Laura moves back to Silas and into her dad's house after being gone for ten years. Some things have changed over the years and other have not. What happens when she runs into old friends after being home?
“But mom.”

“No but’s Jack, I don’t want to hear it.” I say, walking out to the car carrying another box.

“I don’t want to move in with grandpa.” Jack whines again, following me.

“I don’t want to move in with grandpa either, but sometimes we have to do thing we don’t want to do.” I explain to the six-year-old.

“I wish dad was here.” He sighs, handing me the small box in his hands.

“Yeah well your dad decided to do something bad and now we’re left with having to go live with grandpa.” I say, not going into detail, nor wanting to demean his father in front of him.

“I know dad did something bad, but why do we have to leave? Why can’t you and him make up?” Jack asks innocently, not understanding the severity of what it means to be cheated on by someone you thought you loved.

“You’ll understand why when you’re older, besides we aren’t going to be at grandpa’s forever, we will find our own house again, and you will be able to see your father on the weekends, you know that. We explained that to you.”

“I know. I’m gonna miss my friends mom.”

“Look, I know this is hard for you sweetie, I knew it was going to be when I discussed the issue of leaving your dad with him, but everything will work out for the better, I promise.” I say, kissing his cheek. “You know grandpa is willing to paint your room whatever color you want, and he’s going to help you decorate it and all, you’ll be able to have as many posters as you want, rather than living here in the apartment where you aren’t allowed to have as many things and have to keep the walls white. You can even use thumb tacks, you won’t have to use tape.”

“I guess that’s cool, can I make my room red?”

“You sure can, once we get everything settled you and grandpa could set up a plan to paint, okay?”

“Okay.” He says with a smile and a nod. “I love you ma.”

“I love you too sweetie.” I say, brushing his curls out of his face and kissing his forehead. “Now, are you ready to go?”

“I think so, I have everything.” He shrugs, pointing to the back of the car. “Will we be able to come back?”

“You will still be able to come here to visit dad, but I won’t be around here as much.”

“Okay.” Jack sighs, letting his head hang for a moment. “I want to go now.”
“Okay. We have a bit of a trip ahead of us, go run to the bathroom and get your backpack, I don’t see that in the back seat.”

“Okay mom.” After he goes back into the small apartment and grabs the last of his things, he is running back out to the car and hopping in the back seat. The drive back home to Silas took a little over eight hours, but it wasn’t as bad as it could have been, Jack played his video games and stayed relatively quiet during the trip. Driving down my old street was a comforting, regardless of the circumstances, it was nice to be back home for a little while and hopefully make this a permanent stay. Driving up to house 307, I could see my dad standing at the edge of the driveway with a big smile and waving.

“There’s my girl.” He says as I pull into the driveway next to his car.

“Hi daddy.” I say getting out of the car and hugging him tight, listening for Jack as he got out of the car and walked over to us.

“Hello Jack, nice to see you’re getting taller.” My dad says, wrapping his arms around Jack.

“Hi grandpa, can I go see my room?”

“Sure thing, go up the stairs and straight, you know the room next my office? That will be your room.”

“Thank you.” Jack says, running into the house.

“Is he holding up okay?”

“He’s as good as a six-year-old can be, dad.” I sigh. “It’s nice to be home, I missed the quiet.

“Are you okay sweetie, I mean overall are you okay?”

“Yes dad. Theo was an ass hole anyway, we were bound to break up sooner or later.” I sigh, walking into the house.

“Why don’t you go up to your room and rest for a little while, we’ll unpack the car later.”

“Thanks dad.” I smile as I make my way up the familiar set of stairs and walk into my room that seems to still be stuck in a time warp, walking through the door, although all of the posters are gone and there isn’t as many knick-knacks around as there used to be, the room was still yellow, and it made me feel safe. I walked over to the bed and threw myself down, taking in the familiar scent of cherry blossoms and drifting off to sleep.

“Mom.” I hear Jack whisper in my ear. I open my eye to see him standing at the side of the bed with a smile. “Grandpa said he’s gonna get us pizza for dinner, on Tuesday! That’s such a cool treat!” Jack says excitedly, seeing as I usually made dinner during the week and left the days for take out to be Friday and Saturday.

“That is a cool treat, sweetie.” I say with a yawn and sitting up on bed.

“I like your room mom, it’s nicer than the one at our old home, and it’s brighter.”

“Yellow is my favorite color, in case you didn’t already know that.” I inform my son.

“I know that ma, and red is my favorite!”

“That’s right. Where’s grandpa?”
“He’s downstairs on the kitchen.” Jack says, pointing behind him.

“Okay sweetie.” I say, kissing the top of his head. “After we eat, we’ll start brining in some of your things.”

“Okay ma, grandpa got my one box with all my toys in it, I was bored and asked him to.”

“That’s fine Jack.” I get out of bed and start walking downstairs; I walk through the hallway and into the kitchen.

“Hey sweetie, how did you sleep?” He says, standing at the fridge. “Want something to drink?”

“No thanks dad, and I slept well thank you, you changed the mattress didn’t you?”

“Once I knew you were coming back, I figured you deserved to sleep on a new mattress and not some old one.” He shrugs. “Anyway, I have to run and get the pizza.”

“I’ll go get it, do you still go to that place by the grocery store?” I say, getting up and walking over to where my dad put my bag on the counter.

“Yeah, same place forever. You sure you want to go?”

“Yes dad, I want to be familiar with the area again if I’m going to be here.”

“Okay Laura.” He says with a smile. It was very hard to get lost in Silas, there wasn’t any confusing streets, or highways that you had to get on and off of, it was very simple, even after being gone for nearly ten years, it was nice to know I still had a sense of where I was going. I park in front of the pizza place and walk in, giving the girl behind the counter the name, only for her to tell me she confused the order with someone else’s and I would have to wait a little bit. Rather than sitting in the place I wait, I walk up the little strip mall taking in the different places that have come and gone, nothing major changed over the years, except for the addition of some independent coffee shop. I walk into the coffee shop and am overcome with the aroma of fresh ground coffee, not being able to resist, I walk over to the counter to place an order.

“Hello, how can I – Laura?” The tall barista asks, as she looks at me in disbelief.

“Hey Danny, long time no see.” I say with a smile.

“Yeah, no kidding, how are you?”

“I’m good, how are you?”

“I’m doing well thank you. What brings you back to Silas?”

“Oh, that, uhm, not to be rude, or sound rude, but it isn’t something I want to talk about. Not only that but it isn’t much of your concern.” I say quickly.

“It’s fine, I understand why you wouldn’t want to say anything.” She says, putting her hands up in surrender. “What can I get for you?”

“A mocha please, hot.” I say, reaching into my bag for my wallet.

“Don’t worry about it.” Another voice says from the entryway behind the counter, I turn to see a pair of dark eyes I haven’t seen for over ten years, a pair of eyes that, last time I looked into them, they were on the verge of tears. “Look who it is.” She chimes, walking over to us.
“Hi.” I say timidly, looking down at my feet.

“What’s the matter cupcake, cat got you tongue?” She teases. “You act like you just saw a ghost.”

“I feel like I’m looking at one.”

“Well that goes for two of us. Danny, go start to clean up, we have to close soon anyway.”

“Carmilla…” I whisper, trying to see how her name tastes again.

“Laura.” She whispers, giving me her signature smirk.

“Y-you still look the same.”

“You still look good too cupcake. How are things?”

“Alright I suppose.” I shrug. “I have to go, I have to pick up pizza for dinner and it’s probably done now, thanks for the coffee, it was nice seeing you, maybe I’ll see you around, or not, depends I suppose, but yeah.” I say, taking the to-go cup from Carmilla.

“You still manage to ramble when you’re nervous I see.” She says with a small laugh. “My number never changed, call me some time, if you’re going to be in town for a while. We can catch up. It’s been forever.”

“O-okay.” I say with a small smile, rushing out of the coffee shop. After picking up the pizza and driving back to my dad’s house, I walk in to have Jack nearly tackling me and taking the box out of my hands.

“You were gone forever mom! Grandpa was about to call in a missing person’s report.” He says as he leads the way into the kitchen.

“You look like you saw a ghost.” My dad says as I walk into the kitchen.

“I did.” I say, placing my bag on the counter and walking over to sit at the table.

“Oh?”

“I saw Carmilla.” I say quietly.

“Oh really?” He asks wide-eyed.

“Y-yeah. She was at the new coffee shop next to the pizza place. Well I’m assuming it’s new, seeing as I haven’t been here in so long…”

“Yeah, it’s fairly new, just opened a couple of months ago. Does she own it or…?”

“I didn’t get that far, I was more concerned with the fact that I haven’t seen her since the last time I was home.”

“Who are you talking about ma?” Jack asks with his mouthful of pizza.

“Sweetie, you know to chew before you talk, it’s impolite to talk with food in your mouth.”

“Sorry mom, but who are you talking about?”

“A friend of from a long time ago.”
“Can I meet your friends? Do they have kids so I can make friends?” He asks excitedly.

“I don’t know if they have kids, but you will be able to meet them all one day, yes.”

“Okay mom.” After he finished eating and asking as to why I wasn’t eating dinner, and then nearly forcing me to have at least one slice of pizza, it was nice to be lying in my bed quietly.

“Are you okay, Laura?” My dad asks, knocking on the door softly.

“Yeah dad, thank you.”

“I’m gonna head off to bed, there’s a nightlight in the bathroom for Jack just in case, and there’s another in the hall.”

“Thank you dad.” I say with a small smile.

“I love you kiddo.”

“I love you too dad.” I watch as he smiles and closes the door behind him as he leaves.

“Jack come on, you can’t live off of junk food.” I say as he puts another box of cookies on the cart.

“But you like these ones.” He says with a smirk. “They’re for you.”

“Oh so that makes it okay, I’m not buying all of this junk, you have to put some stuff back.” I say, watching as my son sighs and starts taking out the things he knows I’m going to force him to put back. “Thank you.” I say, kissing the top of his head.

“Can we get grapes?”

“That I will buy. Let’s go.” I say leading the way to the produce section of the store. “What kind do you want?”

“The green ones.” He says with a wide smile.

“Do you want anything else over here?”

“Can we get apples too, I want the yellow ones.” Jack says as he runs over to the apples. “Can I pick them?”

“You can point to them, don’t go pulling at them, we don’t need a mess, got it?”

“Okay ma.” He says, looking at me as he walks into someone. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.” The person says.

“Jack, pay more attention to where you’re going. I’m sorry.” I apologize on behalf of Jack.

“It’s okay, hey frosh. What’s up?”

“Laf? How are you?” I say, giving them a hug.

“I’m doing good, keeping the misses happy of course. So this is the little guy?” They say, looking down at Jack.
“Yeah, Jack you may not remember, but this is my friend LaFontaine, they used to come by once in a while when you were younger.”

“You like science. My dad got mad when you made that foamy thing blow up in the kitchen.” Jack says, smiling at the memory. “It was really cool though.”

“You have a good memory kid, that was like a year or so ago.” Laf says with a smile.

“I’m sorry I didn’t know you, your hair doesn’t look the same.” Jack says.

“Yeah, it’s a lot longer than last time. I haven’t had it catch fire in a while.”

“How’s Perry?” I ask.

“She’s around here somewhere. She may be getting some stuff to bake.” They shrug. “Oh there she is!” They say, looking over my shoulder and waving.

“Laura it’s nice to see you again.” Perry says, giving me a hug. “Hello Jack.”

“Hi.”

“You don’t remember me all that much I bet.”

“You make really good cookies, you sent us a box at Christmas time.” He says with a smile, I couldn’t help but feel somewhat proud of him.

“Thank you.” Perry chimes. “You two should come by for dinner one night, once you’re settled.”

“We’ll make a date soon.” I say with a smile.

“Okay, well Laf and I have to get going, we’ll talk to you later.”

“Talk to you later.” I say, giving Perry and Laf a hug.

“Bye.” Jack says with a wave.

“Oh wait!” Laf says turning on their heels. “Have you seen…”

“Yes, last night at the coffee shop. She looks good, do you still talk to her?”

“Yeah, we keep in touch, were you okay?”

“Yeah, I mean, it was short and I don’t think I’ll go out of my way to see her again, but if it happens it happens you know.”

