang and Carmilla didn’t move. “Bro?” Kirsch asked, lightly waving his hand in front of her.

She quickly snapped out of her haze with a light shake. She gathered her things and they made their way out of the classroom.

Before Carmilla could stop herself, she heard herself blurt out her thought.

“What was Laura like before?” She asked Kirsch. He looked bewildered before he spoke.

“What do you mean?”

“What was she like before me? Before she met me?”

“Pretty much the same way she is now. Is that what’s bothering you?”

“Look, Mattie said some things to me about girls waiting for Laura at her locker and—”

“Whoa. Carmilla, you can’t listen to Mattie. She throws Laura under the bus all the time. Talk to Laura.”

“But I want to know—”

“Stop. Listen to me. Mattie has done a lot of things to hurt Laura. It’s like she has a personal vendetta against her for whatever reason. If Laura found out you were asking me questions about Mattie, she’d rip yours and my head off. Talk to Laura.”

Carmilla exhaled. “Fine.” She left him and started walking towards her next class. *I guess Laf will be my better option in bio.*

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Carmilla made it to her biology class and sat down next to Lafontaine.

“What’s up Bio Nerd?”

“You tell me. What’s up with you and Laura?”

“Nothing, but can I ask you something?” Carmilla was interrupted by their biology teacher.
“Okay class, I’m passing out your assignment. We will have a lab today, so pick a partner and head to your stations.”

Lafontaine and Carmilla grabbed a sheet as they moved back to the lab stations. Carmilla was happy to be partnered with Lafontaine. They did all the work, while Carmilla sat there and wrote down the answers to the questions.

“What did you want to ask me?” Lafontaine asked, as soon as they gathered all their supplies.

“What was Laura like before me?” Carmilla pulled out one of the stools and sat down. She stared at Lafontaine to see if they would make a face. But Lafontaine just continued to work.

“What do you mean before you?”

“You know, girlfriends and stuff before me,” Carmilla was growing impatient. She just wanted to have some insight, worried about her conversation with Laura later.

“I don’t know what you mean, but she’s always been her goofy, nerdy self. Her confidence has grown which is great, but she’s still her.”

“I mean Mattie was say-”

“Don’t talk to Mattie,” Lafontaine interrupted. “She could care less about Laura and she always like to stir drama into this school. Why are you even talking to her?”

“Her locker is under Laura’s,” Carmilla stated as if it was obvious.

“Of course it is. She does that every year. She makes sure her locker is near Laura’s. She’s a tormented soul that one. I can’t figure out if it’s because she isn’t friends with Laura anymore and that makes her jealous or she actually hates Laura.”

“Well look, Mattie said that I shouldn’t-”

“Seriously, stop. Talk to Laura.”

“That’s what Kirsch said.”

“So then there should be no arguing. Talk to Laura.”

Carmilla just nodded her head. She knew if she tried to say anything, Lafontaine would just interrupt her. It didn’t help her ease, but maybe they were right. She should just talk to Laura.

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After biology, Carmilla and Lafontaine made their way to lunch. Lafontaine was talking eagerly about something she had read on the internet, while they grabbed their food. Carmilla grabbed a chicken sandwich and fries. They made their way to the table and Carmilla sat down next to Laura, while Lafontaine smiled at Perry.

Everyone around the table was talking and sharing stories except for Carmilla and Laura. They remained quietly eating as Danny and Betty joined the table. They sat across from Laura and Carmilla. Carmilla couldn’t help but notice the amount of distance between herself and Laura. It made her sad thinking Laura was sad.

After receiving a look from Danny, Carmilla placed her hand on Laura’s thigh giving her a little tug to come closer. Laura looked at her and Carmilla smiled. Laura inched over and Carmilla lazily left
her hand draped on Laura’s thigh. Laura rested her hands in her lap, while Carmilla interlaced their fingers, giving Laura a tight grip. She wanted Laura not to worry, even though her thoughts would not subside.

They slowly started to join the conversation when the bell rang, and they were dismissed for their last two classes of the day.

“Carmilla, wanna walk to class together?” Perry asked, but Lafontaine gave her a sharp poke to the ribs. “I mean, I’ll see you there,” she quickly added, poking Lafontaine back with a light giggle.

“Yeah, I’ll see you there,” Carmilla said, watching them leave.

“Carm?” She looked over to see a sheepish look on Laura’s face.

“Yeah, Cupcake?”

“My dad is working again tonight. Do you think you could come over after school? That way we can talk.”

“Sure thing Laura. I’ll call my Dad after school, and see if he says it’s okay. Meet you by your locker?”

Laura nodded and walked away. Carmilla couldn’t help, but feel lonely for the first time in a long time. The way she felt in the city. I can’t wait until this horrible day is over.

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The end of the day couldn’t come fast enough. As soon as Carmilla left her classroom, she pulled out her phone, making her way to Laura’s locker. She dialed her dad’s number and waited for him to pick up.

“This better not be you calling me to say you’ve been expelled, Young Lady,” Henry said, through the phone.

“Check the time, Old Man. School is over,” she replied.

“I am not old. I am aging gracefully and you know it.”

“Okay, Dad.”

“What can I help you with?”

“Do you mind if I go over to Laura’s for a little bit? She had a rough day and wants to talk.”

“How much homework do you have?”

“Just a chapter for English, a few problems for math and a small writing prompt for creative writing.”

“Well the only thing that concerns me on that list is your math homework, but we can work on that together. Just be home by 7.”

Carmilla smiled. “Thanks, Dad. I love you.”

“I love you too, Kid. Tell Laura I hope she feels better.”

“Will do. Bye, Dad.”
“Bye, Carmilla.”

She ended the call as she approached Laura’s locker. Laura wasn’t there yet, but that didn’t surprise her. She had her last class with Lafontaine and Kirsch. They seemed to always walk slow as they talked about whatever they felt the need to talk about at the end of the day.

“Well, not surprised, yet again.” Carmilla rolled her eyes. It was Mattie’s fault that this whole thing had started. She was fine with letting her words ago until someone else said something and it all spiraled. Mattie managed to get into Carmilla’s head with ease.

“Back off, Mattie.” Carmilla’s mouth was drawn tight and she refused to make eye contact with her.

“Well, Darling, since you’re the one who is constantly sulking around my locker, I don’t really think that is the way to talk to me.”

That caught Carmilla’s attention and she stared at her. “And spreading rumors about Laura is the way to talk to me?” Carmilla balled her hands into fists. The weight of the day was slowly crashing down on her and she just wanted to get out of there to talk to Laura.

“Oh, those aren’t rumors, Dear. Everyone knows about them. I told you that.”

“And once again, I’m just supposed to believe you?”

“Like I said, it would be wise. Why would I lie to you?”

“Because you’re jealous of Laura. You want me on your side. Another minion in your gossiping troop.”

“Oh please, I am soon to be President of the student body at this school for the third year in a row. Do you honestly think I have time to lie and create drama? I have enough to worry about.”

Lafontaine placed their hand on Carmilla’s shoulder, pulling her back.

“What do you want, Mattie?” Laura asked.

“Oh, Little One, why do you hate me so? I was just giving Carmilla friendly warning.” She had an deceiving smile on her face.

“Warning against what, exactly?”

“Of your wild ways with women. It’s pathetic you make them wait for you in the morning. More pathetic that they actually do it for you as if you’re some great being! It’s disgusting and ridiculous. I’m also tired of the constant boot stain that is left on my locker.”

“I don’t make anyone wait on me. Carmilla does as she pleases.”

Mattie laughed again. “Do you really think that? Does the same go for Chelsea or Danny? Not to mention all the girls I’ve seen you with in the library. Poor Carmilla fits right into your sad little dog and pony show.”

Carmilla quickly shook Lafontaine’s hand off her shoulder and walked towards Laura. She put herself in front of Laura, blocking her from Mattie.

“Don’t talk about me like that. You don’t know anything about me.”

“Other than the fact that you’re head over heels for a girl who could care less about the girls she’s
“Carmilla, that’s not true,” she heard Laura say behind her.

“Get out of here Mattie,” Kirsch spoke. He stood up next to her and towered over her. His face was stern as he stood at his full height.

“Oh please, Puppy. Your intimidation act isn’t going to scare me. Besides, you know if you touched me, I would go straight to the principal and you would be benched for the rest of the football season. I know you wouldn’t want that.” She winked at him.

“Take Laura and leave. She needs to get out of here,” Lafontaine whispered in Carmilla’s ear.

“What?” Carmilla asked, looking over her shoulder to see Lafontaine’s arm around Laura. She had tears in her eyes and it instantly ended the scene that was happening around them. Nobody was there anymore except for Laura. She grabbed Laura’s things from her locker, and quickly placed her arm around her shoulder.

“Come on, Cupcake. Let’s get you home.” Laura nodded and started walking, tucking herself into Carmilla as much as possible. Carmilla registered Mattie saying something to them, but at that moment she didn’t care anymore. She didn’t care about what everyone had said to them about Laura. She just wanted to make Laura’s eyes sparkle again, and bring her confidence back. She wanted her strong and fierce Laura.

Carmilla fished out Laura’s keys from her bookbag and unlocked the doors. She put Laura in the passenger seat and threw their bags into the backseat. She knew she shouldn’t be driving, but she didn’t think Laura could handle it. Silent tears still fell down Laura’s cheeks and Carmilla couldn’t help but think that she looked broken.

Laura’s head leaned against the window with no protest about Carmilla driving. She slowly backed her Jeep out of the parking space, grateful that most of the students had left by this time. Once they got out on the main road, Carmilla took Laura’s hand in hers and rubbed her thumb up and down trying to sooth Laura. She soon pulled into Laura’s driveway. Laura barely registered the fact that she was home, but got out of the car. She took her keys from Carmilla’s hands and unlocked her front door. Carmilla was behind her and followed her upstairs into her bedroom. She didn’t know what to say or if she should say anything.

Laura kicked off her shoes and laid down her bed. She faced the wall with her arms wrapped around herself. Carmilla noticed she looked small and joined her. She held Laura tight against her.

“Do you wanna talk about it?” Carmilla asked.

Laura took a few deep breaths and nodded, but didn’t speak.

“Just tell me when you’re ready and I’ll be right here,” Carmilla said giving a quick kiss to her shoulder. That seemed to shake Laura from her silence.

“Thanks for driving me home, Carm.” Laura shifted to face Carmilla, still laying on her side, but resting her head as close to Carmilla’s chest as she could.

“No problem, Cupcake.” Carmilla kissed Laura’s forehead. Laura let out another deep sigh before slowly sitting up.

“Let’s get this done with. I don’t think I can stand it anymore.” Carmilla was quick to join her as they sat opposite each other on Laura’s bed. They sat in silence, neither knowing how to break the
silence, until Laura cleared her throat.

“About what Mattie said, it is true. Chelsea and Danny both used to hang out by my locker in the morning and I have done some things in the library.”

Carmilla just nodded. She can’t change the past. Even though the thought bothered her, she couldn’t think of anything to say. She looked at Laura, but had no words.

“Okay let’s go back,” Laura started. “Freshman year of high school was a very confusing time for me and that is when I started to date Chelsea. Chelsea was my everything. She always made me laugh and smile, even when I was at the lowest of the low. She was my first everything. Now like I told you, I found out that she had been cheating on me with this girl Jessica who went to a different school. I was so mad that instead of dealing with it, I went a little crazy for a couple weeks. I fooled around with a couple girls in the library and they were attracted to me, but I was just mad and was desperate to feel anything. For some reason, it was like Mattie followed me because she always caught me with a different girl, but it was only a few girls.”

“Is that how she knew how to find us in the library that day?”

“No. Absolutely not. I haven’t returned to that section of the library in a very long time. Where I went with you was always my haven from a bad day. I could hide back there almost all day without anyone noticing. You’re not just some fling in the corner to me. I actually really like you.”

“So what about the girl in the bathroom? And Elsie calling me your new toy and Betty making comments about challenges?” Carmilla just wanted everything out in the open for a fresh start.

“Rumors spread, Carm. I don’t know who the girl in the bathroom was, but a reputation sticks. That is unfortunately mine. But I think you should know Elsie was one of those girls. That is how she viewed herself, even though I have apologize multiple times for doing that to her, she says it’s okay, but still cracks a lot of jokes about it. It’s pretty much lead us to not like each other, which is understandable, but she thinks she’s hilarious. Danny and Betty like to pick on me. After Danny found out what I was doing, that is when she started to pull away. She barely hung out at my locker anymore and this was after the numerous times I told her I wasn’t interested. Not to mention, Chelsea kept coming in and out. Saying she wanted to be with me and begged me to forgive her. I always did because I thought I was in love with her. Halfway through sophomore year, I realized she was still seeing Jessica. I blocked her from everything and tried my hardest to ignore her. It finally worked and I was free. After that, I had a lot of flings because I thought it would take my feelings away, but of course it didn’t and only made me feel less like of a person than I already did. So then I stopped everything. I haven’t been in any form of a relationship since, except for you.”

“Mattie also said something, but I don’t want to make you upset by telling you what Mattie said,” Carmilla was hesitant. She struggled to make eye contact with Laura.

“What did she say?”

“That you begged your dad to give you your car and how you used a fake ID to get into gay bars or something.”

Laura rolled her eyes. “Wow, she is slipping. She should be able to come up with something better than that considering she’s the one who had a fake ID and snuck out every weekend to see this boy across town.”

“Wait, what?”
“Carm, I begged my dad for my car last year so I could sneak out and hang out with the gang. We had impromptu LGBTQA meetings and met outside of town. At first it was at the cabin, but then when we realized Kirsch’s parents were almost never home, we started going there. I felt like if I constantly told my parents I was hanging out with them he would grow suspicious, which I now know is ridiculous, but it made sense to me. Mattie likes to make my life Hell. I started hanging out with our group more and she got jealous. That’s why she ran against me for student elections. Our relationship was doomed to fail. She knew about Chelsea, but never consoled me when I found out that she cheated. I honestly believe Mattie is the one spread all the rumors about me.”

“Why would she do that?” Carmilla asked.

“She’s jealous. She has a few friends, but no one as close to her like we were. We were inseparable. Once I started dating Chelsea, we became a little distant. She wasn’t surprised when I told her I was gay, but I knew she was jealous that Chelsea was taking so much of my time away from her. I made sure to leave time for her, but after we broke up there was no comfort. So I turned to the group and we drifted.”

“Why hasn’t she just told people you’re gay? It seems like it would be the ultimate revenge.”

“You’d think, but I know no matter how many rumors she spreads, she will never betray my trust to that extent. I think a part of her really hopes we can rekindle what we had before. Not to mention, we both had a traumatic year last year. We were well on our way to being friends again, when I started to go out with Chelsea again for the last time. It didn’t help us at all and it pulled us apart.”

Carmilla nodded. Again, she was at a loss for words.

“Look, I just don’t want you to think that you’re another notch on my bedpost because you’re not. I haven’t done anything with anyone since last year. I really like you, Carm. I just unfortunately have a lot of baggage.”

Carmilla searched Laura’s eyes for any hints of deception. She wanted to make sure she wasn’t just another girl to Laura. Laura’s eyes were clear and she stared at Carmilla, begging her to speak.

“I like you too, Laura. I guess now I’m just more worried it’s going to get back to my parents in some way. You never know who’s watching and I have been careless with my affection towards you.”

“So, we take a step back, Carm. Maybe start anew or something.”

“Yeah, maybe that is a good idea. Take a step back or something,” Carmilla shrugged. She hated the fact that their affection for each other even had to be an issue. She just wanted to be able to be open with Laura.

Laura nodded and Carmilla couldn’t help, but notice the small tears in Laura’s eyes. She moved forward, wiping a tear away from Laura’s cheek.

“Why are you crying, Cupcake?”

“It just feels like we’re breaking up or something.”

“That’s not what I meant by a step back. I just meant no more making out at school, unless I honestly can’t control of it of course.” She gave Laura an encouraging smile, as she heard Laura lightly chuckle.

“Well, what about now?” Laura asked, looking Carmilla up and down before looking at her lips.
Carmilla inched closer to Laura. “What about now?”

“We’re not at school or at church. We’re in the privacy of my bedroom where no one can bother us.”

Carmilla continued to crawl on top of Laura, while Laura started to lay down against the sheets. “That’s very true,” Carmilla whispered. She could feel butterflies in her stomach, but she pushed through them as she was now fully over Laura, looking down on her with a small smile on her face.

“I’m sorry for keeping that stuff from you. I just was hoping you wouldn’t have to find out about any of that, but I should have known Mattie wouldn’t keep her mouth shut. But you know what? You know me better now.”

“That I do. No more secrets?” Carmilla asked, holding her pinky out.

Laura lightly chuckled, but gripped Carmilla’s pinky with her own. “No more secrets. Now, will you just kiss me?”

Carmilla laughed and lowered herself to kiss Laura’s lips. It was just a light peck at first, but Laura cupped Carmilla’s face, pulling her Carmilla closer to her. Carmilla was quick to deepen the kiss, adding more body weight on top of Laura. She ran her hands up Laura’s stomach over her shirt and smiled as she felt Laura’s stomach muscles tense. She kept her hand just above Laura’s waist, when Laura flipped them over.

“You really like being on top, don’t you Cupcake?” Carmilla smirked.

“Oh you have no idea, Sweetness.”

Carmilla chuckled, but pulled Laura down to her. Laura started to kiss Carmilla’s neck causing light moans to escape Carmilla’s mouth. Laura was grateful for them. She was happy that they were in her home, in privacy with no one to bother them. Carmilla ran her hands under Laura’s shirt and scratched down her back. Laura gasped at the sensation, bringing her lips back to Carmilla’s. They heard the front door slam.

“Laura?!” Rich’s voice carried throughout the whole house.

Laura groaned and made sure to hide her face against Carmilla’s shoulder. “Well, all good things must come to an end, I suppose,” Carmilla whispered.

Laura laughed before Rich called her again. “Coming, Dad.”

She gave Carmilla a few more pecks. “Are we okay?” She asked, with a hopeful expression.

“We’re okay. I’m glad the air is open now.”

“Me too.” They smiled at each other and kissed again, when there was a light tap on the door. They quickly separated to opposite ends of the bed. “Laura?”

Rich could hear the shuffling behind the door and waited a moment before it opened. He popped his head and smiled. “Well, hello there Carmilla.”

“Hi, Mr. Hollis.”

“Forgive me, but I wasn’t expecting company,” he said, looking between Laura’s guilty look and Carmilla’s blank face.

“No worries, Sir. I hope I’m not imposing.”
“Not at all, Carmilla. You’re always welcome here.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hollis, but I should be heading on home. I’ve got homework to do.”

She got off the bed and grabbed her bag. “I’ll give you a lift home,” Mr. Hollis offered.

“Thank you, Sir.” He left the room and Laura walked up to her.

“I’ll see you tomorrow at your locker?”

“You bet, Cupcake.” Carmilla gave her a small smile and a peck. “Until tomorrow, Cutie.”

Laura smiled. Carmilla descended the stairs and Mr. Hollis was waiting for her, keys in hands. “We have to take my patrol car. Hope that is okay.”

“Sure thing, Mr. Hollis.”

A few moments later, they were pulling into the Karnstein’s driveway. Henry was putting away stuff in the shed at the end of the driveway when he saw the car pull in. Mr. Hollis got out first before Carmilla quickly followed behind.

“What has she done now, Officer Hollis,” Henry asked, trying to be serious.


“I even knew she was going over there. Should have known it would be a crime.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes. “I don’t think this girl could ever get in trouble, if I’m being honest Pastor.”

“Well that is good to know. Let’s hope it stays that way after she takes her driving lesson next week.”

“I’m sure you have nothing to worry about.”

“Henry, Carmilla, dinner will be ready in 10 minutes,” Lilita said from the porch. “Hello, Rich.”

“Hello to you too, Lilita,” Rich replied with a wave.

“Well we better get inside, Carmilla. It was great seeing Rich. I’ll see you Wednesday night at Prayer Meeting?” Henry asked, holding out his hand for Rich to shake.

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Henry replied, shaking his hand.

“Thanks for the ride, Mr. Hollis.”

“Anytime, Carmilla.” He gave her a pat on the shoulder before Henry led her inside. He made his way back to his patrol car, as he watched Carmilla talk about her day.

*I’m glad my daughter finally found someone worthwhile. She’s the perfect fit for Laura.* Rich thought, smiling as he pulled out of the driveway.

Chapter End Notes
And another shout out to Kristin for helping me focus a little better on this chapter!!

Also check out her latest fic:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/5156705/chapters/11874788

It's amazing
An Evening with The Karnsteins

Chapter Summary

So I wasn’t planning on this being full of angst, but as I started writing it my idea changed so here we are.

WARNING! This chapter contains mention of blood and death.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It had been a few days since Laura finally opened up to Carmilla, and they seemed to be much closer now and happier than they were before. Carmilla was grateful that Laura trusted her enough to open up, as where Laura was just happy that Carmilla didn’t judge her. She doesn’t regret the decisions that she has made, but at the same time she worries constantly about being judged. She hates that that reputation keeps following her around, but knows she can’t do anything about it.

To save themselves from some of the drama, they decided to meet in the mornings at Carmilla’s locker. Laura even started putting some of her stuff in Carmilla’s locker, but she didn’t mind. It kept Laura in a better state of mind and that made her happy. They needed time away from Mattie anyway, but that Wednesday morning, they noticed a familiar person lurking around the corner from Carmilla’s locker.

“I’m beginning to think Mattie is jealous that you and I are together,” Carmilla said.

“I doubt it. She’s just looking for new material since her plan to break us up backfired,” Laura replied.

“Oh wait, I got it. She misses me. Aw that’s so sweet.” Carmilla teased as she shut her locker. Carmilla looked at Laura and ran her hand down Laura’s arm. She grasped Laura’s hand and gave it a light squeeze. Laura learned quickly that it was a way for Carmilla to show comfort. To remind whoever she cared about was there and not alone. It made Laura smile, even though Carmilla always hurried to let go.

They started walking to their English class, chatting lightly about their previous evenings when Carmilla noticed Mattie following them. She stopped abruptly and faced her.

“You know, Mattie, if you keep following me, I’m going to start to think you actually like me. Dare I say, want me?”

“Don't flatter yourself, Darling.”

Mattie was quick to go towards the direction of her classroom.

“What's up with her?” Carmilla asked. Laura shrugged, but Carmilla could tell she was keeping something from her.

“Laura? What's wrong?”
“Nothing, Sweetness.”

“We promised no secrets, remember?”

Laura exhaled. “I know, but unlike Mattie I don't like to spread gossip. This is just a rough week for her.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. She went through something a little traumatic this time last year.”

“Gotta. Well it's none of my business. Besides the less I know about Mattie, the better. But speaking of family, I totally forgot. Oddly enough, my mother asked if you would like to join us for dinner tomorrow night?”

“I want to say yes, but your mother terrifies me.”

“I thought it was peculiar, but she insisted and she is an excellent chef so even if it is terrible, you’ll get a good meal and probably dessert out of it. I'm sure my dad had something to do with it, but anyway, Cupcake, would you like to come to my house for dinner tomorrow?”

“That sounds lovely.”

Carmilla smiled and they entered their classroom just as the bell rang. Well this will certainly be interesting.

The following afternoon, Laura drove Will and Carmilla to the Karnstein residence. To say Laura was nervous would be a bit of an understatement.

She put her Jeep into park and noticed Carmilla staring at her.

“What?” Laura asked with a bemused expression.

“Nervous?”

“A little. I love Pastor Karnstein, but your mother is very stern and I thought she hated me.”

“She doesn't hate you. I have a feeling it's her way of checking up on us, but she isn't home yet and apparently my dad isn't either so we can have a little alone time, calm your nerves, etcetera.”

“Okay but tell me things I shouldn't talk about. I want to make sure she doesn't dislike me more than she already does.”

“I would say the big one is, you shouldn't tell her you're gay.”

“Ha ha. You're so funny, Carm.” Laura's sarcasm was something Carmilla loved. She laughed.

“Just talk about Jesus and avoid politics, Cupcake.”

“Okay. I can do this. I can do this.”

Carmilla gave her a kiss on the cheek. “Come on, Cutie. We've got some cookies and we can work on our homework.”
They made their way inside the house and Carmilla made sure to get the cookies first. They were homemade cookies and she only grabbed a couple. Laura looked at her skeptically.

“That's only two cookies, Sweetness.”

“Yes, but you're sweet enough.”

“But you know I love cookies.”

“Ah, yes, but if you ruin your appetite, my mother will not be pleased.”

Laura rolled her eyes but nodded and they quickly made their way upstairs. Will was already in his room, listening to Christian rock music rather loudly.

“Will! Turn that crap down!” Carmilla yelled before shutting her door.

“Is he seriously listening to that?”

“He does love it. But go ahead and make yourself comfortable. I'll put on some of my own music to drown out the sound of that crap.”

“How do you really feel?” Laura asked, smirking while she sat down on her bed.

Carmilla plugged in her iPhone to her stereo. She decided on The Misfits’ CD, Static Age playing her favorite song: Hybrid Moments.

“Oh my gosh Carm, this is one of my favorite songs.”

“Seriously?” Carmilla turned to look at Laura. She was laying on her bed and looked so comfortable, that Carmilla couldn't help but join.

“Yeah, this is a great song!”

“You like The Misfits?” Carmilla was surprised to say the least.

“I like all kinds of music and don't look at me like that. It's not that big of a shock.” Carmilla smiled and leaned in, kissing Laura.

Laura was quick to respond, as Carmilla slowly shifted on top of her. Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla's waist, pulling her down on top of her.

Things slowly started to get heated as Carmilla laid more of her body weight on Laura. Her legs were on either side of Laura's hips. Laura slowly moved her hands down and slid her hands into the back pockets of Carmilla's jeans, pulling Carmilla even closer to her. Carmilla moaned as she felt Laura grope her backside.

Their breathing was getting erratic causing Carmilla to start kissing Laura's neck. Laura moaned at the feeling which egged Carmilla on more. Laura moved to lay her arms above her head and Carmilla quickly laced her fingers through Laura's. Carmilla made her way down to Laura's collarbone and kept working her way down. Laura was wearing a deep V neck shirt. *I guess it's all or nothing*, Carmilla thought, letting go of Laura's hands.

Laura took this as an opportunity and flipped them over so she could straddle Carmilla's hips. Carmilla let out a light chuckle.

“You really don't like being on the bottom, do you, Cupcake?”
“I don't know what you're talking about,” Laura said before kissing Carmilla again. Their lips were soft and warm against each other as the room started to fade away to only them. Carmilla placed her hands around Laura's waist before slipping a hand under her shirt.

Laura's skin was soft and warm under her hand. Laura jumped and looked at Carmilla. She slowly started to move her hand away.

“No, it's okay,” Laura was quick to say. At this angle, Carmilla could see down Laura's shirt and she couldn't help, but stare at her cleavage.

“You can touch them, you know.” Carmilla looked into Laura's eyes and then back to her lips. She pushed her head off the pillow to kiss Laura and flipped them back over. She was sitting over Laura and looked down at her and smiled. A small blush played across Carmilla's cheeks as she mumbled something.

“Sorry, Carm. Didn't catch that,” Laura said.

“I, uh, I don't really know how to do that.”

“Do what?”

“Uh, you know, touch.”

“You've never touched a girl before?” Laura asked. She was actually surprised.

Carmilla's cheeks became a darker shade of red. “I never got the chance to get that far with Ell.”

“Well, I can show you if you like,” Laura said, pushing the hair out of Carmilla's face. Carmilla was quick to hide her face again and looked down at Laura's thin stomach.

“Carmilla Karnstein. Are you embarrassed?”

“Is that really so hard to believe?”

“No. The tough rock chick who is listening to The Misfits is embarrassed that she doesn’t know how to touch a girl. It's actually really cute, Carm.” Laura smiled.

Carmilla let out a light laugh. “Don't be embarrassed, Sweetness. Do you want me to show you?”

Carmilla nodded her head and Laura sat up with Carmilla still straddling her hips. Laura lifted Carmilla's chin and kissed her. Carmilla was quick to respond and deepen their kiss immediately. Laura rested her hand around Carmilla's neck before slowly sliding it down. She decided to not push Carmilla too much. She moved her hand under Carmilla's left breast and cupped it. Carmilla responded immediately with a sharp gasp, quickly going back to kissing Laura.

Laura moved down to kiss her neck when she felt Carmilla's hands on the hem of her shirt. She could tell Carmilla was hesitant, but nodded her head, giving Carmilla consent. Carmilla lifted Laura's shirt off and smiled. Laura was beautiful and her tan skin was glistening from the sun setting through the window. Carmilla kissed her again, Laura humming against her lips. She slowly moved her hands up Laura's sides feeling goosebumps rise as she did. She cupped Laura's breast and smiled at the sound Laura made. They started kissing again when their was a knock on Carmilla's door.

Carmilla jumped so high as Laura struggled with her shirt.

“Carmilla, are you home?” It was Henry and Carmilla felt a little relieved at his voice, praising
whatever entity was out there that it wasn't her Mother.

She got up and checked her reflection in the mirror to make sure she didn't look to disheveled. Laura was sitting on the edge of her bed when she looked back, her shirt fully intact.

Carmilla opened her door. “Hi, Dad.” Her voice was higher than she meant it to be. He looked at her puzzled, but let it go.

“Hi, Daughter. How was school?”

“The same ole kind of boring day.”

He smiled. “And it's nice to see you Laura.”

“Hi, Pastor Karnstein. Thank you for having me over for dinner.”

“It's a delight as always, but be sure to thank my wife. This was her idea after all.”

Laura smiled and nodded. Henry stood there and looked between the two. Their guilty expressions were giving them away.

“Yeah, so we were just about to work on our homework,” Carmilla said trying to defuse the tension in the room. “Is Mother home, yet?”

“No but she did want me to check with Laura. Are you allergic to anything?”

“No, Sir.”

“Excellent! She'll be home soon and dinner should be ready in about an hour or so.”

“Great!” Carmilla's voice still a little high for comfort. They stood there awkwardly for a few more minutes before Henry cleared his throat.

“Okay. Well I'll let you two get back to your 'homework’.” He used air quotes when referencing the word homework, but he had a sincere smile on his face. He went to close the door, but then shook his head. “Open door rule, Carmilla.”

“I thought that's only when I had boys over or in this case, Kirsch?”

“Let's just be on the safe side,” he said. He smiled and started to sing a song to himself. The girls quickly got to work and sat as far apart from each other as they could. They would steal glances and smiles every chance they got however. The environment around them was comfortable and quiet.

Lilita slammed the front door closed when she got home. She handed the grocery bags to Will, giving him some instructions to preheat the oven for lasagna. Will almost rolled his eyes until he got a tentative, stern look from Lilita.

She made her way upstairs to change into something more comfortable after a long day of work. Comfortable to Lilita Karnstein, however, is a loose, but not too loose button down and skirt that isn't as tight.

Carmilla and Laura were still deeply invested in their homework when they heard a slight knock on Carmilla's door. Even though they had an open door policy, they would make each other known by knocking on something. Carmilla was now at her desk, working on math problems while Laura was
on her bed, against the wall working on some chemistry assignment.

“Hello, Carmilla.”

She looked up from her desk, her face scrunched up from a particular math problem. “Oh, hi Mother. How was work today?”

“Good as always,” Lilita said with a nod. She glanced at the floor before clearing her throat. “It's nice to see you again, Ms. Hollis.” Carmilla could tell the smile on Lilita’s face was strained, but couldn't figure out why she was trying so hard.

“It's nice to see you as well, Mrs. Karnstein. Thank you so much for having me over and inviting me to dinner.” Laura's smile, however, was genuine and caring. How is she so beautiful? Her smile made Carmilla smile.

“It is a pleasure to have you. Now, I just want to double check. You don't have any food allergies?”

“No Ma'am. None that I know of.”

“And is there any kind of food you don't like?”

Laura thought for a moment. A pensive look on her face as she thought. “Only Thai food, Ma’am.”

“Well I can see a reason you and Carmilla enjoy each other's company. Carmilla is also not a fan of Thai food.”

“Really? Everyone thinks I'm crazy,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla.

“It's true, Cu- Laura. Can't stand it.”

Lilita noticed the stutter from Carmilla's mouth, but decided to ignore it. She realized she never really gave Laura a chance and wanted to do the right thing tonight. She had actually grown very fond of Rich and after hearing about the tragedy of his wife. She figured she should be a little nicer to Laura. Not to mention the sin she had committed each week by judging Laura. She had to do better.

“Well it is a good thing I will be making Italian tonight. Is that alright with you, Laura?”

Carmilla and Laura had never heard Lilita use her first name before. It took Laura by surprise causing a delay in her answer.

“Uh, yes, Mrs. Karnstein. Italian is fine with me.”

“Good to hear. Well I'll let you two get back to your homework. Again, I'm glad you could join us, Laura.”

“As am I.” Laura smiled.

Lilita smiled and decided she could trust her daughter as she slowly closed the door.

“Mother, I thought there was an open door policy. That's what Dad said.”

“That's only if you have a boy over Carmilla. I trust you.”

Those three little words made Carmilla's heart swell. She could tell Lilita meant what she said and it meant the world to her. She wanted to keep her mother’s trust so she stayed where she was finishing her math homework as best she could. She planned to let Henry look over it with her once Laura left.
An hour later, they heard Lilita yell that dinner was ready.

“Well here goes nothing,” Laura said, getting off the bed.

“You'll do fine, Cupcake.”

Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura's waist and brought her closer to her. Laura smiled up at her before resting her arms on Carmilla's shoulders. She leaned in halfway allowing Carmilla to kiss her. It was light and sweet. They pulled apart, smiling at each other.

The girls made their way downstairs. Carmilla migrated to the dining room which was only used when guests were over. She felt Henry’s arm on her shoulder, pulling her back.

“Not today, Kiddo. We're at the kitchen table.”

“Strange,” Carmilla said. She was baffled.

“Very strange indeed,” Henry agreed.

Carmilla smiled at him and then looked back at Laura. They followed Henry into the kitchen where the small table was setup for five. Lilita had managed to make a Caesar salad, homemade lasagna and homemade garlic bread.

“This looks delicious, Mrs. Karnstein,” Laura said, taking a seat next to Carmilla.

“Thank you, Dear.”

They gathered around the table. They held hands while Henry led them in a quick prayer thanking them for their food. Throughout dinner they mostly spoke of their day, including Laura, as she rambled on. Everyone seemed to enjoy her though, including Lilita. Carmilla was still confused by Lilita’s intention with Laura and couldn't shake the feeling of something bad happening.

Once dinner was finished, Lilita started clearing plates.

“Oh allow me, Mrs. Karnstein,” Laura said taking her own plate from the table. She nudged Carmilla and Will who quickly jumped up to help Laura.

“Well, Laura, you should stay for dinner more often. My spoiled children never help with the dishes,” Lilita laughed. Laura smiled while Carmilla rolled her eyes, a slight blush returning to her cheeks.

“Why don’t you kids go to the living room. I've made dessert,” Lilita said, gathering the rest of the dishes off of the table.

“How did you find the time, Mrs. Karnstein?” Laura asked, surprised after the meal she had just eaten.

“Oh, I made the dessert last night.”

Laura smiled at her as she followed Carmilla to the living room.

“I think you’re doing very well, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, sitting down on the couch.

“I hope so. This is the nicest she has ever been to me and it’s starting to freak me out a little bit,” Laura replied, sitting as close to Carmilla on the couch as she can without touching her. She had to clutch her fist, trying not to reach for Carmilla’s hand. She looked up at the picture above the
mantlepiece on the fireplace.

“Carm, is that you?” She smiled.

“What?” She followed her line of vision. “Oh, yeah that’s me.”

“You were so adorable. Look at your thick bangs and that cute little dress.”

“Yeah, yeah, but I’m still adorable, Cupcake.”

“Debatable,” Laura smirked.

“Rude,” Carmilla smiled back.

Henry entered the room with a big smile on his face. “Laura, what can I get you to drink? I’ve been sent here on an order from my wife.”

“Whipped,” Carmilla muttered under her breath, smirking.


“Could I have some tea please?” Laura asked.

“Of course. Green, Black or Peppermint?”

“Green, please.”

He smiled. “I would like black, please.” Carmilla teased, but he was already wandering back to the kitchen. “You can get that yourself,” he called back to her.

After a few minutes, Henry and Lilita came back into the room.

“Okay. I have a green tea for Laura. Did I mention I’m happy you could join us?” Henry said, handing the mug to Laura.

“Yes, Sir, you have,” she answered, gladly taking the tea from him.

“A black tea, no sugar or milk, for the Brat,” he said, handing the tea to Carmilla.

“Hey! I’m not a brat,” she fought back.

“My deepest apologies, Kid. A black tea for my beautiful, nonchalant, couldn’t give a care in the world, loving daughter, who never does anything wrong,” he teased.

“That’s better,” Carmilla corrected, accepting her tea.

Laura laughed lightly as Henry handed Will some milk and coffee for himself and Lilita. He sat himself next to Will and ruffled his hair, causing Will to laugh. It made Laura smile.

“Laura, Dear, would you care for a brownie?” Lilita asked, holding out a plate for Laura.

“Yes, thank you very much, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“You’re welcome, Dear.”

Lilita handed brownies to the rest of the family and they enjoyed them on the couch.
“That was delicious as well, Mrs. Karnstein. Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome, Laura. I must say I asked you here tonight so I could apologize,” Lilita said, looking at Laura.

Laura looked over at Carmilla who just shrugged, not understanding what was happening any better than Laura did. However, she was starting to get nervous. Lilita almost never apologizes because she believes she is always right.

“Apologize, Ma’am?” Laura asked, setting her tea down on the coaster left for her.

“Yes, Dear. I feel like I never really gave you a chance and that I judged you before I got to know you.”

“Oh, that’s quite alright, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“No, Laura, it’s not. After I heard about what happened to your mother, I was so angry with myself that I did not give you a chance to just be friends with my daughter.”

Laura’s body went stiff. She still hadn’t told Carmilla what happened to her mother and she wasn’t sure she was even ready to. She started to fidget, trying to hold back the tears. Carmilla noticed this, but was too scared to reach out and grab her hand.

“Who told you about my mother?” Laura asked, it was almost a whisper. Carmilla was surprised that Lilita was able to hear her.

“Your father, Dear. I’m so sorry to hear about your loss. She sounded like a remarkable woman.”

Laura nodded. Carmilla watched Laura and could tell she was trying her hardest not to cry. Both hands were now bunched up into fists.

“To die in such a way. She sounds like a hero if you ask me, saving those lives. She did a good thing, but still a tragic way to go. I cannot imagine what you have been through with all of that,” Lilita rambled on.

Carmilla now saw her mother playing a game. She didn’t care about Laura. She felt like this was a ruse; something to hold over Laura. Laura had a tear run down her cheek and Carmilla tried to wipe it away, when Laura stood.

“Excuse me for a moment,” she said and walked out of the room, up the stairs. Carmilla was quick to retaliate and stand up for Laura.

“Why would you do that?” Carmilla said, glaring at Lilita.

“Do what, Dear? Her mother did die in a heroic matter. She should be proud.”

“I didn’t even know her mother died. I’m sure this wasn’t the way she wanted me to find out either. How could you be so insensitive. You were a mess when Grandpa died, and you’re going to do this to her? Acting like death is no big deal? Losing a parent isn’t a big deal?”

“Carmilla, Darling, I didn’t realize I was pushing any buttons. I just thought it would be nice to get to know her better especially since she doesn’t have a mother figure.”

“And you think you would fill that role, perfectly? You’ve done a great job being my mother, why not add on another kid and mess up her life too. It’ll be perfect. Maybe you’ll finally get the daughter
you always wanted, but I guarantee you won’t.”

“Excuse me? What did you just say to me, Young Lady?”

“That’s enough!” Henry stood. “Carmilla, apologize to your mother.”

“But—”

“No buts, Carmilla. Apologize!” Henry was stern and Carmilla knew she wouldn’t win.

“I’m sorry, Mother,” she said through clenched teeth.

“I was honestly just trying to do something nice for your friend. I wanted to give her a chance. You are my perfect daughter, I wouldn’t have you any other way.”

Carmilla didn’t say anything. She left the living room and made her way up to Laura. She knocked on the bathroom door that was closed, but there was no answer. She slowly pushed the door open and popped her head in.

“Laura?” she asked, but Laura wasn’t in there. She heard a snuffle to her right and made her way into her bedroom. She saw Laura sitting on the floor at the edge of her bed. Her knees were pulled up to her chest, her head resting on her knees. She was looking away from the door, staring at the wall. Carmilla had never seen Laura look so small. She felt a slight ache in her heart.

“Laura?” she asked, softly, closing the door behind her. She noticed a box of tissues on her desk and grabbed them before slowly making her way over to Laura. She sat down next to her, but Laura didn’t move. She just stared at the red painted wall.

“Laura?” She asked again. Laura slowly looked at her and then closed the gap between them, resting her head on Carmilla’s shoulder. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura, holding her as close as she could. She tilted the box of tissues out at Laura, who gladly accepted a couple. She blew her nose and placed her head back on Carmilla’s shoulder, trying to calm herself down.

Carmilla could feel the long, deep breaths Laura was taking. She just sat there silently. She knew Laura would talk when she wanted to finally talk, but she didn’t want to rush her. So she they sat, both staring at Carmilla’s closet as close to one another as they could be. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand and squeezed it. It made Laura smile.

“I will never understand how you squeezing my hand gives me so much comfort.” Laura said, smiling at the hand that rested in hers. Carmilla’s hands were soft and always warm.

“Probably because it’s the only way I can show comfort without people staring at me,” Carmilla replied, glancing at Laura.

Laura nodded and they stared at the closet some more. “You okay, Cupcake?” Laura exhaled, and shook her head no.

“She died almost 2 years ago, Carm. It was so sudden. I went to sleep that night with mom just being on duty. My dad woke me up around 3am with tears in his eyes and rushing us to the hospital in his patrol car. At that point, she was still alive even though it was touch and go. She still had a chance.”

“What happened?”

“Mom’s precinct was closer to the bad side of town. My dad worked there too and it’s actually how they met. My dad was off duty that night. They always tried to alternate so someone would be home
with me at all times. My mother and her partner, Steve, got a call that night about hearing gunfire at a household so they immediately made their way over there. There was this kid that I used to go to school with, Chris Rodgers. My mother could see him through the windows pacing back and forth. It was noted that her and Steve saw the gun in his hand. They made their way to the entrance way, and slowly opened the door.”

Laura was starting to cry again. Carmilla pulled Laura to her as close as she could.

“It’s okay, Cupcake. You don’t have to tell me. You can stop. Shhh. It’s okay,” Carmilla said, hoping Laura would calm down. Her heart was slowly breaking at the sight of Laura. She was rubbing her arm up and down and squeezed her hand again.

“No, I have to, Carm. No more secrets.”

Carmilla wanted to tell her that she didn’t consider this a secret, but curiosity took over. Her mind and body betrayed her as she nodded.

“Anyway, they made their way into the house. He had already killed his parents, but he was standing in front of his two younger sisters and baby brother. His parents were lying on the floor, bleeding out. The father begged my mother to take care of his children. She told Chris to put the gun down, but he wouldn’t do it. It apparently got very heated and he pointed his gun at her. Then Chris started alternating the locations he pointed his gun. It went from my mother, to Steve, to his siblings. Apparently my mother tried her hardest to coax him out of whatever trance he was under. We found out at the trial that he was suffering from schizophrenia. My mother was able to coax him down, or so she thought. She slowly made her way over to him, reaching out for his gun while keeping her hands at surrender. After a split second, he pointed the gun at his siblings and shot. My mother ran and blocked the bullet with her body, it got caught in her bullet proof vest, but she had already holstered her weapon. Chris shot two more shots, one in her arm and leg. Steve shot Chris in the leg to take him down and grabbed his weapon. Steve applied pressure to my mother’s wounds, but she made him take care of Chris. I will never understand why she did that. The EMT’s were already on their way, so they managed to get her to the hospital with no problems.”

Laura took a breath, more tears shedding down her cheeks. Carmilla just held her and let her get it all out.

“By this time, my dad and I were at the hospital, sitting in the waiting room. I was sitting on his lap as he held me close to him. She didn’t make it through surgery. Chris had managed to hit two major arteries. It’s the only time I’ve ever seen my father cry. It broke me and I wasn’t the same after that. My friends tried to comfort me, but I found them to be smothering me. Chelsea tried to comfort me, but she didn’t really seem to care. After two weeks of moping she told me to get over it. Mattie was there, but didn’t say much. She let me cry on her shoulder one night, but we had already started phasing out at that point. I was alone. When my dad finally went back to work, I pleaded with him not to go. That’s when he decided to switch precincts. After she passed, everyone told me what a hero she was and how strong of a woman she was. I already knew that, and decided to just disappear for a while. Dad let me go to my grandparents for the summer, which is what I needed. They didn’t push me and after I finally started to heal, they shared many stories about my mother that they could remember with me. They showed my slideshows of their family pictures and it helped ease my pain. My grandfather never fully recovered. He was a cop himself and I think the pain is still strong within him.”

“I’m sorry that happened to you, Cupcake. I can’t even imagine the pain that you felt.”

“I just don’t like to talk about it. People still want to talk about it and the look of pity got old very quickly. Remember when Laf said we don’t talk about my mother when we first met?”
Carmilla nodded. The words that always kept her from asking Laura about her mother.

“That’s why. I hate the look of pity. Lafontaine always protected me from those people. The story was all over the news, so I had to see it everywhere. From other cops, to strangers, to my peers. I couldn’t take it. It’s been over a year now and even though I’m not fully strong about it, as if that isn’t obvious,” she pointed to her tear stained face, “I can’t stand feeling like I’m broken because that’s how other people want me to be. She was a hero and she always looked for the best in people. I wish she would never replied to that call and I miss her everyday. I don’t understand and I never will understand why she allowed Steve to take care of Chris instead of focusing on her. He could have stopped the bleeding. I don’t understand,” Laura’s voice started to break as she started cry harder.

“Shh. Sh. It’s okay, Cupcake. I’ve got you. I’ve got you, Laura.” Carmilla consoled her. She rubbed her arm and kissed her forehead. “It’s one of those things we will never understand why.”

“I know,” Laura whispered.

“Doesn’t make it any easier, though,” Carmilla offered.

Laura nodded, placing her head back on Carmilla’s shoulder. They sat there for a while longer as Laura tried to calm down. There was a light knock on their door and Henry popped his head in. Carmilla and Laura didn’t move and for once, Carmilla did not let go of Laura. They didn’t push away from each other, they actually moved closer to one another, Carmilla now having both arms wrapped around Laura in a side hug.

“I, uh, I brought up another brownie for you two and new tea.”

Carmilla kept her attention on Laura, when she told her dad thanks. He made his way into the room and over to Laura.

“Are you okay, Kid?” he asked, kneeling in front of Laura. She nodded her head, but didn’t lift it from Carmilla’s shoulders.

“Your father also told me about her after one of our first meetings. I’m sorry my wife brought it up. Rich warned me it was sensitive issue, but apparently Lilita decided to ignore that or didn’t get the message.”

Laura didn’t say anything. Henry nodded. “I, uh, I usually don’t do this because it is a school night, but how about you stay the night? I’m sure Carmilla has something you could wear tomorrow. I know Rich is working tonight and he would probably feel safer knowing you’re here with us. Does that sound okay?”

Laura nodded. “Thank you,” she whispered.

Henry smiled. “I’ll get the guest room setup.”

“Pastor Karnstein? Can I stay with Carmilla? I don’t want to be alone tonight. I don’t know if I can handle being alone.”

His eyes were sympathetic. “Of course,” he said. “Carmilla, may I have a word?”

She looked at him and then looked at Laura. She kissed the side of her head, not caring that Henry was standing in front of them. She slowly let go of Laura and followed Henry out into the hallway.

“I have to set up some ground rules here, Carmilla,” he said, after she shut the door to her bedroom.
“Ground Rules?”

“Yes. I expect you to behave while Laura is here.”

“I always behave,” she retaliated. “And I’m not a child.”

“That’s not the kind of behaving I’m talking about. I expect there to be distance between you two and no funny business.”

“What are you talking about?” Carmilla asked.

“I’m just saying, you are my child. I know you better than you think or want to believe I do. I just don’t want you rushing into anything is all I’m trying to say.”

“Dad, she’s a mess right now. I think all she wants is sleep.”

Henry smiled at her. “Alright. I’ll leave you to it then. I trust you, Carmilla. Don’t break that trust.” Carmilla was confused, but nodded. She turned and went back into her room. Laura was now laying on her bed. Her back was to her as she stared at Carmilla’s red wall again.

“Hey, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, laying behind Laura and pulling her close.

Laura didn’t say anything at all. “You okay?” Carmilla asked, quietly. She kissed Laura’s shoulder.

“Just don’t leave, Carm. I’ll be better if you just stay with me.”

“I’m not going anywhere, Laura. Let’s get you in some of my pajamas and let's go to sleep. Does that sound good?”

Laura nodded again. Carmilla got up and handed Laura a clean pair of plaid pajama pants and a large t-shirt from her dresser.

“I’ll go out into the hallway so you can change,” Carmilla said, making her way to the door.

“Please, stay,” Laura begged. Her eyes were desperate and Carmilla couldn’t say no. She sat on her bed while Laura changed. She tried her hardest not to look and show Laura some respect, but as soon as Laura pulled her shirt off, she couldn’t look away. Laura unhooked her bra and pulled the t-shirt over her body. Carmilla was grateful that Laura’s back was towards her. She doesn’t think she would have been able to control herself, had she seen more. Carmilla stared at Laura’s bottom when she pulled her pants down. Look at that cute little butt she has. Adorable and mine.

“What are you smiling at?” Laura asked, a small smile on her lips.

“I was just looking at your cute little butt,” Carmilla quickly answered.

“I thought I was getting privacy.”

“That’s why I was going to go the hallway. I knew if I stayed in here I’d stare, and I did.” That made Laura smile brightly and laugh. It warmed Carmilla’s heart.

“Well then my turn,” Laura said, sitting down next to Carmilla.

“Your turn what?” Carmilla asked.

“You watched me change into your pajamas, and now I’m going to watch you.”
Carmilla exhaled and shook her head. She got up and pulled her pajamas off the edge of the bed. She changed as quickly as she could. But she did let Laura watch her unclasp her bra, only to hear Laura’s breath hitch. It made her smile and laugh to herself. After she was changed, both girls collected their homework and books to put away. There was another light knock on the door. Lilita popped her head in this time.

“Laura, Dear, I deeply apologize for making you upset. It was not my intention.”

“That’s okay, Mrs. Karnstein,” Laura said, sitting down on Carmilla’s bed.

“Is there anything I can do?” Carmilla could tell her mother was actually being sincere. *Maybe she wasn’t trying to hurt, Laura.*

“That’s alright Mrs. Karnstein. I’m actually just tired.”

“Alright, I’ll let you two get some sleep, but I actually just wanted to ask what is your favorite breakfast meal?”

Laura gave Lilita a small smile. “Well french toast is my favorite, but I also enjoy pancakes or waffles. But you don’t need to go out of your way or anything.”

“I’ll see what I can do. Get some sleep.” Lilita slowly closed the door.

“Mother?” Carmilla got up and made her way over to the door.

“Yes, Carmilla.”

“I’m sorry for what I said earlier. I didn’t mean it. I was just upset for Laura,” Carmilla explain.

“I know Dear. Get some rest. Your father and I will wake you in the morning.”

“Okay, Mother. Good night.”

“Good night, Carmilla.”

Henry walked over to her door. “Good night, Kid.”

“Night, Pops.”

Carmilla slowly closed her door and made her way back to her bed. “Do you have a side you prefer?” Laura asked, shuffling under the warm comforter.

“Not that I know of,” Carmilla said as she laid down next to Laura.

They laid next to each other barely touching. It felt awkward.

“This is so weird,” Laura said.

“I know. I feel like we’re going to be grounded or something,” Carmilla added.

They shared a laugh and then looked at each other. Carmilla quickly turned on her side and smiled. She leant down capturing Laura’s lips. Laura smiled kissing Carmilla back.

“Good night, Cupcake.”

“Good night, Sweetness.”
Laura turned on her side, her back to Carmilla. Visions of her mother haunted her mind, but seemed to ease when she felt Carmilla’s arms around her waist, pulling her close.

“I think my mom would have liked you, Carm,” Laura said, breaking the stillness of the night.

“I think I would have liked her, too. She sounds like an awesome woman.”

“She was. Maybe one day when I’m not caught so much off guard, I can tell you about her.”

“I’d like that.” Carmilla kissed the back of her head as they drifted off to sleep.

------------------------------------------------------

It was around 2 am when Henry made the way out of his study and up the stairs. He had been working on a book for quite some time now, but only seemed to be able to write late at night. He believes it’s because no one disturbs him. He felt the urge to check Carmilla’s room when he reached the top of the stairs, but made himself not to. He trusted his daughter.

He checked Will’s room, to see him spread out all over his bed, sound asleep. Henry felt comfort in making sure his children were safe before he went to bed. Knowing they were safe and sound, always helped him sleep better. He pulled Will’s comforter over him the best he could. When he left his room, he looked over at Carmilla’s door. He did trust her, but knew he wouldn’t sleep well if he didn’t check.

He opened the door and smiled at what he saw. Carmilla was sprawled out on her back, arms above her head and legs spread. She slept just like Will. Laura was curled up on Carmilla’s left side, arm wrapped on her waist, gripping her side, head over Carmilla’s chest and leg bent over Carmilla’s. Laura moved in her sleep and blinked her eyes open. She jumped at seeing Henry in the doorway and slowly started to move off Carmilla.

“Shh,” Henry said, smiling at Laura. “It’s okay. You don’t have to move.”

Laura nodded and curled back into Carmilla. Carmilla inhaled deeply, shifting at Laura’s body movement.

“Stop moving, Cupcake. It’s too early to get up,” she groaned.

Henry smiled even wider. Cupcake is how he used to get Lilita’s attention when they first started dating. He watched Laura fall back asleep and Carmilla wrap her arm around Laura’s shoulder and back. Laura was still glued to her side. He slowly closed the door and made his way to his bedroom. _Yeah, I still trust her._

------------------------------------------------------

The next morning, Laura woke up to warm body under her and it made her smile. Carmilla’s mouth was agape and she was snoring lightly. Some could even describe it as heavy breathing. She laughed to herself, causing Carmilla to stir.

“What’s so funny?” She asked, half awake.

“Just a cute girl, snoring,” Laura answered.

“I don’t snore, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, while turning in her sleep to face Laura. She wrapped her arm around Laura’s waist, spooning her.
“Someone is not a morning person,” Laura said.

Carmilla huffed out air and kissed the back of her head. There was annoying sound coming from behind Carmilla and she let out a groan. Carmilla laid on her back and shut off her alarm before slowly falling back to sleep. Laura tried poking her, but Carmilla just swatted her hand away. Henry walked into the room them and smiled.

“You got to do more than that to get this one up,” he said, clapping his hands. “GOOD MORNING KID! IT’S TIME TO GET UP!” He yelled. Laura was shocked but starting laughing.

“5 more minutes.”

“No Ma’am. Your mother has breakfast on the table and is awaiting for you.”

“I don’t care,” Carmilla mumbled, turning back towards Laura.

“Don’t make me do it, Kid. I don’t feel like dealing with your attitude.”

“Don’t make you do what?” Laura asked. She was curious.

“Laura, would you like to have some fun?” Henry asked with a devious smirk on his face.

She smiled and nodded. He walked out of the room and came back with a small glass of water in his hand. “Would you like to do the honors?” He asked, handing the cup out to her.

“And have her be mad at me all day? Not a chance,” Laura said.

“Good, this is my favorite part.” He leaned over Carmilla. “Carmilla I’m giving you to the count of 5. If you’re not up, you get the waterfall.”

“Whatever,” Carmilla mumbled, trying to snuggle closer to Laura.

“1.”

Nothing, she didn’t move.

“2.”

She moved a little, but only to get closer to Laura.

“3.”

She usually gets up about now, but she isn’t budging.

“4.”

“Come on, Kid. Are you really going to make me do this and embarrass you in front of Laura?”

“Hm?” Carmilla said, eyes still closed.

“Alright, 5.”

Carmilla didn’t flinch. She was already sound asleep.

Henry put his fingers in the cup and spritzed Carmilla’s face. She didn’t do anything.

“She’s a heavy sleeper, isn’t she?” Laura asked.
“No, she’s stubborn and thinks we’ll let her skip school when she does this. Which she has been doing this since she was a kid, so you think she would have learned by now. But at least I get to laugh.”

“Why is that?”

He slowly tipped the glass over and water fell onto Carmilla’s face.

She sputtered and sat up quick. “What the fu-”

“Do not finish that word!” Henry smiled. Laura was laughing hard at Carmilla’s face. Carmilla glared at her.

“I take it you were behind this?” Carmilla asked Laura.

“No, this was all him.” She pointed to Henry and he smiled.

“Do you usually throw your minister under the bus?” He questioned.

“When she looks that mad and almost swears in front of her father, yes.”

“Good answer. Now, Carmilla. As you know from previous experiences, it is time to get up.”

“Sorry, Dad. I’m just really tired.”

“Not my problem. Now come on. Mother has breakfast ready.”

The two girls followed Henry down the stairs and into the kitchen. Laura smiled widely when she saw that Lilita had prepared French Toast and bacon. She found Lilita staring at her with what would be considered a small smile on her face.

“You didn’t have to do this, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“I know, Dear, but I wanted to do something nice for you.”

“Well thank you very much. I’m sure it will be delicious.”

They gathered around the table yet again and said their blessing. Laura wanted to like Lilita, but the thoughts of what she did to Carmilla lingered in her mind, and tightened her chest. Carmilla looked at her curiously and she just smiled. It’s not like she could just bring it up anyway. Carmilla, on the other hand, was happy. She managed to have a girl sleepover and not have a freakout from her mother. Not to mention, she was being nice to Laura for once. Carmilla hopes it can stay like this. She thinks about the future, possibly marrying Laura with kids running around, coming to visit her parents. They accept her with open arms. *Maybe one day.* Carmilla thought as she took her last bite of breakfast.

Chapter End Notes

Shout out to Kristin!!
Carmilla's Birthday

Chapter Summary

It's finally here! For those who didn't know, I was on vacation last week which is why I didn't update. To make up for that, this is by far my longest chapter.

WARNING: Includes underage drinking and drug use.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was now October 15th, and Carmilla couldn't be happier as she walked down the stairs for breakfast. The smell of eggs and bacon filled the room as Carmilla made her way into the kitchen.

“Happy Birthday, Kitty!”

“Thanks, Bro.” Carmilla smiled at him.

“There she is! My big 17 year old! Gosh, you're getting so old,” Henry said, wrapping his arm around Carmilla.

“You're one to talk, Old Man!” she lightly punched him in his side.

Henry laughed and kissed the side of her head.

“Happy birthday, Dear!”

“Thank you, Mother.”

“I made your favorite!”

Carmilla smiled. Eggs, bacon and toast littered the kitchen table. “Thanks. It looks delicious.”

“I'll never understand why the plainest food is your favorite thing to eat,” Lilita said.

“Because it is delicious and you have to admit, it's easy to cook,” Carmilla offered.

Lilita smiled and nodded her head before she joined her family around the table. They quickly ate, and then Carmilla headed upstairs to get ready for school. She was excited and happy to see Laura. She was going to be the highlight of her birthday.

Once Lilita pulled up to the school’s entrance, Carmilla practically jumped out of the car and ran to her locker. Laura had had a few tests earlier in the week, so she wasn't able to spend anytime with Carmilla. She waited against her locker, trying to look as casual and nonchalant as possible. She was wearing black jeans, a red flannel and black converses. She wore a black beanie on her head.

She leaned against her locker and waited. Time seemed to move by slowly when she felt something shift on her left. She felt Laura's hand in hers as Laura started pulling her towards the library.

“Cupcake, where are we going?”
“Present number one, we're skipping English today.”

“Do you think that's a good idea?”

“All my ideas are good ideas.” Laura looked back at Carmilla and smiled. Carmilla couldn't help, but return it.

“Whatever helps you sleep at night.”

They made their way to the back corner of the library while Laura looked around to make sure they were completely alone. She immediately kissed Carmilla, pulling her as close as she could to her body. Carmilla was quick to respond, wrapping her arms around Laura's body.

Laura pulled away and smiled. “Happy birthday, Carm.”

“Thank you, Cupcake.”

They kissed a little more before slowly separating from one another. They sat down on the floor and rested their backs against one of the long rows of shelves full of old mathematical and science textbooks. Laura looked at Carmilla and then back to her bookbag. She pulled a small box out of it and held it for a moment. Carmilla noticed Laura seemed nervous before placing the small box on her lap.

“So I was debating for a long time about what to get you because I wanted it to be perfect. I got worried that I would get you something you didn’t like, but then I saw this at the mall and thought it was perfect. I felt like one thing wasn’t enough so Will helped me figure out the second part of your gift. I hope you like it. And if you don't like it, it's totally okay. I kept the receipt and—”

“Laura! You're rambling.”

“I'm sorry. I tend to be a poor gift giver. Ask Laf or Perry. It’s almost as if I try too hard. I just really hope you like it.”

“I'm sure I will love it!”

Laura smiled and handed over the small box. The box was simple and black. Laura had tied a satin red ribbon around it. Carmilla like the way the box looked so much, she didn’t want to disturb the perfect bow that sat on top of the box. She took out her phone and opened her camera.

“Don't judge me, but I think the box is really cute,” Carmilla said, snapping a picture.

“You really are a sentimental sap, aren't you?” Laura asked.

“I'll deny it if you tell anyone.”

Laura smiled. “Open it, Carm!”

Carmilla slowly pulled the string and set it aside. She knew she was going to keep the ribbon. I am a sentimental sap, Carmilla thought to herself. She slowly opened the box to see purple and black tissue paper. She really does know me.

“You haven't even opened yet and you're smiling,” Laura whispered.

“You just really get me,” Carmilla added.

Carmilla moved the paper aside and saw a plain black leather cuff. Carmilla was surprised to say the
least. She took it out like it was a treasure. The cuff’s band was wide and the smell of leather filled
the room. It had two buckles to clasp it. She was so surprised and happy. She actually does get me.
She's so amazing. I can't believe she would get me this! I hope it didn’t cost too much. It’s clearly
real leather.

“Well...?” Laura asked, pulling Carmilla out of her thoughts.

Carmilla looked up at Laura and smiled.

“I love it! Thank you so much!” Carmilla leaned in and gave Laura a kiss. She rolled up her sleeves
of her flannel. “Help me put it on, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, excited.

Laura quickly grabbed the cuff and wrapped it around Carmilla's wrist to buckle it. Carmilla moved
her wrist, trying to look at every side of the cuff on her wrist. The smile on her face was permanent.

“Thank you, Cupcake!”

“Well there is one more thing, but it's very small. Like I said, Will helped me with it.”

Carmilla pulled the paper out of the box. She could feel something square wrapped in the mix of
paper. She looked at Laura, who had a nervous expression on her face while biting her lip. Carmilla
leaned in and gave her a quick peck. She grabbed Laura's hand and squeezed it. It made Laura smile.

She slowly unwrapped the paper and saw a pack of buttons fall out along with an iron-on patch. She
picked them up and saw that there were three buttons, one for each Distiller’s album. She flipped the
iron-on over to see it was the Distiller’s emblem of a face with the eyes exed out and a frown. She
had a look of amazement on her face. “Holy shit,” Carmilla said, under her breath.

“I think that’s the right band. I had never heard of them before, but Will said they were your favorite.
So I figured this would be something you would like and possibly didn't have.”

Carmilla smiled. “Thank you so much! I love them both! I can't thank you enough! Where did you
even find these buttons? I've tried to find them before, but came up with nothing.”

Laura smiled. “I have my methods, but I did okay?”

“For knowing me only a few months, you did incredible!”

Laura smiled. “Happy Birthday, Carm.”

“Thank you.” Carmilla smiled back and started to put the buttons on her backpack.

“There’s one more present, Carm.”

“Hm?”

Before she could even think of anything else, Laura straddling her hips and started kissing her.
Carmilla hummed and deepened the kiss. She slowly slid her hands up and down Laura's sides, as
she felt Laura push her hair back. She felt Laura grind against her lap and moaned. Laura pulled
away.

“What, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked, trying to kiss Laura.

“I didn't mean to do that.”

“Do what?”
“Uh, grind. I didn't mean to do that. I mean I wanted to and I want to, you know, but when you're ready-”

“Laura, please stop rambling. I liked it; I'm just not ready for the full thing yet. Okay?”

“Okay,” Laura whispered against her lips. Carmilla pulled her back in and kissed her. Laura leaned forward to rest her head in the nape of Carmilla's neck. She gave it a little kiss and then nuzzled. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura's waist and pulled her as close she could. They stayed like that until the bell rang.

The two got up and made their way to their friends. Kirsch saw them first and barreled through Danny and Betty to hug Carmilla. He wrapped his arms around her and picked her up. Her body stayed stiff like a pencil. She couldn't even move her arms to smack him or put up a fight.

“Put me down you Big Goof!”

He kept his grip tight around Carmilla and started turning her. He started to sing to her. “Happy Birthday to you! Come on guys!”

Laf, Perry, Betty, Danny, Theo, Elsie and SJ joined in. “Happy Birthday to you!”

“Cut it out guys and put me down!” Carmilla tried her hardest to get out of Kirsch's grip, but he was too strong for her.

“Happy BIRTHDAY dear Carmilla! Happy Birthday to you!”

Kirsch gave Carmilla one more squeeze before putting her down.

“Feel better, do you?” She asked Kirsch, sarcastically. She was quickly trying to smooth her clothes out and keep her cool exterior.

“And now time for the birthday spankings!” Kirsch announced, moving towards Carmilla with a wide smile on his face.

Laura stepped in front of Carmilla. “Uh, I believe the spanking should be left to me. Wouldn't you agree?” Laura smirked at Carmilla.

“Yes, Ma'am,” Carmilla said, smiling. Carmilla leaned forward and rested her forehead against Laura's and smiled.

“You guys are gross,” Danny said, making gagging sounds.

“Speak for yourself, Xena. I've seen your tongue down Betty's throat more times then I would ever care to remember!”


“So, Carm-sexy! Party for your birthday tonight?”

“I wish, but my parents will throw me a small birthday at home. It's important to my mother that we do everything together for birthdays and holidays. Sorry, Beefcake.”

“Well, my parents are going to be out of town this weekend. Wanna throw an awesome bash at my house tomorrow?” Kirsch asked.

“Abso-fucking-lutely!” Carmilla said, giving Kirsch a high five. “But I rather only you guys be there
and maybe a few others from the football team.”

“Got it!” Kirsch was smiling.

“Sweet!” Carmilla froze and shook her head. Did I just say “sweet”? What is wrong with me. “I've been hanging out with you too much, Bro,” Carmilla said to Kirsch.

“You know you love it!”

“Whatever, Beefcake.”

The bell rang and Laura gave Carmilla a kiss on the cheek. “What time should I be at your house?” She whispered in Carmilla's ear.

“7 o'clock.”

Laura nodded and left Carmilla to go to class.

---------------------------------------------

At 7 o'clock on the dot, Carmilla heard the knock on the front door. She smiled and slowly made her way over to the door. She knew who it was and couldn't help but have butterflies in her stomach. Laura had joined the Karnstein's a few times for dinner by this point. Kirsch had come by a few times, but Carmilla had finally managed to get Lilita off her back regarding a relationship with him. She told her mother they had decided to be only friends and Lilita was oddly okay with that. Carmilla didn't question it, she was just happy to have Laura over for her birthday.

“Hey, Cupcake.”

Laura was wearing a yellow sun dress. Her honey brown hair flowed over her shoulders. She smiled up at Carmilla.

“Hey, Sweetness.”

“I'm glad you come. Sorry it's only for the family party and not for dinner.”

“That's okay. I'm trying to stay on your mother's good side anyway. She's been a lot nicer to me and I plan to keep it that way.” Carmilla smiled and nodded.

“Laura! I'm so glad you could be here!” Lilita said as she walked out of the kitchen. “We're all ready for the cake, Carmilla.”

Carmilla nodded and led Laura to the kitchen. They walked in together while Henry and Will were standing over a birthday cake. Will was putting in the candles and Henry slowly started to light the candles.

“Laura, it's good to see you again!” Henry said, holding the lighter in his hand.

“Good to see you too, Sir.” Laura smiled at him which he returned.

“Short Stuff,” Will said nodding his head.

“Willy Boy,” Laura responded, copying Will’s body movements.

They both laughed and smiled before Will gave Laura a hug. “Alright, Kids, are we ready with the birthday cake?” Lilita asked while Henry held up the cake to prove he could handle lighting 17
candles. Lilita turned the lights off and they started to sing ‘happy birthday’ to Carmilla. She was still embarrassed by her family singing it to her. Carmilla never liked to be the center of attention. She personally hated being sung to.

“Make a wish, Darling,” Lilita said.

Carmilla nodded her head and thought. *I wish one day my parents will accept me for who I am. That what's happening right now will always be the reality with no problems.*

Carmilla blew out all of her candles in one blow. Everyone clapped their hands as Henry put the cake on the table. Lilita started to cut the cake as everyone gathered around.

“What's your favorite kind of cake?” Laura asked, sitting next to Carmilla.

“Oh she's a very Plain Jane, Laura,” Henry said, putting a few gifts in front of Carmilla.

“What does that mean?” Laura asked.

“It means white cake with white icing,” Will said, bored.

“Really, Carm?”

“What?” She looked around and noticed everyone was staring at her. “It’s good!” she defended, getting impatient. She didn’t really care about the cake. She just wanted to open her presents. It was one unfortunate thing about Carmilla. When it came to holidays that involved presents, she never wanted to wait to open them. She picked one up and shook it.

“You know the rules, Young Lady. Cake first and then presents,” Lilita said, passing around cake slices. She handed the biggest slice to Carmilla. “Thanks, Mother.” She ate her cake as quick as possible and shook her leg while she waited for everyone else to finish. She loved gifts, but hated the waiting process.

Once everyone finished, Carmilla looked towards her presents. She had a flat one from Will, a small and large box from her parents.

“Open mine first, Kitty,” Will said handing his gift to Carmilla. She smiled and accepted the gift, ready to rip open the wrapping paper.

“It took me a while to find this, but I know it's one of your favorite CD’s. I also know how much you like the original, classic sound.” Carmilla slowly ripped the paper off. She finally pulled the album out and smiled wide at William.

“It's an original. I made sure of it. You won’t believe how long it took me to find that,” Will added.

It was Janis Joplin’s “'I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama!’” album. “This is absolutely amazing Will! Thank you so much!”

She got up and moved around the table. They hugged each other as Carmilla whispered “thank you” again in Will’s ear.

“You're welcome, Kitty.”

She moved back to her side of the table, next to Laura. “Laura did you bring anything?” Lilita asked before Carmilla could open their gifts.

“Oh. No, Ma’am. I gave Carmilla her gift earlier today,” Laura replied.
Carmilla held up her wrist to show her leather cuff. She smiled at Lilita, still proud and happy with the gift Laura gave her.

“That’s nice, Dear,” Lilita stated with disapproving eyes. However, it was Carmilla’s birthday so she slid the two gifts from her and Henry toward Carmilla.

“Which one should I open first?” Carmilla asked.

“Well one is old and one is vintage,” Henry said, smiling.

“What’s the difference?” Carmilla asked.

“One has more meaning to it and the other is going to blow your mind!” Henry said.

Carmilla grabbed the small box and held it in her hands. She slowly started to open it. She pulled out a metal ring and looked at it curiously while turning it in her hands. She was fascinated by the little piece. Lilita cleared her throat.

“Do you know what that is, Dear?”

“No, Mother, but it looks really cool and old.”

“That belonged to your grandfather. He made it from scrap metal he found in Germany during World War II. You know your grandfather enjoyed welding, right? So while he was there, he managed to weld this ring together. I’m not sure what the metals are from exactly, but he wore it all the time after the war. I believe he held on to the memory of making this ring. Those are his initials on the front. I know how much he meant to you so I thought you would like to have it,” Lilita said. Her eyes were watering.

“I love it, Mother! Thank you! I just wish I could wear it,” Carmilla said, still twirling it between her fingers. Lilita held out a simple, long silver chain. “I figured you could wear it around your neck, instead,” Lilita said. “Grandfather did have fat fingers,” she added.

“Perfect!” Lilita unclasped the necklace as Carmilla added the ring. Lilita stood up and put the necklace around Carmilla’s neck. Carmilla looked at the necklace and smiled.

“Thank you, Mother. This means the world to me!” Carmilla smiled, and Lilita nodded her head.

“There’s one more,” Henry added. “Now, your old man found this! I saw you in it as soon as my eyes landed on it!”

Carmilla quickly ripped the paper and save that it was a large clothing box.

“Wait. Dad you bought me clothes?”

“Yes, but I swear you'll like it!” Henry looked mischievous as he smiled at Carmilla.

“Mother! I thought we agreed! Dad plus clothes equals tragedy!” Carmilla added.

“Just open it, Kid. Have some faith!” Henry exhaled.

Carmilla looked at Lilita who only nodded. Carmilla slowly pulled the box top off and opened the tissue. Her eyes widened.

“No freaking way!”
“I told you!” Henry said, smiling.

“No way! Are you serious?” Carmilla asked. Lilita nodded. Carmilla pulled out her vintage item: an old leather jacket. “This is amazing! Where did you find this?” Carmilla asked, slipping it on.

“Wait is that from Thrift Sound, in the next town over?” Laura asked.

“Sure is! I showed them a picture of you and they swore it would fit you!” Henry said. He was beaming, proud of the item he purchased.

“This is great, Dad! Thank you so much! Mother, it fits right?”

“Yes, Carmilla. It fits you like a glove.”

“You're going to look so badass,” Will said before throwing his hand over his mouth.

“William!” Lilita's voice shrieked.

“Sorry, Mother.”

“We do not speak like that especially in front of guests. I've raised you better than that! I apologize on behalf of my son, Laura.”

“It's quite alright, Mrs. Karnstein. Not the worst thing I've ever heard.”

Lilita nodded.

“Thank you, everyone! I love everything!” Carmilla said, still wearing her jacket. “I'm gonna go upstairs and see what it looks like.”

Carmilla held her hand to Laura, who gladly accepted it. They both ran upstairs as Laura closed the door quietly. Carmilla was standing in front her mirror, checking out her new jacket. It was a simple, black leather, studded jacket. Just like the one she's always wanted.

“You look very sexy in that jacket, Sweetness.”

“Oh yeah?”

Laura hummed and walked over to Carmilla. “Really sexy,” she whispered in Carmilla’s ear. Carmilla smiled as she felt Laura kiss her cheek. Carmilla turned her head and started kissing Laura. She pulled Laura as close to her, both fighting for dominance.

Laura's phone started to ring in her back pocket and she pulled away.

“Don't answer it,” Carmilla was quick to say, her breathing hard.

“It's my dad,” Laura said. “Hi, Dad... I'm at Carmilla’s… For her birthday…” Laura turned to Carmilla.

“He says Happy Birthday and apologizes for forgetting,” Laura said, smiling but rolling her eyes at her dad.

“Tell him thank you and no worries.”

Laura repeated what Carmilla said to Rich. “Okay Dad… Yes I'll be home soon… I love you too. Bye.” Laura ended the call and put her phone in her back pocket.
“I’ve got to go, Sweetness.”

“Don’t go,” Carmilla pouted. Laura was quick to kiss Carmilla’s pout which made Carmilla smile.

“Happy Birthday, Carm!”

“Thank you, Cupcake.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow morning at your locker. Wear the leather!”

Carmilla chuckled and nodded her head.

“And then tomorrow night, we have Kirsch’s party!”

“That’s the plan, Cupcake.”

“Alright. Happy Birthday, Carm.”

“Thank you for the thousandth time,” Carmilla smirked.

Laura shook her head. “Night, Carm.”

“Night, Cupcake.”

With another sweet kiss, Laura was soon down the stairs and out the door. One of the best birthdays I’ve ever had, Carmilla thought while she checked out her new leather jacket in the mirror again.

---------------------------------------------

Friday night rolled around as Carmilla and Will descended into Laura’s car to head to Kirsch’s place for her birthday party.

“Hey, Short Stuff,” Will said, while climbing into the back of her Jeep.

“What’s up Will.”

“Hey, Cupcake!”

“Hey, Sweetness.” Carmilla leaned in and kissed Laura’s cheek. “We have to pick up Laf and Perry. I hope that’s okay.”

“Totally cool with me,” Carmilla said.

“Yep, sounds good,” Will added.

“You look really good, Carm,” Laura said, biting her lip while staring Carmilla up and down. She was wearing her newest pair of black skinny jeans, a black crew neck t-shirt, a red and black checkered flannel and her new leather jacket. They were staring at each other for a few moments before Will cleared his throat, breaking their trance.

“Before you two begin something that would have the potential of scarring me for life, can we get going?”

“Sorry, Willy Boy.”

Laura started the car and pulled out of the driveway. Carmilla laced her fingers through Laura’s as they drove to Lafontaine’s house.
“Carm?”

Carmilla was looking out the window and turned her head towards Laura.

“Yeah?”

“I wanna hear your favorite band.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Distillers.”

“Are you sure? They have a heavy sound.”

Laura nodded her head with a smile, still looking out to the road ahead of her. Carmilla grabbed the aux cord and pulled up her playlist. She searched through until she found one of her favorite songs. The heavy guitar and strong bass of “City of Angels” started playing through the speakers. They all started nodding their heads to the beat and Carmilla started singing the lyrics to herself under her breath. She looked at Laura and saw her smiling, and it lead her to grin as well. She decided to put the music on shuffle.

They soon pulled up to Lafontaine’s house. Laf and Perry were standing outside waiting for them. Will quickly shuffled over to his right side so the two could get in on the left. Lafontaine smiled and held the door open so Perry could climb in.

“Weren’t you guys freezing out there?” Laura asked. She noticed their cheeks were red and that their lips seemed a little swollen. Perry seemed a little off, but they were both smiling.

“Just perfect and toasty,” Laf said, smiling at Perry.

“Whatever you say,” Laura said, smiling at the two of them through her rear view mirror. She started the car and away they went. Laura and Carmilla held hands the entire time on the ride, slowly smiling to each other as the Distillers music played in the background.

15 minutes later they were pulling into Kirsch’s driveway. The three people in the back quickly hopped out the car. It was uncomfortable for the three of them being squished together. Carmilla looked around, not happy with the amount of cars. “Uh, Laura? There are more cars here than there should be.”

“Classic Kirsch. Sorry Babe, but he tends to over invite even when you tell him not to.”

“Should I be worried?”

“About what?”

“I wanted it to be us and our friends so we could still cuddle, hold hands and kiss.”

“We can still do that, Carm. I promise it's okay.”

Carmilla exhaled slowly. “Okay,” she said nodding her head. They exited the car and Carmilla finally took a look at what Laura was wearing. A dark purple V-neck, black and white plaid flannel and tight dark blue skinny jeans.

“Damn, Cupcake. You look great.”

“Not so bad yourself, Carm.” Laura held out her hand to Carmilla. She quickly took it and they
walked to the front door. Once they were inside, people were everywhere. Laura shrugged and dragged Carmilla to the space she knew where she would want to be. The kitchen was pretty empty, which meant Kirsch had managed to get a keg or two to keep the party guests busy and away from the liquor cabinets.

“And what can I get for you, Sweetness?”

“How about a Jack and Coke?”

Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s waist. “Sounds good to me. I think I'll have the same.” Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla. She loved these moments where it was the just them and they could get away from the world with quick pecks and no worrying. Laura made her way over to the liquor cabinet. She pulled out a bottle of whiskey, while Carmilla put a bottle of Coke from the fridge and put it on the kitchen island.

“Yo, Carm-sexy! Happy Birthday, Bro!”

“Hey, Beefcake! What happened to a small gathering?”

“Hey, it's not my fault that word travels. I told people it was small gathering, but I guess they tuned that out. This way. We can head outside where your birthday is.”

Laura handed Carmilla a drink and smiled. She followed Kirsch outside, Laura’s hand in hers. Soon she felt Laura’s hand over her eyes and stopped.

“Just keep walking, Sweetness. I got you,” she heard Laura whisper in her ear. She smiled and kept walking.

“Step down, Carm. We're at the door.”

Carmilla did as she was told and felt Laura pull on her arm. She stopped and felt Laura's hand pull away.

“Surprise!” Everyone said. In front of her was a large banner that said, “Happy Birthday, Carmilla!” She could tell it was Laura’s handwriting. Around the backyard were rows of small white Christmas lights and she smiled. Theo, Kirsch, Lafontaine, Perry, Danny, Betty, SJ, Elsie, Eric and Will were all standing in front of her.

“Do you like it?” Laura asked.

“I love it, Cupcake! Thank you!”

“See? I knew if I said party, people would come. So earlier today we all gathered around to make sure you got your small gathering.”

“Thanks, Beefcake.”

She heard Danny clear her throat. “Thank you all for doing this! It’s great!”

She heard Perry clear her throat and noticed she was holding a small, square cake with candles lit. “Perry made the cake and it’s very special!” Lafontaine said, wiggling their eyebrows.

“When you say special, you mean…?”

“Don't eat too much, Carm. It's strong.”
Carmilla nodded. She took a sip of her drink and started coughing. Laura lightly smacked her back.

“Are you okay, Carm?”

“This is a really strong drink, Cupcake. Remind me to teach you how to portion.”

“Sorry, Carm. It was my first time. I usually drink beer.”

“It's okay, and I'm okay. I just wasn't expecting that much whiskey is all.” She smiled.

“It's time for shots, shots, shots, shots,” Kirsch sang as he started filling plastic cups with whiskey. He was doing a little dance as he continued to sing shots. Danny finally punched him in the arm and he stopped.

“Let's go do my birthday shots, Cupcake.” Carmilla led Laura over to the table and they all gathered around. Laura rested her hand on Carmilla's shoulder as she squeezed in between Will and Carmilla.

“Kirsch, that's way too many shots,” Danny said.

“Yeah! 17 shots for Carmilla. It is her birthday.”

“Yeah… That's called alcohol poisoning and I would hate to have to call her father from the hospital, explaining why she was in there.”

“Bro, I'm not stupid. I just figured there were seventeen of us, but obviously there isn’t. I just didn’t count. Relax, Mom.”

Danny rolled her eyes. “Whatever, Kirsch.”

Kirsch loved to agitate Danny and smiled at his victory. He started handing out shots to everyone and lifted his shot glass.

“To Carm-sexy! Happy Birthday, Little Bro Hottie!”

“Happy Birthday” and “To Carmilla” were said around the small table before everyone shot one back. Kirsch, Laura, Carmilla, Danny and Laf took the few remaining shots left on the table. Perry started passing around thin and small slices of cake. Carmilla saw how small it was and gave Perry a curious look.

“Trust me, Carmilla. You won't need too much to feel the effects of this cake.”

“So there is pot in here?” She asked. She didn't mind a little marijuana, but wanted to make sure it wasn't a harder drug.

“Exactly. What else would it be?”

“I don't know, Perry. You always seem to surprise me one way or another.”

Carmilla took a bite of her cake. Her eyes widen and she quickly finished the rest.

“Perry! That tasted amazing! You couldn’t even taste the pot! Can I have another piece?” Carmilla asked, still finishing the slice in her mouth.

“I'm glad you liked it, but trust me one is plenty for you.” Perry said as she gave another piece to Laura.
“Why do you get two? It's my birthday.” Carmilla looked over to Laura with the biggest puppy dog eyes she could muster.

“Because, Sweetness. I've been eating Perry’s goodies for a year now. And when I had two slices, I was so high that I freaked out and they thought they were going to have to take me to the hospital. I don't want that for you,” Laura said, patting Carmilla on the head.

“Fine,” Carmilla huffed.

Once the cake had been eaten, everyone continued to party. A few hours later, Carmilla had consumed 3 shots of whiskey, 3 Jack and Cokes and another piece of cake that Perry allowed her to have half of. She slowly started to feel the effects of the cake and her alcohol. She made her way over to one of the pool chairs. She felt light and giddy. She even caught herself laughing at nothing, while sitting on the chair and watching everyone. Except she wasn't really watching anyone. She was in her own hazy state, but happy with the way she felt.

After a few moments of staring at nothing, Laura sat in her lap.

“Earth to Carm!”

Carmilla started laughing and moved Laura’s body from sitting to straddling her lap. She did this so she could wrap her arms around Laura. She looked down Laura's V-neck and licked her lips.

“My eyes are up here, Carmilla.”

Carmilla started kissing Laura’s collarbone. She pulled away. “Yeah, but your breasts look really good in this shirt or this bra. I can't tell which.”

“Is that right?”

“Uh huh,” Carmilla said, still not lifting her eyes. Laura cupped Carmilla’s cheeks and pulled her into a kiss. Carmilla laid back against the deck chair and Laura soon followed. They kept kissing until Carmilla could feel Laura grinding against her. Carmilla placed her hands on Laura's butt and pulled her closer. Laura's breathing was getting heavier, but Carmilla didn't want anything to stop.

“Let's go upstairs,” Laura whispered. Carmilla couldn't speak, she was suddenly extremely nervous and wasn't sure what was about to happen. The feeling lasted for what felt like forever, but was apparently only a few moments. The alcohol and marijuana in her system seemed to keep her calm and give her a light, everything-sounds-good feeling. Laura got up and grabbed Carmilla's hand. She followed Laura inside, up the stairs and into Kirsch’s room.

Her nerves came back and the silence was too much. “It's actually clean in here for once,” Carmilla noted.

“Carm, we don't have to do anything.”

“I know, Cupcake.”

“I just thought privacy would be better.”

“Yeah, yeah. Privacy good. That's good.” She laughed at her own words. “I think my brain has stopped working,” Carmilla said, laughing to herself before getting really quiet. She wasn't aware that her breathing had hardened until Laura put her hand around her back.

“Breathe, Sweetness. It's just you and me.”
Carmilla took a deep breath and nodded. They stayed quiet a little longer before they smiled at each other. “Sorry, Laura. I just got really nervous for some reason and I'm spacing out, I think?” She laughed again, this time low and barely audible.

“It's okay.” Laura paused.

Carmilla went and sat on Kirsch’s bed. She took off her leather jacket off and laid it on the end of the bed. She looked at Laura. Laura was taking her flannel off, folding it before she laid it on Kirsch’s dresser. Carmilla patted the seat next to her for Laura to sit. Laura smiled and sat next to Carmilla as closely as she could. She looked in the opposite direction of Carmilla, which Carmilla took as an opportunity. She leaned in and started to kiss Laura’s neck. Laura lightly moaned at the feel of Carmilla’s tongue lighting running over spots on her neck before more kisses were placed.

Carmilla pulled Laura so she was straddling her again. Their kissing became more heated as Laura slipped her tongue into Carmilla’s mouth. Laura slowly took Carmilla's flannel off her shoulders. Carmilla grabbed Laura's shirt at the hem and yanked upwards. Laura lifted her arms and smiled when they separated. Carmilla smiled back, immediately going back to kissing Laura. She still felt light and giddy, but realized it wasn't from the alcohol or the pot. It was from Laura. Laura made her feel right, happy and giddy. She smiled at this.

“What?” Laura asked, her eyes full of light as she looked into Carmilla's. She smirked as Carmilla shook her head.

“Tell me, Carm!” She gave her playful nudge and Carmilla would have sworn her face got brighter at the notion.

“You just make me really happy, Laura. I don't think I've ever been this happy in my life.”

Laura smiled and gave Carmilla a light peck on her lips. Laura moved her hands and placed them on the bottom of Carmilla's shirt. She slowly started to lift Carmilla’s shirt.

“Is this okay?” Laura asked, cautiously. She knows there is the possibility of Carmilla saying no. She would respect either answer.

Carmilla looked into Laura's eyes and saw all the care in the world. Laura looked small and vulnerable. It brought her comfort, and she slowly nodded her head. She lifted her arms slowly and put her head down so her curly hair hid her blush.

“We don't have to, Carm. We really don't.”

“It's okay. I’m ready, Laura.”

Laura nodded and lifted her shirt off. Carmilla quickly leaned back in to kiss Laura. She felt Laura's hands on her stomach and smiled. She was soft and lightly running her hands over Carmilla’s sides. Her body felt alive and a drive she had never felt before powered her. She laid down and brought Laura on top of her still kissing.

Carmilla stopped for a moment. “Uh, can we kill the lights? They're in my eyes and I think I’m going blind.”

“Sure.”

Laura hopped off the bed and turned the light off. She quickly made her way back to the bed and repositioned herself to the way she was before.
“Thanks,” Carmilla said, smiling.

Laura gave her one peck before moving to her neck. Carmilla groaned and scratched down Laura's back, causing her to gasp.

“Sorry. Was that too hard?” Carmilla asked.

“No, Sweetness, it felt so good,” Laura whispered in her ear before kissing her neck and down further to her collarbone. Carmilla smiled and scratched Laura’s back again. She loved the sounds Laura made at her touch, even if she was starting to sober up from the endorphins they were releasing. She started to get nervous again, but only at the sensation of something new. She could still feel Laura's hips grinding against hers. The motion were getting harder, but she was enjoying the sensation it was causing her.

Laura slowly worked her way down. She kissed, sucked and used her tongue in ways Carmilla had never felt before. Carmilla felt Laura’s lips on the swell of her breast and moaned at the feeling of Laura's tongue. She could feel Laura smile against her skin before another kiss was planted.

Laura slid down her body a little, but Carmilla already missed the feeling of Laura's hips against hers. Laura's fingers played around the top of her plain, black bra.

“If you want me to stop, just tell me and I will.”

Carmilla nodded. She felt Laura pull her bra just a little. She was still covered, but Laura’s fingers were dangerously close. She felt nervous again. She'd never been exposed in front of anyone, but felt safe with Laura. She trusted Laura more than she had trusted anyone her entire life.

Carmilla felt Laura kiss closer and closer to her nipple. Laura looked up at Carmilla one more time and Carmilla nodded. She pulled the right side of her bra completely down and kissed around Carmilla's areola before she felt Laura take her nipple into her mouth. She moaned loudly at the feeling and bucked her hips. Her back arched off the bed as wanted Laura to take in more of her. Her breathing was ragged and she wanted Laura more in that moment than she had ever wanted anything in her whole life.

Laura blew light, cold air against her nipple. She could feel herself harden as Laura took it in her mouth again. Carmilla moaned louder this time as Laura placed her other hand on Carmilla's other breast.

“Arch your back again,” Laura said. She did as she was told, feeling the pool of wetness in her underwear. She felt Laura's hand on the back of her bra.

“Is this okay?” Laura asked again. It brought comfort to Carmilla and she smirked.

“Might make it easier,” Carmilla sarcastically replied.

Laura rolled her eyes and smiled. She unclasped Carmilla's bra and slid the straps down her arms. It didn't feel rushed anymore and she watched as Laura took in her topless form with curious eyes. Laura ran her hands down Carmilla's upper body before slowly ducking down and taking her right nipple into her mouth. Carmilla moaned as she tangled her hands in the back of Laura's hair. She gripped her hair and pulled lightly. The sound that came out of Laura was magical and she couldn't take it anymore.

She sat up and Laura stilled, believing she had gone too far. She hadn't, but Carmilla missed the weight of her hips against herself. She kissed Laura passionately, while slowly running her hands over Laura's breast, through her bra. She suddenly felt agitated with the material. She reached around
Laura's back, and tried to unclasp her bra with one hand. When that didn't work, she tried both of her hands. *Come on, Carmilla! It's a bra. You wear them! It shouldn't be this hard to get bra undone. Two little clasps. One, two. Are you shaking?! What's wrong with you? Keep it together!*

"Here, let me," Laura said.

She undid her maroon bra in one snap. Carmilla could feel the blush creep across her cheeks.

"Sorry, I couldn't get it," Carmilla mumbled in embarrassment.

Laura laughed light. "It's okay. It's honestly not as easy as it seems, but you can do the rest."

Carmilla's heart started to pound. Sure, she had seen women's breasts before but never face to face, in person. She took a deep breath before she slowly slid the bra down Laura's right arm and then left. She kept eye contact with Laura. She wasn't sure if she should look. She actually felt a little stupid. Laura was half naked on her lap and she was too afraid to look.

Laura smiled. "You're the first person I've ever been with, who hasn't looked at me while doing that and not looked at what they were disrobing."

"I, uh, I just want to make sure it's okay. This is my first time so I wanna make sure I do this right."

Carmilla felt betrayed by her cheeks that she knew were bright red.

"Carm, if it wasn't okay, do you think I would have let you do that?"

Carmilla shook her head no, trying to look anywhere but down. She was so nervous, she could tell her hands were starting to shake. Laura took Carmilla's right hand and placed it over her left breast. Carmilla made eye contact with Laura, her eyes wide and surprised by the feeling of Laura's bare breast under her hand.

Carmilla kissed Laura with the small amount of courage she had left. She gave her breast a firm grasp, while running her left hand down Laura's back. The sounds Laura emitted pushed her forward. She would do anything to keep her gasps and moans frequent. She slowly kissed down her neck.

"Can we switch positions?" Carmilla asked. Laura slowly climbed off of Carmilla and laid down on the bed. Carmilla sat there for a moment. *Okay, you got this. You don't have to do anything past this if you don't want to. They're just breasts... But they're Laura's. This automatically puts you in a new place with her. Okay, just boobs. You've seen them before and you know what they look like."

"Carm, have you even looked yet?"

"What?" Carmilla asked, quickly turning towards Laura. And there she was. Carmilla stared at her chest, soaking in every detail of Laura's body. She licked her lips as her eyes lingered over the area her hands had just been. She could see Laura's nipples were erect and she felt more turned on then she ever had.

She surged forward and kissed Laura's chest. She kissed and licked before taking one of Laura's nipples into her mouth. Laura grasped at Carmilla's hair and pulled, both moaning from their own sensations. Carmilla sucked and teased Laura's nipples with her mouth while cupping and groping her right breast. Laura's hips jolted up and it caused Carmilla to moan. She licked up in between Laura's breasts before moving her mouth to the opposite side. Laura continuously moaned and pulled Carmilla's hair.

"Yes, baby!" Laura moaned. Carmilla moaned in response.
Carmilla put more pressure on Laura's hip, trying to tame them, but Laura kept grinding up. Laura gave Carmilla's hair a harder tug than before, causing Carmilla to grind down against Laura. The feeling brought a new feeling to Carmilla's stomach. She had butterflies, but wanted more. Laura was moaning with her and to her. She never wanted to let go of that sound. The feeling of their skin against each other warmed Carmilla. Laura’s skin was soft and magical. She wanted to stay this way forever.

Carmilla sat up on her knees and pulled Laura up. She stood straight up on bended knees. Laura was quick to follow. They stood on bended knees in front of each other, holding each other close to one another as they kissed. Carmilla made the quick decision and decided she was ready for this. She wanted Laura.

Carmilla started moving her finger tips around the waistline of Laura's pants. Laura followed her actions, but didn't push any further, keeping her lips connected with Carmilla.

Carmilla moved her hands to the front of Laura's jeans and hooked her fingers into her belt loop, pulling Laura closer to her. Laura moved to kiss Carmilla's neck. They were both breathing heavy as Carmilla moved her hands to the button on Laura's jeans. Laura pulled back to look into Carmilla's eyes.

"Are you sure?" She asked, her breath ragged and her eyes looking down at Carmilla's hands.

"Yes. Are you?" Carmilla asked.

Laura smiled and nodded. Carmilla took a small breath and let it out slowly as she undid Laura's button. She dragged down the zipper and ran her fingers over the top of Laura's underwear. She could see from the small opening that Laura's underwear was white with little pink hearts on them. She chuckled to herself.