“Yeah, just don’t get caught up with her, some things never change.” Laf says with a warning tone.

“Ready to go?” I ask Jack.

“Yeah.” He says with a nod. “I still want some apples though.”

“Of course.”
“Mom can I get this for school?” Jack asks, running over to me with a t-shirt.

“Yeah, that’s okay. We have finish up in here and get you new shoes.”

“Okay, this is all I want now. Can we go to the store with all the cool sneakers?”

“Yes sweetie.” I say, going to the check out to pay for the shirts and walking back into the mall to find the sneaker store.

“Well, well.” I hear a familiar voice; I look up to see Carmilla looking at me with a grin. “Hey cupcake.”

“Hey Carmilla.”

“Who’s this little guy?” She asks nodding to Jack.

“This is my son, Jack.” I say, watching her look at me in confusion. “Things happen.” I shrug.

“I didn’t pin you for going down that road, not after what we had.”

“What we had was a year of aggravation and resentment.” I say, taking Jack’s hand.

“You have to admit that the, you know, was some of the best you had. Especially when we made up.” She husks with a wink. “So you have a kid.” She states, changing the subject.

“Yeah, Jack this is a friend of mine, Carmilla. Carmilla this is Jack.”

“You look a lot like your mom, kid.”


“Jack, be nice.” I warn, looking up to see Carmilla laughing a bit.

“It’s okay, creampuff, when don’t I look grumpy?”

“Whenever you looked at me.” I say smugly, feeling my face turn hot with embarrassment after I realized when I said. “Uhm, I mean, you were still grumpy. Maybe less grumpy, but you still looked grumpy in one way or another I mean –”

“Want to go out with me?”

“Excuse me?”

“Do you, Laura, want to go out with me, Carmilla, one night?” She asks, crossing her arms over her chest. “I want to catch up.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.”
“Why not?”

“You’re seriously asking me that?”

“Yeah I am. I’m not the same person cupcake, I changed.” She says quietly.

“No.”

“No?”

“Yeah, you heard me, no.” I say with a nod, turning and walking away from her.

“Is she not nice mom?” Jack asks, looking up at me.

“Yeah she’s not all that nice sweetie.” I say, giving him a tight-lip smile.

“Is she gonna be your friend?”

“I don’t know, maybe.”

“She looks at you different. Like how you used to look at dad.”

“What do you mean?” I stop, looking down at the six-year-old.

“You used to look at daddy like your eyes were smiling, you didn’t see other people, except for me.” He says, tilting his head to the side. “That’s how that lady looked at you.”

“Let’s go get your new sneakers.”

“I want red ones!” He says with a smile.

“You can get any color you want.” I smile.

-Carmilla POV-

“She has a kid?”

“She had a kid.” I say, taking another shot as my brother pours me another.

“How old was it?” Will asks, leaning against the bar.

“He must have been like five or six. It doesn’t matter, what matters is she had a kid.” I say, shaking my head a bit. “I never would have thought.”

“Yeah well, things happen over time.” He shrugs, pouring me one more shot before putting the bottle on the shelf.

“She always wanted to be a mom, she used to talk about it when we were together.”

“Well you must feel like you fucked up.”

“I knew I fucked up the day she brought all of my stuff over and threw it on the front lawn.”

“Mom was so pissed at you for hurting Laura.” Will laughs.
“Yeah well, I couldn’t seem to get it together back then. I let the one go.” I shrug. “Is there anymore Jack in the storage room?”

“There should be like three cases, why?”

“I have to do inventory and order some stuff.” I say, getting up from the bar and walking towards the back. I walk into the storage room and start counting and looking through the stock. “Willy boy!”

“What?” He asks, poking his head in the doorway.

“Make a note to order more beer, vodka, and two bottles of that gin I like. Oh and potentially some tequila, depending on what we go through tonight.” I say, patting his shoulder as I walk past him.

“Yes ma’am.” He says with a nod, jotting it down on the clipboard. “How’s the coffee shop?”

“It’s fun exploiting Xena, a couple of times a week.” I say with a smile. “But I can’t be too hard on her, seeing as she is a part owner of the business.”

“How did she con you into that again?” He asks with a smirk.

“Let’s just say, that’s why I don’t drink tequila anymore, I agree to things I shouldn’t.” I sigh, looking down at my watch. “Oh shit. I have to go.”

“You’re late aren’t you?”

“Yeah, fuck.” I say, rushing into my office and grabbing the small bottle of mouthwash, taking a swig and ridding my mouth of the taste and smell of alcohol.

“You won’t get in trouble for having two shots.”

“You clearly don’t remember who I’m dealing with.” I say, walking out of the bathroom.

“You’ll be alright, I doubt she’ll make a big deal.” Will says, waving me off.

“If she does, I’m coming here to kick your ass.”

“You’re late.”

“And you run the clocks ahead by five minutes.” I say, walking into the apartment.

“You drank.” Ell states, crossing her arms over her chest.

“I had a drink. Just one, a while ago, give me a sobriety test, I’ll pass.” I say, walking an imaginary straight line like I’m on a tightrope, while also touching the tip of my nose with my index finger. “See I pass.”

“Don’t be a jack ass.” She says, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“You know that’s all I know how to be.”

“Hi mama!” The little girl says, running down the hallway.

“Hello monkey. How are you?” I ask as the little girl jumps into my arms.
“I’m good mama, do I get to come over for the weekend?” The five-year-old asks.

“You sure do.” I kiss her on the cheek. “Go run along and get your stuff.” I say, putting her down and watching her run off.

“Don’t run Allie, you know better.”

“Sorry mommy.”

“She’s getting big.” I say with a smile.

“Well you only see her every other weekend so.” Ell shrugs.

“That’s on your terms, not mine and we both know that.”

“Soon you’ll be able to see her every weekend, if only you would stop coming here after stopping by the bar.” She states. “And that day will only happen on your terms, not mine.”

“I know Ell, I’m sorry.” I say quietly.

“Oh so you do have a capacity for empathy.”

“When it comes to my kid, yeah, I do.”

“Ready mama!” Allie says, walking down the hallway with her bear under her arm as she drags her backpack behind her. I walk over to her and pick her up, resting her on my hip as I take her bag in the other hand.

“We’re going to have fun.” I say with a smile, kissing her on the cheek. “So goodbye to mommy.”

“Bye-bye mommy. See you later.” Allie says, giving a small wave as I carry her out of the apartment.

“Did mommy give you dinner?” I ask, walking to the car.

“No, I just had a snack before.”

“What do you want to eat for dinner sweet pea?” I open the trunk to put her bag in it before getting her in her car seat.

“Macaroni!” She shouts with a smile.

“Just macaroni? How about we have some broccoli too?”

“Broccoli!” She smiles.

“Okay then, macaroni and broccoli it is.” I say, kissing her forehead. After running to the store to get what we needed for dinner and Allie’s choice of ice cream for dessert, I pulled into the driveway, got Allie out of her seat and her things.

“Mama, where’s Sunny?” Allie asks as we walk into the house.

“Sunny is in the backyard. Wait a minute.” I say, watching her run through the house and into the kitchen to the backdoor to find the Labrador sitting at the back door.

“Hi Sunny!” Allie shouts through the glass. I put everything on the table and open the backdoor for
Sunny to come running into the house, nearly tackling Allie to the floor and licking her face.

“Sunny!” I say sternly, watching the dog stop her movements and sit. “Good girl.”

“Mama, can I give her a treat?”

“Just one.” I say, holding up my finger to emphasize.

“Okay mama.” Allie says, walking over to the cabinet where I kept the dog treats. I threw dinner together in a matter of twenty minutes. Allie and I ate while Allie informed me on what she and Ell did during the past two weeks. “Mama, can we take Sunny to the park? I want to go on the swings.” Allie asks, tilting her head to the side.

“We can do that for a little bit, I just have to get you a jacket.” I say, taking out plates and putting them in the sink. There park was a short walk from the house, Allie couldn’t contain her excitement any long and let go of my hand and made a beeline for the swings. I couldn’t help but laugh as I walked over to a bench and sat down with Sunny at my feet. I kept my eye on Allie, watching as she managed to pump her little legs enough to swing on her own, she looked over at me and waved.

“Hi Caramel.” A small voice chimes from beside me. I look to see Laura’s son Jack smiling at me.

“It’s Carmilla, but hi Jack.”

“Can I pet your dog?”

“Sure.” I shrug.

“Hey.” Laura says quietly, standing behind Jack.

“Look mom, Carmel has a doggie.”

“Jack just call her Carm, it’s easier.” Laura says, shaking her head at her son’s pronunciation of my name.

“Okay, Carm has a doggie.”

“I see that, go play. You have to get cleaned up before bed and you’re burning daylight.” Laura says, waving her son off. “So what do you do, sit at the park with you dog and watch children?”

“That sounds gross, and I can’t believe you would think that of me.” I say, trying to control my temper.

“Then what are you doing here?” She asks, sitting down on the far side of the bench.

“I, uhm, I’m actually here with my kid.” I say quietly.

“I’m sorry what?”

“My daughter, she’s on the swings.” I say, pointing to the little girl.

“You have a kid.” Laura says quietly, nodding her head a little bit.

“I do, her name is Allie, and she’s five.”

“How did that happen? If it’s okay that I ask.”
“I was married briefly, we tried for a baby and it happened right away. Long story short, I see her every other weekend, and I’m divorced.” I say quietly.

“You never wanted kids.” Laura says quietly.

“Hence the divorce, but I’m a parent and I’m trying.”

“Which is what matters as a parent.”

“I suppose so.” I say, looking over at Allie.

“She’s beautiful.” Laura says quietly, watching as the little girl slows down her swing and comes running over to us.

“Mama, can I play with that boy?” She asks, pointing to Jack, seeing as he was the only other kid in the park.

“You can sweetie, but only for a little while okay? We have to get going soon.”

“Okay mama.” She says, turning to run off.

“Hang on monkey butt.” I say with a smile as she starts to giggle at the nickname. “Allie, this is a friend of mama’s, this is Laura. Laura, this is my daughter Allie.”

“Nice to meet you Allie.”

“Nice to meet you too, you’re pretty.”

“Thank you, you’re pretty too.” Laura smiles.

“Everyone says I look like my mommy, but I have my mama’s eyes.”

“I can see that.”

“Her son is the little boy, be nice to him okay.” I warn.

“Okay mama.” Allie says, patting Sunny on the head before running away.

“So you’re a mother.”

“I am.” I say with a smile.

“I always thought you were humoring me with the idea of kids, I never though you’d have one.”

“Well like I said, things just happened that way.” I shrug.

“If, uh, if we never ended the way we did, would you have considered…?” She trails off, looking away from me to hide her embarrassment.

“I don’t know, we were kids when thing happened the way they did, I mean, you left ten years ago and never came back. There is no way to tell if things would have taken off that way.”

“I guess you’re right.”

“I know I’m right.” I say with a smug smile.

“Well that’s something that hasn’t changed.” She laughs.
“Being a jerk is my forte creampuff.”

“I can see that.” Laura says, rolling her eyes at me and looking over to where our kids were playing together.

“Are you okay?” I ask, placing my hand on her shoulder.

“Yeah, I’m okay Carmilla.” She says softly, looking over at me with a small smile. “I just never thought I’d come back here and run into you initially, only to run into you again a few weeks later and learn you have a kid. It just sees unrealistic for you…”

“And by that you mean, you never thought I’d have a kid.”

“Of course. I never did think that.”

“I missed you Laura, since the day you left, I just think you should know that. I don’t resent you leaving me as much as I resent myself for pushing you away.” I say softly.

“We should do coffee one day, catch up. Jack starts school in another week, I’ll have some free time.”

“I’d like that, like I said, I only get Allie on the weekends, so I’m free unless needed at work.” I say rolling my eyes at the last part.

“How about next Tuesday at like eleven? Unless you still sleep your days away?”

“Having a kid does change you even if you don’t see them all the time. I can’t sleep past nine anymore.”

“I call that a success.” Laura teases. “So Tuesday at eleven?” She asks, standing up from the bench.

“Tuesday at eleven. Meet me at my shop, I know it sound a bit ridiculous but I have the best coffee and hot chocolate around.” I follow her lead and stand up.

“I’ll hold you to that. Come on Jack we’re going home.”

“Allie, let’s go.” Both kids come rushing over to us.

“Can we have a play date some time mom? Allie is nice.” Jack says with a smile.

“One day we’ll set something up.” Laura says, running her hand through his hair. “Say goodbye to Allie and Carm.”

“Bye-bye Allie.” He says, giving her a hug.

“Bye-bye Jack.”

“Bye-bye Carm.” He walks over and wraps his arms around my legs before patting Sunny on the head.

“Bye, be careful getting home.”

“You too, text me and I’ll see you Tuesday.” Laura says with a smile, taking her son’s hand in hers.
Tuesday seemed to roll by fast. Not only was it Jack’s first day of school, but also it was my coffee date with Carmilla. I’m in the kitchen trying to get everything together for Jack before walking him to school. “Are you excited?” I ask him as I get his snacks and lunch packed away in his Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles lunchbox.

“You are going to make so many friends.” I say reassuringly, walking over and kissing the top of his head, taking his empty bowl and putting it in the sink. “Come on, we have to get going.” Jack gets down from his chair and walks over to my dad.

“Bye grandpa.”

“Have a good day at school Jack.” Dad says, giving him a hug. He lets Jack go, Jack runs over to the front door, grabbing his backpack along the way. “Be careful and have a good day you two!”

“Bye dad!” I call out, walking out of the house and closing the door behind me. I take Jake by the hand as we walk a few blocks to the school. “You’re going to be good for Perry?” I ask, seeing as she ended up being his teacher this year.

“I promise ma, I like Perry, she’s gonna be an awesome teacher.”

“Remember you have to call her Miss Perry, and don’t make a big deal that you know her.”

“I know, I know.” He sighs as we stop in front of the building.

“Ready?”

“Yeah.” He says, looking up at me with a smile. I kneel down to be at eye level with him.

“I’ll be here when the day is over, you know where Perry is, and she knows to take extra care of you. He’s your lunch, and remember yours has the red tag on it, just in case there is someone with the same box. Don’t forget to be polite and sweet.” I say kissing him on the cheek. “Have a fantastic day sweetie.”

“I will ma. I love you and I’ll see you later.”

“See you later Jack, I love you!” I call out, watching him walk into the school. I sigh and look at my watch to see I have a couple of hours before I had to see Carmilla. I walked back home and changed out of my sweatpants and t-shirt. I sigh as I pull off to the storefront and turn off the car. I give myself a couple of minutes to gain composure I didn’t know I lost. I get out of the car and walk into the café to find Carmilla working behind the counter; she looks up to see me, and smiles.

“Hey.” She chimes.

“Hey.” I say shyly.

“What do you want?”

“How about that hot chocolate you claim is so good.”

“Alright. Go sit somewhere and I’ll be over in a minute.” She smiles. I chose a table in the far corner of the small café. “One hot cocoa for you.” She says, placing a mug in front of me. “And, if you still have that avid sweet tooth, Perry baked there.” She adds, placing a dish of cookies on the
“Thank you.”

“No problem. How was Jack getting off to school?”

“It wasn’t as bad as it was when he was going to kindergarten, and Perry just so happened to be his teacher this year which he was very happy about. What about Allie?”

“Oh, I couldn’t go see her off today, I had to work.” Carmilla shrugs. “But her mother did send me a picture of her.” She says, reaching into her pocket to get her phone.

“She looks happy to be going.”

“Allie has a knack for learning, she’s very smart for her age.” Carmilla says proudly.

“It must suck that you can’t be with her all the time.” I say, taking a sip of my drink.

“It does, very much. But I’m getting to where I can see her more.” Carmilla picks at the handle on her mug, not making eye contact with me.

“Is that a story for another day?”

“It is indeed cupcake.” She says with a small smile.

“So there is going to be another day?” I tease.

“If you want there to be, yes we can have another day together.”

“I’ll think about it.” I smile, watching her bite her lip slightly.

“Can I ask you something?”

“If you must.”

“Did you get married? Like I don’t know how I want to word this question, but with Jack and all…?”

“Uhm, no. Jack’s father and I never were married, and if it weren’t for me wanting to keep Jack, I wouldn’t have spoken to him after that night. We stayed together for him really. It just finally came to that point where I couldn’t pretend to like him anymore, and he cheated on me so… yeah. I’m back home.” I shrug.

“And now you’re back home. What have you been doing besides raising Jack?”

“I went to school, I have my degree in journalism. I just haven’t had a chance to put it to use because I focused on Jack so much.”

“You seem like a great mother.”

“I like to hope I am.” I laugh.

“I can tell you are.” Carmilla says, reaching across the table to place her hand over mine.

“I can tell you’re a great mother too, despite your situation.”

“Thanks creampuff.” She smiles.
“Hey cupcake.” I chime as Laura walks through the door of the coffee shop.

“Hi.” She smiles.

“The usual I’m assuming?”

“Wouldn’t really try anything else.”

“You know better, put your wallet away.” I say, fixing her cup of cocoa.

“I’ve been coming in here every day for the past two months, are you ever going to let me pay?” She says, closing her bag as I hand her the cup.

“Nope.”

“Well it’s your loss I suppose.”

“It’s not a big loss, so what brings you around early?” I ask, seeing as it was eight-thirty in the morning, and she was never around until noon.

“I have an interview at the newspaper at ten.” She smiles.

“Congratulations.”

“Thank you. Hopefully I get the job, it’ll give me something to do while Jack is in school.”

“You’ll get it, don’t worry.” I encourage.

“Are you doing anything Friday?” She asks shyly, bowing her head a bit.

“I have Allie for the weekend, I can get her Friday because Ell is busy and she’s letting me take her a day early.”

“That’s okay. Forget I said anything.” She waves me off and smiles shyly.

“There’s some movie out, a kid movie, something with talking animals, I don’t know. But maybe we can take the kids and see it, together but with two children with us. Like, a date, but with our kids…”

“I’d like that, Jack will like that.”

“Allie will like that too, I’m sure she’d like to see Jack. She asked about him when I spoke to her last.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, she asked what he was doing.” I chuckle.
“That’s cute.” Laura smiles. “So I’ll see you Friday.”

“See you Friday, I’ll let you know what’s happening Thursday night.”

“Okay.”

“Good luck with you interview.” I say as she walks towards the door.

“Thank you, I’ll let you know the news as soon as I hear it.” She smiles, giving me a wave before leaving. I sigh contently, looking up when I hear the door open again.

“Hello darling.” My mom says, walking to the counter and taking a seat. “I think I just saw a ghost, or did Laura Hollis walk out of here not too long ago?”

“No, no ghost. It was Laura.” I say quietly.

“Are you going to hurt her?”

“Why is that the first thing out of your mouth?”

“Because I know you Carmilla, you hurt that poor girl once before, she hasn’t been around for a long time and I don’t want you doing it again.”

“I’ve already met with her a few times, she’s met Allie, and she has a son. Things changed mom.” I say as I fix her a cup of tea.

“She’s met Allie?”

“Yeah, it was kind of by accident a few weeks ago. I took Allie to the park with Sunny and she was there with her son.”

“You’re an adult, you can make your own decisions, just DO. NOT. HURT. HER. AGAIN. Do you understand me?” She says, putting her finger in my face.

“I understand mother, yes.”

“Is she good other wise? You know she was always my favorite.” My mother chimes, taking a sip of her tea.

“She is. We haven’t spoken too much about certain things, but overall she is doing well. She was just on her way to interview for the paper, she has her degree in journalism and can finally put it to use.”

“That’s good, it’s nice to know she did something productive.”

“I know that’s a dig at me mom, but look at me. I’m running not only a successful bar, but also an up and coming coffee shop. And I have a degree in Philosophy, that I can choose to go further with if I felt like it.”

“I know sweetheart, and don’t think I’m not proud of you because I am.”

“So then why say that?” I ask, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Because I am your mother, I can say whatever I want to. You’ve had your struggles and you still manage to pull through for the sake of what’s right.”
“I will do anything for my daughter mom, I don’t want to screw that up. Not again.”

“You won’t, you’re on the right track, and you’re doing what you have to do. Ell has nothing to use against you, except for the fact that you have a drink once in a while, but that can’t really be held against you.” My mom says, rolling her eyes a bit at the mention of Ell. “She’s a menace.”

“What else would you think would drive me to drink as much as I did?

“I don’t understand what you ever saw in her.”

“She was everything mom, she really was, and I did love her until Allie came into the picture, then she lost that fun side and became way too serious. I didn’t want to be serious yet. I still wanted to do my thing, and I was still in school. I didn’t want to be tied down with a kid. Granted we got married pretty quick and all, that didn’t bother me, it was getting pregnant on the first try that did. But I love Allie with all my heart and wouldn’t want to change that.” I explain.

“Well, everything you do from here on out has to be for the well being for you as a parent, and for your child. You have to protect her, and you have do be a role model for Allie. That alone is your priority.

“I know mom. Trust me.”

“So your intentions with Laura?” She asks, using her ‘business women’ voice.

“I intend on letting things go how they may. If anything happens I’m not going to fight it, but if nothing happens, then that’s what’s meant to be.”

“I will stress it again, don’t hurt her, she was always good for you.”

“She was too good for me mom.”

“Regardless, you need her in one way or another.” She says as a matter of fact.

-Laura POV-

“We get to see a movie with Carm today!” Jack shouts as he runs across the schoolyard.

“Yes we do.” I say, taking his backpack from him. “How was school?”

“Perry said I can spell really good, I got a hundred!”

“That’s great sweetie, I’m proud of you.” I say, ruffling his hair.

“Can I get an extra candy at the movie cause I did goof with my spelling?”

“Oh, trying to con me are you?”

“Maybe.” He chimes.

“I’ll consider it.”

“Okay mom. When are we going?”

“Carmilla is coming over after she gets Allie from school.” I explain.
“Okay.” He says, running across the lawn, opening the door and running in the house. Soon after that my phone rings, I look at the screen and smile to see it was Carmilla.

“Hey.”

“Hello cutie, are you home?”

“Yeah, we just got in.”

“Is it alright for me to stop by now, Allie need to use the bathroom and I’m closer to your house than I am to mine so…”

“It’s no problem, stop by here and then we’ll go.”

“Thanks cupcake, I’ll see you in five minutes.”

“Okay.” I say with a small smile before handing up. “Jack! Carm and Allie are on their way.”

“Okay mom.” He shouts from the kitchen. I walk in to see him in the fridge, quite literally.

“Jackson, what are you doing?”

“I’m thirsty and grandpa put my juice on the top shelf, I can’t reach.” The boy says as he jumps out of the fridge.

“I would get it for you, just call me next time okay?” I say walking over and getting his juice box from the top shelf and handing it to him.

“Sorry mom.”

“It’s okay, just know for next time. I don’t want you getting hurt. Now Carmilla is going to be here any minute, then we’re going to go.”

“Okay, can I watch TV a little?”

“Go ahead.” I say, watching him run off into the living room as I go to answer the door when I hear the bell ring.

“Hi Laura.” Allie says cheerfully.

“Hello Allie.” I say, opening the door.

“I have to use your potty.”

“I’ll lead the way.” I say as she runs into the house. “Hey Carm.”

“Hey Laura.” Carmilla says with a smile.

“Laura, potty.” Allie says, pulling at my hand.

“I’ll be right back.”

“Mom can I sit next to Carm in the movie?” Jack asks as I walk into the living room behind Allie.

“If Carmilla doesn’t mind.”

“Not at all. That just means Allie sits next to you.”
“I wanna sit next to Jack too!” Allie says.

“We’ll make it work monkey.” Carmilla says, picking up her daughter and kissing her on the cheek.

“Can we go mama?”

“Let’s go.” Knowing Carmilla she would refuse to admit that she actually enjoyed a children’s movie. Or if she did admit it, she would deny it to no end. Walking out of the theater Jack and Allie discussed the movie animatedly and discussed their favorite parts to the extent that a six and five year old can discuss something. “So…” Carmilla says.

“So.”

“What are your plans for dinner? I know we discussed the movie and all, but I think dinner would be a good idea too, I mean if you want to, if it isn’t a big deal.”