Laura was quick to follow. Unlike Carmilla, Laura didn't waste anytime undoing Carmilla's pants. She could see a white Hanes band around her waist. The color of her underwear was black. It didn’t seem to surprise Laura at all.

"Is all your underwear black?" Laura asked, smiling at Carmilla.

"Maybe one day you'll know the answer to that question," Carmilla teased before going in and connecting her lips with Laura. She could feel Laura's hand slowly moving down the front of her stomach. Laura's hand readjusted as it got to the top of her underwear. Her fingers were now pointed down. She slowly slipped her hand down the front of Carmilla's body. Carmilla wanted to feel this, to feel what it felt like to have someone touch her. To have Laura touch her. She felt butterflies at the new sensation of Laura's hand descending. She watched, pulling away from Laura. Laura did the same as she watched her own hand. Carmilla could feel Laura brace over her trim pubic hair when they were suddenly blinded by a bright light.

"Dude! Come quick! Hurry!" Kirsch said, not noticing what was happening inside the room.

They quickly scrambled to cover themselves. "What the fuck, Kirsch! Ever heard of knocking," Laura yelled, pulling Carmilla’s jacket up to cover herself. Kirsch wasn’t paying attention. He was staring at something over the balcony.

"Yo. They decided to do keg stands. You guys in?"

"Kirsch!" Laura yelled. He turned around and his eyes went wide.

"Whoa! Sorry, Ladies. I'll take this as a raincheck on the keg stands. Uh... enjoy or whatever.” He
quickly closed the door behind him. They both looked at each other and started laughing. They laid down next to each other, looking up at the ceiling.

“Does he always have bad timing?” Carmilla asked, as she grabbed Laura’s hand. She started to play with Laura’s fingers, holding it over her stomach, before intertwining them.

“Usually. He just doesn’t pay attention to his surroundings sometimes.”

“Seems that way,” Carmilla added. She turned her head and looked at Laura. “Wanna continue or…?”

Laura smiled. “I think Kirsch pretty much killed that mood.”

Carmilla nodded her head in agreement. “Stupid, Kirsch,” she muttered.

“We can keep going Carmilla. I’ll just need a moment to compose myself.”

“No, you’re right. He did kill the mood and I rather our first time not be in his bed.”

They both got up and looked for their discarded clothes when the door swung open again. This time it was Lafontaine and Perry. Both girls quickly covered themselves with their hands and arms.

“Oops. This room seems occupied,” Laf said, smirking.

Perry pulled their arm away. “Come on, Laf. No need to ogle. Let’s try the next room.”

The door closed and they both just stood there. “Well if Kirsch didn’t kill the mood, those other two just took away my last shred of arousal,” Carmilla said.

Laura laughed as she gathered her shirt and bra from the floor. Her back was towards Carmilla. As Laura started to slip her bra on, Carmilla came up quickly behind her and wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist. The feeling of Laura’s bare skin against the front of her bare body made her smile. Laura was warm. Carmilla kissed across the back of Laura’s shoulders and neck. “Soon,” she whispered before letting go to get dressed.

They left the bedroom together hand in hand, smiling to each other.

“Why do you two smell like sweat and shame?” Elsie asked, as she past the two of them.

“Mind your business, Elsie,” Laura retaliated, pulling Carmilla to where a few people were still dancing.

The party had fizzled out as Carmilla and Laura walked over to dance together. The music was slow and Carmilla didn’t mind Laura wrapping her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders and rest her head in the crook of her neck as they swayed together to the music. She felt content as Laura started kissing her neck. She hummed at the notion of Laura’s mouth on her.

“Keep that up, Cupcake and we will have to go back upstairs.”

Laura laughed against her neck. She went back to resting her head on Carmilla’s shoulder. They seemed to be in a world of their own until Carmilla felt a light tap against her shoulder.

“Sorry, Kitty, but Dad said we should have been home an hour ago,” Will said, holding up his phone. “He also wants to talk to you.”

*Shit.*
Carmilla took the phone and exhaled deeply. “Hey Dad… No I know… I lost track of time. Why are you yelling?... Dad we’re fine. We’re exactly where we said we’d be… Yes I’m still at Kirsch’s… We’ll leave now… I got distracted... Well I’m sorry I wasn’t looking at my watch every five seconds...” She exhaled and rolled her eyes. “Sorry, Sir… Yes, we’re leaving now… We’ll be home soon… Bye, Dad.”

“I take it we need to leave?” Laura asked.

Carmilla nodded. “I’ll round up the other two. They’re upstairs, right?”

“Yeah. Can you get my flannel? It’s on Kirsch’s dresser.”

“No problem. I left my leather jacket up there too.”

Carmilla gave Laura a quick peck on her cheek and ascended the stairs. She noticed Kirsch’s door was closed. She didn’t hear anything and pressed her ear against it just in case. Silence was on the other side. She slowly crept into the room, noticing two naked, yet asleep bodies in the bed. Well that is more of Kirsch than I ever needed to see. She quickly grabbed Laura’s flannel and her leather jacket before exiting as quietly as she could.

She moved to the next door over and knocked. Again, she didn’t hear anything and opened the door wide. She heard a shriek and Lafontaine telling her to get out before she slammed the door shut. What the fuck.

“Just so you guys know, I have to go home now. Minister’s orders. So are you guys coming or will you be getting a ride?” Carmilla yelled through the door.

The door creaked open to reveal Lafontaine’s head. “I think we’ll be getting a ride. Bye!” And with that the door was slammed in her face.

She walked back down the stairs and started laughing to herself.

“What’s so funny?” Laura asked as she met Will and Laura at the entrance.

“Well, Kirsch and Theo had a good time for sure because I saw more of Kirsch than I ever needed to see while I got our stuff.”

Carmilla held out Laura's flannel to her and helped her put it on.

“Thanks,” Laura said, holding out her hand to Carmilla. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulders. Laura followed suit, wrapping her arm around Carmilla's waist and holding Carmilla’s hand that was wrapped around her shoulders.

“Shit. Where's Laf and Perry?” Laura asked, stopping and turning them to the door. Carmilla was quick to turn them back around.

“About that. That's why I was laughing. They'll be getting a ride home.” She paused and smiled. “I may have walked in on them.”

“Doing what, exactly?”

“Well I'm not really sure, but I'm pretty sure I saw a nude back from Laf and I heard a shriek from Perry as soon as I opened the door.”

“It's about time they acted on their feelings. I wonder how long it's been going on?”
“No idea, but hopefully they managed to carry on and I didn’t ruin their moment,” Carmilla said, kicking a rock with her boot.

“So apparently everyone was in the mood tonight?” Laura asked, putting her hand in Carmilla's back pocket and giving a light squeeze. Carmilla groaned.

She stopped and turned to Laura. She cupped her face and kissed her. “Apparently,” she whispered. They heard Will honking the horn and they both jumped.

“Come on ladies! Dad will kill us!” Will shouted from the Jeep.

They smiled and made their way over to the car. They held hands on the way home, Carmilla running her thumb over Laura's hand frequently. She couldn't get over how soft her skin was. Her thoughts going back to earlier. The feel of Laura's naked upper body against her. The feel of kissing her neck and her bare breasts. She smiled.

Laura was pulling into Carmilla's driveway sooner than Carmilla would have liked.

“I'm going to say goodnight to Laura. Tell Dad I'll be in soon,” Carmia said.

“Sure thing. Thanks for the ride, Laura,” Will said, hopping out of the car.

“Of course.”

They waited until Will was inside before Carmilla nodded her head to the backseat. She climbed over the center console and sat. Laura was quick to follow, making her way to straddle Carmilla's hips. Carmilla pulled Laura in by her shirt and started to kiss her. Laura moaned and Carmilla took the opportunity to use her tongue. Once their breathing picked up, Carmilla started kissing down Laura's neck.

“I wish we weren't interrupted before,” Laura said. Her voice was ragged as she breathed heavily.

“Me too, Cupcake. I don't think I've ever been this turned on in my life,” Carmilla whispered back, not taking her mouth away from Laura's skin.

Laura laid them down on the backseat, with Carmilla on top of her. They were kissing again when Carmilla's leg slipped between Laura's thighs. She gasped at the feeling of Carmilla's leg and grounded her hips upwards for friction, while Carmilla started to kiss down the V of her shirt. Carmilla lifted Laura’s shirt up and started kissing her torso. She was dangerously close to the waistline of Laura's jeans.

Laura scooted up a little so Carmilla had more space. She wanted this, but at the same did not want her Jeep to be the location of their first time. Carmilla unbuttoned her pants and unzipped them. She was eager and never thought she would ever know the feeling of being sexually attracted to someone.

She licked down the front of Laura's underwear, brushing against pubic hair. This was all new to her and she suddenly remembered she had no idea what she was doing. She made her way back up Laura's stomach before slowly making her way back down. Kissing and licking patterns on Laura's stomach. Laura was moaning and having a hard time staying still as she felt Carmilla's mouth on her body.

“I'm sorry. I messed up, didn't I? I went too far. I'm sorry, Laura. You should have told me sooner. I wouldn't have undone your pants. I'm sorry. I'm so sor-”

“Look who's rambling now,” Laura interrupted. “And it's not that, Carm. I want you, I really do, but I don't think our first time should be in the back of my Jeep. I rather it happen somewhere special. Like I said before, we don't have to rush this.”

Carmilla exhaled and smiled. “You're right. It must have been something in the brownies because apparently it had a love potion in it or something.”

“It's a possibility with all the sex that seemed to happen tonight, but are you okay with what happened earlier? You didn't feel pushed or anything, right?”

“No Laura. Of course not. I would have stopped you if I felt any doubt. I trust you.” She grinned.

“Okay. That makes me feel a little bit better.”

Carmilla smiled. She buttoned and zipped up Laura's pants. She patted her thighs as they both moved to sit normally on the backseat. Carmilla left her hand on Laura's thigh, rubbing her thumb up and down.

“I should probably get inside. I don't think it normally takes 15 minutes to say goodbye.”

Laura smiled. “Probably a good idea.”

Carmilla leaned in to give Laura a goodnight kiss. They climbed back into the front seats and Carmilla got out of the passenger side door. She walked over to the driver's side as Laura rolled down her window.

“I had a good time tonight, Sweetness. Wish we could have done more though.”

“Me too, Cupcake. But after tonight, I think it's fair to say, it will be happening soon.” Carmilla smiled and Laura hummed. She glanced down at Carmilla's body, remembering what she looked like. She bit her lip.

“Can't wait, Sweetness.”

“I know you can't. Goodnight, Laura.”

“Night, Carm.”

Carmilla leaned in and gave a quick peck. Laura smiled and accepted it, kissing Carmilla back. Carmilla slowly walked away and to her porch. She waved at Laura as Laura pulled away.

_Well this certainly was a good night. Happy Birthday to me. Hopefully 17 will be a good year._

**Chapter End Notes**

Lets give up for Kristin, who read the entire chapter for me last night, so I could get it to you guys early today!
It had been a couple weeks since Carmilla's birthday. Carmilla and Laura had decided to take a step back from their party engagements, agreeing that it was the alcohol and other substances that made them move that quickly. Even though they both loved the feeling of their bodies together, they decided they should wait until the moment is right and they’re both there mentally. They also agreed to want to have their first time in a place where Kirsch couldn’t barge in. When Carmilla had gotten home that night, Henry was not in the best of moods. Carmilla had been grounded after returning home late and then staying in the car to talk to Laura. *Worth it* she thought after being told the news the next morning.

It was now the last Saturday of October, and Carmilla awoke with butterflies in her stomach. She was taking her driver’s test today. Her and Henry had been working towards this for a few weeks. She was a fast learner and Henry finally believed it to be time. Lilita is definitely ready for Carmilla to have her license. Work had been causing her a lot of stress. She figured this would help lessen it.

Before Carmilla got out of bed, she turned the alarm off on her phone and saw she had a text message. *Of course, Laura is already awake.*

**The Rambler:** Good luck today, Sweetness! I know you'll be great!

Carmilla smiled. She heard Henry call her name, and she rolled her eyes. She slowly rolled out of bed and got up. She stretched her arms over her head when there was a knock on her door.

“I'm up! Can I get dressed in peace?!” Carmilla snapped. She knew she was a pain to get up. But once she was up, she just wanted to be left alone so she could get ready in her own little world. Apparently, her family never cared.

“It's too early for your attitude, Carmilla,” Henry said, through the door. “If you want to take your test this morning, I suggest you change it. Get ready. Your Mother has breakfast on the table, even though I assume you're too nervous to eat.”

It's true. Carmilla hated eating anything when she was nervous. Lilita used to force her to eat, no matter what, but luckily enough she stopped doing that after Carmilla threw up in the car one morning on the way to the airport for their family trip.

She threw on some random clothes and opened the door. She regretted it as soon as she did. The smell of breakfast was too strong and it made her stomach turn. She immediately ran to the bathroom and shut the door. She splashed water on her face and looked at herself in the mirror. She made random faces to make her laugh and settle her nerves, before she started brushing her teeth.

She slowly made her way downstairs. *Out of all the mornings, why did mother make bacon? The
“Good morning, Dear.”

“Morning, Mother.” Carmilla grabbed a banana from a bowl on the kitchen counter. She felt like it was the only thing she could stomach.

“Nervous?” Lilita asked, setting a plate of food in front of Carmilla.

“Quite,” Carmilla responded, pushing the plate towards Will.

“Carmilla, you should eat,” Lilita said.

Carmilla held up her unpeeled banana and smiled. “That food is too heavy, Mother. You wouldn't want me to throw up during my test, would you?” Carmilla smirked. This always worked.

“Of course not, Carmilla. I just don't know why you're so nervous.”

“She's always nervous,” Henry said, taking a huge plate of breakfast. He smiled at Carmilla, while taking his seat. “She gets it from my mother. It's a curse really, but don't be nervous, Kid. Rich told us where they want you to drive. It'll be 10 minutes tops.”

“But what if mess up my parallel parking or my three point turn? Or what if I don't realize that I'm speeding down the highway and cause an accident?”

“Let's be reasonable here. You've done amazing at three point turns and parallel parking. You know that. And you've been white knuckling the steering wheel every time we've gotten on the highway together. You're ready, Kid. If you weren't, I wouldn't let you do this.” Henry smiled.

Carmilla felt her nerves lessen but knew they hadn’t gone away. “Thanks, Dad.”

Henry shoveled the rest of his food in his mouth. “Alright, Kiddo, ready?”

He grabbed his car keys and wallet. Carmilla nodded, her nerves returning in full swing.

“Good luck, Kitty,” Will said.

“Thanks,” she replied.

“Good luck, Carmilla, Dear! I know you'll be wonderful! And if you pass, we can go get a car for you tomorrow after church.”

Carmilla smiled. “I'll try my hardest, Mother.”

Carmilla followed Henry outside. “You wanna drive to the DMV? He asked, holding the keys out.

“Too nervous,” Carmilla said, shaking her head.

They got in the car and pulled out of the driveway. The ride was silent. Carmilla sat there staring out the window, shaking her leg up and down.

“Carmilla, I'm going to need you to breathe at some point here. It's not the end of the world. This isn't life or death. You'll either take it and pass or fail. If you fail, you take it again. It’s not a big deal. With they way you’re acting, I feel like I'm taking you to a sentencing hearing which I better never have to do!”
Carmilla laughed. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m just saying I better never have to take you or meet you in court because of something you did!”

“Dad the worst thing I’ve ever done is stay in a car for 15 minutes after already being late for my curfew.”

“Uh, I think you’re forgetting that one time you just decided to stay at Kirsch’s without telling me or your mother about it,” he smiled.

“Okay. I don’t think that’s jail worthy, Pops. Besides you didn’t ground me for that, surprisingly. You did ground me for sitting in Laura’s car. I’m not sure how that’s worse.”

“Well, I told you not to linger and you did. Besides I have to keep an eye on you. Make sure everything is okay and you’re not rushing into anything.”

“And what could Laura and I possibly be rushing into?” Carmilla asked.

Henry smiled at Carmilla. He thought about everything he had seen them do together. Things Carmilla didn’t even know. The kisses. The secret stares and smiles. The way they look at one another. Seeing them cuddled up together after Laura expressed to Carmilla what happened to her mother. The times they sat too close and separated quickly when he walked into a room. He laughed at his daughter.

“Good point, Carmilla. But, are you feeling better?” He asked, knowing distracting Carmilla saved her from herself.

She smiled at him. “Yeah I am. Thanks, Dad.”

“That’s what I’m here for, Kid.”

Soon they were pulling into the DMV. Carmilla's nerves returned as they walked inside. There was a small waiting area and a reception desk.

“Can I help you, Sir?” she asked. Her expression bored and tired.

“Good morning! My daughter is here to take her driver's test.” Carmilla was standing behind him, looking like she would break if someone touched her or jumped too quickly at her.

She handed a clipboard over to Henry. “Fill these out and bring them back to me. Once I have them, I'll get a driving instructor to you as soon as possible. Just please keep in mind that it is Saturday. There will be many teenagers here to take their test, so it could take a while. There are already a few people ahead of you now.”

“I understand, and that is quite alright. We have all day. Thank you very much.” Henry smiled and led Carmilla over to the chairs. She sat there staring at the floor, shaking her leg again. Henry filled out her forms for her, knowing she wouldn’t be able to focus on anything.

“Carmilla, you know it’ll be okay. Like I said, you’re ready.”

“I know, Dad.”

“Do you? Because you look like you’re about to murder someone.”

“What? I’m not even looking at anyone. I’m looking at the floor.”
“What did that floor ever do to you?”

“What?” she asked, looking up at her father’s grinning face. “What’s wrong with you?” she laughed.

“Making you smile, Kid. Now go give these to these to that woman. Be nice and don’t shoot daggers at her.”

Carmilla exhaled and got up. The woman was typing something on her computer and seemed to ignore Carmilla’s existence. She cleared her throat and it got her attention.

“Oh, sorry, Dear. All filled out?”

“Uh, yes ma’am.”

“Okay, let me have a look.” She took the clipboard and Carmilla looked around. The floor was old and faded white tile. There was a lot of brown everywhere including the desks, chairs and wall panels. No wonder she looks miserable. This place is terrible.

“Everything checks out,” the woman said, smiling.

Carmilla nodded.

“I’ll put you in and you should be taking your test in the next 30 minutes or so.”

Carmilla nodded again. “Uh, great. Thank you.”

“Don’t be nervous. I’ll try to get you a nice instructor, but I can’t make any promises. It’s basically first come, first serve.” She smiled at Carmilla.

Carmilla gave her a half smile. “Thank you.”

She returned to her father. “Dad, I would hate to work here.”

“Some people don’t have a choice, Kiddo.”

“But it would be so boring. The coloring here is all off. I mean brown? That’s the ugliest color ever made.”

“Hey, you liked my brown suit.”

“No, Dad. No one liked your brown suit. I made fun of your brown suit. I mean seriously, who has a brown suit?”

“I think we should be more surprised your mother let me wear it that long.”

“That’s truest thing that has ever been spoken,” Carmilla said, smiling.

After thirty minutes, a man in his thirties with a trim beard came out of the door. “Carmilla Karnstein?” he asked, looking around the room.

Carmilla stood. Henry stood next to her and they made their way over to the entrance.

“Hi. I’m Joseph and I’ll be your instructor today.” He held out his hand. Carmilla shook it and exhaled. “No need to be nervous, Carmilla. Are you ready?”

She nodded. Henry handed her the keys and hugged her. “Knock ‘em dead, Kiddo. You can do
She smiled and made her way to her car. She followed all the procedures given to her. He checked her headlights and turn signals all around the car. He was nice, but still kept a stern facade. He would tell her when to turn and she made sure to constantly check her speed. She kept the speedometer on the line, never going above the speed limit. She managed to do her three point turn and overnight parking flawlessly. She was pulling back into the DMV parking lot and was told to drive up to the two flanks of wood.

“Carmilla, you have done excellent. The last thing I need you to do is parallel park for me.”

She nodded her head. She took a deep breath, but managed to do a pretty decent job.

“Well you’re sticking out a little bit, but good job. Why don’t we pull out of here and get into a real parking space.”

Carmilla was nervous. He didn’t say anything about the actual test and surprisingly, regular parking is where she struggled the most. She was short so it was hard for her to see. She put the car in park and killed the motor. He handed over her papers.

“Congratulations. You are now officially a driver.” He smiled at her.

Carmilla smiled back. “Thank you so much.”

They got of the car and she saw Henry waiting by the curb. She ran over to him, excited and happy. He gave her a big bear hug. “I knew you could do it, Kid.” He let go of her.

“Thanks, Pops.”

A few moments later, she was walking out without any nerves and a license in her hands.

“Celebratory junk food lunch?” Henry asked.

“Yes, please! I’m starving!”

“Call your Mother. We’ll pick them up.”

Carmilla called her mother and shared the good news with her. Once she was done, she sent Laura a text message.

Carmilla: I did it, Cupcake!! I got my license!!

The Rambler: I’m so proud of you, Baby!! We have to celebrate!! Lunch?

Carmilla: Can’t. Lunch with the family. Maybe we can get dinner sometime this week?

The Rambler: Are you asking me on a date?

Carmilla smiled.

“Why the big smile?” Henry asked, looking over at Carmilla.

“I just got my license. Why wouldn’t I be smiles?” she asked.

“Just not your usual, ‘I did something and I’m proud’, smile.”

“I didn’t know I had different smiles.”
“You do, Kid. I told you, I know you better than you think I do.”

Carmilla looked at him curiously before shrugging. “Well I was just texting Laura to tell her I got my license. We’re going to get dinner sometime this week if that’s okay.”

“Sounds good to me. You two should celebrate.”

She looked down at her phone.

**Carmilla:** Yes, Laura. I’m asking you on a date. Wednesday night, 6 o’clock, anywhere you want to go. I’ll drive.

**The Rambler:** Sounds good to me, Sweetness.

She smiled again which made Henry smiled. He was proud of Carmilla.

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Carmilla arrived to church the next morning with a skip in her step. They had to get there early again, but Carmilla was happy to see Laura’s Jeep waiting. She looked around, but Laura was nowhere to be found. She decided to make her way to her Sunday School classroom. Laura was there with her head down on the table, lights off and blinds closed.

Carmilla quietly walked up next to her and set her stuff down. She slowly rubbed her hand up and down Laura’s back.

“Hey. Hey, Cupcake?” she whispered.


Carmilla continued to scratch her back. She let Laura sleep, while she played a game on her phone. She liked the feel of Laura against her. She was warm as she took deep breaths. Carmilla knew Laura had gone back to sleep, but she didn’t mind. She always felt at ease with Laura next to her.

Laura’s body jerked and it caused her to wake up. Carmilla lifted her hand.

“What time is it?” Laura asked, groggily.

*She’s so cute.* “We have about half an hour before Sunday School starts,” Carmilla said, putting her phone down.

“Sorry, Carm. I’m so sleepy.”

Carmilla noticed the dark spots under Laura’s eyes and frowned.

“Were you up late last night watching Netflix again?”

“Yes, but I had my reasons. I can’t sleep until my dad gets home and he got home late.”

“I told you, you could text me if you felt uneasy.”

“It was 2 in the morning, Carm. I didn’t want to wake you.”

“Laura, if something is bothering you or something is happening, you can always call me. I don’t care about the time. Okay?”
Laura nodded and shifted next to Carmilla. She rest her head on Carmilla’s shoulder. Carmilla smiled and kissed her head.

“So, are you going to get a car today?” Laura asked, eyes closed.

“Yeah. I don’t know what to get, but I’ll just browse until I find something that I like.”

“Are you going to the Carpenter’s dealership?”

“Yeah. John said he’d give my dad a discount so he didn’t even think twice about looking somewhere else.”

“That’s where I got my Jeep. He’s got good stuff there.”

“Are you going back to sleep?” Carmilla asked, smiling.

“I’m very tired, Carmilla.”

“Do I at least get a good morning kiss before everyone shows up and you have to pull away?”

Laura tilted her head up and smiled. She leaned in giving Carmilla a light peck against her lips. They stayed their with their eyes closed before Laura leaned in again. They kissed for a moment longer when the door swung open.

“You should know better by now,” Kirsch grinned.

“Damn it, Kirsch. Stop ruining every moment,” Laura said.

“Ah, come on, Laura. It’s not the big puppies fault. We shouldn’t be kissing at church anyway.”

“That’s right. Now I believe congrats are in order.”

Kirsch barrelled past the tables and picked Carmilla up. “Congrats, Carm-sexy!” He hugged her tight. Her dress lifted a little higher than she expected.

“Another pair of black underwear. Really, Carm?”

“Put me down, Beefcake. And stop looking at my underwear, Laura.”

He set her down and she straightened out her dress. “It’s not my fault I could see your underwear,” Laura said.

“I know. I told my mother that me and dresses were a bad idea. She just didn’t seem to care this morning.” Carmilla smiled.

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Sunday school and church seemed to drag on for an eternity. Luckily, Laura was wearing another rather low cut dress so Carmilla had something to look at. Laura had crossed her arms which helped elevate her breasts even more. Carmilla glanced every few minutes, remembering how her bare skin felt against her hand. The sounds Laura made from her touch.

“You might want to stop staring, Sweetness,” Laura whispered, bringing Carmilla’s attention back to church.

“Sorry,” she whispered. “It’s distracting.”
Laura kept her arms crossed. They were scrunched in the last pew again. Carmilla was sitting to Laura’s left. After a moment, she felt Laura’s right hand rub up and down her arm. Laura’s hand hidden under her left arm. She smiled at the feeling of Laura. Surprisingly, it helped her pay attention to her Dad’s sermon. Something she had not done in weeks.

Henry was focused on a message about passing judgements. He talked about how we are so quick to judge other people without realizing the sins it creates in our hearts. How we cannot be a person of G-d, if we use our time to judge someone instead of getting to know them. Henry was always passionate about accepting and loving people. Carmilla had never seen him turn away from someone or not help a person in need. It was one thing Carmilla adored about her father.

He closed out with one of Carmilla’s favorite hymns, “Just As I Am”. Even though she couldn’t stand Christian rock music, the old hymns always stayed with her. She found them comforting. Probably because it was hymns that her parents used to sing to her when she was a baby to get her to go to sleep. Henry usually picked his kid’s favorites hymns when he was proud of them. He finished church with a prayer and then it was over. She gathered her things and made her way to the door.

“Great sermon, Pastor Karnstein,” Laura said, trailing behind Carmilla.

“Thank you, Laura. Carmilla, no lingering today. As soon as the church is locked, we’re heading over to the dealership.”

“Okay, Dad. I’ll see you at the car.”

Carmilla and Laura hurried off with the rest of the gang. They gathered around Laura’s Jeep and all started chatting.

“So, Carm-sexy. What kind of car are you going to get?”

“I don’t know, Kirsch. I’m just going to go and browse. I’ll leave with something because I’m pretty sure my mother will kill me if she has to drive Will and I to school tomorrow.”

“Cool. Can’t wait to see it.”

Carmilla smiled, but turned her attention back to Laura. She lightly ran her fingers over Laura’s back and stared at her.

“Carmilla!” Carmilla jumped away from Laura and looked up. “Five minutes,” Henry yelled. She gave him a thumbs up.

Laura and Carmilla managed to slide away from the group. They were having a heated debate over what kind of car Carmilla should get. She could have cared less. Laura and Carmilla snuck behind the Sunday School building. Laura gave her a quick peck as Carmilla wrapped her arms around her.

“I’m so proud of you,” Laura said.

“It’s just a license, Cupcake.”

“It’s not an easy test. Kirsch is one of the best drivers I know and he had to take it three times.”

“Yeah, but it’s Beefcake.”

Laura thought for a moment. “True.”

“Carmilla?!” They heard Henry call.
“Gotta go, Cupcake. I’ll text you later, okay?”

“Okay, Carm.” She smiled and they gave each other another peck before walking around the building.

“Bye guys! I’ll send everyone a picture of whatever car I get,” Carmilla said, running to Henry.

She jumped into the car and they were off. “I’m surprised you didn’t bring clothes to change into,” Lilita noticed as the pulled out the church’s parking lot.

“I honestly didn’t even think about it, Mother. I was also rushed this morning, but I did grab my boots.”

“Of course you did,” Lilita muttered.

It was a quick drive to the dealership. Carmilla was expecting a podunk little lot of cars, like the other used car lots she had seen around town, but the Carpenter’s was actually huge and seemed to have a lot of options.

“Hello, Pastor,” John Carpenter created them.

“Hey, John. How are you?”

“Very well, Pastor. Sorry I missed church today. Sometimes you just can’t get out of work.”

“No worries, John. Sorry you had to work.”

John shrugged. “Well, Carmilla, are you ready to find yourself a car?”

“Yes, sir.” She smiled.

“Do you have anything in mind?” John asked.

“No, Sir.”

“Well, go have a look around. See which one you like,” he gestured.

Henry nodded and Carmilla was off. Will hot on her tail. Lilita and Henry joined John inside for a cup of coffee.

“What are you thinking, Kitty?” Will asked.

“I don’t know. I was thinking a Jeep like Laura’s.”

“Aw. You two would have matching cars. How sweet! When’s the wedding?” He mocked.

“Damn. You’re right. Would that be weird? It would be work. Okay, let’s look. See anything you like?”

He scanned the lot and smiled. “I think I see a car with your name on it.”

She followed Will as he walked up to a black Dodge Challenger. It had clearly been renovated with two dark gray racing stripes up the center. A light yellow-orange color that ran up the side, matching the rims of the tires. Challenger was written on the side in orange, making it stand out. She checked the information on the car. It was a 2013 and barely had any miles on it. She smiled.
“You have a good eye, Will! This is it! This is the one I want.”

They ran back inside. Carmilla was so excited, she couldn’t hold it in. “I found it,” she said, as if she had found a buried treasure or the Holy Grail.

“Well, let’s go have a look,” John said, Henry and Lilita following.

Carmilla and Will led them to the black car. Carmilla’s smile plastered on her face.

“Ah, the Challenger. Good choice, Carmilla,” John said. He gave them the details of the car.

“Wanna give it a spin?” John asked.

Carmilla looked at Henry and he nodded. “Yes, Sir!” Carmilla replied, excitedly.

John, Henry and Carmilla got inside the car. Carmilla sitting in the driver’s seat. She took it out on the highway and fell in love with it. It ran smoothly. The car was quiet, but the engine would rev.

“Do you think Mother will let me get it?” Carmilla asked.

“She might need a little persuasion. How do you feel?” Henry asked.

“I love it. Please, Dad. I want this one.”

Henry looked back at John, who was sitting in the backseat. “Well, I’ll have to talk to my wife, but I think we’ll be leaving with this car today.”

“Well, let’s head back and see the deal we can make,” John said.

Carmilla pulled back into the parking lot and got out. Lilita was there with a stern look on her face.

“I love this car, Mother. Can I please get it?”

“I don’t know, Dear. Are you sure this is the one you want? You don’t want to have another look around? What about this one?”

Lilita pointed to a light blue Ford Focus. It made Carmilla cringe onsite. “You know Grandfather would turn over in his grave if his only granddaughter was driving a Ford.”

Lilita exhale. “That is true.”

“Come on, Lilita. It’s in our budget. I’m sure I can get John to give us a good deal on it. He assured me it’s safe and it barely has any miles on it. This should last Carmilla while.”

She looked at the car and then back to Carmilla. She was pleading. Lilita didn’t like begging, but she could tell she wouldn’t win this argument. Whenever it was Henry and Carmilla against her, she always seemed to lose.

“Let’s see what deal John can give us and go from there,” Lilita sighed.

“Well what has our decision come to?” John asked, coming back.

“That depends on you John. What offer can you give us?” Henry asked. John smiled and after a few negotiations, they reached a reasonable price. They all went inside to fill out the paperwork. Once completed, Henry and John shook hands and John handed the keys over to Carmilla. She smiled widely at him.
“Thank you so much, Mr. Carpenter.”

“It’s my pleasure, but I’m not sure I’m the one that should be thanked.” He pointed towards her parents.

“Oh they’re next, believe me.” She walked over to Henry.

“Thank you so much, Dad! I love it.”

“You’re welcome, Kid! Let’s get home.”

“Mother, do you want to ride with me?”

“No. I think William should be your first passenger.”

“Alright!” Will jumped up, excitedly. Carmilla chuckled at him.

“Uh, Mother?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“Thank you so much. It means the world to me! I love it.” She took a step forward and hugged Lilita. Lilita returned the small hug.

“You’re welcome, Dear. I just hope this makes up for everything.”

Carmilla stilled. She was referencing her being sent to her camp. She let go of Lilita and nodded, her excitement gone for a moment until Will honked her car horn. She jumped.

“Are you alright, Carmilla?” Lilita asked.

_Breathe. Breathe. She says this every time she buys you something expensive. Don’t let it bother you. It’s fine._

She took a deep breath and smiled. “I’m great, Mother. Thank you again,” she said before running over to her new car.

---------------------------------------------

After Carmilla and her family had consumed their lunch, she made her way to the living room. She was back in an old pair of jeans and a baggy t-shirt. She felt ten times more comfortable and like herself. She felt her phone buzz in her back pocket. She pulled it out and smiled when she saw it.

_The Rambler:_ Well?!

_Carmilla:_ Well what, Cutie?

Carmilla smiled.

_The Rambler:_ Did you get a car?!

_Carmilla:_ I did.

_The Rambler:_ Ugh… Details baby?

_Carmilla:_ Why don’t I come over? We can take a little spin together?
The Rambler: Sounds good to me. Dad is leaving soon because he has to go to work. I wouldn’t mind having company.

Carmilla: Let me ask…

She looked up from her phone and saw that Henry was staring at her. “Let me guess,” Henry paused exaggerating a thinking face. “Can you go to Laura’s to show her your new car? Am I close?” He asked.

Carmilla rolled her eyes. “That would be correct, Sir.”

“Hmm. I don’t know, Carmilla.”

She laughed at him. “Please? Please? Please?”

“Hmm.”

“Don’t make me beg, Pops. That wouldn’t be good for anyone.”

“Please let her go, Dad. So I can pay attention to this game,” Will said, gesturing to the television.

“Okay. Home by 9 o’clock. I mean it, Carmilla.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

She popped off the couch and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

“And make sure you have everything! License, insurance.”

“Check and check, Dad,” she said, while slipping on her leather jacket.

“And let me know if you go driving somewhere. Just so I know.”

“Will do, Dad.”

And with that she was out the door, throwing on her Ray Bans.

Carmilla: Be there soon, Cupcake.

She pressed the button on her key to the Challenger to unlock the doors. She got in and started it. It’s engine purred as she revved it. She slowly pulled out of the driveway and made her way to Laura’s. It was a short drive as she pulled up on the curb outside of her house. She saw that Mr. Hollis was still home and didn’t want to block in his car. She clicked the button to lock the car and made her way to Laura’s door.

She was just about to knock, when it swung open with Laura standing there in sweatpants and a big comfy sweater. “Is that your car?” she asked excitedly.

“That’s it, Cupcake.”

Laura ran down the stairs to look at it. She was more excited than Carmilla was. “This is awesome, Carm! I can’t believe your Mother let you get this.”

“I couldn’t either, but she always gives in when my dad and I gang up on her.”

“Can we go for a ride?”
“Of course, Cupcake. I was actually thinking we could go to that diner we went to on our first date a little later. The one outside of town?”

“That sounds like a good idea to me,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla. She slowly stepped closer to Carmilla. They didn’t notice Rich standing in the door frame. He watched them smile at each other for a moment before clearing his throat.

“Is this your fancy new car, Carmilla?”

They jumped apart. “Uh, yes Sir.” He slowly approached them, already in his uniform.

“Looks nice. Did you get this at John’s?”

“Yes. We went straight after church.”

“Very good. I know this car has a lot of speed, but I expect you to follow the rules of the road.”

“Daddy, stop,” Laura said. He smiled at her.

“I had to pull Kirsch over twice before he believed me. Danny a few times, too. I remember that one time I pulled Mattie over.” Rich added.

“Okay, Daddy. She gets the point.”

“Okay, Honey Bear. I’m heading off to work.”

Carmilla took a step back to give them privacy. Laura looked at her and she could see the small worriedness in Laura’s eyes. Carmilla leaned against the side of her car.

“I’ll see you tonight, Laura. I’ll text you if I’m going to be late,” Rich said in a hushed whisper.

“Promise?” Laura asked, her voice small and her eyes hopeful.

“Promise,” He smiled.

She gave him a hug which he returned. “I love you, Honey Bear.”

“I love you too, Dad.” He smiled and they let go. Carmilla had found an interesting rock next to the curb.

“Carmilla?” She looked up at Rich. “Take care of my girl.”

“I always do, Sir.”

He smiled at her and went to his patrol car. They stayed their and watched him back out of the drive way. Rich lightly tapped the horn and Laura smiled, waving to him. He waved back before driving off.

Laura looked over to Carmilla, who was still leaning against her the side of her car. “Don’t move, Sweetness.”

“Why?” Carmilla started to panic.

Laura took out her phone and snapped a picture of Carmilla standing next to her. “I have to make people jealous,” Laura said as she started walking inside. Carmilla quickly followed, shutting the door behind her. She could tell Laura was sad again.
“You okay, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked, sitting down next to her on the couch.

“Yeah. You think after all this time I would be over it, but I still get nervous when my dad leaves.”

“I don’t think that’s true.”

“It’s been two years since my mom died, Carm.”

“So? It’s not a simple thing to just move on from a family member’s death. My grandfather died and every holiday I think he’s going to walk through the door. It’s not easy, Laura. Death never is.”

“I know, but I feel childish.”

“She was your mom, Cupcake. It’s not childish.”

Laura gave her a small smile. She moved over and cuddled into Carmilla’s side. “Thanks, Carm.”

Carmilla kissed the side of her head. “Don’t mention it, Cupcake.”

“This is a pretty hot picture of you,” Laura said, holding it up so Carmilla could look at it.

“Yeah, not bad at all. Can you text it to me?”

Laura nodded and texted it to Carmilla. Carmilla felt her phone vibrate and pulled it out of her back pocket. She smiled.

“You still have my name as the Rambler?” Laura asked, looking at Carmilla’s phone.

“Yeah.”

“Change it! I don’t like it.”

Before Carmilla could do anything, Laura grabbed her phone. After a moment she handed it back to Carmilla. “There.”

Carmilla looked at her phone to see “Cupcake” typed out. Carmilla smiled.

“Better?” Laura asked, snuggling back into Carmilla.

“Better,” Carmilla affirmed.

Laura started to doze off against Carmilla. Carmilla was too excited about the day to fall asleep, so she decided to turn on the TV. Nothing good was on, so she settled for a Lifetime movie. Better than nothing, I guess. Carmilla thought to herself.

A few hours later and Laura was still sound asleep. At some point during Carmilla’s second Lifetime movie, Laura had made her way down to rest her head on Carmilla’s lap. Carmilla quickly grabbed a couch pillow and slid it under Laura’s head as best she could. She knew Laura was exhausted, but didn’t expect her to sleep this much. Carmilla started threading her fingers through Laura’s hair. It felt soft and like silk as Carmilla light scratched her scalp. She rested her left arm against Laura’s side, which Laura quickly pulled down to snuggle up to. The back of her head was firmly pressed against Carmilla’s stomach. This was nice and comfortable. It made Carmilla feel all warm and fuzzy on the inside as she looked down at Laura’s sleeping face.

Out of nowhere her stomach growled louder than she expected. Laura started to blink her eyes open. Even beautiful when she’s waking up.
“Someone’s hungry,” Laura mumbled. She was trying to adjust her eyes to the dimly lit room and brightness from the TV.

“Sorry, Cupcake. That came without a warning.”

“It’s okay. I should probably get up anyway. Let me change and then we can go to dinner?” Laura asked.

“Sounds good, Cupcake.”

Laura got off the couch and stretched her back. She turned around and kissed Carmilla.

“Thanks for letting me sleep, Sweetness,” she said against her lips.

Carmilla smiled and pulled Laura onto her lap, kissing her. She hummed against Laura’s lips. Carmilla was about to deepen the kiss when her stomach growled again. Possibly even louder than the first time. Laura laughed.

“I don’t know who’s worse at interrupting us. Kirsch or my stomach?” Carmilla asked.

“Definitely Kirsch.” They laughed.

“Okay, let me change and we’ll get this little tummy some food,” Laura said. She leaned down and kissed Carmilla’s stomach.

“We’re gross, aren’t we?” Carmilla asked, smiling as Laura left the room.

“Oh, definitely,” she heard Laura say as she went up the stairs.

Ten minutes later, Laura was back downstairs. She put on jeans and a light sweater. She looked refreshed.

“Ready?” she asked, gathering her wallet, phone and keys.

“Definitely! Just let me shoot a quick text to my dad,” Carmilla explained. She grabbed her phone and told her dad she was going to get dinner with Laura. “All set, Cupcake.”

Carmilla walked to the door and opened it for her. “Thank you.” Carmilla followed and shut the door behind her. Laura locked it and they laced their fingers together walking down the porch to Carmilla’s car. Carmilla held the car door open for her.

“You have leather seats?!” Laura asked, excitedly.

“Yep and seat warmers. Whoever had this car before me apparently bought it, gave it the works, didn’t like it and sold it to Mr. Carpenter for an old vintage car he had.”

“So you got very lucky,” Laura added.

“Indeed,” Carmilla smiled. She closed Laura’s door and made her way to the driver’s seat. She’s started the engine and smiled. Laura held Carmilla’s hand as Carmilla started to drive. Laura gave her instructions, but Carmilla quickly noticed this isn’t the place they went to before.

“Are we headed in the right direction, Laura?” Carmilla asked, her eyes still on the road.

“Oh I decided we should go somewhere else,” Laura said. She had a sly smile on her face. “I’ve never been there before, but Kirsch has. He suggested Chelsea and I go there once, but a little too
late. It’s when she was already cheating on me.”

“Okay. How far away is it?”

“Just an hour.”

“Will I be home at 9? That’s my curfew and my dad will definitely ground me if I’m late again.”

“Yes, Sweetness. Don’t get your panties in a twist,” Laura paused and smiled. “Unless you need help getting out of them. Then by all means...”

“Oh you’d like that, wouldn’t you, Cupcake?” Carmilla said, pulling up to a red light.

“Oh I think I would,” Laura said, moving in for a kiss.

A horn honked behind them. Carmilla kissed Laura’s hand and continued to drive. Forty-five minutes later and they were pulling into a small diner on the opposite side of town. There wasn’t any signage and most of the blinds had been pulled down in the windows. Laura took Carmilla’s hand and started pulling her towards the door.

“Laura, are you sure this is the right place?”

“Yes, Sweetness. It’s exactly how Kirsch described it.”

“Why do I feel like I’m going to die as soon as I walk in there?”

“You are such a scaredy cat. It’s a diner. Come on, Baby.”

Laura practically pulled Carmilla to the door and pushed it open. Inside, it felt warm and welcoming. Carmilla tried to pull away from Laura’s hand, but Laura’s grip tightened. They walked to a booth in the corner. Laura pulled Carmilla to sit next to her. “I totally forgot about this place when I was going to take you to our cabin. I can’t believed it slipped my mind.”

“Maybe I should sit on the other side,” Carmilla suggested.

“Don’t be stupid, Carm. Stay next to me. I’m cold and you’re always warm.” Carmilla smiled. She stood up and slid her jacket off to put around Laura.

“Well aren’t you a sweetheart, giving her your jacket. So sweet. I’m Tommy and I’ll be server this evening,” a young guy in 20’s said. His voice was masculine, but his mannerisms were more feminine. He smiled at them.

Carmilla stared at him and then looked at Laura. “Sweetheart, are you alright?” Tommy asked at the expression on Carmilla’s face.

“Uh, yeah.” She chuckled, “I’ll have a Coke, please.”

“Perfect, and you?” He asked, looking at Laura.

“I’ll have the same.”

“Wonderful. I’ll be back with your drinks shortly.”

Carmilla watched him walk away and noticed he had a little more swing in his hips. She started looking around the restaurant. It was nice and cozy. Almost everyone at each tables were of the same sex. She didn’t really put too much thought into and looked down on her menu. Carmilla noticed that
it was originally an album cover that they had converted into a menu. She had a Cher record. She looked at Laura’s who had Celine Dion. Things slowly started to click into place.

“How could you forget about the one gay place in town?” Carmilla asked, smirking at Laura.

“Kirsch has only been here a couple times. After last year, I kind of pulled away from everything. I just forgot until tonight when you mentioned the diner. For some reason, this place popped back up,” Laura smiled.

“You’re adorable,” Carmilla said. She gave Laura a kiss that slowly turned heated.

“Whoa, Ladies. This may be a place where that is more than welcome, but we still like to keep it at PG rating. Families do come here on occasion,” Tommy said, returning with two Cokes.

They separated smiling at each other. “Do you know what you want?”

“I’ll have a cheeseburger and fries, please,” Carmilla said.

“I’ll have the same,” Laura smiled.

“You’ve been my easiest table all night. Can I get you anything else while you wait for your food?”

Laura and Carmilla looked at each other and then back to Tommy. Carmilla shrugged, “I think we’re alright, Tommy.”

“Alright, well you holler if you need anything.”

It was silent for a few minutes. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura, pulling her close to her side.

“I wish it could be like this all the time,” Laura said, snuggling into Carmilla.

“Me too, Cupcake. But maybe one day you and I can go to the city or at least to a place where being gay doesn’t matter. Where there are no judging eyes and our parents aren’t around. We can just live our own lives.”

“That would be nice, wouldn’t it.”

Carmilla kissed the top of Laura’s head. “It would be. Are you still tired?”

“Exhausted.”

“Well hopefully this food will give you a little energy and then you’ll probably sleep like a rock tonight.”

“I’m so ready for bed,” Laura yawned. “But for now…” She pulled the Coke towards her and started drinking it.

“Ah yes. A sugar high, so you can crash. You have to give me directions back so don’t do anything that will cause you to sleep in my car.”

“Fair enough.”

Laura looked at the small drinks menu on the table and her eyes widen.

“Holy crap! Halloween is next week!”
“It sure is, Cupcake.”

Laura looked over and smiled at Carmilla. “Oh please tell me you don’t dress up!”

“Lafontaine always has a Halloween party, and before you ask, yes costumes are a must!”

“Damn it,” Carmilla whispered.

“Please, Carm. I’ll make it worth your while!”

Carmilla’s ears perked up and she smirked. “Worth my while huh?”

Laura nodded and hummed.

“And what would you do to make it worth my while?” Carmilla smirked at Laura.

Laura’s hand ran up the inside of Carmilla’s thigh. She was running her fingers dangerously close as she whispered into Carmilla’s ear. “Oh I have a few ideas, Sweetness,” Laura said before kissing under Carmilla’s ear.

“How could I refuse that offer?” Carmilla asked.

Laura pulled away immediately. The spell Laura had created was broken and Carmilla frowned.

“You can’t. Now, who should we go as?”

“I’ll leave that up to you, Cupcake.”

“Are you sure you want to do that after Spirit Week?”

Carmilla acted as if she was thinking about it. “I’ll take my chances,” she says after a moment. Laura rested her hand on Carmilla’s knee and patted it.

“Then I have planning to do.”

Their food came a moment later. They both ate quickly and quietly. The long drive had made both of them rather hungry. Tommy brought their check over and Carmilla gladly paid for it.

“You didn’t have to do that, Carm.”

“I know, but I wanted to.”

They gathered their things. Laura handed Carmilla her leather jacket, but Carmilla shook her head. “You get colder faster than I do,” Carmilla said.

Laura smiled. “Thanks, Carm.”

Carmilla got out of their booth and held her hand out for Laura. This felt right. Being able to be a couple in public. Her heart warmed at the thought when Laura grabbed her hand.

“Have a good night ladies. You’re welcome back anytime,” Tommy said, giving them a small wave.

“Thanks, Tommy,” Carmilla said, opening the door for Laura.

They walked to Carmilla’s car hand in hand. Carmilla opened the door for Laura and then quickly got in on her side. She shook. It had gotten a lot colder than it was before. Their ride back was quiet. Laura had fallen asleep again, but luckily Carmilla remembered how they got there. She kept one
hand on the steering wheel, while the other stayed rested on top of Laura’s leg. Laura’s hand was wrapped in hers. She pulled up in front of Laura’s house.

“Hey, Cupcake. We’re back.”

“Hmm?” Laura asked, not opening her eyes.

“Okay. Let’s get you inside, Laura.”

Laura just nodded her head and didn’t move. Carmilla walked over to the passenger’s side and opened the door. She pulled Laura out and picked her up. That seemed to wake Laura.

“What are you doing?” she asked, eyes wide.

“Carrying my beautiful, sleeping girlfriend to her door.”

“Put me down, Carm. You’re going to drop me!”

“Laura Hollis, I would do no such thing.”

Carmilla carried her all the way and up the porch before putting her down. “Care to come in?”

“I would, Cupcake, but I should be heading home. It’s almost nine.”

Laura pouted. “Okay.”

“Don’t do that, Cupcake. I just can’t be home late. You don’t want me to be grounded, do you?”

“No. I don’t want that, but can we at least go inside so I can kiss you goodnight?”

“Sure, Cupcake.”

Laura smiled. They stepped inside and Carmilla didn’t even have a chance to think. As soon as she closed the door, Laura was kissing her. She hummed, while cupping Laura’s cheeks in her hands. Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s waist as they continued to kiss. Carmilla deepened the kiss, feeling Laura moan against her. Carmilla slid her hands into Laura’s back pockets and grabbed. Laura moaned again, breaking their kiss. Carmilla started kissing down Laura’s neck to her collarbone. Laura was panting as she also slid her hands down Carmilla’s side and into her back pockets. Carmilla made a trail up Laura’s collarbone, to her neck and up to Laura’s ear. She pulled back and started kissing Laura again. Their breath was hot against one another. Laura started tugging Carmilla to the living room.

“Cupcake, I have to be home in five minutes.”

“Break the rules.”

“I can’t, Baby.”

“Stay with me, Carm.”

“I wish I could Laura, but I really have to go home.”

Laura exhaled before giving Carmilla one more peck on the lips. “Okay.”

“No pouting, Laura. I hate it when you pout.”
“I just wish you could stay until my Dad got home.”

“What time is he done tonight?”

“Eleven, I think. I just hope he doesn’t have to do overtime.”

“I’m sure it’ll be okay. I’m only a call away. You know that.”

Laura nodded.

“Are we done pouting, Beautiful?”

“Yes,” Laura laughed.

Laura walked Carmilla back over to the door. “I’ll see you tomorrow, Cupcake.”

“At your locker at 8, Sweetness.”

They kissed one more time before the door opened, suddenly. They jumped apart.

“Leaving so soon, Carmilla?” Rich asked, stepping inside.

“Daddy, what are you doing home?”

“I had a short shift tonight.” He looked between Laura and Carmilla. They seemed nervous. Both of their hair a little disheveled, clothes a little wrinkly, and their faces pink. He smiled.

“Is everything okay here, girls?”

“Yep, everything is great, Daddy.”

“Do you have boys hiding out in my cupboard this time?”


Rich laughed loudly. “I’m just kidding, Honey Bear. I know it’s not your thing to date.”

Carmilla and Laura exchanged a glance before Carmilla cleared her throat.

“Well, I was just heading out Mr. Hollis.”

“Oh. I’m sorry you have to leave so soon, Carmilla. Maybe one night we can have you over for dinner?”

“I would like that, Sir.”

“Good. Well get home safe. Text Laura when you do so I feel more at ease.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Bye, Carm,” Laura smiled.

“Bye, Cup- uh, Laura. Goodnight, Laura.”

Carmilla walked back to her car and drove home. She managed to walk into her house at 9 o’clock on the dot.
“Good job, Kid.”

“I’m the perfect one of the two,” she said, walking up the stairs.

Will looked at Henry as Henry turned to look a Will. “Nah,” they said in unison as they continued to watch the Sunday Night football game together.

Chapter End Notes

Cheers to Kristin for the edits!! She has been super busy and still made time to edit!! She deserves all the props for this week!

Also this is a picture of what I think Carmilla is driving: http://hdwallpapersfit.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Black-Cars-Top-Pictures1.jpg
Halloween

Chapter Summary

It's the chapter I believe you've all been waiting for.

WARNING: There is a very small use of the wrong pronouns.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Camilla’s new car had been all the rave when she pulled into the student parking lot that following Monday morning. It was weird for her to be in the spotlight. She always stayed under the radar in the city, and all this new found glory didn’t sit very well with her. She decided to let Laura and Kirsch do most of the talking when people asked her questions about her car. She had given almost all her friends a ride home that week and swore she’d never do it again for some. The best part was being with Will. Carmilla and Will were grateful for their new found freedom, listening to music as loud as they could and goofing off. However, she always made sure to follow the rules of the road.

It was now Friday and Lafontaine’s party was tonight. Laura had been quiet all week regarding Halloween and it was making Carmilla nervous. She knew Laura could be very sneaky when she wanted to be, but after spirit week, Carmilla couldn’t imagine what kind of costume she was going to come up with for her. A lot of people dressed up in costumes for school, but Carmilla made sure not to even attempt at a costume. Halloween wasn’t her most favorite holiday and she usually just stayed away from it.

Carmilla was standing next to her locker, waiting for Laura. She checked her watch several times. Laura was running late and it was not like her.

“Hey, Sweetness,” Laura said, running up to her.

“Hey, Cupcake.” Carmilla smiled. “You’re late.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” Laura gave her a quick kiss to her cheek.

“Are you okay?” Carmilla asked, concerned.

“Of course. Just overslept a little.”

“Stay up late again?”

“Dad had to pull an all nighter. I fell asleep on the couch and my phone was upstairs. Luckily dad came home around 7:30 and woke me up.”

Carmilla’s concern didn’t wave. She was worried about Laura and couldn’t remember her staying up like this to wait for Rich before. She made a mental note to ask her about it later. School was never the time to talk about problems.

“I’m okay, Sweetness. Just a little tired,” Laura said, looking at Carmilla with hopeful eyes.
Carmilla nodded and sighed. She pulled Laura into a hug and gave her a quick kiss to her forehead. “So what's the game plan for tonight?” Carmilla asked, changing the subject for now.

“Right. How about I come to your place around 4 and we can get ready?”

“Shouldn't be a problem. What are we going as?”

“Ah, that is a surprise.” Laura smirked.

“Why won't you just tell me?” Carmilla rolled her eyes.

“Well then it wouldn't be a surprise. Look just trust me, okay?”

“I do,” Carmilla smiled as she followed Laura to their english class.

The day seemed to drag on and the last bell had finally rung. She told Perry she’d see her later tonight when she made her way to her car. Will caught up with her just as they stepped outside.

“Excited for Laf's party?” Will asked.

“Yeah. Are you going?” Carmilla was confused. She thought it was just for their close group of friends.

“I mean, Kirsch invited me and Laf said it was fine. If it's not though, I can stay home.” Will deflated a little. He was looking at the ground and kicking a pebble.

“Don't be crazy, Bro. Of course it's cool for you to come.”

He smiled wide. “Thanks, Kitty.”

“Alright enough sentimental crap. Let's get home!”

The ride home was quicker now that Carmilla was driving. Lilita always watched her speed as where Carmilla always went about five over. She just wanted to get home so she could get ready. She had forgotten to text to her parents to ask if it was okay that Laura came over. She just wanted to get home as soon as possible so it wouldn’t be a huge surprise when Laura came over.

She pulled into the driveway and saw her dad was home. They got out of the car and made their way up the path to their home. Once they were inside, Will ran up the stairs to drop his stuff off. Carmilla went in search for her dad.

“Dad?” Carmilla asked from the small foyer. She kicked her shoes off and added it to the pile by the door. She hung up her leather jacket when she saw Henry walk out of the kitchen, holding a sandwich.

“Hey, Kiddo! How was school?” He asked, taking a bite.

“Fine,” Carmilla replied.

“What did you learn?”

“Nothing.”

“Of course not. Why should I expect anything more from my A plus student?” He laughed.
“Dad, Laura is going to come over around 4 so we can get ready for Laf’s Halloween party, if that is okay with you.”

“Fine with me. Your mother is working late so it shouldn't a problem.”

“She's working late again?” William asked coming down the stairs.

“Yeah. It's Friday and she had to finish a project that is due on Monday.”

“So what are we doing for dinner?” Will asked, plopping on the couch. Carmilla plopped down beside him, grabbing the TV remote from his hand.

“You two need to learn to not plop on the furniture,” Henry stated, finishing his sandwich.

“Yeah, yeah,” Carmilla said, waving her hand.

“I'll order you guys some pizza, but help me straighten the house before Laura gets here. The last thing I want is for your mother to come home after a long day, the house be a mess and Laura here.”

Will and Carmilla didn't move. “Hello?” Henry asked. When he got no response, he moved and stepped in front of the TV.

“Pops, move! Your butt is too big and you're covering the TV!” Carmilla complained.

“Is Laura on her way?” He asked.

“Soon,” Carmilla asked, moving side to side to see the TV. She huffed. “Dad!”

“Help clean, now;” he said, turning off the TV.

Carmilla groaned. She knew she was going to have to, but was hoping to get a small break. She sat up and went to the foyer, picking up shoes and putting them in a neat line, just like her mother liked. Henry got out the broom while Will straightened out the couch. They made it look as best they could.

Carmilla ran upstairs to tidy her room. She didn't want to deal with her mother today. She quickly picked the clothes up off the floor, throwing them in the dirty clothes bin or stuffing them into her drawers. She hung up her nicer clothes and her church clothes that had managed to stay on the floor all week. She could see the floor and smiled; proud of the work she had done.

She had just finished making her bed when she heard the doorbell ring.

“I'll get it,” she shouted, running down the stairs. She opened the door to see Laura standing there, looking at her feet. Carmilla sensed something was wrong, but she never wanted to pry.

“Hey, Cupcake.”

“Hey, Carm.”

Laura looked up and gave Carmilla a shy smile. They stood smiling at each other before Will cleared his throat.

“Oh, sorry. Come in.” Carmilla said, shyly. Moving over to hold the door open for Laura.

They still didn't really know how to act in the Karnstein resident. Sometimes it was normal and, other times, you would have thought they had just met with the level of awkwardness between them.
“Hello, Laura,” Henry said from the living room.

“Oh, hi Pastor Karnstein. Thanks for letting me come over before the party.”

“Not a problem. How's your dad?”

“He's good. He has to work tonight.”

“Well, I'm sure he'll be alright,” Henry reassured with a smile.

Laura smiled back as she stood next to Carm.

“You wanna go to my room?” Carmilla asked. Laura nodded and made her way up the stairs, not waiting for Carmilla. Carmilla started following her when she heard Henry call her name. Laura stopped, but Carmilla shook her head.

“I'll be up in a second, Cupcake.” She tried to reassure her. Laura turned and continued up the stairs.

“Is she alright, Carmilla?” Henry asked.

“Yeah, she'll be fine. She just always gets nervous when Mr. Hollis is on duty. You know, because of her mom.”

“Ah. Well just take care of her and make her feel welcome.”

“Will do, Pops.”

Carmilla turned and headed back to the stairs.

“And Carmilla?”

She stopped and looked towards Henry.

“Open door policy, Kid.”

“Seriously?” He gave her a stern look and she exhaled. “Fine,” she grumbled.

Laura was sitting on her bed, looking out her window. I don't think she has ever looked more beautiful, Carmilla thought, going over to sit down next to her.

“You okay, Laura?”

Laura turned and Carmilla could see her eyes were watery. She pulled Laura in close to her and held her.

“He'll be okay, Baby. I promise,” she whispered, kissing the top of Laura's head. She could feel Laura nod against her chest. Carmilla felt a small kiss above her heart before Laura sat up.

“Sorry. Halloween is just one of the worst nights for crime around here for some reason, but he said he should be at his desk all night if I need him.”

“See? Then there is nothing to worry about.”

“Yeah.”

She waited a few moments to see if Laura would speak again. She just kept her head down and looked at her hands in her lap. Carmilla nudged her shoulder.
“Besides, you have a costume in that bag for me and I know you’re dying to make me look like a fool.”

Laura let out a small chuckle.

“I promise you won’t look like a fool. You’re going to look very sexy when I’m done with you,” Laura said, her smile getting brighter by the moment.

“Is that right, Cupcake?” Carmilla smirked, leaning in to kiss Laura.

“You bet that cute little butt of yours, I am.”

Carmilla laughed and pulled Laura in for a quick kiss. Laura gave her a peck, but pulled away quickly. Carmilla whined.

“You’re door is open,” Laura protested.

“I know. Open door policy. I don’t know why he keeps in forcing this rule when you're here.”

“Do you think he knows?” Laura asked, eyes widening.

“About us?”

Laura nodded.

“Doubt that, Cupcake. If he did, so would my mother and we know what her reaction would be.”

“I won’t let you go through that again,” Laura said.

“And I won’t ever let her hurt you,” Carmilla added remembering the sound of her mother's hand when she hit Carmilla across the face. She closed her eyes and shook her head.

“Let’s not talk about that tonight. Let’s get to these costumes,” Laura said, getting off the bed and opening her bag. She pulled out a gray pencil skirt, a burgundy button down and matching gray blazer. A pair of black heels were quick to follow.

“Cupcake, you know I'm not comfortable in skirts,” Carmilla hesitated. She already felt uneasy with the thought of having to wear a skirt all night.

“Oh no, Sweetness. This is my costume. We need to put yours together. You have a black suit, right?”

“I mean I have black dress pants and a black blazer.”

“And a white button down?” Laura asked, smiling.

“Of course,” Carmilla nodded.

“Perfect! Then all you need are these.” Laura pulled out a blue folded t-shirt, black suspenders, black framed glasses and a red tie.

“I'm not following you, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, her face scrunched up from confusion.

Laura rolled her eyes and went to Carmilla’s closet. “Which one of these pants are your favorite?” She asked, moving the hangers around.
Carmilla stood and walked up behind Laura, hugging her waist. She pointed to her favorite pair. They were solid black and skinny. Carmilla had to beg her mother for them before she moved from the city. She managed to get Lilita to agree by saying she could wear them for job and college interviews.

Laura pulled the pants off the rack and tried to get out of Carmilla’s grasp, but Carmilla held on tighter. Laura smiled as she felt Carmilla kiss a trail of kisses down her neck. She tilted her head to face Carmilla. She gave her another quick peck and managed to escape.

“And now the blazer and white button down, Sweetness.”

Carmilla grabbed both and handed them to Laura. Laura undid the blazer and the white shirt.

“Turn around, Carm. I want it to be a surprise.”

Carmilla did as she was told. The sound of a whip cracked in her head and she rolled her eyes at her own thoughts. After a few moments, she grew impatient.

“Cupcake, come one,” she whined.

Laura was still quiet and ignored Carmilla. After a few more minutes, Laura cleared her throat. She wrapped her arms around Carmilla this time. This was a dangerous move because they were staring out into the hallway where anyone could pass. Laura gave a gentle kiss to Carmilla’s neck before stepping back.

“Ready?” Laura asked.

“I’ve been ready, Laura.”

“Oh turn around you big baby,” Laura said, playfully. Carmilla did as she was told and turned around, completely dumbfounded by what she saw.

Laura had laid the blue t-shirt, inside the white button down. She laid the suspenders and tie on top of the white shirt that was folded to look like it was inside the blazer. Carmilla glanced at the blue shirt and looked at Laura.

“I thought it would be cute if we went as Lois Lane and Clark Kent. What do you think?”

Carmilla smiled. “I think we're going to be the sexiest couple at the party and win Laf's stupid costume contest!”

Laura smiled wide. She was just about to wrap her arms around Carmilla when they heard their names.

“Carmilla? Laura? Pizza’s here!” Henry yelled from the bottom of the stairs. Carmilla gave Laura a kiss and they made their way downstairs.

Eric had come over to get ready with Will for the party.

“Hey, E,” Carmilla said.

“Hey, Carmilla,” he replied back with a small smile.

Eric and Will had gotten really close over the past couple of weeks. It made Carmilla happy to see Will manage to make a non religious bond with someone. Even though Eric had started going to church with them.
Carmilla made her way to the kitchen, the smell of pizza filling the air. Laura was right behind her.

“What we’d get, Pops?” Carmilla asked, giving Henry a smack on the shoulder.

“The Karnstein special of course!”

“What’s the Karnstein special?” Laura asked.

“It’s the supreme with everything on it,” Carmilla said, pulling a piece out and taking a huge bite.

“Use a plate, Kid,” Henry said, handing over a paper plate. He looked over at Laura and could tell that a supreme pizza wasn't her thing.

“Don't worry, Laura,” he said opening up the other box. “We've got a nice cheese pizza on the this side.”

Laura smiled. “Thanks, Pastor Karnstein.”

“No worries. Carmilla and I are the only ones in the family who eat the supreme. I've learned to order another pizza after having my wife yell at me for years about it.”

Laura smiled, taking a bite from her pizza.

“You really don't know what you're missing, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, her mouth full of pizza.

“Geez, Kid. Can you at least act like your mother and I taught you some manners. Chew your food and then speak,” Henry said, taking a seat at the kitchen island.

Carmilla finished chewing and swallowed. “Sorry, Dad. It's just so good,” she said, grabbing another piece.

“Oh I'm a terrible host. What can I get you to drink, Laura?” He got up and made his way to refrigerator. “Let's see, we've got Coke, water, ice tea or juice.”

“Coke would be great, Sir. Thank you.”

“Me too,” Carmilla mumbled, food in her mouth again.

“Learn to not speak without your mouth full and I'll bring you one,” Henry replied.

Carmilla glared, but Henry placed a Coke in front of her.

“Thanks, Pops.”

“Manners, Kid.”

Laura laughed. They finished up their dinner in no time and headed back upstairs to change. Carmilla managed to close the door somewhat so they could change without two teenage boys trying to take peeks down the hall or at least that was the excuse Carmilla used. She knew Will would never do that, but she wasn’t so sure about Eric.

She watched as Laura took her shirt off and then her pants. She was halfway taking her pants off as she watched. Laura turned around in her bra and underwear. Carmilla would have sworn her heart stopped at the sight. Laura walked up to her and she slowly walked backwards, tripping over her pants.
“Let me help you, Sweetness.” Laura said, grabbing the top of Carmilla’s jeans and pushing them down. Carmilla watched as Laura lowered herself to help her take her pants off. Laura came back, grabbing the bottom of her t-shirt and lifting it up. Carmilla’s heart was pounding at the lust inside Laura’s eyes. They were now face to face, looking at each other’s lips. Carmilla started to move in when the front door slammed closed.

“Henry!” she heard her Mother call.

“We should get dressed, Cupcake. Mother doesn’t sound very happy.” Laura nodded and backed away. They walked forward to Carmilla’s bed to start getting dressed. Carmilla had just grabbed her pants when she felt a smack to her bottom. She smiled at Laura.

“I had to do something,” Laura said, still eyeing Carmilla.

Laura was buttoning up the last of her buttons of her shirt when she heard Carmilla groan. Carmilla was standing in front of her mirror, the tie and suspenders in her hand.

“Let me help you,” Laura said. She finished up her buttons and walked behind Carmilla, grabbing the suspenders. She clipped them on the back before bringing the straps above her shoulders.

“Hold them for me,” Laura requested. Carmilla did as she was told.

Laura pulled one side down and clasped them to the front of Carmilla’s pants, followed by the other. She stepped back and took in Carmilla. She had the top two buttons buttoned and the bottom ones as well, leaving a small opening in the middle for the superman shirt to shine through.

“Now the tie,” Laura said, picking it up off of Carmilla’s desk.

“Why do you know how to tie a tie?” Carmilla asked.

“You mean other than the fact that I’m a,” Laura lowered voice and whispered, “lesbian?” She had a small smirk on her face. Carmilla laughed lightly before answered.

“Yes other than that reason.”

“My mom taught me how to do it as a child. My dad has never been good with ties, which is why he almost never wears one to church now. But the knowledge has come in handy. My mom used to always tie my dad’s ties before church or work functions. When she passed,” Laura paused and exhaled. “Uh, when she passed, I took over the responsibility, but could only manage to do it for important things. Mom always did it before church, but I just can’t muster up the energy to do that.”

Carmilla stayed quiet as Laura finished up tying her tie. She adjusted the knot until she was pleased. She stepped back so Carmilla could look at it in the mirror.

“Looks great, Cupcake! Good to know, you’re good with your hands,” Carmilla winked. It caused Laura to laugh and it made her feel better. Laura helped Carmilla slip on her blazer, throwing the tie over her shoulder.

“I like you in a suit, Carm,” Laura said, holding onto Carmilla’s lapelles.

“I like it too, Cupcake. I think this was a great costume idea.”

“Thank you.”

They leaned in for a kiss and managed to sneak in one before there was a light knock on the door.
They separated. Carmilla went back to her desk, while Laura put on her heels next to Carmilla’s bed.

“Just wanted to say ‘hello’ to my daughter,” Lilita said, popping her head in.

“Hi, Mother” Carmilla said. She knew her mother wouldn’t be so keen on this costume choice, but hopefully since Laura is here, she won’t make a big deal about it. Especially since it is technically a couples costume.

“Hi, Mrs. Karnstein,” Laura said, standing up to face her.

“I love your outfit Laura. You look so grown up.”

“Thank you, Ma’am.”

“So I heard Susan is having a Halloween party and that she does it every year. Is that correct?” Laura and Carmilla cringed at the name and misuse of pronouns.

“Yes, Lafontaine has a Halloween party every year,” Laura corrected.

“Well what are you two supposed to be?” Lilita asked. Laura stood up straight and walked next Carmilla, but made sure to keep distance from her. She was about to speak when there was noise from the hallway.

“Hello, Mother,” Will said. He was standing in a Batman costume, Eric right behind him dressed as Robin.

“Look at my boys,” she exalted. “Okay, everyone downstairs for a fireplace photo.”

Will and Carmilla groaned. “Why, Mother?”

“This is our first Halloween not in the city so we must have a picture of it!”

They followed Lilita downstairs.


“I’m going to put sweatpants on Mr. Karnstein. I just left them in my bag which is down here,” Eric said.

“And you two,” he turned to Carmilla and Laura, “are sad people who hate their job in business,” he said, blankly.

“Guess again,” Carmilla said. She stood in front of the fireplace with Laura to her left. She puffed out her chest and opened her shirt. Henry started laughing, while Lilita looked less than impressed.

“Clark Kent and Lois Lane. Very nice, Laura,” He complimented.

“Thank you, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Okay, picture time,” Lilita said. “I want my kids in the middle.”

They all gathered around, Carmilla taking her Superman stance with Laura getting as close as she could to her side. Will and Eric stood with their fists on their hips and chests sticking out. After a few photos and Carmilla complaining, they made their way outside. Carmilla, Will and Eric hopped in Carmilla's car following Laura to her place. Laura dropped her Jeep off and they headed towards Lafontaine’s. Laura and Carmilla held hands over the gearshift.
They pulled up to the curb outside of Lafontaine’s house. They had to let Will and Eric out, who all but ran to the door. Carmilla and Laura stayed back, hand in hand as they made their way up the driveway.

“Ready, Cupcake?”

“I’m ready,” Laura said. They made their way inside, letting go of each other’s hands. Lafontaine greeted them dressed as a mad scientist with crazy white hair, a white lab coat and black pants.

“Didn’t you already do that costume?” Carmilla asked. Perry quickly made her way up next to Lafontaine. She was in what looked like a chicken costume with robot parts on it. They made a face like it was obvious.

“I don’t get it,” Carmilla said, looking at the two of them like they had two heads.

“Robot Chicken?” Laura asked. Lafontaine and Perry nodded their heads. “Nice,” Laura said, high fiving them both.

“What’s a robot chicken?” Carmilla asked.

They all looked at her like she was insane this time. “Carm, it’s a show that comes on Adult Swim.” Carmilla still looked bewildered. They stared at her.

“What? Minister’s Kid? We don’t watch a lot of television.”

“I’ll show it to you one day, Sweetness,” Laura whispered in her ear.

“Anyway, who are you two supposed to be?” Perry asked, a bright smile on her face.

Carmilla pulled her shirt open. “Clark Kent and Lois Lane! That is perfect for you two! Looks like the competition will be hard this year,” Laf said, holding out a tray of brownies to them.

“Everyone gets a welcome brownie. Parents are out of town and alcohol is downstairs, which is where everyone else is.”

Carmilla and Laura both grabbed a brownie and split it in half before making their way downstairs. The music was pretty loud and Carmilla realized all of her friends were in couple costumes. Danny and Betty came as a police officer and bandit. Kirsch was dressed as a giant puppy, while Theo was dressed as a black cat, tights included. Elsie and SJ were dressed as Peter Pan and Wendy. There were more people around that Carmilla had seen at Kirsch’s parties, so she felt safe to be herself with Laura. Laura’s hands were back in hers, pulling her towards the alcohol and snacks.

“What do you want, Baby?” Laura asked, picking up a beer for herself.

“Beer is good, Cupcake.” Laura handed her a beer and then grabbed her hand, dragging her to the couch. Carmilla sat down and Laura sat next to her, angling so she could put legs up on Carmilla’s lap and lean on her side. Carmilla rested her arms over Laura’s legs. One hand holding her beer while the other rubbed her knee. She took a swig of her beer as she took in her surroundings. It was very dark, almost as if the walls had been painted black. There was some lighting, but there were black lights on every corner. The television stand had been closed to hang some skeleton posters. Music was blasting from the surround sound. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. Her sight was blocked by a giant puppy, literally.

“Hey guys,” Kirsch said.

“We were going for raining cats and dogs, but it didn’t seem to work out,” Theo explained.

“Either way, I think it’s pretty awesome,” Carmilla said, offering a smile.

“Thanks, Carm-sexy. And who are you two supposed to be?” Carmilla realized then how annoying it was going to be to open her shirt every time someone asked. However this time Laura reached over and did it for her. It sent a chill down her spine feeling the tips of Laura’s fingertips running across her chest.

“Dude, you’re Superman? That’s awesome!”

“No, Beefcake. I’m Clark Kent and my beautiful girlfriend is Lois Lane.”

“That’s pretty awesome,” Theo added.

“Thanks. It was all Laura’s idea,” Carmilla said, rubbing her nose against Laura’s cheek.

“Well we’re going to go get a beer. You guys want anything?” Kirsch asked.

Carmilla and Laura both held up their beers. “I think we’re good. Thanks anyways,” Carmilla said.

As soon as they left, Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla. It was sweet and innocent, but it made Carmilla’s heart pump faster and butterflies spread in her stomach. Laura pulled away and Carmilla kept her eyes closed savoring the feel of Laura. Carmilla pulled her back in for another kiss and deepened it. Laura hummed against her and moved closer to Carmilla. They were interrupted by someone shifting next to them. Carmilla looked over to see a person she never would have expected to see.

“Mattie? What the hell are you doing here?”

“Enjoying Halloween, Darling. And you?”

“The same, of course,” Carmilla replied.

“Yes and you have your little, what do you call her?” She pointed to Laura. “Your cupcake?”

“Mattie please don’t start,” Laura said, shifting to sit on Carmilla’s other side.

“Why would I do that? We can be in the same room without fighting, Laura.”

“Not recently.”

“And who’s fault is that?” Mattie was quick to reply.

“Oh don’t you dare start with this-”

“Okay, Laura. Let’s go,” Carmilla was quick to interject.

“No, she clearly needs to say something to me and I want her to say it,” Laura struggled against Carmilla’s grip.

“I have nothing to say, Laura,” Mattie brushed her off.

“Come on, Cupcake. Mattie, I’m glad you're here. I hope you have a good time and we’ll see you
around, I’m sure.”

Carmilla pulled Laura to the other side of the room.

“What the hell, Carm?” She looked at Carmilla furiously.

“You need to calm down, Laura. What were you going to do? Hm? Fight her? She’s not worth it, Laura. You said that to me before and now I’m saying it to you. Fuck her, alright? Can we just have a night, just you and me?” Carmilla pleaded.

“Yes,” Laura whispered before leaning in and capturing Carmilla’s lips in her own. Carmilla rested her hands on Laura’s hips. Laura pulled on Carmilla’s suspenders and pulled away.

“I really like this look on you, Carm,” Laura said, taking in Carmilla from head to toe.

“And I like this sexy secretary look you’ve got going on,” Carmilla added.

“Well maybe we’ll get to play a little later and you can help me get out of this.” Laura winked and walked away towards Danny. Carmilla stood there with her mouth open, heart pounding, and staring as Laura walked away. Danny looked over to hear and smirked. She quickly shut her mouth and made her way over, standing beside Laura. She wrapped her arm around her shoulders, feeling Laura’s arm around her hip.

“And you are?” Danny asked, shaking her head in a curious movement.

She felt Laura’s fingers against her chest again, pulling open her shirt. The butterflies came flying back into her stomach. The sensation taking over, missing the feel of Laura’s fingers against her bare skin. She smiled at the memory. Laura told them who they were and Danny smiled. They talked for a little more, before Carmilla went to get Laura and herself another round of beers.

“Hey, Kitty.”

“Hey Willy-Boy.”

“So I already called mom and dad and their fine with it. I’m going to stay at Eric’s tonight. So you don’t have to worry about getting me home.”

“Sounds good. You and Eric have been spending a lot of time together recently.”

“I mean, he’s my best friend. We have a lot of the same tastes. He’s pretty cool,” Will shrugged.

“Well he seems like a good guy so I’m happy about it,” Carmilla smiled. She noticed Will seemed a little off.

“You okay, Little Bro?” she asked, punching him lightly on the shoulder.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Always.”

“And you promise you won’t be angry?”


He laughed and scratched the back of his head. Carmilla waited. Will only did this when he was
nervous and wasn’t sure what the response would be.

“I, uh, how did you know you liked Laura?”

Carmilla shrugged. “I don’t know. It was just something in her eyes and then she smiled. I got butterflies in my stomach and it made me smile. The more I got to know her, the more we started to trust one another, the safer I felt. It also helped that we have pretty awesome friends. Why?”

Will shrugged and looked at his feet.

“Are you trying to figure out if like Eric or not?” She wasn’t sure if that was the problem, but decided to question it anyway. Will always managed to surprise her.

“I mean, I still like girls and all, but I don’t know. He’s really nice and I like being around him,” he shrugged again.

“Have you two kissed or anything?”

Will shook his head.

“Well, Little Bro, it could be that you’ve never had a close connection to a guy before and you just really like that you have this close friend. You might also be attracted to him. Is he attracted to you?”

“I don’t know. We haven’t talked about it, but we tend to sit closer than we probably should and have our own private conversations when everyone else is having a group one. I’m just kind of confused.”

“Well, Kirsch or Theo would probably be the perfect guys to talk about this with. And you know either way, I’m here. You can always come to me.”

“I know. But what if Mother finds out.”

Carmilla put her beer on the table and placed her hands on his shoulders. He looked up at her.

“Listen to me. I will never let you go through that. I will never let someone hurt you, and I would never even let Mother have the chance to send you to one of those places. I would tell her everything they did to me, and I do mean everything. I don’t want you to worry about that at all. Just be careful and she’ll never know. Okay?”

He nodded. “Thanks, Sis.”

“It’s what I’m here for. Call me if you need me, alright?”

He nodded and walked off. Laura came up next to her, grabbing herself a beer since Carmilla never came back.

“What was that all about?” She asked.

“Nothing,” Carmilla shrugged.

“Is he okay?” Laura asked.

Carmilla smiled. “He’s perfect, Cupcake.” She watched Will and Eric high five and laugh over something. “He’s just perfect.”

“Well that’s good, I guess. Wanna dance?” Laura asked.
Carmilla rolled her eyes, but knew she would end up dancing anyway. “Sure,” she said and Laura tugged her out by her tie. She would be lying if she said it didn’t turn her on a little bit. Laura turned to have her back against the front of Carmilla. Carmilla kept her hands on Laura’s hips as she swayed to the beat. They got lost in the music and the feeling of being so close to one another. Laura’s arms had come up to rest against Carmilla’s shoulders, her hands weaving themselves into her hair. She pulled lightly and heard Carmilla moan in her ear. She turned around and cupped the back of Carmilla’s neck pulling her into a kiss. She leaned into Carmilla’s ear.

“Do you wanna get out of here?” Laura asked, her voice innocent.

Carmilla smiled. “And go where exactly?”

“My place? My dad is going to be busy all night and won’t be home until late.”

Carmilla stared at Laura, but slowly nodded her head. She grabbed Laura by the hand and pulled her up the stairs.

“Carm, are we not going to say goodbye?”

“Irish exit, Cupcake. This way we don’t have to explain where we’re going.”

“And what about Will?”

“He is staying the night at Eric’s.”

They got outside and the cool air felt refreshing. Carmilla hadn’t noticed how warm the basement had become. She made her way to her car, clicking the button to unlock her doors. She held the door open for Laura and noticed she pulled something out from behind her back.

“What is that?”

She held up a bottle of whiskey. It was only half full. “Just a little fun for us.”

Carmilla smiled and closed her door. She headed over to her side the car, got in and started the car. She put it in drive and they were off to Laura’s. Carmilla placed her hand on Laura’s knee giving it a tight light squeeze. As the car ride continued, her hand slowly went further up Laura’s skirt, now resting in the middle of her thigh. She could tell Laura was breathing heavily and enjoyed the fact that she managed to get Laura riled up.

She pulled into Laura’s driveway, cutting the motor. They got out and made their way inside.

“Drink?” Laura asked, holding up the bottle.

“Yeah, that would be good.”

Carmilla felt nervous. She knows nothing has to happen, but at the same time she was ready for this. She hadn’t stopped thinking about that night at Kirsch’s. Laura snapped her out of her trance by placing a drink in her hand.

“You wanna go upstairs?” Laura asked and Carmilla nodded. She followed behind Laura, sipping her drink. She tried to drink as much as she could to calm the nerves in her stomach. Laura opened her door and let Carmilla go in first. She placed her drink on Laura’s nightstand and sat down. Laura followed suit and took her shoes off. It was like they were playing a game of Simon Says. Carmilla stood up and kicked her shoes off before sitting back on the bed. Laura took her blazer off and tossed it on her desk chair. Carmilla just sat and watched as Laura started to unbutton her shirt.
licked her lips. Laura straddled her hips and wrapped Carmilla’s tie around her hand. She pulled Carmilla in for a kiss.

Their kiss was heated from the start as they both fought for dominance. Carmilla slipped her tongue into Laura’s mouth. Laura moaned and grinded her hips down, sending a spark of electricity through Carmilla’s body. She started to unbutton the rest of Laura’s shirt, pulling the bottom of it out of her skirt. She kissed against Laura’s neck, down her collarbone and as close to Laura’s breasts as she could. She cupped them both while going back to kiss Laura’s neck. Her heart was beating fast and Laura made little sounds at every sensation she felt.

Laura pushed Carmilla’s blazer off her shoulders and down her arms, throwing it behind her. Once she was resettled on Carmilla’s lap, she started to pull off the knot of Carmilla’s tie so it would become loose. Once the opening was big enough, she pulled the tie over Carmilla’s hair.

“I like you in a tie, Sweetness,” she whispered against her lips.

“Oh you do, do you?” Carmilla teased.

Laura hummed and pulled on the suspenders. “Not to mention these suspenders. You look really sexy, Carm,” Laura said, pushing them off her shoulders.

“You look better,” Carmilla said, pushing forward connecting their lips again. She could feel Laura working on the few buttons that were closed before pulling her shirt out. Her motions were becoming frantic.

“Calm down, Cupcake. We have all night.”

“You’re just wearing too many layers,” Laura said, reaching to pull the t-shirt out of Carmilla’s pants.

Carmilla placed her hands over Laura’s and they made eye contact. “I’m here, Baby. Can we just take this slow?”

Laura nodded and exhaled.

“Sorry, Carm. I’ve just been thinking about this night since your birthday.”

“Me too, but I want to do it right. Okay?”

Laura nodded again, leaning in and she kissed Carmilla again. It wasn’t rushed, but sweet and soothing. Carmilla felt Laura’s hand tug upwards. Carmilla lifted her arms so Laura could take the t-shirt off. She kissed discarded to the floor, Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hips and laid her down on the bed. She kissed Laura again, finding the zipper on Laura’s skirt. She slowly unzipped it. Laura gasped and looked down.

“Is this okay, Cupcake?” Laura nodded. She lifted her hips and Carmilla slid the skirt down her thighs and off. Carmilla looked at Laura lying in just her underwear. They were red with lace. She relished in her body and smiled.

“Why are you smiling?” Laura asked, returning the smile.

Carmilla leaned forward and placed a kiss to her lips. “You really are just one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen.”

Laura kissed her and pushed her onto her back. She straddled Carmilla’s hips again and started
playing with the top of her pants. Laura stared for a moment.

“Well?” Carmilla asked. “Are you going to or should I?”

“Are you truly ready for this? I know we did some stuff at Kirsch’s, but I don’t want to rush you. If you want to take a step back we totally can. I don’t have a problem with that. I just don’t want to rush you to do anything you’re not prepared for and-”

Carmilla put her finger to Laura’s mouth. “Shh. I’m ready. I’ve been ready since we were at Kirsch’s. I’m much more happier we’re in your bed and we’re alone.”

She sat up and wrapped her arms around Laura’s hips. “There’s no distractions.” Carmilla placed a kiss to her collarbone. “No one around us.” Another kiss to her neck. “Just you and me, Cupcake.” A kiss to her cheek. “So as long as you are ready, I am more than ready.” A kiss to Laura’s lips.

Laura didn’t say anything. Carmilla felt her pants loosen as she realized Laura had undone the button and pulled her zipper down. Carmilla laid down and bucked her hips up. Laura pulled down Carmilla’s pants, throwing them to the floor. Carmilla felt cold without the warmth of her clothes, but tried not to show it.

“Black underwear. Why am I not surprised?” Laura questioned.

Carmilla chuckled and began to feel nervous. *Holy crap, what do I do? I don’t want to mess this up. The one time I don’t read up on a subject I should know things about.* Carmilla felt Laura spread her legs before kissing up her stomach, between her breasts, her collarbone, her chin and then her mouth. She moaned as she felt Laura’s lips against her. She felt a burst of energy and reached around Laura to lay her back down. Their legs were tangled together and Carmilla started to kiss Laura’s neck. Laura moaned at the feeling. Carmilla worked her way down and kissed the top of her breasts. Laura’s hips started to move up and down as Carmilla pulled her bra down. She kissed and sucked the best she could to hear sounds out of Laura’s mouth. Carmilla took advantage of Laura arching her back and unclasped her bra, pulling the straps down her shoulders. She worked her way back to Laura’s neck. She kissed her and felt Laura’s hands on her back, working on her bra. She stopped moving so Laura could concentrate. She sat up and Laura slid her straps down taking Carmilla’s nipple her mouth. Carmilla moaned loudly, grasping the back of Laura’s hair and pulling ever so lightly. Her eyes closed at the feel of Laura’s mouth. She never wanted her to stop. She loved the feeling of Laura’s mouth on her and wanted more. She pushed Laura down on the bed and placed her hands on top of her underwear. Laura was panting, her eyes full of lust. Carmilla took a deep breath and pulled Laura’s underwear down.

Once Laura’s underwear joined their other clothes on the floor, Carmilla couldn’t help but stare. Her heart was beating a mile a minute. Time seemed to stop as she stared at Laura’s naked body. Her breasts were rising and falling. Her hands resting above her head, with her hair fanning over the pillow. Her breathing was shallow. Her thin legs open, ready to feel Carmilla’s touch.

“Carm? Are you okay?”

Carmilla snapped out of her trance and smiled at Laura.

“I’m perfect,” she said and laid back down on top of Laura. She kissed Laura with all the confidence she could muster. She slowly walked her fingers down Laura’s body and rested her hand against Laura’s pubic mound. She moved her fingers across the small patch of pubic hair. Laura’s legs opened wider and Carmilla halted.
“I, uh, I don’t know what to do, Cupcake,” she said. Her cheeks reddening with embarrassment.

“It’s okay. I’ll teach you.”

Laura placed her hand over Carmilla’s and moved her hand further down south. Carmilla moaned at how Laura felt on her fingers. Laura placed Carmilla’s hand where she wanted it and started to move Carmilla’s fingers in a circular motion. It was soft and slow. Laura started moaning and it made Carmilla come alive. She couldn’t get past the sensation of feeling Laura. Laura moved Carmilla’s fingers up and down before going back to that one spot.

“Just keep doing it like that, Carm,” Laura breathed out heavily. Carmilla did as instructed and felt Laura’s hand leave hers to grab the pillow above her head. She was moving her hips to Carmilla’s motion. Carmilla was concentrated on what she was doing. Laura moaned instructions to her and she did everything Laura wanted. Laura moaned loudly when Carmilla finally entered her. She pulled Carmilla in for a heated kiss. Carmilla kissed her back, completely transfixed by everything that was happening. Laura moved her mouth and hid her face in the crook of Carmilla’s neck. She was pushing her body weight down and gasping. Carmilla kept moving her hand before Laura gasped loudly and grabbed her hand to still her movements. She was moaning and panting, keeping Carmilla’s hand where she wanted it. After a few moments, Laura started to kiss Carmilla’s neck.

“That was amazing,” she whispered against Carmilla’s skin, kissing and biting. She slowly moved Carmilla’s hand away and pushed Carmilla down onto her back. The butterflies in her stomach seemed to multiply as Laura straddled her hips. Laura leaned forward capturing Carmilla’s lips again. Carmilla quickly responded deepening the kiss and holding onto Laura’s head. Laura started to move her hips against Carmilla’s stomach. Carmilla could feel the wetness Laura was leaving and moaned. Laura kissed down Carmilla’s neck, lifting her body as she scooted down. She felt Laura’s mouth descend to her breasts. She moaned at the feeling of Laura’s tongue against her nipple. Laura worked on her breasts a little longer before she continued to go down. She hooked her fingers into Carmilla’s underwear and looked up at Carmilla.

Carmilla nodded her head frantically. Her nerves were coming back as she felt Laura staring at her. She closed her eyes and was about to open them again when she moaned louder than she ever had in her life. The feeling of Laura’s tongue on her did wonderful things to her body. She immediately held onto the back of Laura’s head while she felt Laura’s hands grasp her hips to hold her still. She was panting and moaning the sensation becoming too much. She let go and enjoyed the feeling of Laura’s warm tongue. She felt Laura’s hands leave her hips and make their way up to grasp her breasts. She threaded her fingers with Laura’s. The sensation was building and new feeling was growing stronger. There was a pull in her stomach and then she gasped and moaned. Her hips bucked before her body went still.

She felt Laura kiss up her body. Her breasts getting more attention, but Carmilla wanted more. She pulled Laura’s head up and kissed her. She moaned at the taste of herself on Laura’s lips and deepened the kiss. She was gasping for air, but didn’t want to let go of Laura. Laura pulled away leaving light kisses on her neck.

“That was incredible,” Carmilla said after a few moments. Laura smiled against her neck. She lifted her head and kissed Carmilla. She hummed and brought Laura on top of her. They kissed for a few more minutes before Carmilla closed her eyes.

“That happened, right?” Carmilla asked.

“What?” Laura said, lifting her head.

“I just… I never thought I would be this happy. I never thought I would have this experience at all,
let alone with a girl. I just like you so much and I want to make sure you're actually here. And that I'm actually here. That I'm not going to wake up and be back in my bunk.” Carmilla sniffled, trying to hold back tears.

“Hey, shh, Carm.” Laura smiled and cupped Carmilla's cheek. “You're here, Sweetness. I'm right here and this isn't a dream. You're going to wake up and still be with me. Okay, Carm?”

Carmilla nodded closing her eyes. She brought her hand to cover her eyes as her body started to tremble. Laura laid down on Carmilla's side. She wrapped her arm around her shoulders and pulled.

“Come here,” Laura said, sweetly. She gave Carmilla a small smile. Carmilla rested her head against Laura's chest and started to cry. She wasn't sure if she was crying because she was scared about the past or nervous by what they just did. Guilt started to eat at her. Laura rubbed her back and said reassuring thoughts. Carmilla zoned out and started listening to Laura's steady heartbeat. It soothed her as did Laura's hand rubbing up and down her back.

Carmilla pulled back and laughed. “I can't believe I just cried after our first time. I'm sorry.” Her cheeks reddened again.

Laura smiled. “It's okay, Sweetness. As long as you're okay with what we did. You don't regret it, do you?”

Carmilla smiled and straddled Laura's hips. She leaned down and kissed Laura. “No, Cupcake. I definitely don't.” Laura gasped when she felt Carmilla's hand on her breast. She took Laura's nipple in her mouth and Laura moaned. Carmilla kissed a path back up Laura's body. She got up off of Laura.

“One second, Cupcake.”

“Carm, where are you going?”

“Just gonna call my parents and tell them I'm staying here. One second.”

She pulled her phone out of her blazer pocket and called the house phone. Henry answered.

“Hey, Dad! I know it's late, but is it okay if I stay at Laura's house tonight?” She waited for Henry to answer and heard him exhale. He asked if Rich was home. “Uh, yeah, but he's already gone to bed.” She knew she shouldn't have lied, but decided it was for the best. He told her it was okay, but he didn't seem too pleased to answer that way. “Thanks, Dad! I'll see you in the morning. Love you!”

She hung up her phone and walked back over to Laura. “Now, Cupcake, where were we?”

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A few hours later, the girls were snuggled up together sound asleep in Laura's bed. Clothes still all over the floor as their naked bodies were pressed against each other. Carmilla was spooning Laura from behind, her arm wrapped snuggly around her waist while the other was rested under Laura's neck. The night was quiet as they both slept peacefully.

Chapter End Notes

Give it up for Kristin for helping me with this chapter, yet again!! She helped me keep it
classy!
It was early the next morning. The girls had only been asleep a few hours when Laura stirred from hearing the front door close shut. Her mind was sluggish as her eyes slowly opened. She blinked a few times before her eyes widened. She heard her dad downstairs, muttering loudly to himself. She nudged Carmilla in the ribs. It didn't seem to do anything. After a few more quick nudges and repeatedly whispering “Carmilla.” Carmilla stirred.

“It's still dark outside, Cupcake. Shh and stop hitting me,” Carmilla mumbled. Her voice deep and full asleep. Laura would have thought it was cute, if she had the time to think about it.

“My dad’s home!” Laura said, getting out of bed.

Carmilla woke fully and in a panic. Laura threw her the Superman t-shirt and Carmilla quickly put it on, over her head. Laura was quick to follow, throwing on a t-shirt followed by putting on her underwear. Carmilla saw hers laying next to the bed and grabbed them, sliding them on.

Laura took her and Carmilla’s clothes. She threw them in the closest. Once they didn't look thrown all over the room, she quickly jumped back into bed. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura's waist and pulled her close, the burned energy helping her fall back asleep.

“Carm, scoot. Lay on the other side.”


“My dad will check on me before going to bed to make sure I'm home and safe.”

Carmilla begrudgingly did as she was told, slowly slipping back into her dreams. Sure enough, the door opened and they both pretended to be asleep. Well Laura did, more than Carmilla. Mr. Hollis opened the door cautiously which made an awful squeaking sound from the hinges. Neither of them expected to hear his footsteps coming closer to them inside the room. He leaned down in front of Laura and shook her. She pretended to wake up.

“Hmm, hi Daddy,” Laura mumbled as best she could.

“Well hello to you too. Why is Carmilla here?”

“I decided to have a sleep over and thought you wouldn't mind.”

Rich nodded his head and noticed the space between them. “Next time, call me to ask if it's okay.”
“Okay,” Laura mumbled, pretending to go back to sleep.

“Does Henry or Lilita know where she is?”

“Yes, Dad. She called them.”

“Okay,” he said, looking over to Carmilla's apparently sleeping position. “I love you, Honeybear.”

“I love you too! Night.”

“Goodnight, Laura.”

Carmilla waited until the door was closed.

“That was close,” she mumbled. She scooted over to Laura, wrapping her arm around Laura’s waist, holding Laura close to her again.

“We weren’t careful,” Lauta muttered.

“Well we didn't get caught so it's a win, win,” Carmilla mumbled, voice full of sleepiness.