“It would be silly to not get dinner when you’re the one that drove and I’m pretty sure these little ones are hungry.”

“I’m hungry!” Jack shouts.

“You’re always hungry kiddo.”

“I’m a growing kid.”

“He has you there.” Carmilla says with a smirk.

“Don’t encourage him.”

“Yeah mama.” Allie chime, looking up at me with a grin.

“You’re turning my own kid against me.”

“She did that all on her own.” I say, putting my hands up in surrender as we reached the car.

“So what do you wanna do for dinner?” Carmilla asks as we help the kids into their seats.

“Whatever you feel like doing it doesn’t matter to me.”

“What do you guys want?” Carmilla asks, turning towards the kids.

“Pizza!” The kids shout in unison.

“Okay.”

“We can go back to my place, my dad won’t be in for a little while.” I say.

“Okay.” Carmilla says quietly.

“You don’t have to be afraid or anything like that. I told him we’ve been talking and that we were going out tonight.”

“What did he say?”

“He said I’m an adult and to do what I feel is right.” I say with a small smile.
“Okay cutie.”

-Carmilla POV-

“Well I think she’s out.” Laura says, walking into the kitchen.

“It’s okay, she can sleep a little bit, and she won’t be hard to get to bed again.” I say as she sits down across from me at the table. “How’s Jack?”

“Jack is up in his room. He’s allowed to play his games a little later than during the week so he lets it last as long as possible.”

“Ah, that must be a boy thing. Allie likes to play with her Barbie dolls and all that, but that’s about it.” I shrug.

“Do you like having a daughter?”

“I don’t have anything to compare it to.” I chuckle.

“Yeah I know that, but if you could change the outcome, would you have?”

“I don’t like that she reminds me so much of her mother, that’s the only thing I think I would change. I don’t ever want to change the choice of being a parent and having her, but I would change the woman I decided to have her with.”

“That’s understandable, seeing as I feel the same way about Jack some times, but I love him no matter what, and I wouldn’t change anything about it. Then again, poor choice in partner is something that is hindsight when it comes to my child now.” Laura says, sitting back in her chair.

“Does Jack get to see his father?”

“He talks to Jack almost everyday, which I don’t object to seeing as the kid has every right to talk to his father, just like his father has every right to talk to his child, but he hasn’t see Jack since we moved. Not that it matters, Jack doesn’t seem phased by it at all honestly.”

“That’s good.”

“Would you change anything?” Laura asks quietly.

“What are you talking about?”

“Your life, your choices, would you change any of it at all?”

“I would change two things. One is, I would change the habits I had prior to Allie being born and the early stages of her life, due to my selfishness of not wanting to be a parent when I became one. Two, would be losing someone that meant a lot to me on a count of me being an ass hole. Like a royally epic ass hole that failed the only person that meant so much to me…” I say quietly, staring deeply into Laura’s eyes.

“You didn’t fail me.”

“It feels like I did.” I whisper.

“We were young, we didn’t know better.”
“That doesn’t excuse hurting you.”

“That doesn’t matter, we were kids back then when things happened. You did hurt me, you hurt me very much, but I can’t change it and neither can you. But we can grow from it and learn.” She says with a small smile, placing her hand over my own.

“You want to grow with me?”

“We’re adults now, mature and all that. I think it’s only fair to see what happens. I don’t want to force they issue or anything, but to see what happens would be worth it I think, maybe…”

“You aren’t forcing anything. I just think you should be aware of that; whatever happens happens. The Universe works in strange ways, maybe you were meant to come back here.” I say quietly.

“Yes, maybe I was.” Laura shrugs, looking at me with a small smirk. “I think we should go out again, without the kids.”

“I’d like that.”

“So would I.”

“How’s your job going?” I ask sitting back a bit.

“It’s good, the editor in chief is very nice and understanding about Jack, so he was willing to be flexible, and I get to work from home on the weekends. It’s nice to start putting my degree and passion to work.”

“You always wanted to have an article in the paper. Well a real newspaper, you were editor of the school paper.”

“And I was the editor of my college paper.” She says with a smile.

“Well look at you, aren’t you striving to be the next Diane Sawyer.” I tease.

“She’s primarily Broadcast Journalism, I don’t really want to be that. Maybe the newspaper equation of that.”

“Well I’m here with my full support if you want it.”

“I’ll think about it.”

“Why is there a small child sleeping on my couch?” Mr. Hollis says, walking into the kitchen.

“She’s mine sir.” I say.

“Carmilla Karnstein has a kid? I didn’t believe it when Laura told me to be honest.”

“Well it’s true, the tiny human is my daughter.”

“Well congratulations.” He says with a smile.

“Thank you.”

“You look good Carmilla. Now I don’t know what this little thing between you two is, but I don’t want you hurting Laura again, do you understand me?”
“Yes sir, and believe me, I don’t plan on hurting her.”

“Good. Now I’m just going to steal a slice of pizza and make my way to my office.” He says, taking a piece of pizza. “See you girls later.”

“Your dad never changed.” I say when he leaved the room.

“Nope.” Laura says with a smile.

“He isn’t as intimidating as he was when we were younger.”

“He can be, but I think Jack softened him up a bit, when he was born he realized his little girl wasn’t so little anymore.”

“Yeah. I should get going.” I say, standing up from the table.

“Thank you for today, it was nice.”

“It was, I should go say goodbye to Jack.” I say, walking out of the kitchen and upstairs. I walk down the familiar hallway, realized that it hasn’t changed since the last time I was in the house. I stop in front of one door, looking at it with a sigh. I open the door to Laura’s room to see it has changed, there weren’t as many posters and some of her stuffed animals were gone. The room grew up with Laura it seems, but the theme of yellow didn’t change which made me smile.

“Why are you in my mom’s room?” Jack says from behind me, startling me a bit.

“Jesus. Jack, don’t do that. I thought it was your room, I came to say goodbye.” I say, crouching down to give him a hug.

“I liked going to the movie with you and Allie.”

“I liked it too Jack, we’ll do it again some time.”

“Okay.” Jack says with a smile.

“Be good for your mom, and your grandpa.”

“I will.” He says, hugging me again.

“Good.” I say with a smile, walking back downstairs to find Laura.

“Do you want help with her?” She asks, standing over Allie.

“No, it’s okay. I’ll get her.” I say, walking into the room and picking up Allie from the couch.

“Be careful getting home.” Laura says as she walks me out to my car, helping me get Allie in the car.

“I will, don’t worry.”

“Bye-bye Laura.” Allie mumbles in her sleep as she opens her eyes for a moment once she’s in her car seat.

“Bye-bye Allie.” Laura says, stepping around me to kiss Allie on the head. “I’ll talk to you later.”

“Yeah.” I say with a smile, closing the door and walking around to the driver’s side. “I’ll call you
after the weekend, we’ll make plans. I just can’t do anything Tuesday, I won’t even be at the coffee shop.”

“Story for another day?”

“Yeah.” I say, looking down.

“You have a lot of stories for other days.”

“I still like to have my air of mystery.”

“That air of mystery doesn’t work with me, and you know that.”

“Yeah, that doesn’t work with you.” I laugh nervously and run my fingers through my hair.

“Go, get Allie to bed, take the dog out. I’ll talk to you later.” Laura says, stepping towards me and wrapping her arms around me in a hug, and kissing me on the cheek before she smiles and turns on her heels to walk back into the house.

“Carmilla stop pacing.” My mom says as I turn around for the tenth time and walk past her.

“Where is she? She’s always early and now today, of all the days to be late, she’s late. She’s fucking with me mom, I know it.”

“She may or may not be, we won’t know until she gets here.”

“Mom the hearing is in like ten minutes.”

“Sorry I’m late.” Ell says, walking up behind me.

“No you’re not, you want me to look like a nut.”

“No I don’t, I want you to be with Allie just as often as I am.”

“Can we just go in there then and get this over with please?” I say, walking towards the door of the courtroom.

“Okay, it’s been six months since we last met, Carmilla you have been going to your meetings, you have been spending less time at your bar, and you’ve managed to open and maintain a new business, where you are present on a regular basis, correct?” The judge says, looking over the file.

“Yes sir. My brother has full control over the bar, I don’t go there on a regular basis, but then again it is my job sir, I am still the boss.” I explain.

“That is understandable, granted. I may be willing to oversee that small detail seeing as your business didn’t affect your alleged problem, but it did have something to do with it…”

“Sir, I know owning a bar when I myself had a problem with alcohol is hard to wrap your head around, but it’s a business first. That’s like saying my addiction to coffee is going to get out of control due to owning a coffee shop. I got clean; I’ve been to the meetings. I did everything in the past six months that was expected of me. All I want is to see my kid more than twice a month. I love her so much sir, I don’t know how I could even begin to explain what she means to me. The past me has nothing to do with the present me, what I did is something I regret every time I wake
“Now, I know that this isn’t up to me one hundred percent, that Ms. Black has to agree as well, seeing as she has sole custody of the child at the moment, but I would like to grant you more visitation with your child effective immediately, but you will still have to find time to attend meetings for an additional six months, once the year is up, we will discuss this further and see where this goes. In six months we will discuss joint-custody."

“Thank you sir.”

“Ms. Black, do you have anything to say?”

“No sir. I do not.” Ell says quietly.

“Okay, then we will pick this up in six months.” He says, banging his gavel before getting up and walking out.

“So you do go to the meetings?” Ell asks, walking over to me.

“How could I make that up, I want to have my kid just as much as you do.”

“I know Carmilla, it’s just that last year you didn’t take this as serious. Hell six months ago you didn’t seem to be taking this serious. You changed a lot in the last couple of months and I’m proud of you.”

“Thank you.”

“No problem. Oh just one thing, who’s Laura?” Ell asks, cocking her head to the side.

“She’s an old friend, she just moved back here and has a son.” I explain. “Why?”

“Allie was talking about them Sunday night when you brought her home. She said you guys all went to see a movie on Friday and you went back to her house.”

“Why are you making a big deal out of this?”

“I don’t want my daughter to be introduced to people I don’t know.”

“When she’s with me though it shouldn’t matter as long as she is safe and having fun.”

“I don’t want you seeing Laura when you’re supposed to be spending time with Allie, not for a while at least.”

“What does this have to do with anything?”

“She’s my child, I am her mother and I don’t want her meeting people and getting attached to people who may not be around for a long time.” Ell says as she begins to walk back towards the hall doors.

“Hang on a second, I don’t understand this right now.”

“When you have Allie, you can’t see Laura, I don’t care if she has a son, and I especially don’t care who she is, until I know she isn’t going to be some temporary fling that you’re known for, I don’t want my child near her.”

“Laura isn’t a temporary anything, and Allie just so happens to like Jack and Laura, there is nothing
“I don’t care, Carmilla. You want to see Allie, when you have her you can’t see Laura."

“Fine.” I say, putting my hands up. With a sigh I get out my phone. “Hey, can you meet me at the café at like eight? Yeah just before we close, I just want to talk. Thank you.” I put my phone away and turn to my mother. “Can you believe her?"

“She’s her mother, she has a say. But she is a little absurd.”

“More like extremely absurd.”

“Absurd either way, look honey I have to get back to the office, I’ll talk to you later.” She says, kissing me on the cheek.

“Bye mom thanks for coming.”

“You’re welcome sweetie.” I follow my mom out of the building and walk to my car, I go home and shower, let the dog out before going to the café.

“I thought you weren’t coming in today?” Danny says as I walk through the door.

“Yeah well, I can do what I want. I called Laura, she’s meeting here to talk.”

“Trouble in paradise?”

“No, I called her because I want to talk to her alone, and this is the only place I could think of that was practical.”

“So your house in which you live isn’t practical?”

“Do you like your job?” I say, walking behind the counter. “Do you like working here and having a say in everything?”

“And I’ll shut up.” She says, going back to what she was doing.

“Thank you.” I say with a sigh, turning to see Laura walking in after the door jingled. “Hi.” I say with a smile.

“Hey, is everything okay?”

“Yeah, I just needed someone to talk to, how was work? How is Jack?” I ask, fixing her a cup of cocoa.

“Work was good, I have an article due tomorrow for editing, and Jack was upset when he saw me leaving, he says hello and he hopes to see you and Allie soon.”