Laura shifted to face Carmilla. Carmilla opened her eyes enough to look at Laura. She saw a small smile on Laura's lips.

“Doesn't make it okay, Carm.”

“Yeah, but we had an amazing time so I would say it’s a victory, Cupcake.”

Laura giggled under her breath.

Carmilla held Laura close to her. Laura looked at Carmilla and kissed her. Carmilla hummed her appreciation as they slowly drifted back to sleep.

Carmilla awoke rather early the next morning. The sun was drifting over Laura's bed and into her eyes. She moaned and covered her face until she remembered where she was. She felt Laura's back against her side. She noticed she was in her usual position: on her back and sprawled out wide.

She blinked a few times before slowly lifting herself to her forearms to look at the clock on Laura's nightstand.

8:30? Why am I awake? It's way too early! She rolled over and looked at Laura. The sun was glistening off the back of her shirt. The night before flooded Carmilla's mind and she smiled. All the little touches Laura had left on her skin. The feeling of Laura coming undone for her touch. The sounds Laura made. The way Laura desperately kissed her after each orgasm.

Carmilla noticed that Laura's shirt had ridden up in the night and she took it as an opportunity to feel the smoothness of Laura's skin. She traced her fingers lightly over Laura's lower back. Laura hummed in response. Carmilla smiled and started to kiss Laura's neck. Laura mumbled something incoherent before turning over and tucking herself in Carmilla's arms, grasping the back of her shirt tightly in her fist. Carmilla decided to play with her Laura's hair instead.

She felt Laura shift again and pull away. Laura slowly blinked and stretched her body as long as she could. She exhaled sharply before turning towards Carmilla, smiling.
“Morning, Carm,” She mumbled, laying back down in Carmilla’s arms.

“Morning, Cupcake.”

Laura moved closer, tangling their legs together. “Do you want to go back to sleep?” Carmilla asked.

“No, I just don’t want to get up yet,” Laura mumbled against her shirt.

Carmilla felt Laura’s thumb running up and down above her hip. Her body stilled as she felt where Laura was rubbing.

“What is that?” Laura asked, still moving her thumb feeling a little roughness on Carmilla’s skin.

“What is what?” Carmilla asked, trying to sound nonchalant.

Laura sat up and pulled her comforter and sheets down. The shirt Carmilla was wearing was half way up her stomach, leaving the part of her hip above her underwear exposed. Laura ran her fingers over the spot she felt before. Above Carmilla’s hip, she saw three small red dots in the shape of a triangle.

“What is that, Carm?” Laura asked, turning her eyes away and looking up at Carmilla.

Carmilla didn’t look at Laura and tried to remain casual. She shrugged. “It’s nothing, Cupcake.”

“Well that’s not true. It’s clearly a scar.” Laura stated the obvious.

“You are correct! It is a scar,” Carmilla said.

“How have I never noticed this before?”

“I think your hands have always been busy doing other amazing things,” Carmilla winked.

Laura was less than impressed with Carmilla’s comment and rolled her eyes.

“How did you get it?” Laura’s curiosity getting the better of her.

“It’s really not important, Cupcake. Now come here and cuddle with me.”

“Carm, we agreed no more secrets.”

Carmilla knew that, but the memories of getting that scar was the worst thing that had ever happened to her. She didn't want to scare Laura away and she was sick of the pity she received sometimes in regards to her past.

“Laura, it’s not a big deal. It's just a scar.”

“How long have you had it then?”

Carmilla shifted and kept her eyes trained on Laura’s thigh. She shrugged again. “A few years,” Carmilla replied, trying to make it sound like it was no big deal.

“A few years as in when you were sent away?” Laura was hesitant, and the question came out of her mouth before she had time to think.

“Does it matter?” Carmilla asked. “I'm still me. It's just a scar on my body, Laura. Nothing to worry about. I'm going to change the subject now. Okay. I believe I saw a little tattoo on your body last
night, but I was too busy with other things to get a good look at it.” Carmilla was smirking, thinking she had won the subject change.

“Maybe I do and maybe I don't,” Laura replied.

“Let me see it, Cupcake! I mean I technically already have, but I didn't get a good look at it.”

“It's not important, Carm. It's just a tattoo.”

It was Carmilla's turn to roll her eyes. “Why do you care about my scar so much?”

“Because you've never been good about hiding things from me.”

“I'm not hiding anything, Cupcake.”

“You're lying.”

“So? Am I not allowed to keep things to myself? Why are you being so pushy about this?” Carmilla was starting to get defensive. And when she got defensive, she got mad. It's when her attitude was at it’s worst and she would say things she didn't mean. She didn't want to do that to Laura. She got out of Laura's bed and started looking for her clothes.

“What are you doing?” Laura asked, watching Carmilla.

“Leaving.”

“Carm, please don't go. I'm sorry. I'm not trying to pry.”

Carmilla stopped and turned towards Laura.

“Yes you are, Laura!” Carmilla yelled.

“Carmilla, please don't yell at me! I'm not trying to hurt you.”

Carmilla exhaled and pinched the bridge of her nose. “I know. It's just,” she paused, trying to collect her thoughts.

Carmilla threw the clothes she had managed to gather in her hands, back on the floor, near the closet. She walked towards Laura and plopped down on the mattress. She crawled over to Laura before laying down, putting her head in Laura's lap. She didn't look up at Laura and kept her eyes forward. Laura started running her fingers through Carmilla's hair, trying not to pull on any knots in her curls that had formed during the night.

“It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me, Laura, and I've never told anyone. Not even Will.”

Laura didn't say anything. Carmilla took another deep breath in before she exhaled, trying to collect her thoughts and memories from that day.

“When I got to that camp, I didn’t know what to expect. I was so scared. The first hour, they made it feel warm and cozy, introducing us to everyone. They all had hopeful smiles on their faces and went over the very basic and dismal rules, but then everything changed. They separated all us new kids. There were about 5 or 6 of us. We all waited in our own tiny white room. It was a little bigger than your standard broom closet. I don't know how long I was in there, but I know once I sat down in the corner, as far away from the door as possible, I didn't move until they came for me.”

Carmilla paused. Laura noticed the blank stare on Carmilla’s face, but waited. Even though Laura
had basically pushed Carmilla for this information, she wasn’t sure if she was ready to hear it. But it
didn’t matter. She was going to be there for Carmilla no matter what. She had to prove that to
Carmilla so hopefully Carmilla would never forget.

“They came and got me. They took me down this hallway and into another room. They had me
change into light gray sweatpants, a white t-shirt and a matching gray sweatshirt. That was our
uniform. Then they took me into what looked like an interrogation room. They asked me a series of
questions. To be honest, I don't remember much of them. They were all very basic. Then they started
asking me about women. Things I liked about them, things I noticed. They said they were going to
help me forget these thoughts and feelings. I didn't know what that meant, but I was too afraid to
ask.”

She paused again. She was trying to hold back her tears, but it was no use. Laura kept running her
fingers through her hair and started rubbing Carmilla’s back.

“They uh,” Carmilla cleared her throat. “They put this thing up next to me and I was told this was
going to help me with my problem. They tied my wrists and ankles to the chair with these thick
straps. They told me not to fight because it wouldn’t do any good and I would just be wasting my
energy. They lifted my shirt and pulled my pants down a little to expose that little area of my skin.
That’s when they wheeled the contraption up next to me as close as possible. I remember shaking the
whole time. The metal was warm against my skin and I tried to ignore it the best I could. They
started questioning me about Ell. Anytime I smiled or showed enjoyment, they shocked me with that
contraption. It hurt so bad, Laura. I had never known anything could hurt as bad as that did. I lost
count of how many times they shocked me because the pain became too much. I know I counted up
to 15, but it just kept going.”

Carmilla was curling herself into a ball. She was crying uncontrollably. She felt the pain in her hip.
The sting of electricity hitting her skin.

“I screamed and screamed, but it did no good. They told me every time I had those disgusting
thoughts, I should remember the way it felt. The last time they did it, they kept it running for what
felt like minutes, but told me it was only 10 seconds. That's when they took me to my dorm and I met
Michael for the first time. He had only gotten there the week before I had. I really liked him in the
beginning. He was nice, sweet and just as scared as I was. We weren't allowed to inform new people
of what actually happens so he couldn't tell me anything. He only pointed out all the cameras in our
room and held me while I cried. He applied some cream and a bandage to my side. That's all he was
allowed to do.”

“Carm,” Laura paused. She tried her hardest not to cry, but Carmilla's words repeated in her head
and she couldn't help the tears that ran down her face. She moved Carmilla's chin so she would look
at her. Carmilla couldn't. She adjusted herself and wrapped her arms around Laura's waist. She clung
to Laura. Her sobs deepening, pulling Laura as close as she could to her.

Laura lifted Carmilla's head and moved to lay down next to her. She wrapped Carmilla in her arms
as she rubbed her back. She didn't know what to do or say.

“I'm so sorry, Carm,” Laura whispered. “I'm so sorry.”

Carmilla was hysterical against Laura's chest. She could barely get a breath in before crying harder.
Her grip on Laura's shirt was tight. Laura hugged her closer before she started to feel Carmilla's grip
loosen slowly. She looked down and saw that Carmilla's eyes were starting to roll to the back of her
head.

“No! No! No! Carm?” Laura started shaking her.
Carmilla didn't reply.

“Carm?!” She yelled louder, but got no response.

“Dad!” Laura screamed over and over until Rich came running into the room.

“Laura? What is it?” He said, panicking.

“I don't know what happened! She was crying and then just went limp.”

Rich walked over to Carmilla. “Carmilla? Carmilla? I need you to wake up!”

He lightly tapped her face a couple of times. “Daddy? What do we do?”

“She's blacked out, Laura. She'll be okay. We just have to get her to wake up. Do me a favor. Run downstairs and get some water.”

Laura nodded and bolted out of her bed. Carmilla started to stir. Her eyes opened up and she immediately started to defend herself, pushing Rich away.

“No! I won't go back! No! You can't make me!” She yelled, pushing Rich harder and punching his chest with her fists. “You can't make me go back! Leave me alone!”

Laura ran into the room. “Carm?! She gasped.

“Laura?” Carmilla asked, her eyes not focusing on her surroundings. Laura dropped the glass of water on her desk and ran to her bed. She pried Carmilla's hands off of Rich’s shirt.

“I'm not going back! I'm not!” Carmilla shouted.

Laura immediately wrapped her arms around Carmilla. “I'm here, Carm. I'm here! You're at my house! You spent the night.”

Carmilla's breathing started to calm down and she caught her breath. She wrapped her arms around Laura as tightly as she could.

“Don't leave, Cupcake! Please don't leave!”

“I'm here, Sweetness. It's okay. You're safe.”

They stayed glued to one another for a moment before Rich cleared his throat. They slowly untangled from one another and Carmilla laid down on the bed.

“What happened?” Carmilla asked. She was starting to shiver from the cold sweat that had taken over her body.

Rich wrapped the comforter around her and checked her forehead.

“I was about to ask the same thing,” Rich said, looking between Laura and Carmilla. “But I do know you blacked out, Carmilla.”

“I. What?” Carmilla asked.

“You blacked out,” Rich repeated.

He looked at Laura, who was staring at Carmilla, concern written all over face as she held Carmilla's
hand.

“I just need you to take some deep, steady breaths. I'm going to get you some water and call your
father.”

Carmilla just nodded. They waited until Rich left the room before speaking. Laura leaned over and
kissed Carmilla's forehead.

“I'm sorry, Laura.”

“No, Carm. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have pushed you and wouldn't have if I knew that was going to
happen.”

Carmilla just nodded again. She was still feeling lightheaded but smiled.

“Why are you smiling?” Laura asked.

“I think I deserve to see your tattoo now, Cupcake.”

“Carm, you just passed out because I made you relive something terrible and that's what you want?”

“No you did something better than that. A weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I have never told
anyone that before, but I actually feel really good about telling you.”

“It was wrong of me to ask,” Laura said, looking away.

“Yes, but you know me better now. Now if I wake up in the middle of the night, you'll know why.
It's one of the small things I still have nightmares about. Also you now know me better than anyone
else in this world. That means something.”

“Yeah. That I'm a terrible person who made you tell me something instead of just waiting for you to
tell me when you were ready to?”

“Hey,” Carmilla said, turning Laura's chin towards her. “Look at me, Laura.”

Laura was hesitant, but looked at Carmilla.

“This is one of those things I would never be ready to tell someone. If I had been, I would have told
Will years ago. So this does mean something. It means I trust you. It means I trust you more than I
have ever trusted someone in my entire life. More than my brother. That alone is what makes you the
most amazing person I have ever met.”

Laura gave Carmilla a small smile. She leaned forward and kissed Carmilla. Carmilla kissed back
until they heard Rich coming back up the stairs.

“Well I called Henry. I told him what happened, but advised him to wait a little bit before coming to
pick you up. That you're probably a little lightheaded and should take it easy for a little while. Even
though you basically live around the corner, I'm sure spending sometime with Laura will make you
feel better. Here's some water and I'm going to make you a little breakfast, if you feel up to eating.”

“You really don't have to, Mr. Hollis. I think I've caused enough trouble this morning.”

“Nonsense. I'll make some eggs and bacon. Does that sound good?”

Carmilla smiled shyly. “That's my favorite, Sir, but you really don't have to.”
“It would be my pleasure. After all, you’re still a guest in this house, but I must say you gave me a fright, Carmilla. I’ve never seen someone roll their eyes that far back before. You sure you can even see properly after that?” Rich laughed.

Carmilla laughed, as well. “I think I can, Sir. Sorry for attacking you. I forgot where I was.”

“It definitely seemed so. You have some pretty strong arms and fists there.”

“Thanks. I’m sorry for scaring you and yelling at you,” Carmilla said shyly.

“It’s not a problem. Take some deep breaths. Drink the water and I'll let Laura do the rest.”

With that he got up and walked out.

Carmilla was silent. Dark images of the camp running through her mind. She started to fidget when Laura smiled.

“I have something to show you, Carm. Remember?”

Carmilla smiled briefly. She watched Laura close the door before sitting back on the bed as close to Carmilla as possible.

Laura lifted her shirt to show Carmilla the small writing on her left rib cage. Carmilla saw a quote written like a typewriter had produced it, in one long line on her side.

“Dream as if you’ll live forever,” Carmilla read. She looked at Laura.

“My mom used to say it to me,” Laura explained.

Carmilla ran her fingers over the ink. She liked the way it felt.

“I think it's really sweet, Laura.”

“Thanks,” Laura smiled sadly.

“I’m sorry for crying and blacking out,” Carmilla said.

“Don’t be, Carm. I can't even imagine what you went through. I wish you never had to go through it.”

“You and me both, but I guess everything happens for a reason. If I didn’t go there, my family would have never moved here. I wouldn't have met you and I'd be all alone in the world. Sad and miserable.”

She ran her fingers mindlessly over Laura's tattoo. She noticed goosebumps started to rise on Laura’s skin and she pulled Laura on top of her. She kissed Laura with all the passion she could muster, slipping her tongue into Laura's mouth. She ran her hands under Laura's shirt, over her tattoo before cupping her breasts. Laura gasped at the sensation before pulling back.

“As much as I would love to continue what we did last night again, my dad is home. I also think we should keep you breathing normally for now.”

“I guess you could say, you really take my breath away,” Carmilla smirked.

Laura rolled her eyes. “That is the corniest thing anyone has ever said to me.”
“You love it!”

“Do not, Sweetness.”

“Uh huh. Sure. Keep telling yourself that, Cupcake.”

Rich knocked on the door and they separated. He had a tray with two plates and more water. Carmilla slowly sat up. She put her head on Laura's shoulder.

“Still feeling a bit lightheaded,” she announced.

“Try to get a little food in you. It'll help. Also I'm not kidding about the water,” Rich warned. “I figured you guys would also like some entertainment so I brought up Harry Potter. It's what Laura likes to watch when she's not feeling well.” He shrugged.

“Thanks Mr. Hollis,” Carmilla said. She took a bite of her food and smiled. He was right. It started to help her feel better, but she could only eat a little bit of it. She laid down, her head feeling a little dizzy again. Laura put the tray on the floor and started up the Sorcerer’s Stone. She crawled back into bed, snuggling up behind Carmilla.

Camilla fell back asleep. Her breathing normal, her sleep dreamless and her conscious clear.

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Carmilla woke up a little later with Laura nudging her shoulder.

“Hey Sleepyhead. Your dad is on his way over.”

Carmilla blinked and looked at Laura. She smiled and nodded. She sat up too quickly and held her head.

“You okay, Carm?” Laura asked, grabbing her arm.

“Yeah just got up too fast. I actually don’t feel that great.”

Laura helped Carmilla get dressed and down the stairs. When they reached the bottom, Rich was opening up the door for Henry.

“Hey, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Hey, Rich.” He looked over to see Laura helping Carmilla. “How you feeling, Kid?”

“Still a little lightheaded,” she replied, grabbing Laura's shirt for balance.

“Let's get you home,” he said. “Thanks for taking care of her, Rich and letting her spend the night.”

“Well I didn't have much say in the sleepover, but it wasn't a problem.”

Carmilla flinched. She knew that lie would catch up to her. Henry ignored it but she knew it would only be a matter of time before she got a lecture about lying and how wrong it is.

Laura helped Carmilla over to her car. Henry took Carmilla's keys and helped her inside.

“Sorry for blacking out, Laura, but I had a wonderful time,” she smirked and winked.

“No worries. I hope we can have another sleepover soon.”
“I would like that very much. I’ll text you later.”

“Sounds good. Feel better, Carm. I’ll see you tomorrow at church.”

“Yes you will,” Henry replied before starting the car. He pulled out of the driveway and they waved goodbye to Laura.

“So, Rich didn't know you were staying over?”

“I told you. He was already asleep.”

“If that’s what you want to stick to then I have no choice, but to believe you. Would you like to tell me what happened?”

“What happened when?”

“What caused you to black out. You haven't done that in a while, Kid. Years now, I think.”

“I don’t know why. Just couldn't get my breathing under control, I guess.”

Henry pulled into their driveway and helped Carmilla out of the car. He watched as Carmilla walked slowly back into their house. Luckily Lilita wasn't anywhere to be seen as Carmilla slowly ascended the stairs to her room. She changed out of her clothes and into pajamas. She laid down in her bed and went back to sleep.

--------------------------------------------------

It took a few days for Carmilla to feel one hundred percent again. She had stayed home from church and school on Monday. Henry suggested she probably had a little bug in her system. She slept most of the time. Sometimes she would wake up from nightmares, but she'd call Laura. They would whisper on the phone to each other until they both fell back asleep.

Carmilla felt closer to Laura than she had ever felt before. She didn't know a connection to someone could be so strong.

Before Carmilla knew it, the semester was almost over. Everyone was studying for finals that had already started. Christmas was only a week and a half away. Carmilla sat in the public library with Kirsch the evening before her math final.

He looked lost and confused. “I'm going to fail this test,” Kirsch said, after his third sign.

“You'll be fine, Beefcake. We just have to study.”

“My brain feels like goo, Bro. I hate geometry. It makes no sense.”

“Just get it together. Take a break or something. I can't afford to fail this test. I want to impress my mother.”

“What does your mom have to do with this?”

“I always get a ‘C’ in math. I want to at least get a ‘B’. I've been doing better in this class and if I can pull an overall higher grade, it will make my mother proud.”

“She should be proud no matter what,” Kirsch said, blankly.

“Doesn't work that way, Beefcake.”
“Well whatever. I’m gonna go get a snack. You want anything?”

“I’m good.”

She continued to study and work on her practice problems before Kirsch made his way back and sat across from her.

“So Christmas is coming up,” he said, taking a bite out of his candy bar.

“Yeah it is,” she agreed, not lifting her eyes.

“What did you get Laura?”

Carmilla glanced up to see a knowing look on his face. She put her pencil down on top of her notebook.

“And why would any of that be your business?” She questioned.

“I was going to offer you ideas incase you didn’t know what she would like.”

“Well it just so happens, I’ve already gotten her something.”

“Which is?” Kirsch urged.

“None of your business.”

“Fine, but you’re still coming to the Christmas bash, right? Friday night?”

“Yes, Beefcake. You’ve only asked me that about 10 times tonight,” she replied, picking her pencil back up.

“More like once when we got here,” he pouted.

“Well I’ll be there, with Laura, having a grand ole gay time. How does that sound?”

“Awesome!” Kirsch smiled.

“Good, now can I get back to these practice problems?”

“Sure thing, Carm-sexy.”

They continued studying until Henry called Carmilla’s cell phone, asking where Carmilla was. They said their goodbyes and parted ways.

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Carmilla was grateful that the end of the week had come. It was too intense and stressful for her tastes. She felt good about her exams, but was more excited to have two weeks off from school. To have two weeks with Laura.

Carmilla pulled up to Laura’s house and honked her horn. Laura came scurrying out in what could only be described as the most cheerful (in Laura’s opinion) or horrendous (in Carmilla’s opinion) Christmas sweater Carmilla had ever seen.

“Hey, Baby,” Laura said, getting into the car. She closed her door and leaned in to kiss Carmilla.

“Hey, Cupcake. Nice sweater.”
“You like it?”

“Like is a strong word. In all honesty, it looks like a reindeer puked Christmas all over your shirt.”

“Oddly enough, I’m going to take that as a compliment and enjoy it because I brought you one as well.”

Carmilla groaned as she drove out of the neighborhood.

“No complaints, Carmilla. It’s required.”

“So if I don’t wear a Christmas sweater, I can’t participate?” Carmilla asked.

“Exactly.”

“Fine! I’ll wear the sweater, but for you. Not the other lackwits. Speaking of which, who’s going to be there.”

“Kirsch, Theo, Perry, Laf, Danny, Betty, Elsie and SJ.”

“That’s it?”

“For the first couple of hours. Then the crazy party starts. Wait. You did get your Secret Santa something, right?”

“Of course, Cupcake.”

“Who did you get?” Laura asked.

“If I told you, it wouldn’t be a secret.”

“You’re no fun.”

Carmilla smiled and grabbed Laura’s hand. Laura reached over and kissed Carmilla’s cheek. Laura turned on Christmas music, but Carmilla let it go. She knew Christmas was Laura’s favorite holiday and she actually enjoyed Christmas songs.

Before long, Carmilla was turning onto Kirsch’s driveway. When the house came into view, it took Carmilla’s breath away.

“Whoa,” she muttered.

Christmas lights were strung from corner to corner. It looked even more Christmas-y than Laura’s sweater.

“It’s just Christmas lights, Carm,” Laura muttered, getting out of the car.

“This isn’t just Christmas lights. I’ve never seen anything like this before. I mean on Christmas Eve, we would look at Christmas lights, but this is extravagant,” Carmilla said, grabbing her small bag of gifts before locking her car doors.

“Christmas sweater, Sweetness.”

Laura was holding out a black sweater. “I promise you’ll like it,” she said, smiling.

In red and green lettering it said, “Merry Christmas, you filthy animal!” Carmilla smiled.
“You really do know me, Cupcake. Thank you.”

They shared a quick kiss before Carmilla slipped out of her leather jacket and put the sweater on over her head. She held out her hand to Laura as they walked up to the house together.

“Merry Christmas, Guys,” Kirsch said. He pulled Laura into a hug followed by Carmilla. The foyer was littered with tinsel and garland, that run all the way up the stairs and across the banister. Christmas music playing in the background. “Everyone else is already here.”

They followed Kirsch into a very Christmas decorated living room. “Wow, Kirsch. Your family goes all out,” Carmilla said, looking at the different Christmas trinkets and displays. She placed her’s and Laura’s secret santa gifts with the others under the very large and tall Christmas tree.

“It’s the best holiday, Bro. So there’s pizza in the kitchen along with beer, wine, cider or eggnog. Help yourselves, Ladies.”

Laura linked her arm with Carmilla’s as they made their way to the kitchen. “There’s a supreme pizza, Baby,” Laura said, scanning the pizza selections while Carmilla went to get the drinks.

“Awesome. Can you give me two slices?”

“Sure.”

“What do you want to drink, Laura?”

“Cider is good.” Carmilla nodded, filling up two cups of cider.

They joined everyone sitting in the living room and ate their pizza. Once everyone’s food had been digested and the fireplace had been lit, they all gathered around the Christmas tree for Secret Santa. Everyone was smiling and cheerful. They all seemed very excited.

“Alright, just like every year, I’ll be playing Santa,” Kirsch said. He picked up one gift at a time and handed it to it’s rightful owner. Once everyone had their gift, he picked up his last and closed the circle they were sitting in. They went around, one by one. Someone would open their gift and try to guess who their secret santa was. Perry was opening her gift. She pulled out a sky blue Moleskin notebook, new jet black pens and a book.


“Is she right?” Kirsch asked.

“Yep. I figured everyone probably gets you cooking supplies, so I went with the other thing I know you liked. Writing.”

Perry crawled over and gave Carmilla hug. “I love it,” she whispered.

“Alright, Carmilla, you’re up.”

Carmilla exhaled and slowly started to unwrap the box. It was long, narrow and heavy. She pulled the paper down and smiled. She looked around the group and saw Theo smiling. She had always been good at reading people.

“Thanks, Theo.”
“That is so you don’t have to keep drinking all of Kirsch’s parent’s whiskey,” Theo explained.

“It’s perfect! Thanks!”

She opened the bottle and took a swig. It was harsh down her throat, but smooth. “Anyone else,” she offered, but everyone shook their heads.

The present exchanged continued until everyone was done. Everyone was having their own separate conversations, when Laura noticed Carmilla on the couch. She smiled and walked over to her.

“Hey, Carm.”

“Hey, Cupcake.”

Laura sat down. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulder and kissed her temple.

“Are you alright?”

“I’m great, Cupcake. When’s this party really starting?”

Just then the doorbell rang.

“I guess now,” Laura offered. Carmilla smiled before taking another swig from her bottle.

“Go easy on that, Carm. I’m too short to drive your car, remember?”

“Right.” Carmilla stood.

“Where are you going?” Laura asked.

“I’m gonna go put this in my car so I don’t drink it. Want me to take your present too?”

“Sure, I’ll just wait for you here if that’s okay.”

“Sounds perfect. I’ll be right back.”

Carmilla grabbed Laura’s miscellaneous bag of different goodies that Lafontaine had gotten her. She was almost out the door when Lafontaine spotted her.

“Hey Carmilla,” They said.

“What’s up Laf?”

“Can I talk to you for a minute.”

“Yeah of course. I’m just taking this stuff to my car.”

Lafontaine followed Carmilla outside. It was a clear night and the moon was bright. The air had grown much cooler than it had been earlier. Carmilla’s sweater was no longer keeping in any warmth. Lafontaine broke the silence as they got closer to the car.

“How are things with Laura going?” Lafontaine asked.

“Really well, actually. We, uh, have definitely taken the next big step in our relationship, if you know what I mean.”

“Wow, that’s great! Wait,” Lafontaine paused, “Is that why you left my Halloween party without
saying goodbye to anyone?”

“It’s a possibility.”

“You know we were all actually worried until we noticed your car was gone.”

“I know. You told me that the next time you saw me. I’ve already apologized. You know what? I never asked, who won the contest?”

“Wow, I totally forgot about that. Well it was going to be you and Laura, but since you clearly had better things to do, we gave it to Theo and Kirsch. I mean Theo was in those tights.”

“Oh man! That’s right! I totally forgot about that!”

They laughed. Carmilla unlocked her car, and threw the bottle of whiskey and Laura’s gift bag in the back seat and then closed the door. As they made their way back to the house, Lafontaine grabbed Carmilla’s arm to stop her.

“There is actually something I wanted to tell you. I want to give you a small heads up,” Lafontaine stated.

“Okay. About what?”

“January.”

“January. Yes, that is next month. Thanks for heads up,” Carmilla replied, sarcastically.

“I’m actually serious,” Lafontaine spat back.

“Okay. I’m sorry. What’s so important about January?”

“It’s the month Laura’s mom passed away. She’ll be smiles all through December, but around mid-January, you’re going to notice a shift in her attitude and appearance. I just thought you should know because she isn’t going to tell you.”

“Why wouldn’t she tell me?”

“I told you, we don’t talk about Laura’s mom. I mean, do you even know what happened? How she passed away?”

“Yeah, Laura told me the whole story, actually.”

“Okay so her mom was,” Lafontaine paused again, and blink her eyes. Carmilla’s words finally managed to process in her brain. “Wait. She told you?”

“Yeah. She was having dinner at my house and my mother brought it up. She was so upset, but we sat in my room and she told me the whole story.”

Lafontaine stared blankly and then smiled. “She must really like you then.”

“What do you mean?”

“We’ve made a lot of new friends this past year, and yet there are only about four of us who actually knows what happened. Everyone else knows the story from the papers of course, but she never talks about it. The fact that she told you, tells me she really trusts you.”
“Well that’s good because I trust her more than anyone else in this world. No offense.”

“None taken. But I assume she didn’t tell you when?”

“No, but after holding her while she cried for a long time, I didn’t pry for anymore information than she was willing to give me.”

“Okay. Well don’t tell her I told you, not that you couldn’t just google it. It was all over the papers here and everyone talked about it. I just have a request.”

“And that would be?”

“She will most likely try and push you away. Well not just you, but all of us. She doesn’t like to be around us the week it happened. She’s usually not in school for a couple days. She’ll grow quiet and almost hibernate in her room. No calls or texts. I just ask that you try your hardest not to let her do that. It’s when we all worry about her the most. Last year she went to her grandparents, but this past year did a lot to them, losing their only daughter, Laura’s mom. Her granddad’s health isn’t getting better, and her grandmother is taking care of him most of the time. So, can you just try and keep her happy? Maybe take her out to dinner one of those nights or try to take care of her one day when her dad has to work?”

Carmilla took in every word carefully and nodded. “I’ll do my best, Laf. I can’t make any promises though. If she pushes you guys away, I don’t know what she’ll do with me.”

“We’ll wait and find out, but I know it would mean a lot to the group if someone was watching her. Her dad is usually there, but I think he also likes to work to keep his own mind distracted.”

“Like I said, I’ll do my best.”

Lafontaine nodded.

They made their way back to the door. The still, cold night catching back up to them. Before they walked inside, Carmilla stopped.

“Thanks for telling me that, by the way.”

“It’s not a problem. We’re just looking out for her.”

“I know. You guys are really great friends,” Carmilla smiled, sadly.

“Okay, but we can’t have you going in there all sad looking.”

They paused to think and then Lafontaine snapped their fingers.

“I’ve got it,” They proclaimed! “Ready?”

Carmilla nodded.

“Okay. Two peanuts were walking down the street,” They paused for effect. “And one was assaulted.”

They started laughing, hard. Carmilla smiled and rolled her eyes.

“That was pathetic,” Carmilla said.

“Yeah, but I got you to smile.”
“Whatever, Laf. You go find your woman, while I find mine,” Carmilla said as she opened the door.

“Perry is not my woman.”

Carmilla laughed. “Okay. Like I didn’t see you guys getting down at my birthday party.”

Lafontaine’s face went three shades darker before she looked up at Carmilla and smiled.

“Guilty,” They said.

Carmilla laughed. ‘Come on, friend!”

She pulled Lafontaine inside and the party was definitely in full swing. They met up with Perry and talked a couple minutes before Carmilla announced she was going to go find Laura. She had two beers in hand when she found Laura dancing goofily with Danny. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist, kissing her cheek.

“What took you so long?” Laura asked, leaning back against Carmilla, swinging her hips to the beat. Carmilla followed her movement. All this dancing with Laura had made her a lot better.

“Talking to Laf.”

“What did they have to say?”

“Nothing important. Just a little chat to the car and back.”

Laura turned around and wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders. Carmilla held up the two beers and Laura grabbed one while they continued to dance. Carmilla saw Danny go back to Betty. Her tall stature a little slumped. Shouldn’t she be dancing with her girlfriend and not mine? Ooh, Betty doesn’t look too happy. She watched as Danny walked up to Betty. There was fire in Betty’s eyes.

“I think Betty and Danny are about to get into a fight,” Carmilla said.

Laura quickly turned around and looked. “Yeah, Betty does not look happy.”

“Well maybe it’s because Danny was busy dancing with my girlfriend instead of her own. Shouldn’t she be dancing with Betty rather than you?”

“Aw, Carm. Are you jealous?”

“Absolutely not, Cupcake.”

“A little bit?” Laura asked. Her smiled made her nose scrunch.

“Not a chance, Beautiful.”

Laura smiled and kissed Carmilla. Carmilla kissed her back. She wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist, shifting her closer. Their bodies were against each other as their kissed deepened. Laura backed away a little, before unwrapping her arms and grabbing Carmilla’s hand.

“Where are we going, Laura?”

“To have some privacy.”

Carmilla smiled as she followed Laura. She was expecting to go upstairs when Laura was making
her way through the kitchen. She pulled Carmilla into the laundry room and locked the door.

“There are beds upstairs, you know, with more space,” Carmilla noted.

“Yes, but most people will eventually make their way up there. No one will come in here.”

Laura started to unbutton Carmilla’s pants. Laura paused and looked Carmilla in the eye. That was all Carmilla needed. She kissed Laura, their passion as strong as their first night together. Since their first time together, they only had a few small chances to be together. However they always seemed to get interrupted. Either by a front door closing and they having to frantically put on any discarded clothing or a phone buzzing with their parents waiting on the other line. Once their teachers started speaking of finals, they were too distracted with schoolwork to have too much alone time. They needed this.

Carmilla was quick to take Laura’s sweater off, grateful that Laura didn’t wear a shirt under it. Carmilla kissed her chest delicately before unsnapping her bra. The small room slowly got warmer as their panting and gasps for breath filled the room. Laura helped Carmilla out of her sweater and shirt, wasting no time on discarding Carmilla’s bra.

There was just enough space for Carmilla to lay Laura down on the floor, Laura laying Carmilla on top of her. They were smiling and giggling. She quickly got rid of Laura’s pants and underwear. Carmilla started kissing Laura, walking her fingers up Laura’s thighs. The gasp that Carmilla got when she finally started to touch Laura was her favorite sound in the world. After a few moments, Carmilla got up the courage to do the one thing she hadn’t done yet. She paused her hand.

“Why did you stop, Sweetness?” Laura asked, her breathing ragged.

“Can you move up a little bit?” Carmilla asked, kissing Laura’s neck.

“Not really, Carm. There’s no room in here.”

“And who’s fault is that?” Carmilla smirked, placing her hands on Laura’s hip.

“Ha ha, Carmilla.”

Carmilla started kissing down Laura’s body. Laura’s moans getting louder, the lower Carmilla’s lips went. Carmilla stopped.

“Please, stop stopping,” Laura whined.

“It’s not my fault, I can’t go any lower, which is what I’m trying to do,” Carmilla said, getting aggravated.

“What are you trying to do?” Laura asked.

“What do you think I’m trying to do?” Carmilla gestured with her hands towards Laura’s lower body.

“Are you sure you’re ready for it?”

“Absolutely,” Carmilla smiled.

Laura stood up. “I have an idea,” she said.

“And that would be?”
Laura smiled and sat on top of the dryer. She leaned back on her hands, spreading her legs for Carmilla. Carmilla smiled and walked over to her, kissing Laura and getting back to the task at hand.

Sometime later they were walking out of the laundry room. Fully dressed and big smiles on their faces.

“That was amazing, Carm,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla smiled. “It’s getting late. Are you ready to head home?”

“After that? I don’t want anything killing the mood I’m in right now.”

“And what mood would that be?”

“Pure bliss,” Laura stated.

They decided another Irish exit was appropriate. The party had gotten bigger and they didn’t feel like finding their friends. They got in Carmilla’s car and drove home, thinking about the events that had just occurred.

---------------------------------------

Christmas at the Karnstein’s was always the biggest holiday. Their tree was fully decorated and nativities filled almost every empty shelf. Garland and stockings hung from the fireplace. Carmilla always enjoyed Christmas. She and Will always got the one big gift they wanted, followed by a few small necessities like new clothes or small accessories. They would have more church services, which Carmilla never really enjoyed, but she didn’t mind singing Christmas carols, so she always sucked it up. Not that she ever had a choice in going or not.

Christmas is always a family only event for Carmilla’s family. Which meant Carmilla hadn’t seen Laura since the party except at church. Even though they would take time to steal kisses when they could, they had only managed to exchange quick pecks of hellos and goodbyes. They had texted frequently throughout the holiday break. However, on Christmas Eve, those messages stopped. At least on Carmilla’s end.

“Mother, can I please have my phone back?” Carmilla asked.

“You have been on that thing enough. Christmas is about spending time with your family. Yes your body is here, but you have barely participated in any of our traditions thus far. So I will give it back to you when you go to bed. Now, would you please help me with dinner by starting the mashed potatoes?”

Carmilla rolled her eyes, but did what she was told. She did make the best mashed potatoes in the family. They were preparing their Christmas Eve meal with turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, mixed greens and rolls.

Henry came into the kitchen with Will hot on his trail.

“How’s dinner coming along, Lilita?” Henry asked, smelling different things on the stove.

“Perfectly. Carmilla has started the mashed potatoes so we should be eating in the next 15 minutes or so.”

“Wonderful,” Henry stated, smiling.
“Did you two set the table?” Lilita asked.

“Yes, Mother,” Will replied.

“With the fine china?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Good. We’ll you can start putting stuff in bowls and setting it on the table. And do not let me catch you taking bites of anything,” Lilita said, as she swatted Henry’s hand, trying to take a small piece of turkey.”

“Of course not, Dear.” Henry smiled and carried the plate into the dining room.

After digesting their dinner, Will and Henry started to wash all the dishes. Making sure to put things away, while Lilita and Carmilla rested, watching a corny movie on the Hallmark channel.

I wonder what Laura and Mr. Hollis are doing. I wish I could text her. I wonder if I could get Mother to give me my phone back. We won’t be going out for a few more hours to look at Christmas lights.

She chanced a glance and saw that Lilita was smiling at the movie.

“That was a good meal this year, Mother.”

“Thank you, Carmilla. Your mashed potatoes were as good as always. Possibly even better.”

“Thank you, Mother.”

They shared a small smile before Lilita exhaled. She pulled Carmilla’s phone out of her pocket. “No texting while we do any of our family stuff later on. Promise?”

Carmilla smiled. “Promise,” she said too excitedly. She was quick to text Laura to explained what happened. She kept her promise throughout driving around, looking at Christmas lights. A tradition that started at Carmilla’s grandparents house. She kept her promise through the family Christmas movie night and setting up their presents under the tree.

She texted Laura a quick good night before drifting off into another dreamless sleep.

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Carmilla woke to the smell of the big Christmas breakfast being prepared. There was a knock on her door before Will opened it.

“Merry Christmas, Kitty,” Will said, plopping on her bed.

“Merry Christmas, Kid. How long do you think we’ll have to wait this year?”

“Well Mother is definitely up, based on the smell of breakfast, so I guess however long it takes for Dad to make his coffee and come up the stairs.”

It was a Karnstein tradition that Will had made without even knowing it. He used to be scared at the thought of Santa Claus coming into their city apartment. However, they didn’t want to break his young spirit, so Carmilla reluctantly agreed to let him sleep with her. Now every Christmas morning, they wait in Carmilla’s room for a parent to come get them. Carmilla would be lying if she said it wasn’t one of her favorite things about Christmas morning.
“Do you think you got your new boots?” Will asked.

“Definitely. And your expensive, but must-need cleats?”

“I hope so.”

Just then Henry opened the door. “Merry Christmas, children. Apparently you guys were good this year because Santa came. And I know what you’re thinking. How did Santa think we were good when we were clearly terrible all year? Well I slipped him a twenty begging him to leave you guys presents.” Henry smirked.

“Ha ha, Dad. You’re so funny,” Carmilla replied, sarcastically.

“Ah, Merry Christmas, Ms. Sarcasm,” He joked.

“And a very Merry Christmas to you too, Pops.”

“Well, come on. Mother has breakfast on the table and then we get to start the fun stuff.”

They followed Henry down the stairs. They all seemed to eat breakfast as quickly as possible, even Lilita. It was the Karnstein’s favorite holiday after all.

A few hours later, all the presents had been opened. Carmilla had gotten her new black combat boots. The exact ones she had asked for. A few new sweaters, in various dark colors from black to purple along with other odds and ins. Will had gotten his cleats. Lilita received a very beautiful, yet no doubt expensive necklace from Henry. Henry always got Lilita jewelry. They all received small items from one another. Once the presents were opened and the wrapping paper thrown away, Carmilla, Will and Lilita gathered around Henry, to hear him read the Christmas story from his new indepth Bible, just as they did every Christmas. It was a happy and joyous day. Just like every Christmas the Karnstein’s had together, there were no arguments, no disappointments. Just family being together and being grateful.

Carmilla was standing in front of Laura’s door. A small package in her hand. They were celebrating their Christmas together today. Carmilla exhaled and then knocked. Laura opened the door.

“Hey,” Laura said.

“Merry Christmas,” Carmilla said, holding up the small package.

Laura smiled and stepped aside so Carmilla could come in. Their tree was bright with multicolored lights. Carmilla smiled.

“Do you want anything to drink?” Laura asked, moving towards the kitchen.

“I’m good. Thanks, Cupcake.”

Laura started to make herself some hot chocolate. Carmilla followed her into the kitchen.

“Is your dad home?” Carmilla asked.

Laura had a small glint in her eye. “Nope. He has to work tonight. That’s why I thought tonight would be the perfect night for our Christmas.”

“Sounds good to me, Cupcake.”
Once the hot chocolate was made, and Carmilla deciding she also like a cup of hot chocolate, they made their way to Laura’s living room. Laura played some Christmas music, picking up the small and only gift left under her tree. They gave each other their gifts with a small kiss.

“You go first,” Carmilla said, pointing to the small box in Laura’s lap.

“Oh, yeah. I really suck at it, but it’s not like I could go to Mother and ask her to wrap a gift for my girlfriend, so I was stuck doing it secretly once everyone had gone to sleep.”

“Well it’s adorable.”

“No, but it’s not the gift,” Carmilla gestured.

“Right.” Laura ripped the rest of the paper off, placing it on the coffee table. It was a small black box. She opened to find yellow tissue paper on the inside. It made her smile that Carmilla used her favorite color instead of a traditional Christmas colors. She pulled out a chained bracelet, that had one medium sized heart hanging from it. On the heart, ‘CK + LH’ was inscribed. Laura smiled.

“I couldn’t afford a real Tiffany’s one, but this is true silver. I hope you like it and, if not, well I’ll get you something else. I just thought this would be a nice thing because you mean the world to me and I don’t know-”

Laura lunged forward and wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders. “I love it,” she whispered in Carmilla’s ear, giving her a quick kiss to her cheek.

“Really?” Carmilla asked.

“Yes, really. Now put it on me,” Laura demanded.

Carmilla clasped the bracelet around Laura’s wrist.

“Perfect fit,” Laura commented, staring at it.

“Yeah I used my wrist to measure when I asked the man to take some links out.”

“Thank you, Carm. I really love it. It’s also a little ironic.”

“Why ironic?”

“Open yours and you’ll find out.”

Carmilla looked at her gift. It had a purple ribbon bow on top of red paper.

“Did you make this bow yourself?” Carmilla asked.

“I did.”

“You did a really good job.”

“Thanks. My mom taught me a long time ago.” Laura smiled. “Now, go on. It’s just ribbon.”

Carmilla ripped the bow and paper off. It was another small box. She opened it to see a silver necklace. The charm on the necklace was a silver guitar pick.
“Turn it over,” Laura said, pointing to the charm.

Carmilla did as she was told. “L and C” was inscribed on the small pic. Carmilla looked up and
smiled. “You’re right. They are ironic,” she noted.

“Do you like it? I know it’s a little cheesey,” Laura said.

“Well then, we’re both cheesey because we pretty much got each other the same thing,” Carmilla
said.

“I guess great minds think alike,” Laura said, moving in, grabbing the necklace from Carmilla’s
hands. The chain was long so it would rest low against Carmilla’s body. Laura clasped the necklace
around Carmilla’s neck.

“I love it, Laura,” Carmilla said, holding the silver pick in her hand.

“And I love mine,” Laura said.

They snuggled up on the couch. Laura flipped through the channels before stopping on “It’s A
Wonderful Life”. Carmilla laid down, pulling Laura to rest on top of her. Laura settled and laid her
head on Carmilla’s chest. Carmilla mindlessly ran her hand up and down Laura’s arm. She felt
Laura’s breath against her neck before she started to feel Laura’s lips. She moved her head, trying to
give Laura as much access to her neck as possible.

“When’s your dad getting home?” Carmilla asked.

“Not for a while, Sweetness.”

“Wanna go upstairs?”

Laura kissed Carmilla before sitting up. She got up and bent down to Carmilla’s eye level. “Race
you,” she whispered before running and giggling up the stairs. Carmilla was quick on her trail.

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The bedroom was dark except for the small light slipping in from the hallway. They didn’t even
manage to turn on a light before they laid down in Laura’s bed. Carmilla and Laura were too
wrapped up in each other to pay attention to anything else. The small noises they were making from
each other’s touches was the only sound that filled their world. Their skin against one another.
Carmilla looking down at Laura as she pleasured Laura the best she could with her fingers. The
comforter sliding off her back. Her necklace laying on top of Laura’s abdomen, no longer cold. She
watched as Laura bit her lip and gasped at the feeling. Her mind and body focused on Laura as
Laura focused on the sensation Carmilla was creating. Nothing could break the spell of ecstasy they
were under.

Or so they thought.

“Laura Hollis?!”

The girls frantically covered themselves under the blankets.

“Daddy?!” Laura’s eyes were wide. Carmilla’s stomach sank.

Chapter End Notes
UH OH! Get ready for the storm

Also as always, giving a shout out to Kristin! She just got home yesterday and stilled edited this for me. Also without her, this series would be nothing!
The Same Night

Chapter Summary

WARNING: Graphic visions of Carmilla's past. Underage drinking. Mention of vomit (Not graphic).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sensation Carmilla felt when Laura entered her was remarkable. As they moved together as one, she could feel her body being taken over by Laura. She shifted herself up, holding her body weight on one arm as her fingers continuously worked Laura. She felt the comforter slide down her back, leaving it exposed to the light from hallway. The only thing on her mind was Laura. Their panting and moans filled the room consuming any other sound. She could feel where parts of her body were starting to glisten with sweat. Laura gasped when Carmilla moved. Carmilla stared at Laura before having to close her eyes from the pleasure, moaning herself, losing herself in every motion.

“Kiss me, Carm,” Laura whispered, pulling Carmilla back to reality.

She smiled down at Laura, and started to lower her body weight back down.

“Laura Hollis!”

Panic set in as Carmilla heard the voice. Pulling the comforter over her naked form.

“Daddy!” She heard Laura say. Carmilla’s stomach sank as she realized for the first time the consequences of her actions had brought them to this. She looked at him, their expressions the same. His eyes were wide and his nostrils were flaring.

“I want both of you to get dressed.” Mr. Hollis said using a firm voice.

He stepped out of the room, leaving the door open. Carmilla and Laura laid there for a moment, not speaking nor looking at each other.

“Now!” He shouted from the hallway.

They jumped out of bed and threw their clothes back on.

“Carm?” she heard Laura whisper.

Carmilla ignored her, trying to get dressed as quickly as possible. I have to get out of here. I have to run. I have to get in my car and get the hell out of this town. She felt tears starting to cloud her eyesight. I can’t go back. I can’t. I can’t go back there. I have to get out of here.

Her body was shaking from panic. She felt a hand on her arm, but pulled her arm away as fast as she could. She tossed her bra and shirt back on searching for her hoodie. She felt a faint imaginary sting hit her side from the memories of the camp. She hissed in pain.

“Carm?” Laura whispered again, replacing her hand on Carmilla’s arm.
Carmilla stopped and looked at Laura. Laura had tears running down her cheek. Carmilla pulled Laura into her embrace, rubbing her back lightly up and down as they cried with one another.

“Laura. It’s going to be okay, but I have to get out of here. I’m going to just get in my car and go somewhere. I can’t go back that place.”

“Please don’t leave, Carmilla. I need you to stay. Please.”

“I can’t Laura. Look. If things go wrong with your dad, text me. Pack a bag and I’ll come get you. We’ll go somewhere together. Somewhere safe.”

“What?”

“I can’t go back there Laura. I told you what they did to me and I can’t go through that again, but I can’t just leave you either. I,” she paused. “I guess now is as good a time as any. ‘I love you, Laura.’”

Laura took a step back to look at Carmilla in the eyes. Laura knew Carmilla was being sincere by the hopeful look in her eye.

“I love you too,” Laura whispered, tears staining her cheeks as Mr. Hollis re-entered the bedroom. They shared a kiss before Mr. Hollis cleared his throat. “Wait for me,” Carmilla whispered and bolted towards the door.

“Carmilla Karnstein,” His voice was strong again. She couldn’t ignore it. She stopped and looked back.

“You wait for me downstairs. I’m going to talk to Laura and then we’re going to have a talk. Don’t do anything stupid. You hear me?”

Carmilla stared at him and nodded. She walked slowly out of Laura’s bedroom and down the stairs. She didn’t run. She started pacing around the small foyer. She didn’t run. She started pacing around the small foyer. *I have to leave, but I can’t leave Laura. But I can’t go back there either. Oh God, help me! God, please help me. I don’t know what to do. Why do you do this to me? Why do I have to suffer so much? I just want to be with her! I just want her! Why is that so bad?!!*

Carmilla’s crying picked up again and she screamed mentally. She stopped to wipe the tears from her eyes. Her eyesight readjusted and cleared. She made eye contact with the door. *Right. Strong. I have to be strong. I’ll run home and sneak in. I’ll grab some stuff, sneak out later, get Laura and then we can just go somewhere. I’ll keep her safe and away with me.*

Carmilla started walking towards the door, hand already out to turn the door knob.

“Going somewhere?” Mr. Hollis asked.

Carmilla stilled. Her body frozen. She was breathing fast. *All I have to do is turn the doorknob and run. That’s it. Turn and run.*

She turned the doorknob and slowly opened the door. “Carmilla. I just got off a long shift, and I really don’t feel like chasing after you right now,” Mr. Hollis said behind her. He pushed the door closed. “Living room. Now.” He ordered.

Carmilla exhaled and slowly walked to the living room. She looked at the Christmas tree. *A few hours ago, we were fine. We were in the clear. I’m the one who suggested we go upstairs. This my fault. This is what happens when I don’t avoid temptation. I did this.*
She sat down on the couch, while Mr. Hollis took his recliner. He sat forward with his elbows resting on his knees. Hands clasped together as they rested against his chin. He stared at the coffee table before looking up at Carmilla. They made eye contact. His usually pleasant and happy features were gone. He had a tint of sadness along with anger in his eyes. Carmilla had never seen him look like that before. He looked broken and disappointed. She was scared. They sat in silence before Mr. Hollis leaned back and cleared his throat.

“Would you like to tell me what I just walked in on?” He asked, eyes never leaving Carmilla.

“I, uh, she and I were, um, we were having, uh, sex, Sir,” Carmilla stuttered. She was too nervous to be embarrassed. She clasped her hands together to try and hide her shakiness. She felt sick. She couldn’t tell if she was going throw up or something else with the feeling her stomach.

“I’m sorry, Sir,” she added.

He nodded. “You’re sorry?” He smirked and chuckled, before his face turned sour. “I walked into my house to see you having sex with my little girl!” He shouted.

Carmilla started to cry. I’m so fucked. I’m going back. There is no way to get out of this.

“I’m sorry, Sir,” is all she could manage to say.

“Daddy?” Laura asked. He looked over his shoulder and saw Laura standing at the entrance to living room. Laura was staring at Carmilla, who looked like she couldn’t handle anymore.

“Laura. I told you to wait upstairs so I could talk to Carmilla,” His voice firm again.

“No,” Laura said. She walked in and sat down next to Carmilla. “If you want to talk to Carmilla, you talk to me too.” She was being stubborn. She was always stubborn. Laura exhaled and sat back against the couch, grabbing Carmilla’s hand.

“Fine. You might as well hear this too, Laura. I have to set up rules for whatever you two are.”

“You’ve never done that before. Why now?” Laura asked.

“This is no time to argue with me, Laura. And to be fair, I’ve never caught you doing what I just walked in on. So rules,” He paused. Carmilla could see the millions of ideas happening behind his eyes before he looked up. They made eye contact again.

“Carmilla, you are only welcome in this house if I am home. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“That includes coming over for lunch on Sundays which don’t deny because I know it happens every Sunday I’m not here. Even though I appreciate you spending time with Laura, I now no longer trust you to be alone with my daughter.”

“But Dad–”

“No buts, Laura. My house, my rules.”

He turned his attention back to Carmilla.

“There will be no more sleepovers and you are no longer permitted in Laura’s bedroom.”

“Dad! That’s not fair–” Laura tried again, but Rich held up his hand to stop her talking.
“Carmilla, if I come home and find you in my house alone with my daughter, you will no longer be permitted here. Do I make myself, clear?” He asked.

“Yes, Sir.” Carmilla repeated.

“Loud and clear,” Laura says, not letting go of Carmilla’s hand.

“Okay. Carmilla I think you should head home now. I have to have a serious talk with my daughter.”

Carmilla nodded and started to rise off the couch, letting go of the comfort of Laura’s hand in hers. The butterflies in her stomach would not subside. She stood and made eye contact with Mr. Hollis.

“Sir, I know I’m not in a place to make requests, but can you please not tell my parents.”

He paused to stare at her. It seemed to take years before he finally exhaled. He grabbed Carmilla’s hands in his own while patting the top of her hands.

“Carmilla, I wouldn’t do that. I would never do that,” he said. “And I apologize for yelling. Sometimes my temper gets the better of me.”

Carmilla didn’t know what to say so she nodded and exited the house. Mr. Hollis got up from his chair, walked over to the window and watched Carmilla get into her car to leave before exhaling. He popped his neck while he gathered his thoughts and turned around. His gentle features returned to his face. He knew he couldn’t push them away in fear of losing of his daughter.

“Daddy, these rules aren’t-”

“Laura, Honey bear, I always knew.”

Laura stopped complaining and looked at her father, surprised.

“What?” Laura asked. She was shocked.

“I’m not an idiot, Laura. I saw you kiss Chelsea all the time. Hell, I’ve seen you and Carmilla kiss a time or two.”

“Then why are you so mad? Why were so mean to Carm? She wasn’t the only one involved upstairs,” Laura pointed out.

“I know. I’m not mad that you’re gay or bisexual or whatever you are. I’m mad that I come home from a long day at work, and see my daughter having sex. To say the least, I am shocked.”

“Dad, I can’t help it. I really like her. I wasn’t expecting to fall for her as hard as I did.”

“I know, Laura. But you’re still so young.”

“Please don’t start with the young stuff. I’m an adult and we made that decision together.”

“Yes, but you know how I feel about premarital sex.”

“You always told me if I did it to be safe and use a condom. Since I’m not sleeping with men, I don’t think that is much of an issue.”

“Yes, but Laura, that didn’t mean I expected you to be having sex at 17. Especially with Carmilla Karnstein, but like I said, I knew you two were something.”

“How did you know?”
“I knew you two were a thing from the time I found her hanging out in the pantry looking for flour in the dark.”

“Wait,” Laura said, holding her hand up. “So you don’t hate me?” Laura asked, her father’s words catching up to her.

“Of course not, Laura. You’re my daughter. I could never hate you for being who your are. I never raised you to hate or oppose homosexuality. I’m a little surprised that my daughter is a homosexual, but I would never hate you for anything. It would be the same thing if you came home tomorrow and told me you were pregnant. I would love that child no matter what because you’re still my daughter.” Rich paused. “Please don’t come home pregnant.”

“Daddy. I’m a lesbian. Unless I’m the Virgin Mary, that would be a challenge.”

“Still. I think that will send me into an early grave. But look, I’ve already lost your mom, Little One. I can’t lose the only other good thing in my life. I’m just not ready for you to grow up so soon. No parent is,” Mr. Hollis sat back down in his recliner. “But you know what I have to do now, don’t you?”

“Ground me?” Laura asked.

“Yes. You are definitely grounded, Laura Hollis. No sweet talking out of this one.”

“Fine,” Laura exhaled.

“And remember it’s not because you’re gay. It’s because of your actions.”

They sat for a few moments before Laura looked back over to her Rich. He was getting out of his chair.

“Hey, Dad?”

“Yeah, Honey Bear?”

“Thank you,” she paused before a small smile spread across her face, “for accepting me.”

“That is not something you need to thank me for. You know you can always come to me, right? I’m never going to push you away or disown you. You’re my child, Laura. And you’re the spitting image of your mother. You’re the only one who keeps me as strong as I am.”

Laura started to tear up. She got off the couch and gave her dad a hug.

“I love you,” she whispered, crying onto his shoulder.

“I love you too, Laura. Now, go and call Carmilla. I want to make sure she's okay.”

“Thanks, Dad!” Laura said, heading to the stairs.

“No problem, Honey Bear because tomorrow anything of yours that is electronic belongs to me for the next two weeks,” He said.

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Carmilla sped down the highway, not knowing where she was going. All her flashbacks coming to her at once!
“State your full name, please.”

“Carmilla Elizabeth Karnstein.”

“Date of birth?”

“October 15, 1997.”

“Carmilla, we are going to hook this machine up. Don’t worry. We’re just going to help you face the reality of your situation.”

“Why am I being tied down?”

“We need you to sit still. Don’t fight it. You’ll want to keep your energy up. Now, do you know why you’re here?”

“I got caught kissing a girl.”

“Exactly. Did you enjoy that?”

A small smirk crept onto her face when she felt the first shock.

A horn was honking causing Carmilla to shake her head. The light was green.

“Alright, Asshole! Relax!” She said out loud, hitting the accelerator. She thought about going to Kirsch’s, but decided against going to see anyone she knew. She blared Alexisonfire as she continued to drive. She tried to will herself not to cry.

After an hour of driving, Carmilla turned left into the one place she knew no one would be. She pulled into the sketchy parking lot of the diner without a sign and the blinds pulled down on almost every window. She killed her motor and got out. She walked in and sat at the bar, keeping her head down just incase.

“Hey! You’re back,” a familiar voice said.

She looked at the voice, trying to place it when she saw the same waiter from before.

“Hey, Tommy,” she replied back. He had sandy brown hair and wasn’t much taller than Carmilla. He was rather scrawny with tan skin and blue eyes.

“Where’s that cute little thing you were here with last time?”

“Laura? She’s at home,” Carmilla said, sheepishly.

“Everything alright?” She looked up to see the concern in his eyes.

“Uh, yeah. Can I just get a hot chocolate, please?”

“Sure. Any food?”

Carmilla checked her wallet. She only had $5 cash with her and didn’t want to use her debit card. She looked up to see Tommy looking at her. His concern didn’t waver.

“Uh. I’m okay right now. How much is the hot chocolate?”

“$1.12, but it’s on the house. You seem like you’ve had a rough day.”
“Oh no. I can’t let you do that. I have the money.”

“Save the five for some food, if you want it.” He smiled at her.

“Thanks, Tommy.”

She pulled out her phone. It was only 7:30 and Henry had informed her earlier that she didn’t have to be home until 11. She had about 10 missed calls from Laura, a couple from Kirsch and Lafontaine. She had 3 voicemails and about 20 text messages. She clicked on her texts, mostly from Laura asking her where she was, to call her as soon as possible and asking if she was safe and okay. She decided to ignore it. She clicked on one of the voicemails Laura left, taking a sip from her hot chocolate.

_Carmilla? Please answer your phone. I need to make sure you’re okay. I’m really worried about you. I promise everything is okay. I’m grounded, but my dad really didn’t mean to yell at you. And he knows we’re a couple. He said he’s known for a while. That’s a good thing, Baby. He’s worried too. He said he remembers hearing your tires screech at the end of the street. Please call me, Sweetness. I need to hear your voice. I love you._

She exhaled. She didn’t want to be bothered. She couldn’t deal with the fact that when she got home, her parents were most likely going to know what happened. She was about to be sent back to literal Hell. _Why not enjoy the last little bit of freedom I have left?_ She smirked into her cup before she took another sip. She couldn’t believe how fate had turned against her yet again. She missed Laura. She wanted her here, but couldn’t have her. Her eyes started to well up again.

_I’m so stupid. I was supposed to avoid temptation. The Devil comes in all shapes and forms. But Laura isn’t the Devil. She’s an angel. Oh fuck. I’m never going to see her again. My mother will find out, send me back and then we’ll move to another town. She’ll tell me how terrible of a daughter I am. How disgusting I am and how I’m ruining the Karnstein name. She’ll never forgive me. I don’t want to picture my life without Laura. She keeps me sane. I’m so stupid. So so stupid._

“Hey? You okay?”

She heard Tommy’s voice and looked up. She knew she was crying.

“You’re not the first one to come in here crying like that and if it’s one thing I know, it’s how to make people feel better.” He gave her a reassuring smile.

“My girlfriend’s dad walked in on us.”

“Doing what exactly?”

“We were in the middle of something.”

“Like in the middle of kissing?”

“No. More like in the middle of fucking.”

“Oh. Shit. That’s not good.”

“No. It’s not. It’s really not.”

“Was he angry?”

“To say the least. Laura, my girlfriend, left me a voicemail saying it was okay, but I don’t know. I
can’t really face going back home right now,” Carmilla wiped her eyes. Tommy handed her a tissue.

“Thanks,” Carmilla smiled.

“Is he going to tell your parents?”

“He said he wouldn’t, but I don’t really trust adults all that much.”

“Good call, if you ask me.” Tommy started cleaning the counters to look busy. “What would your parents do if they found out?” Tommy asked.

“Probably the worst thing. I am the minister’s kid.” Carmilla decided not to pour out her past to almost a complete stranger.

“Whoa! And the bomb has dropped!” Tommy laughed and Carmilla couldn’t help, but smile.

“What?” she asked.

“You’re like classic minister’s kid. The rebel and everything.”

Carmilla laughed a little. “Yeah, I guess you could say that. I even have a bottle of whiskey sitting in my trunk that I just remembered.”

“So what do you think he would do?”

“I’m more worried about my mother than my dad, if we’re being honest.”

“Well you never know. Fate has a funny way of working. You gonna be okay?”

“Yeah, I’ll be okay. Thanks for talking with me.”

The door opened bringing in the cold air. “Duty calls,” Tommy said. “Good evening, Sir. How may I help you?”

“I’m actually here for her.” Carmilla’s body went tense. She felt the man sit next to her.

“Carmilla. I thought I told you to go home,” Rich said.

“I can’t go home, Sir,” Carmilla replied. “How did you find me?”

“I’m a cop, Carmilla. It’s my job to know where you are. And I know your plate number. I know the plate numbers of all Laura’s friends. That way, if something happens, I know where you are especially if they’re with Laura. So I had a colleague run your plates, they found your GPS and told me.”

“And so you followed me here.”

“I found you here. I also figured this is where you would go. It is the only gay place in the area, minus the 21 and up places. But I assume you don’t have a fake ID.”

“No, Sir. I don’t.”

“Are you the minister?” Tommy asked, interrupting, setting a menu in front of Rich.

“No. I’m the Deacon. I’m also her girlfriend’s father. You don’t remember me, Tommy?”

Carmilla gave a small smile at the mention of “girlfriend’s father”. Maybe he is okay with it?
Tommy took a good look at the man before shaking his head. “Officer Hollis. Can I get you anything?”

“A coffee, Tommy. Keeping out of trouble, I assume?”

“My record is clean. Charlie wouldn’t let me work here if I got in any more trouble. It was part of the deal.” Tommy placed a hot mug of coffee in front of Mr. Hollis.

“Good to know you’re doing well.”

Tommy nodded and went back to the kitchen.

“Is there anyone you don’t know?” Carmilla asked, surprised he knew Tommy.

“Sure, but I can’t help the cases I’m handed.”

Carmilla nodded. They took sips of their drinks and stayed silent.

“You know, I was being honest. I wouldn’t tell your parents,” Rich finally said, breaking the spell.

“No offense, Mr. Hollis, but I don’t really trust adults.”

“You’re a teenager. All teens think they know better than their parents. You’re no different. Hate to break that to you, Kid.”

“Yeah, well. I have my reasons,” Carmilla mumbled.

“I’m sorry I yelled at you. It’s not easy seeing your daughter grow up. Your father and I have talked about that a lot. Did you know we get lunch once a week. You and Laura always seem to be the center of our discussions.”

“Good to know.”

“I like you, Carmilla. I just didn’t like what I saw happening.”

“Well, I’m sorry I broke your trust in me. But Laura means a lot to me, Sir. She’s my rock. I don’t know what I would be without her.”

“She is one of a kind.”

“Yeah,” Carmilla smiled. “She is.”

“You’re still welcome in my home, you know. Just no bedrooms.”

“Understandable.”

“I really don’t want you to worry. I knew Laura was gay.”

That caught Carmilla’s attention. “How did you know, Sir?”

“I don’t know if she’s told you about Chelsea.”

“She has. I actually met her at Kirsch’s house once. I might have punched her in the face.”

“Really? And why is that?”

“Do you really want this story, Mr. Hollis?”
“Well, I probably shouldn’t, but why not?”

“She kept pulling Laura close to her and I got jealous. I tried to calmly tell her to leave Laura alone. She didn’t. Then she offended Lafontaine. I got mad so I punched her, but in my defence, she smacked me first.”

“Did you protect, Laura?”

“Laura and Laf.”

Rich smiled. “Then I’m grateful.”

“Like I said, Laura means the world to me, Sir. I would never let anything happen to her. I couldn’t live with myself if something did.”

“Will you always protect my daughter?”

“Of course. I care about her too much.”

“Then I’m happy.” She looked at Rich. They shared a brief smile.

“So how did you know Laura was gay?”

“I saw her kissing Chelsea a couple times, but I honestly didn’t think much of it. I also saw my daughter cry a lot over that girl. I knew it was more than a friendship. No one cries like that over a friend. But I’ve actually seen you guys kiss a couple of times.”

Carmilla stilled. “Does my family know?”

“No, Carmilla. I told you. It’s not my place to tell them anything.”

Carmilla nodded. Tommy refilled Rich’s mug.

“May I change the subject and ask you something?” He asked once Tommy left.

“Yes,” Carmilla said. She felt butterflies in her stomach.

“Do you know what happened around this time two years ago?”

“You lost your wife, Sir. Laura lost her mother.”

“Yes. Can you help me keep Laura happy? Distracted even. Last year was really hard as you can imagine and Laura missed about a month of school to be with her grandparents, but I can’t do that this year. She wouldn’t talk to her friends and she barely ate. I need help keeping her happy. Do you think you can help me with that?”

“I’ll do my best, Mr. Hollis.”

“I know you mean a lot to her, Carmilla. Honestly, I figured out you two were dating when Laura started smiling again. Her usual smile she had before her mother died. You bring out all the joy that has been hiding in her for so long. The moment I saw her bright smile returned, I knew someone was in her life that was making things better. And I can honestly say, I’m glad it’s you.”

Carmilla offered a shy smile. “Thank you, Sir.”

“I’m going to head out, now that I know you’re safe. You coming?”
“I’m going to hang out a little longer.”

“Not too late, I hope.”

“No, Sir.”

“Alright. Everything is going to be okay Carmilla and do me a small favor? Call Laura. She was the one who told me to look for you. She’s really worried.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Good night, Carmilla. Get home safe.”

“You too.”

She waited until Mr. Hollis left. She felt a little better about his words, but was still hesitant. She got up and said goodbye to Tommy, leaving her $5 on the counter for him. She opened her trunk and pulled out the whiskey that had been sitting there since the Christmas party. She couldn’t shake her memories. She couldn’t get the negative thoughts and the horrible images out of her head. She got in the driver side of her car and sat down with the bottle in her hand. She turned the heat on to warm up and looked at the bottle. She pulled her car to the darker side of the parking lot and opened the bottle. She took a huge swig and closed her eyes.

“Why did you smile at kissing a girl?”

“Because she was my everything and I loved her.”

Another smile, another shock.

“Did you feel sick when you kissed her?”

“I felt nervous.”

“Why?”

“Because homosexuality is a sin.”

“Correct. It is a sin. Do you want to spend your eternity in the pits of Hell?”

“I don’t think-” Another shock to her side. Longer than the last. Her own scream filling her mind.

She took another swig.

“I repeat do you want to spend your eternity in the pits of Hell?”

Carmilla took too long to reply. Another shock of electricity.

Another swig from the bottle.

“Again! Do you?”

“No!” She cried.

Another shock. Feeling it lasting longer than the last.

Another swig.
“Again!”

Another shock. The longest one yet.

“Remember this when you think of committing a filthy and disgusting act. This will be punishment from here on out.”

Another swig. Screams filled Carmilla’s mind and she opened her eyes. A cold sweat had taken over her body as she cried. She felt the whiskey course through her body. I’m going to hell. I should have avoided temptation. I’m supposed to like boys. I like boys. I like boys. I like boys. I have to avoid temptation. God please forgive me. I’ve been bad. I’ll avoid temptation. Please save me. Just make the pain go away! I’m sorry.

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Carmilla awoke with a jerk. She didn’t know when she fell asleep. She checked the car’s clock. It was now 8:30. She could feel the whiskey in her system and knew she couldn’t drive. She picked up her phone and listened to it ring until finally,

“Carmilla?”

“Laura,” she cried.

“Where are you, Sweetness?”

“The diner you took me to.”

“Can you drive?”

“No.”

“Are you okay?”

“No, Laura. I’m drunk.”

What?”

“Please come get me.”

Carmilla heard shuffling on the phone and a door closed.

“Go inside, Carm and get some water. I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

A car door closed and she could hear Laura starting her Jeep.

“Don’t bring your dad.”

"I won’t, Baby. He’s went back to work anyways to fill out some paperwork he forgot to do. Just go inside and get some water. Okay?"

“Okay, Laura.”

“Okay. I’ll be there as soon as I can. I’m already on my way. Get some water, Baby.”

Carmilla nodded her head and hung up her phone. She thanked her lucky stars at the bottle of water in her bookbag and started to chug it. She held her breath while drinking, taking gasps after she
swallowed. She closed her eyes again and felt dizzy. She drank some more water.

“Shit,” she mumbled to herself before laughing a little. “I’m so fucked,” she groaned.

Her body felt warm, a little too warm. She knew what was coming next and got out of her car, leaving the door open as she ran to small patch of woods next to the diner. She got down on all fours and threw up.

She was gasping and spitting before she felt more bile rise. She leaned forward when she heard a car come into the parking lot.

“I’ve got you, Baby.”

Laura.

Laura pulled back Carmilla’s hair as she vomited some more. She spat and took deep breaths. Laura was soothing her by rubbing her back.

“Better?” Laura asked.

Carmilla nodded her head. She took a few more deep breaths before she sat on the ground.

“I’m sorry, Laura.”

“Don’t be sorry. I’m just glad you’re okay and safe.”

Carmilla hummed, letting Laura rub her back as she waited for her body to respond.

“Where’s the bottle of whiskey, Carm?”

“In my car.”

Laura retrieved the bottle and threw it in the dumpsters nearby.

“That was really stupid, Carmilla,” she said.

“I know. I’m sorry. I just keep having flashbacks and the pain is so present. What am I going to do?”

“Carm, you’re not going to like this answer, but I think you need to tell your dad.”

Carmilla’s eyes widen as she comprehended Laura’s words. She looked over her shoulder at Laura. “Are you serious? So I can get sent back?!”

“No, Carm. That’s not what I mean.”

Carmilla stood up and walked to her car.

“I just mean that he needs to know. He needs to know what your mom did to you.”

“Mother got me help!” Carmilla spated.

“It wasn’t help, Carm. They burned your skin and made you do terrible things. Don’t you think your dad deserves to know what happened?”

“I’m supposed to avoid temptation. I wasn’t supposed to get caught and I did.”

“Carmilla. My dad tracked you down and came to you. I know he told you he was okay with it. I
know he told you he wouldn’t tell your parents. You have to believe him!”

Carmilla sunk down next to her car. “I want to,” she whispered. “I want to be okay. I want to feel okay.”

“You are okay! I mean not right now because you decided to drink away the pain, but you’re fine. We’re fine. We can be happy together in my house. Isn’t that what you want?”

_It’s all I’ve ever wanted._

“I want you, Cupcake. I only want you.”

Laura knelt in front of Carmilla and lifted her chin. “And you have me, Baby. I’m right here. I’m not going anywhere.”

Carmilla nodded. Laura sat down beside her and grabbed her hand. She gave it a small squeeze. Their original sign for comfort coming back. Carmilla laid her head on Laura’s shoulder.

“Is it really going to be okay?” Carmilla asked. Her voice was small, almost childlike.

“I mean we won’t be able to have sex at my house,” Laura paused. Carmilla laughed. “But yes, Carm, everything is going to be okay.”

Carmilla nodded her head and kissed Laura’s neck.

“I’m sleepy, Laura.”

“I know, Baby, but we got to get you home. It will be your curfew soon.”

“I thought it already passed.”

“Nope. You still have about two hours. I know I shouldn’t be asking this, but do you think you can drive? I don’t want to leave your car here or explain to your parents why I had to drive you home. And I would say stay the night at my house, but we kind of killed that one.”

“I just need to wait a little bit. I want to make sure my stomach is settled.”

“Okay. Can we at least sit inside your car? It’s freezing out here.”

“Yeah.”

Carmilla slowly stood up and put a hand out to Laura. She grabbed her hand and pulled herself up. Carmilla tugged Laura into a hug, which Laura reciprocated.

“It’s going to be okay, Carm. Your parents aren’t going to find out. I’m still shocked my dad accepted me, but he has.”

“He told Tommy that he was my girlfriend’s father.”

“Who’s Tommy?”

“The waiter.”

“Oh, right. He wouldn’t have said that if he was ashamed of us, Sweetness.”

“I know, Cupcake. I just need time before I truly believe he won’t tell my parents.”
They stayed hugging for a while, warming each other from their body heat before they got inside of Carmilla’s car.

“So much better,” Laura said, holding her fingers in front of the vents.

“Definitely.”

Laura held out the water bottle and Carmilla graciously took it. She drank it slower this time as the dizziness started to dissipate. They sat there, hand in hand in a comfortable silence. After a few minutes, Carmilla exhaled.

“Okay. I think I’m ready.”

“I’m going to follow behind you. If you feel sick or dizzy or anything not right, pull over. Okay?”

“Okay. I’m really sorry, Laura.”

“Don’t be. Just drive slow and I’ll be behind you the whole way.”

Laura kissed Carmilla’s cheek and made a face. “Do you have gum?”

“Yeah, in my bag.”

“Chew it, Baby. I love you, but your breath smells like whiskey and vomit.”

“Gross,” Carmilla mumbled.

“Yeah,” Laura agreed.

Carmilla waited until Laura was back in her car before she slowly and carefully backed out of the space. She drove home a lot slower than she needed to, but it was for her and Laura’s benefit. Luckily she felt better, even though she was white knuckling the steering wheel and sitting as straight as she could. The water bottle was now empty, but she was hoping the gum would cover the smell.

She was pulling into her driveway a lot earlier than expected. Earlier than she’d like. She looked at the clock. She luckily still had twenty minutes before she had to be inside. She walked over to Laura’s car and got in the backseat.

“Join me?” Carmilla asked.

Laura shut off her car before climbing over the center console and into the backseat. Carmilla immediately grabbed Laura’s hand and squeezed it. Laura snuggled up to Carmilla’s side.

“What a day,” Carmilla started. “I thought we would just get together, open our Christmas presents, snuggle, maybe make out and/or then maybe have sex, have some dinner and then I would have gone home.”

“I pretty much thought the same.”

Laura laid her head on Carmilla’s shoulder. Carmilla adjusted herself so she could wrap her arm around Laura’s shoulders before resting her head on top of Laura’s.

“Can I really trust your dad?” Carmilla asked.
“Of course you can, Carm. I promise he isn't going to say anything.”

“Can we just stay like this a little longer?”

“Please,” Laura whispered into the night.

After a few moments of silence, Carmilla smiled.

“How's the smell?” She asked, looking down at Laura.

“A lot better. I think it was mostly coming from your breath.”

Carmilla hummed her acknowledgment to Laura.

“By the way, I won't have my phone or laptop for the next two weeks,” Laura said.

“Why?” Carmilla asked.

“I'm grounded and that is my punishment.”

“Damn.”

“Well I'm not going to remind him. Usually if I don't flaunt it in front of his face, he forgets.”

“Are you still going to be allowed to go to Perry’s for New Year's Eve?”

“Oh yeah. Don't worry, Sweetness. He wouldn't let me miss that. It's been happening since we were little.”

“Since we were little? Cupcake, you're still little,” Carmilla teased.

“Yeah because you're so much taller than me.” Laura nudged Carmilla in the ribs. They laughed.

“Besides, you wouldn't like it if I was as tall as Danny,” Laura added.

“Well that is definitely true. Xena is too tall for me.”

Laura kissed Carmilla's cheek. Carmilla smiled, but it was quickly replaced with a pout.

“We'll be okay, Carm. I promise.”

“Will you still kiss me at midnight?” Carmilla asked.

“Who else would I kiss?”

Carmilla leaned in, but Laura put up her hand. “I'm sorry, Carm, but I’m not kissing a girl who was throwing up an hour ago.”

Carmilla sat back. “I honestly can’t blame you for that, but I better head inside.”

“Okay, Sweetness. Everything is going to be fine, okay?”

“If you say so, Cupcake.”

Carmilla and Laura got out of the car. Laura made her way back to the front seat as Carmilla made her way to her door.

“Hey, Carm?”
Carmilla turned around and headed back to Laura. Laura gave a kiss on the cheek.

“I love you.”

Carmilla smiled. “I love you too, Cupcake.”

Laura gave her another kiss on the cheek. Carmilla made her way to her house. Her heart was beating fast. What if he lied? What if he told them? What if that is the last time I see Laura? What if I lose her? She paused outside the door knowing Laura was waiting for her to go inside before driving away. She gave a small wave before she opened the door as quietly as she could. Her hand trembling. She took her boots off and tried to make it up the stairs before anyone realized she was home.

“Carmilla?” she heard her mother call from the living room.

Her heart started beating faster. “Yeah?” she managed to get out. Her voice was hoarse.

“Come in here, for a moment.”

She stilled. She walked slowly. She could only hear her heartbeat in her ears, the blood rushing and pumping through her body. She entered the living room. Her eyes were wide, and she couldn’t stop trembling. She could tell Lilita was talking to her, but couldn’t make it out.

“What?” Carmilla finally asked. Regular sound filling her ears again.

“The paint, Dear. For your bathroom.”

He didn’t tell her. Mr. Hollis didn’t tell her. I’m not going back.

“What about it?” Carmilla asked.

“Well William liked this light blue color, but I prefer a more neutral color like white or a light gray. What’s your opinion?”

“Gray sounds good to me, Mother.”

“Good to hear. Are you alright? You look a little sick.”

“I’m actually just hungry Mother. Laura and I watched a movie. Time kind of slipped by.”

“Oh, well,” Lilita got off the couch, throwing the different color palates on the coffee table. “Let’s get you something to eat. What do you feel like?”

“Just a sandwich. I can make it,” Carmilla offered.

“Nonsense, Dear. Grilled cheese?” Lilita asked, over her shoulder, pulling the bread out of the bread holder.

“Please, Mother.”

Lilita got cheese from the fridge before she spoke.

“Did you enjoy your time with Laura?” she asked, curiously. Carmilla started to get nervous.

“Very much so.”
“Well I’m glad to see you’re better and able to control your emotions. I’m also glad you’re able to just be friends with her.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Hey, Kid. How’s Laura?” Henry asked, grabbing a piece of cheese.

“She’s good, Dad.”

“Did you have a good time?”

“Yeah.”

“Good. You okay? You look a little pale. Well paler than usual.”

“Ha ha, Dad. Just hungry.”

“And here you go,” Lilita said, putting the grilled cheese on a plate.

“Thanks, Mother.”

“Of course, Dear.”

Lilita exited the kitchen and went back to the living room. Henry eyed Carmilla for a moment.

“You sure you’re okay?” Henry asked again.

Carmilla took a bite out of her sandwich. “Yeah. Just tired.”

“Okay. Finish that up and get some sleep.” Carmilla nodded. Henry kissed her head and hugged her from behind, wrapping his arms around the front of her shoulders, gripping tightly.

“I love you, Kid.”

Carmilla smiled. “Love you too, Old Man.”

Once Henry left the kitchen, Carmilla threw her grilled cheese away. She knew it was wrong to be wasteful, but she couldn’t eat anymore of it. She went upstairs and took a shower. She wanted to wash as much of the day off of her as she could. She brushed her teeth and got into bed. She sent Laura a quick goodnight text.

She curled up with one of her pillows, wishing it was Laura. She held the guitar pick from her necklace in her hand as she fell asleep. Hoping tomorrow is a better day.

Chapter End Notes

Let’s give it up for Kristin, yet again! Helping me get this story out to you today.
New Year's Eve

Chapter Summary

A fluffy chapter for my readers. You know what that means... Angst is on its way! Enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had been five days since Laura and Carmilla had communicated. Carmilla assumed Mr. Hollis followed through with the whole no technology punishment for Laura. She had tried to text and call Laura with no reply. It seemed Laura was under house arrest. Carmilla managed to calm her nerves about her parents finding out what happened that night. For all she knew, the Karnstein’s hadn’t even heard from the Hollises. There were a couple of times that Carmilla was called downstairs with a stern tone from her mother. It always made her heart skip a beat and her stomach twist with butterflies. But she would get downstairs and told to wash her dishes or join the family in some sort of activity.

However, tonight was different and she felt like her life was getting back to normal. It was New Year’s Eve and she couldn’t wait to wrap Laura in her arms and hold her. Since this was a New Year’s party, she wanted to make sure she looked good for Laura. She went with black jeans and a black button down. She managed to find a gold skinny tie from Will, along with some black suspenders. She knew she would have to wait until she was in her car to finalize her outfit. Lilita wouldn’t approve of her masculine attire. Carmilla had just finished getting ready when she heard her name being called from downstairs.

She grabbed the last few items before she opened her bedroom door.

“Looking good, Kitty,” Will said as he exited his room. He was in jeans and a burgundy sweater which was over a white button down.

“I could say the same to you, Kid. Are you going to give Eric a little kiss tonight?” Carmilla teasingly asked, smacking her lips together to emphasize a kissing sound.

Will rolled his eyes, but smiled. “It’s a possibility.”

“Alright, Bro.”

Carmilla punched Will’s arm lightly. She paused and looked at her fist.

“You've got to stop hanging out with-,” Will started saying.

“I've got to stop hanging out with Kirsch,” Carmilla interrupted and agreed.

They both laughed. Carmilla swung her arm over her brother’s shoulders and they made their way down the stairs together.

“I’m sorry, these are not my children?” Henry asked.
Carmilla rolled her eyes.

“Lilita, don’t you remember when they would fight and scream at each other?”

“Well it was usually when Carmilla didn’t get her way or William would touch her,” Lilita said.

“He was gross when he was little. He had cooties,” Carmilla said.

“Um, no. I believe you were the one who had cooties,” Will said, lightly punching her in the arm as payback. Lilita huffed and changed the subject.

“William, you look so handsome,” Lilita paused, looking at Carmilla. “And Carmilla, no dress tonight?”

“Mother, it’s a party.”

“That’s why you have party dresses.”

“Please, Mother.”

Henry stepped in. “Carmilla, it’s fine. Are we ready to go?”

“We?” Carmilla and Will asked in unison.

“Yes. We’re going to the Perry’s for New Years.”

“Yeah, that’s where Will and I are going,” Carmilla said, trying to now stuff the tie and suspenders in her back pockets.

“No. That’s where all of us are going. It’s for the church families. Are we ready?” Henry asked again.

Carmilla couldn’t help the sinking feeling in her stomach. She thought she was going to have the night alone with Laura. Now that she knew Mr. Hollis was going to be there, she knew he would watch them like a hawk and make sure they weren’t alone. Carmilla looked to Will. He had the same solemn expression.

Will and Carmilla put their coats on and walked out to the car. They both knew their parents would be at least another ten minutes. They always acted like they were ready, but Lilita always found something to clean before they left.

“So much for having my first kiss tonight,” Will muttered, kicking a rock down the pathway.

“I feel ya,” Carmilla added, opening the door and sitting in the backseat.

“Hey, are you and Laura doing alright? I noticed you haven’t talked in awhile,” Will said as he sat next to Carmilla in the backseat of the car.

Carmilla looked to the front door. It was still opened, which meant her parents were still inside.

“She’s grounded,” Carmilla said, matter of factly.

“What did she do?”

Carmilla couldn’t help, but smirk. She knew Kirsch and Lafontaine heard what happened when they were trying to help Laura track her down. “More like who she was doing at the time.” Carmilla
winked.

“What?”

“Mr. Hollis walked in on us, uh, doing it.”

“Holy shit!”

Carmilla’s eyes went wide and she looked at Will. “William Karnstein, did you just swear?” Carmilla asked.

He covered his mouth, eyes also going wide.

“Well, well, well. I’m glad I’m finally rubbing off on you. One more step and I will never have to listen to Christian rock music, ever again.”

“Don’t hold your breath, Kitty. But wait, Laura’s dad saw you guys… getting busy?”

“Yeah.”

“Carmilla! Do you realize the danger?”

“Relax, Will. He said he wouldn’t tell Mother. I basically asked him not to.”

“And what if he does?”

“I guess I’ll be sent back. But it’s been a week and he hasn’t said anything so I think everything is okay.”

“I won’t let her send you back,” Will said, his hands balled into fists.

“It’ll take a huge fight to get me to go back. Trust me.”

Carmilla saw Henry and Lilita close the house door. “Now shut it. Parentals are coming.”

The car ride was silent and only took about fifteen minutes to get to the Perry’s residence. They walked up the small stone walkway when Perry opened the door.

“Hello Pastor Karnstein, Mrs. Karnstein,” she said. Perry was wearing a gold dress. Her hair was pulled back with a black ribbon. Lilita took note of Perry’s attire right away.

“I love your dress, Perry,” Lilita said, smiling brightly.

“Oh thank you so much, Mrs. Karnstein. Please come in. Everyone is gathered right through there in the living room,” Perry said, pointing towards the back of the house.

Carmilla was taking off her coat, when Perry nudged her. “Upstairs, my room.”

“What?”


Carmilla smiled. “Thanks Perry.”

Carmilla waited until she saw her parents making their way to the living room. She ran up the stairs and into Perry’s bedroom. Laura was sitting there, looking out of the window. She was in a black cocktail dress, Carmilla’s bracelet the only jewelry visible. Her heart skipped a beat as she felt her
necklace resting against her skin, under her shirt. So they wouldn’t be disturbed, Carmilla quietly closed the door.

“I don’t think you have ever looked so beautiful,” Carmilla said.

Laura jumped at the sound of her voice, but smiled when she realized who was speaking. It took her all of two seconds before she crossed the room and into Carmilla’s arms.

“I missed you, Laura,” Carmilla said, breathing in the scent that calmed her more than anything.

“I missed you too,” Laura said, wrapping her arms tightly around Carmilla’s shoulders.

Carmilla pulled away just enough to kiss Laura. The response was immediate. Carmilla missed the way Laura’s mouth felt against hers. She knew it had only been five days, but it had felt like five years. All her worriedness washed away in that moment. She only needed Laura.

Laura pulled back and smiled.

“You look very handsome, Carm.”

“Well I was going to wear a tie and suspenders, but you failed to mention our families also come to this party.”

“Did I forget that detail?”

“Uh huh. You did.”

“Maybe I did because we always have our own private party in Perry’s basement.”

“Really?” Carmilla was intrigued.

“Of course. We'll go downstairs, hang out with our families for a while. Then we'll all gather in a circle, talk about something good that happened in the year and then we'll be free to go to the basement. Perry always manages to hide a bottle of champagne. So around 11:45, we’ll pop the bottle quietly, pour a small glass for everyone to ring in the new year.” Laura smiled, her arms still wrapped around Carmilla’s shoulders as they swayed a little back and forth to the music only they could hear.

“So I still get to kiss you at midnight?”

“I wouldn’t miss that for the world.” Carmilla smiled, as she leaned her head forward to capture Laura’s lips once again.

They were interrupted by small knock on the door. The door creaked open.

“Exactly where I expected to find you,” Mr. Hollis said.

“Daddy. Don’t.”

“I believe I set rules about being alone with my daughter, Carmilla.”

Carmilla straightened her back. “You did, Sir, but technically you said I couldn't be alone with her at your house.”

Laura smiled. “That is true. You didn't say anything about other people's houses.”

Laura smiled at Carmilla.

“Alright, Lovebirds. Let's go downstairs before everyone starts wondering where you two are. Also, before I get uncomfortable with being a good dad in keeping this secret for you two and start to tell awkward stories.”

Laura kissed Carmilla one more time.

“Laura,” Rich said, giving her the “act appropriately” gaze.


They left the room and Rich put his arm on Carmilla's shoulder to stop her from following Laura down the stairs.

“How you doing, Carmilla?”

“Better, Sir.”

“Just keep her happy, alright?”

Carmilla smiled as Laura came back up the stairs to see why they weren't behind her. “Of course, Sir.”

Carmilla followed Laura into the kitchen where it seemed all her friends were.

“Whoa, looking good, Carm-sexy!” Kirsch gave her a cheeky smile when she realize her and Kirsch were wearing almost the exact same thing.

“Not so bad yourself, Beefcake.”

Perry interrupted by handing Carmilla a red cup. Carmilla gave her a weird look, believing it to be alcohol.

“It's Coke,” Perry said.

Carmilla nodded as she felt Laura shift very close to her.

“I have some whiskey, if you want it,” Theo whispered.

Carmilla shook her head. The memory of her alcohol binge in the diner parking lot was all too real. The thought of whiskey made her stomach feel sour.

“Suit yourself,” Theo said, turning his back to pour more of the flask’s contents into his and Kirsch’s cup. They all stood around chatting. Carmilla couldn't help but notice every time Mr. Hollis would glance at her and Laura. It made her feel uncomfortable, but Laura always managed to sneak her hand into Carmilla's and give it a light, comforting squeeze. Laura clearly didn’t notice or didn’t care that her father’s eyes were watching them constantly.

Soon they were all gathering in the living room.

“Okay, everyone. Now is the time when we gather around to share. Pastor Karnstein and family, every New Year's Eve we go around and expressed something wonderful God has blessed us with this past year,” Mrs. Perry expressed. Perry has definitely gotten her mother's expressions and
beauty. The same curly red hair hung over her shoulders.

Carmilla smiled before she realized she would also have to talk. She was a little uncomfortable. She knew her friends, but barely knew other members of the church. That included their parents. She might pass them and say hi, but they didn't really know her. They actually didn't really know any of their own kids come to think of it.

“Pastor Karstein, would you mind starting us off?” Mrs. Perry asked.

“Not at all,” He said, placing his cup on his lap.

Henry expressed how grateful he was to start at a new church and a new town. He babbled on for a little bit about God showing him the path. Carmilla barely paid attention. Laura was too close to her for anything else to matter. All she could focus on was the heat from her body. They were sitting next to each other on the floor. Laura’s pinky randomly running over different parts of Carmilla when no one was paying attention.

From Henry, the chat went around. Kirsch said he was happy that God was on his side when it came to his shoulder. It hadn't bothered him on the football field at all this season.

Perry mentioned how happy she was for her friends new and old, giving Carmilla a warm smile.

Lafontaine rambled on about some discovery she had made in one of their science classes. They also got a laugh when they said they were happy they managed to go a year without losing their eyebrows.

Will said how happy he was to make the football team and thanked God for his golden toe. He still hadn't missed a single field goal and was one of the reasons the team was doing so well.

“Okay, Laura. Looks like it's your turn,” Henry said, giving her a big smile.

“Oh. Okay. Things I was blessed with in 2015.” She tucked a piece of hair behind her ear and smiled. “Well I think we all know this was a hard year for me and Dad, but I guess the best part of this year was making new friends.” She smiled at Carmilla as well and Carmilla couldn't help but smile back. Then she realized it was her turn.

Carmilla nervously cleared her throat. She never enjoyed speaking in front of people. “Uh, I guess moving and being able to meet all of you. Also finally finding a group of people who understand me and love me no matter what.” She felt awkward and could feel Lilita’s disapproval from the other side of the living room. Lilita hated when her children stuttered and mumbled over their words. She also was probably going to get in trouble for not mentioning God.

Carmilla was grateful that the next person started speaking. The pressure finally gone. She could feel Laura's eyes on her, but she looked up at her mother eyeing her curiously so she turned her focus back to the people speaking.

Lilita was the last one to speak. She sat up straight and smiled. “This year I'm so happy that God reached into my husband’s heart, telling him where he needed to be.” Carmilla started to tune her mother out as she looked around the group. She never cared for her mother's speeches about what God told her and showed her. Especially after Lilita forced her to go to that camp.

Once Lilita was finished speaking, Mrs. Perry stood up. “Well we are happy to have you all in our home. Lola why don't you show your friends to the basement for your New Years party.”

Every teen stood up and followed Perry. Carmilla noticed Will still sitting on the couch.
“Come on, Baby Bro. She means us!”

Will pardoned himself, like Lilith had taught them before following Carmilla and the rest downstairs. Once they were out of ear's reach, William turned to Carmilla.

“Do you think it would be a bad idea to try my New Year's Eve kiss with Eric?” He asked, eyeing her with hopeful eyes.

“I'm kissing, Laura. We'll be in the basement. Just find a darker corner and you'll be fine.”

“Thanks, Kitty.”

Carmilla made her way to the rather large basement. It had olive green walls and brown furniture. She found Laura sitting on the couch and joined her. Laura curled into Carmilla’s side, warming each other up.

“I don't think I can go another week without you by my side,” Carmilla said, holding Laura’s hand in hers.

“I know. I honestly didn't think my dad would follow through with this.”

“How far did he take the punishment?”

“Well he took my phone and my laptop. I can watch TV when he’s at work, but I’m not allowed to leave the house, unless we’re together. I think he's going to take that whole ‘don't enter the house when I’m not there thing’ very seriously, Carm. Which sucks.”

“Yeah it does suck,” Carmilla agreed.

They sat in silence for a while, just enjoying the fact that they could be together. Their thumbs brushing against each other’s hands. Light kisses to each other when they felt no one was watching. They seemed to be so wrapped up in each other that they didn’t notice the time passing. The only thing that mattered to Carmilla in that basement was Laura.

Perry started playing some music from the sound system she had. She was walking around with a tray of brownies. She approached Laura and Carmilla, who were still snuggled up together on the couch. Carmilla's arm was around Laura’s shoulders, holding her as close as she could. Laura’s head was resting on Carmilla’s shoulder, with her arm wrapped around Carmilla’s waist.

“Care for a brownie?” Perry asked, holding the tray in front of them.

“Anything in them?” Carmilla asked, grabbing one.

“Oh you know, sugar, chocolate, fudge, water, and my special ingredient.” Perry smiled.

“Perry, how did you manage to make these with your parents home?”

“They went out for like two hours and as soon as they were gone, I started baking.”

“You're amazing,” Carmilla said, taking a bite.

“They’re not as strong as they usually are, but I figured, it’s hard enough to get alcohol down here when my parents are home, so might as well have some sort of a party favor.”

“Just make sure to give half of one to Will if he wants one. I can't deal with my brother being high because I'll get in trouble for it, and then we’ll all get in trouble for it.”
“How about I just give a batch of regular ones like I already did?” Perry asked.

“And this is why you’re amazing.” Carmilla smiled.

“Enjoy you two. Oh and I know it’s been awhile since you two were together, but my parents will come down and check on us on occasion so put a little space in between you two.”

They scooted, but only about an inch. Perry exhaled and walked away.

“Will you dance with me, Carm?” Laura asked.

“Is it safe with her parents coming downstairs?”