“Yeah.” I say quietly.

“What happened, what’s wrong?” She says, taking the cup from my hand and walking towards our table.

“I guess it’s time to tell you.” I sigh.
“Carm you don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to.” I say, reaching for her hand.

“No, no I have to tell you. I’m an alcoholic, well former, that’s the reason why I don’t have custody of Allie. Her mother, Ell, she didn’t want Allie to be around me. I had to go to court this afternoon, I go to AA meetings every Thursday morning; I’d like to think I’m doing pretty well. So I went to court today…”

“What happened at court?” I ask, sipping my cocoa.

“I was granted more visitation, I can see Allie every weekend now. I still have to attend meetings and have to try and avoid my other business. Anyway, Allie told Ell about you and Jack.”

“Oh really? What happened?”

“Allie doesn’t want me to bring Allie around you guys anymore, she doesn’t think it’s healthy for Allie to be exposed to someone who may be temporary in my life.” Carmilla says quietly, not looking up at me.

“I understand that Ell is Allie’s mother just as much as you are, but when she is with you it should be in your best interest as to what Allie can and can’t be around.”

“Granted, but at the same time, I don’t have custody of Allie, and I don’t know what Ell would do if I kept bring Allie around you. She accused me of having a terrible drinking problem which had me lose the right to see Allie all the time, and she blew everything out of proportion, I just don’t know what she would so if it came down to it. I can’t lose her, I can’t lose my daughter.” Carmilla says, shaking her head a bit.

“Hey, it’s okay. You don’t have to force the issue of us on you ex-wife. I’m not telling you to do anything you aren’t comfortable with. And I especially don’t want to be the reason you don’t see Allie more.”

“You will never be the reason I lose Allie, and I don’t want you to think that.” She says, looking up at me with a sad smile. “It’ll just be hard if she asks to see you.

“It’ll be hard for Jack too.”

“We’ll figure it out. We’ll see what we can do, give Ell peace of mind that it’s okay for Allie to see me with you.”

“I wouldn’t mind meeting her, like if it’ll help her know that I’m not a threat.”

“I don’t know. I’d have to think about that. But it’s something to consider.”

“Did anything else happen today?” I ask, sitting back in the chair.

“I missed you.” She says with a shy smile.
“Oh well, I should just make that tomorrow’s front page shouldn’t I?” I tease.

“You’re an ass hole.”

“Takes one to know one.” I shrug, watching her smile grow wider. “Was I able to cheer you up?”

“You’re always able to cheer me up.”

“Good.” I smile.

“Are you really willing to meet Ell?”

“For you I am, yes.”

“Can you come with me then when I pick Allie up on Saturday?”

“I can actually, Jack has a play date with one of the boys from his class, he’s excited to go.”

“That’s good that he’s making friends.” Carmilla says with a smile.

“Yeah it is.”

“So, Saturday. If things go over well with Ell, want to do lunch with Allie and me?”

“I’d like that.” I smile.

“Thanks again for coming here.”

“ Anything for you Carm.” I say, following as Carmilla gets up from the table. I take a step forward and give her a hug.

“Thank you.” She whispers in my ear before kissing me on the cheek.

“You’re welcome. Oh, are we still going out Friday?”

“Oh, right. After today I forgot, I’m sorry. We can still go out. We are still going out.”

“We don’t have to if it’s too much. I don’t mind moving it to a Saturday lunch date with Allie.”

“You deserve a real date.”

“I know but until everything is settled we can go on dates and bring our kids.” I chime, watching her smile softly.

“You’re the best.”

“I think I’ve been told.” I smile, watching her carefully. “Your eyes never changed.” I say quietly, not registering what I said.

“Well some things aren’t supposed to change as an adult, cupcake. The eyes being one of those things.” She teases.

“Just an observation.”

“You want to know an observation of mine?” I nod. “You still manage to bite your lip when you’re anxious about something.” She whispers in my ear, pulling back and smiling at me. “Your pupils still dilate and contract when you talk to me. When I smile at you they dilate, when I say
something you like it’s the same. But when I’m an ass hole, they contract.” She says with a small laugh.

“You notice the littlest things.”

“I always have. Like how in high school you would always bring two cookies to lunch, you would eat the smaller one before you ate your real lunch and then you’d have the bigger one.”

“If you didn’t steal it from me first.”

“Well your mom did make good cookies.” She says, catching herself as she looks at me with wide eyes. “Shit, Laura I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, don’t be sorry.” I say quietly. “It’s a story for another day.”

“Oh.” She whispers, kissing me on the cheek. “I’ll see you Saturday.”

“Saturday.” I say with a smile.

-Carmilla POV-

“Sunny shut it.” I say as she starts to bark at the sound of the doorbell. I walk towards the door with Sunny next to me; I open the door and smile when I see Laura. “Hey.”

“Hi.” She says, tucking a piece of hair behind her ear before I open the door to let her in.

“Sunny isn’t mean; she’s just going to smell you and then get bored.” I say as Laura follows me into the kitchen. “Do you want anything?”

“No thanks.”

“Okay, I just have to let Sunny outside and then we can go.” I say, walking towards the back door and opening it for Sunny. “Okay, let’s go.”

“Did you tell her we were coming? Like I was coming?”

“I did, just so it wasn’t a surprise.” I say, as we walk out to my car. We drove to Ell’s apartment in relative silence.

“Are you okay?” Laura asks as I pull in front of Ell’s house.

“Yeah, I just don’t want her freaking out, she had the tendency to do that.” I say, looking over at her.

“Everything will be okay.” I take a deep breath and get out of the car, walking over to meet Laura half way; she smiles at me before taking my hand and interlacing our fingers.

“So you’re Laura.” Ell says as she opens the door.

“Nice to meet you Ell.” Laura says politely. I watch carefully as Ell eyes Laura from head to toe.

“Nice to meet you.” Ells says quietly. “Come in.”

“Hi mama!” Allie says, making a beeline for me. “Hi Laura!” She says excitedly when she realizes
Laura was behind me.

“Hello Allie.” Laura says with a smile.

“What are you doing here?”

“Your mama wanted me to come with her to get you.” Laura chimes. I watch Ell during the exchange between Laura and Allie, she had straight face and her arms crossed over her chest, after a few moments she looks over at me and sighs, nodding her head without a word.

“Thank you.” I mouth, watching Ell smile slightly.

“I’m sorry.” She mouths.

“Come on Allie, let’s get going.” I say, picking up her bag.

“Laura, I’m assuming Carmilla has told you things and I just want you to know that seeing you with Allie shows me that you aren’t just with Carmilla, that you understand what Carmilla’s priorities are and that Allie is a big deal to her.”

“Ell I wouldn’t want to put Carmilla in harms way when it comes to her circumstance with her daughter, and I especially don’t want to put Allie in harms way because of what’s going on. Just know that when Allie and Carmilla are with my son and I we have a good time and there is nothing to worry about.” Laura explains.

“I know, I misjudged you when Allie came home that day talking about you, I shouldn’t have.”

“I know I would do the same thing as a mother if my son came home talking about my ex’s new friend without telling me about it first.”

“Thank you for understanding.”

“Come on Laura, I wanna go see Sunny.” Allie says, walking over and tugging at her shirt.

“Okay, let’s go.”

“Be good Allie, listen to mama and Laura.” Ell says.

“I will mommy.”

“Thank you Ell.” I say with a smile.

“She’s nice, she doesn’t seem like anything to worry about.” Ell says softly.

“She isn’t, she’s very good with Allie and of course her own son.”

“I can see that. Okay go and I’ll see you Sunday night.”

“Thank you again.”

“You’re welcome Carmilla.”

“Jeez mama, you took forever.” Allie says, as I walk up to her and Laura.

“Sorry, mommy and I had to talk quick, let’s get going.”

“Is Jack gonna come over?” Allie asks as we get into the car.
“Jack is at his friends house today sweetie, you’ll be able to see him next time.” Laura explains as she helps Allie into her seat.

“Oh, okay. Can we go to the park?”

“We’ll see, want to go to the mall?” I ask.

“Can I get a book at the bookstore?” Allie asks from the back seat with excitement.

“Of course we can.” I say with a smile.

“She likes to read?” Laura asks.

“She is reading at a second grade reading level.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, she’s a fast learner and likes to be read to and read herself.” I say with a smile.

“Well aren’t you a little smarty pants.” Laura says, turning to Allie with a smile.

“I’m very smart.” Allie says with a laugh. “My mama is smart too.”

“Your mama is very smart.”

“Thank you.” I say, reaching for Laura’s hand and interlacing our fingers.

“Mama I want this one!” Allie says, shoving a book in my face.

“Oh this one is a classic.” Laura chimes. “I read Dr. Seuss when I was little.”

“I like the kitty on the cover. The Cat in the Hat.” Allie says with a smile, pointing at each word as she read.

“You’re very smart sweetie.” I say, bending down to pick her up and kiss her cheek.

“Thank you mama, so can I get this one?”

“Yes you can monkey.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, are you ready to go home?”

“Is Laura coming?”

“Of course Allie.” Laura says with a smile. “I can stay for a little while, then I have to get Jack from his friend.”

“Okay.” Allie says quietly.

“Maybe if Jack isn’t too tired, and your mama says it’s okay, Jack and I can come over again when I get him.”
“I’d like that.” Allie chimes. “Is that okay mama?”

“It’s okay with me.” I say, walking with Allie towards the check out.

-Laura POV-

After getting back to Carmilla’s house and having Allie read me The Cat in the Hat three times, I had to go get Jack from his friend’s house and run home to get him a change of clothes and myself, seeing as Allie conned Carmilla into letting Jack and I sleep over. “Mommy is it really okay we’re sleeping over?” Jack asks.

“Carmilla said it was okay sweetie, I promise.”

“This is gonna be so much fun.” Jack says as we walk up to Carmilla’s door. “Hi Carm.” He says with an excited wave.

“Hello there Jack, come in.” She says, opening the door for us. “Hi.” She whispers in my ear with a smile before kissing me on the cheek.

“Hi to you.” I smile, following her into the living room to put my backpack.

“Look Laura, we made a tent while you were gone!” Allie says, crawling out from the sheets that were attached to the ceiling.

“This is really cool.” I chime, crouching down to look inside the tent.

“Mama said me and Jack get to sleep in here.”

“Cool sweetie.” I say, standing up to look at Carmilla.

“It’s safe, I promise. I’ve made this tent plenty of times for Allie and we’ve slept in it and nothing has happened.” She says reassuringly.

“Where are we supposed to sleep?” I ask, smirking a little.

“Well, we start off in the tent with the little ones, and then once they’re dead asleep, we get to sleep in my cozy bed and not the hard floor.”

“And what happens when Ell finds out that I slept over? And in your bed no less.”

“We deal with that when it comes to it. If anything we can at lease have some time kid free and get back into the tent before they wake up.”

“That idea sounds safer.” I say with a smile.

“And our first priority is about being safe.” Carmilla teases.

“Of course it is.”

“I know that cupcake. We have to be really, really safe.” She whispers in my ear, sending a chill down my spine.

“Mom! Carm’s dog licked me and now I’m itchy.” Jack says, running into the living room scratching his arm.
“Oh sweetie, let me see.” I say, taking his arm to see little bumps. “You must be allergic.”

“Oh no, I like Sunny, now I can’t go by her.”

“I don’t think so sweetie.”

“I guess she has to stay upstairs.” Carmilla says.

“But Sunny sleeps with me mama, Jack can sleep upstairs.” Allie says.

“Sweetie, that isn’t nice, you and Jack stay in the tent and Sunny can stay upstairs. She can come down first thing in the morning, and if Laura and I sleep in the tent there won’t be room for Sunny.” Carmilla explains.

“Oh okay mama.”

“We should all get ready to go to sleep, it’s nearly bedtime.” Carmilla says. “I’m just going to get Sunny upstairs, can you start getting the to bed?”

Of course.” It took about twenty minutes before the kids were fast asleep, Carmilla was the first to move out of the tent, as I followed close behind her. Once I was out of the tent and on my feet, she took me by the hand and led me upstairs to her study, based on the looks of the room, it was one she spent a lot of time in.

“Sit.” She says, gesturing to the old leather sofa against the wall next to the door.

“This room reminds me of a psychiatrist's office in a movie.” I tease.

“Just the look I was going for.” She says sarcastically, rolling her eyes as she walked over to one of the many bookcases in the room. She rummages through the shelves looking for something, after a couple of minutes, she finds what she’s looking for and walks back over to me with a smile as she plops down on the couch.

“What’s this?” I ask as she hands me a notebook. “Wait. You still have this?” I say, realizing it was the notebook we kept together.

“I was able to keep it hidden and safe for ten years, so yes I still have it.” She says quietly.

“You always signed your notes with a C, you never spelt out your whole name.”

“Speak for yourself, you did the same, you signed with an L.”

“Only because you signed with a C first.” I counter, watching her smile a bit.

“Touché cupcake.”

“Hey Carm?” I say, resting my head on the back of the couch as I look at her.

“Yeah.” She says quietly, reaching over to brush the hair out of my face.

“Is what we’re doing okay?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Like, us being close hanging out with our kids. Reconnecting. Is this okay?”
“What makes you feel like it isn’t okay?” Carmilla asks, reaching for my hand and playing with my fingers.

“What you did to me. That’s what makes me feel like it isn’t okay. I know you changed over the years, I know you’re different, but I don’t know if this is a sure thing…”

“Laura, I know what I did was wrong, I know what I did was terrible, but it was ten years ago. I wouldn’t do that to you again. I have no reason or desire to.”

“Are you saying you had a reason to last time?”

“There is no reason to cheat on someone, there isn’t, but the minute you walked in on that I regretted it instantly and you know it.”

“You still did it.”

“I was seventeen! I was seventeen and thought I was invisible and I could get away with anything. I thought I would be able to get away with having sex with someone else just for fun, and I was able to be with you because you were real. You were reality, Elsie was fantasy.”

“That doesn’t excuse you cheating on me.” I say quietly. “I don’t care what the reasoning is, you still shouldn’t have felt the need to do something like that to someone you claimed to love.”

“You still don’t forgive me?” She asks quietly.

“I don’t know. To be honest I never thought I would see you again, I never thought I would speak to you again. I though it would be over with once I left, but honestly, I never stopped thinking about you.” I whisper. “When I walked into your room with Elsie half naked on top of you, I was so angry and shocked I didn’t know what to do or if it was even real. Then my only thought in that moment was to run away, so I went home gathered up everything that was yours, or what reminded me of you, and came to your house and threw it on the front lawn. I heard your mother screaming at you while I did it.” I explain, feeling a lump form in my throat. “That’s when I went to the school furthest away. I wanted to get away from you so you wouldn’t hurt me again, and yet here I am, sitting in your study with my son downstairs with your daughter, and even though so much has changed, I look at you and realize that no matter what happened in our lives, or what we did to each other, we were able to pretty much pick up where we left off almost like nothing has changed.”

“Maybe because no matter what, we never stopped loving each other.”

“You can’t say the L word.”

“Why not?”

“Because ten years is a long time to still love some one who hurt you.” I say, feeling my eyes tear up.

“But I know I still do.” She whispers, lifting my chin to look her in the eye. “And I know that if you didn’t have one shred of love for me, you wouldn’t have talked to me when you walked into my shop that day.”

“That’s just being polite.” I say shaking my head.

“But you didn’t even look at me the last couple of weeks of school or at graduation, and it took a lot for you not to talk to me.”
“I don’t understand the logic of that. I just don’t think you should be bringing up love.”

“Why not? It’s not like I don’t love you Laura.”

“Carmilla I don’t want to talk about this.” I sigh. “I don’t know what I feel, how I feel when it comes to you. I don’t know what’s going on in my head; I can’t even begin to process it. I don’t want to love you.”

“Why don’t you?”

“I don’t want you to hurt me again.” I say, looking away from her.

“I don’t want to hurt you again either, I’m willing to try if you are.” She says quietly. “I know I won’t hurt you again. It’s been ten years… I don’t know if I want to lose you again.”

“Carm….” I whisper before she leans in and kisses me softly.

“Laura.” She whispers against my lips before kissing me again, only this time it was a little more passionate than the first time. Carmilla slowly starts pushing me back so she’s on top of me. I pull away and look up at her, placing my hand on her cheek.

“I don’t know how to do this. I don’t know how to be with you again.” I say quietly.

“Don’t be mad.”

“I’m not mad Laura, really. Maybe we should tone this down a little.”

“What’s this?”

“Us, you and me. Us with the kids, we clearly have different intentions.” Carmilla sighs before walking out of the room.

“Wait.” I chase her out of the room and meet her in the hallway. “Carmilla, maybe I just don’t want to do this in fear of what may happen, but I’ll consider trying. I’ll try this with you and see what see where this takes us. I just don’t want to dive in head first and something go wrong.”

“Nothing will go wrong. I promise you that.”

“I’m willing then.” I say, walking over to her.

“I am too.” She smiles, placing her hands on my hips. “Can I kiss you again?”

“You can.” I smile, leaning in to meet her halfway in a loving kiss. “We should get back downstairs before something happens.

“What’s gonna happen?” She asks, kissing my neck.

“Carmilla please, I wasn’t to be responsible I don’t want to give the kids the wrong idea. We have to keep this quiet from them.”

“Okay. Responsible adults got it.” She says with a playful salute.
-Carmilla POV-

“This is a surprise.” I say, watching Laura walk into the café.

“I was able to get out of the office early.” She chimes, leaning over the counter to kiss me on the cheek. “Are you able to get off early?”

“Danny is on her break, once she’s done we can do something. What did you have in mind?”

“We should go to the park.”

“The park isn’t as fun if you don’t have kids with you.” I chuckle.

“But it is quiet, and we can talk.” She says quietly

“Okay.” I smile.

“So how long do you plan on staying at your dad’s?” I ask, as we sit on a bench by the lake in the middle of the park.

“For as long as I need to, hopefully after I start making some money I’ll be able to move out and find an apartment with Jack, but I don’t mind being home.”

“That’s good.” I look down at our hands and watch as Laura plays with my fingers.

“How’s Lilita?”

“Oh you know Lilita, she’s still kicking and busting my balls.” I joke. “She’s asked about you.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, she asked about you last week, she saw you walking out of the shop, wanted to know if you were a ghost or not.”

“I always liked your mom.”

“I know. You two used to gang up on me.” I say, rolling my eyes.

“You know you loved it. It’s not like anything we said wasn’t true. You always preferred your nose in a book rather than communicating with anyone.”

“I’m still that way four to five days a week.”

“Do you like living alone most of the week?”

“Not really, I don’t like that the house feels so full for two days and go to feeling empty.”

“Why do you have a house? Like why not rent?”
“Ell left me, she literally took everything out of the house while I was at work and moving into her apartment. I couldn’t bring myself to sell the house and move so I kept it. I like living there; I wouldn’t want to bring Allie to an apartment. She deserves to come to a house, she shouldn’t have to bounce between apartments and not have a rightful place to run around whenever she feels like it. And Sunny wouldn’t be good at an apartment.” I explain.

“Do you get lonely?”

“No, surprisingly I don’t. I like being alone. I’m never lonely; I just enjoy being by myself. You should know that.”

“I don’t know what I should and shouldn’t know anymore Carmilla.” She says quietly.

“What does that mean?”

“You seem to have harped on remembering everything that has ever happened between us and how we used to be, and yet when it comes down to you cheating, you don’t know how to let yourself remember that you did it.”

“I know that I did it, it was so long ago…”

“You broke my heart.”

“It was ten years ago.” I say, letting go of her hand.

“That doesn’t give you a free pass Carmilla, you should know that. Cheating is cheating and there is no way to justify it no matter how hard you try.”

“I want to try to get you to understand that I’m sorry and it was forever ago.”

“I want to take things as slow as we can, I don’t want to push things at all. We’ve kissed, and that was definitely unexpected –”

“That was almost a week ago.” I interrupt. “This is the first time we’ve seen each other since then. Cupcake, please.”

“Why do you want this so bad? Why do you want to be with me? Your life was clearly content after we broke up, why do you feel the need to be with me so bad?”

“I’ve missed you.” I say simply, looking up at her to see her thinking. “It’s that simple. I’ve missed you for ten years.”

“It’s still something to think about, it’s going to be hard trying to explain to Jack why is mom is with a woman and not a man, let alone is father. He’s only six, it’s going to be a lot for him to try and understand. I can’t just jump into this.” She explains. I look at her for a moment before leaning in and kissing her. “Carm.” Laura mumbles before giving in to the kiss entirely.

“I’m sorry Laura, for everything.” I whisper before kissing her again.

“That’s all you know how to say.”

“Because I don’t know what else to say.” I shrug. “I just know that this is one big mind fuck of a situation.”

“How is it a mind fuck?”
“It just feels that way, like I just want you to be straight with me and when you are, you go on saying how it isn’t right, and then you kiss me, and then it’s just so confusing that I don’t know how to handle it.”

“I don’t know how to handle it either Carmilla, I don’t. It’s not like we can pick up where we left off, there are other factors that come into play, for example our children for one, they can’t get lost in the shuffle, my son is going to ask questions.”

“Allie is going to ask questions too.”

“But Allie has two mothers, she knows what it’s like to get love from two women, Jack doesn’t know what that is, he doesn’t understand what that is.” Laura shakes her head a bit. “I think we’d have to sit him down and talk to him.”

“If that will make you feel better that we should.”

-Laura POV-

“Hi Carm!” Jack says excitedly, running out of the school and over to where Carmilla and I were standing, he jumps into her arms and give her a hug. “What are you going here?”

“Your mom and I were out and she asked me to come with her to get you.” She explained, stretching the truth a bit. Carmilla insisted on telling Jack about us, and explaining to him what may or may not take place between the two of us.

“That’s cool.” He smiles, wiggling out of Carmilla’s hold. “Is Allie with her other mommy?”

“She is kiddo.”

“Oh okay.” He says, reaching for my hand.

“How was school Jack?” I ask, taking his backpack.

“It was good, I don’t like subtraction though.”

“You’ll get the hang of it. You’re very smart.”

“I know mom. Is Carm coming over?” He asks, looking up at her.

“She is, we have to talk to you about something okay?”

“Okay mom.” He says with a smile. After the short walk back home, Jack ran up to the front door.

“You know it’s locked and you always run.” I tease him, walking up to unlock the door.

“I have to go to the bathroom.” He calls out, running to the bathroom.

“Come in the kitchen when you’re done and wash your hands!” I call out. “So.” I say, looking at Carmilla.

“So.” She says quietly, walking over to me.

“I don’t know how to tell him.”
“Just do it naturally, don’t try to go too far into it.” She says, placing her hand on the small of my back. “Everything will be okay.” She whispers, kissing the side of my head.

“Can I have a snack mom?” Jack asks, climbing on the seat at the counter.

“You can have an apple and peanut butter.” I say, walking over to the fridge and getting out the sliced apples and peanut butter that I made for him before I left to get him from school.

“Thank you.” He chimes. I look at Carmilla to see her give me an encouraging smile and nod.

“Jack, we have to tell you something. I have to tell you something.”

“Okay mommy.” He says with his mouth full of apple.

“Sweetie, I don’t know if you’ll understand this completely seeing as you’re still so young, but honey… I, Carmilla, we –”

“It’s okay if you like Carm mommy, I saw you kiss her like how you used to kiss daddy sometimes.” He says, playing with the food on his plate.

“What do you mean you saw us?”

“I woke up and wanted to see Sunny upstairs when we slept over Carm’s, when I went up there, I saw you kiss her. I didn’t want to get in trouble so I ran back to the tent. Am I gonna have two mommies now?”

“No kid, you’re not going to have two mommies. Your mother and I just like each other very much.” Carmilla says to him.

“Okay. I just don’t want you to make my mom cry, dad used to do that and it wasn’t fun. It would make her like a zombie some times.”

“I promise I won’t make your mom upset, but some times adults get mad at each other without there being control over it. I can promise to make her not like a zombie though, no one likes to see someone be a zombie.” Carmilla explains.

“Okay, you can like my mommy then.”

“Thank you Jack.” Carmilla smiles.