“It’s okay, Sweetness. They tend to make a lot of noise because they always think we’re playing dumb games like ‘Spin the Bottle’ or ‘7 Minutes in Heaven’ so we’ll know they’re coming downstairs before they even open the door. Perry is just always paranoid. It’s why sometimes we like to tease her by calling her ‘Perrynoid.’”

“Okay, Baby. If you say so,” Carmilla said, standing up. She held her hand up for Laura. The song was slow, so Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders, smiling up at the only person that mattered.

Carmilla placed her hands on Laura’s hips as they swayed to the music.

“I really did miss you, Carm. It was so weird not being able to even say ‘hi’ to you. I actually tried to get my phone once, while my dad was at work, only to find out when he got home that he had it in his pocket.”

“I tried to text you a couple times, hoping, maybe you’d be able to see them at least. So you knew I was thinking about you.”

“Nothing inappropriate, I hope.”

“No, Cupcake. Just things like I miss you and I wish I could talk to you. That sort of thing.”

“So nothing about my body or my mouth?” Laura teased, stepping closer to Carmilla so their bodies were together.

“I mean I missed those aspects too, but after you didn’t reply to my ‘heys’ and ‘I miss you’s’, I assumed your dad had your phone.”

Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla when the door slammed opened. Almost everyone let go of whoever they were dancing with.

“How’s everything going down here?” Mr. Perry asked.

“We’re fine, Dad.”

“Alright. Let us know if you need anything.” And with that he slammed the door closed.

“I told you,” Laura said, pulling Carmilla to a darker corner of the room, behind a shelf of books.

“How many girls have you taken to the corner, Laura?” Carmilla asked, keeping Laura as close to her as possible.

“Honestly, a couple, but nothing compares to just having you here with me.”
“I’ll take that as a weird compliment.” Carmilla leaned down so she could kiss Laura. They kissed for a few more minutes before the door slammed opened again. It was Mrs. Perry this time checking on the party, and after everything seemed to be in order, Carmilla went back to kissing Laura. After a moment of kissing, Carmilla’s hormones got the best of her.

“Fuck, Cupcake. Is there a bathroom down here?”

“No, Sweetness. It’s only upstairs.”

“Damn.”

“Well, Carm, if you have to go,” Laura paused.

“No, Baby. It’s been a week and I know that’s crazy, but if I keep kissing you like this, I’m just going to want you more and more.”

“Oh, so you wanna have a private moment,” Laura smirked.

“Stop teasing me, Laura.”

“Okay. Okay. One more peck and we’ll take a step back.”

Carmilla smiled and gave her a quick peck before they left the dark corner to join the rest of the party. Little did they know, there was only 30 minutes left until the New Year. Perry was handing the champagne bottle to Kirsch.

“Now, Kirsch remember. You have to be quiet while opening it.”

“Relax, Perry. Geez. I can handle it. I’ve done it since we started this tradition.” He managed to open the first bottle with ease. Perry poured a little into everyone’s cups, while Kirsch continued with the second bottle. It seemed to be a little more difficult when it made a loud pop.

“Shhh,” Perry said. She was sure the door was going to slam open at any given minute. Carmilla felt a tap on her back and saw Will standing there.

“Can I talk to you for a moment?” He asked.

“Of course, Will.”

Laura noticed and walked away. Carmilla brought him over to the darker corner.

“This is the perfect place, by the way.”

“For?” Will asked.

“Your special first kiss with Mr. Hottie over there.”

“Oh,” Will said. He looked down at his feet, clearly defeated.

“What’s up, Will.”

“About that. Apparently he’s got his eye on Mel for that. I guess I just read things wrong.”

“Damn, Will. I’m sorry.”

“Yeah. It’s whatever, I guess.”
“Have you talked to Kirsch or Theo about this? They might know a guy or something.”

“I really don’t want to talk to them about it, if I’m being honest.”

“That’s okay too. You can talk to me or Laura.”

“I think I’m just going to go back upstairs,” Will said, pointing towards the stairs.

“What? Why?” Carmilla asked, grabbing his arm to stop him.

“Well if I can’t kiss the person I wanted to, what difference does it make? I’ll just get my kiss on the cheek from Mother like I do every year.”

“Will. Come on. So you misread the signs with Eric. It happens and at least you didn’t embarrass yourself by just going for it. You know?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Ah, come on. Hang out with Laura and me. I promise we won’t be all coupley and gross.”

“Oh please. You two haven’t gone a full week without seeing each other and you’re acting like it has been years.”

“Well, we’ll try.” Carmilla waited for Will to respond. When he didn’t, she wrapped his arm around his shoulders.

“Come on, Little Bro.”

“Fine, Kitty, but I’m still sad.”

“Sad is always okay. Just don’t let it take over.”

They walked back over to Laura. “Hey, Will.”

“Hey, Laura.”

“Is everything okay?” Laura whispered in Carmilla’s ear.

“Yeah. The person he wanted to kiss decided they wanted to kiss someone else,” Carmilla whispered back.

“Who did he want to kiss?”

Carmilla nodded his head in the direction of Eric. Laura looked and then smiled back at Will and Carmilla.

“Apparently Mel is more his type,” Will said. They both looked at him. “Yeah, I can hear you both. You’re not actually whispering and I’m standing right here.”

“Well, you never know, Will. Mel could be a cover up or maybe he hasn’t come to terms with his sexuality.”

“Or maybe he’s straight,” Will added.

“Or that, Negative Nancy,” Carmilla said.

“Can I please just go upstairs?” Will pleaded.
“No. I’m not going to let my brother be the loser by going and getting a kiss on the cheek from Mommy.”

“5 minutes!” Perry practically shouted.

“Fine,” Will said. He left and went to sit on the couch.

“Damn. He was looking forward to that,” Carmilla said.

“I’m sure Kirsch would give him a kiss or Theo.”

“That’s the thing, Cupcake. I don’t know if he’s gay or what. I think he just has a crush on Eric. I don’t even know if he knows.”

“Well, we could talk to Eric and-”

“He would be so mad at me if I did that. Let’s just let it go. He’ll come around. We were taught not to sulk,” Carmilla said, pulling Laura into her embrace.

“3 minutes!” Perry shouted. She turned on the TV so they could watch the ball drop.

“Miss the city?” Laura asked.

“Not anymore,” Carmilla said, smiling at Laura.

“Why’s that?”

“Because in the city I was a loner. I had no friends last year and I was miserable. Now I’m here and I have friends. Besides there’s one thing this town has that the city will never have.”

“And what’s that?”

“It doesn’t have Laura Hollis.”

Laura smiled. “That’s cheesiest thing you ever said.”

“You love it.”

“Yeah, I do.”

“1 minute!” Perry shrieked.

It made Carmilla jump.

“Geez, does she always scream like that.”

“She just likes everyone to know.”

“It keeps making me jump.”

“It’s okay, Carm. I’ve got you.” They stood there in front of each other, both hand in hand. Carmilla brought their foreheads together.

“Here we go!” Perry shouted again.

In unison, everyone started to countdown from 10. Carmilla lifted her head and looked at her brother one last time, watching as Eric got closer to him on the couch with each second and Mel was
standing in the corner with SJ, Elsie, Natalie and Danny.

“5! 4! 3! 2! 1! Happy New Year!” They all yelled.

Carmilla looked down to Laura, who just stared at her.

“Happy New Year, Cupcake.”

“Happy New Year, Sweetness.”

They smiled before leaning in to kiss each other. It was short, but sweet with a few pecks afterwards. They pulled away, while Kirsch was trying to sing “Auld Lang Syne”. They shared a brief laugh as people started to gather to dance to the traditional song. Carmilla glanced at her brother.

“Well, it looks like his dream came true after all,” Carmilla said.

Laura looked to see Will and Eric dancing together.

“In all honesty, that could be one of the cutest things I’ve seen,” Carmilla added, twirling Laura out and then back in.

“Someone got new dance moves,” Laura noted.

“I was bored in my room because my girlfriend was grounded. So I entertained myself with some dancing techniques. Will might have helped.”

“Well I like it.”

“Oh, do you?”

Laura hummed as Carmilla captured her lips in another kiss. The door slammed open again, causing everyone to jump. Everyone slowly started to leave, one by one. Carmilla knew her parents would be one of the last ones to go. They thought it was more courteous to stay and help clean. The only people left in the basement were Laura and Carmilla. Perry was in the process of saying goodbye to Lafontaine.

“Should we go upstairs?” Carmilla asked.

“Umm, not yet,” Laura said.

They were sitting together on the couch. The television playing nothing in the background. Carmilla felt Laura shift and the next thing she knew Laura was straddling her.

“We could entertain with other things.”

“While my parents are upstairs? And the only thing keeping them blocked from us is one door and some stairs? I rather not, Cupcake.”

“Oh come on. Just a quickie,” Laura said, kissing Carmilla’s neck.

“Laura, I don’t want to have a ‘quickie’. If we’re going to do that, I want it to be nice and slow.”

“So you can tease me?”

“It’s a bonus contribution.”
“Will you at least kiss me before my dad realizes we’re alone and comes down here to separate us?”

Instead of answering, Carmilla cups Laura’s cheeks, bringing her in to kiss her. Laura smiles against Carmilla’s lips, as she kisses her back. The door bangs open again and Laura jumps off of Carmilla as soon as possible.

“Carmilla?” It was Henry.

He came down the stairs, noticing the two girls sitting apart of the couch. He could tell he just interrupted something.

“Uh, Will is upstairs and we’re all ready to go. You ready?”

“Sure thing, Dad.”

Carmilla got up and Laura followed. Henry left the doorway and Carmilla paused. “I guess I’ll see you Sunday at church.”

“Yeah, Sweetness, I’ll be there.”

“Happy New Year, Baby.”

“Happy New Year, Carm.”

They kissed one more time before making their way up the stairs.

She said her thanks to Perry and her parents and made sure to say goodnight to Mr. Hollis before she followed her family out to the car. Henry backed out of the driveway and Carmilla only had Laura on her mind.

“Good party downstairs?” Henry asked.

“Definitely,” Will said.

“Yeah, it was great,” Carmilla added.

“How was the party upstairs?” Will asked.

“It was interesting. The Perry’s are quite a unique family,” Lilita said.

“What does that mean?” Carmilla asked.

“They’re just a little strange, and they are very particular.”

“I think Perry is great,” Carmilla argued.


They pulled into their driveway a few moments later. “Kids, to bed,” Lilita said.

They made their way upstairs before Carmilla pulled Will into her room and shut her door.

“Oh man, Baby Bro! Well tell me what happened!”

Will had a huge smile on his face. “He told me he was just scared and that he was sorry.”

“And you wanted to go upstairs.”
“Whatever, Kitty.”

“How was it?” Carmilla asked, trying to egg Will to talk.

“How was what?”

“Uh, the kissing and the dancing.”

“Oh.” Will couldn’t take the smile off his face. “It was amazing!”

“Good! That makes me happy to hear!”

“Me too.”

“Alright Little Bro. I need beauty sleep.”

“Thanks for being there for me, Carmilla.”

“I told you, Will. I’m always here for you.”

“Good night.”

“Night, Will.”

He closed her door. She quickly got into her pajamas and under the covers. She was just about to fall asleep, when she heard her phone buzzing. She reached over and saw it was Laura.

“Hey, Cupcake,” she mumbled into her phone.

There was radio silence on the other side. “Laura?” she asked again.

She heard a sniffle through the phone.

“Baby? Are you okay?”

All Carmilla could hear was crying on the other end. She sat up straight in her bed.

“Did your Dad go to work?” she asked, hoping to get an answer.

After a beat, Carmilla hear a soft ‘yes’ from her phone. She checked the time to see that it was two in the morning. She knew she’d get in a lot of trouble for this, but she got out of bed. She put on a pair of sweatpants and a hoodie.

“I’m coming back. I’ll text you when I get to your house.”

“Okay,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla opened her door as quietly as possible. The house was pitch black. She slowly made her way down the stairs as quietly as she could. She grabbed her boots and coat before silently opening the front door and closing it, hopefully without disturbing anyone. As soon as she was outside, she stepped into her boots and made her way to her car. Remembering that her engine has a loud purr, she quickly started walking to Laura’s house. It was only a 10 minute walk.

When she was on Laura’s street, Carmilla sent her a text. As if she had been waiting, Laura opened the door and started to make her way out. Carmilla ran up her front yard to meet her halfway.

“Are you okay?” Carmilla asked, cupping Laura’s cheeks.
“It’s the month, Carm. It’s the month when my mom died.”

“I know, Baby. I know. I’m so sorry, Laura.”

Laura laid her head against Carmilla’s chest and started to cry.

“Come on. Let’s go inside,” Carmilla said.

“But the rules, Carm. I can’t go this entire month without you. I need you.”

“I know, but it’s freezing. I’ll figure it out. As of right now, if he drives by, he won’t know I’m here. I didn’t drive.”

Laura nodded and lead Carmilla inside. They went straight upstairs to Laura’s room. They got under the covers and Laura clinged to Carmilla like her life depended on it.

“Do you wanna talk about it?” Carmilla asked, hoping the girl next to her would speak.

“No,” Laura whispered, burying herself further into Carmilla’s chest.

The house was silent, minus a few sniffles coming from Laura. Carmilla had thought Laura finally fell asleep before Laura moved to lay on her back. She huffed.

“I just feel numb, Carm. I don’t feel like myself anymore. I just wish she was here, you know? Why did she have to leave me? Why did she take that stupid call?”

“I don’t know, Baby. I don’t know. Come here, Sweetheart.” Carmilla pulled Laura back to her. She rubbed her hands up and down Laura’s back, holding her as best she could. She didn’t know what else to do for Laura, but just be there for her.

Eventually, Laura fell asleep. Her breathing evened out as Carmilla continued to rub up and down. She forced herself to stay awake. She managed to move and replace her place with a pillow. She looked at Laura’s alarm clock to see it was 4:00am. She slipped out of Laura’s room and went downstairs.

-------------------------------------------

Rich pulled into his driveway around 8am the next morning. He was exhausted after a night with friends, followed by a short shift thanks to people not showing up for the job. He got out of his car and made his way inside. What he wasn’t expecting was the TV to be on as he closed the door.

“Laura?” he called, but go no response.

As he made his way to the living room, he was surprised to see another house guest. He turned the television off and tried not to let his anger get the best of him. He shook Carmilla’s shoulder. She jolted awake and her eyes went wide.

“Carmilla, we had a deal.”

“Mr. Hollis. I’m so sorry. Laura called me last night and she wasn’t talking. I got scared so I came over.”

“My rule was that you could not be alone with Laura in this household if I was not home.”

“I know, Sir. I know. And I’m sorry I disrespected your wishes, but she as soon as I got here I realized it was about her mother. She cried for a couple hours, Sir. She needed someone, Mr. Hollis.
She called me.”

Rich exhaled and sat down in his chair.

“Okay. I’m going to let this slide. You slept on my couch without even a blanket.”

“I wasn’t sure what time you were going to come home, Sir. I thought I would stay awake until you got here so I could tell you, but I fell asleep.”

“It’s okay. How about we make Laura some pancakes, and I let you take them to her. It might cheer her up a little bit.”

“Sounds good to me, Sir.”

Rich got up and Carmilla was quick to follow. “Why do you always call me ‘sir’?” he asked.

“It was how I was raised, Sir.”

“Ah. Makes sense.”

After making pancakes, Carmilla made her way upstairs with a tray. It had two plates of pancakes, two cups of apple juice along with a couple movie choices for Laura. She went into her room and saw that she was still sound asleep. Carmilla sat the tray on her desk before walking over to Laura. She brushed some of Laura’s hair out of her face before lightly calling her name.

“Laura. Hey, Laura?”

Laura stirred, but kissed Carmilla’s hand instead.

“I have pancakes, Cupcake.”

Laura opened one eye. “Are we in trouble?”

Rich walked in as she asked that question. “No, you’re not in trouble.”

Laura sat up and looked at Rich. “I wish you would have called me, but I understand why you called Carmilla. So no, you’re not in trouble.”

“Thanks, Daddy.”

“You’re welcome, Honeybear. Now I’m exhausted. I’m going to take a little nap, but this door stays open. If I come out of my room and this door is closed-”

“I’m in trouble. Is it okay if Carmilla sits in bed with me?” Laura asked with hopeful eyes.

“Yes, just no funny business.”

“Deal.”

Carmilla brought the tray over to Laura’s bed.

“Which DVD do you want to watch?” Carmilla asked.

“I guess ‘Toy Story’ is fine. All the movies I watched growing up remind me of my mom.”

“Well we can watch something else if you want.”
“No, Carm. I like this movie. It’s at least funny.”

“Okay, Cupcake. Anything you want.”

Laura began to eat her pancakes. Carmilla put in the movie before making her way back to Laura’s bed. She made sure to sit on top of the covers so Mr. Hollis could see where her body was at all time. After their breakfast was consumed, Carmilla laid the tray beside the bed before pulling Laura to her.

“Just stay with me, Carm. That’s all I need.”

“I’m not going anywhere, Cupcake. I’m here.”

Chapter End Notes

Another round of applause for Kristin!!
The End of January

Chapter Summary

Alright guys, I'm not sure if I consider this chapter to be full sadness or angst. I'll let you decide.

WARNING: Mentions of vomiting are in this chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As the month of January continued on, Carmilla could tell Laura was just going through the motions. She would catch her spacing out during their English class together and lunch. Carmilla wanted to ask multiple times if Laura was okay, but Carmilla never pushed her. She was worried if she put too much emphasis on what happened, Laura would shut down for sure.

Carmilla managed to take Laura out to dinner a couple times and have her full attention. She was engaging and smiling her true smile. Carmilla came to learn Laura’s ‘distant and I'm not really here’ smile. It was usually shown at lunch or when they were around their friends. Laura was barely eating lunch by this point. When Carmilla would ask if she was going to eat something, Laura would nod and put food in her mouth, chew it and swallow. Then she would take another bite or two before Carmilla asked her if she was finished. Laura would shake her head no and eat a couple more bites. No emotion or anything. Like she thought, she was just going through the motions. Everyone was readjusting to school and there hadn't been a party since New Years, but Carmilla didn't mind. She just wanted to be there for Laura in any way she could.

-------------------------------------------

Carmilla and Will arrived at school 5 minutes before the first bell rang that following Wednesday. Laura really hadn’t been doing well. Carmilla believed that Laura was only eating when she was told to, which Carmilla constantly stayed on top of at lunch. She would sit there and stare out the window or nothing. It was only when Carmilla would say, “eat, Baby,” in her ear, that she would put some food in her mouth. It was heartbreaking for Carmilla.

Carmilla had overslept this morning, staying up late talking to Laura on the phone. Laura was upset so she stayed up and listened. Around 3am she heard Laura's deep breathing and managed to drift off herself. She was exhausted, but ran to her locker in hopes of catching Laura to give her a hug before class.

However, when Carmilla arrived to her locker, Laura wasn't there. She must be at her locker.

Carmilla quickly grabbed her stuff for English and Math before running to Laura's locker. When she arrived, the only person that was there was her enemy.

“Ah, the fool in love,” Mattie sneered.

“Yeah, Yeah, Mattie. We all know you’re jealous. Have you seen Laura?” Carmilla asked, honestly hoping she had.
“Of course not. Not today. Besides I have better things to do than watch for your girlfriend.”

“A simple ‘no’ would have sufficed,” Carmilla said as the bell rang.

She left Mattie and went to her class. She was sure Laura would be there. She walked in, smiling, only to see Laura’s chair empty. *Maybe she's late today.*

During the next hour, Carmilla sent Laura a few texts, but got no responses. She was starting to worry. She knew that Mr. Hollis had given Laura’s phone back to her a day after New Year’s. It was weird that Laura wasn’t responding. Carmilla didn't focus all through her English class. She watched the clock, waiting for the bell to ring. The class dragged and dragged as she stared at Laura’s chair, wishing she was there. She checked her phone constantly, with phantom vibrations in her pocket fooling her every chance it got.

When the bell rang, Carmilla made her way to where her friends usually are. It felt weird not having Laura’s warm body by her side. She checked her phone again. Nothing. Once she turned down the hall, she saw the three gingers, the two blondes (Betty and Elise) and Kirsch. They all watched her walk down the hallway.

“What are you doing here?” Kirsch asked suddenly with snark.

It caught Carmilla by surprise. “Going to school, you Goof. Why wouldn't I be here?”

“Bro, today's the day.”

“What?”

Carmilla was so confused. She just wanted to know where Laura was.

“What Kirsch is trying to say,” Perry started, “is today is the day Laura's mom died.”

And then it hit Carmilla like a ton of bricks. She should have known. She should have known that's why Laura isn't here and why she isn't answering any texts. Why the last couple of days, she felt like she had to force Laura to eat. Why her smile wasn’t present and she seemed so small when she curled into Carmilla’s side. Why she was up until 3am trying to console her through the phone. She should have know.

“Shit. I didn’t know the date, just that it was soon. Shit.” Carmilla paced around the hall and stopped. “Can you guys help me get out of here?” Carmilla asked.

“Carmilla, teachers watch the doors during the break,” Danny said.

“Well, help me. I can't leave Laura by herself.”

Kirsch stood up straight. “I know what to do. Danny isn't Coach watching the parking lot door?”

“I think so, why?”

“We'll distract him. Get his back towards the door. We're tall, so Carmilla can hide behind us or just casually walk down the hall.”

“My locker is by that entrance,” Carmilla said.

“Perfect.”

“Wait! What are we supposed to distract him with? We're on different teams,” Danny blatantly
stated.

“I actually have a couple plays I need to talk to him about. Just come with me for moral support.”

Danny rolled her eyes. It wasn't the best plan, but it's the only one Carmilla had. Their time was slowly running out.

“Please, Xen-, I mean Danny. Do it for Laura. Please.”

Danny exhaled. “Fine, for Laura, but you owe me.”

“Deal,” Carmilla said. Carmilla noticed Betty roll her eyes at Danny. Danny tried to kiss her cheek and say she’d be right back, but Betty stood there cold. *Yikes*, Carmilla thought.

Danny, Kirsch and Carmilla made their way to the hallway talking and laughing. They were possibly trying a little too hard to look nonchalant and like they weren’t about to break the rules.

“I gotta get something from my locker,” Carmilla announced sounding more forced than natural. *Who shouts out what they’re doing like stage directions?*

“Coach!” Kirsch yelled.

“Ah, Wilson. What can I help you with?”

“I've thought up of a few new plays. Can I run them by you?”

“Absolutely!”

They managed to get his back towards the door. Carmilla quietly closed her locker. She made eye contact with Danny who rolled her wrists and nodded her head towards the door to tell her to hurry up. Carmilla nodded. She quickly and quietly made it to the door. Coach Carr’s back was still facing her. Carmilla slowly pushed down on the rebar and was grateful the door was quiet when she pushed it open. She held the handle to the door in her hand and let it close quietly.

Just then the bell rang and she saw a couple teachers coming in from the parking lot. *Shit!* Carmilla thought.

She ran behind the corner of the school and hid as best she could. She watched them go in before practically sprinting to her car. The only good thing was there was no guard watching who came in and came out of the parking lot. She started her car, backed up and slammed the gas to get to Laura's as soon as possible.

At a stop light, she checked her phone only to see Laura still hadn't texted her. She kept driving anyway. She knew Laura would be up by now. When she pulled up into the driveway, she noticed Mr. Hollis was home. She wasn't going to let that stop her.

Carmilla walked up to the door and knocked lightly. The door opened and Rich eyed her curiously.

“Why aren't you at school, Carmilla?”

“Uh, I was told today was the day, Sir.”

“Yes, but you should be at school.”

“Has she eaten today, Sir?”
“No. She's sitting on the couch, but I think you should go.”

“Why? I'm here for her, Sir. Just like you asked. I can't let her be by herself. Not today.”

Just then there was a shuffle behind the door and Carmilla was sure it was Laura coming to her rescue. To convince Rich it was okay. She wasn't expecting to see, “Dad?”

“Carmilla. Why aren't you in school?”

“Because everyone told me today was the day Laura's mom died. Why are you here?”

“I'm counseling her. Giving her someone to talk to,” Henry said. “Even if today is a rough day for Laura, that isn’t a reason for you to ditch school.”

“Please, Dad. She needs me.”

“Carmilla, I’m going to write you a note that you will take back to school with you. Take it to the office and get back to your classes.”

“Dad, please,” Carmilla practically shouted. “I’m asking for one day here. Trust me, Laura needs me. She’s my, uh, she’s my best friend and I won’t leave her to be by herself.”

“She isn’t by herself, Carmilla. I’m here and talking to her. Rich is here. She won’t be alone.”

“She isn’t eating.”

“I’m working on that. She just has to get some of the stuff inside of her out before we can move on to get her to eat,” Henry said, calmly.

“Please, Dad. Please. I’m asking for one day off. Please,” Carmilla pleaded.

Henry looked at Rich, who shrugged. There was another shuffle behind the door. “Carm?” Laura’s voice sound hollow and full of sadness. It was enough to break Carmilla’s heart in two. Carmilla pushed passed Rich and Henry. Laura was standing there, with a blanket wrapped around her. She was in her pajamas, hair up in a bun and looked tinier than she ever had before. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura, who started crying on her shoulder.

“I'm here, Cupcake. I'm here. I've got you.”

Laura continued to cry on her shoulder. Her face buried into the crook of Carmilla’s neck. Carmilla held her tighter as she felt the tears from Laura's eyes running down her neck. She kept whispering, “I’m here” and “I’ve got you” into Laura’s ear. After a moment, Carmilla took a step back to look down at Laura. Laura stayed as close to Carmilla as possible. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulders and walked with her to the living room. Carmilla sat down on the couch before Laura, who she expected to sit next to her, but instead, Laura laid her head in Carmilla’s lap. Carmilla ran her fingers through Laura’s hair.

“Carmilla?” Henry asked, walking back into the living room, followed by Mr. Hollis.

“Dad, please. I’m not trying to be disrespectful, but I’m not going back to school. I’m not leaving her,” Carmilla said.

“Okay, but you can’t just intrude on the Hollis’s door. Rich might have plans with Laura and-”

“It’s okay, Henry. I think Carmilla is exactly what Laura needs,” Rich said.
Carmilla looked down to see that Laura had fallen asleep. “She hasn’t been sleeping well. The fact that Carmilla has actually put her to sleep, is a good sign,” Rich added.

“Do you want me to stay?” Henry asked.

“I think it would be nice. Maybe we can take the girls out to our weekly lunch in a little while. But for right now, how about I offer you a cup of coffee and we talk in the kitchen?”

“Whatever you need, Rich.”

Carmilla watched her father and Mr. Hollis leave the living room and head towards the kitchen. Carmilla noticed that Mr. Hollis also seemed to be sad. His vibrant smile was small, but she was grateful for him. She just wanted to be close to Laura. She continuously rubbed her fingers through Laura’s hair as she slept. She didn’t want to be rude by turning on the television, so she read some articles on her phone and played a few games.

It was nearing noon and Carmilla felt a slight push on her shoulder.

“Hey, Kid. It’s time to get up.”

“Hm?”

Carmilla blinked her eyes a few times before her dad’s features settled in.

“You passed out,” Henry said.

She noticed Laura wasn’t laying in her lap anymore.

“Where’s Laura?”

“She went upstairs to get ready. We’re going to take you two to lunch with us. How does that sound?”

As if on cue, her stomach growled, loudly.

“That sounds good, Pops.” Carmilla smiled, patting her stomach.

“Good, Kid.”

Carmilla slowly stood up and stretched when Mr. Hollis entered the room.

“Carmilla, would you mind checking on Laura?”

“Sure thing, Mr. Hollis.”

He gave her a stern look to which she nodded. She knew that meant no funny business and her nod of the head was acknowledging that. She felt both of the men’s eyes on her as she went up the stairs slowly. Laura’s door was closed so she knocked.

“Yeah?” Laura asked, through the door.

“It’s me, Cupcake.”

“Come in.”

She walked into to see Laura sitting by her bed, legs bent at the knee. She was naked and crying.
“Hey. Hey, Baby,” Carmilla said. She grabbed the extra blanket from Laura’s bed and wrapped it around Laura, making sure she was fully covered. *She has to be freezing,* Carmilla thought.

“I’m sorry, Carm. I can’t stop.”

“Why are you apologizing, Laura? There is nothing to be sorry about.”

“I just miss her so much.”

“I know, Cupcake.”

“And I know your dad and my dad are trying to help, but I feel smothered. I just wish she was here. I wish none of this happened. I wish I could go back and change the past. If she was here and I was this sad, she would know what to do. She was the only one able to get me out of this funk.”

“Well, I think everyone wishes they could go back and change things. I know I do, but you can’t, unfortunately. We have to make mistakes and have losses to move forward and learn. I know you miss her, Cupcake, but would she want you to be this sad about her?”

“No, but she just knew how to get me out of it.”

“Can I try something?” Carmilla asked.

Laura sniffled. “Sure.”

Carmilla got up and went to Laura’s dresser. She looked through the top drawer before picking a pair of underwear that she liked followed by a bra. She then pulled out a t-shirt from Laura’s middle drawer and spotted a pair of jeans on her desk chair.

“First, let’s get you dressed, Cupcake.”

She held out her hand to help lift Laura up. She held out the underwear and Laura slipped them on followed by her bra.

“As much as I hate to see this beautiful image be covered up, I don’t want your Dad coming in here and seeing me with you naked… again.”

Laura gave her a small smile and she felt like that was victory enough. Laura didn’t like the shirt Carmilla had grabbed so she made her way over to the dresser, searching aimlessly for a shirt that she liked. Carmilla pulled out her phone and went to her music. She turned her music all the way up and clicked play.

A light bass and guitar with a littler percussion sounded, and Laura looked over to Carmilla, smiling a little wider.

Carmilla started singing the lyrics. “Listen Baby. Ain’t no mountain high, ain’t no valley low, ain’t no river wide enough, Baby.” She was doing a stupid little dance with hand motions while she continued to sing. Laura threw a shirt on and her smile grew as she watched Carmilla dance around and sing to her. Carmilla held out her hand which Laura gladly took right in time for the chorus. They started to dance around in each other’s arms as Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell’s voices filled Laura’s room. Laura was actually laughing and smiling as the song came to an end. They both jumped when the Distillers started to blare through her phone.

“Sorry, sorry. It’s like the one non-punk song I have on my iTunes.”
“'Ain’t No Mountain High Enough'? Really?”

“Hey, it’s a good song and I got you to smile, Cupcake.”

Laura smiled again. Carmilla pulled her back into her embrace.

“It won’t last long,” Laura said quietly.

“I know, but it’s a stepping stone. We’ll just take one step at a time,” Carmilla said while moving Laura around in another dance. “Okay?”

Laura nodded and held Carmilla closer to her. Carmilla could see the tears welling in her eyes.

“Okay, Cupcake. How about we let our dad’s take us to get some food?”

“I don’t really want to go out. I’m a mess and I can’t stop crying. It hits me at random times and-”

“Hey, I’m going to be there. If you need to cry, I’ll be right there. You can grip my hand or curl into me, but I’ll be there. Okay?”

Laura exhaled, a small tear trailing down her cheek. “Okay, but what about your dad?”

Carmilla wiped away Laura’s tear, speaking softly. “I don’t care today. All I care about is you. I’m here, Laura. And if you need me to step out with you or hold you or whatever, just ask and I’ll be there to help.”

Laura nodded. Carmilla wanted to kiss her, but knew it wasn’t the time. “Ready?” Carmilla asked, making her way towards the door with her hand out for Laura to take.

Laura grabbed her hand and pulled Carmilla back into her. She kissed Carmilla for a moment before stepping back to look at Carmilla in the eyes.

“I love you, Carm.”

“I love you too, Laura.”

With that, they walked downstairs, hand in hand. Carmilla really didn’t care today. If Henry saw them holding hands and asked about it, she would answer the questions later with some excuse about comfort.

“How do you girls feel about Chinese?” Henry asked, eyeing Carmilla and Laura’s hands together.

“Sounds good, Dad.”

“Well then, shall we?” Henry asked.

Carmilla helped Laura put on her coat and beanie, before putting her own coat and hat on. They followed Rich and Henry out the door. Carmilla never let go of Laura until they had to get in the car. She gave Laura a reassuring smile as Rich got into the car. Henry was getting into his own car.

“Are you hungry, Laura?” Rich asked, buckling his seatbelt.

Laura only nodded. She looked a little pale and Carmilla was worried.

Laura turned to look at Carmilla.

“It's okay. If you're not hungry when we get there, you don't have to eat,” Carmilla paused. “But that doesn't mean I won't try, okay?”

Laura nodded her head again.

“Come here, Laura.”

Laura scooted closer to Carmilla and rested her head on Carmilla's shoulder. Carmilla kept her hand on Laura's knee. She gave it a quick squeeze to show comfort.

After a few moments, they pulled into the Chinese food place. Henry was pulling into the spot beside Rich’s car. Once inside, Henry and Rich were greeted by the host with a smile on her face, as if they were old friends. Carmilla kept her hand in Laura's as the were shown to a table.

“These are your daughters?” The host asked.

“Yep, Carmilla is mine,” Henry said, pointing to Carmilla. She gave a small wave, clearly embarrassed.

“Oh, such a beautiful girl,” the host said.

“That she is,” Henry agreed. Carmilla bowed her head to have the attention be moved to someone else. At least it got Laura to laugh a little.

“And this one is mine. Her name is Laura,” Rich said.

“Two beautiful girls. What can I get you all to drink?”

“Water for me, thanks,” Henry said.

“Same,” Rich nodded his head.

“May I have a Coke please?” Carmilla asked. They waited for Laura, who was glancing at the table.

“Hey, Laura? Do you want a Coke?” Carmilla asked. Laura nodded her head.

“Two Cokes on this side,” Carmilla said, waving her hand between her and Laura.

“Very well! You can help yourself to the buffet.” The host left and the gentlemen of the table got up.


Laura looked up, her eyes brimming with tears. She exhaled. “Where’s the restroom, Dad?”

“Down that hall, Princess. You okay?”

Laura nodded before she quickly made her way down the hallway.

“Should I follow her?” Carmilla asked.

“No. Just give her a little space,” Rich said. He wrapped his arm around Carmilla as they headed towards the buffet, but let go to grab a plate.

“I'm sorry this happened to you two, Mr. Hollis,” Carmilla said before grabbing a plate.
“Me too, but each day we get stronger and we remember that God has a plan. I just like to think she's up there watching over Laura. God had a reason to take her and even if I don't understand why, I'll see her again someday.”

Carmilla smiled and felt her dad wrap his arm around her shoulders. Mr. Hollis started making his way down the buffet, wiping a tear from his eye. Carmilla looked up at her father.

“I love you, Dad.”

Henry smiled. “I love you too, Kid.” He kissed her head before making his way back to the table with a plate full of food. He always overdid it at buffets. Carmilla grabbed some lo mein, sweet and sour chicken, and some vegetables before making her way back to the table. She expected to see Laura, but she still wasn't there. It made her nervous.

“I'm gonna go check on Laura,” Carmilla said, putting her plate down.

“I'm sure she's fine, Carmilla. She just needs a minute. She'll be back. Pastor? Would you like to say grace?” Rich asked, turning his attention away from Carmilla.

“Of course.”

They all lowered their heads while Henry said a quick prayer. Once it was over, Henry and Rich started to eat. Even though Carmilla was starving and the food smelled delicious, she couldn't shake the feeling something was wrong with Laura.

“I'm sorry. I have to check on Laura.” She got up from the table and made her way towards the bathroom. She opened the door to a small, but clean two stall bathroom.

“Laura?”

“Go away, Carm. Go eat.”

“Baby are you okay?”

“Yes. Please Carmilla. Leave me alone.”

“I can't go out there not knowing if you're okay.”

“I'm fine. Please Carmilla!”

Carmilla had never heard Laura be so short with her, not to mention stubborn. She knew Laura wasn't okay. She walked towards the door and opened it, but she didn't step out. She let it close and she stayed put. It was quiet for a moment before she heard Laura start to cry. It broke her heart, listening to Laura cry so desperately on the other side of the stall door.

She was about to leave to let Laura have some actual peace and alone time when she heard Laura throw up.

“Open the door, Laura.”

“I knew you didn't leave.”

She threw up again. “Please let me in, Baby. Let me hold you.”

Carmilla could hear Laura panting and spitting. She then heard the stall door click. Carmilla slowly pushed the door open and saw Laura on the floor, leaning against the toilet. She looked so frail and
small. She moved back to the toilet, and Carmilla was quick to hold Laura's hair back.

“Okay, Baby. I'm here. I'm here.”

Carmilla had to turn away, but tried to comfort Laura as best she could. She rubbed Laura's back.

“You have to calm down, Sweetheart. You're making yourself sick. It's going to be okay. I'm here.”

After a small amount of time had passed, Carmilla sat against the stall wall. Laura flushed the toilet and made her way over to Carmilla. Carmilla held her arms and legs open. Laura crawled and cradled herself in Carmilla's arm. Carmilla wrapped one arm around Laura's waist, while using her other hand to push the hair out of Laura's face.

“Baby, I know you're sad and you have every right to be. I only half understand what you're going through. When I lost my granddad a couple years ago, I was so sad, but I knew he didn't want me to act this way. He was the happiest man I knew. She doesn't want you to be like this, Cupcake. She wants you to be smiling and laughing. Your dad probably does too. And I know you rather be laughing then vomiting, Laura.”

Laura nodded, trying her hardest not to cry. Carmilla could feel her trembling against her body.

“Don't hold it in, Laura. Just let it go. Get it all out.”

Laura cried and cried. She doesn't think she's ever cried so much. Carmilla held her as tight as she could, until Laura's sobs subsided into whimpers. Then it was just heavy breathing. Carmilla pulled down some toilet paper so Laura could blow her nose.

“Why won't you let me push you away?” Laura asked, her voice small.

“Because it would take a lot more than you telling me you're fine and to leave you alone to get me to leave.”

Laura nodded. After another moment, Carmilla sighed.

“Do you think you can eat?”

Laura shook her head no.

“Is the smell too strong out there?”

Laura shook her head no.

“Well then how about we get off this floor and make our way out?”

Laura nodded. Laura scooted forward so Carmilla could get up.

“I feel weak, Carm.”

“It's because you need to eat something, Laura. Maybe we can find you some bread or just something light, like soup or toast.”

Laura was still on the floor so Carmilla squatted down. “Come on, Cupcake. I've got you.”

Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulder and helped her up. Laura held onto her stomach while they made their way out of the bathroom. Rich was there.

“Hey, Honey. You wanna go?” He asked, holding his arms out to Laura. She kissed Carmilla's
cheek before going into her father's embrace.

“Let's go home.”

“Is Carmilla coming?” Laura asked.

“Actually, why don't you spend sometime with your dad, Laura,” Carmilla said.

“It's okay if you want to come over,” Rich said.

“I think you guys should have some time to each other, but if you don't mind Mr. Hollis, maybe I could come over later? Check in on her?”

“Sounds good to me,” Rich said, smiling.

Laura moved away from her dad to hug Carmilla. Carmilla held her close and kissed her temple. “I'll see you later, Cupcake. I love you,” Carmilla whispered in her ear.

“I love you too,” Laura whispered back.

“And if you need me, I'm a call away. Okay?”

Laura nodded. Carmilla looked around for her dad. Henry walked up to them and wrapped his arm around Carmilla's shoulders.

“You ready, Kid?”

“Actually, I'm pretty hungry.”

Henry held up a to go bag. “I got everything you like.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

Henry and Rich walked out in front of the girls. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulders. Laura wrapped both arms around Carmilla's waist and leaned her body against Carmilla's. Carmilla kissed her temple before leaving the restaurant.

“Sorry for ruining your lunch, Carm.”

“Shush, Cupcake. You didn't ruin anything. I'll eat when I get home.”

Carmilla smiled down at her. She walked Laura over to Mr. Hollis's car. When she saw that the two men were talking, she leaned in to kiss Laura, who put her hand over her mouth.

“I wanna give you a goodbye kiss while our dads are distracted,” Carmilla whined.

“Carm, I was just throwing up in the bathroom.”

“One little peck isn't going to kill me.”

Laura shook her head no. Carmilla pouted.

“I do love you, though,” Laura said with a small smile.

“I love you too, Cupcake.” Carmilla leaned in and kissed her cheek. “Call me, if you need anything.”

Laura nodded and Carmilla shut the door for her.
Carmilla walked over to her dad as Henry and Rich were saying goodbye.

“Carmilla, why don't you come over around, 6, 6:30?”

“Sure thing, Mr. Hollis.”

“And I talked it over with your dad. Why don't you bring an overnight bag.”

Carmilla paused before she looked over to Rich. “Are you,” Carmilla’s voice was hoarse and she cleared it. “Are you sure, Mr. Hollis?”

“After the way she's been today, I know she needs someone to watch her. So, yes, I'm sure.”

“Okay, Mr. Hollis. I'll see you at 6 then. Is it alright if I leave my car there?”

“Of course.”

“Okay, then I'll see you soon,” Carmilla smiled.

Rich and Henry shook hands, and they went their separate ways.

Carmilla got into her dad’s car and it was silent for a moment. It made Carmilla uneasy wondering the millions of questions running through her father's head. He was pulling into the driveway before she knew it. She grabbed her takeout and went inside.

Carmilla was starving and went straight to the kitchen, grabbing a plate from the cupboard, followed by grabbing a Coke from the fridge. She dumped all the food products on to her plate and was happy to see Henry got all of her favorite things.

Henry entered the kitchen quietly. He grabbed a glass and filled it with water. The uneasy feeling welcomed itself back into Carmilla. She continued to eat, trying to ignore the sensation. Henry was the first to break the silence.

“Listen, Kid. I know you care about Laura, but you can't just leave school to come to her rescue or barge into other people's homes,” he said.

“I know,” Carmilla sighed.

“So why did you then?”

“Dad, everyone kept telling me how I'm the one that makes Laura happy and that I needed to keep her happy. I want her to be happy and I didn't want to leave her by herself. I was worried Mr. Hollis was going to go to work and leave her to deal with her emotions alone. I just wanted her to know that I was there for her. She’s been so weak lately, that I just wanted to be there for support.”

“And you don't think texting her throughout the day or calling her at lunch would have sufficed?”

“No, Dad. I don't. Besides I tried texting her and she didn't answer. When I met up with Kirsch and everyone at break, they told me today was the day she passed. My mind went blank and all I could think about was Laura and if she was okay. Since she wasn't answering me, I got scared. So they all managed to help me sneak out. I'm sorry I left school without permission, but I'm not sorry for wanting to take care of my gi-, my friend.”

Carmilla and Henry stared at each other for a moment. Henry exhaled.

“Carmilla, do you need to tell me something?”
Carmilla's heart started pounding. She tried to stay calm and collected. “Tell you something about what?”

Henry exhaled and leaned across the counter in front of her. He reached out a hand to hold Carmilla’s. He looked into her eyes and gave her a soft smile. It did nothing to calm Carmilla’s nerves.

“Do you need to tell me something about Laura.”

“Like what?” Carmilla played dumb. She wanted to buy herself some time in case things turned for the worst. She was never a good liar when she felt on the spot or under pressure. Her Christian guilt would eat her alive.

“Like if there is something going on between you two.” His eyes didn't falter. His soft features remained nice and calm.

“There's nothing going on between us, Dad. I'm straight, remember? I dated Kirsch for a while.”

“I know, Kid, but Laura's different. Isn't she?”

Carmilla could feel her hand starting to sweat and she pulled it away from her dad’s. *I can't stay quiet too long or he'll know. Think! Think!*

“She's my best friend, Dad. I worry about her. I just didn't want her to be alone. Can I finish eating my lunch now, please?”

Henry exhaled and smiled. “Sure thing, Kid.” He walked out of the kitchen and Carmilla watched as he turned to go into the living room. She continued to eat in silence, reflecting on the conversation she had just had with her father.

What she couldn't see was Henry on his phone. A text message open to Rich as he typed out, “My daughter is going to be hard one to break, but we're making progress.”

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Around 5:30, Carmilla started getting items together to go to Laura’s. She couldn't believe Mr. Hollis was allowing her to stay the night. She probably had to sleep on the couch or in the guest room, but that didn't bother her. She was just going to be there for Laura anyway.

She realized her backpack was still locked in her car, so she settled on using her old backpack that was bright turquoise. She loved it at the time, but hated it now. She placed everything in the bag and made her way downstairs.

“The old turquoise bookbag?” Henry asked.

“I left mine in my car,” Carmilla corrected.

“Ah. Well, you ready to go?”

“Yeah, I figured I could just walk over there.”

Carmilla couldn’t help, but feel a little uncomfortable after her words with her father earlier. She still felt nervous.

“I'll drive you, Kid. It’s freezing out.”
Carmilla put on her coat and walked outside. Henry was right. The temperature from earlier in the day had dropped significantly. Henry followed behind Carmilla. Within five minutes, they pulled up in front of Laura’s house. Carmilla could see Laura’s bedroom light was on, but she wasn’t sure if that was a good sign or not.

“Alright, Kid. Be on your best behavior.”

“I always am,” Carmilla said. “Thanks for letting me stay with her tonight.”

“Rich and I both agreed that we think it’s what she needs the most.”

“Alright, well I guess I’ll see you tomorrow,” Carmilla said, getting out of the car. She pulled her backpack off the floor and onto her back.

“Just remember, you do have to go to school tomorrow!” Henry said, sternly.

“I know, Dad. Don’t worry. I love you.”

“I love you too, Kid. Have fun, but not too much.”

Carmilla closed the door and made her way up the sidewalk. The turquoise bag stood out against her all black attire. She knocked on the door and waited. Laura opened the door, looking brighter than she did before.

“Hey, Carm.”

“Hey, Cupcake. How ya feeling?”

“A little better. I finally managed to eat something.”

“I’m glad to hear that, Baby.”

Laura stepped aside for Carmilla to step in. Carmilla quickly walked inside. She was freezing.

“Ah, Carmilla,” Rich said, coming out of the kitchen.

“Evening, Sir.” Carmilla noticed he was in uniform. “Are you working tonight?”

“Unfortunately, yes. They were polite enough to give me the day, but we’ve had some issues lately and they needed me on the night shift.”

“Oh. I’m sorry to hear that, Sir,” Carmilla said, making sure she kept a little distance between herself and Laura. She heard Laura sniffle and looked over to her. She had a tear falling down her cheek. Laura was usually nervous when her father went to work, so she couldn’t imagine how she felt now.

“But I figured we could have a nice meal before I have to go. How do you feel about zucchini, Carmilla?”

“Just zucchini, Sir?”

“No, no. Stuffed zucchini and rice.”

“It sounds delicious, Mr. Hollis.”

“Perfect because it’ll be ready in about 15 minutes. Why don’t you and Laura hang out and I’ll call when it’s ready.”
“Sounds good,” Carmilla smiled.

Mr. Hollis turned and headed back into the kitchen. She looked over at Laura who was quiet, but a little calmer.

“What would you like to do, Laura?”

Laura grabbed the strap of Carmilla’s backpack and pulled it down her shoulder. Even the lightest touch of Laura’s fingers against Carmilla’s arms made her feel the electricity between them.

“A turquoise bookbag?” Laura tried to joke.

“Put that on my list of things that make you smile. And yeah. I left mine in my car today, which is outside your house so I had to use my old one.”

“It’s hard to think that this Carmilla Karnstein would ever wear or use anything that had such a bright color to it.”

“I wasn’t always away at that camp,” Carmilla said.

Laura’s eyes widen. “I’m sorry, Carm. I didn’t mean to bring that up-”

“Laura, it’s okay. I used to wear a lot of bright colors before. I know it seems crazy, but after everything happened, I wanted to blend in. You know to ‘avoid temptation’, ” Carmilla said, using her finger quotes. “It’s all over, and now I just like red, black and purple. The things you like change and this hideous color had to go.”

Laura nodded. She grabbed Carmilla’s hand and dragged Carmilla to the couch in the living room. They sat down together. Laura took Carmilla’s arm and wrapped it around her shoulders. Some news channel was on, but Carmilla didn’t pay attention to it. She only cared about the girl who was secure and safe in her arms. After about twenty minutes, Henry popped his head into the living room.

“Dinner is ready, girls.”

Laura sat up and kissed Carmilla’s cheek. It made Carmilla smile. They got up and walked to the kitchen hand in hand.

“It’s nice to be able to do this openly,” Laura mumbled.

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“Hold your hand without worrying about my dad.”

Carmilla hadn’t really thought about it, but Laura always made her feel calm and in control. “It does feel nice. It feels normal.”

They gathered around the small kitchen table and Carmilla could feel her stomach growling. She didn’t finish her Chinese food earlier after her conversation with Henry.

“Everything smells delicious, Mr. Hollis.”

“This was Laura’s mother’s favorite meal. Laura and I agreed earlier we should eat it tonight.”

Laura gave a small smile when Carmilla looked at her and nodded her head.

“So the zucchini is stuffed with beef, I hope that’s okay,” Mr. Hollis added.
“That’s perfect, Sir.”

She filled her plate with rice before letting Mr. Hollis load her plate with the stuffed zucchini along with pieces of zucchini and onions. She could see why this was Mrs. Hollis’s favorite. It was one of the most amazing things she had ever tasted.

“This is amazing, Mr. Hollis. I can see why your wife loved it.”

“It was the only thing she claimed I could cook,” Mr. Hollis smiled.

“It is one of the only good things you can cook, Daddy,” Laura smiled.

“Hey. I’m not terrible. I’m still learning. Laura on the other hand is an amazing cook. Sometimes she makes me dinner after a long day on the job. I make sure to call her Chef Hollis when she does.”

“I didn’t know you could cook, Cupcake.”

“It’s a pastime. I always watched Mom cook so I guess she gave me her cooking abilities.”

“Will you cook for me sometime? I’d love to try whatever you make,” Carmilla asked.

Laura gave another small smile. “Sure.”

The rest of the dinner held small conversations through the three. Carmilla and Mr. Hollis were doing most of the talking, but Laura would put in her two cents here and there. After dinner, Carmilla offered to do the dishes.

“That’s not necessary, Carmilla,” Mr. Hollis said, picking her plate off the table.

“I really don’t mind, Sir,” Carmilla said, taking the plates out of Mr. Hollis’s hands and walking over to place them in the sink.

“Laura, would you mind starting the dishes? I need to talk to Carmilla.”

Laura nodded and Carmilla stood still. Why does he need to talk to me? What did I do?

“Carmilla, may I speak with you in the living room please?”

“Uh, sure.”

Carmilla followed Mr. Hollis out of the kitchen and into the living room. He sat down in his big recliner and motioned for Carmilla to sit on the couch. This felt too familiar and she started to get nervous. The only thing that kept her calm was this time Mr. Hollis didn’t look angry or upset, he looked calm and gentle. He looked up at Carmilla and smiled.

“The reason, I wanted you to stay with Laura tonight is because you are the only person I could think of who wouldn’t make her upset or angry. After watching you with her today, I knew you would only show her concern and compassion. The fact that you’ve gotten her to smile a few times makes me the happiest man in the world. I know that you care about her.”

“I do, Sir. I really do.”

“I’m putting a lot of faith in you tonight to stay here without me. I know my rules are set, but I don’t want to think about what would happen to Laura if I left her here by herself. I tried to convince her this morning to go to your house, so you two would have some kind of parental structure, but she didn’t want to even move an inch from her bed. I’m even surprised you managed to get her out of
her bed to get out of the house.”

“Why me, Sir? Why not Lafontaine or Perry?”

“She pushed them away first last year when they tried to take care of her. I believe she felt smothered by them. I think she wants to stay home so she’s somewhere familiar. Some place where her mother used to be.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Now, with all that said, I’m trusting you with her. I’m trusting you to stay in this house alone with my daughter after everything that has happened. I’m trusting you to take care of her. Please do not break this trust, like you did before. It’s okay for you two to stay together tonight in the same room, but no funny business. If I come home tomorrow morning and assume that something has happened, that will be it, Carmilla. You will be banned from this house and I won’t let you see Laura for a while other than school or church. Do you understand me?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Can I trust you?”

“Yes, Sir. You can.”

“Good. Now I’m going to say goodbye to Laura because I’m already late. She’ll probably be more distraught when I leave the house, so make sure-”

“Mr. Hollis, she’s safe with me. I’ll be here all night.”

He smiled. Carmilla got up and went back to the kitchen. She took the plate that Laura was aimlessly cleaning, lost in her own thoughts as she stared out the window, into the backyard. Feeling the plate move, brought Laura back into the moment.

“You okay?” Carmilla asked, threading a misplaced hair behind Laura’s ear.

“Yeah. I was just thinking about the games she and I used to play in the backyard when I was a kid.”

“You wanna talk about it?”

Laura shook her head.

“Okay. Well your dad is about to leave. He said he wanted to talk to you before he did.”

Laura nodded. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand and squeezed it. It made Laura smile, which was enough for her.

“Will you come with me?” Laura asked.

“I think you should go by yourself. I’ll be right here though, finishing these dishes.”

“You’re right,” Laura said, letting go of her hand.

Carmilla thought about listening, to be there immediately when Rich was done talking, but fought against it. Carmilla looked outside the small kitchen window. The sun had already set, leaving a cold clear sky above. She continued to wash the dishes, when she felt two arms circling her waist. She put the last dish on the dish rack.
“Hey, Baby,” she said before twisting so Laura was tucked in her side.

“Alright, girls. I’m on my way out. Remember, no funny business, no drugs, no sex, no alcohol. Just have a nice, boring night in. Okay?” He asked.

“Scouts honor,” Carmilla saluted him.

“There are snacks in the pantry. Carmilla I think you’re familiar with it,” he teased, causing Carmilla to smile.

“Be good.”

And with that, he was out the door. Laura moved to the front of Carmilla, keeping her arms firmly wrapped around Carmilla. Carmilla leaned back against the counter, holding Laura while resting her head on top of Laura’s head.

“He’ll be okay, Cupcake.”

“I know.”

They stayed there a few more minutes before Laura looked up at Carmilla. Tears stained her cheeks; Carmilla didn’t even know that she had been crying. She cupped Laura’s face and rubbed the tears away with her thumbs. She kissed her forehead as Laura exhaled, releasing her nerves.

“You wanna watch a movie?” Carmilla asked.

Laura nodded and let go. Carmilla figured they would go into the living room, but Laura pulled her up the stairs. They went into Laura’s room, and Laura grabbed her laptop. She sat down on her bed while Carmilla leaned on the door frame. Laura looked up at her, confused by the fact that she wasn’t next to her.

“I thought we’d watch it downstairs,” Carmilla mumbled.

“I don’t want to sit in the living room. There are pictures of my mom everywhere. I just want to be in my space.”

“Fair enough,” Carmilla said walking over to the bed. She paused when she noticed a picture on Laura’s bedside table, which she had never seen before. She picked it up and looked at. Smiling at the camera were Laura and her mother. Laura couldn’t have been no more than 10. Their hair was wet, but their smiles were bright.

“My dad took that on a really hot summer day when I was 8. Mom had the week off and we stayed inside most of the time. But the heat was too strong one day and the power went out. It was too miserable to sit inside the house, so my mom told me to put on my bathing suit. When I got outside, she had blown up this old kiddie pool we used to have and had it filled with water. Then she had the sprinkler out that would turn in all different ways and my dad managed to find my old Slip and Slide. We played around for hours in the backyard. I got really sunburnt, but that was always one of my favorite memories because we were all together and having fun. That’s actually one of my favorite pictures.”

Carmilla smiled. She looked at Laura and was happy to see she wasn’t crying. She actually looked a little peaceful.

“I don’t know why, but I’ve never told anyone about that day before. It was the middle of summer and everyone was away. By the time they got back, it wasn’t the most exciting thing to share.”
“Well I’m glad you told me, Cupcake.”

Carmilla laid down on Laura’s bed. Laura chose Disney’s “Robin Hood”.

“I know it’s stupid, but it was my mom’s favorite and-”

“It’s not stupid, Cupcake. We can watch whatever you want to watch.”

Laura nodded as the movie started to play. Laura placed her laptop at the end of her bed and slowly curled into Carmilla. She laid her head on Carmilla’s chest, while wrapping her left arm around Carmilla’s torso. Carmilla put her arm around Laura’s shoulders and rested her other hand on top of Laura’s arm that was wrapped around her, lightly stroking her thumb up and down. Carmilla was surprised that Laura didn’t cry or fall asleep. Her eyes stayed on the screen as the movie continued to play, while Carmilla’s eyes stayed on Laura. She looked at her arm, that was laid across her body. Laura’s hand as it started to slowly rub up and down her side. The back of her head, that is now more on body than before. She scratched Laura’s back, lightly. Laura hummed her approval and Carmilla couldn’t help the way it made her body feel. She loved being with Laura like this. When there is no one to bother them and they can just be alone and happy in solitude. However, she made a promise to Mr. Hollis not to do anything. After his warning, she didn’t want to risk doing anything that would ban her from his home. Laura looked up at her.

“Carm, you’re thinking so much, I can hear you over the movie.”

“Sorry, Cupcake.”

“What are you thinking about?”

“Just how much I like to be with you, alone, with no worries or cares.”

Laura sat up and straddled Carmilla’s hips. “Oh really?”

“Yes, but I promised your dad no funny business so don’t tempt me because I won’t be able to say no if you-,” Carmilla was cut off by her own moan. Laura was kissing her neck and she had missed the way it felt. They hadn’t been this intimate since Mr. Hollis caught them.

“Laura, stop. We can’t. Your dad was very clear about the rules. If he catches us, I won’t ever be able to see you. I don’t want that.”

“I know, but I just want to be distracted. I don’t want to think about anything.”

“I don’t know, Laura. I’m not sure it’s a good idea after everything that’s happened today.”

“Please, Carm.”

“I don’t know, Baby.”

Laura leaned in a kissed Carmilla. Laura started to grind her hips down on Carmilla’s. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hips to stop her.

“I don’t think it’s right, Laura. I don’t think you’re in the right mindset for this.”

“Carmilla, please. I just want to focus on one thing and if we’re being intimate, then I don’t have to worry about anything else except pleasuring you. Please, Sweetness.”

Carmilla paused and clinched her jaw. The look in Laura’s eyes was vulnerable, but wanting. Carmilla exhaled.
“Fine, but we stop if anything doesn’t feel right or if you start feeling upset.”

“Deal,” Laura said, kissing her neck. Carmilla could see the movie playing in the background and Laura looked back up to see Carmilla smirking.

“What?” Laura asked.

“So foxes really do it for you, do they?” Carmilla asked pointing towards the laptop.

“Ha ha, Carm. You’re so funny,” Laura’s tone was dripping with sarcasm, but Carmilla sat up straighter wrapping her arms around Laura’s hips. Laura had a bright smile on her face. Carmilla hadn’t seen that smile in what felt like weeks. She leaned forward, rubbing a finger over Laura’s lips before leaning in a kissing her.

-------------------------------------------

They laid together, tangled in Laura’s bed sheets. Their clothes still discarded on the floor and the bed. They were snuggled together, both aimlessly rubbing their hands over different parts of each other’s bodies: neck, hips, waists, breasts. They weren’t speaking, still catching their breath after their last round together. They shared sweet kisses, as they both relaxed into the sensations their bodies were still having. After a few more moments, Carmilla cleared her throat.

“We should probably get dressed for bed,” Carmilla said.

Laura nodded.

“Are you okay, Cupcake?”

“I’m fine, Carm.”

“Still sad?”

“Not as much as before. I miss her, but you were right.”

“Right about what?”

“She wouldn’t want me to be this sad. She would want me to be living my life and being happy. I just, I never felt happy once she was gone. I mean I was happy, but I didn’t feel full of joy like I used to. Well, until I met you.” Laura leaned on her arm, so she was looking down at Carmilla. “You just make me so happy, Carm.”

Carmilla smiled. “You make me happy too, Baby.”

They shared another brief kiss before Laura laid back down in the same position she was in before. Her head laid on Carmilla’s bare chest, as she listened to Carmilla’s heart beat. Her left arm wrapped around Carmilla’s torso, rubbing her thumb up and down. She was being soothed and for once that day, she didn’t feel like crying.

“We really should get dressed, Cupcake.”

“Just a little longer.”

“You know we’re going to fall asleep.”

Laura exhaled heavily. “Fine.” Laura sat up and swung her legs over the bed. Carmilla followed and sat right where Laura had been and pulled her back down into her lap. Laura giggled as Carmilla
leant down and kissed her.

“I love you, Laura.”

Laura’s smile was warm. “I love you, too.”

They had watched another Disney movie before turning in. They fell asleep rather quickly, limbs tangled together.

At some point in the night, Carmilla turned to feel the space next to her empty.

“Laura?” she mumbled out, but heard nothing.

She slowly opened her eyes to be surrounded by darkness. Her eyes adjusted and she noticed Laura wasn’t with her.

“Laura?” she said, a little louder.

She was only sleeping in a t-shirt and underwear. When she got out of the bed, the room was cold. She didn’t like the feeling of being alone in a house that wasn’t hers. She quickly put on her pants and went out into the hallway. She called Laura’s name again, but got no reply. She checked the different rooms located upstairs only to find more emptiness. She was starting to get nervous. She didn’t like this feeling. Where is she?

She made her way downstairs and was grateful she remembered where the lightswitch was in the foyer. Laura wasn’t in the living room nor the kitchen. She was about to go upstairs and get her phone when something moving outside caught her attention. She stood still, almost too scared to look, but then she saw honey brown hair moving around in the moonlight. She went and got her coat and boots before opening the patio door.

“Laura? What are you doing?”

“Looking at the stars,” Laura replied.

“You scared the crap out of me,” Carmilla whispered.

“Sorry. I just wanted to talk to her.”

“Your Mom?”

“Yeah. When it was nice outside, she and I would sometimes camp out here with Dad. They were always scared I would run off in the woods, so we’d camp back here. It was nice.”

“It sounds sweet, Cupcake, but it’s freezing and I don’t want you to get sick.”

“We went and visited her today. After lunch. She’s has a nice spot in the cemetery. She’s under a tree and gets a lot of shade. We brought her daisies because those were her favorites. It was nice, but hard.”

“I’m sure she loved the flowers, Laura,” Carmilla was shivering and her teeth were clattering. She was only in pajama pants afterall.

“I’m glad I did that with Dad. I think he needed it more than I did.”
Carmilla nodded in agreement. She wasn’t really sure if Laura needed words of comfort or just to get things off her chest.

“After that, we came home and I managed to eat a sandwich. I felt better, but when Dad left tonight, I got so scared. I’m still scared, Carm. What if he doesn’t come home?”

Carmilla left her spot in the door frame and made her way over to Laura. “Don’t talk like that. He’s going to come home and if he sees us out here in the middle of the night, he’ll probably be pissed.”

Laura laughed. “I think he would be more pissed if he saw what we were doing earlier.”

Carmilla hummed and made a thinking face. “I agree with you.”

They shared a brief kiss before Laura could feel Carmilla shivering against her.

“You’re missing our little girl becoming an adult. It’s scary and I wish you were here to help me with it. But she’s still the sweetest, most loving girl. I’m glad she got that characteristic from you, Sweetheart. I miss you everyday, but when Laura smiles at me, I see you in there and it pushes me a little forward each day.”

Rich drove in around 5 o’clock am. The night shift went longer than expected and he was happy to be home. The house was dark and a little cold. He walked over to the thermostat and raised it up a little. He was worried to see what state the girls would be in, but he was hoping that even if they were together, they would be sound asleep and decent.

He slowly opened Laura’s door to see Carmilla completely spread out. Her hands above her head and her legs bent at the knee, in the center of Laura’s bed. She was breathing heavy and her mouth was open. Laura was spread out next to her. Half of her body was hanging onto Carmilla, while she slept on her stomach.

Henry couldn’t help the small chuckle that came out of his mouth. He closed the door as quietly as he could, as he made his way to his bedroom. He pulled out a picture of his wife in uniform from his nightstand and smiled. He traced the outline of her face, trying not to tear up.

“Okay, let’s go inside you Big Baby,” Laura said, rubbing Carmilla’s arms.

“It’s freezing and my pants are thin,” Carmilla complained.

“Sure, sure, Baby.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes, but was happy to feel the warmth of the house as she stepped back in.

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Chapter End Notes

You know who my end notes go to, it’s Kristin! And if you haven’t, you should check out her fanfic. "Help Me Lose My Mind" by kwillow19.

And in other news, Kristin will be coming to visit me for this weekend! And trust me guys, this story would be nothing without her and would also be nothing without you guys! So I’m giving a big shout out to ALL my readers. Your comments, chats and
anons on tumblr, make me want to continue this story! Thank you guys so much!
Chapter Summary

This takes place literally the day after the last chapter. I hope you guys enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Carmilla shifted in her sleep onto her side to block out the sun that was creeping in through the window. She stretched her arms out in front of her before pulling a pillow up against her chest. She smacked her mouth open and closed a couple times before cuddling further into the pillows. She was half asleep and smiled at the strong smell of Laura. That’s when she remembered where she was. She reached her arm behind her to pull Laura close to her. After grasping at air, she rolled onto her back.

“Cupcake?” She asked with her eyes still closed. Her voice was raspy and full of sleep.

“Laur-?”

She was met with silence. She blinked her eyes opened and looked around the room. Her eyes were still focusing and they were blurry, but she knew Laura wasn't there. She sat up and shook her head, rubbing the sleepiness out of her eyes. She slowly got up and quietly walked down the small hallway. She knew Mr. Hollis would still be asleep after his late shift and didn’t want to disturb him.

Carmilla made her way to the bathroom. The door was ajar, and she lightly tapped on the door.

“Laura?” She whispered, slowly opening the door. The shower curtain was open and the room was empty.

She must be downstairs.

Carmilla quietly tiptoed back down the hallway and downstairs. The sun was still rising and the living room shined with a golden hue through the white curtains. Carmilla thought of all the different places Laura could be. She checked the couch to see if perhaps Laura had gotten up and went back to sleep there, but the couch laid bare. There was no pillow or blanket out of place. She made her way to the kitchen, thinking perhaps she was making herself breakfast. The room was cold and looked like it hadn’t been touched all morning. She was starting to worry now. Something didn’t feel right, but Carmilla remembered last night that Laura had gotten up and The backyard, she thought and ran to it. The green grass was wet with dew and nothing was disturbed.

Her nerves were settling in. She checked the front yard and driveway. Laura's Jeep was gone. “Fuck,” Carmilla whispered, running her hand through her hair. She closed the front door as quietly as possible before running back upstairs and into Laura's room. She checked her phone hoping Laura stepped out to get breakfast or something. She looked around for a note, but there was nothing.

She sent Laura a text message, hoping she would answer. A second later she heard Laura's phone. It was on her desk.

“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” Carmilla said.
Okay. Okay. Calm down. She might have just stepped out. Wait. I have to wait at least a few minutes before I bother Mr. Hollis. I would hate to wake him up and she’s walking through the door looking at me like I’m a crazy person.

Carmilla tried to hold off for fifteen minutes. Surely if Laura stepped out to get something, she would be back within in fifteen minutes. The grocery store and pharmacy were only a five minute drive away.

After five minutes, Carmilla couldn’t stand it anymore. She knew what she had to do, but hated disturbing people. However, she knew this was important. It was just weird that Laura wasn’t home and if the feeling in gut was telling her anything, something was wrong. She stood from Laura’s bed, gathering the courage to disturb the man who had worked all night. She slowly walked across the small hall to Mr. Hollis’s room. She knocked lightly at first and placed her ear to the door. She could hear him snoring on the other side. She banged a little hard.

“Mr. Hollis? Sir?”

She heard grumbling through the door and then heavy footsteps. She backed away from the door as he swung it open. He was standing there in a white t-shirt and boxers. Carmilla could feel her cheeks flush with embarrassment.

“Can I help you Carmilla?” He asked, groggily, running his hand over his five o’clock shadow.

“Uh, I’m sorry to wake you, uh, Sir, but I think something is wrong.”

“Wrong? Where's Laura?”

“That's the issue, Sir. I don't know where she is.”

“What?”

Carmilla's eyes were starting to tear. She couldn’t pretend not to be worried. “Her car isn't here and I don't know where she is.”

He quickly went back into his room. Carmilla stayed where she was. She could hear him shuffling around. He came back with a pair of jeans on and pushed past her. She followed.

“Have you tried to call her?”

“Her phones on her desk, Sir.”

“Okay. Let's not assume the worst yet.” Mr. Hollis paused at the end of the stairs. He turned around and faced Carmilla.

“She might have gone out to get some breakfast. She's done that before. How long has she been gone?”

“I don't know, Sir. I've only been up for about 20 minutes or so.”

Mr. Hollis looked at the small round clock on the wall. “Okay. It’s 7:05 now. Let's give it til 7:30. If she isn't back by then, that's when I'll start to worry. You should go upstairs and get ready for school.”

Carmilla's shoulders slumped down. He can't expect me to go to school when I don't know where my girlfriend is.
“Sir, with all due respect—”

“Carmilla don’t argue with me. I’m glad you were here for her yesterday, but you can’t miss another day of school. Your father would not allow it. I think you should get ready.”

This wasn’t her dad and she knew it would be disrespectful if she disobeyed him. Not to mention if her mother found out she disrespected a member of the church, she would be in huge trouble. She slowly made her way back up the stairs and went into Laura’s room, closing the door behind her.

“Where are you, Cupcake?” She said, speaking to no one, but the dark room.

She quickly put on her jeans and the extra shirt she had packed in her backpack. She looked through Laura’s room, just to see if she noticed something was missing. Her drawers were closed and the closet seem to have everything. She noticed Laura’s pair of brown boots were missing. Well at least she isn’t barefoot. It looked like Laura hadn’t taken anything with her, but her wallet and keys... She probably didn’t mean to leave her phone either. Shit. She made her way to the bathroom to brush her teeth and wash her face. She walked back into Laura’s room and grabbed her backpack before heading back down the stairs. It was almost 7:30 and Laura still wasn’t home.

She saw Mr. Hollis pacing in the living room on his phone. Hopefully calling the police department or at least someone to inform them that she’s missing.

She waited until he hung up the phone and then entered the living room. He looked at her and his face was paler than she remembered. He was clearly worried.

“Well, uh, let’s get you some breakfast.”

Carmilla shook her head. “I don’t think I could stomach it, Sir. I’m too nervous and worried.”

He nodded. “Understandable, even though I’m sure she’s fine. But does she have a test this week? Could she be at the school already, studying in the library?”

Carmilla shrugged. “It’s a little bit early to be going to library, isn’t it? Either way, I don’t think she has a test, but she could. She gets mad at me when I ask about her schedule. She’s says it’s not my job to stay on top of her schoolwork and she knows when her deadlines are.”

Mr. Hollis gave a small smile. “That’s definitely Laura.”

Carmilla returned with a weak smile. Her hands were on her hips and her nervousness would not subside.

“I think you should go to school, Carmilla. Give me your number and I’ll call you when she gets home or if I find out any information. Okay?”

Carmilla stood her ground and her jaw clenched. She wouldn’t be able to concentrate at school. She needs to find Laura.

“Besides, don’t you have to take Will to school?”

Shit.

“Yeah I do. You’ll call me if anything happens to her or if she comes home?”

“You’ll be the first on my list,” He said.

She wrote her number down on a piece of paper and picked up her bag. “Please, Mr. Hollis. Tell me
He placed his hands on her shoulders and lowered himself to Carmilla’s eye level. “She’s alright, Carmilla. She’s stubborn and tries too hard to be an adult sometimes, but I guarantee she's okay.”

Carmilla nodded and headed towards the door. “Thank you for letting me stay the night, Sir.”

He nodded. “Have a good day at school and try not to worry.”

Carmilla walked slowly until she heard Mr. Hollis shut the door. Then she quickly ran the rest of the way to her car and got in. She drove to her house and parked along the curb. She wasn’t going to waste time by going inside so she honked for Will. While she waited, she wrote up a quick note and signed her mother’s name. She had mastered her mother’s signature back in the city when she would skip a day or two of school with Elle.

Will came hopping out of the front door, smiling. Lilita was there, standing in the doorway. Carmilla smiled and waved to her mother. Once Will was in the car, she took off.

“I need you to do me a favor,” Carmilla said, her eyes scanning the road for Laura's Jeep.

“And what's that?”

She held up the note she had previously written. “Absolutely not,” Will said.

“Please?”

“No. Why would I turn that in so you get to have another day off with your girlfriend? It's not fair.”

“Look, Will, I woke up this morning and Laura wasn't there. I don't know where she is. And even though I know Mr. Hollis will be looking for her, I can't sit idly by, not knowing.”

“Wait. Laura’s missing?”

“Missing might be a strong word, but she isn’t home and her Jeep isn’t there. I need to search for her so I know she’s okay.”

“You do know, you're going to get in serious trouble if Mother or Dad finds out that you skipped school again,” Will argued.

“I'll take my chances. Please, Will.”

He exhaled and grabbed the note. “You owe me.”

“How about once I find Laura, I take you to dinner. We can double. You and Eric and me and Laura. I know a place we can go and not be stared at. Deal?”

“I think you can do better than that.”

“I don’t have any cash on me. Just do it, please!”

“I’m doing it. I already took the note!”

They were quiet for a moment. Will noticed the panicked look in Carmilla’s eyes. Carmilla was constantly scanning every car she saw. Her heart would skip a beat everytime she saw a Jeep, but it would falter when she realized it wasn’t Laura.
“Where do you think Laura is?” he asked, breaking the silence.

“I don’t know, but I have to find her.”

They pulled up to a red light. Carmilla pulled out her phone and sent a group text to Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Kirsch telling them to meet her in the back of the parking lot near the football field and that it was an emergency. A few cars honking brought her attention back to the road as she continued to drive.

Once they got to the high school, Carmilla drove Will through the drop off in the front of the school.

“Text me when you find her. I know she and I aren’t that close, but I want to know she’s safe.”

“I will and thanks for helping me play hooky.”

“Just come up with a better idea than a double date, and we’ll be good.” He paused for a moment, studying his sister. “She’s okay, Carmilla. You’ll find her.”

Carmilla gripped the steering wheel and nodded. Will got out of the car and made his way inside. Carmilla quickly made her way to the student parking lot. Before meeting the gang at the football field, she did a quick scan around the lot, hoping to see Laura’s car. Her heart was pounding. Laura was the only one to drive a deep green Jeep. It was nowhere to be found and she was tired of getting honked at by other students, even though she was flipping them off one at a time. She made her way back to the end of the lot. She could already see three of the four waiting. Kirsch, Lafontaine and Perry were huddled together next to Kirsch’s truck.

Carmilla pulled up in the parking space next to them. She killed the engine and hopped out.

“Hey Carm-sexy. What’s this big emergency?”

“Where’s Danny?” Carmilla asked.

“Not here yet,” Kirsch replied.

“We need Danny. The more eyes we have the better off we’ll be.”

“Carmilla, what’s going on?” Perry asked, concerned. Carmilla’s eyes were wide. She knew they could read the concern on her face.

“Laura’s missing.”

“What?” They all said in unison.

“Or at least I think she’s missing. I don’t know. I stayed with her all day yesterday and even spent the night. When I woke up, she was gone. I searched the house and noticed her Jeep was gone. Can you guys give me a list of places she might have gone?”

“Dude, does Mr. Hollis know?”

“Yeah, I woke him up this morning.”

“If Laura’s dad knows, he’ll have the cops out looking for her. She’s much safer that way,” Perry said, trying to console Carmilla.

“Look. I know the cops will be looking for her, but I need to know places she hangs out other than the mall. So could you just give me a list?”
“Fuck that,” Lafontaine spat. “If Laura is missing, I’m going to help you find her.”

“Me too, Bro. If the Little One is lost, then we need to find her.”

“Thanks guys, but you really don’t have to—”

“I know Laura better than anyone. The cops might be looking, but they don’t know her as well as we do. It’ll be best if we help,” Lafontaine offered.

Lafontaine and Kirsch stood beside Carmilla as they all looked at Perry with longing eyes.

“Oh alright, fine, but if I get in trouble, I’m blaming all of you,” Perry added, pointing a finger at each of them.

Looks like someone could use their own special brownie this morning, Carmilla thought.

Danny finally pulled up in the parking space next to Carmilla’s car.

“What’s going on?” She asked, stepping out of her car.

“Laura’s missing,” Carmilla stated.

Danny didn’t hesitate. “So what’s the plan then?” She asked.

“Okay, I’ve got it. Perry and I will go to the mall. Sometimes when she’s distraught, she’ll go shopping. They’re not open yet, but at least if her Jeep is there, we’ll find her,” Lafontaine said. She pointed to Carmilla. “You and Kirsch, go to the campground where we work during the summer. Carmilla follow Kirsch and he’ll be able to get you in. Check the arcade, swimming pools, recreation room, the skate park and even the oceanfront. It’s the only oceanfront Laura likes because not a lot of people are usually there. Once we’ve both scanned our locations, we’ll give each other a call.”

Carmilla and Kirsch nodded.

“And what about me?”

“Danny, I think you should stay here,” Lafontaine said.

“What? Are you kidding me? I’m better at spotting people because I can literally see over everyone,” Danny complained.

“Exactly,” Lafontaine continued. “If you stay here, you’ll be able to see her if she decided to come to school.”

“Her backpack was missing from her room and the foyer,” Carmilla added.


Betty came up and wrapped her arms around Danny’s waist. “Why are you all the way back here? I was looking for you?”

Danny’s jaw was clenched. “Laura’s missing,” she said.

Betty took a step back and looked at the group. “Where is she?”

“If we knew that, she wouldn’t be missing.” Danny’s replied, sarcastically.
“I don’t care for that tone, Danny Lawrence. I was just asking, not that it should be any of your concern where Laura is. We do have this thing called school that should be our focus.”

“Are you kidding me right now, Betty? She’s my friend and she’s missing. They want me to stay here instead of going out to help.”

“Danny, I don’t think Laura’s whereabouts are your concern. They should be and most likely are Carmilla’s. So let’s go inside and get to class before the bell rings. You can’t afford to make any more mistakes or coach will have your ass.”

They started bickering back and forth. Carmilla’s nerves were on edge. She didn’t have time for this. She needed to go find Laura.

“Alright, shut up!” Carmilla yelled, her hands clenched into fists. Everyone looked at her. “We don’t have time for the young and the restless right now, you two.” She pointed between Danny and Betty. Betty’s eyes were wide while Danny just rolled hers.

“Lafontaine and Perry, go to the mall and see if she’s there. Kirsch and I will make our way to the campground. Danny, just go inside and use that tall, gargantuan body of yours to search over the crowd of students. If she’s in there, text me immediately. No one leaves their spots until everywhere has been searched. Laf, I’ll wait to receive a text from you before Kirsch and I leave the campground, that way we can meet up somewhere and continue our search. Everyone know what they’re doing? Yes?”

Everyone nodded. “Great. If anyone finds her, you text me immediately. Danny, we’ll text you so you know what’s going on. Okay? Let’s head out.”

Perry and Lafontaine got into a car Carmilla wasn’t familiar with, but Lafontaine was driving. They must have gotten their license.

She got back into her car and followed Kirsch out of the parking lot.

Her eyes were still scanning the road for any sign of Laura’s Jeep.

They pulled into a large open entrance. On their right was a large building that had a huge canopy over a few car lanes, but Kirsch kept going forward to the left and Carmilla followed. Kirsch stopped and got out of his truck. Carmilla waited, tapping her thumb against the steering wheel. After a few moments, Kirsch walked up so Carmilla rolled down her window.

“He hasn’t seen her car, but he’s only been on duty for about thirty minutes. The overnight guy is already home. They have cameras, but it would take a lot for them to go through them and honestly, if Mr. Hollis thinks about it, he’ll have the police come and check those out.”

“So what does that mean?” Carmilla asked.

“It means we do what Lafontaine said and don’t act too suspicious. Put this sticker in front of your windshield.”

He held out a blue and silver sticker. “It’s a yearly pass. That way you can come and go at no cost throughout the year.”

Carmilla blinked at him. “Consider it a favor. Not to mention you can’t get in without so just follow me,” Kirsch said.

People were honking behind them now, so Kirsch quickly made his way back to his truck. Carmilla followed him inside. The security guard waved to her which she gave back. Before she knew it there were beach houses and RV’s parked everywhere. They passed a small laundromat and what looked like to be a grocery story. She continued to follow Kirsch down the small main street. They pulled up
in front of a large swimming pool. She stepped out of her car and the gust of wind that met her made her shiver. Kirsch offered her a thick coat from his truck, which she gladly took. She loved her leather jacket, but it couldn’t stand against that wind.

“Right. So I would say let’s split up, but I think you would get lost. So let’s hit up the arcade first. I can already tell she’s not by the pool.”

Carmilla looked through the white fence to see it was deserted. It was too cold to swim anyways. Carmilla followed Kirsch into the arcade. It was larger than Carmilla expected, but easy to look around. Every game was making it’s sound and it distracted Carmilla. She was just happy that the layout was simple, otherwise, she wouldn’t have been able to concentrate. They quickly made their way through the arcade. It was empty.

“Hey there, Kirsch,” an older woman said behind the prize counter. She had a thin face with blondish, white hair. She had a warm smile and wore a white polo with khakis.

“Hey, Karen.”

“Shouldn’t you be in school, Young Man?” She asked before laughing.

“Oh, yes ma’am, but didn’t feel like it today.”

“I never felt like it either. So what brings you to the old campground today?”

“Well I was just wondering if you had seen Laura?”

“No, no. She doesn’t work in the off season.”

“I know, but like have you seen her around today?”

“Nope. I haven’t seen anyone today. Is everything okay?”

“Yes, ma’am. Everything is great. I was just curious, but we gotta go. See ya later, Karen.”

Kirsch grabbed Carmilla and they exited through the side door.

“Sorry, I didn’t introduce you, but she is a talker. Great woman and I love working with her, but she’ll talk your ear off, if you’re not careful,” Kirsch said.

“No worries, Bro.”

They immediately entered the next building. It had a small counter in the front and Carmilla noticed the large recreation hall through the next doorway. There was a lot going on in this room. There were bookshelves and a whole wall full of brochures of attractions in the area.

“Yo, Kirsch!” A younger guy said. He was skinny with dark black hair and tan skin.

“Hey, Josh. How’s it going?”

“It’s good. Night classes tonight so I’m stuck here today. Who’s this?”

“Oh this is Carmilla.”

Carmilla gave him a weak smile, just wanting to find Laura. She gave Kirsch a pointed look.

“Uh, right. Have you seen Laura this morning?”
“Nope, but Holly was here earlier. She stepped out though to go to the main office, but feel free to look around.”

“Thanks.”

Carmilla nodded her exit and they walked into the recreation hall. The hall was large and opened. There wasn’t any way not to see Laura.

“So do you know everyone here?” Carmilla asked.

“Well I work at the pool with Danny. She and I were lifeguards over the summer. Lafontaine and Laura work at the arcade, and Perry works here with the children. So we’re usually all over the place with one another. So we know everyone in this area.”

“Oh. Makes sense.”

Kirsch went around the great hall checking restrooms, classrooms, a spare kitchen and even behind the large stage at the end of the hall before walking back to Carmilla.

“She’s not here, is she?” Carmilla asked, sounding defeated. She just wanted to know where Laura was. She wanted to find her.

“Let’s check the skatepark and the water front. Just to be sure,” Kirsch said while escorting her to a couple of doors that lead to the outside.

Carmilla nodded. Kirsch wrapped his arm around Carmilla as they made their way to the oceanfront. The skatepark was clear.

“I didn’t even know she skated,” Carmilla said, kicking a stone around.

“She hasn’t in a long time, but she used to. It was kind of a thing with her mom, I think.”

Carmilla nodded.

“She didn’t tell you that?”

“No. The only times she’s every specifically told me about her mom is how she taught her how to tie a tie and a couple of other things. She doesn’t like to talk about her, I guess.”

“I mean if my mom died, Bro, I wouldn’t either, but give her time. She was always a hard book to crack. Just be grateful she actually told you about her mom. That alone was a big step for her.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Come on. Let’s go check the beach. She always liked sitting there no matter what.”

They walked down the small boardwalk when the beach came into view.

“Whoa.” Carmilla said. The wind was strong, but there were a lot of waves crashing. Her eyes were wide as she took in the scene, along with the smell of sea salt and sand.

“Dude, you act like you’ve never seen the beach before.” Kirsch nudged her shoulder.

“I haven’t in years.”

“What? No. That’s crazy. There isn't a summer that goes by where I'm not at the beach at least three
“City kid, you Goof. I don’t like water.”

They looked around, but Laura wasn’t there. In fact, no one was there. It was way too cold and too windy to be standing near the waterfront.

“Come on, let’s go wait for Lafontaine’s call in my truck.”

Carmilla followed Kirsch. Her nerves were getting worse and she just wanted to find Laura. She realized the time. If she was at school, her break would be close to ending. It was roughly 10 o’clock. Since she still hadn’t heard from Lafontaine, so she took her phone out of her pocket and called Mr. Hollis.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Hollis? It’s Carmilla. Any news?”

“Not yet. Everyone is out looking for her. I’m sure she’s fine.”

“So you’re not worried then?”

“No. I am extremely worried, but she did this last year. I was just hoping with you here, she wouldn’t do it again this year.”

“Where did she go last year?”

“Nowhere, she just kept driving until she came back because she was low on gas. I’m hoping for that again. But get to class. Like I said, I’ll call with any news.”

“Okay.” Carmilla hung up her phone.

“No news?” Kirsch asked.

“Nope.”

They sat in silence until Carmilla’s phone buzzed again. It was Lafontaine. She hurriedly answered it only to find more disappointment. She wasn’t at the mall, inside or out. Carmilla turned her phone off.

“We’re meeting Laf and Perry at the McDonald’s near the mall.”

She didn’t wait for a reply from Kirsch. She got out of the truck and got into her car. She was angry now. She was angry because Laura was nowhere to be found. She was also angry at herself that she didn’t wake up whenever Laura got out of the bed. She could have stopped Laura from going, but no, she had to sleep through all of it. She was just mad. She blared the album “Diploid Love” at the loudest volume her ears could take it. She drove out of the campground and made her way to the McDonald’s near the mall. She was so frustrated. She just wanted Laura back.

Lafontaine and Perry were already waiting in the McDonald’s parking lot when Carmilla pulled in with Kirsch not too far behind her. Carmilla slammed her door shut when she got out of the car. She was still nervous and her stomach was bothering her, but knew she needed to eat something. They all went in and got in line. Carmilla got chicken nuggets and fries. Kirsch loaded up with a BigMac, a 6 piece McNugget and a large fry. Perry ordered a salad and Lafontaine also got nuggets. While they were waiting for their food, Carmilla informed Lafontaine and Perry about what Mr. Hollis had said
on the phone about her driving around last year. They gathered around a table.

They ate in silence. The only sound was paper moving or a box of dipping sauce being open. Carmilla couldn’t take the silence anymore.

“I can’t take it anymore. I need to know where she is,” Carmilla practically shouted.

“Look we just have to put our heads together. She has to be somewhere out there other than just driving,” Lafontaine added.

“What if something happened? I mean what if she got into an accident or something.”

“Carmilla. Her dad’s a cop, and everyone knows him. Trust us. He would know by now if something like that happened,” Kirsch said. He wrapped his arm around Carmilla’s shoulder and gave it a squeeze for comfort. Carmilla gave him a smile.

“I’m sorry. I just hate not knowing where she is.”

“We’re all worried Carmilla,” Perry added, placing a hand over Carmilla’s and patting it. “We just have to think. Danny texted me while we were at the mall, saying she didn’t see her at break and she wasn’t in the library. She said she would text again at lunch.”

“Okay. So she’s not at her job, or the mall or school. Where could she go?” Carmilla asked.

“We haven’t checked the cemetery yet,” Perry said.

“She went there yesterday with her dad,” Carmilla said.

“It doesn’t mean she couldn’t have gone again today by herself.”

“True. It’s the best lead we got. Should we all go?” Carmilla asked.

“Might as well. That way if she is there, she’ll know we’ve all been looking for her.”

They got up and threw their trash away. Carmilla just wanted to go anywhere to keep her mind distracted from the worse case scenario. She was hoping somehow her heart and brain would work together to tell her exactly where Laura was. She knew it didn’t work that way, but she just needed an answer.

“Do we know where the cemetery is?” Carmilla asked, holding the door for the rest of the group.

“It’s near the church, but we’ll take a backroad. That way if your dad is at the church he won’t know you skipped.”

“Thanks, Laf. So I’ll follow you?”

“Sounds good.”

It took them over forty five minutes to get to the cemetery. Apparently the backroads were code for dirt roads. She hadn’t seen any pavement since they got off the highway.

“You could have warned me about the dirt roads,” Carmilla said. Getting out of her car.

“Backroads usually mean dirt roads. Everyone knows that,” Lafontaine defended.

“Well I didn’t. In the city, a backroad is an ally or a street you shouldn’t be driving down.”
“Well then, now you know,” Lafontaine teased.

Carmilla wasn’t in the mood, but gave her a smile anyway. “It doesn’t look like it matters. Her car isn’t here.”

“Doesn’t mean she’s not here. We’ll drive up to the area her mother was buried in. I remember where her mother was buried. I bring her daisies sometimes,” Perry said.

“Laura’s mother’s favorite,” Carmilla mumbled.

“And Laura’s,” Perry added.

Carmilla didn’t know that either. “Come on, we’ll take my car. It’s the smallest,” Lafontaine offered.

As they got in, Carmilla pulled out her phone. “Danny texted me. She said Laura’s definitely not at school. She hasn’t seen her anywhere and that includes break and lunch.” That only made Carmilla’s stomach drop more while they drove through the graveyard. It was old and a little eerie. Clouds had casted over, leaving the sky gray. *Perfect weather for how I’m feeling.*

“It’s up along here.” Perry pointed.

“Her car still isn’t here. She’s not here guys,” Carmilla said. She sounded defeated and she was beginning to feel that way.

“Well we should still go look. Better to be safe than sorry,” Perry said.

They followed Perry up the small path to Laura’s mother’s grave. Laura was right. She had a nice tree that added some shade over her tombstone. It was quiet and almost comforting.

“Hi, Mrs. Hollis,” Perry started, “I didn’t bring flowers today, but I see Laura must have brought some yesterday. They are beautiful. I’m here with Kirsch, Lafontaine and Carmilla. I doubt you know who Carmilla is, but it’s Laura’s girlfriend. We three agree that she’s the best thing to happen to Laura since you passed. Carmilla do you want to say hi?”

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“I mean, I know it’s weird, but sometimes I come here to talk to her. I was very close to her. She used to take care of me when my parents couldn’t find a babysitter. She was a second mother to me. I assume Laura didn’t tell you that, but it’s Laura’s girlfriend. We three agree that she’s the best thing to happen to Laura since you passed. Carmilla do you want to say hi?”

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“I mean, I know it’s weird, but sometimes I come here to talk to her. I was very close to her. She used to take care of me when my parents couldn’t find a babysitter. She was a second mother to me. I assume Laura didn’t tell you that, but it was a long time ago and my parents used to work a lot more. So would you like to say hello?”

“Oh, okay. Hi, Laura’s mom. I’m Carmilla, her girlfriend. I know that’s probably a bit of a shock to hear. I, uh, well Laura is missing today. Your husband seems to think she’s fine, but I don’t know. I wish I could have met you, but I’ve seen a few pictures. Laura looks almost identical to you from what I can tell. Anyway, it was, uh, nice meeting you. Maybe I can get Laura to come back and visit more often. If I find her.”

Carmilla placed her hand on the tombstone that was almost ice cold. It was peaceful, even though she felt completely weird having a conversation with a granite. Her phone started buzzing in her pocket. She quickly pulled it out to see Mr. Hollis’s number.

“It’s Laura’s dad,” Carmilla said. She waited a couple rings so it would seem she had stepped out of her classroom.

“Hello? Mr. Hollis? Did you find her?”
“Not yet, but at least I know as of an hour ago she was okay.”

“What?”

“She went to that little diner I found you at. Tommy was there again. He said she was there earlier and ate some breakfast. When she left, he noticed she went in the opposite direction. We’re still looking, but I think she’s okay. She’s probably off driving.”

“Okay. So what should I do?”

“What you’ve already done. Go to class and I’ll call as soon as she turns up.”

“Right. Thanks for keeping me updated Mr. Hollis.”

“Sure thing. Carmilla try not to worry. She’s fine. She’s just being a rebel today.”

“Yeah.”

Carmilla hung up her phone. “What did he say, Dude?”

“Well she was spotted at the diner on the other side of town an hour ago.”

“The gay one?” Kirsch asked.

“Yes, but that was the last place someone saw her.”

“So what does he think?” Perry asked.

“That I should stay at school and continue on with my day. That she’s fine and being a rebel.”

They nodded their heads. “We should go. Let’s leave Laura’s mom to rest,” Carmilla said, gesturing towards the path. She watched as the other three walked away. She quickly turned back around to the gravesite and whispered, “I’m going to find her, Mrs. Hollis. Don’t worry. I won’t let anything happen to her.”

Carmilla felt a small gust of wind. Some would say it was a sign, but Carmilla knew it was a coincidence. She quickly followed the other three down back to Lafontaine’s car. It was again quiet as Lafontaine parked. They got out and Carmilla let out a loud groan.

“I’m sorry, but I had to get that out. I just can’t get rid of this feeling that something is wrong. That Mr. Hollis thinks she’s safe, but she isn’t.”

“It’s probably just nerves, Bro. You know because you don’t know where she is.”

“Yeah, but I feel like I’m forgetting something or there’s one place none of us are looking at.”

They all stood around and thought for a moment. Carmilla pinched the bridge of her nose and closed her eyes, taking deep breaths hoping it would help calm her. She leaned against the driver seat door of her car.

“I mean we’ve looked at all the places she normally hangs out,” Perry said. “Maybe there is something she did with her mom we’re not thinking about. Or a place they would go together.”

Carmilla’s eyes snapped open. The memory flooded her mind. She was sitting in Laura’s car. “Uh, Cupcake, where are we going?”
“To a quiet place that I used to go to when I was little.”

“Laura, this looks like a place where people go to die in horror films.”

“Oh calm down wuss, it’s my dad’s cabin.”

“I know where she is,” Carmilla stated.

“Where?” Kirsch asked.

“It’s a place she took me before. She used to go there when she was little. Her dad’s cabin.”

“Alright! Let’s go!” Lafontaine moved towards their car. Carmilla remembered that Mr. Hollis had told her how she pushed Lafontaine and Perry away last year. How she felt like they were smothering her.

“Uh, Guys? Thanks for all your help, but I think I should go alone.”

“Are you kidding me? We cut school to help you,” Lafontaine said.

“I know and I’m grateful, but if she is there, she is there for a reason. She doesn’t need a ton of people smothering her. I think she just needs me.”

“Are you sure?” Kirsch asked.

“Yeah. Thanks again for ditching school and helping me, but I got to get going before she moves again.”

They nodded and Carmilla got into her car. She remembered the drive, she was just hoping she could remember where the cabin was. Before she drove off, she rolled down her window.

“Hey do any of you actually know where her dad’s cabin is?”

They all looked confused before Perry cleared her throat.

“Pull out of here and turn left. Keep going south on 544 until you see a sign that says ‘Deerpark Road’. Take a left onto it. It’s a two lane road. It will start to get more and more dense with woods. After about 5 to 10 minutes or so, there will be another small road of a clearing. It’ll be on your right so make sure you keep an eye out. Just stay down that road, it’ll lead you straight to the house.”

“How did you know that, Per?”

“Remember that summer when we were kids and my parents went out of town for a whole month? Well I spent it with the Hollises.”

“I thought you went with them?”

“No. I stayed at that cabin.”

“Thanks, Perry,” Carmilla said.

“No problem.”

Carmilla backed up and waved before hitting the gas and zooming off. She followed Perry’s instructions and turned left on Deerpark Road. She drove slow and kept her eyes peeled to the right. The memories of being here with Laura came back into her mind and it’s almost as if she knew
exactly where she was. She turned right onto the creepy road. *It still looks like a place people go to get murdered.*

Once she reached a clearing, she saw Laura’s jeep. She felt her entire body finally relax, knowing that Laura was here. She parked behind Laura’s car and got out. She saw Laura sitting on the hood of her Jeep. She was sitting with her legs crossed in front of her and resting back against her arms. She heard Laura exhale.

“I know I’m in trouble, Dad, but I had to get out there. There were just too many people and this was one of my favorite places with Mom. So go ahead and ground me for skipping town, but I couldn’t be at home anymore. I’m sorry, Dad.”

“Guess again,” Carmilla said.

Laura slowly turned her head. “You know, Cupcake. I really wish you’d stop leaving in the middle of the night. I have been worried sick about you and have looked everywhere for you. I even had to have the ginger squad help me out. Not to mention Kirsch.”

Laura didn’t move. She sat there frozen as if Carmilla was the last person she thought she’d see.

“What are you doing here?” Laura asked.

“I came to find you. Do you think I was going to go to school when I woke up and couldn’t find you anywhere? When I noticed your Jeep was gone, I woke your father. Why, Cupcake?”

“Like I said, I had to get out of there.”

“And you couldn’t tell me? Given me some sort of heads up maybe?”

“I just wanted to be alone.”

“You know, you could have just told me that. You could have said, ‘please don’t tell my dad, but I’m going to take a day to myself. I need some alone time.’ I would have respected that.”

“You don’t understand, Carmilla. I just needed to get away so no one knew where I was.”

“No, Laura. You don’t understand. I’ve searched all day for you. Your dad is out there looking for you too.”

“That’s not my fault. I didn’t tell you to look for me.”

“Are you kidding me?”

Carmilla was starting to get frustrated. She couldn’t understand why Laura was being so cold. *She’s trying to push me away like before, except now she’s actually trying.*

“Just leave, Carmilla.”

“You know I’m not going to leave, right?” Carmilla asked.

“Don’t you understand that I want to be alone?”

“Oh I get it, Cupcake, but I can’t leave you alone. I won’t bother you, but I’m staying here.”

“You’re such a child,” Laura sneered.
Carmilla laughed. “Oh I’m a child? When you decided that getting up and leaving with no clue of where you were going was being an adult? Okay, yeah. I’m a fucking child.”

“Carmilla just leave.”

“No.”

Carmilla pushed up on the hood of her car. She sat down with her legs crossed over one another. She was just happy that Laura was here, alive and safe. Laura glared at her. They sat in silence for a long time before Laura spoke.

“How did you know I was here?” Laura asked.

“I didn’t, at first. We actually went to a lot of places looking for you.”

Laura turned to face Carmilla. “Where?”

“The mall, the campground, the oceanfront, the skatepark,” Carmilla paused, “Why didn’t you tell me you skate?”

“I haven’t done it since my mom passed so I didn’t think it was an important thing to tell you about me.”

Carmilla nodded. “Well we had Danny on school patrol, which she wasn’t happy about.”

“Of course she wasn’t. She has a hero complex. If she isn’t the one to find me, she isn’t the one to know I’m safe first.”

“Well it’s not her place to know, as Betty told her this morning. You missed a good little cat fight,” Carmilla said, trying to lighten the mood.

Laura only stared.

“Uh, right. So after that we got some lunch at McDonald’s near the mall, where we tried to brainstorm some other places you could be. We agreed to try the cemetery, but you weren’t there either. Then Perry mentioned that maybe we forgot a place and it clicked. I knew this is where you would be.”

Laura nodded.

“Well glad you found me, but head on back, Carmilla. You don’t need to be here.” Laura was being short again.

“I might not need to be here, but I need to know you’re safe, so I’m staying.”

“Why won’t you get the hint of leaving me alone?” Laura’s eyes started to water.

“Look, Laura. I know you want me to, but I’m not going to leave. I know you want to push me away and tell me to go home, but technically since school isn’t over, I can’t do that. So I’ll just stay over here and wait until it’s closer to school time, probably about an hour and then head on back, to leave you here. But I will call your dad and let him know you’re safe and-”

“Will you go inside with me?” Laura interrupted.

“What?” Carmilla asked.
“I want to go inside. I haven’t been in there in years. It’s why I came here. My mother decorated this place, and I want to see it, but I can’t do it by myself.”

“Sure thing, Cupcake. Whatever you want.”

Carmilla hopped off the hood of her car and helped Laura get down from hers. They walked hand in hand to door. Carmilla reached for the doorknob, but it was locked.

“Do you have a key, Sweetheart?”

Laura nodded and pulled a small, silver key out of her pocket. She handed it to Carmilla.

Carmilla carefully unlocked the door, but didn’t open it.

“Ready?” Carmilla asked.

Laura didn’t say anything. She just gave a little nod. Carmilla slowly opened the door. It creaked as she slowly opened it. Yep. Definitely a house in a horror film, she thought. Carmilla started walking in, but Laura held her ground. The small house was dark. Every curtain had been closed, keeping the minimal sunlight from the cloudy sky out.

Laura exhaled slowly before walking in, past Carmilla in the doorway. She turned on the lightswitch. It was a very small cottage, but definitely homely. They were standing in the small living room, with a fireplace to their left. To their right, was a small kitchen with a counter island. Straight ahead was a small hallway. It looked like there were three doors open down the hallway. Carmilla could see the last, center door was a small bathroom. The furniture was covered with white sheets. Family pictures littered everywhere Carmilla could see. They were aligned on top of the fireplace mantle in small frames. A couple portraits hung on the wall behind the couch. Some were on the kitchen counter.

Carmilla moved further into the house so she could stand next to Laura, who had planted her feet in the center of the small living room, looking around.

“It’s just a lot of family,” Laura said.

“It is, but it’s nice.”

“I honestly forgot it looked like this. It’s just been so long, maybe 6 or 7 years now. As I got older, we started coming less and less for some reason. I forgot my mom put up every family portrait. She always wanted to make sure everyone knew this was the Hollis’ country house.”

“Well it’s cute and quaint. Not to mention this adorable little blonde girl with her missing front teeth in this picture.”

Carmilla smiled. She noticed Laura’s lips twitch into a small smile.

“Yeah, well. At least I didn’t have to have braces,” Laura countered.

“Oh I did. They were terrible.”

“I can’t imagine you with braces.”

“Well one day, I’ll show you my horrific school pictures so you can laugh and make fun of me.”

Laura smiled and started to walk towards the hallway. She held out her hand for Carmilla, who grasped it firmly. Laura opened the door on the right. It was a small bedroom that had all shades of yellow and blue in it. A couple posters hung on the wall and a small bunny sat in the middle of the
bed.

“This was my room.”

“I can tell. There’s a lot of yellow going on.”

Laura just looked around before slowly backing up. “Too much?” Carmilla asked.

Laura nodded and tugged on Carmilla’s hand. She followed as they made their way across the hall to the other room.

“This was my parents room.”

There was a large bed in the center of the room with white linens. A hint of blue was also found as a border on the pillows and comforter. The only other thing in this room was a small dresser. It had something on it.

“What’s that, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked, pointing to it.

Laura walked over and she smiled. Her eyes started to brim with tears.

“It was my mom’s favorite necklace,” Laura said, picking it up. “I asked Dad where it was, but he said he didn’t know. I assumed she was buried with it.”

It was a simple gold chain, with a little gold cross on it.

“Well I guess your mother had other plans with it.”

Carmilla picked it up and clasped it around Laura’s neck. “Thanks, Carm.”

Carmilla hummed in response. They walked back out of the room, their hands back together again. Laura led Carmilla to the door and turned the light off.

“It’s still just too much,” she explained at the curious look Carmilla gave her. Laura closed the door and locked it. She slowly started making her way over to her car.

“How much trouble am I in?” Laura asked.

“I honestly don’t think that much. Your dad said you did this last year too.”

“I did, and I got in so much trouble, but that might have been because I had a full tank of gas and when I got home, I was almost on empty. He pays for my gas.”

“Well, I guess just see if he only grounds you a little bit, but not Valentine’s Day.”

“Aw, do you have something planned, Sweetness?”

“Nope, but I don’t want that to mean we can’t spend it together.”

“Will you be planning something?” It was the first time Laura actually smiled.

“I can’t refuse that smile.”

They stood outside Laura’s Jeep, hand in hand. Laura looked back at the small cottage.

“Do you mind if we stay a little longer?” Laura asked, sitting back on the hood of her Jeep.
“Not at all,” Carmilla said.

She joined Laura and wrapped her arm around her shoulders. It was peaceful.

They stayed there for another hour or so. Carmilla followed Laura back home. She saw Mr. Hollis run out of his house and hug his daughter. She hugged him back tightly. Carmilla was just about to drive away when Mr. Hollis stopped her. He waved for her to come inside. She did as she was told.

“You didn’t go to school today, did you Carmilla?” He asked, as she stepped inside.

“No, Sir.”

“So you disobeyed me?”

“In a sense, yes. How did you know?”

“Well both times I called, the background was just too quiet.”

“I had to find her, Sir.”

“And you did.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Care to tell me where she was all day?”

Carmilla looked at Laura. Laura shook her head. “I think if Laura wants you to know, she’ll tell you, Sir.”

He exhaled. “Well it was worth a shot. She didn’t tell me either, but I think you should head on back home.”

“Are you going to tell my parents?” Carmilla asked.

“No, Ma’am. Just go home and even though tomorrow is Friday, go to school. Also will you do me a favor and pick this one up tomorrow?” He pointed to Laura.

“Why, Dad?” Laura asked.

“Oh, well you’re grounded, Honeybear and no car for two weeks. Don’t worry, I’m sure Carmilla will be happy to take you.”

“I guess I deserve that,” Laura mumbled. “Can I at least walk Carm out?”

“Sure.”

Laura walked over to Carmilla and opened the door for her.

“Thanks for coming to find me today,” Laura said.

“What else would I have done?”

Laura shrugged. “Suffered?”

Carmilla grabbed her heart dramatically. “You wound me, Cupcake.”

“Oh shut up.”
Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla.

“Next time, call me or wake me, Cupcake. I won’t smother you, but I’ll try to help you.”

“Okay.”

“Promise?”

“Swear,” Laura said, giving Carmilla another kiss.

“Goodnight, Laura.”

“Night, Carm.”

Later that night, Laura received a text from Carmilla saying, “Looks like you’re not the only one who’s grounded. I wrote a note with my mother’s signature and turns out they called her at her office anyways. I’m grounded for the next two weeks myself.”

Chapter End Notes

Kristin and I had an amazing time while she was here. Especially since we trapped in the blizzard. So let's give her another round of applause for editing!
An Empty House for Valentines

Chapter Summary

Bring on the fluff!

No trigger warnings for this chapter because it is just so fluffy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Red and pink hearts hung from the roof in the cafeteria. Couples were seen up and down the hall smiling and finding valentines being left in their lockers from their secret admirers.

“Well if it isn't getting close to the made up love holiday created by the card manufacturing companies,” Carmilla said, joining her group of people at their lunch table.

“You know Laura's going to want to do something,” Lafontaine said, taking a big bite of their mashed potatoes.

“Oh I know, but she doesn't know what's happening yet.”

“So you haven't told her your parents are going out of town?” Danny asked.

“Nope. Just me and Laura with a whole house to ourselves this weekend minus Will.”

“Won't he be with Eric?” Perry asked, politely.

“He will, but he's still a kid. I gave him an 11 o'clock curfew if he decides to go out and I told him no sex. His Christian conscious isn't ready for that.”

“Who's Christian conscious isn't ready for what?” Laura asked, taking her seat next to Carmilla. The long tables were more cramped than usual today, so Laura ended up practically sitting on half of Carmilla, not that Carmilla minded. This way they could touch each other without a bunch of eyes on them.

“Will isn't ready for sex,” Carmilla said, sneaking a kiss onto Laura's cheek behind Laura's long, flowing hair.

“Ah,” Laura smiled.

She had been doing a lot better once the month of February started. Her smile was back to normal, she could eat without being told, the late night calls had stopped and Carmilla oddly felt even closer to Laura.

After Laura's runaway experience and Carmilla's fake school note, the girls could barely see each other. Carmilla was still allowed to drive her car, but they really only were allowed to speak during their school hours. It was straight home after school for them both. No phones or computers after school hours. If Carmilla needed to do research, she had to do it in a space where her parents could monitor her on her laptop. Lilita even made Carmilla sit in the front of church with her and Will once
she found out that the reason Carmilla skipped school was because of Laura. But the two weeks were over and everything has finally started to settle again and Carmilla was grateful.

“Carm?” Laura asked, taking a bite of her cookie.

“Yeah?” Carmilla took the small opportunity to take a bite of Laura’s cookie.

“Will you walk with me to my locker before our next class? I need to get my book and notebook.”

“Sure, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, trying to take another bite. Laura graciously let her have one.

“How come when I ask for a small piece, you yell at me about how it’s your cookie and you only have one, but Carmilla can just take a bite whenever she wants to?” Lafontaine asked.

Laura used her thumb to run over the tips of her fingers, getting rid of the extra crumbs before shrugging her shoulders. “Well, Laf, Carmilla gets cookies because she sleeps with me and does an amazing job.”

Carmilla could feel her cheeks blush and she put her head down, with a small smile.

“Not to mention, you are dating the best baker in the entire high school. I'm sure Perry would make you cookies or cupcakes or brownies anytime you want,” Laura smiled before getting up.

“Sorry I asked,” Lafontaine mumbled.

Carmilla quickly got up and followed Laura.

“So, Baby, are we actually going to your locker or are we going to make out somewhere secret?” Carmilla asked as they left the cafeteria. The hallways were deserted with kids being at lunch or class, so Carmilla felt comfortable wrapping her arm around Laura's shoulders.

“I actually have to get that stuff from my locker, Sweetness.”

Carmilla pouted her lower lip out.

“But if we have time afterwards…” Laura let the sentence drift. Carmilla smiled as they approached Laura's locker.

“Well, well, well, if it isn't St. Charles very own gay pride parade,” Mattie smirked.

Laura rolled her eyes, but smiled. “You can do better than that, Mattie.”

Mattie smiled and then looked at Laura. Carmilla had never seen Mattie look so concerned.

“Hey, I know what happened a few weeks ago and I know we're not as close as we used to be, but I want to make sure you're okay.”

Laura smiled. “Yeah, I'm okay, Mattie. Just got to be a little too much is all.”

“You know you can still call me, right? If you need to talk or anything. I know you've got little miss sunshine over here, but I'm still here if you need me.” Mattie's eyes were hopeful looking.

“Yeah I know. I also know what past event is coming up for you, so if you need me, I'll be there. Just like I was when it happened.”

Mattie nodded her head. “Thanks,” she said. “I might take you up on that, if your girl doesn't mind
me stealing you away from her for a night.” Mattie looked at Carmilla.

“As long as you don't hurt her, and play nice, I'm fine with it,” Carmilla said.

“I assume she's told you by now.”

“Mattie,” Laura groaned.

“I don’t ask about private lives, Mattie. Laura hasn't said anything and I haven't asked. It's not my business.”

Mattie nodded again. She closed her locker and started to walk away.

“Hey, Mattie,” Laura said, running to catch up with her.

Carmilla didn't move. She stayed where she was and tried to mind her own business. She saw Laura lean forward for a brief and almost awkward hug with Mattie before coming back.

“Everything alright?” Carmilla asked.

“Better than expected,” Laura smiled, while grabbing her stuff from her locker and put them in her bag.

“Besides, Sweetness, we have plenty of time to kill before our next class.”

“You read my mind, Cupcake!”

They giggled as they made their way to the library.

The next day, Carmilla and Laura walked as close as possible next to one another down the hallway to their friends during break. Laura had carried almost all her books with her in her bag, but still had to carry a few by hand. But Carmilla was quick to grab the two notebooks and text book from Laura's desk.

“You carrying her books now, Fang Face?” Danny asked.

“I do whatever she needs, Xena. It's my job to keep her happy.”

“It's a little old fashioned, don't you think?”

“Maybe I'm a little old fashioned and like to be a good girlfriend.”

“Are you saying I'm not?”

Carmilla shrugged and then smirked. “If the shoe fits…”

“Yo,” Kirsch interrupted. “Babes shouldn't fight.” All the girls eyes fell on him with shocked expressions.

He stuttered. “I… I… I mean people. All people. Everyone shouldn't fight. Fighting is bad no matter who's throwing the punches.”

“I should punch you in the face for saying what you said,” Danny added.

“Back off, Giant Ginger. Kirsch is good people,” Carmilla defended. “But I will kick the shit out of
you if you ever say that again,” she added, giving Kirsch a stern look.

“Noted,” he said, holding his arms up in defense.

Lafontaine, Perry and Betty came up shortly after the altercation. It was quiet.

“Who died?” Lafontaine asked.

“Kirsch made a sexist comment,” Danny said, throwing her arm around Betty's shoulder.

“Get over it, Xena. It's said and done.”

“Carm, be nice,” Laura said.

Carmilla exhaled. “Anything for you, Cupcake.”

Betty made a whipped sound and it took all of Carmilla's strength not to say anything while she watched Danny's shocked expression and their lame high five.

“Anyway,” Kirsch started speaking before anyone else could, “It's Valentine's Day this weekend. I was thinking party?”

“I think the last place I rather be on a holiday that shows romance is at one of your parties,” Perry said. “I feel like it'll just turn into a whole orgy.”

“True that,” several agreed.

“Well what if I just made it intimate,” Kirsch tried.

“Not helping yourself there, Buddy,” Carmilla said.

“No, no, guys. We make it a closed affair. Like just all our close friends and what not.”

“Sounds good to me,” Laura said.

“What?” Carmilla asked.

“Well we haven't made plans and after last month, I could use a party.”

“Baby,” Carmilla moaned, whispering, while pulling Laura away from the group.

“What, Sweetness?”

“I just thought, you know, we could do something together and alone for Valentine's Day.”

“Well you haven't mentioned anything about doing something so I just assumed you didn't want to.”

“I do. I just thought I'd wait to tell you,” Carmilla pouted.

“I ruined a surprise, didn't I?” Laura asked.

“No. You still don't know what it is.”

“But the holiday is on a Sunday so we wouldn't be able to really do anything anyway.”

“I wanted to wait to tell you this, but my parents are going on a little romantic retreat this weekend. They'll only be gone Friday night. They'll come back Saturday evening. I figured you could come
over and we could have our own romantic and intimate night.” Carmilla looked down, believing her plan starting to sound stupid.

Laura smiled and wrapped her arms around Carmilla's waist.

“That sounds better than any party, Sweetness.”

“Really?” Carmilla asked, looking at Laura through her lashes.

“Really,” Laura said with a nod.

“Perfect. And if we get bored, we can hit up the party later,” Carmilla said.

“Sounds like a plan.”

The bell rang and students started scattering to get to class. “I'll see you at lunch, Cupcake.”

“Save me a seat.”

“My lap is always available.”

They shared a brief smile before Kirsch, yet again like everyday, broke up their little moment by wrapping his arm around Carmilla’s shoulder. “Come on, Bro! We have math!” Carmilla rolled her eyes but waved to Laura.

Carmilla and Will walked into their home after school Friday afternoon. As soon as she stepped over the threshold, Henry called Carmilla into his office. Carmilla was excited for her parents to leave and to have her night with Laura. She had everything planned. Lilita was upstairs packing her bag for her night off with her husband.

“You’re home later than I expected,” Henry said, sitting behind his desk, pointing to the chair across from him.

“Am I in trouble?” Carmilla asked.

“No, Kiddo. Just wondering what took so long.”

“I got stuck talking to Kirsch about something after school. Not to mention, Will took forever and a day to get to the car.” Carmilla replied.

“Will can be slow, but this isn’t the reason I called you into my study. As you know, your Mother and I are giving you a huge responsibility this weekend.”

“Dad, I have had to babysit Will tons of times. This won’t be any different.”

“Well, Carmilla, you’re older now. He’s older now.”

“Which means we can take care of ourselves, no problem.”

“And you’ve never stayed the night with him alone.”

“I think we’re old enough to put ourselves to bed,” Carmilla pointed out.

“You’re right. Well I’ve left the bed and breakfast’s number next to the phone,” Henry said. “If you
need us for anything and can't reach our cells, call there.”

“Will do, Pops, but I think Will and I can handle being in the house by ourselves for one night.”

“Yeah, yeah. Alright house rules.”

“Do you really need to set house rules, Dad?”

“I think it’s a necessity, Kid.”

“Fine,” Carmilla exhaled, leaning back her chair and putting her boots up on Henry’s desk.

“Okay,” he started, pushing Carmilla’s boots off. “I don’t think I have to state the obvious, but no one comes over this weekend. No parties, no friends, no girlfriends,” He paused for a second, just to see if he would get a reaction, but Carmilla sat stone cold, “or boyfriends.”

“Geez, Dad. Will and I are both single. You really need to not worry so much. We’ll have a nice, quiet time at home.”

“Okay, Kid, can we cut out the sarcasm? I just want you guys to keep the house clean and nice. I want your mother to have a good weekend away and not come home to a mess.”

“We’re not animals, Pops and I’m also not some irresponsible child. Will and I are going to be fine.”

“I know, Kid. I know, but I also know your mother would kill me if I didn’t tell you this.”

“You can never lie to her. She always just sees right through you. It’s freaky.”

“She knows when you lie too, Kiddo. As do I.”

That made Carmilla uncomfortable, but she tried her hardest not to show it.

“Okay, you got me. Once when I was 7, I took a dollar in change out of your coin basket, so I could buy some ice cream from the ice cream truck.”

“I knew it!” Henry banged his fist lightly against his desk. “I have been waiting 10 years for you to tell me that.”

Carmilla rolled her eyes, but smiled at her father.

“To make sure you don’t starve to death, we’ll leave you money for food.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

Carmilla got up to leave the study.

“And Carmilla, I’m serious. No one is allowed over.”

“Yeah, Dad. I got it.” She waved him off and walked out of the study. Henry followed her, wrapping his arms around Carmilla’s shoulders.

“Do you remember when you were a kid and I’d do this?” He asked.

“Yeah. I would scream for Mother, telling her there was an ugly monster on my back.”

The memory made Carmilla smile. It’s the time her mother considered her to be a good and obedient child. Henry tightened his grip.
“Mother! Mother, help! I have an ugly monster on my back! Mother, please!” Carmilla yelled, while Henry gripped tighter around her shoulders. She tried to free herself and started laughing. “Dad, stop!”

Lilita was coming down the stairs, with Will following carrying her suitcase.

“Carmilla stop. Your father is getting too old and you’re far too old to be playing those games,” Lilita said.

“Oh my shoulder, Kid. I think I pulled something,” Henry said, pretending he was stuck. Lilita glared at him in response.

Henry stopped and pulled away. It hurt Carmilla a little. Lilita hit a point where she didn’t want her children to goof around anymore. It’s when Carmilla had to get serious about school work and extracurricular activities.

“Are you ready, Dear?” Lilita asked.

“Yes, Honey. Why are you taking such a large bag?” Henry asked.

“Well I decided we should just share a suitcase and I’m not sure how cold it’s going to be so I packed you a couple extra sweaters.”

Henry exhaled and made eye contact with Carmilla. He knew he wasn’t going to win so there was no point in trying.

“Well we should get going before the traffic picks up,” Henry said.

He took the suitcase from Will and made his way to the door.

“Now, the number is by the phone and here is some money to get you two hungry kids through the weekend with food,” Lilita said, holding out $40.

“Thanks, Mother,” Carmilla said.

“Be safe, and I love you both.”

And with that, she and Henry were out of the door. Carmilla and Will watched from the living room window and waited for Henry and Lilita to leave. They watched as the car backed out of the driveway.

“We have the house to ourselves!”

“Relax, Bro. Be cool, for once in your life.”

“Ha ha, Kitty. So what’s the plan?”

“Well Kirsch’s parents are in town this weekend and turns out we’re the only open house.”

“Carmilla, we can’t have a party here.”

“It’s not a party. It is a closed off arrangement for our friends only. I promise it won’t get out of control.”

“Will there be alcohol?”
“What’s a party without alcohol?”

“You do know this is the minister’s house, Carmilla, right? We’re the minister’s kids.”

“Which is why we should be the ones throwing a party.”

Will gave her a worried looked.

“Look, Will. You don’t have to participate. You can sit upstairs and watch movies with Eric if you want, but people are coming over.”

“Fine, what’s the full plan.”

“Laura will be arriving at 6 o’clock sharp. It’s 4 o’clock now, which means I need to start dinner soon. We’ll be cooking her dinner, so the dining room is mine. Then around 8 that’s when everyone is coming over. Luckily, there will be a carpool so there should only be two extra cars in the driveway. When is Eric coming over?”

“Anytime now. I take it, I’ll be helping you cook until he gets here?”

“Please,” Carmilla asked.

“Well you can’t cook for shit, so I guess it’s up to me.”

“Hey, I can cook,” she paused. “Okay, I can cook mashed potatoes.”

“Exactly.”

“Thanks, Bro.”

They grabbed the groceries from Carmilla’s car. Carmilla also grabbed the two bouquets of flowers she got for Laura. One bouquet were daisies and the other roses. She remembered that daisies were Laura’s favorite.

“So what’s this dish we’re making for Laura called again?” Will asked, placing the bags on the kitchen counter.

“Perry gave me the recipe. It’s stuffed zucchini. Apparently Laura’s mom used to make it, and her dad has tried multiple times, but doesn’t quite get the gist of it. Perry has made it a couple times and seems to hit it on the nose. So hopefully Little Bro, you’ll be able to get the gist of it.”

“I’ll try,” Will said, pulling out the ingredients.

“Here’s the recipe. I’m gonna run upstairs and clean my room a little bit.”

“I thought you were going to help me.”

“I will. Just let me do this first. Please,” Carmilla begged.

“Ugh, fine. You better be happy I like you.”

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At 6 o’clock on the dot, the Karnstein’s doorbell rang. Carmilla rose from the couch.

Will adjusted her tie and brushed her shoulders. “Handsome,” he replied.

“Perfect. Now upstairs.”

“Fine. But just remember who made that dinner for you two.”

“And I’ll make sure to leave some for you and Eric.”

Will nodded and made his way upstairs. Carmilla walked over to the door and opened it. Her heart stopped in her chest at the sight of Laura. She was in a dark red dress that came up to her knees and was sleeveless. And, a small duffle bag on her shoulder. Carmilla smiled.

“I don’t think you have ever looked so beautiful, Laura.”

“I could say the same to you. Where do you keep getting these ties?”

“That’s where having a baby brother comes in handy.”

Carmilla stepped back from the door to let Laura inside. Once the door was closed, Laura wrapped the tie around her hand.

“I love it when you wear ties.”

“Oh, I know, Cupcake.”

“And these suspenders. I’m beginning to think I like it more than the ties.”

“Oh yeah?”

Laura nodded.

They shared a brief kiss.

“Now, Madam,” Carmilla said, pulling back and straightening her tie. She held her arm out for Laura. “My oh so sweet brother, has prepared dinner for us. May I take you to the dining room?”

Laura giggled. “Sure, Nerd.”

“Hey, I’m trying to be romantic,” Carmilla countered.

“Then stop being a nerd and be my sexy girlfriend.”

Carmilla lightly tapped Laura back against the door and kissed Laura’s neck. Laura hummed at the feeling. Carmilla kissed up to her ear and whispered, “That can be arranged after dinner.” Laura felt a hand creep up her inner thigh. “Can’t we have our dessert first?”

“No, Cupcake. Dinner first.”

Carmilla pulled back and took Laura’s hand, dragging her to the dining room.

“Fine,” Laura groaned.

Carmilla opened the doors to show a small setting for two. The room was lit with candles.

“Well you know how to set the mood,” Laura said. “And daisies! How did you know?”

“I have my methods,” Carmilla said.
“What did you make, Carm? It smells delicious!”

“Well, Will has attempted to make your favorite. I got the recipe from Perry.”

“You mean stuffed zucchini?” Laura asked, excitedly.

“That is what I mean.”

Laura kissed Carmilla’s cheek before walking over to the table and sitting down. They ate silently.

“This is really good, Carm. Give my compliments to the chef.”

“You’re welcome,” Will said, walking past the now open dining room doors.

“Does it tastes like your mother’s?” Carmilla asked, hopeful.

“It’s very, very close. I believe my mom had a secret ingredient that she decided not to tell anyone.”

“Well as long as it was good.”

“It was delicious, Carm. So what else do we have planned for the night.”

“Well, Kirsch’s small gathering has come to my place. I’m just hoping he actually kept it small.”

“If Kirsch says small, he means it.”

“Okay. Well I figured I would kick them out around 11, and then it’s you and me.”

“And what are we going to do with all that alone time?” Laura flirted.

“Oh I have all kinds of thoughts about that, Cupcake.”

Carmilla winked and then got up, carrying the dishes to the sink. She started washing them. Will was looking in the fridge for something. “If you’re looking for food, there is plenty left over,” Carmilla said.

“Thank you,” Will said, shutting the door.

“I told you we made plenty.”

Carmilla finished the dishes and took Laura to the living room. They still had some time before people would show up. They sat very close to one another on the couch, while they watched something on TV that Will had already turned on. Laura wrapped her arm around Carmilla’s waist and started kissing up her neck lightly. Carmilla turned her head and gave Laura a quick peck.

“Let’s go upstairs,” Laura whispered in Carmilla’s ear.

“I really don’t want to have sex before everyone gets here,” Carmilla said.

“We don’t have to go all the way, but we could at least make out a little or something. Besides, I want to change before people get here.”

“Change into what? You look sexy in this dress.”

“You think I look sexy in this?”

Carmilla nodded her head.
“You should see what I have under it,” Laura whispered again, pulling Carmilla’s earlobe in between her teeth.

Carmilla felt her entire body come to life. She had to bite back a moan and all she could think about was what Laura was wearing under her dress.

“How you want to see it?” Laura whispered.

Carmilla’s heart rate was becoming faster and faster.

“If you guys are going to look at each other’s underwear, will you please go upstairs? I’m trying to eat,” Will complained.

“Stuff it,” Carmilla said. She smiled at Laura. “I’ll see it in a few hours.”

Laura pouted, but Carmilla gave her a quick kiss. The doorbell rang.

“Saved by the bell,” Will grumbled.

“When’s your boyfriend coming so he can untwist your panties?” Carmilla asked, smirking.

“That should actually be him now,” Will smiled.

“Then you get the door.”

It rang again and Will got up. He had been correct.

“Hey, guys,” Eric said, his hand in Will’s.

“Hey Eric,” Carmilla and Laura both said.

“Let’s go upstairs. Carmilla’s been trying to guess what kind of underwear Laura’s wearing and it’s been discussed rather loudly,” Will complained.

“I was whispering,” Laura defended.

“Not very well,” Will smirked before pulling Eric upstairs.

Laura gawked.

“You were being loud, Cupcake.”

“I was not.”

“Baby, we need to work on your whispering.”

“I wasn’t loud, Carmilla!”

“Well now you are, Cupcake.”

Laura huffed and crossed her arms over her chest.

“Awh, don’t get all huffy. I’ll teach you,” Carmilla offered, pulling Laura on top of her lap.

“Now what’s this about your underwear?”

Carmilla ran her hands up Laura’s thighs, but Laura stopped her hands.
“I thought someone wanted to wait,” Laura teased.

“That was before someone couldn’t stop talking about it.” Carmilla started to move her hands up again.

“I only mentioned it,” Laura said, grabbing Carmilla’s hands and placing them on her shoulders.

“Well then let’s go upstairs and stop talking about it,” Carmilla offered.

Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla. It became heated quickly, but both girls were expecting that. Carmilla wrapped her hands under Laura’s bottom, making sure Laura’s dressed covered her girlfriend’s backside and stood up from the couch. Laura squealed as Carmilla slowly made her way to the stairs, carrying Laura.

“When did you get so strong?” Laura asked.

“I’ve always been strong, Cupcake.”

They paused at the bottom of the stairs to share a long, heated kiss when the doorbell rang followed by several obnoxious knocks. Carmilla groaned and put Laura down.

“I hate our friends.”

“No you don’t, Carm. You’re also the one who invited them over.”

Carmilla groaned again. “Don’t remind me.”

Carmilla made her way towards the door and started to loosen her tie. “Whoa, Sweetness. Don’t do that,” Laura said, stopping the movements.

“I can’t take my tie off?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to take it off later.”

Carmilla smiled and nodded. She gave Laura another kiss before the doorbell and the knocking started to drive her nuts.

“Alright, assholes. I’m coming,” Carmilla said, opening the door.

“Laura works that quick, huh?” Lafontaine winked and teased.

“Zip it, Bio Nerd.”

The group started to pour in bringing snacks and soda.

“You know you love us,” Lafontaine said as they wrapped their arms around Carmilla and Laura’s shoulders.


“We thought we’d go sober in the pastor’s house,” Kirsch said, taking two large bags of chips into the kitchen.
The group ended up being smaller than Carmilla was expecting, but that’s because it was only couples. It seemed like half of everyone from the New Year’s Party was there: Perry and Lafontaine, Kirsch and Theo, and Danny and Betty. When Will and Eric heard the commotion, they made their way downstairs to hang out. Once everyone was settled with a drink in their hand, Carmilla laid down some rules.

“Alright, guys. I’m glad you’re here, but remember, this is the minister’s house. So no one goes upstairs and I’ll kill you with my bare hands if I find you in my room at any time. Try not to spill your drinks because my mother is a neat freak. Better yet, don’t spill anything. And-”

“Relax, Carm-sexy. We didn’t come here to bash. We came here to hangout and just chill. Maybe watch a movie or something,” Kirsch said, wrapping his arm around Theo.

“Well, that we can definitely do.”

Carmilla opened the cabinet under their television to reveal a ton of DVD’s. They were all family oriented and good natured, but it was better than nothing.

“It’s mostly family stuff, but I’m sure someone can find something. Who would like to do the honors?” Carmilla asked.

Everyone looked around until Lafontaine put her hand into the air. “I guess we’re watching something science related,” Carmilla mumbled as Lafontaine searched the movies. Carmilla made her way over to the couch and sat next to Laura. They smiled at each other before Lafontaine announced they found the movie they wanted to watch.

“You have Monty-Python movies?” Laf asked.

“Yeah, my dad loves those movies.”

“Whoa, Pastor K just got cooler,” Kirsch added.

“Which one did you choose?” Carmilla asked.

“Hm. Life of Brian or Holy Grail?” Lafontaine asked.


“Then Holy Grail it is,” Lafontaine said, putting it into the DVD player.

“Oh wait,” Carmilla said getting off the couch. She grabbed a remote and then another. Music filled from all over.

“You guys have surround sound?” Kirsch asked.

“Yeah. Mother made sure they were white to match the furniture,” Will said.

“Awesome, Bro.”

Everyone seemed to snuggle up to watch the movie. Carmilla could care less. She loved this movie, but she and Henry had watched it together too many times. Laura was snuggled into her side and all she could think to do was pull her closer. Laura smiled and cuddled in as close as she could, laying her head on Carmilla’s shoulder.

“How long do you think they’ll be here?” Carmilla asked about half through.
“Shh. Carm. Movie.” Laura pointed at the TV.

Carmilla nodded and looked back to the television. She still managed to laugh, even though she wished she wouldn’t have invited all these people over. She decided to close her eyes and lay her head against the back of the couch. A few moments later, she could feel Laura placing kisses on her neck.

“Don’t tease me, Cupcake. I already want you and regret inviting these idiots over,” Carmilla whispered.

Laura just smiled before settling herself back into Carmilla’s side. Carmilla looked around at the couples that surrounded them and smiled to herself. She never thought she would be in a room with same sex couples. She never thought she would have friends that would understand her and accept her. It was comforting and made her feel safe. Having Laura next to her is what made her feel the safest, but knowing she had a whole group of people that had her back, made her feel even safer.

Before she knew it the movie was over and people were wondering what to do next. They all stayed around, sharing the bags of chips and probably drinking more Coke than necessary. They all had a lot of energy and started goofing off. Carmilla kept throwing pieces of popcorn to see if she could get them in Kirsch’s mouth when she noticed that Laura wasn’t there. She looked around.

“Have you seen Laura?” She asked Kirsch. They were up to Kirsch catching 20 pieces in a row.

“I think she’s in the kitchen,” Kirsch said, chewing on the latest piece.

Carmilla got up to move and check.

“Bro, don’t leave me hanging. We’re up to 22 in a row. She’s fine.”

Carmilla nodded as they continued to let the number grow. That’s when she noticed Betty sitting alone.

“Where’s Danny?” Carmilla asked, Betty.

“In the kitchen.”

Carmilla stood up.

“Bro!” Kirsch complained.

Carmilla ignored him and made her way into the kitchen. She saw Danny and Laura standing together, talking.

“Sometimes I think Danny will always like Laura more than me,” Betty said behind Carmilla, causing her to jump.

“I thought Danny backed away when she found out about the girls Laura had been with in the library,” Carmilla argued.

“She did, but then Laura explained herself and apparently that was enough for Danny.”

“It really pisses you off, doesn’t it?” Carmilla asked.

“I know Danny cares about me, but we haven’t declared our love for one another or anything.”

“How long have you two been together?”
“It’ll be a year in May.”

“Damn. That’s a long time. And you managed to keep it a secret?”

“Well we know how to control ourselves when we’re away from the group or in public, but it was also a long distance relationship the whole summer. I wonder if she was this chummy with Laura while I was gone.”

Danny laughed and placed her hand on Laura’s shoulder before rubbing it down her arm. That made Carmilla uncomfortable. She clenched her hands into fists.

“Maybe you should talk to her about that,” Carmilla said, trying to relax.

“I plan on it, but right now, I just want to take her home. Shall we go get our girls?” Betty asked.

“Definitely.”

“Hey,” Betty said loudly, watching Danny jump back and hitting the back of her lower back against the counter.

“Don’t scare me like that, Betty,” Danny said, rubbing her back.

“I assume it’s karma giving you a warning,” Betty offered.

“Hey,” Carmilla said, wrapping her arms around Laura’s waist.

“Hey,” Laura replied, following suit before leaning in and kissing Carmilla.

“Are you ready to go, Babe?” Danny asked, wrapping her arm around Betty’s shoulder.

“Been ready. Can I pry you away or do you need to flirt some more?” Betty asked, walking away from Danny.

They heard Danny say, “Don’t be like this, Baby,” as she exited the Karnstein house.

“Betty’s pissed, huh?” Laura asked.

“I would be too if my girlfriend was constantly caught flirting with the same girl.”

“She wasn’t flirting, Carm.”

“She held your shoulder and then rubbed her hand down your arm. I’m surprised she didn’t try to hold your hand and kiss your cheek.”

“Is there a hint of jealousy behind that tone of voice?” Laura asked.

“No,” Carmilla grumbled.

“Oh, Baby. Don’t be jealous,” Laura teased.

“I’m not.”

“Oh really. Why is that?”

“Because as soon as I get everyone out of this house, you and I are going to go upstairs.”

“Still thinking about my underwear?”
“Haven’t stopped.”

Laura gave Carmilla quick kiss on the cheek before going back into the living room.

“Hey! Carmilla! Theo sucks at this! Let’s see if we can get this up to 50 in a row,” Kirsch shouted from the living room.

Carmilla just smiled as she made her way back to the living room. It was around midnight when the last two couples decided to leave. They hung out and chatted. Carmilla managed to get 78 pieces of popcorn into Kirsch’s mouth before he missed the last one. He begged for her to start over, but she refused. She just wanted everyone to leave so she could be alone with Laura. Even though she didn’t come out and say that, it seemed everyone started to get the hint. Carmilla and Laura were getting more and more intimate as the night progressed, causing the other couples to leave. Carmilla was happy to see them go.

Eric had left some time before and Will had already gone back upstairs by this point. While Laura was saying goodbye, Carmilla snuck upstairs to take care of some things before going back downstairs. She said her final goodbyes and shut the door. Carmilla made sure to double check that all the doors and windows were locked. She shut off the lights, leaving a lamp on in the living room at Henry’s request. She took Laura’s hand in hers and took her upstairs. She opened her door and slowly slid it open.

“Carm,” Laura said seeing the room lit by candles and another bouquet of roses on her desk.

“I know it’s cheesey, but we said no gifts, so I figured I could at least make tonight special somehow.”

“It is cheesey,” Laura paused, causing Carmilla to pout, “but it dosen’t mean I don’t love it.”

Carmilla walked into her room and shut her door, smiling. Laura grabbed her tie again and pulled Carmilla into a kiss. Carmilla moaned, immediately kissing Laura back.

“We have to be quiet, Cupcake. My brother is down the hall.”

“Speak for yourself. I haven’t made a sound.”

“Yet,” Carmilla said, playing with the bottom of her dress.

“You really want to see my underwear, don’t you?”

“Can you blame me with your teasing earlier?”

“Wouldn’t it be a shame if I just wore my basic stuff and let you get yourself worked up for nothing?”

“You wouldn’t,” Carmilla said.

“Of course I wouldn’t,” Laura winked.

Carmilla started to undo her tie, but Laura stopped her. “That’s my job.”

Laura started to unbutton Carmilla’s shirt slowly, pulling the bottom of the shirt out of her tight black pants. Carmilla could feel her skin get colder as each button was opened. Laura slowly undid Carmilla’s tie, letting it rest around her neck. Then she slowly undid Carmilla’s pants while placing kisses on Carmilla’s neck. She didn’t take anything off, just continuously helped to take things off
easier when she wanted to.

Carmilla on the other hand was getting impatient. She lifted Laura up and carried her to her bed, setting her down gently.

“I was waiting for you to do that,” Laura panted.

“Could have just told me,” Carmilla said, taking the suspenders straps down from her shoulders.

Laura pulled the tie off around Carmilla’s neck.

Carmilla knelt down beside her bed. She kissed Laura while pushing her dress up. Laura rubbed her hands over Carmilla’s shoulders pulling her shirt off in the process. Carmilla lunged forward, knocking Laura onto her back.

Laura rubbed her hands up and down Carmilla’s back as their lips connected.

“It’s been too long, Laura,” Carmilla said, moving from her lips to her neck.

“That’s because we have to be more cautious now.”

“I hate it,” Carmilla said.

Laura sat up and pushed Carmilla on to her back. She straddled Carmilla’s hips as she sat.

“Help me unzip,” Laura commanded, pointing to the back of her dress.

Carmilla sat up and ran her fingers up and down Laura’s back a couple times before finding the zipper and pulling it down as slowly as she could.

“Ready?” Laura asked with a glint in her eye.

Carmilla nodded and started to kiss Laura’s neck. She slowly slipped Laura’s dress down her arms. Her mouth and tongue followed the movements down the front of Laura’s body. Once Laura managed to free her arms, she gripped onto the back of Carmilla’s hair. Her breathing started to become ragged. Carmilla couldn’t pay attention to anything else.

“Do you like it?” Laura asked.

“Like what?” Carmilla asked, continuing to kiss Laura’s neck and shoulders.

Laura backed up and got off Carmilla. Carmilla tried to pull her back.

“Where are you going, Baby? Come back.”

Laura took the rest of her dress off and stood in her underwear. Carmilla eyed over her body and smiled.

“Do you like it?”

It was black with a little pit of pink stitched in. It was all lace and left very little to the imagination. In between her breasts and on the top of her underwear was a little pink bow.

“The little bows suit you nicely, Cupcake.”

Laura started to crawl her way back up to Carmilla. It turned Carmilla on more to watch her
girlfriend slide up to her.

“Oh yeah?”

Carmilla nodded before grabbing Laura and pulling her back on top of her. They were kissing and giggling. Laura leaned up to take off Carmilla’s pants.

“Black underwear, yet again,” Laura said, smiling at Carmilla.

“It has red stitching,” Carmilla defended, but Laura didn’t care. She took Carmilla’s underwear off as quick as she could. Carmilla quickly followed as the remainder of their clothes were discarded to Carmilla’s floor.

The night continued on as the two girls worked with one another, moaning, biting and teasing each other the way they knew each other liked. Both girls were giggling and enjoying their time together. It had been too long and they missed the way they could be intimate together. Some of the candles had been blown out, while others were slowly dying out from the melted wax. Time slipped by them.

Laura was on top of Carmilla, enjoying the feel of Carmilla’s hand and fingers when a strong orgasm hit her causing her to loudly moan when there was a loud knock on Carmilla’s door.

“Just because you get to have sex doesn’t mean you need to do it so loudly. Keep it down,” Will yelled from the other side, not even attempting to open the door. They stayed silent listening to him stomping down the hallway and slamming his door shut before they both erupted with laughter.

Laura laid down on top of Carmilla, trying to catch her breath. They were sweaty and tangled in Carmilla’s bed sheets. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulder and pulled her tightly, before kissing her head. Laura’s hand lazily stroked over Carmilla’s lower body. They laid together quietly, both looking at the ceiling and still coming down from the sensations their bodies were feeling.

“Do you think it’ll be like this one day, Carm?”

“What do you mean?”

“You and me, living together, being able to be us. To have our friends over and host parties or get togethers. To do what we want, to have sex when we want. Never being disturbed because it’ll just be you and me in love.”

Carmilla smiled. “Yeah, Cupcake, I think it will be like that one day.”

She pulled Laura even closer as she felt her eyes starting to close.

“Don’t leave me, Carm,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla opened her eyes. She looked down to see Laura staring at her. She slid down to be eye level with Laura. “I’m here, Laura. I’ll always be here.”

Laura nodded before exchanging another brief kiss with Carmilla. Carmilla smiled before letting her head rest against the pillow. Laura readjusted herself to rest her head back on Carmilla’s chest and wrapping her arm around Carmilla’s waist. Carmilla closed her eyes.

“Oh and Sweetness?”
“Yeah?” Carmilla grunted, her voice already full of sleep.

“Try not to snore tonight.”

“I don’t snore, Cupcake.”

Chapter End Notes

Another shout out to Kristin! I wish she was still here with me in the crazy city.

She updated her story, "Help Me Lose My Mind" and you guys should definitely check it out!!
Confrontations and Confessions

Chapter Summary

Hope you enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Laura woke before Carmilla that following morning. She could feel Carmilla's warm body across the front of her. Laura’s arms tightened before loosening around Carmilla's waist as she stretched out her arms, trying to wake up. She was snug against Carmilla's side who was sprawled on her back as usual. Laura had grown accustomed to Carmilla's sleeping habits of being on her back. She actually found it easier to snuggle up to Carmilla when she almost always slept that way. Laura shivered when she realized the comforter had been kicked off the bed sometime during the night and Carmilla's red sheets were wrapped around their legs.

Laura steadily started to sit up, moving slowly so she wouldn't disturb Carmilla. She glanced at her phone seeing it was still rather early in the morning. She knew Carmilla wouldn't be up for a while. She was planning on letting her sleep by getting up and going downstairs until she turned around and looked at Carmilla’s sleeping form.

Laura noticed how peaceful Carmilla looked in her sleep. She laid on her back with one arm above her head, and her other arm sticking straight out from where Laura slept all night. Laura stared at her face for a moment longer before letting her eyes linger over Carmilla's body. Her nipples were erect from the cold morning air. The sheets were resting low around Carmilla's hips. She could see the small patch of Carmilla's pubic hair sticking out from the top of sheets. Her mind started to wander to the rest of Carmilla's body that was hidden. She could see her legs outlined under the sheets, seeing her legs were spread open. Laura got a wicked look in her eye.

Carmilla’s dream was starting to turn erotic even though she couldn't understand why. A moment ago she was sitting under a tree in the park, back in the city. She watched as people smiled and laughed with one another, ignoring her as they always did. She felt lonely like she always had. But then a beautiful girl with honey brown hair came out of nowhere, blocking the sun, smiling at her.

“Laura,” Carmilla mumbled in her sleep. Her body was starting to respond to the sensation Laura had created.

Carmilla started to wake up, a moan escaping her lips. She felt hands holding her hips down as she felt Laura's warm tongue working her slowly and sensually.

“Fuck,” Carmilla whispered.

Laura hummed as she felt Carmilla thread her fingers through her hair. She tugged lightly on Laura's hair as her breathing began to pick up.

Carmilla was moaning as quietly as possible. She couldn't stop her hips from rutting against Laura's
mouth. “Fuck, Baby. I'm close,” she whispered. She was panting and moaning uncontrollably now as she felt her body give into the sensations Laura was giving her. She tumbled over the edge, Laura helping to bring her down.

Laura kissed her way back up Carmilla's body, while Carmilla caught her breath. She kissed around Carmilla's breasts before laying a few pecks against her collarbone. Laura fisted her hands, laying them on top of one another, before resting them on Carmilla's chest and placing her chin on them so she could look up at Carmilla. She smiled at how wonderful Carmilla looked. Her hair sprawled over the pillow and the light morning sun gave her pale skin an almost translucent glow.

Carmilla's eyes were still closed and she was starting to breathe normally. A smirk played across her lips. She started to wrap her arms around Laura's waist as she opened her eyes to see Laura smiling at her.

“Morning, Sweetness,” Laura whispered. She undid one of her fists so she could rub her fingertips lightly against Carmilla's skin around her neck and collarbone.

“Morning, Cupcake,” Carmilla mumbled through a smile.

Laura leaned forward and pressed her lips against Carmilla's. Carmilla moaned. She could taste herself on Laura's tongue and smiled. She scratched down Laura's back causing Laura to moan before grasping Laura’s bottom. She slowly rolled over, laying Laura down on her back.

“Let me return the favor,” Carmilla said. She bit her bottom lip and raised her eyebrows. Laura nodded and Carmilla descended, placing kisses on Laura's neck. She slowly kissed down her body. She continued down the front of Laura's skin when there was quiet knock on her door.

She groaned and laid her head on Laura's stomach. Laura chuckled lightly and thread her fingers through Carmilla's black curls, scratching Carmilla’s head. Carmilla hummed her appreciation. “Such a cat,” Laura giggled.

“It feels good,” Carmilla said, trying to prove her point.

Another light knock followed by another groan. Carmilla slowly raised herself off of Laura.

“What?” She said.

“Are you guys decent?” Will asked, through the door.

“What do you think?” Carmilla asked.

“Mother called,” Will said.

“Shit,” she whispered. She got out of bed and started to look for some clothes.

“Should I get dressed?” Laura asked.

“No, Baby. I'm just going to talk to him and see what's going on,” Carmilla replied, pulling on a pair of sweatpants. “I want you to stay just like that. I'm not someone who just receives without giving.” Carmilla winked at her before throwing a shirt over her head. Laura shook her head, but smiled.

Carmilla cracked her door open so she wouldn’t expose Laura and saw Will standing right in front of her.

“Can you move? Some of us aren't decent.”
“Gross,” Will mumbled, turning away from the door. Carmilla stepped out of her room, making sure her door clicked behind her.

“So why did Mother call?”

“Well two reasons,” Will started. He paused. There was a small smile on his face.

“The bad news? You still have to go to church tomorrow, which I know is like hell on earth for you, but the good news might help with that.”

“Which is?”

“The good news is Mother decided that her and dad deserved a weekend off and away from us, which I can’t blame her for.”

“So what are you saying?” Carmilla asked, a small smile on her face.

“Turns out, the bed and breakfast assumed they were staying there through the weekend for Valentine’s Day like everyone else who had booked a room there for this weekend. They actually paid for tonight too when originally booking, even though they didn’t seem to know that. They’re not coming home until tomorrow evening!”

“And you’re not joking?”

“Nope! She said Dad would call you in a little bit.”

“Oh, man! This is awesome! I wonder how long Dad had to talk Mother into it?”

“Or how long Mother had to convince Dad to skip church,” Will offered.

“True.”

“So I have a question,” Will said, shifting.

“Yes, Eric can come over.”

“Thanks, Kitty.”

“Just be responsible and no sleepovers.”

Will rolled his eyes and exhaled. “Fine.”

“Whoa. No wonder mother hates when I do that. That was the most obnoxious thing I’ve ever seen. That or the best impression of me when mother tells me something to do. Either way, I don’t really care. Now, if you’ll excuse me. I have a beautiful girl, in my bed who I have to attend to.”

Carmilla wiggled her eyebrows before going back to her room.

“Are we in trouble?” Laura asked.

Carmilla took her shirt off and threw it on the ground. She shook her head no.

“Mother apparently paid for the whole weekend instead of just one night. How do you feel about staying another night, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked, pulling her sweatpants down her legs, revealing her now, again, naked body to Laura.
“I'll have to think of another lie to tell my dad,” Laura said. Her eyes stayed lingered over Carmilla's body. She licked her lips.

Carmilla crawled over to Laura and straddled her hips.

“Do you think you can?”

“I know I can, Baby. But I'll have to go home at some point today. I'll have to go get church clothes for tomorrow as well.”

“Ah, well apparently us minister kids still have to attend church so that I understand.”

Carmilla leaned forward and kissed Laura.

“But I think we have time before we have to worry about you heading home. Where does your dad think you are now?”

“Lafontaine’s.”

“Did you drive here?”

“No, Baby. Laf picked me up and I got ready over there. They drove me over here. They told me to call and they would pick me up.”

“So we do have time?” Carmilla raised her eyes again.

Laura nodded before Carmilla connected her lips with Laura's again. Will rolled his eyes as he heard them giggling through the door as he made his way downstairs.

-------------------------------------------

An hour later, Laura giggled as Carmilla found a ticklish spot against her skin. Carmilla was straddling Laura's hips again.

“Does that tickle?”

“No,” Laura said, not making eye contact.

“Oh I think it does.” A devilish smile spread across Carmilla’s face before she started to continue tickling her. Laura squealed against her fingers.

“Stop, Carm.”

“And what if I don't, Cupcake?”

“I'm sure you have a spot too,” Laura said, raising her fingers to Carmilla's bare torso.

“Don't you dare, Cupcake.”

Laura started to run her fingers along Carmilla's sides up and down. It was Laura's turn to raise her eyebrows. Carmilla jumped once Laura's left hand hit the right side of her hip, but it wasn't because she was ticklish.

“Sorry,” Carmilla said, embarrassed by her body’s reaction.

“Can I ask you something?” Laura asked, tracing her fingers over the now familiar triangular scar.
She could feel Carmilla stiffen. Carmilla slowly nodded her head.

“Why does it only affect you at times? Your scar.”

“I don't know, really. I guess in moments like this, it's easier for me to focus on where your hands are. But when it comes to our more intimate moments, I think I'm more focused on what we're doing together and the feeling of everything so I don't pay attention to it as much.”

“Does it make you uncomfortable when I touch it?”

“Honestly?”

Laura nodded.

“Yes. I just try and act like it's not there most of the time. So when it's touched, I remember that it is actually a part of me and it did actually happen to me. Sometimes I can still feel the pain of it hitting my skin, but other times, I just try to forget that it's there. So when you touch it, even mindlessly, I remember.”

“I'm sorry, Carm.”

Laura started to move her hands away.

“Hey,” Carmilla said, moving Laura's hands back. “It's not a bad thing. I promise you. I don't mean to tense my body. It just happens. It's like a reflex. But maybe if you keep touching it, you'll help me to be less scared of it.”

Laura shrugged, but left her hands on Carmilla's hips.

“I just don't want you to be afraid to touch me, Baby. You can always touch me. I love you and I'm unbelievably comfortable with you. If I wasn't, I don't think I would be sitting here, naked on top of you.”

“That's true,” Laura smiled.

Carmilla leaned down and Laura met her halfway in a heated kiss.

“I love you too, Sweetness,” Laura whispered against Carmilla's mouth. She smiled before kissing her again.

Just then Carmilla's phone started ringing and she groaned again before leaning over and picking it up.

“It's the minister,” Carmilla said, waving her phone in front of Laura before swiping her screen.

“Hi, Dad.”

*Good morning, Kid. Did I wake you?”*

“Nope. Will woke me up when Mother called,” Carmilla said, laying down next to Laura. Laura turned on her side and lightly played with the hair that framed Carmilla’s face. Running her fingers lightly over her forehead and tracing down the side with her index finger.

*So you've heard the news? We'll be staying an extra night.*

“Yeah, Dad. Will told me. Who had to convince who?”
What do you mean?

“Did you convince Mother or did she convince you?”

A bit of both, actually. Did you have fun last night?

“Yeah. Will and I hung out. Just a quiet night at home.”

You mean, you, Will and a few others?

Carmilla paused. “How did you…”

How did I know? Henry interrupted.

“Well, yeah.”

I love you, Kid, but I can't believe you forgot about a certain sheriff who lives in our neighborhood.

“So you had him spy on us?” Carmilla asked, annoyed.

I just wanted an update to make sure you guys were okay. He said there were only a couple cars in the driveway and noticed Danny's, Lafontaine's and Kirsch’s vehicles in the driveway. He said it was quiet and that everything seemed to be in order, but I thought I made myself clear about no one coming over.

“You did and I'm sorry, but come on. We just watched a movie and hung out. I'm 17, Dad. I want to hang out with my friends.”

I know you are, Kid. And honestly, I would have been more surprised if Rich reported nothing happening. In fact, I think I would have been more worried if he would have said nothing was going on.

“Look, Dad. I'm sorry I had people over.”

It’s okay, Kid. Do you guys still have money for food or did you spend it all last night? Henry asked, interrupting Carmilla. He would do this sometimes when a random thought would hit him.

“Will and I had dinner before people came over, so we're fine to go another day and a half.”

Okay, Kid. That's good. And I know you'll be disappointed to hear, but I want you two to go to church tomorrow. Mr. Hollis is going to be speaking and I want my kids there to show support. Your mother wants you there to represent our family.

“I know, Dad. It's all good. Will already told me and it is now planned in my brain to go.”

Okay. Well your mother and I are about to go on this nature walk. Guess who's idea that was? Henry laughed. Try to get through tonight without houseguests please. I didn't tell your mother and I won't, as long as you actually have the house clean and empty. Okay?

“Oh, Dad… I love you too. Bye, Pops. Enjoy the nature trail.”

Carmilla hung up the phone. Laura was wrapped around her body. She was so warm which contrasted nicely to the cold air.

“Nature trail?” Laura asked, her voice mumbled against Carmilla’s chest.
“Mother’s idea, no doubt. Dad is more like me. We prefer the inside or city life in comparison to nature.”

“Is that why you think every place that is surrounded by woods is a murder zone?”

“No. That would be because I saw Friday the 13th at a young age and am still terrified that if I go camping, that’s what will happen.”

“Ah. Child nightmares. Been there.”

Laura stayed quiet for a moment before lifting her head to look at Carmilla.

“Can I ask you something else?” Laura asked.

“As long as you stop asking me if you can ask me something, then yes.”

“Why are you always so formal in regards to your mom and not so when you talk to your dad?”

“What do you mean?”

“You always refer to your mom as ‘Mother’, but I’ve heard you call your dad, ‘Pops’ and ‘Old Man’, but your mom is always Mother.”

Carmilla shrugged. She took a glance at Laura before staring back at the ceiling.

“Well, Mother has always been very formal. I still call her mom on occasion, but it's rare. She has to be in a certain mood for that. She just prefers Mother. She's uptight, if you haven't guessed.”

“That's true. I've never even seen her in pants.”

“Yeah. Dad is really laid back, like me. My mother is stern and has a certain allure about her that means business. She gets what she wants no matter how hard she has to fight for it. Will follows her in that respect. My family has always had a line that splits us. Me and Dad against Will and Mother. Dad and I have always been silly. Mother never had or has time for nonsense.”

“I see.”

“In fact, Will and I used to be total opposites. Everything changed when we moved here. My dad has gotten more silly, Mother has stayed the same and Will and I have never been closer. Not to mention I have friends now and of course, you.”

Carmilla looked down at Laura and smiled.

“I'm glad your family moved here, Carm. You're safe with me. Just stay with me.” Laura whispered her last sentence before stretching and sitting up. Carmilla squinted her eyes at Laura's words of staying with her, looking at her curiously. Where does she think I'm going?

Laura lowered her arms and looked at Carmilla. “How about we get dressed, go get some breakfast and then meet Laf somewhere so they can take me home to get church clothes and etcetera.”

“ Sounds good, Cupcake.”

They both got out of bed, but getting dressed seemed to take longer than expected. Every time one of them tried to put something on, the other would come up behind them and wrap their arms around their waist or start laying kisses in certain places. They shared moments of hugging and kissing as they slowly dressed themselves, trying to take on the new day.
Once they were fully dressed and ready for the day, they headed downstairs to the living room. They were putting their shoes on by the door when Carmilla called out for Will.

“Will, we’re gonna get some breakfast and then meet Laf somewhere so I'll see you later.”

“Wait!” Will yelled from the kitchen.

Carmilla stood up after getting her boots on. She placed her hands on her hips.

“What?” She asked.

“Eric wants to go to the movies. Could you, possibly, drive me to the mall?”

Carmilla rolled her eyes. She really didn't want to, but she couldn't leave him here either. They were close, but she knew if she didn't take him, he would tattle like a 5 year old to their mother.

“Can't his mom take you?”

“You don't think I asked him that before asking you?” Will smirked.

Carmilla was less than pleased.

“They're already at the mall. He said his mom would drive me home after the movie. So could you please take me?”

“Come on, Carm. There's a good place to eat around there,” Laura said. She gave her a kiss on the cheek.

Carmilla exhaled. “Yeah. Okay, Will. I'll take you to the mall. Are you ready to go?”

“Yeah, Kitty. Let me just grab my wallet. Thanks!” Will smiled before running up the stairs.

“So, Cupcake, where am I taking you for...” she paused and looked at her watch. It was noon now. “Wow, it's later than I thought. Where am I taking you for lunch?”

“You'll see, Sweetness.” Laura smiled before wrapping her arms around Carmilla's shoulders.

“Hey, Laura?” Will asked, coming down the stairs.

“Yeah?”

“How much are the movies here?”

“What time are you going?”

“1 or 2ish. We're just going to wing it.”

“Oh, like eight dollars.”

“Eight dollars?” Will and Carmilla asked in unison. They both looked at Laura with wide eyes.

“Yeah. Why?” Laura asked, confused by their excitement.

“Are you being serious? It's only eight dollars?” Will asked.
“Yes. Why is that so weird?”

“Man, Cupcake. In the city, a movie would be anywhere from twelve to eighteen dollars, depending on the time and where you went to see it,” Carmilla explained.

“Eighteen?” Laura asked. “That’s insane.”

“It’s why we rarely went,” Will added.

“The city is expensive, Cupcake. Even the food is cheaper here.”

“Yeah, but eighteen dollars is literally just insane,” Laura restated as they left the house. Carmilla made sure to lock the door and double check before following everyone to her car.

“This? This is the good place near the mall?” Carmilla asked, standing outside of a TGI Fridays with Laura. Carmilla was shaking. There was a cold wind on this corner lot where the building stood. Her hands were deep into her pockets.

“What? They have good chicken fingers,” Laura stated as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

“Cupcake. I could have taken you anywhere and you want to come to TGI Fridays?”

“I like it, Carm. Now hush. Lafontaine and Perry will be here to soon to join us.”

“Bored of me already?” Carmilla smirked.

“I figured with them taking up one side of the booth, you and I could cuddle up next to one another across from them. With our coats and stuff, it wouldn’t be too difficult. And this way I can still snuggle into your side without people staring. Just think of it as a double date.”

Carmilla smiled. “Fine, but you owe me.”

“Oh I’m sure I can think of a couple things to do to make this up to you.” Laura ran her fingers up and down Carmilla’s arms.

“Hey guys,” Lafontaine said.

Carmilla expected to see Lafontaine and Perry, but she wasn’t expecting the other two that followed up behind them. Danny towered over the group, with Betty wrapped around her waist. She seemed just as surprised as Carmilla did to see one another.

“You invited the giant?” Carmilla asked, lowly in Laura's ear.

“I didn’t know she was going to come. I only told Lafontaine, who said she would bring Perry,” Laura replied. “Promise me, you'll be nice, Sweetness.”

Carmilla bit the inside of her cheek. She wasn’t jealous, she was just mad. She didn’t mind sharing her time with Lafontaine and Perry, but she didn’t trust Danny. Betty didn’t seem to either. She exhaled.

“I’ll be nice.”

“Thank you. Maybe I’ll give you a little reward later,” Laura smirked. Carmilla looked over to her
and smiled.

“I will look forward to that, Cupcake.”

They all made their way inside. Their table was long, and it ended with a couple being split. That lucky couple just had to be Danny and Betty. Laura was now sitting in between Danny and Carmilla. Of course she has to sit next to my girlfriend. God forbid, she sat next to Perry. , Carmilla thought, looking over the menu. She hadn’t realized her leg was bobbing up and down, until she felt Laura’s hand on her thigh.

“Please. Stop,” Laura begged, rubbing her hand up and down Carmilla’s thigh.

“Sorry, Cupcake. I didn’t realize I was doing it.”

“It’s okay, it was just starting to get a little annoying. But are you okay, Carm?” Laura’s voice had a hint of worriedness now.

“Yeah. Sorry. I honestly didn’t know I was shaking my leg.” Laura smiled at her and left her hand where it was. Their waitress came a few moments later, asking for their drink orders. She scribbled them down quickly before leaving.

“Well, what is everyone going to get?” Perry asked, looking around the table.

“I’m going to get the the Jack Daniel’s sampler,” Lafontaine said. “It looks filling and delicious. It has shrimp, chicken strips and ribs.”

“That’s a lot of meat,” Betty said, looking disgustted.

“And let me guess. A salad for you Betty?” Lafontaine asked.

“The Pecan Crusted Chicken Salad, to be correct,” Betty said, looking at her menu.

“Well I’m getting the chicken fingers,” Laura announced.

“Laura have you ever heard about broadening your horizons? Trying something different?” Lafontaine asked.

“Why would I try something different when I know that this is delicious?” Laura asked. She never wanted to try new things. She liked to stick to routine when it came to her food choices. That way she never wasted money on food she didn’t like.

“If Laura wants chicken fingers, then let her get chicken fingers,” Danny argued.

Carmilla rolled her eyes. She placed her hand on Laura’s thigh, making sure Laura was as close to her as possible and as far away from Danny as possible.

“Thank you, Danny. What are you going to get?” Laura asked. She played with Carmilla’s fingers that were resting on her thigh. Carmilla’s hand was gripping her a little harder than she liked. Laura assumed it was the small annoyance she had for Danny. She felt Carmilla’s hand starting to relax as she continue to play with her fingers.

“I’ll think I’ll have the chicken fingers as well,” Danny announced, smiling at Laura. Laura smiled back, but didn’t let go of Carmilla’s hand. Carmilla started to believe that her eyes were going to get permanently stuck in the back of her head with how much she continued to roll them. Carmilla couldn’t help but notice the small perturbed look on Betty’s face. Laura placed her hand back on
Carmilla’s thigh, giving it a light squeeze. Carmilla swore that Laura scooted over even closer to her.

“Danny will you order for me? I’m going to use the restroom,” Betty announced, suddenly. She left the table and quickly made her way to the back of the restaurant.

The waitress came back and asked if they were ready to order. Perry was the first, saying she would like the French onion soup and salad. They made their way around where Carmilla smiled saying she would like the chicken fingers. She could practically feel Laura’s excitement at the announcement. When it got to Danny she ordered the chicken fingers before pointing to Betty’s spot.

“She’s in the restroom, but would like, um,” Danny paused, looking through her menu.

“Guys. What did she want again?” Danny asked.

Lafontaine ordered for Betty and the waitress left.

“Thanks, Laf,” Danny said. Her body was turned and almost facing Laura’s.

“Well she did tell us that’s what she was getting,” Lafontaine added.

“I honestly didn’t hear her say that,” Danny said.

That disturbed Carmilla and she slowly exhaled through her nose, trying her hardest not to say the words that were on the tip of her tongue. She didn’t know Betty that well, but still didn’t like the fact that Danny seemed to be so enamored with her girlfriend more than Betty. Everyone was looking at Danny, bewildered.

“What?” Danny asked.

No one said anything, but Carmilla’s leg started shaking again. It was helping her to keep her words in her brain instead of coming out of her mouth. Everyone was avoiding Danny’s question. Apparently Carmilla wasn’t the only one to notice her lack of attention when it came to Betty.

“Guys? What?” Danny asked again.

Carmilla was done biting her tongue. If no one else was going to answer on behalf of Betty, she would.

“Maybe you should spend more time focusing on your girlfriend, than Laura,” Carmilla said.

Everyone turned their attention to Carmilla. Perry’s eyes were wide.

“I pay more attention to Betty than anyone,” Danny said.

“No you don’t. If you did, you would have heard what Betty said. We all heard her say what salad she wanted, so you can’t act like she didn’t speak. Maybe instead of sitting here with your giant of a body turned towards Laura and keeping your focus on Laura, you should go to the bathroom and see if your girlfriend is actually okay.”

“Carm, we agreed that you would be nice,” Laura interrupted.

“Well maybe no one else was paying attention, but I saw the annoyed look in Betty’s eyes and I’ve seen it before. Danny if you want to keep Betty, I recommend that you give her the time of day when Laura is around instead of acting like she doesn’t exist. I don’t know if you noticed, but you tend to gravitate towards Laura and away from Betty.”
“I do not.”

“Actually you do,” Lafontaine said.

“What are you talking about?” Danny asked, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Well, Sweetie, you did practically push us out of the way to sit next to Laura,” Perry said. She had a calm expression on her face, trying to seem as normal as possible.

“Not to mention, Betty has been gone for about ten minutes,” Carmilla added. “Unless her stomach is bothering her, I would say, she’s upset.”

“And what’s your opinion, Laura?” Danny asked.

Laura looked uncomfortable. She looked at Carmilla first, who had a bored and annoyed expression on her face. Carmilla’s hand that had been resting on Laura’s thigh was now reaching around to wrap around Laura’s shoulder. Carmilla pulled Laura close and kissed her temple before pulling away. She placed her hand back on Laura’s thigh and gave it a few light taps. Laura exhaled before nodding and looking at Danny, who seemed to be silently fuming.

“I won’t lie. I have noticed you being a little closer and clinging to me more than usual. I just thought you were being friendly, but you did have feelings for me at one time so maybe I’m wrong. But I think you should know that Betty likes you a lot and you two are good together. I’m with Carmilla, Danny. And I love Carmilla so if you’re using Betty as a way to hold on and wait until I’m single again, then it’s just wrong. I’ve never been more happy in the past two years than I have been with Carmilla.”

A series of expressions crossed Danny’s face. Everything from anguish, to sadness, to understanding. She blinked a couple of times before she snapped back into reality. Betty was walking back up to the table. Her eyes were red and her nose was pink. Danny stood up and wrapped her arms around Betty, giving her as much comfort as she could.

“Betty, are you okay?” Danny asked.

Betty shook her head no. “I’m not feeling that great,” Betty whispered.

“Let’s go home. I’ll get the waitress to bag our food, okay? Let’s have a you and me day. How does that sound?”

Betty smiled and nodded. Danny managed to flag down the waitress and explain. A few moments later, they had a doggy bag in hand and were leaving the restaurant.

“Well that was interesting,” Perry said, after a small moment of silence.

“Yeah, well, maybe Xena will finally figure out where her importance should lie,” Carmilla grumbled.

“You know, you’re the only one who has ever said something to her like that,” Lafontaine said. “Most people see how tall she is and back away. The height intimidates them.”

“Well someone needed to say something. I’ve had a couple conversations with Betty about it.”

“Really?” Laura asked, turning her head to look at Carmilla. “You never told me that.”

“It never came up, Cupcake.”
Just then their waitress returned with their food. They said their thanks before digging in. They chatted lightly about the previous night and what Lafontaine and Perry’s plans were for their own Valentine’s Day. They had finally admitted their feelings for one another the week before and were now officially, but of course, secretly dating.

“So, I guess I’ll be taking Laura home?” Lafontaine asked, as they exited the restaurant with full tummies.

“Yeah, I just have to get my stuff from Carmilla’s car,” Laura said.

Carmilla and Laura slowly walked to Carmilla’s car. Laura hated not being able to hold her hand openly. She got in the car and Carmilla kneeled down beside her, squatting. Laura reached into the back and pull her bag onto her lap.

“How were the chicken fingers?” Laura asked, smiling.

“Pretty damn good, Cupcake, but not the best thing in the world.”

“Just admit that you liked it? Please?”

“I liked it, Cupcake.”

That made Laura smile and she leaned in to lightly kiss Carmilla’s lips.

“So I guess just come over whenever, Cupcake. I’ll be home.”

“Okay, Baby. I’ll come up with something to tell my Dad and figure it out. I’ll text you later, okay? To let you know what’s going on.”

“Sounds good, Love.”

Laura bent down to reach Carmilla’s lips in a brief kiss before getting out of the car. “I’ll see you later.” She smiled.

“Yeah. Just keep me updated.”

Carmilla watched as Laura hopped away to Lafontaine’s car. Laura waved at her before sitting down and closing the door. She rolled down her window and blew Carmilla a kiss. Being the cheesiest person Carmilla could ever think to be, she grabbed at the air as if catching Laura’s kisses and put them in her shirt pocket. She got in her car and drove home, a smiled plastered on her lips.

Carmilla got home around 2 and started to put this dishes away from the night before, making sure to have the house extra clean. She didn’t want her Mother to find out that teenagers had been traipsing all through her house while she wasn’t home.

Around 4, William returned, helping Carmilla straighten the living room out. Carmilla still hadn’t heard from Laura, but was sure she would hear from her soon. She hoped she wasn’t putting any burden on Laura to spend the night with her. She started to get worried that maybe Laura had grown tired of her after spending the night and early afternoon with her.

Around 6, she definitely started to worry. This wasn’t like Laura. She would have most likely heard from her. She started to wonder if Mr. Hollis had found out that Laura had lied about being at Lafontaine’s house. However if he took her phone away, Laura would have been able to send a text
message saying she was grounded before handing her phone over to Mr. Hollis. Right now, she felt weird. However, the thought that Laura had grown tired of her was growing and she started to get too scared to call her. *If I don’t hear from her by 8, then I’ll call. That’s a reasonable amount of time.*

Around 7:30, Carmilla heard the doorbell ring. She had been sitting on her bed, reading her book assignment for her creative writing class. Will popped his head out of the door as Carmilla made her way to the hallway.

“Are you expecting someone?” Carmilla asked him.

“No. Is it Laura?”

“I haven’t heard from her since we parted ways earlier this afternoon. I don’t know who that is?”

The doorbell rang again and for some reason, it made Carmilla a little uneasy. It was dark outside and she still didn’t like the calmness of this small town. She made her way down the stairs slowly, grateful that Will was right behind her. *At least he can kick whoever that is with that golden foot of his,* Carmilla thought as she reached for the handle. She opened the door fully relieved to see Laura standing there, until she saw the worried look in Laura’s eyes.

“Cupcake, where have you been?” Carmilla asked, wrapping her arms around Laura’s shoulders.

“Uh, I got a call today and got distracted. I hope you don’t mind, but I brought someone with me,” Laura said, pointing to her side.

Carmilla was surprised to see Mattie standing next to Laura. He eyes were watery and she was sniffling. Carmilla had only ever seen Mattie dressed like she was off to a press conference with the president. But here she stood in sweatpants and sweatshirt. Still matching of course.

“She needed a place to talk, but there was nowhere private to go. She came over, but my dad just kept talking to her and asking her questions. I told her that I would be spending the night at her house like old times. Since my dad wouldn’t let us have any privacy, we left my house and this was the only place I could think to come where no one would bother us so we could just talk,” Laura rambled.

“It’s fine, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, surprised that she was actually concerned for Mattie. “Come on in,” Carmilla gestured. Mattie followed Laura inside and gave Carmilla a brief smile.

“Thanks,” she muttered.

“It’s not a problem. The only rule is, to take your shoes off by the door. Mother will kill me if a speck of dirt gets on the carpet.”

Mattie nodded and took her shoes off, making sure to align them nicely with the line that was already made. “Nice place,” Mattie whispered looking around.

“It’s not bad,” Carmilla added.

“Can I get you guys anything?” Will offered, taking in the scene in front of him. Mattie jumped at his presence. “Like water or a coke. We don’t have much, but I can get you something.”

Mattie looked frail and shook her head no.

“Thanks, Will,” Laura offered.
He nodded. Will always wanted to make sure people in the house were comfortable. Another trait he received from their mother.

“So how about you two take the living room. Will and I will return upstairs to what we were doing. That way you guys can have some privacy,” Carmilla said, gesturing towards the large opening into the living room.

Carmilla turned her back and grabbed Will’s shoulders for him to do the same. She gave him a light shove to start moving towards the stairs.

“Thanks, Carm,” she heard Laura say.

“Carmilla, you can stay if you like,” Mattie said.

That made Carmilla stop in her tracks. Will stopped before her, but she nodded her direction and he continued up the stairs and into his room.

“Are you sure?” Carmilla asked.

“Look, I don’t have a lot of friends. If I did, I don’t think Laura would be the person I would be going to with this. I know you and I know we are not the closest of people, but I wouldn’t mind having a little extra comfort. If that’s okay. It’s just not an easy time for me,” Mattie stated, matter of factly.

“Okay. Sure,” Carmilla said. She started walking down the stairs and followed Laura and Mattie into the living room. Laura sat down beside Mattie, wrapping her arm around her shoulders. Carmilla sat on the adjacent couch, waiting to see if anyone would say anything. It was quiet for what like an awkward eternity to Carmilla before Mattie cleared her throat.

“A year ago, I did something really stupid to retaliate against my parent’s judgement of how a young girl should live her life,” Mattie started, but Carmilla held up her hand.

“You don’t have to tell me why you’re here if you don’t want to. We can just hangout and watch a movie, if you want.”

“I honestly just want to get this off my chest,” Mattie said, giving Carmilla a cold look before softening and leaning back into the couch. “It’ll help me,” she added.

“Okay,” Carmilla said, following suit and leaning back into the couch.

“When I was 15, I started to date this guy named Jeffrey. He was a really nice guy and treated me really, really well. With more respect than anyone I had ever met. However, my parents didn’t enjoy the fact that I had decided to date a white male. He was older than me. He was 18 and preparing to go to college. He had been impressed that I had managed to beat the senior class students and juniors, as well, to become class president. He said he admired my passion to be a leader. So I fell for him and I fell hard. When my parents tried to forbid me from seeing him, I retaliated. He and I would go out and party on the weekends. I would end up sneaking into Laura’s room and sleep on her floor so I wouldn’t have to go home and I could sleep off whatever alcohol or drug I had consumed, but one night changed everything.”

Mattie took a breath and wiped her nose. Carmilla grabbed the box of tissues that sat on the end table and pointed it towards Mattie. She gratefully took one and wiped her nose and eyes.

“You really don’t have to tell me,” Carmilla said, feeling nervous about what Mattie was going to say.
“It’s okay. One night, he took me to his brother’s party which was the university in town. I should have known better than to go, but I didn’t want to seem like a child. That night I tried cocaine for the first time and I don’t know if you’ve ever tried it, but-”

“I have. I know what it can do to you,” Carmilla said. Laura locked eyes with Carmilla, but Carmilla shrugged as if saying it wasn’t important right now.

“Well it made me a little crazy. And even though we had been intimate before, that night I went off the deep end. He was still gentle and loving. I didn’t want to be anywhere else, but with him. I felt safe in arms, even when he made love to me.”

Carmilla nodded. She was starting to see where this story was going or at least she thought so.

“I realized the next month I was late and started to panic. I took a pregnancy test at Laura’s of all places.”

“That was a fun thing to try and hide from my Dad,” Laura stated.

Carmilla thought Laura’s moment of sarcasm was a little insensitive until Mattie smiled. “You mean, when we had to throw it away in a random store’s trash can and we were so suspicious about it, someone thought we were stealing?”

“Exactly. I’m not sure why we just didn’t throw it away in the garbage that was already outside? I bet someone at that bookstore was surprised to see the box and positive test in their clear trash bags.”

Mattie smiled more before looking over at Carmilla, who’s face was bunched up in confusion. “Turns out, I was pregnant,” Mattie said.

Carmilla nodded her head.

“Anyway, I didn’t know what to do,” Mattie continued. “When I told Jeff, he said he would support me in my decision, but he was honest with me. He told me, he wasn’t ready to be a father and in all honestly, I wasn’t ready to be a mother, but I was raised to believe abortion was wrong. However, I couldn’t find it in me to bring this child into a world where it wouldn’t be wanted. It was clear, after a while, that Jeff wasn’t going to be there for me. He even started packing his stuff for college and apologizing. He had gotten into Yale. I couldn’t take an ivy league school away from him when he had worked so hard to get there. So I called Laura. She helped me make an appointment and the next thing I knew I was no longer pregnant.”

Mattie’s voice went hollow. “I felt like I was lost and empty for a long time. I only just started to recover this past summer before school started. I know Laura and I aren’t as close, but she was there for me when it happened and up until now, she’s the only one who knows that I had an abortion.”

“Did you tell Jeffery?” Carmilla asked.

“No. Once he left for college, I never heard from him again, so I didn’t see the point. He hasn’t gotten in contact with me since, but still follows me on social media. I think it’s pretty clear that I haven’t had a child since the summer after there were pictures of me in a bikini. I assume he suspects it was a false alarm or that I gone through with the abortion.”

“I see it still affects you,” Carmilla noted, stating the obvious.

“Like I said, I was raised to believe abortion was wrong. I, now, even though my parents don’t know this, believe that to be wrong. I made the choice and I now understand every woman has the choice. It’s stupid to think any other way, in my opinion. But yes it still affects me. I just thought I should
still take a moment to remember my child today, but the empty, hollow feeling hasn’t left. I just feel it more today. I assume one day it’ll pass completely.”

“And your parents never suspected anything?” Carmilla asked.

“They knew something had happened, but they didn’t push me. They knew if they did, I wouldn’t tell them and keep lying, just like a good politician. Luckily I have Laura on days like today. She always listens to me when I’m feeling down about it.”

“She’s there when I’m feeling down about my mother and I’m here when she’s feeling low,” Laura added.

Carmilla just nodded. “Is this why you’re such an asshole?” Carmilla asked, smirking at Mattie.

Mattie’s face brightened and she laughed low. “It added to it, but this has always been my attitude. Right, Laura?”

“It’s true. She’s likes to pick on people, but she can also be the sweetest person ever.”

“I didn’t mean to pick on you so much about Laura. It’s just, I’m a bitter, jealous person who views anyone waiting around for Laura as taking her away from me. Our relationship is strained, yes, but it’s comforting to know that I can still call her when I need her.”

“You did lie though,” Carmilla said.

“When?” Mattie asked, resting her hand against her chest in a way of saying, ‘who me?’.

“When you told me that Laura begged her dad to get her a car so she could use a fake ID to get into the 21 and up places.”

“Which is the worst thing you’ve ever come up with,” Laura added, smiling. “Since that was you.”

“Yeah, about that. I tend to get jealous of Laura because she makes friends so easily. If I would have known at the time, when our lives started to change, that it was because she was gay, I think things would have turned out differently. And if I wasn’t such a bitch about winning the school election, that might have also helped.”

“Just a little, but like I said earlier, I forgive you for that. We should never be rivals.”

“That is very true.”

They smiled at each other and for whatever reason, it made Carmilla smiled. It was nice to see Laura and Mattie together without bickering or getting angry.

“Well I think I have perfectly ruined your evening together. Laura told me your parents weren’t home, so I’ll be heading out,” Mattie said, getting off the couch.

“You can stay for a while if you want,” Carmilla offered. “I could order some pizza and we could all chill.”

Laura walked over and hugged Carmilla.

“What do you say, Mattie? It’s a honest moment of Carmilla being nice to someone who isn’t me,” Laura said.

Mattie exhaled. “Fine, but try not to be too star crossed lovers in front me. I hate that crap.”
“Well as long as Laura doesn’t try and whisper, you’ll be fine.” Carmilla smiled.

Laura nudged her in the ribs. “I was whispering.” Laura pouted.

“A little ball of fire, that one,” Mattie said, pointing to Laura. “She can’t whisper for shit.”

“She really can’t. It’s kind of entertaining, don’t you think?” Carmilla asked, walking towards the phone.

“What was she talking about this time and who was in the room?” Mattie asked, following Carmilla.

“My brother was in the room and she was talking about her underwear. I could tell she was trying to whisper, but it was still loud.”

“I was whispering,” Laura said again, a little louder.

“Is Laura trying to whisper?” Will said, from the top of the stairs.

Carmilla and Mattie started laughing while Laura just started to pout. Carmilla walked over to her, wrapping her arm around Laura’s shoulders. “Oh, Cupcake, don’t pout. We’re just teasing.” Carmilla leant down to give Laura a kiss. Laura continued to pout before a small smile crept up onto her lips and she kissed Carmilla back.

Mattie stayed at the Karnstein residence til around 10:30 before heading out the door. Carmilla actually started to like Mattie that night as they got to know each other better in a more comfortable environment. Carmilla made sure to lock the front door and leave the light on in the living room, before taking Laura’s hand so they could go upstairs together. They changed into their pajamas before crawling into bed. Carmilla spooned Laura from behind and kissed her shoulder lightly.

“Everything alright, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked.

“Yeah. I just wish I knew that on Monday, Mattie would still be her old self and continue to be that person who was just downstairs. But I know her walls will come back up and her colder side will make it’s presence known,” Laura sighed.

“Well enjoy the thought that you had tonight with her and don’t let your mind linger on anything else,” Carmilla offered.

“I’ll try.” Laura was quiet for a moment. “So, cocaine, huh?”

“I used to be a little bit of rebel with Ell. She was a little more dangerous. I tried it once at her place, but never did it again.”

“Why, Baby?”

“It made me a little crazy and angry. I, uh, I punched a wall because I had a ton of energy.”

“Geez, Carm. How did you explain that to your parents.”

“I told them I punched a wall on a dare. I was pretty much an ass hole and got in trouble a lot then, so they believed me. But I knew to never touch that stuff again.”

“I think that was a smart choice.” Laura smiled and turned in Carmilla’s arms. She gave her a light peck. “I like this, you know.”
“Like what?” Carmilla asked. She adjusted her body to make Laura more comfortable.

“Us being domestic. Getting up together. Going to lunch with our friends. Going to bed together. It’s just really comforting and I like it.”

“I like it too. In fact today when I didn’t hear from you, I started to get worried that you had grown tired of being around me. That I had annoyed you in someway."

“I could never grow tired of you, Sweetness. I love you.”

“I love you too, Cupcake.” Carmilla gave a light peck to Laura’s forehead before they both started to drift off to sleep.

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The next morning, the two girls woke in each other’s arms, still tight around one another. Their legs tangled together and the warmth of their bodies keeping them glued to one another. Laura made breakfast for Carmilla and Will before heading back to her place to drive her Jeep to church. Carmilla and Will did as they were told and went to church so the Karnstein family had representation. They left church and went home together. They tidied up the house and waited for their parents to come home.

Around 7, Will and Carmilla were watching a movie on the television when the door opened.

“Children?” They heard Lilita ask.

They both got up to greet their parents home.

“Hi, Mother.”

“Hi, William. Carmilla. Did you two have a good weekend?”

“It was very good,” Will said, hugging his mom.

“And you two kept the house so nice and clean,” Lilita smiled, running her fingers over surfaces to check for dust. Good thing Carmilla had thought of that earlier.

“Hey, Kid. Good weekend?” Henry asked, stepping inside with the suitcase.

Carmilla smiled. “Great weekend, Pops.”

Chapter End Notes

Give another round of applause to Kristin for editing and helping me get this chapter up!

Also guys I reread my entire fanfic this past week and realized I had made a few errors. I’ve gone back and fixed those, but I just want to clearly state that Laura’s mom has been dead for 2 years. I realized sometimes it was 2 and other times it 1 year, so that has all been corrected. If you guys see anything that doesn't make sense, just tell me lol. But thank you again for reading and staying with this story! Means the world to me!
She Can't Hold It In Any Longer

Chapter Summary

WARNING: There is blood mentioned in this chapter along with descriptive dreams of the camp.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The air was starting to warm as the month of March started when Carmilla woke in a panic. Her eyes shot opened as she kicked the sheets off that were snug around her. She was breathing heavy and looking around. She tugged on her pajama pants to check on her scar. It wasn't bleeding like she had dreamt it was.

The dreams.

Since the third week of February, Carmilla’s nightmares were coming back. She hadn’t had dreams like this since she got out of that camp. She can’t shake her memories and they are becoming more and more vivid with each sleep.

“It's okay. It's okay,” she whispered to herself while panting for breath. She was sweating, but tried to ignore the fact that her tank top was clinging to her back and pieces of her hair were sticking to her forehead.

Carmilla laid back down and closed her eyes, trying to wield her brain to stop, but the images of her nightmare played like a movie behind her eyelids. The images forced her to open her eyes again. She groaned. She looked at the clock to see it was one in the morning. She was exhausted, to say the least. Over the past two weeks, her nightmares had been waking her up every few hours or so. She hadn’t had a peaceful, dreamless sleep since the last time she cuddle with Laura, and that had been just a nap on Laura’s couch one Sunday after church. She felt like it would take hours for her to finally settle enough to sleep, only to wake with a jolt a few hours later. They were taking a toll on her nerves as well as her emotions.

Carmilla swung her legs over to the side of the bed, sitting up. She rested her elbows against her knees holding her head in her hands. She rubbed the palm of her hands over her eyes as she contemplated calling Laura. She always found Laura’s voice soothing and comforting, but Carmilla couldn't bring herself to wake Laura up with child like nonsense of a bad dream, no matter how much she felt like she needed her.

She rose from her bed and made her way downstairs to the kitchen for a glass of water. The fact that she was breathing heavily and panting, had dried her mouth out. As she made her way downstairs, she noticed the neon light above the sink was on. Carmilla could make out the faint outline of her father sitting at the kitchen counter.

“Hey, Dad.”

“Jesus!” Henry jumped. “Don't scare me like that,” he said, resting a hand over his heart. “I'm an old man.” He smiled.
“Didn't mean to startle you so dramatically,” Carmilla responded, sarcastically.

“Ha ha. Care to tell me what you’re doing up so late?” Henry asked.

Carmilla ignored Henry’s question as she grabbed a cup from the cupboard and started to fill it up with water. She glanced outside through the window over the kitchen sink, but quickly looked away. Her nightmares had increased her fears of any dark areas and she was terrified of seeing something or someone move in the backyard. She looked down as she kept her back towards Henry while taking a few large gulps, finishing the glass and refilling it. Instead of using her words to answer her dad, she kept her back to him and shrugged.

“Kid, don’t tell me you had a nightmare.” Carmilla could tell Henry was trying to be amusing, but after the misery she had been through, she couldn’t find any humor in his words. She knew it was ridiculous to be having nightmares, but it’s not like she could stop her past from haunting her.

Carmilla cleared her throat as she felt it tightening, fighting the tears. Her dream tonight had been a bad one which she hadn't had in awhile. Most of her dreams consisted of the same thing, her being back in camp, being numb, adjusting to the electric shock on her skin, Michael trying to show her how straight he was, her being denied any remorse when it came to Michael, Joshua crashing into that tree and seeing his mangled body over and over again. They rotated each night to play a different scenario. Sometimes she swore her brain actually just showed her, her memories. Her dreams have been something she kept to herself. Her family knew she was having nightmares, but she never explained what happened in them. Not even to Will. When the nightmares had finally stopped a couple months after returning home from the camp, she assumed she was better, but now they’re back and she isn’t sure what that means.

Carmilla tensed her body to hold everything in. She wasn't a child who could just cry on her daddy’s shoulder anymore because she had a disturbing and almost realistic nightmare. She had to be strong. She wasn’t sure if she had to be strong for herself, her family or Laura, but she wasn’t a kid anymore.

“All good, Pops. Just needed some water,” she managed to choke out without her voice cracking.

“You sure?”

Carmilla nodded before exhaling. “What are you doing up?” Carmilla asked.

“Late night crossword, of course,” he replied, holding up the newspaper. “It bores me so much that when I can't sleep, it puts me to sleep.”

Carmilla nodded and finished her glass. She placed it back into the sink to clean in the morning. She just had to get back upstairs and into her room, that way when her tears fell, she would be the only one to know how weak she could actually be. Henry on the other hand knew something was wrong with her. As she passed her father, he lightly grabbed her arm. Carmilla stilled, but couldn't turn around. She knew if she looked at him, she'd lose it and she hadn't done that since he returned from Africa.

“You sure you're okay, Kid?” He asked again.

She nodded, but didn't turn around.
“Carmilla, look at me.”

She didn't want to. She wanted to go upstairs and be alone. She just wanted to sleep without problems.

“Come on, Kid,” He whispered.

She felt him stand up from his stool at the kitchen counter. She slowly turned to face him. Her eyes were starting to water and she bit her lip, trying her hardest to keep it in. He slowly pulled her in against his chest, holding Carmilla as she started to cry. Henry knew from the past that he would never learn what these dreams were about. Carmilla had always said she couldn't remember or that it was just something stupid that spooked her. Henry always knew it was something more than that, but also learned it was easy for Carmilla to shut down completely when she was asked too many questions at once about something she didn’t want to discuss.

Carmilla, on the other hand, always felt comfortable and safe with Henry. Even though she never wanted to look feeble, she felt like she could with her father. When she was a little girl and had scratched her knee or fell at the playground, Henry was the one to swoop her up and hold her until she stopped crying. Mother didn't like Carmilla to show her weaknesses. But Henry was always there.

Henry rubbed Carmilla's back, telling her it was okay. She nodded before slowly pulling away, sniffling and rubbing the tears away from her cheeks.

“Sorry, Dad,” she whispered.

“It's okay, Kid. Sometimes dreams are just scary. It happens to all of us, no matter how old we are. Do you want to talk about it?” He asked, hoping his daughter would comply.

“Uh, I'm okay. I guess I just needed to get that out, but I'm tired. I'm gonna go back to bed.”

“Okay, Kid.”

Carmilla started making her way towards the stairs. He body was slouched and she was growing tired with each step. She continuously wiped her nose on the back of hand, trying not to cry again in front of her father.

“Carmilla?”

She stopped and turned to look at Henry.

“You know you can come to me with anything. I'll always listen and always help you without judgement. You know that, right?”

Carmilla stared at him.

“Promise?” She asked so quietly, she could tell it took a moment for Henry to process her question.

He smiled at her. “Promise,” he said. “I just wish I knew what went on in that head of yours. I want to make sure you're okay. Will you come sit with me for a moment?” Henry asked, patting his hand on the empty stool.

“It's late, Dad. I do have school tomorrow.”

“Just come and sit. Just a moment, please.”
Carmilla exhaled sharply, but made her way back to the kitchen and sat on the stool next to her dad.

“You know, Kid, you haven't had nightmares like this in a while.”

“I know,” Carmilla muttered.

“How long have you been having them? I’ve noticed it’s becoming more and more difficult to get you up for school in the morning.”

“A couple weeks.”

“Any idea why?”

Carmilla stared and scratched a piece of dried food that was stuck to the counter. She shrugged, hoping Henry would let her go back to bed.

“In fact, I don't think you've had nightmares since a few months after I got back from the mission trip in Africa.”

“No, I haven't. Well at least, not to this extent,” Carmilla said, not bothering to make eye contact.

“Well talk to me, Sweetie. Let's see if we can figure this out.”

“It's just a bad dream.” Carmilla was starting to get aggravated.

“I know, but you had them for a couple years. Are you thinking about that girl? What's her name?” Henry paused before snapping his fingers, clearly having come up with the name. “Ell. Are you thinking about her?”

“No, Dad. I haven't thought about her in years. I told you what happened between us was an accident. I was just caught up in the moment, but it shouldn't have happened.”

“Are you sure, Kid?”

Carmilla didn't like where this conversation was going and she was starting to get mad.

“Yes, Dad, I'm sure,” she said through gritted teeth. Her fist were starting to clench. Her body rigid.

“Carmilla, I'm just trying to understand why these dreams are happening to you. Are you not happy?”