“So if you like girls, is it okay for me to like boys?” He asks cocking his head to the side as he looks at me.

“If the time comes and you like a boy, it’s okay by me. But I don’t think you’ll understand that really for a while sweetie.” I say with a smile, reaching over to place my hand on his cheek.

“Okay mom.” He smiles, placing his peanut butter covered hand over mine. “I love you.”

“I love you too sweetheart. Finish up your snack and wash your hands.”

“Carm are you staying?”

“Can’t kid, I have to go to work and I have some stuff to do.” Carmilla explains with a smile.

“Okay.”
“I’m going to walk Carmilla out, then I’ll be in to help you with homework.”

“Okay, bye Carm.” He says with a wave.

“See you later Jack.” She smiles, following me out to the front door. “That wasn’t hard, was it?” She says as we step out onto the porch. I shake my head.

“It wasn’t.” I say, crossing my arms over my chest. Carmilla takes a step towards me, placing her hands on my hips.

“Everything will be okay.”

“I hope so.” I say quietly. “You do one screwed up thing Carmilla, and this is over faster than it started, do you understand?”

“I do. You’re not going to regret it.” She smiles, kissing me on the cheek.

“Get home safe, you have more people to worry now. And someone who will be extremely upset if something were to happen to you.”

“Awe, you do care.”

“No.” I scoff. “Jack would be in pieces if something happened to you.”

“Ass hole.” She rolls her eyes, pulling me flush against her.

“I’ve learned from the best.” I tease, smiling as she leans in to kiss me.

“I’ll see you later.”

“Of course.” I smile, kissing her again.

“Oh, it’s my mom’s birthday this weekend, she’s having a party. You and Jack are more than welcome to come with me and Allie if you want to.”

“I’d like that, I’d like to see your mom.”

“Cool, I can come get you guys, or you can drive yourself. She still lives in the same house.”

“I’ll let you know.” I smile, kissing her again. “Be careful getting home.”

“Will do.”

-Carmilla POV-

“We get to see nana today!” Allie shouts, running into my room and jumping on my bed to wake me up. “And Laura and Jack.” I feel her push her nose into my cheek and giving me a kiss. “Morning mama.”

“Good morning monkey.” I say with a yawn.

“You have yucky breath.”

“You’re getting a yucky breath kiss.” I say, kissing her on the cheek.
“I love you mama.” She giggles, resting her head on my pillow.

“I love you monkey.”

“When do we get to go by nana?”

“After you eat some breakfast and get dressed, then we can go help Uncle Will set up for nana’s party.” I explain, brushing her wild bedhead out of her face.

“Okay mama.” She says, kissing me on the cheek before turning over and getting out of bed. I sigh and follow her as she sits and slides down the stairs step by step. We walk into the kitchen to let Sunny out. “Mama, can we make pancakes?” She asks, walking over to her stepstool to wash her hands, as I got out all of the ingredients.

“Ready?” I say as I wash my hands.

“Ready mama.” She smiles. “Can I crack the egg?” She asks after she puts everything in the bowl as I hand it to her.

“Let’s crack it in a different bowl in case.” I say, getting a smaller bowl to avoid shells. “Ready?” I hand her the egg. “Gentle, like I’ve shown you.” She does it on her own, not really wanting to listen to me, seeing as she feels like she knows what she’s doing. I like to thing it’s something Allie got from me and not Ell.

“I did it! Look no shells.” She chimes, showing me the bowl.

“Good job sweetie.” I say, kissing the top of her head.

“I like cooking mama.”

“You’re getting better at it every time.”

“Mommy doesn’t let me cook.” She says sadly. “She doesn’t want me to get hurt.”

“You know you’re not allowed to go by the stove or touch knives…”

“I know, but she doesn’t let me, it’s no fun to just watch.”

“I’ll talk to her about it.” I say, kissing the top of her head.

“Okay mommy.”

“Happy birthday nana!” Allie says, running up to my mom.

“Thank you sweetheart.”

“Happy birthday mom.” I say, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

“Thank you Carmilla. How are things?” She asks, not seeming to care that it was her birthday when talking about my life is more exciting.

“Good, very good.” I smile.

“And who has you all smiles?”

“Laura Hollis, mother.”
“Will she be joining us today?”

“She will, her and her son are coming early to help set everything up with us.” I say as we walk into the house.

“That’s good.”

“Is it okay that she’s coming, and with her son no less?” I ask, following her into the kitchen.

“Of course it is. I’d like to see her.” She says with a smile.

“Mom, tell me what’s wrong.”

“I don’t want you upsetting that girl again. What you did, what she had to see. That wasn’t right to do.” My mom reprimands.

“We’ve talked about this mother, Laura and I have discussed it already.”

“I don’t care, I know you Carmilla, and I know what you’re capable of doing to people.” She sighs, walking into the back yard.

“Give me credit mother, please? That’s all I ask is for some sort of credit.”

“I’ll give you the benefit of the doubt that you grew up, but I don’t know what you want credit for, the only thing you can get credit for is being a good mother to your child. I don’t want to talk about this any further, I want to enjoy my birthday.” She says, essentially shutting me up.

“Great talk mom.” I say quietly, walking to the front door when I heard the bell ring. “Hi.” I smile when I open the door and see Laura standing there with Jack.

“Hi Carm!” He shouts excitedly, wrapping his arms around my legs.

“Hey kiddo.” I say, patting his head.

“Where’s Allie?”

“She’s in the backyard.” I say, grabbing his arm as he starts to run away. “Hang on there. You have a couple of people to meet before you disappear.” I say, picking him up and resting him on my hip.

“Okay Carm.”

“Hi.” I say to Laura, kissing her on the cheek.

“Hey.” She smiles.

“Laura Hollis.” My mother chimes from behind me. “Look at you.” She coos, walking over to us and pulling Laura into a hug.

“Hello Mrs. Karnstein.”

“Please Laura, call me Lilita. You haven’t changed one bit.” My mother says, holding Laura’s shoulders.

“You haven’t changed either, happy birthday by the way.” Laura says, handing her a gift bag.

“Oh you didn’t have to get me anything. Thank you though. Who is this handsome young man?”
“I’m Jack!” He says, wiggling out of my arms.

“Well Jack, aren’t you just the spit image of your mother.”

“My mom didn’t spit on me.” He says confused.

“It means you look a lot like me.” Laura says with a smile, patting the top of Jack’s head.

“Oh, can I go play with Allie now?” He asks, looking up between Laura and I.

“She’s in the backyard on the play set, walk straight through the kitchen, if you need help with the door knock like crazy and William will come and help you.” My mom says with a smile.

“Thank you Mrs. Carm.” He chimes, following Lilita’s orders.

“He’s adorable.”

“Thank you.” Laura chimes.

“Come on, let’s get inside.” Lilita leads the way into the kitchen, placing the gift bag on the counter. “Laura can I get you anything?”

“Please it’s your day, don’t worry about me Lilita.” Laura says, waving her hand at the woman.

“You’re still a guest Laura, and you know how I am.”

“So you really haven’t changed.” Laura teases, causing mother to laugh a bit.

“I can see you two are getting along just fine, I’m going to go make sure there are no injuries to the people outside.” I say, kissing Laura on the cheek before walking to the backyard.

“Mama! Jack surprised me.” Allie says from the little tree house window of the play set.

“Did he really?”

“Yeah.” She giggles. “Is Laura here too?”

“She’s inside talking to nana.” I say, walking over to the little girl.

“Okay mama.”

“Don’t get dirty please.” I call out when she pokes her head back into the tree house. “Both of you.”

“Okay.” The kids say in unison.

“So that’s little Laura?” Will asks, walking up behind me.

“That is. His name is Jack.”

“I know he introduced himself very enthusiastically.”

“He’s just like his mother.” I smile.

“He is very much like Laura, is she talking to mother?”

“Yes. Lord only knows what they’re talking about.”
“I doubt it’s anything remotely bad.”

“Mother is probably just giving Laura the warning that I could still hurt her and all that bull.”

“You did cheat on her, and she did walk in on it. I mean I would give her the same warning, you’re unpredictable Carmilla.” Will says quietly.

“I’m not the same person.”

“Saying that doesn’t justify when you were a bad person.”

“I’m trying to convince myself it will.” I say quietly as I bow my head.

“Well it won’t and the only way you can prove you changed is by not letting everyone think you’re the same, the only thing that has changed about you is the fact that you have a kid. If you really changed, when Allie came into your life, you would have stopped your habits, and you wouldn’t be in a custody battle with your ex-wife.” He says before walking away.
-Carmilla POV-

I walk through the doors of an unfamiliar diner on the other side of town. I look around and spot the familiar dirty blonde hair. I walk over to the table and sit down in front of the woman who isn’t looking up at me. “What’s happening?” I ask, taking the scarf from around my neck.

“I’m sick.”

“Okay, what does that mean?”

“I went to the doctor, I’m not going into the details, but long story short it’s cancer.” Ell says quietly. My thought immediately went to Allie.

“What’s gonna happen with Allie?” I ask, looking down at the table.

“That’s why I called you. Carmilla look at me.” Ell says placing her hand on top of mine; I look up at her to see tears threatening to fall. “I don’t want her to see me get sick, she’s too young for that.”

“But she’ll know something is wrong if she just comes and lives with me out of the blue.”

“I know that. She’s too young to understand what it means, but she’s so smart. We can explain it in a way she will understand.”

“What if you die?” I say dryly. “How am I supposed to explain that to her? How am I supposed to explain why her mother is getting sick and she’s going to die? She’s five-years-old for God’s sake! How am I supposed to tell my five-year-old that her mother is dying?”

“Are you really going to make this about you?! I’m the one who is going to die, I’m the one who is going to miss out on her child’s life!” Ell says with an aggressive whisper, trying not to cause a scene.

“What did the doctor even say exactly? I feel like we’re jumping to conclusions.”

“We’re not. They said it’s an aggressive form of cancer. I got a biopsy of it when you had Allie for that extended weekend a few weeks back. I haven’t been feeling right for a while, they did an MRI, and it showed up on that. They went in took a piece and told me what it was.”

“When did all of this happen?”
“A couple of months ago, Allie stayed with my mother when I was in the hospital, I didn’t want to tell you. I didn’t want you to worry.”

“Didn’t want me to worry, why didn’t you give Allie to me while this was all happening?”

“You legally were only allowed to have her on the weekends.”

“That doesn’t matter, when you were sick you should have given her to me.”

“That doesn’t matter now, what matters is the fact that I am going to die and you’re going to have your child back. It’s nothing to talk about what should have been done. It’s over.” Ell says, tears running down her face.

“I’m sorry you have to go through this, I really am. You don’t deserve this at all. I want you to know that I am going to be the best mother to Allie. For the rest of her life I will make her feel safe, and special. I will do everything in her best interest. No matter what, I know you will be watching over her too. Okay? Everything will be okay.” I say, handing her a napkin to wipe her eyes. “How are we going to tell her?"

“Mama! You got me from school!” Allie should as she walks out of her class group and runs towards me. “Where’s mommy?” She asks as I pick her up in my arms.

“Mommy is at home monkey. We’re gonna go now okay?”

“Okay mama. I like you picking me up from school, you never do that.”

“I know monkey.” I say, kissing the side of her head. After the short ride back to Ell’s apartment, we walk into the house to find Ell sitting on the couch with a sad smile.

“Mama got me today!” Allie shouts as she runs over to Ell to give her a hug.

“I know she did sweetie.” Ell says kissing her on the cheek. “Sweetie, mama and I have to talk to you. We know how smart you are and maybe you’ll understand, but how would you feel if you went to live with mama?”

“Why do I have to do that?” Allie asks, bowing her head a little bit.

“Sweetie, mommy is sick.”

“Like a cold? Take some medicine silly.”

“It’s not that kind of sick monkey.” I say, pulling her onto my lap as I sit down on the couch.

“What kind of sick is it then?”

“Allie, there isn’t an easy way to explain this… It’s a bad kind of sick. I have to see a special doctor to get special medicine.”

“Is the medicine going to get you better?”

“It’s supposed to. But the kind of sick I have, the medicine might not work.” Ell says fighting back tears.