“I am, Dad! I'm the happiest I've ever been!” Carmilla raised her voice.

“Carmilla, I'm just trying to understand why-”

“I don't know, Dad! It's just a nightmare. It's not a big deal!”

“Carmilla, please. We don't want to wake your mother.”

“Of course not,” Carmilla said as a snide remark, pushing her stool back. She was on edge and couldn't handle this conversation anymore. She was so tired and felt nervous, even sick. *Why is he questioning me. It's just a stupid dream. Stupid, stupid dreams.* She got off her stool and started making her way out of the kitchen.

“Please don't leave, Carmilla. I didn't mean to make you upset. I'm just trying to tell you that I love you and I'm here for you.”
“Dad, I'm going to bed.”

“Carmilla?”

Carmilla ignored him as tears started to shed down her cheeks. She ran upstairs and slammed her door shut. She didn't care if she woke her mother. She curled into a ball on her bed as close to the wall as possible and let her emotions get the better of her. She felt her body heaving and gasping for breath as she continued to cry. She heard a light knock on her door, but ignored it. She figured it was Henry and she couldn't deal with him anymore tonight. She knew her door opened and she felt her bed dip before two arms wrapped around her.

“I've got you,” Will whispered. “You're not there anymore. I'm never going to let Mother send you back there. You're here with me.”

Carmilla couldn't stop crying. She rolled over and curled into her brother, continuing to cry on his shoulder.


Carmilla shook her head.

“You have to stop crying, Kitty. You'll black out and you know I'll have to tell Dad. He already knows something up. Is it the nightmares again?”

Carmilla nodded. “How did you know?” she asked, her voice was small.

“I heard you when you woke up. I was in the bathroom, when I heard your door open. So I did my new hobby of listening at the top of the stairs. Carmilla, please listen to me when I say this. Dad loves you. You can trust him. He wouldn't hurt you.”

“He left, Will. He left me with her and she sent me the earth equivalent of hell.”

“I know. But maybe it’s time Dad knew. Mother is going on that business trip next week. Why not take advantage of it? It could help.”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you think dad would send you back to that? You know he wouldn’t. Not to mention, I would never let them send you back to that place. Hell, if Laura even has an idea of them contemplating sending you back there, I’m pretty sure that little ball of fire would have plenty of words to say. And you know she would lay down in front of any type of vehicle to stop them from taking you.”

Carmilla felt her lips twitch up at the name of Laura before she thought of the things that could happen to her if her mother found out that she had been sneaking behind her back to be with Laura. She had to keep Laura safe and away from the wickedness her mother could have against her. She felt her eyes starting to water again and curled back into a ball.

Will rubbed Carmilla's back until she fell asleep.

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The next morning, Henry opened Carmilla's door to see his two children fast asleep on opposite sides of Carmilla's bed. Will stretched on his back while Carmilla was curled into the fetal position as tight as possible. Henry shook Will as lightly as he could, trying not to disturb Carmilla.
“Hey, Buddy. It's time to get up,” Henry said.

Will opened his eyes and just nodded, remembering he had fallen asleep in Carmilla’s room. He had waited for her body to stop shaking from crying before he allowed himself to shut his eyes. Even though he was exhausted, he slowly got out of Carmilla’s bed hoping not to wake her. He knew out of anyone, that she needed sleep. Will noticed Henry was going to stay. He watched as Henry sat down and studied Carmilla’s features.

“Dad? I don't think-” Will started in a whisper.

“She’s not going to school today. I'll be the one taking you. Go get ready. Mother is getting breakfast prepared.”

“She’s going to be okay, right?” Will asked.

“She’ll be fine, Will. Do you know what her nightmares are about?” Henry asked, curiously.

Will shook his head no. “But whatever they are, they must be bad.”

Henry nodded. “Go get ready for school, Son.”

Will looked at him a little longer before leaving, closely Carmilla’s door quietly. Henry rubbed Carmilla's back slowly and lightly, noticing the knit in her brows. She had the comforter clenched in her fists and her body was tense. He shook her gently and her eyes opened immediately. She was quick to push Henry away from her with her eyes wide.

“Shh. It's okay,” Henry said.

She sat up and looked at Henry. Her room came into focus and she felt herself relax.

“Sorry, Dad,” she said, trying to catch her breath.

“Another bad dream?” He asked, lightly.

“Not a good one, that’s for sure.” Carmilla looked around. “What time is it?” she asked. She was rubbing her eyes. She just wanted to see Laura. Laura would make this better.

“It's 7, but you were up late so I think you should take the day.”

“No, Dad, it's okay. I can go.”

Carmilla untucked herself and started to get out of bed, but Henry stopped her by placing his hands over hers.

“Sleep, Kid. You need it. I'll tell your mother. Don’t worry about it. Think of it as a mental health day and go back to sleep.”

Carmilla looked at her dad. Henry noticed how scared her eyes were and he patted her hand.

“I don't know what's happening, but I'm not going to pry. If you need to talk, I'm here. If you don't want to, I'm still here. Now get some rest,” Henry said.

Carmilla laid back down against her pillows. Henry pulled her comforter up and kissed her forehead.

“I promise you, Kid. No matter what is happening, whether you tell me or not, it's going to be okay. Okay?”
Carmilla nodded before turning on her side. She thought about texting Laura to tell her she wasn’t going to be in school today, but decided against. *She shouldn’t have to deal with this or my problems. It’s not fair to make her go through this with me,* Carmilla thought before drifting back asleep.

Carmilla woke up again around noon. She didn’t feel any better and her dreams had still managed to be consistent, but not terrifying. She laid staring at the ceiling for a moment before she heard her phone vibrate. She checked her phone to see texts and missed calls from Laura. She knew it would be lunch time soon at school and that Laura would try to call her again. She still felt like keeping this from Laura would be a better thing. They were her own problems. Laura didn’t need to be dragged back into this. She got out of bed, the same way she had the night before. She rubbed her eyes before making her way into the shared bathroom with Will.

Her mother had painted the walls a light hint of gray, that matched the white tiles of the shower. She turned the water on and started the shower, waiting for it to warm while she brushed her teeth. Carmilla looked at herself in the mirror and almost didn’t recognize herself. She had dark circles under her eyes and they seemed kind of hollow. Her skin didn’t look as refreshed as it usually did and her body felt heavy. The mirror started to blur from the steam, as Carmilla trudged herself under the shower head.

After a long shower, she made her way downstairs. Henry was sitting on the couch, watching an old episode of Law and Order. He noticed her as she made her way into the living room, sitting on the adjacent couch, avoiding eye contact with him. She felt bad for her losing her temper earlier that morning, but after being asked the same questions over and over in her dream before feeling the burn of electricity on her skin, she couldn’t handle Henry interrogating her.

“Dad?”

“Yeah, Kid?” Henry acknowledged and muted the television.

“I’m sorry for losing my temper last night and yelling. I hope I didn’t wake Mother.”

“It’s okay, Carmilla. Your mother did wake, but I explained to her that you had another nightmare and that I pushed you a little too far for comfort. I’m sorry for asking you so many questions. I know you hate that.”

“It’s okay.” Carmilla paused and could sense Henry was about to ask something before cutting him off. “I’m not ready to talk about it,” she stated.

Henry gave her a weak, sad smile, but nodded. He hated that she wasn’t opening up to him like she used to do when she was little.

“I promise, when I am ready, I’ll tell you,” Carmilla added, seeing the hurt look in Henry’s eyes. She didn’t like to disappoint him, but she wasn’t sure if she’d ever be able to explain what was happening in them and what had happened to her.

“Whenever you’re ready, Kid, I’ll be here. But until that time comes, are you hungry?”

Carmilla had honestly felt nauseated since last night, but she felt a little hunger buried in her empty stomach.

“A little,” she said, turning her attention to the television.
“What would you like to eat?”

Carmilla shrugged, staring at the tv, not paying attention to what was actually happening. Henry was scared that her pout might become a permanent feature on her face.

“So Thai then?” He asked, smirking.

Carmilla smiled and gave him a little laugh. “You wish, Old Man!”

He laughed. “Well worth a shot. How about you get dressed and we'll go get Chinese.”

“Sure, Dad.”

Carmilla got up and ran upstairs. She threw on an old pair of jeans, a tshirt and a black sweatshirt, before making her way back downstairs. Henry was standing by the door with her leather jacket open so she could slip it on. After she secured on a pair of Converse, she gratefully put on the jacket that was held out to her and followed Henry out to her car. She let Henry drive, too tired to stay focused on the road.

Carmilla’s phone sat on her bed. She left it so she could have a nice quiet lunch with her dad. Her phone was buzzing as Laura’s name appeared on the screen.

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When they got back an hour later, Carmilla was feeling a little better. Her thoughts had been distracted by Henry doing goofy things at the Chinese restaurant as they caught up about school and Henry’s book.

Once they stepped back inside the house however, Henry had work to do in his study. Carmilla made her way back upstairs and into her room. She turned her music on shuffle and laid down on her bed. “I Only Want You,” by Eagles of Death Metal seeped through her speakers while she grabbed her book for English that was laying on the floor, where she had left it the night before. She was hoping this book would distract her from the thoughts of her nightmares.

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Henry noticed the time being after three when he heard the doorbell ring. He had a feeling he knew who it was and got up from his chair in the study. He made his way through the living room to the foyer when the doorbell rang again. He swung the door opened and smiled at the short, honey brown haired girl standing in front of him.

“Good afternoon, Laura.”

“Hi Pastor Karnstein. I hope I’m not bothering you.” Laura stood there with her hands behind her bag, shifting her weight back and forth from her left side to her right side.

“And what brings you here on this slightly warm March day?” Henry asked. He knew why she was there and assumed Carmilla asked her to come over without checking with him first to make sure it was okay.

“Well, Carmilla wasn’t in school today and I haven’t heard from her at all. I’m worried, Sir. I just wanted to make sure she was okay.”

“She’s okay, Laura. She’s just hasn’t been sleeping well.”
“Oh. So she’s okay then?” Laura asked, visibly relaxing.

“She’s okay, Laura. She’s upstairs doing her homework that she didn’t do the night before. She and I were up late talking so I let her take a mental health day. I think she needed it.”

Laura nodded and bit her lip. “Well as long as she is okay, I’ll be on my way. Sorry for bothering you, Pastor Karnstein.”

She turned and was halfway down the stairs when Henry spoke.

“Laura? Do you want to see her?”

Laura turned to look at Pastor Karnstein.

“I don’t want to intrude. I just wanted to make sure she was okay.”

“I think the only way you’ll feel better is if you check on her yourself. Not to mention, I think she would feel better seeing you. She wanted to go to school this morning, but I stopped her. It’s unlikely that Carmilla has ever wanted to actually go to school so I thought about it and realized you were most likely the reason she wanted to go. So why don’t you come on in?”

Laura was hesitant, but Henry smiled at her.

“Are you sure, Pastor Karnstein?”

“As sure as I am standing here. Come on. I’ll make you guys some hot chocolate. Maybe you can tell her what she missed at school today. Keep her mind distracted.”

Laura started to make her way past Henry, who had held the door open for her. Laura was quick to follow the house rules, and slipped off her boots before asking Henry the question on her mind.

“Keep her mind distracted?”

“Laura, she’s been having nightmares and apparently bad ones. She won’t talk about them, but maybe you could help her? She doesn’t seem to mind talking to you and telling you things. So can you try to keep her distracted and happy for me?”

“I don’t think that would be a problem, Sir.”

“Also, try and help her stay awake. She slept pretty late today and I wouldn’t be surprised if she is up there sound asleep again.”

“I’ll try, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Thanks, Laura. I’ll leave you to it. You know where her room is. I’ll be up in a little bit with a snack.”

Laura smiled and turned to head up the stairs, while Henry continued to walk into the kitchen. Laura entered Carmilla’s room, expecting to see her sprawled on her back, but she was curled into a tight ball. She could see Carmilla was shaking and breathing her hard. Her face was scrunched and her fists were clenched.

Carmilla on the other hand, didn’t feel Laura’s presence. She was back in that dark interrogation room. “State your full name, please.”

“Carmilla Elizabeth Karnstein.”
“Do you know why you're here?”

“I got caught kissing a girl.”

“Did you enjoy that?”

She felt her lips twitching upward even though she begged them not. She was smiling and she knew what that meant. The heat of the electricity against her skin buzzed and shot pain through her body. She screamed at the top of her lungs.

“Why are you smiling? You’ve committed the most unholiest of sins.”

“Because she was my everything and I loved her.”

Another shock. She could feel the blood running down her side.

“Do you want to spend your eternity in the pits of Hell? Huh? Do you?!?”

“No!” She cried. “No, please stop! Please! Please!”

Her shocks were lasting longer and longer as the blood from her skin started to drip onto the white tiled floor.

“Again!” The camp leader shouted. The machine kept running and running as her blood started to pool on the floor, draining her. She was drowning in it. His voice was shouting in her ear.

“Remember this when you think of committing a filthy and disgusting act. This will be punishment. God hates what you’ve done. He hates fags.”

Carmilla felt a light shove on her shoulder. She caved her body in more, rubbing and scratching at her scar.

“No,” she said, slapping at the hand on her shoulder.

“Carm?” The voice said, but she ignored it, swatting at the hand again. It was trying to pull her hand away from her scar and she had to protect herself. She had to cover the blood. It was rising too fast. She couldn’t see anything, but red. The liquid filling her brain.

“No. No.”

“Carmilla,” the voice said again.

Slowly Carmilla started noticing the softness in the voice.

“Baby, please,” Laura said, rubbing Carmilla's back. Carmilla stilled and opened her eyes. She blinked several times as the red walls of her room came into view. She noticed her black comforter under her body and the distinct smell of Laura. Laura, she thought. She slowly rolled over to see Laura looking at her, a concerned expression on her face.

“How are you feeling?” Laura asked, touching Carmilla's forehead with the back of her hand to check for a fever before wiping away the light trickle of sweat.

Carmilla didn't say anything as she scrambled to lay her head on Laura's lap. She pulled Laura as close to her as possible. Laura lightly scratched her head before turning Carmilla's head up to look at her. Laura saw the dark marks around her eyes and it seemed her skin was paler. Laura was even sure that Carmilla was thinner. She stared at her before Carmilla turned her head back to face Laura's
stomach and curled in. She closed her eyes and started to fall back to sleep, or so Laura thought.

“Why are you here?” Carmilla whispered.

“Well, my girlfriend, who I love more than anything, ignored me all day and I needed to make sure she was okay. Are you?”

Carmilla shook her head no.

“Talk to me, Sweetness,” Laura said, as she started to play with Carmilla's hair.

Carmilla started to feel safe with Laura's hand scratching her head lightly. Everything felt better and lighter. Her body wasn’t tense and her fists weren’t clenched. She hadn’t felt this relaxed in a couple of days. She started to fall back asleep. Laura nudge her lightly.

“Your dad told me to not let you sleep too much. He said you've been sleeping almost all day.”

“I'm so tired,” Carmilla said.

“What?”

Carmilla stared at the woven fabric of Laura's sweater before slowly picking her head up, out of Laura’s lap and sitting up. She could feel the burning sensation of not crying in her throat and tried to swallow it down. She couldn't look at Laura. Even though she couldn’t figure out why, all Carmilla wanted to do was sleep. Nightmares or not, she was still exhausted.

“Talk to me, Carm,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla felt a tear run down her cheek, but Laura was quick to catch it and wipe it away. Laura cupped Carmilla's cheeks which caused Carmilla to look at her. She had never seen Laura look so worried. The look on Laura's face made her feel worse and filled her with guilt. They were just nightmares. Nothing to be concerned about. She exhaled which helped the tight muscles in her throat loosen.

“I'm sorry I ignored you all day,” Carmilla whispered.

“As you should be,” Laura started, “but I understand why if you've slept all day. What's going on, Carm? I know you like to sleep, but no one sleeps this much. Are you sick?”

Carmilla shook her head no. “It's a childish reason,” Carmilla said.

“And who says that?”

“I do,” Carmilla whispered.

“Please tell me what's happening.”

Carmilla looked away and Laura placed her hands on top of Carmilla's thighs. They sat together in the endless silence before Laura exhaled. She started moving which caused a panic in Carmilla's chest. Please don't leave me. I need you. Oh god, she's leaving. Carmilla was just about to beg her not to leave, when Laura resettled herself against Carmilla's pillows with a huff while she fixed the pillows to feel more comfortable. She opened her arms to Carmilla.

“Come here,” Laura said.

Carmilla was happy to oblige, wrapping herself around Laura's side. Carmilla rested her head on top
of Laura's chest, listening to Laura's heartbeat, wrapping her left arm over Laura's torso. Laura lightly threaded her fingers in Carmilla's hair. Carmilla closed her eyes. This was the safest she had felt in weeks. Well, since Valentine’s Day. The last time she got to have an intimate moment with Laura.

“Are you going to talk to me?” Laura asked.

Carmilla nodded against Laura's chest.

“In this century or…?”

That caused Carmilla to laugh. She looked up at Laura who had a worried smile on her face. Laura remembered Henry telling her she had been having nightmares, but she knew how to approach Carmilla when it came to things Carmilla didn’t want to talk about. She decided to tread lightly.

“Let me ask again, are you okay?”

Carmilla nodded. “I just haven't been sleeping well.”

“And why is that?”

“I told you, it's childish. I don't know why my dad let me stay home from school because of it. I wanted to be with you all day, but also for some reason thought it would be better if I stayed away.”

“Why is that?”

Carmilla exhaled. Laura knew the answer was coming and waited for her to speak.

“I'm having nightmares again, Laur. And they're worse than before. They're more vivid and I can't shake them. I keep waking up and then it takes me forever to go back to sleep because the image is so strong in my mind. I don't know what to do. I just want them to stop, but they won't and it's killing me.”

“You know what I'm going to say,” Laura started.

“I know I should tell him. I do, but I'm not ready. I don't think he's ready.”

Laura nodded and laid her head back against the pillows.

“Why did or do you think it would be better if I stayed away?” Laura's voice was small now.

“I want to keep you safe from going through any of that.”

“Baby, my dad already knows about us and about me. He wouldn't send me to such an awful place so you don't have to worry about keeping me safe.”

“No. That's not it. I know you won't be sent to a camp, but I want to keep you safe from my Mother.”

“Why?”

“She hit me when she saw me kissing Ell. My biggest fear is if I get caught a second time, she’ll go after you.”

“I can take-”

“I know you can take care of yourself, but I’m scared Laura. I’ve never kept a secret from my dad.
this long and he usually figures it out by now. I’m scared when he finds out, I’m going to lose you and that thought scares me more than anything. I think you’re the only thing that keeps me from breaking completely.”

“I’m scared everyday you’re going to leave me,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla lifted her head off of Laura’s chest to look at her. “Why?”

“It’s inevitable. People always leave. My mother, Chelsea.”

Carmilla pushed herself up on her right arm to look down at Laura. She cupped Laura’s left cheek with her left hand and kissed her. Laura was eager to kiss her back. All her worriedness about Carmilla throughout the day started to dissipate with that small kiss. Laura had missed Carmilla by her side and didn’t feel whole. Carmilla pulled back while Laura kept her eyes closed.

“Look at me,” Carmilla whispered.

Laura did as she was told, making eye contact with Carmilla.

“I’m never going to leave you. No matter what happens when my parents find out, it’s you and me. I love you, Laura. I don’t want to go through life without you by my side. I’m here and always will be. Okay?”

Laura nodded and leaned in to kiss Carmilla again. She pulled back and felt Laura’s hand cup her neck.

“Talk to me about these nightmares, Carm.”

“It’s no big deal, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, sitting up fully now, facing Laura.

“Carm, you have circles under eyes and you don’t look like you’ve slept in weeks. I’m also a terrible girlfriend. How have I not noticed this?”

“The power of makeup, Love. And you’re an amazing girlfriend, Cupcake.”

“Regardless, talk to me. Maybe if you tell me, you’ll feel better and be able to get an actual night’s sleep without them.”

“They’re just stupid camp dreams, Laura. It’s not a big deal.”

“It is a big deal. I saw you asleep, Carm. I know when you’re having a bad dream and when you’re sleeping peacefully. We’ve slept together enough times now for me to know that. When you’re body is straight or you’re on your back, you’re peaceful and happy. When you’re curled into a ball, something is wrong. Your whole body was tense and shaking when I got here, Carm. Now talk to me, please,” Laura demanded.

There was a light knock on the door.

“Come in,” Carmilla said as Laura sat up.

“Just brought you some hot chocolate and cookies for you two to enjoy,” Henry said, placing the tray on Carmilla’s desk.

“Thanks, Dad.”

“Are you okay, Kid?”
“I’m okay. Thanks for the snack.”

Henry nodded. “Thank you, Pastor Karnstein,” Laura said, giving him the best smile she could muster.

“You’re welcome. I’ll be downstairs if you need me.” And with that he was back out the door. Carmilla got up to grab a mug for Laura, handing it to her, before grabbing her own with the plate of cookies.

“Thanks, Carm.”

Carmilla nodded before breaking a very small piece of the cookie off and putting it in her mouth. The silence had returned and Laura hated it. She watched as Carmilla quietly ate her cookie. She didn’t want to say anything, but the silence was slowly starting to kill her. She was just about to speak when Carmilla let out a loud sigh.

“I just keep dreaming I’m back there. I’m not sure why the camp dreams are coming out of the wood works, but I can’t shake them. It’s every night now. I go to sleep, and before I know it, I’m waking up a few hours later, panicked and gasping for breath. They’re just really haunting me right now.”

“What happens in the them?”

“It varies. Sometimes they’re small, but discomforting, like me continuously mopping down a long, endless hallway in my sweats, while Michael just stares at me from a dark area that seems to follow. Other times, it’s Josh’s body being flung out of the car from the tree he crashed into. Other times, they’re just shoving that laser thing into my side until I’m drowning in my own blood.”

“Carm, I’m-” Laura stopped herself. She felt like saying ‘I’m sorry’ wasn’t good enough.

Carmilla noticed the scared look in Laura’s eyes. “It’s okay, Cupcake. It’s just my mind reliving it over and over for some reason. However, considering I haven’t told anyone about them, I feel a little better.”

“What do you mean you haven’t told anyone?”

“My family knows I’m having nightmares, but I always say I forgot or make something up. They don’t actually know what’s going on in this noggin.” Carmilla said pointing to her head. She leaned forward to place her mug on her nightstand.

“And even though your Mother knows about the camp, obviously because she sent you there, only Will and I know what truly happened inside?”

“You know more than Will does, Laura.”

“And even though your mother thinks you’re Satan incarnate,” Laura paused to smile which made Carmilla smirk. “And Will knows you’re gay and is fine with it because he possibly could be himself, what do you think will happen if your dad finds out?” Laura asked.

“I don’t know, Laura. I know he isn’t opposed to gay people and he always preaches against homophobes, but who knows. It could be the whole, it’s okay for others to be gay, but not my kids. I just don’t know.”

“Your dad loves you, Carm.”

“I know he does.”
“Do you honestly think this is something he wouldn’t help you with? Do you think he would disown you?”

“I don’t think he would disown me, but I don’t think he’d like it.”

“Do you think he would have the same reaction as your mother?”

Carmilla shook her head. “He didn’t when I got caught with Ell, but my mother was screaming at the top of her lungs, that I don’t think he even really understood what was happening.”

“Didn’t you say he stayed with the whole night by your side?”

“He did, but I think that’s because she slapped me across the face.”

“So he was protecting you from her?”

“I think he was making sure I was okay.”

“Or maybe he was telling you, you were okay and that he loved you and supports you no matter what. Carm, he doesn’t know you got sent away. I think he deserves to know what your mother did to you. I think, it’s time for you to tell him.”

Carmilla was quiet for a moment, letting Laura’s words seep into her.

“Should I tell him about us?” Carmilla asked.

“I think that’s your decision, whether you want to or not.”

Carmilla paused. To tell her father what happened to her, scared her more than her mother finding out that she had been in a sexually active relationship with Laura. She honestly never expected to tell him ever. The thought of sitting down with her dad scared her beyond belief. She knows he loves her and would do anything for her. He tells her that at least once a week, but she knew he would tell Lilita. That’s what was stopping her. She had never told her mother what happened in that camp. She hadn’t told anyone about the last few days there. While in the camp, they fed her food that she was surprised to see was actually called food. But once she had passed their standards, she was given heavier food in a different cafeteria with other healed people. This put color back on her cheeks. When Lilita had come to get her, she was too scared to tell her what happened. Her mother was smiling brightly at her and she just returned it, thanking her mother for everything and helping her.

Carmilla hadn’t noticed the tears running down her cheeks.

“Will you be there with me when I tell him?” Carmilla whispered.

“If you want me there, I’ll be there.”

Carmilla nodded before leaning forward and resting her head on Laura’s shoulder. Laura rubbed Carmilla’s back until Carmilla lifted her head.

“Thanks, Cupcake.”

“I’m always here for you.”

Carmilla smiled before leaning in to kiss Laura. It was calm and Carmilla felt some relief leave her body. She was hoping she would have a peaceful sleep tonight.
Over the next week, Carmilla’s dreams had finally started to settle. She believed it was because she
told Laura in depth about what had been happening in her dreams, but Laura figured it was because
Carmilla was about to take the biggest step of her life. Carmilla sat in her room that following Friday
evening, waiting for her mother to head on out her business trip.

“Kids, come say goodbye to your mother before I drive her to the airport,” she heard Henry yell from
the bottom of the stairs.

“Coming,” she yelled. She sent Laura a text, telling her to come over in ten minutes.

She made her way downstairs and hugged Lilita.

“Have a safe trip, Mother.”

“Thank you, Sweetheart. Be a good girl while I’m home. Not that I have to worry. You’ll be with
your father so I guess I need to worry more about William.”

“They don’t gang up on me as much as they used to,” Will said, running down the stairs. “Bye
Mother, have a good trip.”

“Alright, Lilita, we need to get you to the airport. Kids, I’ll bring home a pizza?” Henry shrugged,
asking.

“Sounds good, Pops.”

“Alright, I’ll text one of you when I’m on my way.”

Henry started to push Lilita towards the door before she found anything she needed to clean. They
were cutting it close as it was.

“Bye, children!” Lilita said, as Henry closed the door.

“Bye,” they both yelled.

Henry shut the door and locked it. Her nerves were coming back in full swing as she made her way
into the living room, to sit down. She stared at the coffee table for a moment before Will sat down
next to her.

“When’s Laura coming?” He asked, holding his sister’s hand.

“Any minute now.”

“I won’t let anything happen to you. You know that, right?”

Carmilla nodded. She just wanted to get this done with. She was ready for this, but it still scared her
at the same time.

The doorbell rang. Will looked at Carmilla who was still staring blankly at the coffee table. He got
up and walked to the door.

“Hey, Will,” Laura said.

Will stepped aside to let Laura in. She kicked off her sneakers before making her way to the living
room, sitting beside Carmilla.

“Hey, Sweetness,” Laura whispered.
“Hey,” Carmilla said, her eyes not lifting.

“You don’t have to do this, Carm, if you’re not ready.”

“I’m ready. I just want to get it over with.”

Will sat down on the adjacent couch. “We’re here for you Carmilla. I already talked to Kirsch. He isn’t having a party, so if we have trouble, we’ll take you there.”

Carmilla nodded, barely listening to any of the words he was saying. Time seemed to move slowly as she waited for her father to return. Laura was there, she reminded herself as she put Laura’s hand in hers. She knew Will and Laura were talking amongst themselves and she was grateful they weren’t pushing her to join. She hadn’t really thought about how she was going to tell Henry, but figured she would just wing it. She would stutter over her own words if she tried to memorize something.

Finally, after what felt like hours, they saw headlights turning into the driveway. Carmilla took in a big breath before exhaling, sharply.

“We’re here,” Will assured Carmilla.

Carmilla nodded again, as she felt Laura’s lips brush against her cheek.

“I love you,” Laura whispered and it made Carmilla smile. She gave Laura a quick peck.

“I love you, too.”

Laura squeezed her hand before letting go. The front door opened and they all stood up.

“Well, the pizza place was packed, but what do you expect on a Friday night. Then they got the-” Henry froze as he saw his two children and Laura standing in the living room.

“Is this my intervention?” He asked, smirking.

Laura offered a light, generous laugh, hoping it would ease the tension.

“Well at least she thinks I’m funny,” Henry said, pointing towards Laura.

“Dad, uh, I want to talk to you,” Carmilla said, firmly.

Henry noticed the tone.

“Okay. Let me put these pies in the oven to keep it warm and then I’m all yours.”

Carmilla’s heart was beating a mile a minute. She knew she could do this, but she was terrified. She grabbed Laura’s hand as she sat down on the couch. Henry came in a moment later and Carmilla let go of Laura’s hand.

“So what do you need to talk to me about?” Henry asked, taking a seat next to Will.

“Oh, I need to talk to you about me.”

“Okay,” Henry said.

He looked between his two kids and Laura, but everyone’s expressions were blank. He looked back at Carmilla and knew what was about to come. He smiled at her, hoping it would offer her some
help. Carmilla just looked at him. He could tell her hands were shaking and the nervous look in her eye. She used to get that way before she’d tell him she had done something bad and had gotten in trouble. Her leg started to bounce a little, but Laura stopped that immediately by placing her hand on Carmilla’s knee and giving it a squeeze.

As the silence continued, Henry found this more and more humorous. He knew his daughter was trying to do the adult thing, but couldn’t help the fact that she was more of a child now then she had been in a while. He decided to get this conversation going and tried to keep the humor out of his voice.

“Carmilla, do you remember when I told you that I know you better than you think I do?” He asked.

Carmilla looked at him and nodded before turning her head back to her lap.

“Do you remember when that was?” He asked.

She cleared her throat. “No, Sir.”

“Well it’s the night Laura stayed over after your mother invited her for dinner. Do you remember how I was going to prepare the guest room? And Laura asked if she could stay with you? Well I was hesitant, but I allowed it.”

“Yeah, I remember.”

“And you’ve also noticed that I have put up a strict open door policy anytime Laura is in this house and in your room.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Kid, did you think I didn’t know? That I have had no idea what’s been going on?”

Carmilla shrugged. She barely looked up from looking at Laura’s hands. She could see her dad’s hands in her peripherals, but kept her head down.

“Kid, you gotta look at me at some point,” Henry said.

Carmilla felt her eyes start to burn as she looked up at her father. He was giving her an encouraging smile which helped her, but she felt wrong. She felt like all her lies were catching up to her and that she had been bad. As if she was almost in trouble.

“I told you. I know you better than you think, yes?”

Carmilla nodded her head again.

“So, I’ve known about you and Laura for a very long time.”

Carmilla started crying. She couldn’t suppress it anymore. She wasn’t sure if she was happy or sad, but the tears wouldn’t stop. Henry’s eyes started to water which didn’t help her feel any better.

“And I love you, Kid. You’re my little girl. My princess. You know that, right?” Henry asked, trying his hardest not to cry.

Carmilla nodded her head again. “And I’m always going to love you, Carmilla. I don’t care if you’re gay or bisexual or straight. You’re my little girl and I’m never going to let anything happen to you.”

Carmilla leaped off the couch and into his arms, crying on her dad’s shoulder. He held her tight and
kissed the side of her head. “It’s okay, Sweetheart. I’m always here. You’re my pride and joy. You make me so proud. Don’t ever think any different.”

Carmilla continued to cry on her dad’s shoulder. Henry patted and rubbed her back.

“I’m a lesbian, Dad,” Carmilla whispered.

“And that’s okay, Carmilla. I’ve known for a very long time. I’ve just been waiting for you to tell me.”

Carmilla leaned back and looked at Henry in the eyes. He cupped her cheeks. “You are so important to me and I want you to be happy. That’s all I’ve ever wanted. And I know you pretended to date Kirsch because it’s what your mother wanted, but I knew Laura was something else to you and it’s okay.”

Carmilla continued to cry. “It’s okay, Kid. I promise, it’s okay.”

Carmilla nodded. “I love you, Dad.” Her voice cracked. She leaned in to give Henry another hug.

“I love you more than you’ll ever know,” Henry said, wrapping his arms around Carmilla’s back. He held her a little longer before Carmilla composed herself and pulled back.

Henry smiled at her. “I’m so proud of you, Kid.”

Carmilla smiled back at him before going back to her seat next to Laura. She saw that Laura had tears stained down her cheeks and rubbed them away with her thumbs. She kissed Laura’s forehead and held her hand.

“And I see you have your two bodyguards. I wouldn’t dare take on Laura, but come on, Will?”

“Hey,” Will said, giving his dad a light slap on the arm.

Carmilla laughed, wiping her nose and eyes. “Look out, Old Man. He’s got that golden foot.”

“That he does,” Henry said, wrapping his arm around Will and pulling him into a headlock to rub his hair.

“Dad, cut it out,” Will protested.

“Oh, sorry your Highness. But since we’re on the subject, what’s going on with you and Eric?”

Will eyes went wide as well as Carmilla’s. Will and Carmilla shared a glance before Will started to stutter.

“I told you guys, I see things, I know all things. I’m your father. So what’s going on there?”

“I honestly don’t know, Dad. I like him, but right now we’re playing it by ear.”

“Alright, well don’t do anything rash and I’m here if you wanna talk.”

“Thanks, Dad,” Will said, clearly embarrassed.

“As for you two,” Henry said, pointing to Laura and Carmilla, “I would say you could do better about making sure you don’t get caught.”

“We’re careful,” Carmilla protested.
“I’ve seen you two kiss in the church parking lot, in the Sunday school classrooms, behind the church, in the driveway, on the street, afterwards in Perry’s basement,” Henry smirked.

“You’ve known for that long?” Carmilla asked.

“I think I knew as soon as it started to be honest.”

“How?” Laura asked.

“When we left the city, Carmilla was quiet and lonely. She didn’t have that many friends. Then you came into her life and I’ve never seen her more social. But then Rich said something to me one day about how you two would look at each other. Then we both started paying attention to how you two acted around each other compared to others. Laura, your father always knew, he claims, as did I with Carmilla. You’ve both been the center of our discussions at our weekly lunches for months.”

“So he did tell you then?” Carmilla asked.

“Tell me what?” Henry asked, looking between his daughter and Laura.

“How he found out that I was a lesbian,” Laura said.

“He hasn’t told me anything. How did he find out?”

Carmilla dodged the question immediately. “So he didn’t tell you that I was gay?”

“No, he has not.”

“Remind me to thank you dad, Cupcake,” Carmilla said, smiling at Laura. She looked over at Henry. “So we’re okay? I’m not going to be sent away or anything?” Concern had worked its way back into Carmilla's face.

“Of course we’re okay, Carmilla. Thank you for finally telling me. Do you feel better?”

She did. She felt strong and like a dark part of her soul was brightening up. She smiled before her eyes started to water.

“I think this is the absolute happiest I’ve ever been, Dad.”

He smiled at her. “Good, Kid. Remember, I’m your father. The day you were born, I told myself I would love you no matter what for all eternity and that I would protect you from anything that can harm you. I have never had a problem with sexuality and I do love you. You two kids are my heart and soul. Don’t ever forget that.”

Carmilla nodded.

“Now before this old man gets more sappy and cries some more, I’m starving. Who wants pizza?”

All three teenagers stood up and followed Henry into the kitchen. Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand and held it. Laura looked up at her and smiled, pulling Carmilla back into the living room.

“I’m so proud of you, Sweetness.”

Carmilla smiled. “Thank you for being here by my side.”

“Where else would I be?”
Laura leaned in and kissed Carmilla sweetly. They kissed for a few moments before Henry cleared his throat.

“Dinner time, ladies. Let’s keep the kissing to a minimum. Laura, even if you were a guy, I wouldn’t want to see you two kissing every time I checked in, okay?”

“Sure thing, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Yeah, sure thing, Dad.”

“Alright. Pizza?” Henry asked.

They all gathered around the kitchen counter and ate their pizza. Carmilla was happy that Henry was acting as if nothing had changed. He treated Laura the same as he had before and Carmilla couldn’t help, but feel even more blessed as she watched her dad interact with Laura. They were laughing and enjoying their time together. After they ate, Henry insisted Laura stay to play a game with them. Carmilla and Will tried to get her to decline, but it didn’t work. The settled on Monopoly and played as long as they could before they realized Laura was never going to give up.

“Come on, Cupcake. It’s late.”

“But we don’t know who won,” Laura said.

“It’s fine. You had the most money, so you won,” Carmilla said.

“But that’s not how you find out,” Laura protested.

“Baby, it’s a game. Let it go.”

Laura huffed. “Fine. It’s getting late and dad is going to be home soon.”

Carmilla walked Laura to the door. Henry came downstairs.

“Goodnight, Laura. Thanks for being there for Carmilla tonight. I know that wasn’t easy for her.”

“Well I do like her an awful lot. Wait, where’s Will?” Laura asked, slipping her shoes back on her feet.

“Will!” Henry called from upstairs.

“Yeah, Dad?” He said, coming down the stairs as quickly as possible.

“You owe me twenty bucks,” Laura said, smirking.

“Damn,” Will said under his breath.


“Sorry, Dad. I lost a bet and was hoping Laura would forget.”

“What kind of bet?” Henry asked.

“We bet twenty dollars that you already knew. I said you didn’t because you would have pried a long time ago, but Laura was sure you did and now I’m out twenty bucks.”

“Use this as a lesson to never gamble. Or at least never gamble against Laura.”
“Noted,” Will said, handing over the twenty.

“Nice doing business with you.”

Will rolled his eyes. “Goodnight, Shorty,” Will said before heading back up the stairs.

“Thank you, Pastor Karnstein,” Laura said, tucking the money into her jeans pocket.

“For what, Laura?”

“For accepting us and letting us be together.”

“I wouldn’t want it any other way,” Henry smiled. “Have a good night, Laura and even though you live around the corner, get home safe.”

“Thank you Pastor Karnstein.”

He nodded and walked into the living room. Carmilla heard the door close that led to his study. Carmilla turned her attention back to Laura and pulled her into a tight hug before kissing her cheek.

“I love you, Laura.”

“I love you too, Carm.”

They shared a few brief kisses before Laura took a step back.

“I’ll text you when I’m home, Baby.”

Carmilla nodded before giving Laura another kiss. Carmilla helped Laura put her coat on and opened the door.

“Night, Carm.”

“Goodnight.”

Laura smiled and gave Carmilla another brief kiss before she watched Laura walk down her sidewalk and get into her Jeep. Laura waved before driving off. Carmilla closed the door and locked it before the sinking feeling of nerves caught up with her. She walked to the back of the living room and knocked on the study door.

“Come in,” she heard Henry say.

She went in and sat down in one of the chairs across from Henry’s. He smiled at her, but noticed something was off.

“Is everything alright, Kid?”

Carmilla shook her head no. “I want to tell you about my nightmares,” Carmilla confessed.

Henry looked at her. “Are you having them again?”

Carmilla shook her head no. “Dad, I’ve kept something from you. Well, we all have kept this from you for a long time.”

“And what’s that?”

“I think you need to know what happened to me when you left for that missionary trip to Africa,”
Carmilla stated. She couldn’t hold it in any longer.

Chapter End Notes

Hey Guys, Kristin is busy this week so let me know if there are any errors and I'll fix them immediately. I've read through it a couple of times so I'm hoping I caught everything. Thanks again for reading!
Carmilla watched as Laura waved goodbye to her before driving off. She closed the door as quietly as she could, gathering her thoughts together. She had decided earlier that day that opening up to Henry was something she would have to do by herself. She took a deep breath before walking towards Henry’s study as slowly as she could. The door was closed, which meant he was working. Usually she would contemplate on the importance of disturbing him, but she had to do this. She had to get this out.

She took another deep inhale before exhaling slowly, while knocking on the door.

“Come in,” she heard Henry say. His tone was light. Carmilla hated that she was about to alter that mood with stories from her past.

She pushed the door open, and he smiled at her. She tried to give a smile back, but she knew it came out weak. This made his smile falter causing his features to go from happy, even almost giddy, to concern.

Carmilla sat down in one of the two chairs that faced Henry’s desk. The chairs were both at an angle, so she rearranged one to be almost aligned in front of her father.

“Is everything alright, Kid?” Henry asked.

Carmilla was anxious. Her nerves were making her shake worse than before, but she had to do this. She had kept this a secret far too long. In reality, they had all kept this secret for too long. She was ready to be completely honest with her father.

Carmilla shook her head no. How to start this? Carmilla thought for a slight moment before clearing her throat. She could feel her throat growing tighter. She took another breath.

“I want to tell you about my nightmares,” Carmilla confessed.

Henry placed his pen down on top of the papers he was previously working on. He looked at her, the amount of concern never leaving his eyes. “Are you having them again?” he asked.

After she had expressed the meaning of her dreams to Laura, her nightmares had gone away. She made sure to tell her dad she was sleeping better and that nothing was disturbing her during the night. That seemed to help his worriedness regarding his daughter. Carmilla, again, shook her head no to Henry’s question. That seemed to lessen the tension Henry had in his shoulders. It’s now or never.

“Dad, I’ve kept something from you. Well, we all have kept this from you for a long time,” she blurted out.
“And what would that be?” Henry asked. He really had no idea after all these years of what happened to his daughter.

“I think you need to know what happened to me when you left for that missionary trip to Africa,” Carmilla stated. Her voice didn't crack and just saying those few little words helped her release some of the butterflies that were in her stomach.

Henry didn't say anything. He simply put his papers, pen and book away to the side of his desk, stacking them neatly. He then got up from his chair and joined the empty chair, next to Carmilla. He moved it so they were now facing each other, Carmilla followed suit so she could look at her dad.

“When I went to Africa?” It was the only thing Henry could think to say. He had no idea where this was headed, but didn’t like the look Carmilla had on her face. He was dumbfounded at the fact that this story Carmilla had held back from him started when he left for Africa, figuring Carmilla's nightmares reflected something that had happened to her when she was a little girl, not from a couple years ago.

Carmilla nodded. She took another deep breath. “Did Mother ever tell you what happened when you left?”

“In regards to you kissing that girl?”

“Yes.”

“I remember her telling me that you had said it was an accident and that you hadn't meant to. Basically explaining it the way that you have been by being caught up in the moment.”

“And that's it?”

Henry thought for a moment. It had been a few years and he was honestly so preoccupied with having to travel, that he didn't really understand what happened. He knew his wife had acted in a terrible manner by hitting their daughter. It is one thing he refuses to forgive. He also knew Lilita had mentioned stuff when he had gotten back, but he was jet lagged and barely comprehended anything that happened those first few days back.

“Honestly, Carmilla, that's all I remember.”

“Okay.” She rested her right foot on top of her left knee. She started to shake it. This is it. Now or never, she reminded herself.

“Dad, do you remember staying by my side until you left?”

“Of course. I made sure your face hadn’t been fractured or anything. Constantly applying ice to it and checking it. I didn’t sleep.”

“I was really scared when you left that morning. Mother was not happy by any means.”

“No, Carmilla she wasn't. I tried to explain to her, and she told me before I left how sorry she was and that I shouldn’t worry. At that point, I was so tired, I assumed she slept it off and let it go.”

“Quite the opposite, actually,” Carmilla said, tapping at her shoe.

Henry stared at her. She was gazing at her shoe. He could see all the words passing behind her eyes before looking back up at Henry.
“I believe the next day, while I stayed in my room, she was looking for something.”

“Looking for what exactly?”

“Well, the night after you left, Ell came back to check on me. I met her downstairs, outside. I was terrified of Mother after feeling her hand against my cheek. I should have known better than to leave the apartment. But I had to let Ell know I was okay. I didn't realize Mother was watching us from the living room window and I should have thought to move down the street, but I didn't. The next thing I know I was telling Ell to run. Mother pulled me back into the building, upstairs and then locked me in the hallway coat closet. I stayed in there all night.”

Carmilla paused. Henry was staring just passed Carmilla, silently fuming at his wife's actions. He knew Carmilla being gay would bother his wife, but he never thought it would bother Lilita to the point of mistreating their daughter.

Carmilla cleared her throat.

“I slept in there that night. I don't know how because it was small, but I did. The next morning Mother woke me up and told me to get dressed. When I asked why, she wouldn't answer me. All I remember was it being too bright with the morning sunrise and my duffle bag had been packed, waiting for me on the floor next to the door.”

She took a moment to look at Henry. He barely seemed to relax at all, but at least he had managed to calm down a little bit. Carmilla, at the same time, had realized how rigid her body had become from telling this. Her hands were gripping the armrests of the chair for stability. She hadn't realized she was sitting forward, nor that she had uncrossed her legs. She loosened her grip, trying to relax.

“About a half hour later, a man came,” Carmilla continued. “He said his name was John. When I asked mother who he was all she said was John was going to get me help. To help me with my problem.”

“She told you, you had a problem?”

Carmilla nodded. “I did as Mother said. I assume she thought she would have to fight me to go, but at that point, I thought it was for the best. John also seemed like a really nice guy in the beginning. So John grabbed my bag, asked me if I was ready to go and I nodded.”

Henry's features went from angry to sad. A thousand questions ran through his mind. The most predominant one was how could he not have known this happened? In all honesty, he knew something had occurred, but never would have expected this.

Before Henry left for Africa, Carmilla was a wild child. She would often come home with the smell of booze, cigarettes and sometimes marijuana on her clothes. She was a rebel and believed herself to be an adult. She had a strong voice and opinions and never shamed from expressing them. Henry knew something had happened within an hour of being back. When he returned, Carmilla was quiet and almost always sad or down. She never left the apartment unless it was for church, school or a walk to the library. She was always home, continuously reading in her room quietly.

“Sweetheart,” Henry started, but Carmilla put her hand up.

“Please just let me get this out, then you can say whatever you like. If I don't get it out now, I won't ever.”

Carmilla took another deep breath before letting it out. She stayed quiet for a minute, but she looked at Henry. Memories of her childhood flashed behind her eyes. Henry always being there to make her laugh or smile. Henry picking her up when she had fallen and soothing her scrapes and bruises. How he took care of her every time she was sick. He was always there. *He’ll never hurt me.*

And so she started. She told him every single detail she could remember. How they told her if she prayed hard enough and worked hard enough, God would cure her of her homosexuality. She told him how at first she thought it was going to be okay. How they had greeted her and the other few people she entered with, like it was actually a fun camp and how they were going to help her. How she was actually looking forward to feeling normal. She described how everything changed in only a matter of hours. She told Henry about the small white room she was forced to sit in and wait for someone to get her. How cold it was there and how scared she slowly became. The sweats they made her change into. She felt like it was hours upon hours of waiting, but that it had probably only lasted thirty minutes. She continued on about the interrogation and about the small electric shock on her skin. That was the hardest part for her to confess because other than Laura, this was the second time she was saying it out loud.

Carmilla took a moment to show Henry the scar on her side. He was astonished that his daughter had gone through all of this and never mentioned it to him, but she didn’t stop there. She looked at him for a moment, contemplating.

“And then I met Michael,” she said, blatantly.

Henry blinked a few times, processing what he figured was only the beginning of this long, tedious story. He cleared his throat.

“May I ask a question before you continue,” Henry asked.

Carmilla nodded.

“Is that scar the reason you stopped going to the beach or to the pool? Why you protested anytime we mentioned it for a family vacation or activity?”

Carmilla nodded again. “If I was in a bathing suit, you would have seen it. Everyone would have seen it. I’ve always tried to hide it. And if I had just worn a t-shirt over my bathing suit, you would have asked why because I had never done that before. It was easier just to protest.”

“Have you shown anyone your scar?”

Carmilla paused for a moment before giving a slight nod. “Laura.”

“Does she know—”

“She’s the only person I’ve ever told that part of the story to. I never told Will nor Mother. Only her and now other than the three men that did this to me, you two are the only ones to know what happened in that interrogation room. That’s why I blacked out that day when I stayed with her that one time.”

“Yes, but you were actually sick that weekend.”

“I was, but I blacked out because I couldn’t control my breathing. I had just told her about what they did to me and couldn’t stop crying. Unfortunately, I couldn’t get any air into my lungs so I passed out.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this sooner or the minute I returned from the Missionary trip?” Henry asked,
as the conversation seemed to pain him more and more.

Carmilla shrugged. “I was terrified, Dad. I also was forced to sign a contract, claiming I would keep
the practices of the camp sacred for future campers. I didn't even know if you guys would believe me
so I decided to keep it for myself.”

Carmilla and Henry sat for a minute in silence. Carmilla decided to continue her story instead of
letting the silence linger any longer.

“So Michael was my roommate.”

“They made you room with a boy?”

“Yes. If I had been with a girl, I would most likely have been tempted by rooming with her, so
everyone was put in the room with a person of the opposite sex. Michael was nice, at first. He
actually helped me clean my burns from the interrogation. But after a while, things with Michael got
really weird. I found out later the things they made men do there, but I think Michael got to the point
where he needed to prove that he was straight.”

“Did he touch you?” Henry asked, anger filling his voice.

“The first few times he tried, I’d push him away and tell him to, uh, ‘F’ off and he would leave me
alone, apologizing for trying. However, later, it all became too much.”

“Did he touch you?” Henry asked again, his fist clenched tightly.

“The last time he tried, he was aggressive, but I kneed him in the groin and he toppled over like a
baby.”


“Dad!” Carmilla stated, surprised her dad openly swore in front of her.

“What else would you call him?” Henry asked.

“I mean I have multiple names, but he was being traumatized. I honestly don’t think even he knew
what he was doing most of the time. I think he got so lost in his thoughts and their brainwashing, he
forgot he was allowed to be in control of his actions. He apologized several times after that, when I
would pass him in the hall.”

“Didn’t you tell someone?” Henry asked, trying to make sense of how this camp was operated.

“Of course, Dad, but it didn’t matter. As soon as a counselor got there, he told me I should have been
proud that Michael was making a move on me. It meant that he was almost cured of his
homosexuality, that he was attracted to me. I got in trouble for resisting him, but after a week of good
behavior, they brought me a new roommate.”

Carmilla paused to make eye contact with her father. She realized everytime she talked, she looked at
his desk, trying not to meet his eyes. His eyes were full of sympathy and something else Carmilla
couldn’t place. Possibly regret or maybe anger at himself for not knowing this happened. She didn’t
know. She looked back at the desk to continue the story.

“That’s when I met Josh.”

“Did he…?”
“No. He was actually a sweetheart. I bonded with him rather quickly. He was really sweet and we took care of each other. He honestly reminded me of Will and I had a strong feeling that I had to protect him. After a couple weeks, I honestly felt like I had managed to develop a crush on him. I thought I was actually being cured. That God was saving me from all the horrible things I had done with Ell.”

“Carmilla you never did horrible things.”

“You and I both know that’s not true,” Carmilla countered. “I was a jerk who was rebellious. I got in trouble all the time. I did a lot of bad stuff.”

“Carmilla, stop. You were a young teenager acting out. That’s all.”

Carmilla put up her hand to stop Henry from talking more and changing the subject, keeping her eyes trained on her father’s desk. “Josh and I would stay up late, talking about all the things they made us do that day. Then we would talk about what we thought of ourselves, the things we’ve done, the things we wanted to do and about God. We talked about God a lot and figured God had way much more to worry about then a couple of gay teenagers trying to figure out who they were. We comforted each other on the bad days and laughed with each other on the good. It’s because of Josh that I learned why Michael had turned aggressive so quickly. They wanted the guys to prove themselves in their masculinity and how they should feel towards women. I think they went through a lot of worse things than I did.”

“What did they make you do?” Henry had a neutral persona at the moment. He was taking in every word his daughter was saying to him.

This was the part Carmilla didn’t want to tell her dad. The electric shocks where the worst part, but she, as well as the rest of the campers, were completely humiliated by the things they were forced to do and watch. She explained to them what they did daily. How she didn’t mind the time they were told to sit in a room and take notes on the Bible. She read the whole thing when she was in there. She would copy down Bible verses that meant something to her for herself, while handing in the correct ones she was supposed to write to her counselor. She told Henry about her personal mantra and how she would repeat it to herself over and over again everyday. She went on further to explain how she even did it when she realized she had feelings for Laura.

Then Carmilla decided on telling him about the more graphic parts of her conversion therapy. How they would make them sit and watch hours and hours of pornography. How they took all the girls into one room and boys into another. They forced everyone to watch it over and over again, showing them what women should want out of men, how they should react from men and their purposes of being women. They watched weddings and birthing videos to make sure they remembered why women were put on this earth. If they ever looked away, they would get a small shock on the side. The images of these videos and movies flooded Carmilla’s mind.

She exhaled sharply and looked at the clock. It was around eleven at night and she needed a break. Her throat was dry.

“Can I get some water?” Carmilla asked.

“Please,” Henry said. “I’ll join you.”

They walked out of the study. Henry turned the lights off and closed his door, while Carmilla made her way into the kitchen. She grabbed a glass and filled it, chugging the water almost immediately. Henry sat down on a barstool. Carmilla placed the cup in the sink, and turned around to face him.
“Well this feels familiar,” Henry tried to joke, but his smile left his face too quickly. “Are you ready to continue?” He asked. Carmilla started at him and didn’t reply to his questions.

“After many hours a day of writing and watching these horrible videos, they started making us, the girls, clean. They wanted to make sure we remembered our roles in society. It was very old fashioned, but they wanted us to be slaves to men basically. I guess they thought that we shouldn’t be outside or working. So I would mop the floors for hours everyday remembering to practice my mantra and trying to avoid the images of pornography that played through my head. This is why Josh and I became so close. Because we would sit and talk like normal people. We managed to get out all our thoughts from the day without repercussion. You wouldn’t dare say anything to counselors. I saw teens get swatted with belts and struck by rulers. It only happened to me once because I couldn’t get a stain off the floor, but I didn’t bleed. I mostly minded my own business and did as I was told. I was too scared to do anything else especially after getting a ruler slammed on my hand. Josh saved me, Dad. Everyone would see us together and believed that our friendship was a relationship. They made us an example for the other people to follow by. We held hands and I think I kissed him once, but nothing more than that. By society standards, he was a true, absolute gentleman.”

“He never touched you?”

“No, Dad. He was respectful. I wish you could have met him. He was a really good friend.”

“Is this the boy you were crying about one day, but wouldn’t tell me why?”

“Yes. He died in a car accident. I saw it on his facebook. His mom had posted it. I did as much research as I could. I left before he did. We wrote a lot of letters back and forth. He would get all his thoughts out on paper and I would reply back. His death was unexpected.”

“Which is why all my stamps kept going missing.”

“Exactly. He was a good guy, Dad. I think after I left, he realized his feelings for guys was never going to leave and they made him feel ashamed of himself. He didn’t have anyone. He was from a small town, like this one. His parents disowned him when he got back and realized he hadn’t been cured. The last note I got from him said he was living in his car, driving to a better place. I just didn’t know a better place to him eventually meant Heaven.”

Carmilla had honestly liked Josh a lot. He was the only one who understood what had happened to her because he lived through it too. Tears stained down her cheeks at the thought that he didn’t have anyone to comfort him or accept him. That she wasn't enough to save him.

“Do you think he’s in Heaven, Dad?” she choked out, wiping tears from her cheeks.

“He is, Kid. He has a better life now.”

Carmilla nodded before she felt more tears pool in her eyes.

“Can we go and visit him sometime?”

“Sure, Kid.”

She took a few breaths. “That's it. I came back damaged and terrified, trying to be a good girl for Mother. I believed I was supposed to avoid temptation from girls so I cut off all my contacts and kept to myself so I wouldn't be tempted to even think of a girl.”

She exhaled. She had finally done it. She had gotten it all out to the one man she knew would never fail her. At this point, she couldn’t stop crying. Henry stood up from his barstool and walked over,
embracing his daughter into a tight hug that she gladly reciprocated. She cried on her Henry’s shoulder.

“I’m so sorry,” Henry whispered. “Had I known, I would have never let that happen to you.”

“I know, Dad.”

“I’m so sorry, Kid. So, so sorry.”

“I’m stronger now.”

“I love you so much.”

“I love you too,” Carmilla cried.

They stayed there for a long time before Carmilla pulled away.

“Why didn’t you tell me as soon as I got back?” Henry asked.

Carmilla made her way over to the kitchen island. She slid up onto the countertop and shrugged.

“I was scared. I had thought they had honestly cured me, even though I constantly resisted what I considered to be temptation. Even if I looked at woman a second too long, my personal mantra would start in my head. It was just easier to stay at home, keep my head down and blend into the background.”

“And this is what has been causing your nightmares?”

“Yes. The ones I were having a while back were more vivid than the ones I originally had. Laura was the one that helped me come to terms with telling you. I told her about them first and it helped, but I knew I had to tell you.”

“Remind me to thank Laura for helping you, but why didn’t you tell your mother right after it happened?”

“Like I said, I was terrified. Once Mother came to pick me up, she smiled at me like she smiled at Will. You know the smile I’m talking about. The one that said she was proud of me. I forced the bad memories down, until the nightmares started. That’s when I told Will.”

“Well when your mother gets back, I’m going to have a stern talk with her. I can’t believe she would do this to you,” He almost growled.

Carmilla was hesitant towards this comment. She had thought long and hard about her mother finding out as well.

“Dad, please don’t tell Mother.”

Henry looked at Carmilla wide eyed, surprised by her daughter’s request.

“You, out of all people, don’t want me to talk to your mother about this?”

Carmilla shook her head no. “I think you should talk to her more about homosexuals and why we're okay, but not about the camp.”

“Why?”
“I have thought long and hard about this. I know she was doing what she believed was right. I’ve
looked at the website, and I know she wouldn’t have sent me there if she knew really happened
inside those walls. The website is light fluffy, talking about church and helping realizing the right
path. There is no mention of what they actually do which is why they make us sign those contracts. I
know she and I have had our ups and downs, but she doesn’t hate me. I know she wishes I was this
girly girl who would marry a strong, handsome man one day, but that isn’t me and it’s why we’ve
always fought. I think she knows deep down who I am, but hasn’t come to terms with it yet. I know
she loves me, regardless. So please don’t tell her.”

“Carmilla. I have to talk to her about this. She shouldn’t have made this choice without consulting
me. I would have never have let this happen to you. I knew she was trying to keep Laura away from
you because of what she witnessed, but when she started to open up and invite Laura over, I thought
she had finally seen the right way. Had I known that this camp had been a part of that,” He paused
for a moment. “Other than not letting you go, I don't know. I don’t know what I’m going to do when
I see her again. I’m so angry with her.”

“I am too, Dad, but please, I'm begging you to not tell her. You know she wasn’t doing it to hurt me.
She thought she was helping me. After I while, I believed she was helping me too because I was so
brainwashed. However, I want to tell her in my own time. Please,” Carmilla begged.

Henry exhaled. “Okay, I promise.”

“And don’t tell her about Laura and me. I need to be the one to tell her all of this, when the time is
right.”

“Okay, Kid. I won't say anything.”

The weekend carried on and it quickly became Monday. Carmilla felt lighter than she had in years.
The dark part of her soul had brightened even more at sharing her deepest secret with her father. She
informed Will and Laura the next day that she had done it and they both were so proud of her.

Now Henry, Carmilla and Will were on their way to the airport to pick up Lilita. Carmilla could tell
Henry was nervous, but tried his hardest to be his normal self, when he got out of the car to put her
suitcase in the trunk.

“Hello, my children,” Lilita greeted, sitting in the passenger seat.

“Hello, Mother,” they both replied, in unison.

“Are we all set?” Henry asked, getting back into the driver’s seat.

“Seems so,” Lilita stated, smiling at her husband.

“So how was your trip, Mother?” Will asked.

Carmilla rolled her eyes. “Always the suckup,” she whispered. Will punched her lightly in the arm.

“You’re going to regret that, Willy Boy,” Carmilla muttered before landing a solid punch on his arm.

“Ow, Carmilla! That hurt!”

“Children,” Lilita stated, sternly.
“Sorry, Mother,” the both said.

“So yeah, how was the trip, Sweetheart?” Henry asked.

“It was nice. Not the prettiest town, but we’re hoping to develop tourism with them. We both have so much history in our towns that we think we can come up with a way to connect them. We’re both going to be working with the towns and small cities in between us to see what we can come up with.”

“Sounds very interesting,” Henry stated. He seemed nervous.

“Are you alright, Henry?”

Carmilla kicked the back of his seat. “All good, Lilita. Where would you like to go for dinner?”

“Oh, any old place will do.”

Carmilla watched as her dad turned into the old diner parking lot. The one she knew too well. The missing sign and the blinds pulled down.

“Henry, when I said any old place, I didn’t mean a run downed, low income type of place that looks like we’ll get murdered if we step out of our car.”

“Relax, Lilita. Looks can be misleading,” He smiled and she settled, getting out the car. Will was quick to follow. They were eating dinner later than usual on account of Lilita’s arrival.

“Dad, what are you doing?” Carmilla asked, frantically.

“I’m curious to see how she’ll react.”

“Well, can’t you do that when I’m not here? One of the waiters knows me and he knows I’m gay. What if he says something?”

“Relax, Carmilla. Trust your old man for once in your life,” He said, making eye contact with her in the rearview mirror.

“Fine,” Carmilla huffed.

They got out of the car and Henry wrapped his arm around Carmilla’s shoulders. “It’s going to be okay, Kid. This is just an experiment for me. Think of it as testing the waters.”

They met up with Lilita and Will at the door.

“Are you sure about this place, Henry? It seems rundown,” Lilita said, a hint of disdain in her voice.

“It’s good, Lilita. I swear they make the best burgers in town,” Henry said, holding the door open for his family.

Everyone made their way in and Lilita smiled when she saw that Henry was correct. The outside certainly didn’t match the inside. Inside, the lights were bright and it was warm. It had a light, friendly environment. Carmilla was more grateful that a woman was working tonight and not Tommy.

The waitress took them to a table in the back corner. Henry and Lilita sat facing the restaurant, while Carmilla and Will had their backs to it.
“What can I get you to drink?” The woman, whose name was Paula, asked when they settled into their seats.

“Can I have a cup of coffee and water, please,” Lilita said, giving her usual gracious smile to Paula.

“I would like a water, please,” Henry said.

“Coke for me,” Carmilla said, lifting her head from the menu.

“Same for me,” Will said, pointing to Carmilla.

Paula gave them a half, almost forced smile before going back to the counter.

“Well, Kids. Good weekend?”

“Very good, Mother. Eric and I hung out to play some video games.”

“That’s wonderful, William. I’m so glad you have managed to make a new friend here like Eric. And you, Carmilla?”

“Uh, it was quiet. I hung out at Laura’s for a while. We watched a movie with Mr. Hollis, but that was about it. Nothing too exciting.”

“Well that sounds nice that you offered to spend some time with Mr. Hollis.”

Carmilla smiled thinking about all the times Mr. Hollis left the living room. The kisses and laughs she shared with Laura. He didn’t even mind that they cuddled up under a blanket together, but made sure he could see their hands at all times.

“And how was church, Henry?”

“Great actually. We had a good crowd and even Laurel’s daughter came to visit.”

“The one who has had some issues in the past?”

“Yeah. She came to talk to me about a few things and said she might start coming regularly.”

“Well that’s great, Pastor Karnstein,” Lilita joked.

She was in an oddly good mood tonight which made Carmilla feel a little more uncomfortable. They ordered their food, Henry, Will and Carmilla getting cheeseburgers, while Lilita settled on a garden green salad with grilled chicken, claiming she had eaten way too much junk while she was away. As they waited for their food, Carmilla noticed the restaurant was getting more and more busy. She could hear a bell ring every time the door was opened. Not to mention, Paula started to get more friendly as they sat there, welcoming and telling people goodbye rather loudly.

Carmilla watched her mother as she studied the restaurant before her. Carmilla wanted to look behind her to see who had entered, but thought it was best not to. She was waiting for Lilita to catch on, but she remained silent throughout the meal. Henry paid the check with a smile on his face before they all made their way back out to the car. When they entered the family vehicle, the real trouble started.

“Well that was an interesting place,” Lilita said, putting her seatbelt on.

“Interesting how? I mean the food was delicious, right Kids?” Henry asked.

Carmilla and Will both agreed.
“Yes, the food was very delicious, but the people. I don’t know.”

“Everyone was very friendly, Lilita,” Henry stated.

“Yes because they all seemed to be high. Not to mention, the amount of homosexuals who kept wandering in and out.”

“You shouldn’t judge them, Lilita,” Henry said.

“I know that, but God doesn’t like them. I know I’m supposed to accept and love everyone, but that I can’t get passed it,” Lilita stated blantly.

Carmilla felt her stomach drop, but she didn’t look as worried or as sick as Will did. She grabbed his hand.

“What is there to get past, Lilita? They are humans. They just love the same sex is all. It’s human.”

“Are you honestly going to sit here and tell me that being gay isn’t a sin?” Lilita asked, looking at her husband.

“You asking if it is a sin is based off the Old Testament. Most people go straight to Leviticus in regards to homosexuality. However, we are Christians. We believed that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. With that said, if we ask for forgiveness we are forgiven. God accepts and forgives those sins by throwing them into a vast water to never be looked at or thought of again.”

“Yes, but if you continually sin it’s different,” Lilita argued.

“We’re all sinners, Lilita. I just ate a cheeseburger. According to Exodus, I am not supposed to mix meat and dairy. My body is now unclean by the way of the Bible. Does this make you love me less?”

“No, Sweetheart. That is a silly rule.”

“Why is that a silly rule, but homosexuals are not?”

“Because that is not what nature intended for people. We are made to love the opposite sex for a reason. That is what the Bible said.”

“Yes, but do you think this is what Jesus taught?”

“Jesus followed the words of God, Henry.” Carmilla could tell Lilita was getting annoyed and she started to get nervous. She wanted to tell her dad to cut it out before something happened.

“Jesus taught everyone to love one another. To recognize people for their mistakes. To not hate, but forgive.”

“Oh don’t give me that hippie nonsense, Henry. He was God’s son.”

“In modern terms, He most likely was what you call a hippie. What did the angel say when Jesus was born? ‘And the Angels above sang Glory be to God in the Heavens and earth, peace, goodwill towards man.’ Jesus taught everyone that God was a loving spirit. He taught that people should respect one another and love one another. Not hate and shield our eyes away, but to help and spread his word of good news. Saying a homosexual goes to Hell is judgement that is not a human’s right to make.”

“I didn’t say they go to Hell. I’m just saying it’s a sin.”
“Calling it a sin is also a judgement, Lilita. It is no one’s place but God’s to make that sort of judgement. As much as I follow the Bible and teach from it, no one knows what happens in our afterlife. No one knows who goes to Heaven or Hell. There are statements in the Bible that could point either way, but it is wrong for us, as mortals, to try and decide people’s fate,” Henry said, reasonably.

“Well either way, I believe what my Bible says. I agree with your teachings and I agree with spreading God’s love, but according to the Bible, it is an abomination and I believe the words that God descended to be written,” Lilita said, finalizing the conversation.

Henry was frustrated as they pulled into the driveway shortly after and Carmilla could fill the rage bubbling in her stomach from hearing her mother’s words. She let go of Will’s hand and got out of the car. Instead of following her family, she walked over to her car.

“And where do you think you’re going, Young Lady?” Lilita asked.

“Sorry, Mother, but Laura and I have a school project to do. I told her I would come over as soon as I got back. Is that okay?” Carmilla asked, hoping her mention of school would persuade Lilita to say yes.

“Of course, Dear. Anything for a good grade. Be home by ten though, it is a school night,” Lilita said, waving.

Henry walked over to her. “I can see why you want to wait to tell her.”

Carmilla sneered.

“Will you please stop egging her on? She’s smart. She’ll figure it out sooner or later so Dad please, just let it be. I’ll tell her when I’m ready to. Okay?” Carmilla asked in a loud whisper.

“Okay. I’m sorry. She just never really discusses her views on homosexuality with me. Or anything really. We didn’t have time to discuss it when she found you kissing Ell. I needed to know where her views were so eventually I hope I can fix them.”

“Dad, just let it go. Telling you has helped me more than anything. I’m not ready to tell her and she certainly isn’t anywhere near ready to hear it. I’m gonna go to Laura’s and blow off some steam. I just need to be with her right now so I don’t say anything stupid to Mother. Okay?”

“Okay, Kid. I’m sorry I made you upset.”

Carmilla exhaled and put her hands in back pockets. She looked up Henry.

“You didn’t. Okay? It just frustrates me to listen to her talk about anything religious and after having a good weekend with you, I didn’t want to deal with it the second she got back.”

“I understand, Carmilla. But I have to protect you. You’re still my daughter,” Henry sighed.

Look, Dad, I know you love me and want the best for me. I know you’re trying to help me, but please Pops, just let me do this on my own.”

“You’re right. You’re an adult and can handle this situation. You’ve been doing it for so long now that I don’t know why I doubted you.”

“Thank you. I’ll see you at 10.”
Carmilla gave her dad a small smile before hopping in her car and pulling out the driveway. She just needed some air and some space away from her family. After that talk in the car, she needed to hear Laura’s voice. When she reached Laura’s house, she realized her dad wasn’t home.

“Shit,” she muttered to herself.

She killed her motor and pulled her phone out of her pocket to call Laura, when she heard knocking on the window. She jumped until she saw Laura smiling at her. She unlocked the doors so Laura could get in.

“You scared the shit out of me, Cupcake. How did you know I was here?”

“Your car is really loud, Sweetness. I also saw your headlights pulling into the driveway and my dad won’t be home until tomorrow morning, so I knew it was you.”

“Can we go inside?” Carmilla asked, hesitantly. They had respected Rich’s wishes about not being alone together in the Hollis residence when Rich wasn’t there, but Carmilla needed Laura. She didn’t want to sit in her car.

“Um, we’ve been doing really good, Carm. I don’t want to ruin that.”

“I know, but I want to be alone with you.”

“We’re alone right now.”

“Thank you, I know that,” Carmilla replied, with annoyance in her voice. “I want to be alone with you somewhere that isn’t a car.”

“Okay, but only for a little bit. You know my dad is going to check up on me.”

Carmilla put her car in park before getting out. Laura was already walking up the sidewalk. As soon as Carmilla walked inside, Laura locked the door. Carmilla pulled Laura to her and kissed her, wrapping her arms around Laura’s waist. Laura was quick to follow, putting her arms on Carmilla’s shoulders before giving Carmilla light push.

“Whoa there, Lady Killer,” Laura said.

Carmilla tried to push forward to connect her lips with Laura’s, but Laura was stronger in the moment and kept her back. She knew she wasn’t going to get anything until she explained.

“Dad thought it would be a good idea to take my Mother to the diner outside of town to see how she would react around a place that served gay people.”

Laura made a face. “Yikes. How’d she do?”

“In the restaurant, she was very well mannered, but she had plenty to say on the way back. How she couldn’t understand it. Why homosexuals are wrong. How she can’t get passed the idea that two people of the same sex can really love each other without Satin’s input. How wrong it is and what the Bible says. My dad made a strong counter argument, telling her when things were wrong religiously, but she shrugged. She basically said it was her belief and that’s how she would always view it. I told my dad to stop pushing her because she’ll eventually figure it out, and I only want to tell her on my own time.”

“How did he take that?”
“He apologized and realized that I am an adult who should be making these decisions by myself.”

“Well at least one parent is on your side. I like your dad a lot.”

“Me too. But I didn’t come here to talk about my parents. I came here to work on a ‘school project’,” Carmilla said using her fingers to form quotes. She leaned in again and kissed Laura.

Laura pulled away again. “Not tonight, Carm. It’s not a good time for me.”

Carmilla groaned. “What does that mean?”

“Well, you’re a woman. I think you can figure it out.”

Carmilla thought for a moment before realizing. “Oh. Oh, shit, Cupcake. I’m sorry. Are you feeling okay?”

“I’ve eaten a lot of cookies, and have had a heating pad on my stomach all night for the cramps, but yeah I’m okay.”

“Can I do or get you anything?”

“Sit with me on the couch for a little bit?” Laura asked.

“Nothing would make me happier,” Carmilla smiled. They walked over to the couch and Carmilla laid down until she heard Laura squawk. Laura motioned for Carmilla to move.

“Use your words, Cupcakes.”

“I have to have the heating pad on my stomach so I want to lay my head in your lap,” Laura pouted. Carmilla sat up with a smile on her face. “Come here, Laura.”

Laura smiled before laying down, resting her head in Carmilla's lap. Carmilla scratched Laura's hair lightly after she was situated. They watched a few episodes of The Office before Carmilla realized it was getting closer to ten. “I’ve got to go, Cupcake. Dad wanted me home by ten.”

“Okay, Sweetness.”

“Feeling any better?” Carmilla asked.

“Much better. Just sleepy.”

“Are you going to be okay with your dad gone all night?”

“Oh yeah. The doors are locked so I’m just going to head on off to bed.”

“Okay, Laura.”

They walked to the front door of the foyer hand in hand. Carmilla pulled Laura into a hug and they stayed that way for a few moments. Carmilla wished she could stay and be wrapped up in Laura, but saw it was five till ten and had to leave. She gave Laura a goodnight kiss before smiling.

“I’ll see you tomorrow Cupcake.”

“Okay, Baby.”
“I love you. Thanks for letting me hangout.”

“I love you too. Text me when you get home.”

They shared another brief kiss before Carmilla stepped outside and drove home. She didn’t feel as nervous or angry as she had before. Laura was always the special touch when it came to that.

The month of March carried on with ease. Carmilla could tell her dad struggled with the knowledge she had told him, but he had eased up on Lilita. They had talked about it a few more times, but the conversation had gone the same way. Lilita sticking to her opinions and thoughts only. Carmilla, however, was grateful that he had finally backed off. She had to tell him a few more times to ease up and let it be. He finally agreed and left it in Carmilla’s hands. He would wait for the day she would open up to Lilita. On that day, he swore to be by her side, to protect his daughter from anymore harm.

Carmilla was planning on waiting until she was 18. That way there was nothing for Lilita to do. She would be legal and going to college. Lilita would no longer have a say involving Carmilla’s life. Luckily, her mom had been on quite a few business trips, so Laura was more than welcome to come over and spend time with Henry, Carmilla and Will. Henry, personally, enjoyed having Laura in their home, playing different games or watching movies.

It was now Wednesday night and Carmilla had managed to stay home from going to Wednesday night prayer meeting and the youth gathering by saying she needed to study for her math exam coming up before Easter break. She might have also told a little fiblet to stay home and not be bothered with having to go to church. She liked having the house to herself, but she liked it even more when she got spend that alone and quiet time with Laura.

Carmilla was sitting on the couch with some math homework spread out in front of her, when the doorbell rang. She smiled and walked over to the door, opening it. Laura wasted no time in coming in and wrapping her arms around Carmilla’s neck. Carmilla pushed the door closed with her foot and wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist pulling her to her as close as she could.

“Hi,” Laura said.

“Well hello to you too,” Carmilla replied.

They kissed each other passionately for a few moments before Carmilla whined.

“What is it, Love?”

“Math,” Carmilla pouted.

Laura kissed Carmilla's pouted lip and grabbed her hand, making their way back to living room.

“You sure you want to help me with my math?” Carmilla asked.

Laura nodded. “I’m not the best at math, but it’s better than nothing and I took this class last year with the same teacher, so hopefully it'll be close to the same.”

“I don’t want to cheat.”

“No. I mean my notes. I brought them,” Laura said, pulling her notebook out of her bag.
“Oh. Of course,” Carmilla paused and then smiled. “I'm happy you’re here, Cupcake.”

“Me too, Sweetness. Now math!”

They worked for a little bit, but both managed to get distracted with each other. They would share kisses back and forth or play with each other's hands. Laura made it into a little game for Carmilla. If she got the answer right the first time, she got a kiss on the lips. If she got it right on the second try, she got a kiss on the cheek and if on the third try, she would get a kiss on the hand. If she still didn’t get it and Laura had to explain it, she got nothing. It was an easy way to keep Carmilla focused on her school work.

After an hour of studying and working on practice problems, Carmilla had had enough math. She had a small headache and needed to take a break. Laura leaned in and started kissing Carmilla. Carmilla could never say no to Laura causing her to respond almost immediately. Carmilla ran her hands under Laura’s shirt and scratched down her bare back.

Laura moaned before pushing Carmilla down on the couch. Carmilla allowed Laura to lay her down, keeping their lips connected. They kissed a few more minutes before Carmilla pampered Laura’s lips with light pecks.


Laura nodded and hopped off Carmilla and started to skip towards the staircase. Carmilla quickly followed her until they were in her room where she immediately started to kiss Laura’s neck. She kissed down the V neck that Laura was wearing, before she felt Laura pull her head back up to kiss her. They moaned in unison as their breathing started to pick up. Carmilla knew they had to be quick and didn’t want to bother with discarding any clothing items. She slid her hand down the front of Laura’s jeans causing Laura to gasp loudly.

Carmilla kissed Laura’s neck as she worked her hand in between Laura’s thighs. Laura was moaning and panting, pulling at Carmilla’s hair. Carmilla continued to kiss down her neck and the exposed area of her chest, enjoying the feel of Laura. Laura swore under her breath and pulled Carmilla closer to her. Carmilla knew she was close. It only took a few more minutes to feel Laura come undone, raking her nails down Carmilla’s back. She took a few deep breaths, relishing in the feeling of herself on Carmilla’s hand. Carmilla pulled her hand out and met Laura’s lips. They kissed each other greedily. They were giggling and smiling at each other, sharing small kisses while they stood and hugged each other, slightly swaying back and forth in each other’s arms while kissing each other.

Just then Carmilla felt a hand tug harshly at her hair while Laura’s arms started to fall off her shoulders. It was like everything was happening in slow motion, as she saw Laura’s eyes widen. She knew whose hand was pulling her hair away.

“Laura, run!” Carmilla shouted, trying to save Laura from whatever was about to happen, but Laura stood there frozen. Carmilla felt herself falling backwards and landing on the carpet floor of the hallway with a thud.

“Run, Laura! Get out of here!” Carmilla shouted again and she saw her words click in Laura's brain as she started to make her way towards the stairs. Carmilla watched Laura turn to go down the stairs, but Lilita was hot on her trail. Carmilla pushed herself off the floor and ran after both of them.

“Laura?” She heard Henry say, coming from the living room. He was standing up as Carmilla continued to run down the stairs.

“Lilita, what happened?” Henry asked, hoping to get some answers.
Carmilla could barely hear any other responses as she saw her mother’s hand land on Laura’s shoulders trying to stop her.

“Don’t touch her!” Carmilla screamed.

They all looked towards Carmilla, who was now standing at the bottom of the stairs.

“Don’t put your fucking hands on her,” Carmilla yelled, her hands clenched in a tight fists. Lilita’s hand faltered, staring at her daughter.

Chapter End Notes

This was a hard chapter for me to write guys. I did a lot of research for this to make sure everything was accurate. I hope you guys enjoyed it along with yet another cliffhanger.

Shout out to Kristin!! She's been with me through this whole process.
Carmilla and Laura were kissing while embracing each other. Both arms wrapped around each other's waist as they swayed back and forth to nonexistent music. Carmilla studied Laura. The way her body was still responding to the orgasm she had just received. Her deep breaths and blissful smile. Her smooth, soft lips and beautiful eyes.

Laura moved her arms to wrap around Carmilla's shoulders, before cupping Carmilla's neck in her hands and giving her another kiss. Her body finally relaxing and enjoying the feel of Carmilla against her. She pulled Carmilla into a hug. Carmilla's grip grew stronger and tighter around Laura's waist as she took in the faint scent of Laura’s perfume that she had dabbed on her neck before coming over. She gave her a light peck where she knew Laura placed her perfume. They let go, but only to move in for another kiss.

Carmilla pulled away to smile and rested her forehead against Laura's. They looked at each other having a silent conversation, while smiling and ogling one another when the mood of the room suddenly shifted.

At first, Carmilla thought Laura’s hand had moved to her hair to push her back into a kiss until she felt a harsh tug that began to pull her. The pain was immediate and she gasped as she felt herself being dragged from Laura. Her mind slowly caught up with her. Laura's hands slid off her shoulders and her eyes widened at the realization of what was happening.

“Laura, run!” Carmilla shouted as she passed her door frame still being pulled by the hair from Lilita’s strong grip. Laura stood frozen on the spot, her body tense and rigid. Carmilla felt herself being pulled down before she fell on the carpet, sliding a little bit, knowing her elbows would have floor burns. Her heartbeat was so loud, it was the only thing she could hear. Lilita started to step over her, towards Laura.

“Run, Laura! Get out here!” She practically screamed. Lilita looked back at Carmilla with the most hateful look Carmilla had ever seen in her mother’s eyes. Carmilla didn't care, she just wanted Laura to get out and away from her mother. She had to keep her protected. Carmilla noticed that her words finally registered with Laura when she saw Laura turn and make her way down the stairs. Lilita wasn't too far behind once she realized Laura was moving and trying to get away. Carmilla pushed herself off the floor and chased after them.

“Laura?” Carmilla heard Henry say, coming from the living room when she reached the top of the stairs and to make her descent. Carmilla could hear the surprise in Henry’s voice.

Henry caught on and was standing up as Carmilla continued to run down the stairs. She could sense
he was trying to figure out what was going on.

“Lilita, what happened?” Henry asked, hoping to get some answers as he continued to move into the foyer.

Carmilla could barely hear any other responses over her heartbeat. She knew Lilita was shouting and Henry was trying to calm her mother down, but she didn’t care.

“You!” Lilita screamed, reaching for Laura’s shoulder.

As Carmilla watched her mother’s hand land on Laura’s shoulders trying to stop her, every amount of anger she had ever felt bubbled to the surface.

“Don’t touch her!” Carmilla screamed.

They all looked towards Carmilla, who was now standing at the bottom of the stairs. Carmilla was breathing heavy as if she had just ran a marathon.

“Don’t put your fucking hands on her,” Carmilla yelled, her hands clenched in a tight fists. Lilita’s hand faltered, staring at her daughter.

“What did you just say to me?” Lilita asked. Her voice was calm, almost peaceful, and it made Carmilla feel sick when she saw the anger in Lilita's eyes. Henry stood, watching Lilita and Carmilla motionless.

Carmilla noticed Lilita's hand back on Laura's shoulder and watched as Laura flinched when Lilita tightened her grip. Carmilla moved immediately, pushing Lilita's hand away and standing in front of Laura.

“She has nothing to do with this,” Carmilla shouted.

“She’s not going anywhere, Henry!” Lilita interrupted. “She’s tricked my daughter back into her old wicked way,” Lilita's calm voice never falter. “I saw them upstairs kissing and hugging. As if Laura didn’t know I was there watching. That evil look in her eye as I witnessed her tempting my daughter to go down this dark path with her! I will not tolerate this. She is my daughter and she will not be a lesbian. She will disgrace our family. You are the head of a church. We will be a laughing stock and I won’t have that.”

Carmilla had enough and found her voice, stronger than ever. She straightened her back, making sure Laura was still behind her.

“Laura hasn’t done anything, Mother! This is who I am. I’m a lesbian!” Carmilla was shouting, proud of herself for facing her mother.

Lilita stared at her. She had the same look as the last time they were in this predicament: wide eyes, her mouth stretched into a thin line and her nostrils flaring. Lilita gritted her teeth before turning her body straight towards Carmilla. She swung her arm and slapped her daughter across the face with the back of her hand. Carmilla flinched and moved at the pain, but wasn’t going to let her win.

“Lilita,” Henry shouted, grabbing his wife’s hands and pulling them behind her back to restrain her from even tempting to do that again.

“Is that what you want?” Carmilla shouting again. “Fine. Hit me! If you think it’s going to make me
straight, continue to hit me. I don’t care anymore!” She was still standing in front of Laura and she tried so hard not to cry as her cheek continue to sting in pain. She could feel that it was hot from the contact, and felt a small trickle of blood running down her cheek, knowing she had been cut by Lilita’s ring. She dabbed at it with her shirt.

“You continue to ruin this family. You’re doing this to be a rebellious teenager. This will cost your father his job, do you know that? He can’t be minister with a child that is a faggot. You ungrateful child. I have done everything for you and this is how you repay us? By acting out? There will be no more of this. This little thing between you two is over, and you will never see her again.”

“If you do that to me, I’ll run. You can’t keep me from her!” Carmilla screamed.

“Carmilla stop! Both of you stop!” Henry shouted.

“Why? She hates me! You’ve always hated me!” Carmilla said, to her mother.

Carmilla had never said those words out loud and the surprised look on Lilita’s face shocked her.

“I could never hate you Carmilla. You are my daughter. I love you very much.”

“If you actually loved me, you wouldn’t have sent me away for being gay,” Carmilla argued. “Why can’t you just accept me?”

“It’s not right!”

“Who says?!”

“The Bible says it Carmilla. Leviticus 18:22 states that fact. It’s wrong and unholy in the eyes of God.”

“That’s not a reason,” Carmilla countered. “That’s a book answer. Why can’t YOU accept me? Dad has. Will has. Everyone has, but you. Why?”

“Because no daughter of mine is going to be a lesbian. You’re too good for that horrible, degenerate life. You are better than that. You are a Karnstein. I won’t let this happen to our family. Plain and simple.”

Henry sighed and tried to keep his voice calm. He took one of his hands away from holding Lilita back and pinched his nose.

“This is happening, Lilita. Whether you like it to or not, our daughter is a lesbian.”

Lilita wiggled her way out of Henry’s arms to face him. “How can you say that? You act as if you knew it was happening and allowed it to happen.”

“I did know. She told me when you were out of town, but I didn’t need her to. I saw how much she adored Laura. How much happier she was with Laura. This is who she is.”

“How can you stand there and act like you’re okay with that?”

“Because I am Lilita. She’s our daughter. I will love her no matter what.”

“I won’t stand for this. You fool!” Lilita screamed at Henry. “I told you Laura was no good for her! I told you what those women said and I knew it was true. I knew she was nothing, but a foul, disgusting human being trying to trap our daughter into the darkness of Satan’s work.”
“This has nothing to do with God or religion,” Henry stated, rolling his eyes. “This is who Carmilla is and I’m not making her live a life full of misery when Laura has brought so much joy to her heart.”

“No!” Lilita shouted. “No. This is not happening. You’re going back, Carmilla. I’m making this right and I’m making sure they do everything right this time. You need more God in life, Child, and I’m going to make sure that’s exactly what you get. Might as well head upstairs and start packing.”

Henry decided to play dumb. “And where is she going?”

“She’s going back to God in Your Heart, a conversion therapy camp for homosexuals.”

“When did she go there?”

“Henry, don’t play dumb. She went while you were in Africa after I found her smooching with that disgusting girl.”

“You sent my daughter away?”

“Yes and it worked. When she left, she had a boyfriend. They were delighted by her recovery.”

“He wasn’t my boyfriend,” Carmilla said. “He was my friend who killed himself after being disowned by his parents and living on the streets. He had nothing else to live for.”

“Then he was too far gone to be saved. Let him rest in peace in Hell.”

Lilita’s words were cold and it pushed Carmilla to edge. “Is that what you think? That he is living his eternity in Hell?”

“Of course. He obviously didn’t get the help he needed while he was in camp. He was only strong with you. I assume once you left, he didn’t have the proper things he needed.”

“Oh, get your head out of your ass, Mother!” Lilita glared at Carmilla for using language. Even Henry wasn’t going to stop his daughter from using foul language. He knew it would be no good. Carmilla continued before Lilita had the chance to reply.

“He killed himself because no one accepted him or loved him. I was the only friend he had and that's why everyone thought we were dating. I hate that I couldn’t save him, but I couldn't and now he's dead! He's dead because of people like you!”

“That's ridiculous! He wasn't meant to be saved.”

“What? How can you even say that? He was a person. A living, breathing person who was an incredible, loving man. There was nothing wrong with him! How can you say he wasn’t meant to be saved?”

“He was a homosexual who could not be healed, Carmilla. That is not your issue to deal with. You were healed until this,” Lilita waved her hand towards Laura, “little moppet came into your life. Now pack your bags, Carmilla. Henry, she will be going back first thing in the morning.”

At those words, Laura moved in front of Carmilla.

“I can’t let you do that,” Laura said.

“Ms. Hollis, there is no way you can stop me.”

“I can tell my father that you hit her. She’s bleeding.”

“She’s not going to a conversion therapy camp, Lilita. She is my daughter and I’m not letting her go through that.”

“They’re not going to do anything, but make sure she understands her role as a woman. She’ll go to church, Henry and learn how to-”

“I’m not going back,” Carmilla said.

“Oh, Darling. You don’t have a choice. This is my decision.”

“I’m not going back, Mother.” Her voice slowly started to rise as Lilita tried to fight her.

“Hush, Child. You’re just confused.”

“I’m not confused!”

Lilita exhaled. “You need to learn what it means to be a woman.”

Carmilla laughed. It was low and her smile was more of a wicked grin than any show of happiness. “I need to learn how to be a woman?” Carmilla questioned. Her body was starting to shake, every dark emotion from inside her was rising. “Do you want to know what they taught me?”

“Oh, Carmilla, stop being so dramatic. If you would have just learned how to control yourself, this wouldn’t be a problem.”

“You don’t even know what you’re talking about, Mother! You don’t know what they did to me in there!” Carmilla was shouting again.

“Hush! They were teaching you how to be normal!”

“They burned my skin!”

“Oh, stop with the dramatics, Carmilla,” Lilita waved her off.

“The dramatics? Are you kidding me? You have no idea what I’ve been through!”

“And what is that Carmilla? They make you read too many Bible verses? Attend too many church services? I know you hate church, but seriously,” Lilita waved her hand, turning to go towards her laptop in the living room.

Carmilla looked at Henry, with tears in her eyes. She was so frustrated and angry. It was at that moment she thought it didn’t matter what she said, her mother wouldn’t stand down and she would be going back. Then she felt Laura’s hand in hers. “Carm?” Laura whispered once Lilita stepped out, “Let me look at your cheek.”

Carmilla kept her head down, tears stained her cheeks, as she felt Laura’s hand caress the opposite cheek that still had a little sting to it. “It’s okay,” Laura whispered. “I’m here, Sweetness.” Carmilla nodded and made eye contact with Laura. She hissed at Laura’s hand under eye, when she touched the scrape on her cheek. She could feel it starting to swell a little bit. She hadn’t realized how hard her mother had hit her. Henry moved quickly to them.

“Let me look,” He said, cupping his daughter’s face.

Carmilla was crying, unable to control it anymore. She felt defeated. She knew there was no
“I’m so sorry,” Henry whispered, pulling Carmilla into a hug. She took that as a sign. He was backing down. He couldn’t help her and she cried more against him, her hand still in Laura’s, gripping it tightly. “I’m so sorry, Kid,” Henry repeated, kissing the top of Carmilla’s head.

“Yes, hello? This is Lilita Karnstein calling,” they heard from the living room. Henry immediately let go and made his way in. Carmilla turned to face Laura, where she fell immediately into Laura’s open arms and started crying harder.

“You’re not going back, Carmilla. I’ll call my dad if I have to or Kirsch. I’ll call anyone, but you’re not going back. Even if I have to sneak you out in the middle of the night. I’m here and I’m going to keep you safe,” Laura whispered, rubbing Carmilla’s back.

“What the hell are you doing?” Carmilla heard Henry yell, causing her and Laura to jump.

“I’m calling the camp, Henry. I told you, she’ll be leaving first thing in the morning. They will have someone come and pick her up.”

“Hang up that phone!” Henry shouted.

That peaked Carmilla’s interest as she pulled Laura to the opening into the living room. She saw her mother next to the fireplace, with the house phone to her ear. Henry was standing in between the couch and the coffee table.

“Lower your voice, Henry. I will do no such thing. Our daughter needs help.”

Henry stepped forward and grab the phone from Lilita’s hands. He hung it up before throwing back on the couch.

“Our daughter does not need help!”

“Then what do you expect we do Henry? How is she going to get better?”

“Damn it, Lilita, she isn’t sick! There is nothing wrong with her. She’s just gay. It’s not the end of the world. She is our daughter! Why would you want to send her away?”

“She is sick. Homosexuality is a sickness and she needs to be cured.”

“She doesn’t have a disease! She is a human being and as her father, I will not let her be sent back to a place that involves the torture they put her through.”

Lilita’s eyes widen at the confession.

“Yes, she told me all about your helpful camp. They destroyed my child!” Henry said. Carmilla felt Laura’s arm wrap around her. She knew it was for protection, but at this point, running away with Laura seemed like the more valuable answer.

“Oh, now you’re on the delusional rampage that they hurt her? She was smiling when she left Henry and she told me she was cured.”

Carmilla felt her body tense again. The thing she never thought she’d ever tell her mother now needed to be said.

“I was brainwashed! They burned my skin and made me watch pornography everyday! No one cared! I stayed quiet and did as I was told just so I could get out and not be beaten!”
“I’m not hearing this, Carmilla,” Lilita said, holding up her hand.

“How? So you can continue to believe what you did was right?” Carmilla asked.

Lilita didn’t answer and that made Carmilla even more upset. Carmilla walked over to her mother, who was still standing in front of the fireplace. She lifted her shirt and tug down her pants just a little bit to show her the triangular scar.

“This happened on my first day. They asked me questions about why I was there and anytime I smiled or took too long to answer or tried to put in an opinion, I felt three shocks to my side. Anytime after that, if I messed up, was found even talking to a girl, smiled while they made me watch countless hours of pornography, or didn’t clean fast enough, I got more shocks. Do you see this scar, Mother? Look at it!” Carmilla screamed. “That’s what they did to me! I will have this scar forever as a constant memory of the actual Hell you put me through.”

Lilita glanced at her scar and almost gawked. She covered her mouth with her hand and her eyes widen. She was shocked that after all these years, she had never known about this.

“Carmilla, I—”

“What, Mother? You what? Still don’t believe me? Would you like me to go in detail about the graphic pornography?”

“Sweetheart,” Lilita tried to east this with a pet name, “I didn’t know. You never told me. Why didn’t you ever tell me?” Lilita almost pleaded.

“How was I supposed to? You constantly bribed me to keep my mouth shut. You bribed Will to keep his mouth shut. When was I supposed to tell you about this?!”

“I don’t know. Why didn’t you tell me when I picked you up? You were smiling.”

“I was terrified, Mother. They wanted us to smile. Not to mention, for the first time in forever you gave me the smile you only saved for Will. The smile that said you were, for once, proud of me! For once, you actually loved me.”

“Carmilla, you are my daughter. I’ve always loved you.”

“That’s bullshit,” Carmilla said, turning away from her mother and sitting on the couch furthest away from Lilita but still faced her.

“Carmilla,” Henry said, sternly. She knew it was a warning for saying ‘shit’, but she could care less at this point.

“Well it is,” Carmilla said, crossing her arms. She looked over her shoulders to see Laura still standing in the doorway. Laura looked at her before taking cautious steps and sitting down next to her on the couch.

“It doesn’t excuse your language,” Henry said.

“If you love Carmilla so much, why would you send her away or assume she needed to be fixed?” Laura asked, suddenly. Carmilla and Henry looked at her. Lilita’s face transitioned from shock to smirk.

“My relationship with my daughter is no concern to you, Ms. Hollis. You may leave my house and head home.”
“Laura stays,” Carmilla said. “And I’m curious to know the answer to her question. If you love me so much, why would you want me to change?”

“You have no right to question my motives. I did what I did because it was the right thing to do.”

“Shut up, Mother!” Carmilla shouted, clenching her fists on top of the couch.

“Do not speak to me that way, Young Lady,” Lilita’s voice was stern.

“Then tell me the truth! Why did you send you me there?!”

“Because you needed help!”

“And burning my skin was the way to help me?”

“Carmilla had I known that that was what they were going to do to you, I would have never sent you there. I searched and it said it was the best one in the area. I couldn’t find anything that said otherwise. I would have never sent you there if I thought they would hurt you.”

“How am I supposed to believe you?”

“Because even though you think I have some personal vendetta against you, I don’t! I love you more than you’ll ever know and I only wanted what’s best for you. I thought this was the right option.”

“You should have discussed it with me first,” Henry stated.

“You were in Africa,” Lilita countered.

“She’s still my daughter, Lilita. I would have never let you do this!”

“Exactly. That’s why she needed to be fixed. How are you not upset about this?” Lilita asked.

“How are you so upset with the fact that our daughter is a lesbian? That the thought of them torturing your child has you showing no remorse for what you did to her?! We protected our children from everything. We barely let them witness anything in regards to sexual content. We made sure we explained to them how everything works and then they made her watch hours, days, weeks of pornography. All that filth, embedded into our child’s brain, at what you consider to be a Christian place. She was sexually assaulted for Christ’s sake,” Henry stated. He sat down next to Carmilla.

“What?” Lilita said, looking up and glancing between her husband and her daughter. They were silent. Henry wrapped his arm around Carmilla’s shoulder, providing as much comfort as possible. However, Carmilla was so upset, she wasn’t sure she would ever know the feeling of being relaxed again.

“What?!” She asked again, voice rising. “Carmilla?”

Carmilla exhaled. “It was my roommate, Michael.”

Lilita sat down on the edge of the fireplace, covering her face with her hands. Everything started to settle in for Lilita as they sat there in silence. Carmilla looked up at Henry, who nodded at her. She nodded back before taking Laura’s hand.

And so she started to explain. She told Lilita everything that had happened to her in the camps. She started on the first day she arrived and went in chronological the best order she could. She told her about Michael and Josh, the things they actually made them do, how her counselors treated her, the conditions they lived in, how she managed to get on their good sides by cleaning, the Bible verses,
the church services, everything she could think of. Lilita listened intently, while watching her daughter slowly breakdown. She moved from the fireplace to the coffee table, breaking her own rule about sitting on that table. Lilita’s face became more and more sorrowful at her daughter’s words. Carmilla had tears running down her cheeks again when Lilita finally noticed what she had done to her daughter.

The cut was red and swollen on her cheek. She looked down at her own hands to realize it was her wedding ring that had done the damage.

“That’s all I can truly remember,” Carmilla finished, looking at her mother.

“Carmilla,” Lilita paused, her voice soft. She tried to hold back her tears, knowing she didn’t have the right to cry. She didn’t have the right to be upset because she did this to Carmilla. She did all of this to her own daughter. She knew she couldn’t blame anyone, but herself.

Carmilla looked at her mother and leaned forward a little, resting her elbows on her knees. “The worst part is, as much as I want to and sometimes really wish I could, I can’t hate you for doing this,” Carmilla said, quietly.

Lilita studied her daughter before clearly her throat, “You should hate me.”

“Sometimes I really want to. When I have a nightmare or think about that place, but a part of me, deep down, knows you were doing what you thought was right, no matter how wrong it was. I know you thought it was right, and I can’t hate you for that.”

“Carmilla I’m so sorry,” Lilita said, still trying not to cry.

“All I ever wanted was to feel like you loved me. That I meant something to you just as much as Will did, but I never felt like I did. I was your burden. The child you couldn’t control. I was daddy’s little girl, but you must know, I don’t trust you. You’ve hit me, pulled my by my hair, didn’t give me a chance to explain, sent me off to a camp where I was humiliated and broken down to nothing. I don’t think I will ever trust you again, Mother.”

Lilita felt a tear fall down her cheek. She could tell Carmilla was getting stronger with each word that passed.

“I’m sorry,” she expressed again.

“I wish it was good enough and over time it will be, but right now those words mean nothing to me. I love you Mother, I do, but you caught me with Laura and immediately started to take the same action. You didn’t even give me a chance to explain anything before you start chasing Laura down the stairs. You still didn’t listen when I nor Dad tried to explain what happened to you. You called me dramatic. Sometimes I feel like you don’t listen to me to begin with and sometimes I think you honestly just don’t care. You need to realize you’re the one with the problem, the sickness. I’m fine. Laura and I are strong and great together. I’m not going to let you ruin the one person who has made me happy in the past two years.”

“Carmilla, I can’t accept it,” Lilita said, regaining her form.

“I don’t care if you accept it or not, but know it’s going to be happening regardless. However, if you really loved me, you’d realize your mistake and accept me for who I am.”

Lilita stayed quiet before looking up at her daughter. “I can’t,” she said, blankly.

Carmilla’s heart shattered. She had put all her hope in that when Lilita figured out the truth about
what had happened to her, she would accept Carmilla for who she was. But she didn’t and wouldn’t even try.

“Fine,” Carmilla huffed. She stood up and walked out of the living room, into the kitchen. She went to freezer and squeezed the door handle, trying to stay strong and not cry. She felt a hand on her shoulder and jumped. She knew who it was, but she honestly wished it was her mother coming to say she would at least try. She turned around to face Laura, the tears already welling up in her eyes.

“I guess that’s it then,” Carmilla said, with a laugh that got cut short when she bit her lip and started to cry.

Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla and Carmilla hugged her. She heard shuffling and saw Lilita heading towards the door. Henry was trying to stop her.

“I’m just going for a drive, Henry. I need to clear my head.”

“It’s late, Lilita. Just stay here so we can figure this all out.”

“I have to go. I need to be away. I’ll be back in an hour or so.”

Lilita closed the door, but Henry followed her out. “Lilita, wait,” he said, as the door closed.

Carmilla just continued to cry on Laura’s shoulder before sniffing and standing back up straight, looking at Laura in the eyes.

“I just thought that after telling her everything that happened to me, she would accept me. How could I be so stupid?”

“Carm, you’re not stupid. Your mother sure is, but not you. You’re so strong to stand up to her like that. I know now isn’t the best time, but I’m still so proud of you.”

“What if she sends me away, Laura?”

“After what you just told her, I don’t think she will.”

“What if she needed to drive so she could look for another one? Another camp for me to go to and ‘get fixed’?” Carmilla asked with finger quotes.

“I promise you, no matter what she comes back saying, I’m not letting her take you. I’ll sneak you out of this house if I have to, but I’m not leaving you. I’m not going anywhere. Okay?”

Carmilla nodded her head. She turned and opened the freezer door, looking for an ice pack. She moved some stuff around until she found the small, rectangular pack.

“How’s my cheek?” Carmilla asked turning back towards Laura.

“A little swollen. Let’s lay you down on the couch so we can ice it.”

Carmilla nodded and made her way back to the living room. Instead of going to the couch however, she went to the front window. She saw her mother sitting in her car, talking to her dad. They both looked upset and Carmilla started to feel sick. She couldn’t imagine what they were talking about. It seemed like they weren’t arguing, but it was hard to tell, the only source of light being from the start of the sidewalk.

“Carm? Lay down so I can look at your cheek,” Laura said.
Carmilla didn’t look away. She stayed and studied her parents, trying to figure out what was happening. She took the ice pack and brought it up to her cheek. She winced at the feeling of the cold ice against her warm cheek, but soon adjusted. She was so caught up in her thoughts, the growing pain of the ice was easy to ignore. Laura didn’t bother her. She let Carmilla stay where she was, taking in the situation that was unveiling in front of her.

Carmilla saw headlights turning into the driveway before Will jumped out. He must have been with Eric, Carmilla thought. She watched Will approach their parents, concern and anxiety taking over his features. He heard Henry yell at Will to go inside and then apologize. She watched as Henry pulled his son into a hug, then messing with his hair before letting go. Will nodded and almost ran inside.

“Kitty?” He asked, coming in a rush. He threw his book bag down by the stairs and ran to her when he saw her.

“Are you okay?” He asked.

“Other than a busted, swollen cheek, and the fact that I don’t think Mother will ever accept me and possibly never even love me, I’m okay,” she choked out before she started to cry again. Will wrapped his arms around Carmilla.

“It’s okay, Carmilla. I’m here. She’s never going to hurt you again. I’m so sorry.”

That’s when Will noticed Laura sitting on the couch, watching them.

“You okay, Short Stuff?” He asked.

Laura nodded.

“You want a hug too?” He asked.

Laura gave him a small smile before making her way over to them. She joined the hug that had already started, and felt Carmilla pull her closer to her side. When they left go, Will cupped Carmilla’s face.

“It’s definitely swollen, but the cut isn’t any bigger than the last time,” Will noted.

“That’s because it’s the same ring,” Carmilla noted.

“Do you want me to clean it up?” Laura asked, trying to comfort Carmilla as best she could.

Carmilla shook her head no and returned her eyes back out into the yard. She saw Henry walking back to the front door, Lilita stayed in the driveway. She started to cry again, when the front door slammed shut. Henry entered the room.

“She hates me, doesn't she?” Carmilla asked.

“She does not hate you, Carmilla. I think it’s just a lot for her to process,” Henry replied.

“But you accepted me so easily. She acts like I’m a disgusting, filthy person.”

“She doesn’t think you’re disgusting. Just remember, I was the wild child too, Kid. I was just like you growing up. I hated church, listened to rock, wanted to go against everything in my generation. I had friends that were gay growing up. Your mother was raised different than I was. She lived in a strict Christian household. You remember how religious your grandfather was, right?”

“So he would hate me too then?”
“Honestly, Carmilla, I don’t think he would have understood it in his old age. That’s not the point. Do you remember how religious he was?”

“Yes,” Carmilla said, keeping her eyes on her mother. She was still sitting in the car, and she could tell she was crying. *Is she crying because of what she did or the fact that she has to accept me?* Carmilla questioned.

“So you must realize this goes against something that has been embedded in her since she was a child.”

“So you’re siding with her then?” Will asked. “Dad, you know what she did.”

“Son, we have to accept people’s faults. Everyone makes mistakes.”

“And hitting Carmilla is just a small mistake?” Laura asked.

“Trust me, Kid, she feels terrible about that. Everything is crashing down on her right now. I’m not taking sides, but she feels awful.”

“She’s crying,” Carmilla noted, continuing to stare out the window. “I haven’t seen her cry this much since grandpa died.”

Henry came and stood behind Carmilla. “Let me check your cheek, Kid.”

Carmilla nodded and followed Henry up the stairs to the bathroom. She put the lid of the toilet down and sat, while Henry grabbed the First Aid kit.

“You know what I’m going to say,” he said, moving Carmilla’s head so it was more in the light.

“I’m just supposed to forgive her?” Carmilla asked.

“No. I won’t blame you if it takes years or if you never do.”

“So what then?”

Henry applied a little Neosporin to her face. The cut was barely deep and it didn’t look like she needed stitches. He took some gauze to clean up the little blood that streaked down her face.

“I just want you to give her a chance.”

Carmilla tisked.

“Let me finish. Just talk to her. Help her understand where you’re coming from. I know you won’t end in agreement, but you know she’s going to want to talk to you about this. I just ask that you listen to her, and try to remain calm. I know how quickly you get angry with her, but just give her a chance. Can you do that for me?”

Carmilla nodded. “Yeah, Dad.”

Lilita entered the door to the bathroom. Her eyes and nose were red and Carmilla would be lying if she didn’t feel a little gleeful at how she looked. She wanted her mother to feel bad for what she did to her. She cleared her throat.

“Carmilla, may I speak with you for a moment?”

Carmilla nodded, and made her way to the door.
“First, I’ll let you say goodnight to Ms. Hol… I mean Laura. Then will you come to your father’s and my bedroom, where we can speak privately?”

“You’re gonna let me say goodnight to Laura?” Carmilla asked.

“I don’t agree with it, but I can’t stop it. So yes, you may say goodnight to her.”

Carmilla smiled briefly. “Thanks, Mother.”

She walked down the stairs and waited for Laura by the door. She grabbed Laura’s hand, opened the front door and followed Laura down the sidewalk.

“You walked here?” Carmilla asked.

“Of course,” Laura said.

They stopped at the end of the driveway, hands in each other’s hands.

“Your mother apologized to me,” Laura said, abruptly.

“Oh really?”

“She said, she’s sorry that I saw her overreact. She’s sorry for what I witnessed and for being rude. She also apologize for squeezing my shoulder and blaming me for the reason you’re gay.”

“I guess that is as good as it’s going to get. But in all honesty, I’m sorry too,” Carmilla said.

“You have no reason to be sorry, Sweetness.”

“I’m sorry you had to witness that as well and for her touching you.”

“It’s not your fault, Carmilla. Do you hear me? None of this is your fault.”

Carmilla looked back at the house, noticing Lilita standing in the window.

“Well that’s creepy,” Laura commented.

“I better go, Cupcake. Text me when you get home?”

“Of course.”

“And if I don’t reply, it’s because I’m talking to her, but I’ll call you before I go to bed. I have a feeling, I’ll need to hear your voice again in a little bit.”

“And if you need me to come get you, I’ll be here. You know that, right?”

Carmilla nodded and wrapped her arms around Laura.

“You know your mom is still watching?” Laura asked, standing a little stiff.

“I don’t care. She knows now and Dad has my back, so she can’t touch me.”

Laura smiled. “I love you, Carm.”

“I love you too, Laura.”

The two girls shared an intimate, but brief kiss. Carmilla pulled away and kissed Laura’s hand before
separating completely.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Baby,” Carmilla said, waving.

Laura nodded before turning and heading down the road. Carmilla watched her for as long as she could before heading back inside. The atmosphere had changed and everything seemed to be a little more uplifting. Will and Henry were watching TV, when Carmilla came back in.

“If you need me, just call,” Henry said to her.

Carmilla nodded before making her way up the stairs and into her parent’s bedroom. She walked as slowly as possible. The door was half open. Carmilla took a deep breath before entering. She pushed the door open with a tap so it could open by itself. The door had a mild screech and Carmilla was more surprised Lilita hadn't fix that. She walked in to see her mother still looking out the window.

This is the first time in a long time she saw her mother in relaxed clothing. Her mother was already in her pajamas. The two pieces were navy blue and matched in a long sleeve shirt and pants. It honestly took Carmilla by surprise.

“Sit down, Carmilla,” Lilita said, keeping her eyes trained on something outside. Carmilla looked around and sat on her mother's vanity seat. It was cushioned and the farthest away from Lilita. She figured distance was best. Not to mention, if she sat on her parents bed in her street clothes, she would be in huge trouble.

“Did I do this to you?” Lilita asked. Her voice was soft and calm. Her body was relaxed and she even had her hair down. Carmilla took a moment to look at her mother. She had gotten older, but she was still as beautiful as she always had been. Then Carmilla realized the question she had been asked. She thought that it was an odd question for her mother to ask first.

“Did you do what to me?” Carmilla asked.

“Are you like this because I didn't love you enough or give you enough attention? Because I wasn't there for you?” Lilita continued.

Sure. Make it all about you, Carmilla thought before rolling her eyes. She remembered her dad’s words about trying to be nice and to watch her attitude.

“No, Mother. That has nothing to do with it.”

“I've read that some people date the same sex because they're looking for that touch that they didn't receive from a parent. For example if a man who turns out to be gay could be because he didn't have a father figure and-”

“Mother, that's not it. That's not it at all.”

“Then why?”

“There is no why. It's just who I am.”

“I don't understand why God has cursed you,” Lilita said, softly.

“Mother, I don't think I'm cursed and I definitely don't think God had anything to do with it. I read once that lesbians could have more testosterone than estrogen or maybe, Mother, it's just who we are. Maybe people just love who they love and identify how they want because it makes them happy.”
“But the Bible-”

“Mother, please stop. I understand what the Bible says, you say it enough. But don’t you remember the verse in Jeremiah where God says something along the lines of, I knew you before I put you in your Mother’s womb? I know that can be interpreted in many ways, but I always read it as God knew everything that was going to happen to me before I was born. He knew I would be rebellious. He knew I would experience pain. He knows what will happen in the future. If God is such a forgiving soul and a spirit who spreads love, why would He hate anything he has created?”

Lilita paused, contemplating over her daughter’s words, before turning away from the window. She had a small smile on her face. “And all this time, I thought you hated church?”

Carmilla had to give her a light chuckle at that. “I had a lot of time in camp to look up Bible verses. I think I’ve read it about twenty times now.”

Lilita's face changed to sadness.

“Carmilla, please believe me. I would have never sent you there if I would have known that they were going to do that to you. I should have known better than to send you there in the first place.”

“So why did you?” Carmilla asked.

“Several reasons, really. One, I was scared. I didn't know what this meant. My parents hated homosexuals. I was taught to hate them as well. I guess my anger rose and all I saw was red. It doesn't excuse what I did. I just feel awful and that's my fault. I wish I could take it all back. I do.”

“But you can't,” Carmilla said.

“I'm so sorry, Carmilla.”

“Mother, it's going to take me a long time to accept any apology from you. I know that's harsh, but instead of talking to me, you smacked me, through me in a closet, left me and then sent me away for a month. I'm your child.”

“I know. I know,” Lilita whispered. “I'm sorry.”

“The worst part is, you repeated it again tonight. You hit me again, you threatened Laura, and you were honestly going to send me back. Why won't you just talk to me about it instead of getting rid of me? Why do you hate me?” Carmilla asked. She sniffled and looked away from her Mother. Her eyes started to shed tears.

“Carmilla, I don't hate you. I never could hate you.”

“If you loved me, you would have let me stay. You wouldn't have just sent me off.”

“I know. You're right. But I love you, Carmilla. I was stupid in my choices. I was stupid to think that it would be any good to send you there and I'll never forgive myself. I am truly sorry, Carmilla. You are my daughter, my first born, and I have loved you since the first time I felt you kick me hard one night in my sleep while I was pregnant.” That made Carmilla laugh. She knew she had always been a pain to her mother.

Carmilla’s laugh put a smile on Lilita’s face.

“Please don't ever think I didn't love you. I made a terrible, stupid mistake. I will never be that stupid again.”
“Does that mean, you accept me?” Carmilla asked.

Lilita exhaled. “I accept you, but I'm still struggling with it. But I promise, I'll work on it. Can you give me a chance?”

Carmilla looked up at Lilita whose eyes were full of hope. “I'll give you a chance.”

Carmilla held out her hand and Lilita shook it. “Mother, I think you should know this now. I'm in love with Laura and we've been dating for quite a while now.”

“I think you're too young to understand love, Dear.”

Carmilla ignored her comment. “Laura is going to be over here and I'm going to hold her hand, put my arm around her, hug her and maybe even kiss her. You have to work up to being okay with that. I'm not going to shove it in your face or anything, but I respect a better reaction than pulling me by my hair to the floor.”

Lilita nodded.

“And you are never to touch Laura unless it's a friendly hug or handshake. She is mine and if you hurt her, that's it. I'll go and never look back. She is my world, Mother. She's the reason I'm happy and have been happy.”

“I won't touch her, and I apologized to her for my actions.”

“She told me. I just want to make sure it's clear.”

“It's clear, Carmilla.”

There was a light knock on the door and Henry popped his head in. “Everything alright in here?”

“It's fine, Henry.”

“How you doing, Kid?”

“I'll be alright. I'm gonna go call Laura and then go to bed.”

“Okay, sleep tight, Kid.” Carmilla hugged Henry tightly.

“I love you,” she whispered.

“I love you too, Kid.”

They let go of their embrace and Carmilla stood in the doorway.

“Goodnight, Mother.”

With that, Carmilla turned and left, walking down the hall quickly and closing her door.

Henry shut the door to their bedroom.

“She'll never forgive me and I honestly will never blame her,” Lilita said.

“She’s still a teenager, Lilita, but she’s opinionated. Just give her all the time she needs.”

“I've been a horrible mother to my child.”
Lilita sat down on her side of the bed. Henry looked at her for a moment.

“You have done terrible things to her, but I think eventually she will forgive you. Maybe not fully, but enough for you to know she loves you.”

“I’m sorry, Henry. I’m sorry for what I’ve done to her. I honestly thought I was getting her help. I should have gone to you. We should have talked about it before you left. I was just so scared and angry and I don’t know.”

“I love you, Lilita, but those are just excuses.”

“I know now what I did was the worst thing you could ever do to a child. If I had known what they were going to do—”

“I know, Lilita, I do, but it’s not an excuse for what you did. Not to mention, if I see you hit my child ever again, we’re through. It will be the end for us and this family. I will divorce you and fight for custody.”

“I can’t believe I hit her. That I could build that much hate in my heart.”

“Again, excuses. I’m unbelievably mad at you for even laying a hand on her. Love can only go so far. Touch her again, and I will not even hesitate,” Henry said, sternly.

Lilita nodded, knowing his words were the truth. She loves her husband, she loves her children, and now she has to figure out what to do.

“I think I want to see a therapist,” Lilita said.

“What for?”

“To deal with my anger and come to terms with Carmilla’s sexuality. It’s not going to change anytime soon, so I ha—”

“It’s never going to change, Lilita. You have to accept that.”

“But she dated Wilson.”

“She did that because she knew that’s what you wanted it. She was dating Laura the whole time that was happening. Accept it, Honey. Our daughter is a lesbian and you have to be okay with that or this family will never work.”

Lilita nodded her head again. For once, she didn’t have any comebacks. Her strong persona was defeated. She felt guilty and knew she was.

“I think going to a therapist sounds like a good plan,” Henry added. “I think Carmilla will also need to go eventually, but when she’s ready and with someone she wants to see. She’s old enough to make that decision now. If she doesn’t want to, we don’t make her. I also think she’s old enough now to decide what to wear, how to do her hair and anything else she wants to do. If she doesn’t wear a dress, you are not going to make her. She is going to be her own person and we have no right to stop her. No more pressuring her to be the girl you want her to be. Not only do you need to adjust to the fact that she is gay, you need to accept her as a person. Do you understand?” Henry asked.

“Yes, Sweetheart, I understand and I promise to work towards it.”

Henry nodded and changed into his pajamas before getting into bed. He laid down, looking over
some notes he had written earlier in the day for his novel. Lilita sat, staring at the wall, the night replaying in her mind. The horrible things she put her daughter through. At that moment, she hated herself and would do anything to change it, to get her daughter back. They sat in silence a little longer before a thought popped into Lilita’s head.

“Carmilla mentioned Jeremiah chapter one, verse five earlier.”

“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb,” Henry recited from memory.

“She said she viewed that as God knowing everything that would happen to her before she born. That her life was already a known story for him. Do you agree?”

“I think that is definitely one way to look at it.”

“Did you teach her that?”

“No, I did not. I’ve always taught there is a beaded path he has made for us and sometimes we fall off that path and need God to lead us back on it.”

“Do you agree with Carmilla?”

“I think if that is how she interprets it, then it is a wise way to view it. You should give her more credit, Lilita. She’s a smart kid.”

“She is,” Lilita stated.

Carmilla waited until it was two in the morning before she quietly made her way downstairs and outside. She was sitting on the curb when a car pulled up.

“Hey, Kid, looking for a ride?” Laura asked.

“I was taught as a child I wasn’t supposed to get in cars with strangers,” Carmilla replied.

“Yeah, but I’ve got candy!”

“Candy!” Carmilla said with a big smile. She climbed into the passenger seat and took Laura’s hand.

“What a night,” Laura muttered, squeezing Carmilla’s hand as she drove off.

“You can say that again,” Carmilla mumbled.

“Are you okay?”

“I’ll be, Cupcake. I just need time. Where are we going anyway?”

“To a special place. I’m glad to see you dressed warmly like I advised.”

“I love you, but I cannot go to your cabin in the woods. I don’t like it in the daylight. I think I would become the biggest baby if you took me there now.”

“Relax, Carmilla, we’re going to the beach.”

“Isn’t it closed?”

“We’re going to the campground. They know me, so we won’t get in trouble.”
“Won’t they call your dad?” Carmilla teased.

“Nah. They know I like to go there when I need a escape. Tonight is no different.”

Carmilla kissed her cheek and they continued to drive. When they pulled in, they were greeted by a rather young security guard. Laura rolled down her window.

“Hey, Brad.”

“Hey, Laura. Need a night away?”

“Actually, my girlfriend does,” Laura said gesturing to Carmilla.

“Well, well, well. You got someone to finally tie you down. Good for you, Laura.”

“Har har. Carmilla this is Brad. Brad, Carmilla.”

Carmilla grimaced. “Pleasure.”

“Likewise. I’ll radio the guys so they know you’re there. Have a good time.”

“Thanks, Brad.”

Laura drove out and a few minutes later they pulled up right into the bank.

“Won’t we get stuck?” Carmilla asked.

“No, I’ve got the right tires.”

Laura turned the wheel so the back of her Jeep was facing the water. She got out and started to take the top off the Jeep. Once it was out, she put her back seat down to give them more space. She laid out some blankets with two more for them to huddle under. She also pulled out a thermos.

“Is there alcohol in that?” Carmilla asked, curiously.

“You wish.”

Laura moved it in her hands before saying, “Hot chocolate. I also have one of hot tea.”

“You really planned all this out?” Carmilla asked, surprised.

“It’s been a really shitty day, Carm. I think you deserve a little quiet and a little romance. Now are you gonna sit in the passenger seat or are you going to come keep me warm under these blankets?”

Carmilla smiled at her before getting out and joining Laura in the back. They snuggled into each other, taking turns drinking from the thermoses. Carmilla laughed and smiled at all the corniness that Laura had to offer for hours. The stress left her minute after minute. They snuggled into one another as they laid back and looked at the stars together. Carmilla pointed out the random ones she knew. Laura was surprised that Carmilla knew so much about the stars since she was from the city. Carmilla pretended to be annoyed, but laid her head on Laura’s chest.

“I love you, Laura,” Carmilla whispered.

“I love you too, Carm.”

“Will you stay with me?” Carmilla asked. It was Laura’s question that she had never asked.
“I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”

Carmilla looked up at Laura and they shared a brief kiss. Carmilla adjusted so she could look at Laura’s eyes. She kissed Laura’s forehead before pulling away slowly.

“Should we start heading back? It’s pretty late or I guess early,” Carmilla said.

“Why? The sun will be rising soon.”

Carmilla smiled. They stayed together and watched as the sun slowly rose over the horizon. Carmilla thought it was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen until she looked at Laura. The sun captured all of Laura’s natural beauty and it took her breath away. Laura looked at her and smiled, thinking the same thing about Carmilla. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulder and held her close as the sun rose higher and higher into the morning sky. She was happy to share this intimate moment with Laura.

They drove home the same way they got there, hand in hand. Carmilla opened the door as quietly as possible. She saw Henry sitting in the kitchen, reading the newspaper.

“Where were you and Laura?” He asked. He had amusement in his voice.

“At the beach, watching the sunrise.”

“Was it beautiful?” He asked.

“It was, but not as beautiful as Laura,” Carmilla commented.

Henry smiled. “Such a romantic, my daughter. You mother isn’t up yet, but I’m not going to tell her.”

Carmilla exhaled before making her way to lean against the wall of the entrance so she could look at her dad.

“When did you find out I was gone?” Carmilla asked.

“When you left. I told you, I always know. Even though I was concerned to see you get into Laura’s Jeep, I had a feeling you just needed to be alone so I let you. How’s your cheek?”

“A little swollen, but no pain. I haven’t really looked at it.”

Henry motioned for her to come closer so he could look. She did as she was told and felt her the comfort in her father’s touch. He lifted her head towards the light again to give him the best angle.

“The cut is smaller, but you’re right, still a little swollen.”

Carmilla nodded. They looked at each other a little longer before Henry cleared his throat.

“So I managed to find out where your friend Josh was buried.”

Carmilla looked at him with wide eyes. “I didn’t even know you had looked,” she said, baffled.

“Well I figured I might as well since you asked if we could go see him. So I did a little research and asked around. I managed to find him. I know it was a rough day yesterday and that you’re probably emotionally drained, but I think with that cheek you should stay home today. I’m even going to give the day off to Will and just let him sleep. I was thinking the three of us could get some lunch and then drive out to see him. I figured I could also probably persuade Rich to let Laura come with us, as
well. I assume you would like to have her company.”

“She said she was going to tell Mr. Hollis she wasn’t feeling well.”

“Well, how about I talk to Rich anyway? Does that sound good?”

Carmilla smiled and nodded.

“Then it’s settled. I’ll let you get a little sleep.”

“Thanks for this, Dad.”

“I love you, Kid.”

Carmilla was about to go up the stairs when she stopped.

“Dad. We’re gonna be okay, right? As a family?”

“Yes, Sweetheart. I told you. I’m always going to protect you. Your mother is going to search for a therapist to see if she can find someone to talk to about all of this.”

“So everything is alright?”

“I promise, Carmilla, it will be. Most likely not today, and probably not tomorrow, but soon.”

Carmilla smiled and made her way up the stairs. She took her boots off, changed out of her clothes and got into bed falling soundly asleep with the feel of Laura’s necklace resting against her stomach.

Chapter End Notes

I know it came a little later than usual, but there it is! Give up to Kristin, who will be traveling tomorrow, but still helped edit this chapter! THANKS SO MUCH FOR READING!!!
The Suit

Chapter Summary

Hello everyone! I know this chapter is a day late, but it's finally here!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Carmilla woke up a few hours later with a groan. She soon realized she was laying on her swollen cheek, which left her with a sore, aching pain. She winced as she rolled over in her bed, pushing herself onto her back. She blinked a few times, trying to let the brightness of the sun settle into her vision.

Carmilla slowly reached over and grabbed her phone to check the time. It was one in the afternoon. She had managed to get a few hours of sleep after she got back to the house around 6am. She laid on her back for a few more moments before getting out bed. She sat up and stretched her arms above her head.

Once Carmilla felt like she had the energy, she pushed herself up and went straight to the shower. She reflected on the night before and Lilita's words as the hot water helped her release the tension she was holding in her shoulders and back. She winced when the water reached her elbows. She twisted her arms to look at them, noticing the small rug burns from her mother pushing her to the floor. She shivered and shook her head, trying to clear her thoughts.

Once she was clean, she got dressed and made her way downstairs. Will and Henry were talking in the living room. She could see they were having a serious discussion. Carmilla assumed it was about Will and Eric. Instead of bothering them, she said a quick “good morning” before making her way to the kitchen. There was a small surprise waiting in there for her.

“Hi, Sweetness,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla smiled. “What are you doing here, Cupcake?” She asked, making her way over to Laura who was sitting at the kitchen table. Carmilla gave her a light peck on the lips and then another kiss on her forehead.

“You dad persuaded my dad to let me go with you today to visit Josh. He also told my dad about everything that happened last night. I think your dad also told him about your mother grabbing my shoulder. So my dad examined it as if I had been mugged in an alley somewhere. I managed to calm him down since there was one little bruise, I assume from her thumb, but I had to bite my tongue so I wouldn't have said something worse.”

“What do you mean worse?” Carmilla asked, concerned that someone had hurt Laura.

“Remember that night in the laundry room? I have plenty of bruises from that night.” Laura smirked.

“What night in what laundry room?” Henry asked, coming into the kitchen. He was smiling, but Carmilla’s mind went blank. The memories of the night in the laundry room flooded her mind. Laura sitting on that dryer with her bare legs open. She could feel the blush creeping onto her cheeks at the
thought of what she did to Laura that night.

“Oh. One time when we were at Kirsch’s, he decided it would be a good idea to push Carmilla and I into the pool. So I had to help Carm dry her pants. It was a little time before we started officially dating and I think we got to know each other pretty well.” Laura smiled and then laughed to herself.

“What are you laughing at?” Will asked.

“The look on Carm’s face when she got pushed into the pool.”

“Very funny, Cupcake. I can’t swim,” Carmilla reminded her.

“Oh that’s bologna,” Henry commented. “Carmilla used to be a great swimmer until she didn’t want to do it anymore.”

“I almost drowned, if you recall.”

“I do and you were fine. She hasn’t liked the water since.”

“I think having a wave crash down on you, taking you under and having a few moments of not even realizing you’re still under the water, looking up at the sun will have an effect on you,” Carmilla said, grumpily.

“Someone is still tired,” Laura said, patting Carmilla’s head.

Carmilla pouted.

“And hungry,” Laura added.

“Well then, how about we start our little journey?” Henry asked.

Carmilla went back upstairs to put on a pair of converses and a hoodie. It was getting warmer outside, but she liked the feeling of layers against her skin. When she came back down, everyone was waiting by the door, but a new person had joined.

“Hello, Mr. Hollis,” Carmilla commented, giving him a small smile.

“Hello, Carmilla. I heard about last night. How are you feeling?”

“I’m okay, Sir. Just a little tired.”

“Well I hope you don’t mind me joining you today. Your father told me about your friend and I figured he could use a little more company.”

“I don’t mind at all, Sir. Thank you for coming.”

With that, they all headed outside to the Karnstein’s family car. It was a small four door Prius, but they managed to all squeeze in. Rich and Henry took up the front seats, while Carmilla, Laura and Will crammed into the back. At first Will decided to sit in the middle, but Carmilla looked at him as if he was crazy. Will got in on the other side, and Carmilla held the door for Laura with a smile. Laura thought Carmilla was being sweet, but soon realized Carmilla wanted her in the middle so Carmilla could rest her head on Laura’s shoulder without bothering her cheek. Secretly, Laura didn’t mind at all. She actually welcomed it.

“I figured we could grab a quick bite somewhere and then head out. It’s about an hour and a half drive to the cemetery. How does that sound?” Henry asked.
“Sounds good, Pop,” Carmilla mumbled, slowly closing her eyes.

Henry started to back up when he noticed Carmilla falling asleep on Laura’s shoulder.

“It’s only about a ten minute drive to Wendy’s, Carmilla. I think you can stay awake for that,” Henry said, but Carmilla was already out. He smiled at his daughter before continuing down the road.

Carmilla wasn’t actually asleep, she just wanted something peaceful and Laura always provided that comfort. She felt Laura’s hand on her knee and it made her smile. She peeked through half lidded eyes to see her dad and Mr. Hollis in a deep conversation, before leaning up and placing a light kiss on Laura’s neck. Laura was having her own conversation with Will and didn’t seem to notice, but Carmilla snuggled further, causing Laura to wrap her arm around Carmilla’s shoulders. Worth it Carmilla thought before smiling.

Henry pulled into the Wendy’s parking lot not much later and Carmilla continued her charade of being asleep, just so Laura would have to wake her. She could hear everyone getting out of the car, but remained still.

“Come on, Carm. Food!” Laura exclaimed.

Carmilla hummed before kissing Laura’s neck again.

“Carm, I’m hungry,” Laura whined, nudging Carmilla with her elbow in the ribs.

“Ow,” Carmilla said, sitting up straight.

“I knew you weren’t asleep.” Laura said, crossing her arms.

“Is it so bad I just wanted to cuddle up next to you?” Carmilla asked.

Laura smiled. “Sometimes you’re so sweet, it’s a little ridiculous.”

Laura booped Carmilla’s nose before getting out the car. Carmilla smiled, chasing after her, into the small eating area of Wendy’s. Their dad’s were already in line, knowing what their kids wanted. Carmilla and Laura gathered some straws, napkins, and ketchup before making their way to a table. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s chair, pulling the chair closer to her so she could rest it on the back of the chair. Will looked around and then cleared his throat.

“Carmilla, we’re still in public,” He commented.

“And?” Carmilla asked.

“Maybe it would make some people uncomfortable to see you so affectionate,” Will muttered.

“I’m resting my arm against the back of her chair. I think we’re okay.”

“Yeah, it’s not like we’re making out,” Laura said, before leaning in and whispering, “Not that I would mind doing that,” into Carmilla’s ear. Carmilla smiled. Will, however, looked distraught and a little upset.

“What’s going on, Will?” Carmilla asked.

Will exhaled before looking over his shoulders, to see if his dad was coming.

“I’m worried about Mother finding out,” Will stated.
“Well luckily, now she knows about Laura and I, so there really isn’t anything to worry about. But I do think we should let her adjust to one gay child before the possibility of informing her about another one. I told you, Will. Just be careful and don’t do anything in our house. That way, it’ll be really hard for her to find out. And if she does find out, you know I’m not going to let her hurt you, right? I’m not going to let you go through any of the crap that I went through.”

Will nodded, not meeting her eyes.

“Hey, Little Bro, I’m here. She doesn’t have to know anything until you’re ready for her to know. If you’re still trying to figure out if you’re gay or whatever, you don’t have to tell her until you’re ready to. I’m not going to pressure you and Dad clearly isn’t either. Just don’t be stupid like me and keep it out of the house, okay?”

Will seemed to relax a little at that.

“Okay,” he whispered.

Carmilla reached out across the table and patted Will’s hand before grabbing it.

“No one in this family will force you to do anything you don’t want to do. You’re still young Will. You’ve got time to figure all this out. In the meantime, I’m here to talk. I told you that,” Carmilla added.

“Not to mention, Kirsch. He would help you with any of these problems. He helped me when I was trying to figure out my sexuality,” Laura said, giving an encouraging smile.

“Exactly. He might be bro for brains, but when it comes to figuring out your sexuality, he’s a great, caring, big teddy bear. Just food for thought.”

“And here’s food for tummy,” Henry said, placing the tray of food down.

Will and Carmilla both smirked, knowing Henry was the king of corny, dad jokes. Carmilla moved her hand away from Will’s, reaching for her food. She also moved her arm from Laura’s chair, to enjoy her meal. She grabbed her burger and fries, before Henry placed her Dr. Pepper in front of her. Laura watched as Carmilla unwrapped the Baconator sandwich.

“Are you really going to eat that?” Laura asked, looking at the cheese that had melted onto the paper.

“Yes. It’s delicious,” Carmilla said, taking an exaggerated bite to tease Laura.

“I love you, but that’s gross,” Laura said.

“It’s not that bad,” Will said, holding up his own Baconator.

“Agreed,” Henry said, holding up yet another one.

“Wow, the apple really doesn’t fall that far from the tree,” Laura stated, smiling at the Karnsteins. Carmilla placed her left hand on Laura’s knee and gave it a squeeze before returning to her sandwich.

They managed to keep the conversation light, which Carmilla was grateful for. They briefly discussed the night before with Rich, but that conversation seemed to get hushed rather quickly. They talked amongst themselves while they finished up their meals. They cleaned off their table before heading back outside.
Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura’s shoulder, while they talked to each other walking back to the car, with smiles on their face.

“Hold on,” Henry said, stopping them.

“What’s up, Pops?” Carmilla asked.

He pulled out his phone. “Smile,” He said.

Carmilla immediately pouted. She never enjoyed her picture being taken.

“Carmilla, when I say smile, that means look happy.”

“I don’t like my picture taken,” she said, looking at Laura.

Laura got a wicked glint her eye before tickling Carmilla a little on the side. Carmilla squealed, trying to get away from Laura's fingers. Laura stopped and they smiled at each other. Henry managed to capture a candid picture of the two of them.

“Well, it’s better than nothing. Your mother asked for updates today, so I’m sending her that.”

“Why not just send her to an early grave?” Carmilla asked.

“Carmilla, she’s trying. Maybe if she sees how happy you two are together, it will help. Okay?” Henry questioned.

Carmilla just stared at him, causing him to exhale.

“We’re giving her a chance, remember? We’re going to help her with this. She’s already told me she found a therapist this morning, so we’re already slowly starting to get there. I’m just trying to help,” Henry added.

After Carmilla didn’t say anything, Laura stepped in front of her, staring into her eyes. She pushed some of Carmilla’s hair behind her ears before sharing a small smile.

“I know you’re still mad at her, Baby, but this is your dad trying to get your mom fully on board with us. I don’t agree with anything she has done to you, and she’s definitely not even close to being my favorite person because that is of course you,” Laura paused, giving Carmilla a smirk which Carmilla offered back. “But I think we need to give your mother a chance to try and redeem herself. Okay?”

“I’m trying,” Carmilla muttered.

“I know, but take that little pout away. Maybe the picture will help.”

Carmilla nodded, before cupping Laura’s cheeks and giving her a quick peck. They walked back to the car hand in hand.

“Can I send the picture?” Henry asked.

“Go ahead,” Carmilla said, knowing she would have no control over whether the picture actually got sent or not.

They all got back into the car as they had before and Carmilla groaned.

“I have a tummy-ache, Laura,” Carmilla said, laying her head on Laura’s shoulder.
“That’s because you ate too much food, Carm,” Laura replied, pushing Carmilla off of her shoulder. “I guess you can’t handle the Baconator as well as you thought,” she continued.

“Hey,” Carmilla said, “Every Karnstein can handle the Baconator. It’s what makes us family.”

“Except for Carmilla, who always complains about a stomach ache after,” Henry said, causing Laura to smile at Carmilla.

Will laughed. Carmilla caught his eye and she shot daggers at him. She knew it was true, but she didn’t want Laura to know that sometimes she felt a little weak with a sore stomach.

“Whatever,” Carmilla grumbled, crossing her arms.

As they drove out of town to the cemetery, Carmilla started to feel more and more nervous. She wasn’t sure why she felt this way. She had only known Josh for a short time while she was staying there, but they managed to create a very strong bond over those few weeks. It still bothered her that she couldn’t save him from the terror that seemed to follow him during his stay and after he left the camp. She laid her head back on Laura’s shoulder and started to curl towards her the best she could, looking for any sign of comfort from Laura. She started shaking her leg slightly up and down, before Laura placed her hand on Carmilla’s thigh. Laura rubbed up and down a couple of times before finding Carmilla’s hand and giving it a comforting squeeze. She felt Laura shift, and then felt a small kiss to the top of her head. Carmilla looked up at Laura, who looked at her with concern.

“It’ll be okay,” Laura whispered.

Carmilla nodded her head slowly before laying it back down on Laura’s shoulder. She knew she still had some time before they would be arriving, so she decided to take a little nap. She had eaten more than she should have which wasn’t exactly helping her feeling of nervousness, but she knew a little sleep would help her ease both of these feelings.

What Carmilla didn’t expect was to sleep soundly enough to dream. Josh’s face kept appearing in different memories, his smile, his laugh, his comfort, his whole being before an image of his mangled body made an appearance causing Carmilla to gasp for air and sit up, almost banging her head on the window.

“Are you okay, Kid?” Henry asked immediately, slowing down the car in an effort to pull over if he needed to.

“I’m okay,” Carmilla said. “It’s just a little warm back here.”

She saw Rich turn on the air as she tried to catch her breath. She couldn’t get the image of Josh’s remains out of her mind.

“Do I need to pull over?” Henry asked.

Carmilla shook her head no before feeling her stomach start to turn sour. She nodded her head frantically and Henry immediately pulled over, bring the car to a stop. He got out to help her open the door to avoid oncoming traffic on the interstate.

Carmilla quickly got out of the car and headed into the grassy area in front of a line of trees. Laura was quick to follow. Carmilla bent over and took a few deep breaths worried she was about to be sick. It was too hot. The sun was bright and she could feel herself starting to sweat. Laura came up behind her. She unzipped Carmilla’s hoodie, and pulled it off her shoulders. She then grabbed Carmilla’s hair, and pulled it up into a messy bun with her extra hair tie.
“You okay?” Laura asked.

“Yeah, I just ate too much and got too hot,” Carmilla responded, still taking deep breaths. She felt Laura’s hands rub up and down her back. She knew Laura was trying to help soothe her and it was working.

“And you had a nightmare,” Laura commented.

Carmilla couldn’t ignore Laura’s statement. Carmilla figured that Laura knew she had a bad dream and the way her dad was staying back, but still looking at her told her that he knew too.

“Yeah. I just saw Josh’s mangled body from the car accident. With that and the food, I just got too hot. I needed some air.”

“How do you even know what he looked like after the car accident? You’ve mentioned descriptions of the car accident before.”

“I googled him after I found out he had passed. I managed to find a website that updated accident reports and with their photographs. I know I shouldn’t have looked at them, but a part of me had to. I had to make sure it was actually him. At that point in my life, I was just as depressed as he was. I had thought numerous times that I should just end my life. The thought of giving up and just letting go stayed on my mind for a long time. I was honestly still thinking it when we moved here.”

“Do you still think like that?” Laura asked.

“Do you think I would after finding you?” Carmilla was still hunched over, trying to cool down, but looked over her shoulder to stare at Laura.

“I would hope not.”

“Well good because you saved me Laura. You saved me from myself and all the dark thoughts that haunted me. You know that, right? You mean the world to me.”

Laura smiled. “You saved me too.”

Carmilla straightened her back slowly, smiling at Laura. “I guess you and I were just meant to be.”

Laura nodded and smiled. She took one of Carmilla’s hands in hers.

“Are you feeling better?” Laura asked.

“Yeah,” Carmilla said, turning and heading towards the car.

Henry was watching her. “Sorry about that, Dad. I just got too hot and my stomach was bothering me. I’m really nervous about visiting Josh.”

“Well we can turn around if you want. We don’t have to go yet if you’re not ready.”

Carmilla shook her head. “I’m ready. I just had a weird dream and it all became too much, too soon. I think I was just hot and full.”

“Okay. You sure?” Henry asked.

Carmilla nodded and they made their way back into the car.

“Sorry Mr. Hollis. Sorry Will. Just getting a little nervous is all,” Carmilla said as she got back into
the car after letting Laura scoot back into the middle seat. Henry shut her door before getting back in the driver’s seat.

“No worries. It happens to all of us,” Rich said, giving Carmilla a reassuring smile.

Laura took Carmilla’s hand as they continued on. Soon enough, they were driving into the ceremony. It was rather large, but opened. Carmilla noticed clouds had started to move into the sunny sky. It made the cemetery look more gloomy than it had before. After a few minutes of driving, Henry pulled up to the area Josh was buried in.

“Do you know which one he is, Dad?” Carmilla asked as they all got out of the car.

“I know he’s down this row somewhere, but the actual plot, I have no idea.”

Carmilla nodded. She started walking, when the rest of the group started to follow her. She stopped and looked at them.

“Uh, do you mind if I go alone, first?” Carmilla asked. No one responded and stared at her blankly. “It’s just, I feel like he and I should have a little one on one, just like the old days before he meets you guys.”

Henry smiled. “Sure, Kid. Let me know if you can’t find him.”

Carmilla nodded and turned. She studied and stared at each stone as she passed them. Carmilla searched frantically, trying to find him. The search felt like it was never ending. She stopped for a moment and looked down the row of tombstones. That’s when she noticed a small, dark granite stone laying on the ground. The grass around his grave was tall and untouched. Weeds had grown all around the small square and the plot looked like it had never been touch. No one had ever visited this spot and she immediately knew it was his place of rest. Carmilla walked over it to, quickening her pace the closer she got. She looked down at the stone and read his name and birthdate.

Carmilla smiled before she felt her throat tighten. No other words were written on his small tombstone and he deserved all the words in the world. She knelt down in front of the small piece of stone and started pulling out all the weeds that surrounded his name. She tossed them over her shoulders to other grave sites that clearly had more visitors than he had ever hand. She was trying not to cry, when she finally took a seat in front of his little plaque. She traced his name a couple of times before clearing her throat.

“Hey Josh,” she said quietly. “It’s, uh,” She paused, knowing she was only talking to a stone, but hoping he could hear her somewhere from beyond. “It’s been a while. Where to start after all this? I know what you’re thinking: how did I find you? Well my dad is actually the one who found you. The crazy thing is, he accepts me and after all the horrible things my mom did, she’s apparently trying to accept me too, but we’ve talked about the bad things before. No need to bring those up again. I don’t know if she will ever fully accept me, but at least my dad is okay with it and he supported me when I came out to her. My mother actually found out almost the same way she found me with Ell. The same amount of stuff happened. I’m sure you’re looking down from somewhere and can see my swollen cheek. She hit me again and pulled my hair this time, but I think she’s finally going to come around.”

Carmilla paused before a small smile crept onto her face. “I actually have a girlfriend now. Her name is Laura and I have feeling if you would have gotten the chance to meet her, you would have loved her. She would have liked you too. She’s great! She has honey brown hair and a smile that could light up the entire world. She's caring and giving. The sex isn't too bad either, if you know what I mean?” She laughed to herself, before a sad smile settled into her features.
“Maybe you could do me a favor. Laura’s mom is up there with you. She died a couple years ago saving three kids lives. Could you tell her Laura is doing great? Also could you give her a good word and tell her, I wish I could have met her? You should seek her out, regardless. Laura told me she was a great listener. Maybe you could talk to her sometime. Give her a little company.”

Carmilla thought what to say next. “I don’t know. I miss you, Josh. I miss our letters. I miss the way we used to make each other smile and laugh to relieve ourselves of the hell we were living in. I miss your updates about your adventures. I’m sorry this happened to you. Just know there isn’t a single day that goes by where I don’t think about you. It might only be for a second, but you’re there. Sometimes I feel like you’re just standing behind making faces like you used to do when I mopped the floors or trying to make me feel better after a particularly bad session or just a bad day in general. I hate that I wasn’t there to save you or to make you realize how great of person you were.”

Her throat started to tighten and her voice started to waiver. She felt tears slide down her cheeks. “You truly were the only person that mattered to me at that time in my life. You were the only person I trusted. For so long you were the only person who mattered to me. You were the only person there for me and now you’re gone because I couldn’t save you. I’m sorry, Josh. I’m really sorry.”

Carmilla brought her knees up to her chest and tucked her head down. She cried quietly to herself before she felt familiar arms wrap around her shoulders. She tried her best to calm down, wiping at her eyes.

“It’s okay, Sweetness,” Laura whispered, hugging Carmilla from behind.

“I couldn’t save him, Laura.”

“It wasn’t something you had control over and now he’s probably happier than he has ever been. He’s free and that’s a good thing. He’s probably laughing at you shedding tears right now.”

Carmilla chuckled. “He probably is,” Carmilla agreed. She turned her eyes back to his grave. “This is Laura and I brought my dad and my brother. Also Laura’s dad is here as well. I figured you could use a little company.”

“I’ll go get them,” Laura whispered. Carmilla nodded before getting up off the ground. She grabbed Laura’s hand and pulled Laura back. She cupped Laura’s cheeks before leaning and kissing her.

“I love you,” Carmilla whispered, their lips barely apart and her eyes still closed.

“I love you too,” Laura whispered back, before closing the gap and kissing Carmilla again. Laura left to grab the three men waiting by the car.

“I really wish you were here,” Carmilla muttered. “But I know you’re with our maker and I know you're finally happy.”

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Spring came around the corner and the weather had finally gone from cold to warm. Flowers had bloomed around the gardens in the neighborhood, the grass was green and the trees came to life with gentle breezes and spring showers. The only thing that didn't change was the small gang that still huddled together, down the art hallway, talking about prom that was coming up next week.

“Yo, Carm-sexy, do you want to go tuxedo shopping with me after school today?”

“Sure, Bro. Who’s your date?” Carmilla asked, glancing down the hallway, looking for Laura.
“Technically Theo, but for picture taking, my date is SJ. Elsie will be Theo’s date.”

“Who’s house are we doing pictures at again?” Danny asked, her arm protectively around Betty. Since their little altercation at the restaurant, Danny had done a lot of thinking. She had finally realized how important Betty was to her and couldn’t seem to figure out why she ever thought any differently. It seemed to be working out better for them. Betty even smiled more now. Carmilla was happy for them.

“We’re doing it at Laura’s house, I think,” Carmilla said.

“We’re doing what at my house?” Laura asked.

Finally Carmilla thought.

“Where have you been?” Carmilla asked.

“I had a dentist appointment this morning. I guess someone was already asleep last night when I told them that,” Laura said.

“I was sleepy,” Carmilla mumbled before smiling.

Carmilla took Laura’s hand, wrapping it around her waist before giving her a kiss to the side of her head. Now that they were out to their parents, they had no shame in hiding their relationship anymore. They were the first open lesbian couple at their high school. Sometimes they got looks from some faculty and most students gawked at them, but they ignored it. They were together and that’s all that mattered.

“Now, what are we doing at my house?” Laura asked again.

“Prom pictures,” Carmilla said.

“Oh right! Yeah my dad figured it would be easiest. We actually talked about it last night. He wants you all there by 6,” Laura said.

They all nodded their agreements. “I got my suit yesterday,” Lafontaine said.

“You guys are going to love it,” Perry added. “It matches my dress.”

Carmilla heard a familiar clicking down the hall.

“Am I invited to this little picture party?” A voice behind them called.

“Of course you are! It wouldn’t be prom without my best friend,” Laura said.

Mattie and Laura had managed to work around their past issues. They still weren’t as close as they were before, but their friendship was slowly better and getting stronger as the days passed. Lafontaine and Kirsch still did not trust Mattie, but that didn’t stop Carmilla from growing rather close to her. It turned out they were more alike than Carmilla had originally thought.

“And I take it my dashing Sis will be there,” Mattie said, looking at Carmilla.

“And where else would I be?” Carmilla asked.

“I don’t know. Brooding at home?” Mattie smirked.

“You wish,” Carmilla said, smiling.
The bell rang and students started filling the halls all around them. “Do you wanna come over after school, Carm? My dad wants you to come to dinner soon.”

“Can’t, Baby. I’m going to the mall with Kirsch to help him find a tux for prom. Which should be interesting, but I’m going to drag Will with me. He has a better eye for that stuff then I do.”

“And what about your tux?” Laura asked.

“I’m still easing my mom into my lesbianism, Cupcake. I might not be able to persuade the tux thing just yet.”

“But you said, she’s been doing a lot better. She’s even been nicer to me and inviting me over all the time.”

“I know, I guess I’ll talk to her tonight. See how things are before I land the whole I’m wearing a tux to prom idea on her. I hope she’ll be okay with it. I want to have a good time and know I won’t if I’m stuck in a dress.”

“Well whether you’re in a suit or a dress, I know you’ll look super sexy,” Laura commented, smiling up at Carmilla.

“But not as sexy as you,” Carmilla replied. Laura gave her a chaste kiss. Carmilla welcomed the fresh taste of mint that still lingered on Laura’s breath.

“Let’s get to class, Cupcake.”

Later that day, Carmilla and Will found themselves bored out of their minds at the suit shop in the mall. Carmilla finally found an open chair and sat it in, letting out a huge huff. She had texted Laura she was dying of boredom. Laura however resent her warning about trying to find clothes with Kirsch. Carmilla looked up at Kirsch and exhaled.

“Kirsch, you’ve tried on like fifty tuxes, can you please hurry the hell up already,” Carmilla complained.

“Dude, it has to be perfect.”

“You have a great body! You’ll look good in anything,” Will commented, sitting next to his sister on the floor.

“Except for that one,” Carmilla said, pointing to the one Kirsch was currently wearing.

“What’s wrong with this?” Kirsch asked.

“No one wears long suit jackets anymore. It’s not the 1920s. You look like you belong in an old mob movie.”

Kirsch’s smile widened. “Cool!”

“Trust me, Bro. Not cool. Now go put on tux number three again. It was the best one,” Carmilla said, pointing to the suit that was hanging on the rack.

Kirsch obeyed Carmilla’s command before taking the tux off the rack and running back into the dressing room.
“And what about your tux, Kitty?” Will asked.

“Like Mother is going to let me go to prom in a tux.”

“It’s your life, Carmilla. I don’t think she’ll actually say anything to you about it at this point.”

“No she most likely won’t, but I know as soon as I say it she’s going to look so disappointed. I’ve seen that look enough in my life.”

“Do you want to wear a dress to prom?” Will asked, curiously.

“Absolutely not.”

“Then, let’s find you a nice looking suit,” Will said, standing up.

“Here?” Carmilla asked. She looked around the store. She was pretty sure she wasn’t going to find anything suitable for her in this store.

“Yes, here. You and I have pretty much the same body type, so it shouldn’t be too hard. I know my measurements so let’s find you one.”

“Carm-sexy, you were so right,” Kirsch said, stepping out of the dressing room. “This is the one.”

“Good, now put it back on the hanger and pay so we can get out of here,” Carmilla noted with a bored tone.

“No, we’re going to find you a tux too,” Will countered.

“Alright, going for the sexy lady vibe?” Kirsch asked.

“The what?” Carmilla shook her head. “No. I don't want to hear you say that again nor do I want to know what you mean. I just don’t want to wear a dress.”

Will saw the older gentleman who was helping them with Kirsch and flagged him down.

“Excuse me, Sir. Do you have any suits in her size? Preferably skinny trousers, only black or dark navy, nothing flashy, but enough to get the attention that she wants at prom.”

The older man looked over to Carmilla and smiled. “I’m sure we have a few things, but whatever you choose, we’ll most likely have to take some parts in, and possibly some other parts out. Let me see what I have.”

Will came back with a smug smirk.

“Happy?” Carmilla asked. “How do expect I pay for this? I have to buy Laura a corsage, which I’m having specially made to match her dress. Not to mention, I have to ask Mother if this is okay. Gas is also expensive you know, which I’ll have to pay to get us home and most likely again to get Laura and me to and from prom.”

“So you try on a few, ask them to hold it overnight, talk to Mother tonight and then come back here and pay for it tomorrow because you know Dad isn’t going to let Mother win the argument.”

“You’re sneaky, you know that?” Carmilla asked.

Will nodded with a smile.
“I’ve taught you so well,” Carmilla added.

The old man came back with a few options for Carmilla. A rack of suits just for her.

“I managed to find two women suits, but I brought a couple more of our younger male suits as well. They’re a little smaller size and would be more suitable for a girl,” he said.

“Ready?” Will asked.

Carmilla got out of her chair and headed towards the rack. There were only five suits hanging, but she studied them, thinking which one would look best. The two women suits were okay, but basic black. Almost a dark gray. She had to wear the darkest black she could find, to match Laura. Her eyes landed on the last suit and she smiled.

“I figured you would like this one,” the older man said. “It’s very rare I get a woman asking for a suit, but I had a girl.” He paused, “Excuse me, a person, come in yesterday also looking for a suit for prom. They were very nice, but the picked out this hideous dark purple suit jacket that I believe has been at this store since the 1980’s.”

Kirsch, Will and Carmilla shared a glance with each other, before chuckling. “Lafontaine,” they said in unison.

Carmilla picked up the suit and took it to the dressing area. She quickly put it on before looking at herself in the mirror. The crotch of the pants were a little baggy, but the blazer seemed to fit perfectly. It was pitch black and it fit her like a glove. Luckily she had a small chest. *If only the pants fit,* Carmilla thought.

“Will?” She called through the door.

“Yeah?”

“Are there any pitch black pants on that rack?” She asked.

“Let me check.”

She could hear him talking to the older man. After a while, Will came and threw them over the door. “How’s that?” Will asked.

“They weren’t on the rack,” Carmilla noted.

“He searched in the back. Apparently their women’s and extra skinny.”

Carmilla slid them up her legs. They were definitely skinny and snug, but she fell in love with the look immediately. She opened the door and stepped out.

“Oh, Bro. You have to wear that to prom. Laura will go crazy.”

“I agree, Kitty. It fits you perfectly.”

Carmilla looked to the older gentleman who was helping them. He smiled. “Well we need to find you a shirt, a tie, possibly a vest if you like and a nice pair of shoes. What color is this, what was her name?”

“Laura,” Carmilla smiled.

“Ah yes. What color is Laura’s dress?”
“It’s a light yellow, Sir. It’s her favorite color.”

“Ah, well I say, we should do a black shirt, with a yellow tie. I would also recommend wearing yellow socks, if you plan on not wearing heels. And maybe a nice black vest to match the rest. I believe that blazer comes with one. I’ll go in the back and check. Should I look for all four items while I’m searching?” He asked.

“Just the shirt, tie and vest will do,” Carmilla replied. “Thank you for helping.”

“It is always a favorite time of mine when I get to help a woman find a suit.” He smiled and nodded before heading to the back of the store.

“He’s a pretty awesome old dude,” Kirsch commented.

“Yeah, he doesn’t seem to have a problem with you wanting to buy a suit at all.”

Carmilla looked down at the price tag dangling from the suit jacket and she sucked on her teeth.

“I don’t think I’ll be buying this one at all. It’s pretty expensive and I doubt mom is going to want to pay 150 dollars for this blazer and another,” she looked at the tag on the pants, “75 on the pants, but it’s fun to play dress up.”

“Damn, Kitty. We can try and persuade her though.”

“Yeah, we can try,” Carmilla agreed.

The older man came back with a shirt, the perfect shade of yellow for the tie and a vest. Carmilla took them into the dressing room and put them on. She couldn’t help, but love the way this looked all pieced together. She wanted this suit more than anything. She was feeling confident until she heard an oddly familiar voice. She peeked her head out around the door and gawked at the sight.

“Mother, what are you doing here?” Carmilla asked.

“I was picking up something for your father and decided to do a little light shopping. I got a call from William, saying he was at the mall trying to help you figure out what you should wear for prom. He said he didn’t feel up to the task. So I informed him I was already here and he told me that you were here. I assume you are trying on a suit?” Lilita asked.

Carmilla gulped and nodded. Lilita exhaled.

“Well come on, let me see it,” She said, waving Carmilla out of the dressing room.

Carmilla crept out of the dressing room as slowly as she could. She watched as Lilita stared at her. She could tell her mother wasn’t exactly pleased with the choice of a suit instead of a dress and was waiting for the backlash of comments to begin. Lilita had come a long way over the past month, but some things were still hard for her. Carmilla tried to be as patient as possible with her mother.

“Excuse me, Sir. Could my daughter stand on the small platform over there so I can take a look at this suit?”

“Certainly, Miss,” He replied with a smile.

“Go on,” Lilita said, pointing Carmilla towards the platform. Carmilla stood up on it and slouched. This was painful and embarrassing.

“Stand up straight Carmilla. I’m not going to buy you this suit if it doesn’t fit right and I won’t know
that unless you have better posture.”

That caught Carmilla’s attention as she immediately stood up straight. “You’re going to buy me the suit?” Carmilla asked, surprised.

“If it is the one you want to wear to prom with Laura, I will have no objections.”

Lilita glanced and circled Carmilla’s outfit. She tugged her pants up and flattened out the back of the suit jacket. She brushed off the shoulders and then faced Carmilla. Lilita looked at her for a moment before exhaling.

“Everything looks good. Except for this tie. It’s not the right color,” Lilita noted.

“How do you know that?” Carmilla asked.

“Laura asked me if I could go with her to help her find a dress last Saturday. I agreed because even though Mr. Hollis is a good man, I don’t think he would have the right touch.”

Carmilla stared at her, stunned. Why didn’t Laura tell me that? Why did she hide that from me? Her thoughts were interrupted by Lilita’s voice.

“Excuse me, uh, what is your name, Sir?” Lilita asked.

“Alfred, Miss.”

“Ah. Alfred. May I see your collection of yellow ties? This is not quite the right color and I want to make sure it’s perfect before I buy this suit.”

“Certainly,” He smiled.

Carmilla stood there shell shocked. She’s going to let me get this suit? She’s helping me pick out a tie. She helped Laura pick out her dress. What is happening? She’s scaring me a little bit.

“Here we are, Darling,” Lilita said. “Come down so I can put this on.”

Lilita discarded the old tie and helped Carmilla put on the new one. Her mother was right. This tie was the exact color of Laura’s dress. She hadn’t seen it yet, but Laura did send her a picture.

“Well I think that’s definitely you, Dear,” Lilita said, trying to smile without any sadden expression.

“Are you sure you’re okay with this, Mother?” Carmilla asked.

“Well, I would have loved to pick out a dress with you, but I knew deep down that wasn’t going to happen. It’s why I was so delighted when Laura asked me to help her. At least I got to help one girl pick out her prom dress. So, even though I’m still dealing with my own issues about you being who you are, I’m still happy to buy you this suit for you to wear at prom.”

Carmilla smiled before leaning in. She hugged her mother, tightly.

“Thank you, Mother.”

“You’re quite welcome. And I must admit, you do look pretty suave in that suit. Now go change and hand me each item nicely. I will pay for them while you get dressed.”

Carmilla nodded and did as she was told. She couldn’t believe this was happening and she couldn’t wait to tell Laura.
The week passed by rather quickly as Carmilla stood in front of her mirror. She was in the process of getting ready for prom. Lilita had helped her with hair, making sure all her curls were in place. Carmilla did her own makeup, after watching a few YouTube tutorials. She promised herself no one would ever find out that she did that. Her shirt was tucked into her pants after Lilita had ironed everything. She was struggling with her tie when there was a light knock on her door.

“Yeah?” She asked.

“Just wanted to check on you, Dear,” Lilita said. “Is everything okay?”

“No,” Carmilla groaned. “I can't get this tie right and I'm nervous. I don't know why because it's just Laura, but I know she's going to look so beautiful. She left school early today to get her hair and makeup done. I just want everything to be perfect for her.”

“Relax, Carmilla. You’re acting as if this is your wedding day or something. You’re strong, Dear. Laura will be impressed no matter what you’re wearing. She just wants to see you.” Lilita smiled. “Now, let me help you with your tie.”

Lilita took the tie and started to tie a Double Windsor knot. She had a small smile on her face. “I used to do this for William every Sunday before church. I'll be honest, I never thought I'd be doing this for my own daughter, but in your 17 years, I don't think you have ever looked more radiant than you do right now.”

Lilita was finishing up her tie with a small tear in her eye.

“Even when I wore dresses?” Carmilla teased.

“You do look beautiful in dresses, but I don't think I've ever seen you look more comfortable in anything. You were always twitchy in dresses and you slouched. Tonight you look proud and you’re standing up straighter than usual. I guess I shouldn’t have pried so much before.”

Carmilla smiled. “Thank you, Mother.”

Lilita wiped the small tears under her eyes, but smiled back none the less.

“Now, let's get this vest on and then your blazer. You two are going to be quite the match tonight,” Lilita said. Carmilla could tell her mother was struggling to keep it together. Lilita was getting better everyday, but something’s were just hard for her to grasp. Carmilla understood that and always tread lightly with the subject.

“Mother?”

“Yes, Carmilla,” Lilita said, picking up the vest off of Carmilla's bed, keeping her back to Carmilla.

“Thank you,” Carmilla stated it clearly. Lilita glanced over shoulder before facing the opposite wall again. She took a deep breath before turning around facing Carmilla.

“I'm trying,” she whispered. “I really am.”

“I know, Mother and I appreciate it. You don't have to help me get dressed if you don't want to. I understand if this is hard for you.”

“No,” Lilita said, straightening her back. “I want to. This is one of the most special nights of your
high school experience and I'm not going to let my small mindedness get in the way and stop it from being a great night. Now turn around so we can get you dressed. We need to get to the Hollis household soon.”

Carmilla did as she was told. Lilita finished helping Carmilla get dressed and smoothed out any wrinkles. Carmilla wanted to wear boots, but she allowed her mother to talk her into a pair of patent leather heels. She slipped into them and we're happy that they were at least comfortable. Carmilla gave Lilita a smile before leaving her room and making her way downstairs.

“Oh wow, wow, wow! Look at my beautiful daughter,” Henry said, taking pictures on his phone.

“Save the pictures for Laura's house please,” Carmilla said.

Henry walked over and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. “You do look beautiful,” he said, smiling.

“Thanks, Dad.”

Henry kissed the side of her head. “Alright, are we ready to head over to Rich’s?”

Carmilla's eyes went wide and small amount of panic started to settle in. “Oh, no. I forgot to pick up Laura's corsage. Oh she's going to be so upset. Do I have time to go and get it?”

“Carmilla. Calm down. I picked it up while you were at school. It's in the refrigerator,” Lilita said, making her way over and into the kitchen, taking it out and handing it to Carmilla.

Carmilla let go of the breath she was holding. “Thank you, Mother.”

“Did you two plan these colors?”

“Uh, yeah. Once Laura had gotten her dress, we decided that since her dress was already yellow, that her corsage should be my favorite color. Hints the purple base. But I took a step forward and got the tips outlined in bright yellow so she could still be wearing her favorite color,” Carmilla explained.

“Her dress is yellow, Sweetheart.”

“I know, Mother, but her flowers should also have yellow on them. This way she has a little extra yellow.” Carmilla smiled looking at the five flowers sewn together.

“Well I'm sure she'll love it,” Lilita smiled.


“Yes, Pops, I have all of those things,” Carmilla replied sarcastically.

“I don't know where you're hiding them. Are you taking a purse?”

Henry and Carmilla shared a glance before they both started laughing.

“They're in my jacket pocket, Dad,” Carmilla said. She looked at the watch around her wrist. “We better go though. Laura will not be happy if I don't get there before the others.”

“We're right behind you,” Henry said.

Carmilla ran out to her car and pulled out of the driveway.
“How you holding up, Honey?” Henry asked, walking out to the car with Lilita on his arm.

“A little off, but I'm okay. Still adjusting to the suit thing, but that's what Carmilla likes so I'm trying to be okay with it.”

Henry opened the passenger door for Lilita. “Baby steps,” he smiled. She smiled back at him while settling in the passenger seat. Henry walked to his side of the car, and they soon followed Carmilla's path to the Hollis’.

Carmilla waited outside her car before going inside. She figured her parents would want to see her face when she saw Laura. They slowly pulled in next to Carmilla.

“ Took long enough,” Carmilla said with a bored expression.

Henry rolled his eyes. “Let's go, Cranky.”

“I'm not cranky. I'm nervous,” Carmilla stated.

“Carmilla, it’s not your wedding day or anything. It’s just prom. Relax,” Henry said.

“That's what Mother said, but as I said to her, I just want it to be perfect for Laura.”

“It will be. Now come on. Let's go see this girl of yours.”

They walked up the sidewalk and up the stairs to the small porch. Carmilla exhaled before knocking lightly on the door. Rich opened and smiled brightly.


“Thanks, Mr. Hollis. Where's my beautiful date?” She asked. She noticed she had a death grip on the box that contained the corsage. She knew her hands were shaking uncontrollably.

“She's in the living room and I think she's going to take your breath away so you should prepare yourself now. Come on in.”

Henry and Lilita went in first. Carmilla took some breaths before stepping into the foyer. She looked at Laura who was standing next to the coffee table, away from the couch so Carmilla could get a clear view of her. Rich was right, Laura took her breath away. She stood frozen as she stared at Laura. She was in a knee length yellow dress. It had a lace design on the bust and from her waist down the yellow fabric flowed. Her hair was slightly curled and even though it was the most makeup she had ever seen on Laura, she couldn't help but think how it made her look more mature.


“I could say the same thing about you,” Laura said, taking in Carmilla's suit. “You look gorgeous, Carm.”

Carmilla walked over to Laura and wrapped her arms around her waist, pulling Laura into a hug. Laura wrapper her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders, following the embrace. They shared a brief kiss before Rich cleared his throat. They smiled at each other before taking a step back from each other.

“We want to take pictures of just you two before everyone else gets here. That way we can take pictures of the corsage exchange and all that,” Rich explained.

“You look gorgeous, Laura,” Lilita said. She walked over and gave Laura a hug.
“Thanks for helping me find it,” Laura said.

“Of course. I think we did a good job,” Lilita smiled.

“Yeah, how come I didn't know that was happening?” Carmilla asked.

“You didn't ask and I figured dress shopping would be torturous for you, so I asked your mom. Is there a problem with that?” Laura asked.

“Absolutely not,” Carmilla smiled.

“Well you do look beautiful, Laura.”

“Thank you, Pastor Karnstein.”

“Alright, before I start crying, let's get this going,” Rich said, grabbing his camera.

“Is that for me?” Laura asked, pointing to the box in Carmilla's still shaky hands.

“Oh, yes. I hope the colors are okay,” Carmilla said, holding the box out to Laura.

Lilita laughed. “Carmilla, Dear, you have to put it on her.”

“Oh, right,” Carmilla said. She opened the box and almost dropped it because of her hands. “Sorry,” she mumbled, clearly embarrassed. She laid the box down on the coffee table and took out the small corsage. She spread the elastic band open and slid it onto Laura's wrist. She could hear the click of cameras, but Laura's smile, made her feel better.

“It's so beautiful, Carm.”

“I'm glad you liked it. I thought I would use both of our colors instead of just mine.”

“We really do think alike,” Laura stated.

“What do you mean?” Carmilla asked.

Rich handed Laura the small box that held Carmilla's boutonnière. She decided it would be better than a corsage, once she found out Carmilla was wearing a suit. A flower almost identical to Laura's was pulled out of the box. Carmilla smiled.

“Mrs. Karnstein, can you help me do this so I don't prick her with the needle?” Laura asked.

“Of course,” Lilita said.

She guided Laura's hands as the made sure her boutonnière looked neat and straight.

“Thank you,” Laura said.

“Anytime,” Lilita replied with a smile.

“I love it, Laura. Thank you.”

Laura smiled and they shared a chaste kiss, forgetting the other people in the room for a moment.

Their parents took a few pictures in the living room and few outside. Carmilla smiling in all of them, not caring about anything but how beautiful Laura looked. Lilita kept making them change poses which bothered Carmilla to no end, but she knew it was making her mother happy so she followed
each instruction carefully.

Soon the Hollis’ home was full of excited teenagers and eager parents. Kirsch, Theo, SJ, Elsie, Lafontaine, Perry, Danny and Betty were there for the group pictures. They lined up in long rows in Laura’s backyard. They were all smiles and giggles, complimenting everyone on their outfit of choice. Mattie was the last to arrive with her date, Steven. He was the star of the basketball team and they seemed to be a perfect match. Steven towered over everyone, but they were happy to have a new friend added to their group.

After what felt like hours of picture taking, they all started to disperse into their own vehicles.

“Home by 2, Carmilla,” Henry said with a nod.

“Yeah, Pops. You told me a million times already,” Carmilla complained.


“So you’ve told me,” Carmilla teased.

Lilita stood awkwardly beside him. Carmilla looked at her before going in and hugging her mother tightly. She felt her Lilita’s warm embrace as she held onto her. After a moment, Carmilla took a step back. She looked at her mother and had a huge smile on her face.

“Thank you, Mother. For everything.”

“You do look amazing in that suit, Carmilla.”

Carmilla contemplated for a minute before she whispered, “I love you.” She heard the small gasp from Lilita and then her body starting to shake.

“I love you too, Carmilla. I'm so proud of you and I think Laura is the perfect match for you. You two do look great together.”

Carmilla smiled and felt a tear run down her cheek. She hugged Lilita again. “Thank you,” she whispered before pulling away.

They all said goodbye and Carmilla held the door open for Laura. Once she was in and settled, Carmilla waved to her parents before getting into the driver’s seat. Laura and Carmilla shared a brief kiss, before she started the car and pulled out of the driveway.

“Our kids are getting old,” Rich said, wiping a tear from his eye.

“They sure are, but it's a good thing. They know who they are and they now get to live their own lives openly. I don't think anything could be better than that,” Henry said, watching Carmilla's drive away.

“Well why don’t you two come in for coffee?” Rich asked.

“Sounds good,” Henry said, turning with Rich to head into the house.

Henry noticed Lilita still watching the end of the street. He pulled his wife to his side and wrapped his arm around her shoulders.

“You okay, Sweetheart?” He asked.
Lilita smiled up at him. “For once I can say, I honestly am. Our little Carmilla is finally happy and I haven’t seen her like this in years. I never want this change. I want her just the way she is.”

Henry smiled at his wife. “We did good, Lilita. We did good.”

Chapter End Notes

Kristin was out of town this week so let me know if you see any grammatical errors.

I hope you guys enjoyed. We’re almost at the end, but not quite.
A Prom Surprise

Chapter Summary

We're almost to the end, Dear Readers.

Fair warning, this chapter is a little shorter than the ones posted recently. It was more a fluff piece. One more to go. What's going to happen?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Carmilla held the car door open for Laura, helping her get inside with her dress. Once she made sure the skirt of Laura’s dress was fully in the car and wouldn’t get stuck in the door, she closed it before making her way to her side. She looked up to see her parents and Mr. Hollis staring at her. She gave them a small smile and a little wave before settling in the driver’s seat. She sat for a moment before starting her car.

Carmilla took a moment to look at Laura. Carmilla felt a small tear run down her cheek. Laura grabbed a small tissue for her purse and dabbed at the tear.

“I told her I loved her,” Carmilla stated, looking down at her hands that were clasped together in her lap.

“I think that's good, Carm. What did she say?”

“That she loved me, too. That she was proud of me. And that we make the perfect match. Not to mention we look great together.”

“Well she might have done some terrible stuff in the past, but at least she isn’t blind. We definitely look great together,” Laura winked.

“You do look absolutely stunning, Laura. Just incredibly gorgeous tonight.”

“Compared to you, I think that is a bit of stretch because you look so beautiful and sexy in that suit.”

Carmilla smiled. She reached over and grabbed Laura’s hand, giving it a light squeeze. The car was quiet for only a moment.

“Baby?” Laura asked.

“Yeah?”

“Take me to my junior prom!” Laura exclaimed.

She moved over the center console to give Carmilla a chaste kiss. They pulled apart and smiled at one another. Carmilla gave another quick wave to her parents before backing out of the driveway, never letting go of Laura’s hand.

“Are you ready for this?” Carmilla asked, pulling out onto the highway.
“To be the first openly gay couple at St. Charles’ prom?”

Carmilla nodded.

“Yes, but it is a little nerve wracking.”

“I was actually a nervous wreck before I got to your house,” Carmilla admitted, turning onto the highway.

“Why?”

“Because I want this night to be perfect for you. To be perfect for us. Mother had to tie my tie because I couldn’t figure it out, which just added to my stress of things. Then I thought I forgot the corsage, but luckily Mother had picked it up earlier. Then I was shaking my leg like crazy on the way over to your house. You would have been so annoyed if you were in here. I just want tonight to be perfect.”

“It will be. And do you know why?”

Carmilla smirked. “Why?” She asked.

“Because I’ll be with the only person I want to be with.”

Carmilla’s smile grew, when she felt Laura’s lips against her cheek. Laura stayed where she was, lightly nipping at Carmilla’s ear. Laura knew that was Carmilla’s favorite spot.

“You’re distracting the driver, Sweetheart,” Carmilla teased.

“I can think of other things that would most likely distract you more,” Laura said, moving her hand to Carmilla’s thigh.

Carmilla took a deep breath. “Why don’t we skip prom, go somewhere private and have our own party tonight?”

“Hmm,” Laura paused, as if she was thinking it over. “No,” she stated.

Carmilla frowned as Laura resituated herself in the passenger seat. Carmilla made sure to not let go of Laura’s hand. It kept her calm and was helping her with her nerves.

Prom was being held at a country club a few towns over. According to Laura, who had been there once with her dad, claimed it was lavish and gorgeous. Carmilla didn’t enjoy snoody environments, but Laura promised her it wouldn’t be like that considering it would be filled with a bunch of teenagers. Carmilla drove up to see their large group of friends standing outside, waiting for them.

“What took you guys so long?” Danny asked, shouting.

“They probably had some unfinished business that needed to be taken care of,” Mattie smirked.

“More like, I was saying goodbye to my parents and having a small conversation with my incredibly stunning girlfriend before heading over here,” Carmilla replied.

“Uh huh, sure,” Kirsch added.

Carmilla blushed. Her nerves were getting the best of her, as she gripped Laura’s hand. She was surprised to see they had valet parking. She handed her keys over to one of the guys before looking up at the extravagant building in front of her. It was a large, white building with Roman columns.
She wasn’t expecting to have to take so many stairs in her stilettos.

Everyone in the group started to have their own conversations. A few of them were already making their way upstairs before Lafontaine tried to interrupt.

“Guys?” Lafontaine asked. When everyone continued their conversations, Perry jabbed them on the side to speak louder.

“Guys!” Lafontaine yelled. The group stopped talking to look over at Lafontaine and Perry.

“I have to tell you guys something,” they continued. Lafontaine took a breath before speaking. Everyone’s eyes were on them. They stole a glance at Perry, and smiled at her before bringing their attention back to the group.

“I told my parents.”

“Told your parents what?” Laura asked.

“That I’m non-binary.”

The group all seemed to be in awe. Kirsch’s mouth was hanging open, while everyone started to smile and make their way towards Lafontaine and Perry.

“Congratulations, Laf!” Laura said, giving them a hug.

Carmilla smiled. “Wait. There’s something else, isn’t there?”

“And,” Lafontaine paused. “They accepted it without question.”

They all cheered in excitement for their friend. Lafontaine had been struggling with this for a few weeks. They had given up after their first announcement, but after thinking about it for months, Perry kept encouraging them. Soon, they knew it was the right time to do it and they knew they would have to explain everything. Lafontaine wasn’t sure what the outcome would be, but knew it was time.

“We also have to tell you something,” Perry started. She looked at Lafontaine who nodded their head.

“We’re sure you all already know this, but Laf and I are officially dating!”

Most of the group rolled their eyes, but smiled. “We knew,” Danny stated, wrapping her arm around Betty. That didn’t stop Kirsch from letting out an awful noise of a howl and a scream of excitement before running over to Lafontaine and Perry, wrapping them into a huge bear hug.

“Congrats, you guys,” he said.

“Kirsch, let go. My suit,” Lafontaine said.

“Right, sorry.” Kirsch said, letting them go.

Carmilla walked over and hugged them both individually, giving them her congrats. Everyone was extremely happy for them. Laura even had tears in her eyes. Carmilla wiped them away carefully, to not mess up Laura's makeup.

“Well I think we should go celebrate,” Danny said, gesturing to the the large country club.
They all agreed, making their way to the entrance. Carmilla grabbed Laura's hand and they smiled at each other. They started making their way up the large staircase when Carmilla inched closer to wrap her arm around Laura's shoulder. She felt Laura’s arm snake around her waist.

“Ready, Sweetness?” Laura asked, her excitement practically dripping.

“I’m always ready when I’m with you, Cupcake.”

Laura rolled her eyes. “You’re such a cornball,” Laura stated.

“Yeah, well, you like it.”

“I do,” Laura smiled.

Carmilla leaned in for a gentle kiss.

Once they entered the hallway, it was definitely a little too gaudy and large for Carmilla’s tastes. The entrance had a grand staircase, covered in red carpet. They saw the small check in table and handed the few teachers standing there their tickets before making their way behind the staircase to the crowded auditorium.

People were everywhere. They had a DJ on stage, playing some of the top 40 songs, which Carmilla could have cared less for. They looked around, taking in their surroundings. Carmilla noticed a large buffet when she felt her stomach growl. She’d barely eaten all day because of her nervousness. Laura was already ahead of her, heading to the table. She had barely eaten as well, since she began prepping right before lunch was over. They both took a plate, gathering different finger foods. They headed towards the table witnessing their big group goofing off and enjoying each other’s company. It made Carmilla smile to know that these people accepted her and were the best group of people she could have ever asked for.

Once they reached the table, Carmilla noticed there was only one chair left available and started looking for another one so Laura could sit.

“Take that one, Carm. I’ll go look for one,” Laura said, placing her plate on the table.

“How about you sit, and I’ll find one?” Carmilla asked.

“Sit. It’s okay. I’ll be right back.”

Carmilla obeyed Laura’s command and sat on the chair. Without hesitation, Laura took her seat on Carmilla’s lap.

“Looks like I found one,” Laura said, putting a grape in her mouth.

Carmilla smirked at Laura.

“You could have just said you wanted to sit on my lap, Cupcake.”

Laura kissed her cheek again before she started to try the different types of food she had collected on her plate. Carmilla wrapped her arm around the front of Laura, holding her close to her. Their seating arrangement didn’t last for long, however. Mr. Tucker, an older man who taught history, came up and told the two girls to separate immediately.

“I understand this is prom, but you can have your own seat, Ms. Hollis,” he said.
Laura rolled her eyes, but took the now empty seat next to her. Carmilla suddenly felt rather cold without Laura on her lap. After scarfing down her food, she took a sip of her punch. She was ready to have some fun.

“So, Beefcake, did you bring anything to help this punch taste better?” Carmilla asked, holding up the small glass.

“No, Dude. That’s why we’re going to my house after this. You know like an after party?”

“So I have to wait that long?”

“Sorry, Carm-sexy.”

“Besides, you can’t get drunk. You’re the one driving,” Laura stated.

“I know. I know. Just thought we’d spice it up a little bit.”

Laura stood for her chair and held out her hand to Carmilla.

“Come dance with me. I’ll make it better.”

Carmilla accepted Laura’s hand. She enjoyed watching Laura bounce to the music in front of her as they made their way to the dance floor. Laura turned Carmilla to face her before wrapping her arms around Carmilla’s shoulders. Carmilla’s arms wrapped around her waist. A few songs passed before Laura turned and pressed her backside into the front of Carmilla. This was always Carmilla’s favorite way of dancing with Laura. She moved some of Laura’s hair so she could kiss up her neck before Laura turned her neck to give Carmilla a proper kiss. They forgot anyone else was in the room when they heard someone clear their throat.

“Young ladies, do we need to remind you that this is a school event? There should be space between the two of you. This isn’t a club, it’s prom,” Mr. Tucker said, coming out of nowhere. “If I have to separate you two again, I will be giving you both a detention.”

Carmilla and Laura didn’t understand what the big deal was. Carmilla looked around and noticed that a lot of the students were dancing more sexually than she had been with Laura.

“Fucking, homophobe,” Carmilla muttered, grabbing Laura’s hand, taking her back to the table.

“Hey guys, back so soon?” Danny asked, feeding some sort of tartlet to Betty.

“Mr. Tucker said we were dancing too close together and there should be space between us, whatever that means. We were rather tame compared to a few others on the dance floor,” Laura replied.

“That’s because Mr. Tucker is a homophobe and wants to make sure we aren’t being too racy at prom,” Carmilla added. “God forbid, two girls want to dance together. I wonder what would have happened if we were still in the closet?”

“Man, fuck that guy. He’s such a prick. He’s the reason we don’t have an LGBTQ club here,” Lafontaine said.

“We could do a prom prank to him. Give him a taste of his own medicine or something.” Danny smirked.

“Like what, Xena.”
“I don’t know. Put an Ex-lax into his drink or accidentally bump into him so his punch glass spills down the front of his shirt. Or have all of us continuously dancing around really close to someone of the same sex to freak him out.”

“Do you normally carry laxatives in your purse?” Carmilla asked, ignoring all of Danny’s ideas.

“Is that the only thing you focused on?”

Carmilla just shrugged her shoulders, turning her attention back to Laura.

“Carm, we should get our pictures done before the line gets too long.”

“But we already took pictures at your house,” Carmilla tried to argue.

“No, we need to get official pictures done. You aren’t going to argue your way out of this so let’s go.”

Carmilla groaned, but followed Laura. They both heard a whipped sound from Mattie. Carmilla turned to glare at her, but Laura grabbed her and pulled her along. Once they were in line, Laura checked to make sure Carmilla’s tie was placed in the center of her chest, and making sure everything was neat.

“Relax, Cupcake. You’re worse than my mother right now.”

“She is the one who wanted us to get our picture taken.”

“Are you doing her favors now?”

“No, Sweetness. I want this done too, but your mother told me she wanted one, so I want to make sure she won’t be disappointed. Now nothing dirty and make sure you stand up straight.”

“You know, they say you date someone like one of your parents. I thought you’d always be like my dad, but now I’m starting to worry.”

“Ha ha, Carm. Very funny.”

Carmilla smirked. They were next in line. Laura was shifting back and forth on the balls of her feet while they waited.

“Next!” The photographer called.

Laura grabbed Carmilla’s hand as they walked in front of the classic sheet background.

“Where are your dates, ladies?” The young woman asked.

“We are each other’s dates,” Laura said, proudly.

“Oh, I apologize. So how do you want to do this? We can do back to back or-”

“How about no. We’re together, as in a relationship,” Carmilla interrupted, her tone not waiving.

The young photographer’s eyes went wide before she apologized. “I’m so sorry. I don’t get a lot of gay couples. How about we do this?”

She went for the classic prom pose. Carmilla stood behind Laura, with her hands on her waist. Laura was looking at Carmilla with a smile, when the flash went off.
“I wasn’t ready,” Laura said, immediately.

“It’s okay. I’m going to take another one. That was just too cute of a candid shot to pass up,” the girl explained. “Now, right over here and smile.”

They smiled at the camera when another flash happened.

“Perfect.”

They thanked her before walking off. Carmilla took Laura’s arm before heading back to the buffet.

“Are you going to be the date that eats the whole time?” Laura asked.

“No. I just barely ate today because I was nervous. I’m just a little hungry.” Laura grabbed a piece of watermelon from Carmilla’s plate and took a bite. She smiled at Carmilla and they made their way back.

Carmilla and Lafontaine talked for a little bit, before a friend of Laf’s showed up. Carmilla took this opportunity to look at Laura again. She stared at her in her dress, as she talked to Perry. The way her smile lit up her face, the way her hair was laid on top of her shoulders, her body movements. Just everything. But then the music stopped and her attention was caught by the DJ.

“Alright, this next song was a special request. It’s not something I would normally play, but here we go.”

Laura turned, making eye contact with Carmilla and smiled. Carmilla smiled back at her before a very familiar song started playing. Carmilla’s eyes went wide as she recognized it almost immediately.

The light chords of the Distiller’s song, “The Hunger” started to blast from the speakers.

“Surprise!” Laura exclaimed, getting up from her seat.

“What? How did you—”

“My dad is friends with the DJ.” Laura held out her hand as the group of them made their way back to the dance floor.

“You can’t really dance to this song, Cupcake. It’s slow, but then fast. It doesn’t have a steady rhythm.” Carmilla explained.

Laura placed her hands on Carmilla’s shoulders. “So? I know it’s one of your favorites. Just tell me when it’s going to get fast and I’ll be ready.”

“You’ll know. It’s when Brody will just start screaming with a key change.”

“When will that happen?”

Carmilla paused and waited.

“Now,” she said as heavy guitars, bass and the beat dropped. People started jumping to the heaviness of the song before it moved back to the slower beat. Carmilla noticed a few Distiller’s fans dancing in the audience because they were the only ones who were managing to keep up with the song.

“I told you!” Carmilla yelled over the heavy sound.
“You love this though, don’t you?” Laura yelled back.

“Absolutely! I’ve never heard this song so loud! It’s awesome!”

Just then Brody Dulle’s voice started screaming again and everyone, though confused, by the constant up and down of the song started jumping again. The song started its first instrumental break and Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist, pulling her close. They swayed back and forth to the music. Carmilla had a huge smile on her face as she leaned in to kiss Laura.

“Thanks, Baby.”

“It was just a little something. I know you hate the top 40’s.”

“I do, but I listen to it all the time with you.”

“So? Everyone deserves to hear at least one song they honestly enjoy at prom.”

Carmilla turned Laura before bringing her back close. She noticed Mr. Tucker watching them, but ignored him as Laura continued to smile. They jumped to the frantic sound of the snare drum as the song played to an end.

“That was the best,” Carmilla said. “Thank you, Cupcake.”

“You’re welcome.”

They made their way back to the table. They had been there for more than an hour when Kirsch came barrelling through the crowd with Theo in his hand. “Hey, Bro. Theo and I were just talking. We’re ready to go and have a real party where we can all be us,” he said to Carmilla.

“What do you say, Cupcake?”

“Sounds good. Should we rally the troops?” Laura asked.

Kirsch nodded.

Once they managed to gather everyone together, they headed out. Mr. Tucker was by the door.

“Leaving so soon?” He asked, smirking.

No one paid attention to him as they passed except for Carmilla.

“It’s hard to dance when there is a homophobic asshole wandering around the crowd telling me and my girlfriend that we’re too close, when there are straight people dancing a lot more sexually around us.”

“What did you call me, Ms. Karnstein?”

“Oh, Sir, I didn’t say it was you. I just meant in general.” She gave him a signature smirk before following Laura down the stairs. She handed her ticket to the valet as they waited for her car. Laura’s arm was linked in hers when Carmilla felt her shiver.

“Are you cold, Cupcake?”

Laura shook her head no, but Carmilla knew her too well by this point. She slipped her jacket off and wrapped it around Laura’s shoulders.
“Thanks.”

Carmilla kissed the side of her head when her car pulled up.

“You have a sweet ride,” the valet guy said, handing Carmilla her keys.

“I know,” she replied, opening the door, yet again for Laura. Laura took Carmilla’s jacket off, handing back. Carmilla slipped it back on. She looked at Laura, making sure her dress was in.

“All good, Cupcake?”

Laura nodded.

She got in her car and started driving to Kirsch’s house.

“Baby, can you pull down that road?”

“Isn’t that the road to your dad’s cabin?”

“Yes.”

“You know that place gives me the creeps, Cupcake.”

“Oh, just do it you big baby.”

Carmilla grumbled, but did as she was told. She turned down the dirt road and followed it until the clearing opened up around the cabin. She pulled in front of the small cabin before looking over at the old rundown barn.

“I think it’s the barn that creeps me out,” Carmilla stated, putting her car in park.

“Why?”

“Because it’s deteriorating. I mean the roof has caved in.”

“I used to play in it all the time when I was little and it looked like that. It’s safe.”

“Please tell me we’re not going in there,” Carmilla said, hesitant that Laura was going to say yes.

“No, Sweetness. We’re going to the cabin.”

“Care to explain to me why we’re here and not at Kirsch’s after party?”

Laura just smiled before getting out the car. Carmilla, however, was slow to get out. Laura walked around and opened her door.

“Come on, Carm.”

“You really don’t understand how much this place freaks me out.”

“We’ve been here before.”

“Yeah, but that’s because I was more concerned about where you were than where I was. Now we’re both happy and I’m more worried about being murdered than I am about getting out this car.”

“Haven’t you ever heard of facing your fears?”
“Nope. I’m a coward who likes to keep things just the way they are.”

“Come on. Please!” Laura whined, bending over and leaning into Carmilla. “I’ll make it worth your while. I promise.”

Carmilla huffed before slowly getting out of the car. “Fine,” she grumbled closing the door.

Laura immediately covered Carmilla’s eyes.


“Stop. You know it’s me. You’re safe, Baby. I won’t let anything happen to you and blah, blah, blah.”

“You’re so comforting, Laura,” Carmilla replied sarcastically.

Carmilla started to follow Laura up to the cabin’s door, stumbling a little bit. “Keep your eyes shut,” Laura commanded. She took her hands away slowly to see Carmilla not peaking before Laura tried to find the key that was hidden under the mat. Carmilla still felt nervous.

“Ready, Sweetness?” Laura whispered in her ear.

Carmilla just nodded. Laura cupped her eyes again before opening the door. She placed Carmilla against the small kitchen counter that separated the living room from the kitchen.

“Now just give me a moment. Stay here and please keep your eyes closed.”

“I haven't opened them yet, Cupcake.”

“I know, but no peeking, please.”

“Fine,” Carmilla exhaled with a bored expression.

Carmilla could only see black as she kept her eyes clothes. She watched as things happened behind her eyelids. However she could hear every sound Laura made.

“Was that a match?” Carmilla asked.

“No?” Laura replied.

“It smells like fire. Oh god, Laura what are you doing?” Carmilla asked, trying to open her eyes.

“Keep them closed and will you relax. This is for you so chill out a little.”

Carmilla exhaled, but a she could smell was smoke. She heard crackling.

“Are you sure nothing’s on fire?” Carmilla asked again.

She heard a thump. “Damn it,” Laura said.

Carmilla still had her eyes closed. “Baby? Are you alright?”

“Yes, I’m fine. Just an old cabin and uneven floors that I’ve always tripped over.”

Carmilla smiled at the thought of how cute Laura was. A few more minutes passed with more noise. Carmilla was getting impatient.
“Cupcake, how much longer is this going to take?”

“Carm, if you want to stand outside in the big bad wilderness where you apparently you think you’re going to get murdered and have your eyes wide open, go ahead.”

Carmilla let out a slight shriek before she swallowed hard. “I’m good,” she whispered. “I’ll be good.”

“Good,” Laura said, giving her a kiss on the neck that made her jump. She wasn’t expecting Laura to be so close.

“Jesus, Laura. Don’t do that.” She put her hand to her heart, trying to catch the breath she lost.

“Aw, did I scare you, Little Girl?” Laura teased.

Carmilla puffed her chest out. “No,” she stated clearly.

“Uh huh,” Laura said. Carmilla could hear her walk away. She could tell Laura was now in the kitchen. She heard the refrigerator open and close, some glasses clanging together, what sounded like ice being poured into something, silverware scratching a plate and drawers opening and closing. Carmilla backed up until she hit the wall, her legs getting restless. Her feet were starting to hurt from her shoes. She placed her hand over her eyes. Her nerves were being tested that is for sure.

“Laura, come on,” she shouted.

“Alright, cranky. 2 more minutes, I promise.”

Carmilla started to tap her foot. After a few more minutes, she felt Laura pull her arms down from her face. She kept her eyes closed.

“You're the worst person to surprise. You get super cranky,” Laura said.

“I do not.”

“Exhibit A,” Laura replied sarcastically.

“I still smell smoke,” Carmilla replied blatantly.

“Oh open your eyes already. I was just trying to do something nice, Carm.”

Carmilla kept her eyes closed. She could tell Laura was irritated. She felt bad. She didn't mean for that to happen.

“I'm sorry, Cupcake. I didn't mean to irritate you. I'm just not good with surprises. Take your time. I'll be quiet. I promise.”

Laura wrapped her arms around Carmilla's waist. She had to stand on tippy toes to reach Carmilla's lips because of Carmilla's shoes. They kissed for a few moments, but Carmilla never opened her eyes. Laura pulled away and giggled.

“You can open your eyes, Silly,” Laura said.

“I'm not silly,” Carmilla replied.

“Open them, Baby.”

Carmilla slowly opened her eyes. All the things she had heard were on the floor next to the fireplace
that was now lit. Laura had two pieces of chocolate cake on plates on the floor rug. A bottle of champagne in a bucket of ice and two glasses. She was mildly stunned.

“You did all this for me, Cupcake?” Carmilla asked.

“Well we've always wanted a quiet night away. I figured even though we can't technically stay the night here, we can at least stay late, together. Just you and me.” Carmilla didn’t say anything, still surprised by what Laura had done for her. Laura immediately started to ramble. “I mean if that is okay. Is that okay? It’s okay if it’s not because we can totally go to Kirsch’s if you want to party. I mean it is prom after all and-”

“Whoa, whoa, Laura. You're rambling,” Carmilla said, placing a finger over Laura's lips. “The only place I ever want to be is with you.”

Laura smiled. Carmilla slipped out of her shoes before leaning down to kiss Laura.

“This is the most romantic thing that anyone has ever done for me,” Carmilla explained.

Laura just smiled and picked up the bottle of champagne. “Can you pop this?”

“Sure thing.”

“Oh good,” Laura said, letting out an exhale. “The pop scares me.”

Carmilla just laughed. Of course it does, Carmilla thought. She grabbed the bottle from Laura's hand. She peeled the gold foil off before unscrewing the metal piece. Laura plugged her ears which Carmilla couldn't help but think was adorable.

“Why did you buy champagne, if you the popping sound bothers you?” Carmilla asked.

Laura unplugged her ears. “Because it tastes good and is romantic,” she replied quickly, plugging her ears back.

Once Carmilla managed to take the metal piece off, she slowly twisted and pulled the cork out which caused a very small pop.

“How did you do that so quietly?” Laura asked, taking her fingers out of her ears.

“Not my first bottle, Cupcake.”

Laura took the bottle from Carmilla and filled the two champagne flutes. Laura handed Carmilla her glass. She held up her own.

“To us?” Carmilla asked.

“To us,” Laura agreed.

They both took a sip before Laura moved away from Carmilla with a little swivel in her hips. She pulled a remote off the mantle and hit play. Light jazz filled the room.

“Ms. Hollis, I get the feeling you want to get lucky tonight.”

Laura just walked over to her as they started to dance around the living room. Laura rested her head on Carmilla's shoulder. Carmilla held Laura's hand against her chest and smiled. She never wanted this to end. She hoped to feel Laura against her like this forever. She loved the way Laura kept her level headed. How warm Laura always felt. Like she had a little piece of the sun no matter where she
She felt Laura lift her head off her shoulder. She looked at her before leaning in. They kissed sweetly before Carmilla was being pushed over to the couch.

Laura straddled Carmilla. Carmilla ran her hands down Laura's back before gripping Laura's bottom, bringing Laura closer to her. Laura moaned and pulled on Carmilla's tie. Laura went to the knot and started to undo it. Carmilla worked on Laura's zipper, pulling it down slowly, making sure the loose fabric didn't catch in the track. Laura pulled Carmilla up so she could take off her jacket.

"Hold on, Cupcake," Carmilla said, lifting Laura off of her. She stood up to take her jacket off, followed by her vest. Laura eyed her curiously.

"It was expensive, Love," Carmilla said.

She folded her suit jacket and vest the way Lilita had told her to and rested it against the arm of the chair. She smirked at Laura and used her pointer finger to call Laura over to her. Laura did as she was told. As Laura stood in front of her, Carmilla slowly pushed Laura's dress down to the ground. Laura stepped out of it. Carmilla didn't want Laura's dress to get messed up so she picked it up and laid it out on the back of the chair.

"Now. Where were we, Cupcake?" Carmilla smirked. Laura stood in front of Carmilla and started to undo the buttons of her shirt. She untucked Carmilla's shirt from her pants before sliding the long sleeves down her arms and tossing it on the chair. She kissed Carmilla's breast before undoing her belt.

"You always wear too many clothing items," Laura muttered, kissing Carmilla again.

"Then I guess we should get them off faster," Carmilla suggested.

But Laura took her time pulling Carmilla's pants down her legs. She laid them on top of her dress before sitting Carmilla back on the couch. They tried to take their time, but it all escalated.

Carmilla discarded Laura's bra onto the floor, using her mouth to kiss a path down Laura's bare chest before pulling Laura's nipple into her mouth. Laura moaned, grasping the back of Carmilla's hair. Carmilla's bra was the next to go before Carmilla laid Laura down on the couch.

The night passed in ecstasy both taking turns on each other, both moaning and panting. They were both happy to be alone. They didn't have to worry about being too loud or disturbing anyone. No one was around for miles and they enjoyed every second they had together. Every kiss, every sound and every orgasm.

They laid together on the couch under a blanket, wrapped in each other's warmth. Laura's head rested on Carmilla's bare chest, listening to her heart beat. Carmilla's arms wrapped snugly around Laura's body, holding her close. The fire had died down, the champagne and cake forgotten and not eaten. There was a comfortable silence. Carmilla started drifting asleep, when she heard her phone ding. She groaned. Laura started to get up, but Carmilla pulled her back down.

"Ignore it," Carmilla mumbled.

"It's probably your parents. It is midnight."

Carmilla groaned again and tried to make Laura stay where she was.

"I don't want tonight to end," Carmilla whispered.

"One day, it won't. But tonight, it has to."
Laura got up, taking the warmth of the blanket with her. Carmilla just stayed how she was, sprawled out on the couch. Laura turned to stare at her girlfriend’s naked body. She knew she had seen it before, but it still did things to her that she couldn’t explain. She was about to go back to the couch when she heard the phone go off again.

“Come on, Sweetness.”

Carmilla huffed but sat up, grabbing her underwear and putting it back on. They both got dressed, slowly because Carmilla kept kissing Laura in the places she knew she liked, trying to convince her to go back to the couch. Laura smiled and laughed, but shook her head no, trying to just get Carmilla dressed. Once Laura had managed to get Carmilla to put on pants, she slipped back into her dress. Carmilla helped her zip up before putting her shirt on followed by her jacket.

Laura started to put stuff away, taking a bite of cake. She held the fork out to Carmilla who took a bite.

“Oh my gosh, that is delicious,” Carmilla stated, licking the fork.

“Perry’s work.”

“Oh of course. Bring a piece with us for the road?” Carmilla asked.

“You read my mind, Carm.”

They made sure the fire was completely out before Laura started to turn off the lights. Once they made sure everything was in order and headed towards the door, Carmilla pulled Laura into a hug.

“Thanks for tonight, Cupcake.”

“Did you like it?” Laura asked teasingly.

Carmilla wiggled her eyebrows before kissing Laura deeply.

“I love you, Laura.”

“I love you too, Carmilla.”

Laura reached for the doorknob.

“Back to reality?” Laura asked.

Carmilla nodded.

“It doesn’t seem we have any other choice.”

Carmilla held the door open for Laura. Laura waited for Carmilla to pass before she locked the door, taking the key with her. Carmilla once again held the car door open for Laura before practically sprinting over to the driver’s seat. She got in her car, slammed the door and made sure they locked. She hurriedly tried to start the car.

“Are you seriously still scared?” Laura asked.

“I heard something.”

“What?” Laura asked, looking around.
Carmilla leaned in close to Laura. “Guess it was nothing,” she whispered in Laura’s ear, causing her to jump. Laura smacked Carmilla’s arm lightly. Carmilla started laughing.

“Don’t do that,” Laura said.

“Payback for making fun of me.”

“You scared the shit out of me, Carm. It is still the woods, you know.”

“I told you it’s dark and creepy.”

Laura managed to let out a light laugh as Carmilla turned the car and drove down the eerie, dark road to the highway, happy to be back with streetlights. They drove back, holding hands. Carmilla placed kisses on Laura's hand as they chatted. Laura took the time to feed herself and Carmilla the piece of cake she had brought along. A quick thirty minute drive home and they were back outside Laura's house.

“Thanks for coming with me to prom, Laura.”

“Who else would I go with?”

“No one else, I hope.”

“Only you, Carm.”

They shared a brief kiss before Carmilla got out of the car. She opened Laura's door and walked her to the porch.

“You’re being such a gentlemen tonight,” Laura said.

“Just treating my girlfriend with the respect she deserves.”

They stopped outside Laura’s door to her house.

“I had a great time tonight, Sweetness.”

“Me too, Cupcake.”

They paused for a moment, looking at each other, holding hands.

“And you really did look absolutely beautiful tonight,” Carmilla added.

“And you looked incredible in this suit.”

At that, Mr. Hollis swung open the door. Both girls jumped. “I was just about to come looking for you,” he said, startled.

Laura rolled her eyes.

“We're fine, Dad.”

“You didn’t answer your phone when I called. I got nervous.”

“I didn’t hear it. But we’re here now and alive. Perfectly fine. Can I please say goodnight to Carmilla?”

He smiled. “Of course.”
He stood there, looking at the both of them.

“Without you here?” She asked.

“Oh. Sorry,” Rich said, closing the door.

Carmilla chuckled. “Goodnight, Carm.”

“Goodnight, Laura.”

They shared a brief, but heated kiss before they hugged each other. Laura pulled back and made her way inside. Carmilla grinned, biting her lip as she made her way to her car.

She pulled into her driveway a few minutes later. She parked her car, collecting all of her stuff before making her way inside. She walked in and saw that her parents and Will were watching a movie. It was quickly paused when Henry saw Carmilla.

“Well Preacher’s Kid, how was it?”

Carmilla smiled, sitting on the couch next to Lilita, making sure not to plop.

“It was,” she paused and smiled again, “incredible.”

“Did you and Laura have a good time?” Lilita asked.

“The best, Mother.”

Lilita smiled. “Well, we're watching the Blind Side. Care to join us or are you too tired from a night of fun?” Lilita asked.

Carmilla nodded. “A movie night sounds like the perfect ending to this day.” Lilita offered her some of her blanket as she settled herself on the couch. The Karnstein’s sat together without walls or secrets blocking them. She finally didn’t feel like the outcast. She glanced at the family picture over their fireplace and smiled. She made eye contact with Henry.

“I’m proud of you, Kid.”

“We’re both proud of you,” Lilita offered.

Carmilla smiled before resting her head on Lilita’s shoulder. She knew this feeling wouldn't be leaving anytime soon or at all. For once in her life, she was proud of herself. She was happy and finally felt like she was home.

Chapter End Notes

I'm giving a big THANKS to ALL of YOU!!! You guys are amazing and I cannot thank you enough!

I'm also giving a HUGE thank you to Kristin! She has helped me write and edit this little fic that I started in July of last year. We’ve also almost been friends for a year. April 25, when we met at that little Almost Adults table read. Who knew having a stranger explore Toronto with you would turn in a blooming and lasting friendship. So thank
you, Kristin!
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Well Dear Readers, it has come to an end.

I was asked way back when to include an epilogue and I was happy to oblige.

Take note: This is set 15 YEARS into the future! Enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The large apartment building structure was starting to get noisy as the day was slowly began. The light gray walls of the living room and kitchen area that was one big open space had sunlight pouring in from the large windows that led to the small apartment balcony. The bedroom was dark and chilly as the early fall air sneaked through one of the two opened windows. Cars honking from the city street below is what woke Carmilla from her deep slumber. The white comforter was resting around her hips and she was sprawled on her back. She shivered in the cool morning air.

She must have left the window open, Carmilla thought as she pulled the heavy comforter back over her body. There was only one problem with this apartment and that was sometimes the radiators got too hot, causing the air to be very dry and almost stifling. Carmilla rolled over onto her side, her eyes still closed, reaching out to find nothing but an empty bed. She huffed back onto her back, and started to drift back off to sleep. It was too early for her to function anyway.

That’s when Carmilla heard the familiar morning sound. The light sound of pitter patter of feet came down the hallway outside her bedroom, but she ignored it, trying to will her body back to sleep. She heard the bedroom door creak as the footsteps got louder. Before she could even object, she felt the weight on her torso, but remained in a sleeping position. She felt a small, little finger poking her cheek.

“Mama?” Katherine whispered.

Carmilla stayed where she was, making sure not to cause any movement. Maybe her daughter would go back to the living room if she stayed still.

“Mama? Are you awake?” The little voice asked her again. “Grandpa, Granddad and Grandmother are coming today! So is Uncle Will and Chris!” She whispered louder.

Carmilla pretended to snore, hoping it would work. It had before, even if it left Katherine a little disappointed sometimes. But then she heard heavier feet down the hallway. She knew trouble was coming.

“Carmilla, get up,” Laura said from the doorway. Carmilla kept her eyes closed, but smirked.

“Mama, you smiled! She's awake, Mommy!”

Carmilla quickly tickled her daughter’s sides. Little Kat squealed before falling to Laura's side of the bed.
“Mama! Mama, stop!” She begged, laughing and breathing hard. Carmilla stopped and laid on her side holding herself up by her forearm, her head resting in her hand. She looked down at her daughter. She was the spitting image of Carmilla. Dark black, curly hair, pale skin and her shy smile. Except she somehow managed to have Laura’s eyes. Neither one could figure how it happened, but chalked it up to genetics.

“Mommy’s in a bad mood,” Katherine said, pouting.

“Why’s that, Pumpkin?” Carmilla asked, poking her daughter on the nose.

“She said the house is a mess and not anywhere near ready for grandpa, grandad and grandmother. Also Josh made a messy diaper, I think.”

“Well, we should go help. Don’t you think?”

Katherine nodded her head. Carmilla got off the bed and Katherine stood where Carmilla had just been laying, holding her arms out to Carmilla.

“You got legs, Kid,” Carmilla commented. “You can walk now, remember?”

“But, Mama, I want to fly!”

“You wanna fly, huh?”

Katherine nodded her head.

“I don’t know,” Carmilla contemplated.

“Please,” Katherine begged, clasping her hands together in front of her mouth.

“Hmm.”

“Please, please, please!”

Carmilla smiled. She picked Katherine up, holding her legs and body above her head, and she walked out into the living room.

“Mommy, look!”

Laura looked up from Josh’s playpen and smiled. Carmilla circled the hallway and then the living room for a couple times before her arms started to tire.

“Uh, there seems to be problems with the engine,” Carmilla said. “We're coming in for a crash landing. Repeat, we're coming in for a crash landing.”

Carmilla moved Katherine down in front of her before plopping down on the couch. Katherine just smiled before climbing off of Carmilla and walking away.

“Excuse me, Miss. I think you forgot to pay your pilot,” Carmilla noted, tapping her cheek.

Katherine walked over to Carmilla, who leaned forward. She felt the little girl give her a kiss on the cheek before wrapping her arms around Carmilla’s shoulder. Carmilla picked her up to hug her.

“Alright. Go get dressed, Pumpkin,” she said, letting go of Katherine. She watched as Katherine walked out the large living room and turn into the hallway.
Katherine was four now and Carmilla couldn't believe how quickly time was passing. She remembered the whole process with Laura. Carmilla had no desire to be pregnant. She wanted to have kids with Laura, but couldn't imagine herself with child. After hours of long discussions with themselves and their doctor, they decided to impregnate Carmilla's eggs and use Laura as the surrogate. They thought this way, their child would have Carmilla's genes, but Laura's blood. The day Katherine was born was one of the happiest days of her life. They had decided on the name Katherine after Laura’s mother, but kept the Karnstein tradition going by having her middle name be Elizabeth.

Carmilla looked over at Laura. She knew Laura had probably been up for hours with their newest little addition. When Carmilla and Laura decided to have another child, they had to go through the process of discussions again. This time, however, they agreed that they would use Laura's eggs. Carmilla knew, deep down, that’s what Laura wanted to do. She wasn't going to argue with her wife. Mostly because she knew she wasn’t going to win.

Laura was leaning over the playpen, looking at Josh or so Carmilla thought. Her eyes were closed and she seemed to be almost asleep.

"Hey, Cupcake," she whispered, moving some of Laura's hair out of her face. Laura opened her eyes immediately and moved to be in Carmilla's embrace. Carmilla kissed the top of her head.

"Why don't you take a nap and I'll watch the kids for a while?" Carmilla asked, knowing what Laura’s answer would be.

"But there's so much to do before our parents get here," Laura mumbled.

"Yes, but that doesn't mean you don't get to sleep. What time did you wake up?"

"Josh started crying around 5 this morning, I think. He was hungry."

Carmilla glanced at the small clock on the wall. It was now 9am.

"You've been awake all this time?" Carmilla asked.

"Well Katherine got up around 7:30 so we've been watching cartoons. I've cleaned a little bit, but there is just so much junk in here, Carm. There's just a lot to do," Laura complained, looking around at their toy filled living room.

"Okay. Come on, Cupcake."

"Where?"

"To bed. You need more sleep."

Carmilla grabbed Laura’s hand and started pulling her towards the hallway. Laura exhaled.

"Josh is going to wake up soon for a feeding," Laura said, pulling her hand away from Carmilla. She walked back over to check on Josh. She had been doing this a lot, but she also did this with Katherine. Laura just liked to make sure everyone was safe and sound.

"Yes, but we are slowly weaning him. I'll use a bottle from the fridge and heat it up."

"But he still hasn't committed to it. It's best if I just stay up and do it."

"Laura, let me help. You're exhausted. I can handle the two little rugrats on my own for a couple
hours. Kat can help too. She's old enough now. Let's get you to bed. Our parents won't be here for
hours. I'll start cleaning.”

“Are you sure?” Laura asked, looking up at Carmilla from Josh’s resting face.

“Yes, Cupcake. Now come on.”

Laura let Carmilla lead her down the hall. Carmilla pushed the bedroom door open and laid Laura
down and tucked her wife in.

“Do you want me to close the window?” Carmilla asked.

“Just a little bit, if you don’t mind.”

Carmilla smiled. As if she would ever mind doing something for Laura.

“Sleep, Baby. I'll wake you if I need you, okay?”

Laura nodded, her eyes already closed. Carmilla started to walk away when Laura grabbed her wrist.

“Can I get a good morning kiss?” Laura asked.

“It wouldn't be a good morning if you didn't,” Carmilla smiled. She leaned down to give her wife a
loving kiss before pulling away after a few innocent pecks.

“Don’t let me sleep too long, Carm. Just an hour or two, please.”

“Scouts honor,” Carmilla smiled, saluting. “Sleep, Cupcake.”

Carmilla left the room and entered their master bathroom. She washed her face and brushed her teeth
before walking as slowly and quietly as possible back into their room. She noticed Laura was already
sound asleep. She grabbed a black sweatshirt and closed the door as quietly as possible. Katherine
was standing in the doorway of her room, when Carmilla spotted her. She had only managed to get
on her favorite pair of multicolored leggings. Carmilla studied her daughter and noticed she looked
sad and worried.

“Is mommy sick?” She asked so innocently.

“No, Pumpkin. She's just really sleepy. New babies take a lot of work.”

Katherine didn't look convinced. Carmilla knelt down in front of her, making eye contact.

“She's okay. Let's get you a shirt and then you can help me out. How does that sound?”

Katherine nodded her head. Carmilla walked in and noticed the unfortunate trait she had passed on to
her daughter.

“Katherine Karnstein, this room is a pigsty. Are you hiding little piggies in here?” Carmilla asked,
slipping her sweatshirt over her head.

“There's only Pig,” Kat replied, pointing to her stuffed pig on her bed.

“No I think there is one more.”

“Where?”
“I’m looking at her.”

“I’m not a piggy!” Katherine protested.

“But this room is a pigsty and there is only one little pig who can make this mess.”

Katherine studied Carmilla before huffing. “Will you help me?” She asked.

“Of course, Little One. I wouldn't be a good mama if I didn't. But first I think we should get you a shirt!”

After they debated about which clean shirt Katherine could wear, Carmilla started picking up the clothes off the floor while Katherine put her toys away. After a small amount of time, and making the bed, this room was complete. *I'll dust later*, Carmilla thought as Katherine ran past her legs.

“Mama, I'm hungry,” Katherine said, pulling on Carmilla's pajama bottoms.

“Let me guess. You want pancakes?”

Katherine just smiled at her. Carmilla couldn't make pancakes to save her life. She had tried multiple times, but always failed.

“Are waffles okay?” She asked, knowing Katherine was about to argue. She got this from Laura, but Carmilla couldn’t help thinking how adorable it was when Katherine would ball her fists and put them on her hips until she got her point across.

“But they're not the same. I want pancakes. Can't mommy make them?”

“Mommy is sleeping and waffles are just as good.”

“But they’re not fluffy.”

Carmilla knelt down so she was eye to eye with her daughter.

“I know, Princess, but we've talked about this. We get the pleasure of eating whatever we like, but just remember some people don't get to have choices for the food they eat. Others don't have any food at all to fill their tummies. They have to eat what they get or find. You're lucky enough to have options, but that doesn't always mean you get what you want.”

Katherine pouted.

“Right?” Carmilla asked.

“Yes, Mama. I'll eat waffles.”

Carmilla picked her up and carried her to the kitchen. She sat her down at the large kitchen island on one of the bar stools, before making her way to the freezer to pull out the premade, frozen waffles. She put them in the toaster as she made her way to the sink to wash some dishes.

“Mama?”

“Yes, Pumpkin?”

“May I have sliced banana with my waffles?”

Carmilla smiled. “Yes you may.”
Katherine smiled and waited patiently for her breakfast. After a few moments, Carmilla placed the plate in front of her. She had cut up the banana so each pre-cut waffle slice had one. She kissed Kat’s head before making herself a pot of coffee.

“Is it good?” Carmilla asked.

“Yes, Mama. It's yummy. Thank you.”

Carmilla smiled and started to clean up around the kitchen. She was in the process of putting silverware away when Josh started crying. Carmilla made her way over and picked him up.

“You hungry, Little One?” She asked as he continued to cry. She bounced him lightly making her way back to the kitchen. She opened the fridge and pulled out the bottle. After heating it up and making sure it wasn’t too hot, she held the bottle to Josh who was still crying. He shook his head anytime the bottle got close to his mouth.

“Aw, come on, Kid. Let mommy sleep, please.”

He was still crying, not taking the bottle. Carmilla rested him against her front and rubbed his back, hoping it would help him calm down. It did nothing of the sort.

“Can I try?” Kat asked.

“He’s pretty upset right now, Princess. He doesn’t like this bottle.”

“Well that’s not how mommy feeds him.”

“I know, but eventually a baby has to move to the bottle. So that's what mommy and I are trying to do.”

Josh was still crying. She tried to calm him so he wouldn't wake Laura. She knew Laura needed sleep more than anything because of the late night feedings. Making a schedule with Josh was almost impossible. He woke up at different hours of the night. Carmilla tried to help when possible, but was hoping, weaning him would help Laura get more sleep.

Kat stared at Carmilla with hopeful eyes, as Josh continued to wail.

“Okay, Kid. Come with me to the couch and let's see if you can do it.”

Kat jumped out of the chair and made her way to the living room couch. She climbed up and got situated.

“Just remember to hold his head under your arm,” Carmilla reminded her.

She nodded as Carmilla slowly placed Josh in Katherine’s arm. Katherine was a great older sister. She had even changed a few diapers for Laura. She had a lot of questions about boys afterwards, but luckily they had already read up on that and were expecting it. Katherine held the bottle to Josh and, after a few moments, he accepted it. He stopped crying, and it made Katherine smile. Carmilla had managed to turn into a sap and took a small video for Laura to watch when she got up.

“Well look who has a secret power,” Carmilla noted, relieved that she didn’t have to wake Laura.

The front door buzzer rang and Carmilla made her way to the door. She hit the camera button to view who was at there and wasn’t surprised at all to see Perry and Lafontaine. Well she assumed Perry was there, since Lafontaine tended to make some sort of face into the camera. She didn’t
bother greeting them and buzzed them in. After a few moments, there was a knock on the door.

“Good morning, Gingers,” Carmilla greeted, as she opened the door.

“After all these years and we still can’t escape that name?” Lafontaine asked, taking off their coat.

“Well you did when you dyed your hair blonde that one time, but I have to say, I prefer the ginger.”

“I think we all do,” Perry agreed handing Lafontaine their coat.

“Well not to be rude, but what are you doing here?” Carmilla asked.

“Laura invited us, but I came early to help,” Perry said, pushing past Carmilla and making her way into the apartment. Carmilla took their coats and hung them in the coat closet behind the apartment door.

“Of course you did.”

“I tried to stop her, but you know how Perry is,” Lafontaine said, waiting for Carmilla to allow them in. Carmilla waved her hand as they crossed the threshold.

“I’m not trying to impose, but Laura told me how tired she was lately because of Josh. I just thought with everyone coming later, that I could help you clean this up,” Perry said, looking around the large open space. Carmilla could see the disgust on her face. Carmilla took a moment to take in the actual mess in front of her. Toys and books littered the floor, along with old juice cups and a couple bottles. There were some clothes and unfinished laundry in it’s basket that never made it to the small laundry room.

“Thanks, Perry. I think we need all the help we can get,” Carmilla said.

“Hi Aunt Perry! Hi Laf.” Katherine said, still holding the bottle. “Mama, he’s getting heavy and my arm is tired.”

“Sorry guys. Make yourself at home. There’s a pot of coffee in the kitchen if you’d like.”

Carmilla made her way over to the couch. She picked Josh up and took the bottle from Katherine’s hand. Katherine slid down the couch, onto the floor and picked up one of her books. She started reading it immediately. Katherine was very shy and liked to stick as close to Carmilla or Laura as much as possible when there were too many people were around them.

“What is her reading level up to?” Lafontaine asked, taking a seat at the kitchen island.

“Second grade. She just really likes it, which makes me happy, but makes Laura thrilled.”

“Where is Laura, by the way?” Perry asked, evaluating her cleaning schedule in her head.

“She’s asleep. She had been up since 5 and I wanted to make sure she got some rest before all the festivities began.”

“Well then I guess it’s good we came early. Where should I start?” Perry asked, pulling out some rubber gloves and putting on apron.

Carmilla noticed Josh was done and grabbed the shoulder rag to burp him. “Um anywhere is fine.” She heard the small little burp from her son before setting him back down in the playpen. She turned attention back to the little girl on the floor. “Kat?”
Katherine finished her sentence and looked up at Carmilla. “Would you like to surprise mommy?”

Katherine smiled. “Yes.”

“Can you clean up your toys and books in this area? This way mommy won’t have to do it when she wakes up and she’ll be so happy that you helped.”

“But I can’t reach the shelf where my books go,” Katherine pouted.

“How about you put them together and then I’ll pick you up and let you put them where they go?”

Katherine smiled. “Okay!” She immediately closed her book setting it on the coffee table next to Carmilla’s book. She was allowed to leave her current book out, so they wouldn’t have to continuously pull it off the shelf for her when she wanted to read. Behind their couch was a ceiling to floor, wall to wall, bookshelf. Katherine started to put her toys away in the toy chest Carmilla had added to the bottom of the bookshelf after Josh was born.

“So how is Laura?” Lafontaine asked, while Perry started to clean the countertops.

“She’s great, just tired. We both are.”

“Did Katherine keep you up this much at night?”

“No. He doesn’t do it all the time, just a little more recently. We have a doctor’s appointment next week, just to make sure everything is okay. I think Laura is just more stressed out about our parents coming then anything else. She always gets so nervous about it.”

“Well that’s because after all these years, your mother still makes her unbelievably nervous,” Perry added, putting down the sponge.

Carmilla walked over to balcony door and opened it a little bit. She didn’t want the fumes to linger and her kids breathing it in. “What do you mean? Mother loves Laura.”

“Has she honestly not told you how much your mother still scares her?”

“Clearly not.”

Silence took over as Carmilla looked at Perry, who shrugged. She felt another pull on her pants leg before a small hand found it’s way into hers.

“I put my stuff away, Mama.”

Carmilla shared a small smile with Katherine.

“Looks good, Pumpkin. Let’s get that stack of books put away.”

Katherine handed Carmilla book by book to put on the shelf. She tried to do two at a time, but kept dropping them. Once everything was put away, Carmilla sat on the couch. She watched as Lafontaine played with Katherine. She looked at the clock and was surprised to see an hour and half had already passed.

“Will you keep an eye on them for a moment?” Carmilla asked.

“Of course,” Lafontaine said.

Carmilla nodded her thanks and made her way to her bedroom. She saw Laura still sound asleep
where she had left her. She crawled onto her side of the bed before shuffling over to wrap an arm around Laura’s torso. Laura hummed before turning into Carmilla. Carmilla could feel her starting to wake-up before she felt Laura rubbing her arm a little bit.

“Is it time to get up?” Laura mumbled.

“You don’t have to. I just came in here to be with you.”

“And what about our children?”

“They’re with Perry and Lafontaine.”

“And why are they here so early?”

“Because apparently everyone is coming over today and Perry has already started to help us by cleaning. She said she knew we had a lot going on and that apparently you’re nervous around my mother.”

“Isn’t everyone nervous around your mother?” Laura questioned.

“I thought you guys got a long now.”

“We do, Sweetness. I don’t get nervous, per se. She just tends to not realize that while taking care of our children, we should have a dust free, clean house.”

“Is that why we go into crazy cleaning mode anytime she comes over?”

“She always runs her finger on something.”

“I’ll talk to her about, if you want.”

“No, Baby. It’s fine. I guess we should just get up and help Perry since she was nice enough to come over to give us a hand.” Laura started to untangle herself from Carmilla, when she realized she was struggling to move.

“At,” Carmilla suggested.

Laura smiled. “At?”

“The kids are being watched. If we’re quick, we could,” Carmilla trailed off.

Laura seemed to grasp Carmilla’s comment as she leaned in for a kiss. Carmilla was happy to oblige meeting Laura halfway. Laura shifted to straddle Carmilla’s lap, as Carmilla sat up. She peppered kisses all around Laura’s neck and ears as she felt Laura starting to grind down. They hadn’t had a lot of free time lately and it was starting to get to them. Laura was biting her bottom lip, with her eyes closed, enjoying the feel of Carmilla’s lips on her.

Carmilla cupped her wife’s breast before slowly lifting her shirt, when they heard the thump followed by a loud wail of crying. They practically jumped off each other and made their way down the hall. Perry was trying to hold Katherine to her, trying to soothe her, while she cried. Katherine saw her parents and struggled to get away from Perry.

“Mama,” Katherine cried, finally managing to slip away from Perry.

“Hey, what happened, Princess?” Carmilla asked, scooping her up and holding her to her chest. She swayed back and forth a little bit. “Shh. It’s okay. Tell me what happened.”
Laura started rubbing up and down her back, trying to comfort Katherine as well. Laura looked to Perry, who looked to Lafontaine.

“She ran a little too fast and kind of slid on the floor. I tried to catch her, but she fell. I think she skinned her knee and might have bumped her head, but she wouldn’t let me check. It was hard enough for Perry to pick her up.”

“Let me look, Pumpkin. Where does it hurt?” Carmilla asked in the softest tone Perry and Lafontaine had ever heard her use. Katherine’s head was laying on Carmilla’s shoulder. Her little arms clenching around Carmilla’s neck. She slowly let go, her cries slowly subsiding as she pointed to her knee. Laura bent and gave it a small kiss.


“Anywhere else?” Carmilla asked. She pointed to her forehead, tears still streaming down her face as she sniffled. Carmilla leant forward and gave her a soft kiss to her forehead.

“Better?”

Katherine nodded again, but still clung to Carmilla. “It's okay, Princess. Mama’s got you. Let’s go clean you up.”

Carmilla headed down the hallway with Laura right behind her. They went into Katherine's room. Carmilla looked at her forehead and there was an impressive read bump off to the side. She checked her knee and saw it was okay.

“Just a little bump, Pumpkin.”

Laura held out a tissue and helped Katherine blow her nose. Once it seemed she was okay, Laura looked around.

“Did you clean your room, Little Kat?” Laura asked.

Katherine nodded. “And the living room,” she said, excitedly.

Laura smiled wide. “Well thank you for help!”

“Is there still a lot to clean?” Katherine asked.

“Just some stuff. Come show me the living room.” Laura held out her hand. Katherine slid off her bed and grabbed Laura’s hand. Carmilla followed.

“Wow!” Laura exclaimed, over excitedly for Katherine’s benefit. “You did such a good job!”

“Mama said it would help.”

“It did. Now we have less to clean. How about you watch cartoons while we continue to clean before all the grandparents get here?”

“Yay!” Katherine screamed, running to the couch, her previous fall forgotten.

Once she was settled, Laura looked at the clock. It was 11 and everyone was arriving around 3. They all got to work immediately, except for Lafontaine, who kept the children entertained and occupied. Perry made the kitchen spotless. Laura cleaned the rest of the living room up, making sure every service was spotless and dust free. Carmilla worked on the guest bathroom, bedrooms, and Katherine's room. Their house would be full over the weekend so to help Laura keep her sanity, she
cleaned as much as she could.

Once everything had Perry’s approval, which Carmilla considered to be Lilita approval they took a break. They all sat in the living room with Katherine, watching some old cartoons. Josh started to cry and Laura realized it was his now past his lunch time. She picked him up carefully before making her way to his room/second guest room at the moment.

“Mama?”

Carmilla had her eyes closed. She hadn't realized she had drifted off until Katherine sat in her lap. She jumped.

“Yes?” She asked, trying to stay awake.

“I'm hungry.”

“What can I make you?” Carmilla asked, rubbing her eyes and leaning forward. She yawned and stretched her arms out before sitting back against the couch.

“I don't know. What can you make mama?” Katherine had also gotten Carmilla's sarcasm.

“Very funny. How about a PB&J with the crust cut off?”

“Okay,” Katherine said. She picked up her book from the coffee table and followed Carmilla to the kitchen. Carmilla picked her up and sat her on her favorite bar stool.

Laura came out with a fresh looking Josh in her hands. “Well he was hungry,” Laura stated, moving to stand next to Carmilla. Carmilla wrapped her arm around Laura's shoulder and kissed her temple, before letting Josh grab her finger.

“What are you making, Carm?”

“A PB&J for my Kid.”

“Kat hates that kind.”

“Then why did we buy it?”

“Because I like it. Here, take Josh. I'll make her a sandwich.”

“Are you sure?” Carmilla asked as Laura handed Josh to Carmilla.

“Yeah. Hey do you guys want some sandwiches before everyone gets here?” Laura asked Lafontaine and Perry. They nodded in unison.

Once lunch was over and consumed, Katherine told Laura she was tired. Laura walked her to her bed and laid her down for a nap. Carmilla was playing with Josh on the floor rug in the living room, while Perry and Lafontaine watched.

“They're going to be here soon so I'm going to hop in the shower,” Laura announced.

That peaked Carmilla's interest. She got up and picked Josh up, laying him back in his playpen.

“Um, I'm not going to beat around the bush. Can you watch the kids for a little bit so I can join her?” Carmilla asked bluntly.
Perry's eyes widen as Lafontaine smirked.

"Been a while?" They asked.

"Well two kids with different schedules can interrupt your alone time."

"Fair enough. We'll take care of them."

Perry's eyes were still wide, but nodded her head.

"Thanks, guys."

Carmilla walked back to her and Laura's spacious bedroom. Laura had opened the curtains to let the sun in. She made her way over to the bathroom door and knocked lightly. When she didn't get an answer, she slipped inside, quickly discarding her clothes. She heard Laura breathing heavy and knew instantly what she was doing. She stepped behind Laura, under the water and wrapped her arms around Laura’s body. Laura jumped.

"Sorry, Cupcake. I did knock."

Laura nodded, clearly embarrassed. "Sorry, Carm. It's just been so long and-"

"Shh," Carmilla whispered, moving her hand lower, and over Laura's own hand. "Let me." Laura bit her lip as she felt Carmilla's hands for the first time, in what they considered to be too long of a long time.

Once they were finished and actually showered, they got out and dressed frantically. Laura hadn't known that Carmilla practically told Lafontaine and Perry what was happening and wanted to appear normal. Carmilla put on her signature look of black, while Laura chose a white t-shirt and light jeans. Laura was about to leave the room when Carmilla pulled her back.

"I love you, Cupcake."

Laura smiled and leaned in for a kiss. They kissed a few times keeping it light and not heated.

"I love you, Sweetness."

They shared another kiss. "Will you make the bed?" Laura asked.

"Will you help me?"

Laura rolled her eyes.

"Yes, lazy."

"It's a big bed. It takes longer with one person. You should know. You argue about it with me almost every morning," Carmilla stated, jokingly.

"I know."

They worked together, getting the bed made as neatly as possible. Laura grabbed Carmilla's hand when they were finished so they could walk out together. Carmilla enjoyed the small moments she got to share with Laura when it was just the two of them.

They noticed that Katherine was still asleep as they passed her room.
“If we let her sleep any longer, she won’t sleep tonight,” Carmilla commented.

“I know. She just looks so cute when she sleeps.”

“Laura, she’s drooling a little bit and her face is smudged against the pillow.”

“I’ve seen you in that state more times than I can count.”

Carmilla pouted, but walked over to the little girl.

“Hey, Pumpkin,” Carmilla said, rubbing her back.

She smiled and rolled over.

“Hi, Mama.”

“Hey, Sleepy Head. Why don’t we get you dressed for your grandparents. How does that sound?”

Katherine smiled and jumped out of bed.

“Can I wear a pretty dress?” She asked, standing in front of her closet.

“You can wear whatever you want,” Carmilla answered.

They had made Katherine’s clothes hang low in her closet so she could dress herself. They wanted Katherine to always express herself in any way she pleased. Sometimes she was Carmilla’s mini me, but other times, she wanted to look like a pretty princess.

She thumbed through her dresses until she found the one she wanted. She pulled out her favorite dress that was simple and black. Carmilla had been the one to pick it out at the store.

“Good choice, Princess,” Carmilla said.

Just then they heard a very familiar, loud laugh. Katherine smiled.

“Uncle Kirsch is here?!” She asked, jumping on the spot.

“Surprise!” Laura said, making a surprised face.

Katherine threw off her shirt and jumped into her dress. Other than Will, Kirsch was the most important man in her life. He moved to the city not long after Carmilla and Laura had for school. Once college ended, his life took a small downward spiral. He had managed to lose his job and Carmilla had offered the position of being their nanny. He was happy to accept under the condition of being called “Bro-nanny” instead. They agreed even though they thought it was a dumb name. He had been there for everything. He was already a family member to Carmilla, but not he was part of her whole family.

Katherine struggled to get her dress on. They had let Kirsch take time off while Laura was on maternity leave. Katherine was saddened by it, but happy to have her moms home with her.

Carmilla helped her get her dress ready and put her hair back so it was out of her eyes. Laura’s request to keep Lilita happy. She always hated when Katherine's eyes were covered by her bangs. Once Carmilla had the clips in place, Katherine bolted from the bathroom.

“Uncle Kirsch!” She screamed, running over to him.
“Dudette!” He said, meeting Katherine halfway and scooping her up, throwing her in the air a little bit before catching and hugging her. Carmilla and Laura watched with smiles on their faces.

“Miss me, Little Bro?” He asked.

“Yes, Big Bro!” She gave him another hug. He shifted her to his side.

“Hey, Carm-se,” he started to say before he received a glare from Carmilla. “I mean, hey Carmilla.”

“Hey, Beefcake,” she said walking over to him and hugging him tightly.

“Little nerd,” he said towards Laura. She rolled her eyes. She always hated that nickname.

“Hey, Kirsch,” giving him another hug.

“How's everything going with me gone?” He asked sitting back on the couch with Katherine in his lap.

“I've missed you, but it's okay. Josh cries a lot and it gets annoying. When are you coming back?” Katherine asked.

Kirsch looked to Laura and Carmilla. Laura was in the process of deciding if she wanted to go back to work or not. She enjoyed being a full time mom, but they had some money issues they would need to figure out.

“He'll be back soon, Pumpkin,” Carmilla said. “Mommy and I just have a few things to figure out before he does.”

Katherine didn't like that answer and pouted.

“Oh don't worry, Little Bro. I'll always be here if you need me. Okay?”

She nodded her head before hugging Kirsch again. “Besides, I brought you something from my trip back home.” She smiled at that.

“And how was the trip?” Carmilla asked, sitting on one of the bar stools. Laura moved to stand next to her and she wrapped her arm around Laura's waist.

“Oh it was great! I forgot what the life of money was like. Mom and dad took good care of me. The odd part of it all was I saw Danny while I was there.”

“Really?” Laura asked.

Danny went to study abroad after high school. She had met someone and decided to stay. As the years passed, their contact was less and less frequent, until it stopped all together.

“Yeah! She was in town visiting her parents. Apparently she's married now and her wife is pregnant. She told me to tell everyone hi for her and that she'll be in touch. But we all know that probably won't happen,” Kirsch said, fixing one of Katherine's hair clips.

“It's crazy to think we're all still here and together. But she just kind of disappeared from the world,” Carmilla states, not too distraught about it.

“How are your parents, Kirsch?” Perry asked, changing the subject. They all knew talking about Danny was going to get them nowhere, but stuck in the realm of old history.
“They’re great! Living the life now that they’re getting close to retirement.”

“Uncle Kirsch?” Katherine interrupted, bored by the grown ups talking around her.

“Yes?” He asked, smiling down at her.

Seeing Kirsch with Katherine always made Carmilla smile. He was still in great shape and worked out all the time, but managed to be so simple and calm when it came to Katherine.

“What’s my present?”

“Katherine Elizabeth,” Laura started.

“It’s okay, Laura. I should have given it to her when I mentioned it.”

“Come here,” Laura said, not letting her daughter get off that easily.

She sulked over knowing she was in trouble. Carmilla had seen this numerous times. She felt bad, however. She always made Laura take care of the discipline. She worried with her genetic makeup that she had developed the irrational anger that her mother had. She was always worried she was going to take it too far or get too upset. None of those signs ever showed, no matter how many times Laura pointed it out, but Laura understood and never pushed the issue.

Katherine stood in front of Carmilla, hoping she would save her. Carmilla shrugged at her because she knew Laura was going to make a good point.

Laura knelt down in front of her. This, however, was a good sign that she wasn't going to have to sit in time out. It’s when Laura would take her to another room, that she knew she was in trouble.

“Katherine, when someone says they have a present for you, you need to be patient. Do you know what that means?”

She shook her head no.

“It means that you need to wait until they're ready to hand it to you. We don't ask for gifts, but are blessed to receive them. So when someone says they brought something to you, but don't give it to you right away, you just have to wait until they're ready. Okay?”

She nodded her head yes, but she hung it low. She never liked getting in trouble, even though Laura was nowhere near being angry.

“I'm sorry, Mommy,” she said in a whisper.

“It's okay, Princess. You're not in trouble. You just need to know. Okay?”

She nodded again, but kept her head down. Carmilla had noticed that Katherine was a very sensitive child. When she got in trouble, she knew she was in the wrong and it made her feel bad. She turned towards Carmilla again and held her arms up.

Carmilla picked her up and kissed the side of head.

“It's okay. You're not in trouble,” Carmilla said, comforting her.

“I did something bad,” she mumbled.

“Well now you know not to do it, right?”
She could feel Katherine nodding her head. The worst part for Carmilla was she felt guilty. Since she always made Laura be the bad guy, Katherine would come to her after being in trouble with Laura. This was something she was working on, but it was still hard for her. However, she knew it was harder for Laura.

“You can go back to Kirsch, Baby,” she whispered in Katherine's ear as she watched him carrying on a conversation with Lafontaine and Perry, clearly trying to ignore what Laura was saying to their daughter. Katherine shook her head no and snuggled further into Carmilla.

The buzzer buzzed and Carmilla sighed. She kissed Laura's temple before making her way back to the door. Laura made her way to join the small gang on the couch. Carmilla checked the camera and smiled.

“Someone's about to be very happy,” Carmilla whispered in Katherine's ear. She hugged Carmilla tighter around the neck. “Aw, cheer up buttercup,” Carmilla said, standing next to the door.

“I feel bad,” Katherine muttered.

Carmilla leaned against the wall and moved Katherine to the front of her so she could look at her. Katherine kept her down as she played with Carmilla's necklace.

“Katherine, everyone makes mistakes. If we didn't, the world would be perfect and boring. You weren't in trouble when mommy called you. We just had to correct that one little flaw is all. But you're not in trouble, okay?”

Katherine nodded, keeping her head down.

“Aw come on, Kid. You're not going to make the tickle monster get you, are you?”

Carmilla wiggled her fingers towards Katherine who smiled.

“Stop, Mama,” she said.

“Okay. I'll save him for later.”

“Where did you get this necklace?” Katherine asked, playing with the small guitar pick. Carmilla smiled, watching as Katherine moved it around in her hand.

“You're mommy got it for me when we were younger. Isn't it pretty?”

Katherine nodded. There was a slight knock on the door which pulled their attention away.

Carmilla opened the door and smiled.

“Hey, Will!”

“Hey, Kitty.”

Carmilla leaned in to give him the best hug she could considering she had Katherine on her hip.

“And who is this?” Will asked, bending a little lower to look at Katherine who was still snug against Carmilla and resting her head on her shoulder.

“You know who I am, Uncle Will!”

“Well this can't be Little Kat. You're too big!” Will smiled.
Katherine smiled back, but didn’t bother moving from Carmilla.

“Aren’t you going to give your Uncle a hug?” Carmilla asked.

“I don’t know who this little girl is. She’s way too big to my niece. Are you an imposter? Are you hiding my niece somewhere and pretending to be her? I have to find her and rescue her,” Will teased. He started looking around the living room, picking up small things that no one could hide behind: pillows, a lamp, a couch cushion.

“Hi, Will!”

“No time Laura, my niece is missing,” Will said, looking frantically.

Finally Carmilla heard a small laugh from Katherine as she started to wiggle to be put down.

“I’m right here, Uncle Will!” She exclaimed, standing next to Carmilla.

“I don’t know. You look like her, but you’re much too tall.”

Will continued to search frantically around the kitchen and the living room. Katherine moved to sit on the couch and cuddle up to Laura. She sat on Laura’s lap as she watched Will look around and laughed. Carmilla followed, sitting next to her wife. Will ducked behind the kitchen counter before standing up again, looking directly at Katherine.

“There you are, Princess! I have been looking for you everywhere!” Will exclaimed, making his way to the couch.

“I’ve been here the whole time, silly,” Katherine smiled.

She jumped off of Laura’s lap and into Will’s arm. He gave her a big hug when there was another knock on the door.

“That will be Christopher,” Will said, hoisting Katherine up and opening the door. Christopher was a skinny man with blonde hair. He and Will met during college out west, but both moved to the city afterwards. Christopher had informed Carmilla that Will had talked about the city so much, he couldn’t picture living anywhere else with him.

Will came to terms with his sexuality when he was a senior in high school. Carmilla had made sure to be home that weekend when Will sat Lilita and Henry down to talk about it. Lilita was surprised to say the least. She thought dealing with one gay child was hard, but when she had to accept two, it took a while to adjust. However, she didn’t get angry or upset. She listened calmly to Will as he explained. She took in the words of her husband, the words of her daughter and eventually came to terms in accepting Will and Carmilla as who they were.

Will and Christopher shared a brief kiss when Christopher entered. Katherine made a sound of disgust.

“You’ll do that one day too, Little One,” Christopher said.

“No I won’t,” she protested.

“Ah, just like Carmilla,” Will said, putting her down on the floor. “But there is always one way to get her happy.”

Will held out a small bag for Katherine, but she felt conflicted. She wanted to take it and rip it open,
but instead she took the bag and walked to her mothers, placing it on the coffee table. She moved over and leaned against the couch in between Laura’s legs. Laura looked down and smiled at her before placing her hands on Katherine’s shoulders.

“And this is for my nephew, who I am excited to see,” he said, holding it off his finger. Will had waited in the waiting room when Katherine and Josh had been born. He was proud of his sister and wanted to be there for her when her family was starting and expanding. However, he had been traveling with Christopher, and hadn’t managed to see his nephew for quite some time.

Carmilla noticed Katherine not opening her present. She knew that Katherine was debating when the right time would be, but also knew she felt guilty.

“You can open your gift, Sweetheart,” Carmilla said.

Katherine shook her head. “I'll wait.”

Laura heard Katherine and smiled. “It’s okay, Kat. You can open it.”

Katherine shook her head again and decided to wait.

“Now that everything is in order and this is in fact my niece, I think I’ll do some introductions,” Will said, holding Christopher’s hand.

“Chris, this is Perry and Lafontaine, good friends of ours from high school. And you know, Kirsch.”

“Nice to meet you,” Chris said, offering his hand. “What do you two do?” He asked, taking a seat on the adjacent couch.

“Oh, I own a little hole in the wall bakery downtown and Lafontaine is a professor of Biology,” Perry said, her hand resting on Lafontaine’s arm.

“But I’m currently in the process of looking for a PhD program,” Lafontaine added.

“What do you do, Chris?” Perry asked.

“I’m a personal trainer and nutritionist for a few different well known people.”

“Who?” Lafontaine asked.

“That I cannot say, but I help a lot of actors get in shape and get on the right diet for either weight loss or a specific role.”

“That sounds thrilling,” Perry said.

“It's exhausting, but rewarding,” Christopher smiled.

“Can I get anyone something to drink?” Carmilla asked.

Kirsch and Will asked for a coffee. She made her way to the kitchen to make a fresh pot.

“And you, Chris?”

“Oh, water for me. I assume you don’t have the special kind of tea I like anyway,” He said, turning his attention back to Perry and Lafontaine.

Carmilla rolled her eyes and exhaled. Laura nudged her and she tried to relax. She wasn't a big fan of
Christopher, no matter how much Will said he loved him. Luckily Josh started crying and she immediately excused herself. She walked over to the playpen and picked her son up. She carried him to the nursery to not disturb anyone.

Once in the nursery, she regretted her decision. The smell from his diaper was strong and this was the one process of parenting she didn't like. Luckily, he had managed to keep it all in his diaper this time.

“Thanks for the distraction, Kid. I'm not a big fan of your Uncle’s boyfriend.”

She managed to get the old diaper off and into the trash can. Josh started making little baby noises and smiling. Carmilla couldn’t help but act like she was having a conversation with him when he was vocal. After getting him cleaned up, she took him back to the living room.

Will placed his coffee mug on a coaster. He stood up and smiled towards Carmilla. Carmilla got the hint and handed Josh off to Will, who was smiling.

“He’s definitely a handsome Karnstein,” Will said, letting Josh hold onto his finger.

“He’s a Hollis,” Carmilla corrected, kissing the top of Laura’s head before sitting back down next to her. They enjoyed the quiet for a minute as they watched Will with Josh.

“So who else is coming to this little shindig?” Kirsch asked.

“Now we’re just waiting for my dad and Carmilla’s parents,” Laura said.

“Oh man, I haven’t seen your parents in ages. How are they doing?”

Laura looked at Carmilla.

“My parents are well. Dad is getting close to retirement, but luckily mom is already there. They’ve been vacationing a lot, since Dad technically only has to work on Sundays. But they seem a lot closer than they were in the past, right Will?” Carmilla asked.

“Oh definitely. I think once we got out of the house and out of their hair, they managed to rekindle their love for one another.”

“So romantic,” Christopher said.

“And what about Rich, Laura?” Lafontaine asked.

“He’s, uh, he’s good. Retired and living more in the cabin now.”

“Are you sure he’s okay? You don’t seem like he is,” Kirsch noted.

“Uh, Rich has met someone and Laura still doesn’t know how she feels about her. But you will all meet her soon. I’m pretty sure she’s coming today,” Carmilla said.

“Well I’m sure she’s lovely,” Perry said, scooting forward to pat Laura’s knee.

Laura nodded, but scooted back on the couch, closer to Carmilla.

“So our parents should be here anytime now, maybe we should start preparing food,” Carmilla suggested, changing the subject as quickly as possible.

“Sounds like a good idea,” Laura said, heading off to the direction of the couch.
What Carmilla thought was a small family reunion, turned into an entire family reunion. Lafontaine and Perry were great babysitters when Kirsch wasn’t available. Laura and Carmilla decided that Perry would be referred as Aunt Perry. They asked Lafontaine if they wanted a certain title, but Lafontaine smiled saying their name was perfect. And if it was too difficult, Katherine could just call them Laf. Katherine called them Laffy for a while and even though it wasn’t their favorite, they let her call them that anyway.

Carmilla followed Laura into the kitchen.

“Cupcake, I don’t think we have enough food for everyone. I thought it was just going to be our parents, Will and Chris.”

“I bought more food to accommodate everyone. We’re fine. Besides you kept reminiscing about the old days. I figured this would be a nice thing to do. We all live here, and yet rarely see each other all together. Also it will be a nice little surprise for our parents. Dad continuously asks me questions about them, so at least this one time they can all answer for themselves. I thought it was a nice surprise for you.”

“It is, Laura.”

“Good. Now since the only thing you can do is mashed potatoes, get out of my kitchen.”

Carmilla smiled and pulled Laura to her, giving her a big kiss. Katherine walked up beside them.

“Ew,” she said.

They pulled away from each other, and Carmilla looked down at her. She made a face and then started chasing Katherine.

“Help me, Big Bro!” She screamed, running straight to Kirsch.

He picked her up over his shoulder and held out his hand. “Ma’am, you are not allowed to touch the Princess. I’ve had to warn you about this before.”

“Well, Sir, you’re in charge of the burgers so-” Carmilla started.

“Sorry, Dudette. Kirschy has to work.”

He set Katherine down and joined Laura in the kitchen.

“So what’s the deal with your dad’s new lady friend?” Kirsch asked Laura, keeping his back to everyone while he started chopping some onions to add to the ground beef Laura had laid on the counter.

“I don’t know much. Her name’s Julie and she’s a couple years younger than my dad. All I know is she was a detective new in town when they met.”

“Does she make your dad happy?”

“I assume. I don’t know. I just always assumed after mom died that was it for him. You know?”

“Yeah, but come Laur. Your dad deserves to be with someone. He’s like, super awesome and nice.”

“Yeah, but my mom.”

“Do you think him dating this Julie chick is really going to take away the love he had for your mom?
You really are the spitting image of her. You know that right? He still has her because he has you and you know he would do anything to make sure you’re happy and safe. He’d probably even maul down a bear if it messed with you.”

“That’s why he always carried bear spray.”

“Oh, Dude, I totally remember that,” Kirsch said, laughing. “Anyway. You should give this woman a try. I bet she’s nice and she’s not replacing your mom. But come on, everyone needs a little lovin’.” Kirsch wiggled his eyebrows.

Laura smacked his arm. “Don’t ever refer to my father having sexual relations, you perv,” she tried to whisper.

The room went quiet and they turned around to see the rest of the apartment staring at them.

“Everything okay?” Carmilla asked from her spot on the couch.

“Perfect,” Laura said.

“Mama, what’s a perv?” Katherine asked.

Carmilla looked at Laura and Laura shook her head, mad at herself for not actually whispering.

“It’s a bad word, Pumpkin.”

“Uh oh. Mommy said a bad word, which means she has to go to timeout,” Katherine demanded.

“I have to make dinner, Sweetie. You don’t want mama to do it, do you?”

Katherine looked up at Carmilla and then back at Laura.

“Nope,” she said, matter of factly causing everyone to laugh a little.

“Carm, where are the good spices?” Kirsch asked from the kitchen.

“I’m right here, Kirsch,” Laura asked.

“He means the hot stuff, Baby,” Carmilla said, getting off the couch.

She walked into the kitchen and opened the cabinet. “I figured I could do a few that have a little extra kick, if you like.”

“Sounds good, Bro. Laura what else are we making besides burgers?”

“Well I bought some coleslaw at the store. I figured some mac and cheese would suffice.”

“Do we have potatoes?”

“Why?”

“I could make some mashed for everyone. Also do we have dessert?”

“I took care of that. There is a pie and brownies in the fridge.” Perry announced.

“It must be nice to have your own business,” Carmilla said.

Perry turned and smiled at her. “Well you would know better than any of us.”
“That’s true, Kitty. How is the shelter?”

Carmilla decided in college that she wanted to help people. But not just anyone, she wanted to help parents, children or both who were coming to terms with their sexuality. She was well on her way to becoming one of the most successful therapists in the city. She took her license to the next step by leaving the firm who had hired her out of college and starting her own practice along with a shelter. The shelter provided a warm bed for any child that was kicked out of their homes because of their sexual orientation. She was currently trying to expand it so they could fit more kids in. She would contact the parents who let them go, only to usually start counseling with them as a family. The kid would only be on the street for the night, once their parents came around to what they had actually done out of shock. However, some kids weren’t so lucky. Those kids had private rooms and managed to stay in a safe environment. She had a full time staff and many volunteers. She had also managed to get a few open church groups who came every week to help with anyone struggling because of religion.

“Work is fantastic,” Carmilla said. “Luckily, I’ve managed to work from home mostly since Josh was born. I go in when we get a new kid who has been abandoned or they really need me. But we’re working on expanding and looking for a second location.”

“I thought you just wanted more space? Like a new building?” Lafontaine asked.

“Well we’re looking for one in the neighborhood of the building we’re already in. We figured if we can find an affordable new building, we could have our long term teenagers stay there and have more of a dorm setup. We have a long ways to go though and we’ll have to do some fundraising to get there. But that’s what we’re hoping for.”

“That sounds great. I’m proud of you, Kitty.”

“Thanks, Will.”

“Carm, if you’re going to make mashed potatoes, you should start now,” Laura said, already washing them and handing them to Carmilla.

“Sure thing, Cupcake. Hey Kat, want to help me peel potatoes?”

“No,” the little girl said, playing pattycake with Christopher.

“Okay,” Carmilla said, putting the potatoes in a bowl.

“Katherine, help your mother, please,” Laura said.

“Baby, relax,” Carmilla whispered.

“I lost track of time and I was hoping to have everything prepared before your parents got her. I just want things to go well and—”

“Hey,” Carmilla said, putting down the things in her hand. “Come here,” she said.

Carmilla pulled Laura outside on their balcony. It was basically a large wall of windows, with only one, not so obvious door that led outside. Carmilla and Lafontaine hold the record for running into it the most and cursing under their breath when they banged their heads. The balcony wrapped around to one small corner that wasn’t visible from inside of the apartment. This is where Laura and Carmilla would go to either have a small argument or discussion. Carmilla pulled Laura into the small spot.
“Relax, Laura.”

“I know. I just want things to be right when your mother gets here. And,” Laura paused, looking up at the clouds,” it looks like it’s going to rain so how is Kirsch going to be able to grill the burgers. I thought it would be nice if we could all eat outside, like a cook out, but if it rains, that’s not happening. I just feel like I have so much to do and there is never enough time to get it done and-”

“Whoa. Whoa. Laura calm down. First off, Mother won’t be here til 5 because you know she’s always late. And yeah my parents are getting old, but they’re not 80. I’m sure she can wait a while to eat. Secondly, Kirsch is the burger master. You know he has a secret way of using that ridiculous grill he bought to keep here for these reasons. And if it rains, Cupcake, it rains. We can eat inside. There is plenty of room. We have nothing to worry about. Now what’s really going on?”

Laura shrugged and looked away from Carmilla. Carmilla wrapped her arms around Laura’s shoulders and hugged her. Laura hugged back, embracing Carmilla tightly.

“I’m just exhausted, Carm. My brain runs a mile a minute, but I’m too tired to keep up with it.”

“I know, Cupcake.”

“I just want to sleep all the time, but we have too much responsibility to do that.”

“Okay. How about this: Tomorrow, Laura Hollis, you have the day off.”

“We have to go to church tomorrow. It’s Sunday and your parents will be here. Not to mention, they’ve been dying to go.”

“Shit. You’re right. I forgot. Okay. Monday, you get the day off. I will get up and take care of everything. You can sleep for as long as you want. I’ll take the kids out somewhere or something so you can have a peaceful, quiet day at home.”

“You won’t be able to handle both of them, Carm.”

“Then I’ll bring Kirsch with me. He can keep Katherine distracted and safe, if I have to attend to Josh. How does that sound?”

“You really don’t have to do that.”

“Yes, I do. You’re working so hard to make sure everything is in order. Let me do this for you.”

Laura nodded and shared a brief smile. Carmilla returned it before leaning in to kiss her wife. It was a moment of stillness. For Carmilla, every kiss they had felt like the first one she received when Laura kissed her all those years ago.

“I love you,” Laura said against her lips. “Thank you.”

“All you ever have to do is ask.”

“And?” Laura asked.

“I love you too, Cupcake.”

They shared a few more kisses before heading back inside. Katherine was sitting at the kitchen counter, Kirsch standing next to her, showing her how to peel the potatoes.

“Look what Kirsch taught me, Mama.”
“You’re doing a good job there. Just be careful. That’s a sharp little knife under there and we wouldn’t want you losing any fingers,” Carmilla teased.

Katherine stilled and put the peeler down. “No, Dudette. You’re smart. Just do this slow and you’ll be okay. I’m watching you. You won’t lose any fingers on my watch,” Kirsch said before turning his attention back to the two women who just walked in. “The patties are ready. I figured we should wait until everyone is here to start the grill.”

“Sounds like a good plan,” Laura said, trying to calm down.

“Go sit on the couch, Laura. I’ll get the salad together and you can just relax,” Carmilla said.

“Thanks, Carm.”

Laura made her way back to the couch. She took Josh from Will’s arms who seemed to be happy by the notion. Will shook his arms a little bit and Carmilla realized they must have gotten tired. Holding a baby for a long period of time can get exhausting. Carmilla loved to watch Laura from afar whenever she interacted with her children. She seemed to smile the brightest when she was looking at them. Most of the pictures on Carmilla’s phone were candids of her wife and children. Even her lock screen was the image of Laura seeing Josh for the first time. Out of all the years she had known Laura, she had never seen her so happy.

“Everything alright with you two?” Kirsch asked.

“Yeah. Are you busy on Monday?”

“Nope. I have nothing planned.”

“Would you mind working on Monday? I’m giving Laura the day off. She’s just exhausted and it’s adding to her stress level. She needs a break.”

“Yeah, no problem, Bro. What time?”

“Uh, could you be here by 8?”

“Sure.”

“We’ll get some breakfast and then figure out something to do with these little guys.”

“Sounds perfect!”

Carmilla was starting to put the potatoes in boiling water, making sure Katherine wasn’t too close to the stove when they heard the doorbell ring. Carmilla turned to look towards Laura.

“I got it,” Laura said, getting up. Perry eagerly took Josh into her arms before making her way over to the door. She opened it and immediately smiled.

“Hi, Mom,” she greeted, pulling Lilita into a hug.

“Hi, Sweetheart,” Lilita said, following Laura’s embrace.

“How did you get in without buzzing?” Laura asked.

“Oh a nice young couple let us in. They were walking out as we were walking in,” Lilita explained, hugging Laura tightly.
After Laura and Carmilla got married, Lilita insisted that Laura could call her anything she wanted. Lilita had helped with the wedding planning as much as Laura needed her to. She never argued with Laura on her choices. They really bonded over the simple and small little wedding they had. She helped Laura pick out her dress and the location. She called everyone to make sure everything was in order. She basically became Laura’s wedding planner. Since that time on, Lilita and Laura grew close. But of course, Laura was the only one who was allowed to call Lilita “mom”, everyone else had to stick with “mother”.

“Hi, Henry,” Laura greeted, who came in behind Lilita with presents under his arm.

“Hey there, Kid.”

Lilita grabbed the presents and walked passed Laura. Henry embraced her in a huge hug before walking in. Laura shut the door and heard Henry whistle.

“Oh right, you haven’t seen this place yet,” Laura said. “Well let me take your coats and I’ll let you say hi to everyone. Then I’ll give you grand tour.”

Henry shook out of his coat, but tapped Laura’s hand away. “I take it this is the coat closet?” He asked, pointing to the door behind Laura.

“Yes.”

“Give me your coat, Dear,” Henry said to Lilita. She shimmied out of it and handed to him. He put them on hangers and hung them up. They made their way out of the small foyer into the large living room and kitchen space.

“Well, well, look at this! An old Greenland Baptist youth reunion,” Henry said, smiling.

“Oh it’s so wonderful to see you all!” Lilita said.

“Hi, Mother,” Will said, standing from the couch to greet her.

“There’s my William. How are you?” She asked, wrapping her arms around her.

“I’m wonderful, Mother.” She backed away to look at him.

“So handsome,” She said, cupping his cheek.

“I agree,” Christopher said, standing up from the couch.

Carmilla looked up at her mother to see a slight, almost unnoticeable sneer. “It’s good to see you again, Christopher,” She said, holding out her hand.

“And where is my glittering girl?” She asked, looking at the kitchen.

“Hi, Mother,” Carmilla said.

“Grandmother!” Katherine shouted, jumping off the counter and landing on her own two feet. She ran over to her and hugged her legs. Lilita picked her up and hugged her.

“Look at you! You’re getting so big. Did you miss me?” Lilita asked.

Katherine nodded before wrapping her arms around Lilita’s neck.

“I love your dress. Let me guess, your mother picked it out?” Lilita asked, looking at Carmilla.
Carmilla mouthed “mama” to her. Lilita was still coming to terms, even after 4 years, of how her grandchildren would refer to her two moms.

“I’m sorry. Your mama picked that out for you?”

Katherine nodded. “It’s my favorite!” Katherine declared.

“Well you look absolutely beautiful,” Lilita said, putting her back down on the floor.

“Come here you little rascal,” Henry said.

Katherine laughed and ran to her granddad.

“Hey, Grandkid,” Henry said.

“Hi, Granddad.”

“You missed me more than your grandmother, right?” He asked.

Katherine nodded.

“Good answer! Now, where is my world renowned therapist?” Henry asked.

“Mama’s in the kitchen,” Katherine said, pointing.

“Hey, Pops,” Carmilla said, walking around the counter. Henry sat Katherine on the ground to give Carmilla a huge bear hug.

“Hey, Kid. Everything good?”

“Always,” she smiled. She let go and turned towards Lilita.

“Hi, Mother,” she said, giving her a hug.

“Hi, Sweetheart. I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you too.” Carmilla pulled away and smiled. “Well I’m in the middle of making some mashed potatoes for dinner so why don’t you let Laura give you the grand tour of the new place. I can’t believe you guys haven’t been here yet.”

“Well we were gone and then little Josh came and we always felt like you two were too busy to deal with more people,” Henry said. “But now you have a whole house full.”

Perry, Lafontaine, and Kirsch stood to greet Henry and Lilita. They shared hugs and hellos before making their way back to their seats in the living room.

“Oh, Henry, I’m so sorry. Let me take your bag,” Laura said.

“No worries, Laura. I’m old, but I’m not that old.”

“How’s the new hip, Pops,” Carmilla shouted from the kitchen with a smirk on her face. Henry made a face at her. “I said, how’s the new hip, Pops?” She yelled a little louder.

“I’m so sorry you have to deal with her,” Henry said to Laura.

“Yeah she’s more of handful than Josh,” Laura admitted.
“I heard that,” Carmilla said before turning on the mixer.

“Well, let me show you around. We had to do so much to the place. It’s why we got it for so cheap. So the kitchen and living room used to be separate, but we took the wall down to give it an open space. Carmilla put in the bookshelf with help from Kirsch. It surprisingly didn’t take long, but we managed. And then this way,” Laura led them to the end of the open area where the hallway was to her right. “This is where we reside. Carmilla and I are down at the end of the hall there, with a master bath attached to our room. The first door on the right is Kat’s room and then the door next to that will be Josh’s room, but right now we still have it setup as a guest room. He’s still sleeping in our room. And then on the left is the second bathroom and then the study/second guest room. The first room here is a smaller bedroom, that we decided to only use when we have everyone over. Carmilla and Kirsch converted it, making the study smaller since she managed to get the bookshelf out here.”

“Well I just can’t believe it. It’s beautiful, Laura.”

“It wouldn’t be twice as beautiful if you hadn’t helped me pick out the perfect furniture. Oh and if you two would like to use Carmilla and I’s shower, that’s totally fine. The hall bathroom is full of toys for Katherine, even though they should be in her room now.”

“We’ll be fine, Laura. Thank you, though,” Henry said, taking their small bag to Josh’s room.

“Cupcake, show them the best part,” Carmilla shouted from the kitchen.

“Oh yes and this way,” Laura said, leading them through the open kitchen, “is our balcony and view.”

“This is beautiful,” Lilita said. “It’s so lovely. And you can see the park. Just amazing.”

“How did you manage to afford all of this anyway?” Henry asked. “It looks pretty expensive.”

“It was, but I have a pretty awesome wife, who is doing a lot of good things and making some decent money. But we built this up. Half the apartments in this building aren’t rented yet. Kirsch and Carmilla worked really hard on this, which helped us save a lot of money.”

“That we did, Pastor K,” Kirsch said, passing them to load the burgers onto the grill.

“You do know it’s starting to get cold out, right Kirsch?” Henry asked.

“Oh yeah, but don’t worry about that. These burgers will still be delicious.”

“Laura?” Lilita asked.

“Yes, mom.”

“May I see my grandson?”

“Oh, of course,” Laura said, leading them back inside. Perry was still holding him and she was happy to see her smiling son before handing him over to Lilita.

“Oh, hi there, little one,” Lilita said, smiling and holding her grandson. She looked over to Laura. “I always loved the named Joshua. It’s a great Biblical name.”

“It is, but he’s actually named after Carmilla’s friend, Josh.”

“The one who passed?” Lilita asked, still smiling at her grandson.
“Yes, ma’am. We agreed on that name for a boy when we were just starting to think about starting a family.”

“Well, I still love it,” Lilita said, sharing a brief smiling with Laura before Josh started to babble and grasp Lilita’s finger. Henry smiled, but looked over at the kitchen.

He saw his granddaughter sitting on the counter helping Carmilla make the mashed potatoes. Carmilla told her what to add and when to stop. He watched them giggle and smile at each other. Katherine constantly trying to take a taste with her finger and Carmilla secretly letting her. He thought the day he married Carmilla and Laura was the happiest he had ever seen Carmilla, but he always stood corrected when it came to Carmilla’s happiness. This could possibly be the happiest she has ever looked. He stared at them as they interacted with one another. He smiled at how gentle she was with Katherine. He knew that Carmilla’s family was the most important thing to her.

“All done,” Carmilla said.

“That was fun, Mama,” Katherine said.

Carmilla took Katherine off the counter and she ran up to Laura. Laura picked her up and held her on her hip.

“I helped mama make the mashed potatoes,” she announced.

“You did?” Laura asked.

Katherine nodded.

“I’m proud of you,” Laura said, kissing her head.

Another knock, which Laura was hoping was the last.

“You know who that is?” Laura asked Katherine, who smiled and nodded before wiggling to be put down. She ran to the door, but knew to wait until a grownup was with her. Laura opened the door and smiled.

“Grandpa,” Katherine said.

“Hey there, Kat. Hi, Honeybear.”

“Hi, Dad,” Laura said, giving him a hug before he picked up Katherine and gave her a hug.

“Your face is scratchy,” Katherine said.

Laura eyed him curiously until she noticed the small scruff on his face.

“I was in a hurry to get to the train this morning and forgot to shave,” he clarified.

“Ah,” Laura said. “Come in, Dad. Get comfortable.”


“She thought it would be a good idea to let this be a family trip. But she’s hoping you guys can come down soon and visit.”

“Is it because of me?” Laura asked.
“No, Sweetheart. She’s working on a case and knew you would have a lot of people here. Everything is fine.”

Laura nodded and Rich followed her in.

“Oh, perfect timing, Mr. Hollis. The burgers are ready,” Kirsch said, carrying in a plate of food.

“Well, Kirsch, what are you doing here?” Rich asked. He looked around, taking in everyone around him.

“Oh my gosh, look at all these grown ups,” He said, smiling. He immediately went to Perry and Lafontaine bringing them into hugs. He followed with Will. He exchanged introductions with Christopher. He waved off to Carmilla’s parents. He still attended Henry’s church so he saw them all the time.

“And is this my little grandson?” He asked, looking at the baby in Lilita’s arms.

“That’s him, Dad.”

Lilita handed off the now sleeping child to Rich.

“Oh, look at this handsome little guy. He’s definitely a Hollis,” he said, rocking Josh back and forth gently.

“Hey, Rich,” Carmilla said, coming to join the rest of the family in the living room.

“Hey, Carmilla. Still keeping my girl happy?”

“The best I can, Sir,” she said, wrapping her arm around Laura’s shoulder.

“She’s keeping me happy, Dad. Forever and always as promised,” Laura said, wrapping an arm around Carmilla’s waist.

“Is that what I promised? I need to re-read the contract,” Carmilla teased.

Laura nudged her in the side hard.

“Ow. Joke, Cupcake. Just a joke!”

“Mama, did you get a boo boo?” Katherine asked.

“Yes, from Mommy,” Carmilla replied, rubbing her side.

“She’s okay,” Laura said, turning to everyone. “Foods ready. There is salad, coleslaw, burgers, mashed potatoes and corn on the cob,” Laura announced.

Everyone got up and headed towards the kitchen Island. Carmilla and Laura stood behind and waited. Josh started to cry in Rich’s arms.

“I don’t know what I did,” Rich announced, trying to calm Josh.

“You didn’t do anything. It’s his dinner time too,” Laura said, taking Josh from his arms. “Excuse me for a moment,” Laura said, heading back towards their bedroom.

“Do you want me to make you a plate?” Carmilla asked.
“No, it’s okay,” Laura said before shutting the door.

Katherine walked over to Carmilla who picked her up. “You hungry, Pumpkin?”

“Very,” she replied, rubbing her tummy.

“Well what do you want?”

“Some mashed potatoes.”

“Anything else?” Carmilla asked, plopping some mashed potatoes on her plate.

“And a burger, please.”

Kirsch had set aside the spicier ones for anyone who wanted one. She grabbed a normal one for Katherine. She put some ketchup and mustard on it, knowing Katherine didn’t like anything else.

“And how about some corn, Buttercup?”

Katherine shook her head no.

“You need a vegetable, Sweetheart. Do you want some salad? It has lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and cheese in it.”

Katherine shook her head no again.

“You have to eat one of them, Katherine. Do you want corn?”

Katherine exhaled. “Okay,” she said. “But can I put some honey mustard on them?”

It was how they had managed to get Katherine to eat any of her vegetables. They knew it wasn’t the healthiest, but at least she was getting the nutrients she needed inside of her.

“Sure, Kid, but just a little bit. Go sit in your spot and I’ll bring it to you.”

Katherine nodded and Carmilla put her down on the floor. She watched as Katherine pulled out her little food tray and set it next to one of the two chairs that was facing one of the two couches. She put a little honey mustard on her corn before bringing Katherine her plate, along with some water. She fixed her own plate before sitting next to Katherine on the floor so her friends and family could be comfortable on the couches and chairs. Henry shared a brief prayer before they started eating.

Laura came out soon after with Josh. She put him in the only place that could contain their little boy before moving over to the kitchen. Once her plate was full, she moved to sit next to Carmilla on the floor. She doubled checked to make sure Katherine was actually eating her corn instead of just shifting around before she started eating.

“She’s eating, Cupcake,” Carmilla whispered in her ear before kissing Laura’s cheek.

“Good. I just want to make sure she’s not being sneaky and putting the corn in that napkin on her lap.”

“I think she realized it was not a good idea when she got a time out for it and then had to eat it anyway. She learned her lesson.”

“True,” Laura agreed.
Through dinner, Laura and Carmilla stayed quiet as they listened to everyone catch up. Lafontaine talked about what PhD programs they were looking into, Perry talked about her bakery and how well it was doing, Will talked about his travels, Kirsch talked about how he was struggling a little bit, but was managing pretty well and Christopher rambled on about the importance of his job. Carmilla couldn’t stand the sound of his voice any longer and started to collect everyone’s empty plates. Lilita joined her before they both made their way to the kitchen sink.

“Please tell me you think William can do better than that man,” Lilita said, placing dishes in the sink.

“He could, yes.”

“Oh thank goodness, Carmilla. I thought I was the only one who thought he was a complete idiot. Why is William with him?”

Carmilla shrugged. “He claims it’s love. However, if I got to travel and not work, I’d probably stick to him too.”

“When do you think William will figure out what he wants to do with his life?”

“I don’t know, Mother, but he has been helping me out when he’s not traveling. He stops by the shelter every day when they’re in town to talk to some of the older teens. He does really well with them, actually.”

“How is work going, Dear?” Lilita asked, starting to wash the dishes.

“It’s going really well, Mother. Mattie and I have managed to take down some of the bigger conversion camps. It hasn’t been the easiest to get past camp members on our side, but once we found the one trigger, we compiled a good amount of people. We’ve shut down five already, but we still have a long way to go.”

“That’s wonderful news, Darling. Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Well there is one thing I’ve wanted to talk to you about,” Carmilla admitted, scratching the back of her neck.

“And what would that be?” Lilita asked. She paused washing the dishes to face Carmilla.

“Mother, do you think you could come up once a month or every once in awhile and help some of the parents that are struggling with acceptance? I know that is a lot to ask, but I’ve seen many parents who have had the same reaction as you and I think you could be the best influence to them of all because you’ve been through it all. Not only did you have a gay daughter, but you eventually found out you had a gay son as well. I think you could give a lot of advice when it comes to this.”

Lilita smiled. “I would be honored,” she said, proudly.

“Really?” Carmilla asked.

“Of course. I know I had a long, bumpy road to get to where we are today, but I’m glad I made it. I mean look at you. You are successful. You provide for your family and whenever I look at Katherine, sometimes I forget she is not you. You’re so happy, Carmilla. And that makes me happy.”

Carmilla smiled. “Thanks, Mother.”

They continued to discuss what Carmilla wanted while washing the dishes together. Carmilla and Lilita were a lot closer to one another now. Carmilla called Lilita anytime she needed some form of
advice when it came to motherhood, but always stuck to her dad for the comedy aspect of life. She actually didn’t enjoy being away from her parents, but luckily they were only two hours away by train. Laura came over and started to put the food away, talking casually with Lilita about work.

“So you just don’t know what you want to do?” Lilita asked.

“Well after Katherine was born, I had the whole summer to recuperate and get back on my feet. It didn’t seem like such a burden. I was also just ready to get back to work and to teaching. But now I’m kind of enjoy the thought of being a stay at home mom and taking care of my children.”

“I felt the same way after William. But I soon realized, I only needed to be home on the days that Henry needed to visit people. However, I always enjoyed work.”

“I know. I do miss teaching art history though and my students.”

“What do you think, Carmilla?” Lilita asked, sipping on a fresh cup of coffee that Carmilla had offered her.

“I think Laura should do whatever she wants. We’re fine financially if she decides to stay at home with kids. I just want her to be happy.”

“I’ve been debating since Josh was born. Kirsch was huge help to us and I don’t want to lose him because he really is great to have around. He’s good at keeping Katherine entertained. Not to mention, since we’ve both been home, Katherine hasn’t really been able to see him. They have a very strong bond and I don’t want to break that for them. My maternity leave will be up in the next couple of weeks. Then I will have to return to campus regardless.”

“Basically, we’re kind of just waiting for that day. I will have no opinion in Laura’s choice,” Carmilla added.

“I know you’ll make the right decision Laura. You like to think these through unlike my daughter,” Lilita added.

“Hey, I think everything through now,” Carmilla pouted. “If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have a successful youth program along with everything else I do.”

“You’re amazing at your job, Carm,” Laura said, giving her a quick kiss.

“Well,” Henry said, catching everyone’s attention. “Now that the food has been digested, I think someone needs to open all these bags and boxes she has been given.” He looked over to Katherine, smiling.

Carmilla watched her daughter go from being comfortable to nervous. She got up and walked over to Carmilla, who picked her up.

“Did I say something wrong?” Henry asked.

“No. She just learned today that she has to be patient after asking Kirsch where her present was. She thinks she got in trouble, when I was just trying to teach her a little life lesson on waiting,” Laura explained. “But she has been such a good girl all day. She even helped me clean, didn’t you Pumpkin?” Laura asked tickling her side. Katherine grabbed Laura’s hand to stop her.

“Yes,” she mumbled against Carmilla’s neck.

“Oh, well if you were working so hard, you deserve a reward,” Lilita said, standing from the barstool
and walking over next to the couch, where the big bag of presents laid. Lilita picked up the bag and put it on the coffee table.

“Go put your tray away, Pumpkin, and then you can open those presents,” Carmilla whispered. Katherine did as she was told, putting her tray away slowly. Carmilla and Laura sat on the floor where they originally had for dinner, when Katherine came back and sat in Carmilla’s lap. She scooted as far back against Carmilla as possible. Lilita laid a box in front of Carmilla’s legs for Katherine. Katherine looked up to Laura with sad eyes.

“Come here,” Laura said.

Carmilla tried not to make a sound as her daughter basically climbed and stepped all over her to get to Laura. Katherine hugged Laura, while Laura wrapped her up. “You look pretty sad for a girl who has a lot of presents.”

“I’m sorry, Mommy,” she said.

“Why, Sweetheart? There’s nothing to be sorry for.”

“You’re okay, Pumpkin. Don’t you want to open your presents?” Carmilla asked.

Katherine nodded.

“Okay then, let’s start ripping this paper up,” Carmilla said.

Katherine looked back at Laura. “Have I been patient, Mommy?”

“Oh you have been very patient all day, Little Kat.”

“So I can open them?”

“Well that’s what we’re all waiting for, Pumpkin.”

Katherine smiled and turned to sit in Laura’s lap. Carmilla handed the box over and Katherine slowly started opening it.

“Also, Mother, you’ve got to stop spoiling her,” Carmilla said. “She doesn’t need new things every time you see her.”

“Hush, Carmilla. She is my granddaughter and I will spoil her in any way I please,” Lilita said. “Besides I think you’ll like this one as much as she will.”

Carmilla looked back over to see a clothing box. Laura helped her open the box and clear the wrapping paper. She was expecting to see another dress when Katherine gasped.

“Mama, it’s just like yours!” Katherine exclaimed, pulling a, most likely, pleather jacket out of the box.

“Well look at that,” Carmilla said.

“I figured she would want one since you were already putting her in band t-shirts,” Henry said. “It’s not real, but when I saw it, I knew she needed it to be just like her Mama.”

Laura helped her put on the jacket and Katherine stood up. She did a little pose with one hand on her hip which caused Carmilla to smile. “Now you look just like me,” Carmilla said.
“What do you say, Katherine?” Laura asked.

“Thank you, Grandmother. Thanks, Granddad.”

“There’s a few other little odds and ins. These two are for Josh,” Henry said, holding out the two bags. “Well more for you than him. We also brought a box of diapers, but they’re down in the rental car.”

“You didn’t have to do that,” Laura said.

“Oh, it’s no trouble at all.”

“Carm, do you want to open these?” Laura asked, holding out the presents for Josh.

“How about we both open one each?” Carmilla asked.

“Sounds good.”

Laura unwrapped the first bag and there were a few different onesies that were a set. There were five in total: red, blue, green, black and a white.

“He needed new ones. Thank you so much,” Laura said.

Carmilla pulled out a few new bottles.

“We figured you were using the same ones you had when Katherine was small. Since everything seems to change, we figured you could use some new ones. Laura mentioned you were trying to get him on the bottle,” Lilita explained.

“Thanks,” Carmilla said.

They let Katherine open the rest of her presents. Will had gotten her a necklace from his travels, while Kirsch had brought his favorite toy from home. He asked her to keep it safe, which she agreed to do.

Around 9 o’clock, Carmilla heard her phone in the other room and excused herself. She saw Mattie’s contact and smiled.

“I’m gone one day and you miss me like crazy,” Carmilla teased.

_Oh, please. I could go my whole life without having to listen to your snarky comments and sarcasm_, Mattie replied.

After high school, Mattie was accepted into an ivy league school where she studied law and business. Mattie had stayed in touch with Laura all throughout college. Once Laura informed Mattie of Carmilla’s plan to start her own practice with a shelter for LGTBQ kids, Mattie was more than happy to provide any help she could. Carmilla never thought she would business partners with Mattie, but Mattie was the reason this whole project was successful and stayed successful. She was also the reason conversion camps were coming to an end.

“So what’s going on? It’s rare that you call me this late.”

_Well I managed to do some magic, Darling. We’re going to be able to by the building next door to the office._

“Are you kidding me?” Carmilla asked, excitedly.
Nope. We managed to come to an agreement with the landlord. It will be a little more expensive than expected because I figured this way we could put the buildings together to make our own brownstone larger. I’ve already talked to our most generous church, who is willing to help us setup fundraisers. I also started to contact local LGBTQ bars around the city to help add support and awareness to what we’re doing. I think we’re going to be able to pull this off with ease.

“Oh my gosh, Mattie. This is fantastic news. Do I need to come into the office tomorrow?”

No. Spend time with your family, not to mention it’s the weekend. We have a meeting Monday morning at 9 with the owner of the building to make everything final.

Carmilla felt her stomach drop. “Any chance we can move that meeting to Tuesday?”

Carmilla, the sooner we get these papers signed the better off we’ll be, but since this is your practice, you need to be there.

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“Okay. I’ll figure something out. I’ll see you Monday. Call me if anything changes.”

I always do. Have fun, Darling. Ta ta.

Carmilla made her way back to the living room.

“Everything alright, Carm?” Laura asked.

She looked up at her wife, knowing how tired she was, but she’d work something out with Kirsch.

“It’s great actually. That was Mattie. We’re expanding!” Carmilla said, happily.

Laura ran over to her and hugged her. “Congratulations, Sweetness,” she whispered before kissing her.

Everyone gave her congratulations as they waited for Carmilla to explain. She told everyone what Mattie had told her.

“Mama, what’s happening?” Katherine asked, still wearing her new jacket over her black dress.

“I’m about to help a lot more people and that is great thing,” she said, picking up Katherine.

“That’s good, Mama,” Katherine said, before laying her head down on Carmilla’s shoulder.

“You sleepy, Pumpkin?” Carmilla asked.

Carmilla already knew the answer to this. “Why don’t you tell everyone goodnight and thank them for the gifts. Then we’ll get you ready for bed.”

Katherine went around giving hugs to everyone before slowly making her way back to Carmilla. “We’re just going to put her to bed, we’ll be back.”

Katherine took Carmilla and Laura’s hands as they walked back to her bedroom. They helped her put on her pajamas and get into bed. Carmilla tucked her in just how she liked it before handing over the stuffed pig.

“Goodnight, Little Kat,” Laura whispered, kissing her forehead. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Mommy. Good night.”
“Night, Pumpkin. Sleep tight. Come get me if you need me,” Carmilla said.

“Night. I love you, Mama.”

“Ah, I love you too, Kid.”

Carmilla made sure her night light was on before turning off the light and closing the door.

“Hey, Laura. Can I talk to you for a minute?” Carmilla asked, gesturing towards their bedroom.

“Sure,” Laura said, following Carmilla.

Carmilla shut the door and exhaled. “Look I’m really sorry, but—”

“You have to go in for a meeting on Monday and can't give me the day off,” Laura interrupted, finishing Carmilla’s sentence.

“Exactly.” Carmilla made her way over to the bed, sitting next to Laura.

“That's okay, Carm. This is more important than a little sleep.”

“I think we need to hire Kirsch back, full time. Regardless if you go back to work or not,” Carmilla blurted out.

“Carm, why?”

“Because it's clear Kat misses him. He could help out while you take a nap. We could work it out to where you can sleep a little more in the morning. Not full time, just a couple days a week.”

“If we hire him, I'll have to go back to work.”

“Not necessarily. I'm sure we can work something out with him. Laura you need rest and you definitely need a break.”

“Can I sleep on it?” Laura asked.

“Of course.”

Laura played with Carmilla's fingers. “Do you remember our life before we had to worry about kids?” Laura asked, resting her head on Carmilla's shoulder.

“Yeah,” Carmilla answers.

“Do you ever wish you could go back to that simplicity?”

“If I'm being honest, sometimes.”

“So I'm not alone?”

“Of course not. But at the same time, I can't imagine our lives without them, you know?”

“Yeah. They are pretty great.” Laura looked up and cupped Carmilla's cheek. They shared a brief kiss before they saw their door open. A sleepy Katherine came over holding her pig and wiping her eyes.

“Can you read me a story?” She asked.
“Which one?” Carmilla asked.

“Mommy.”

Laura smiled and got off the bed. She took Katherine's hand and started heading towards the hall.

“Mama?”

“Yes, Pumpkin,” Carmilla said, turning off their bedroom light and closing the door.

“Can I have some water?”

“Sure. Mommy will start your story and I'll bring you a cup.”

“Thank you, Mama.”

Carmilla walked into the kitchen and grabbed one of Katherine's night cups. She filled it with water before heading back into her room. She could see Laura and Katherine all snuggled up in her bed. She grabbed her phone from her back pocket and took yet another picture. She walked in, and put the water on Katherine's nightstand. She saw Katherine was already falling back asleep and didn't want to bother her. She quietly walked out of the room, hoping not to disturb her.

“Sorry, everyone,” Carmilla said, coming back into the living room. “Katherine wanted a bedtime story and Laura's reading to her now.”

“I think we're gonna head out,” Perry stated, standing from her spot on the armrest of the chair Lafontaine occupied.

“Yeah, but we had a great time Carmilla,” Lafontaine said.

“Thanks, guys. And thanks for coming over early to help us out. We appreciate it greatly,” Carmilla said, smiling.

“It was wonderful to see you Mr. Hollis. Also wonderful to see you Pastor Karnstein and Mrs. Karnstein,” Perry said.

“Will! We will see you soon I'm sure. Christopher nice to meet you and Kirsch. We'll probably see you tomorrow,” Lafontaine asked.

Carmilla walked them to the door. “Thanks again, guys! Get home safe and I'll tell Laura you said goodbye.”

She closed the door and made her way back. Kirsch was standing this time.

“Heading out, Beefcake?”

“Yeah, I'm picking up a couple shifts at Perry’s bakery.”

“We'll talk on Monday.”

“Sounds good, Carm-sexy.”

She looked at her parents’ faces. They were clearly confused by that nickname.

“Don't ask,” Carmilla said, stopping Henry from speaking. “It goes back to high school and I don't know why.”
“It was great to see you guys! And Carmilla I'll see you Monday! Tell Laura and Little Kat I said goodnight.”

“Will do. See ya, Bruh!”

They shared a brief hug before Kirsch exited. Carmilla turned to her family. “What a day,” she said, plopping down onto an armchair.

“All these years, Carmilla and you still plop on furniture,” Lilita said.

“Trust me, I've tried to break the habit,” Laura said, coming back out. “I'm going to put Josh in his crib.”

“You want me to do that, Cupcake?’”

“No, it's okay. I'll be back in a little bit.”

Rich got up and offered to help. Laura had missed her dad and wouldn't deny a chance to talk to him one on one.

“And here we are,” Henry said. He glanced around at his family and smiled.

“And here we are,” Carmilla agreed.

“Allright, spill. What's motherhood really like?” Will asked.

“I told you this after Katherine was born,” Carmilla stated.

“Yeah, but that was one. Now you've got two!”

“Well, it's still pretty amazing. I mean, if you would have asked me when I was 16, where would I be in fifteen years, this would not have been it. I feel really blessed and even though Laura and I are tired most of the time, I think this is the most rewarding thing I have ever experienced.”

“So life is good?” Henry asked.

“Dad, life in is incredible.”

“And you're happy?” Lilita asked.

Carmilla smiled. “I don't think I've ever been this happy.”

“Good,” Lilita smiled.

Laura and Rich joined them a few moments later. Carmilla grew worried when it looked like Laura had been crying. Laura sat down on Carmilla's lap and curled into her.

“You okay, Cupcake?” Carmilla whispered in her ear.

She smiled. “Yeah. We were just talking about my mom.”

“Ah. Is there anything I can do?”

Laura shook her head no. “Can we go to bed soon?”

“Please,” Carmilla replied, kissing Laura's temple.
“Well I think your mother and I are ready to hit the hay. What time is church tomorrow?” Henry asked, wrapping his arm around Lilita’s shoulder as they stood from the couch.

“It’s at 11 but it’s only down the block so if we leave here at like 10:30, we’ll be good.”

“Do you want us to take care of the kids in the morning so you can get some extra sleep?” Rich asked.

“That would be wonderful,” Carmilla answered.

“Well at least, Kat. I’ll probably have to feed Josh. He still doesn't like the bottle,” Laura explained.

“Or,” Carmilla suggested. “We let Kat do it. I don't know what she did this morning, but he was screaming his head off and she managed to soothe him and feed him.”

“And what were you doing?” Laura asked.

“Cleaning up around the apartment so you wouldn't have to.”

Laura smiled. “So I guess if Kat can't get him to eat, then you can wake me,” Laura said.

“Sounds good. We can put the little guy in with me.”

“Are you sure, Rich?” Carmilla asked.

“Absolutely! I need some bonding time with my grandson.”

“We will see you in the morning,” Lilita said.

Carmilla got up to hug her parents goodnight. Rich went soon afterwards. Laura held Josh, as Carmilla and Rich moved the small crib into the small study. Will, Christopher, Laura and Carmilla shared a glass of wine each and talked for a little while before everyone started heading to bed. Will and Christopher were sharing the the actual guest room.

Carmilla started turning off the lights and lamps in the living room when she saw Laura grab her coat, heading to the balcony. Carmilla grabbed the blanket off one of the couches and put it around her shoulders. She saw Laura looking out over the city.

Carmilla walked up behind her and wrapped her arms around Laura's waist. Laura smiled as Carmilla rested her head on Laura's shoulder.

“All good, Cupcake?”

Laura signed. “I’m perfect.”

“Then I'm perfect.”

Laura turned around and kissed Carmilla passionately.

“I can't believe this is us. Two girls who met at a church and ended up spending the rest of their lives together,” Laura said.

“I know. A minister’s daughter and a sheriff’s daughter.”

“Would you change anything?” Laura asked, looking into her wife’s eyes.
“Not a thing.”

“Even that camp?”

“That camp is the reason we met. And now I’m saving kids from ever having to go through that.”

Laura smiled. They stared out over the landscape for a little while longer before heading inside. They finished picking things up and turning the lights off before getting ready for bed. Carmilla checked in on Katherine, seeing she was sound asleep. She pulled her covers back up, and kissed her forehead before heading to the bedroom.

Once they were ready and in their pajamas, Carmilla and Laura crawled into their usual positions. Carmilla on her back and Laura curled into her side.

“I love you, Laura.”

“I love you too.”

“Night, Cupcake.”

“Goodnight, Sweetness.”

The apartment was still. A cold draft entered in from their bedroom window as they cuddled closer, falling asleep almost instantly.

Chapter End Notes

First and foremost, I have to thank Kristin. She has taken the time every week to read over this fic and help me bring the best of it to you.

I'm sad to see the end of this and I won't lie, I teared a little at the end. To my readers, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING EVERY WEEK!!!! I love you guys and you really are the only reason this story continued from week to week. As excited as all of you were to read the new chapters each week, I was excited to see the comments and questions in my inbox and read your opinions, thoughts and questions. I love this story so much and I hope it has meant as much to you as it has to me. You guys are the best!!

Feel free to contact me here or on Tumblr. There will be a new story on the way, but I'll be happy to add any details to this story that I can. I hope you stick around for the next adventure starting in a week or two. Thank you again, Dear Readers! You're all inspiring and amazing!

End Notes

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