“Are you gonna die like my fishy?” Allie asks, playing with the zipper on her sweater.
“I’m not going to lie to you sweetie.” Ell says, taking a deep breath. “There is a chance that I could, yes.”

“But if you die like my fishy, you won’t be around anymore.”

“I know sweetheart.” Ell says, placing her hand on Allie’s cheek. “I may not be around for real, but I’ll be with you all the time.”

“Like a ghost?”

“You know so much for your age.” Ell says with a sad chuckle.

“Mama let’s me watch the ghost show sometimes.” Allie says, looking up at me with a smile.

“Oh does she really?” Ell asks, cocking an eyebrow at me.

“Only sometimes and when it’s not scary, which it never is.” I say with a small laugh.

“I’m gonna miss you mommy, even if you do become a ghost.” Allie says, getting out of my lap to give Ell a big hug, causing Ell to cry.

“I’m going to miss you too sweetie. I’m going to miss you so much. But mama is going to take care of you just like she does on the weekends, but now it will be all the time.”

“What about my stuff here? What’s gonna happen?”

“You get to take a lot of your stuff to your room at my house. Some of your stuff you’ll have to give up, but not all of it. Okay sweetie?” I say.

“When do I have to move?” Allie asks, looking between Ell and I.

“It won’t be for a little while monkey.” Ell says, running her fingers through Allie’s curls.

“Okay mommy. Can I go play now?”

“Yes you can go play. Wash up from school please.” Ell says as Allie runs towards her room.

“That wasn’t bad, but it wasn’t good.”

“Everything will be okay.” I say, patting Ell on her knee.

-Laura POV-

“Hey Danny, is Carmilla in?” I ask, walking through the café to the counter.

“No, she wasn’t coming in today, she had to take a personal day. Would you like your usual?”

“No thanks, I really just came by to see where she was. She hasn’t been answering my calls or texts today. Thank you though.”

“No problem.” Danny says with a smile and a wave. As I walk out of the café I bump into someone who was walking in.”

“Holy crap, I’m so sorry.” I say.

“It’s okay cupcake.” Carmilla says, grabbing my arms.
“Is everything okay? I’ve been trying to get in touch with you.”

“I’ve had a hectic morning. Nothing some time with you won’t fix.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss me.

“Well aren’t you sweet. But really Carm, are you okay?”

“It’s something to talk about, but not outside in the cold. Do you have time to come back to my house or do you have to get home?”

“Jack’s with the babysitter, my dad just left for work and I called and told him I was going to be a little late so I have time.”

“Do you want to leave you car here or?”

“No, I’ll follow you back to yours.” After the short drive to Carmilla’s house, we were sat on her couch with a glass of wine. “What is it?” I say, taking a small sip.

“I saw Ell today.”

“What happened with that?”

“She’s sick. She’s not going to make it.” Carmilla says quietly.

“I’m so sorry to hear that.” I say, placing my hand on top of Carmilla’s. “I’m assuming that you get Allie.”

“Yeah. We had to explain to her that her mother is dying and that she will be moving in here.”

“That must have been hard.”

“She’s a smart girl, she understood what was happening.” Carmilla says quietly. “I just don’t know what’s going to happen long term, you know? Like I don’t know what’s going to happen when Allie starts to forget, or asks where Ell went. It’s going to be harder then than it is now.”

“Maybe she’ll understand it regardless. I mean, she may be only five but she isn’t stupid. She’s not you average five-year-old, and you know it.”

“I know.”

“I’ll be here you know. I’ll be right here to help you through everything.” I say, leaning in to kiss her on the cheek.

“You’re too nice.” Carmilla says quietly.

“I’m just the right amount of nice.” I tease. “You’re going to be okay. Allie is going to be okay. Everything will be okay.”

-Carmilla POV-

“Does Sunny get to sleep in my room all the time?” Allie asks as she carries a small box of hers into the house.

“Yes sweetie, Sunny can sleep in your room whenever you want.”
“Thanks mama!” Allie chimes, running up the stairs to her room. I sigh as I watch her run up the stairs to her bedroom. The thought of her being home with me 24/7 means I have to be a parent more than I was before. Something I don’t know I’m prepared for. “Mama can you come here?” I run my fingers through my hair as I walk upstairs and into Allie’s room.

“Yes missy?”

“Can I paint my room?” She asks, looking at the pale white walls.

“We can paint it whatever color you want to short stack.”

“Can we make it blue? I don’t like white.”

“We sure can. Tomorrow after school we’ll go to the store and you can pick your favorite blue.” I say, picking her up to kiss her cheek.

“Thank you mama. Can we go visit mommy too?” She asks quietly.

“Yes we can sweet pea.” I say, kissing her cheek again. Ell had been in the hospital for a week now. Allie liked the idea of living with me, but it was still hard for her to understand exactly what was going on. Although she was taking it as well as a child could. Seeing as she had a lot of stuff at my house as it was, while Ell was in the hospital, after I picked up Allie from school she would pick what she wanted to bring with her and what she should give away to the less fortunate.

“I want to bring her a picture. I’m gonna color one.” She says, running over to her desk.

“Allie?”

“Yes mama?” She asks from her desk.

“Sweetie, are you okay about what’s happening with mommy?” I ask, walking over to her and crouching down.

“She’s gonna go to heaven she said. Mommy is going to watch me all the time. But I don’t want her to go away. I want her to get better.”

“I want her to get better too pumpkin.” I say, watching tears run down her little cheeks.

“Are you gonna go to heaven too mama?”

“Not for a very long time.” I say, wiping the tears from her face.

“When you’re old like nana?”

“Hopefully when I’m older than nana.” I say with a small laugh, causing Allie to smile.

“Old like gammy?” She asks, referring to Ell’s grandmother.

“Yes, old like gammy. I’m gonna be around forever kiddo.”

“Is Laura gonna be around forever?”

“Maybe. Do you like Laura?”

“I like Laura a lot. She’s really nice.”
“She is very nice.”

“How can she come over? And Jack.”

“Maybe tomorrow, I’ll see what she’s doing.” I say, running my fingers through her hair, brushing it out of her face.

“Okay mama. Can I draw my picture now?”

“Of course monkey.” I say, kissing her on the cheek. I go to stand up but she wraps her little arms around my neck, holding me tight.

“I love you so much mama.” She says, kissing my cheek sloppily.

“I love you so much too Aleksandra.”

Chapter End Notes

Questions, concerns, critiques? Drop by my tumblr: juli-with-a-chance
"Hi mommy." Allie says quietly as I carry her into Ell's room.

"Hello ladybug." Ell says with a small smile, lulling her head to the side against her pillow. "You've gotten big." Ell says, seeing as she hasn't seen Allie in weeks.

"I grew an inch. Mama measures me on the doorframe in my room." Allie says with a smile.

"That's good sweetie."

"Hey." I say quietly when Ell looks at me. "How are you feeling?"

"As best as I can feel." Ell says with a small smile.

"Has anything changed?"

"No, it's still the same. Still... You know."

"It is what it is." I say quietly with a shrug.

"Yeah." She sighs, looking at Allie. "How is school pumpkin?"

"School is good mommy. I learned to add today."

"That's good sweetheart." Ell says, brushing the hair out of Allie's eyes when I put her on the bed next to Ell.

"I miss you mommy, but I know you're getting better." Allie says, lying next to Ell in the bed.

"The doctor is trying to make me so much better sweetie."

"Good." Allie says with a smile. We visited with Ell for about an hour, Allie doing most of the talking which seemed to make Ell very happy. "Mama is Laura coming over today?" She asks as I buckle her into her car seat.

"I don't know cupcake." I say, kissing her on the cheek. "Are you going to help me with dinner?"

"Duh mama. I like helping you."

"Just making sure."

"Who's that mama?" Allie asks when the doorbell rings as she washed her hands.

"I'll go check." I say with a smile, walking to the door and opening it to see Jack and Laura. "Be quiet, Allie doesn't know you're coming." I say when Jack goes to say something.

"Okay Carm, where is Allie?" Jack whispers.
“She’s in the kitchen.” I say as Jack and Laura walk through the door. “Hi.” I say with a smile as I take Laura by the waist.

“Hello to you too.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss me. “How was today?”

“It was alright, better now that you and Jack are here.”

“Well aren’t you a sappy sap.” Laura teases, kissing me again before walking into the kitchen.

“Mama you tricked me!” Allie runs over and wraps her arms around Laura’s legs. “Hi Laura.”

“Hello pretty lady.” Laura picks Allie up and kissing her on the cheek. “Are you being good for mama?”

“Yes Laura, I’m being very good. Come see my room, me and mama painted it blue!” Allie says, wiggling out of Laura’s arms before taking her by the hand and leading her upstairs.

“Can I go see Allie’s room too?” Jack asks.

“Go ahead little man.” I laugh as he runs out of the kitchen and up the stairs. After a few minutes Laura walks back into the kitchen, walking up behind me and wrapping her arms around my waist, resting her cheek on the back of my should. “You okay?” I ask, stirring the pot that was on the stove.

“Yeah, I just missed you.”

“I missed you too.” I say, turning to face her, placing my hands on her hips.

“Are you okay? It seems like Allie is okay, but are you okay?”

“Seeing as Ell is dying before my eyes, it’s hard. But I could only imagine how Allie is really taking it. I mean, she seems to be taking it fairly well, but at the same time I don’t know what the long term is going to be, you know?”

“Time will tell.” Laura says quietly.

“Is there something bothering you?” I say, brushing her hair to the side.

“Nothing, I mean, we’ve been technically dating for two months, and have yet to be alone.”

“Is that what’s bothering you? That we haven’t been on a date for two months, just the two of us?”

“A little bit.” Laura shrugs.

“Cupcake, things will be easy, we’ll have time together.” I say, kissing her forehead.

“But we aren’t going to have time together soon enough.”

“Things have been hectic, and now with everything going on with Ell and Allie moving in, I’m sorry.”

“Okay.” Laura says quietly.

“Are you really going to get upset about this right now?”

“I want to spend time with my girlfriend without having to think about the two kids upstairs, or if
the dog has to go outside. I want to go somewhere nice for dinner and it just be you and me like adults. It’s just hard.”

“Don’t get mad, or upset, or whatever you want to call it. I don’t want you to feel that way. You know what’s going on with me at the moment, there is nothing I can do. I have to run two businesses, I had a custody battle, my ex-wife is dying, what do you want from me? I’m juggling as best as I can.”

“I don’t want to argue with you. I know you’re doing a lot, and I’m working a lot. I just want to be alone with you. I don’t want to share you with our children.” She says quietly.

“Go run home and pack an overnight bag or Jack, let the kids sleep downstairs in a tent like last time, and we can just stay upstairs. Or there may even be pajamas here from the last time you dropped him off a sleep over.” I say, walking into the laundry room.

“I’ll just run home, I need a change of clothes anyway. I should be back before Jack even knows I left.” Laura says, walking up behind me.

“Be careful.” Laura walks over and kisses me before she leaves.

-Laura POV-

“The little buggers are a sleep all cozy in the tent with Sunny as the guard dog.” Carmilla says as she walks into her room, handing me a glass of wine before sitting down on the bed beside me.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” She smiles, kissing me. “Is this okay?”

“It’s a compromise, but yes it is okay because I am alone with you.” I say with a smile, leaning in to kiss her.

“I love you.” Carmilla whispers against my lips before kissing me again.

“I – I love you too.” I say, looking into her eyes and smiling.

“Is it too soon to say that, I don’t want you to feel like you should say it just because I said it.”

“You’re okay, I promise.” I smile, taking a sip of my wine before Carmilla takes the glass from me.

“I love you.” She says again, after placing our glasses on the bedside table, as she leans in and kisses me softly.

“You’re not getting away with anything, just so you know.” I whisper as she pushes me onto my back.

“You’re no fun.” She smiles, kissing my neck.

“Carm, our kids are right down stairs, I don’t find it wise to do anything right now.”

“That doesn’t mean we can’t make out like teenagers.” She says wiggling her eyebrows.

“You’re like a fifteen-year-old.” I tease, kissing her again.
“You want to know something?” Carmilla straddles my waist as she speaks.

“You’re going to tell me anyway, aren’t you?” I say, placing my hands on her hips.

“Of course I am cupcake.” She smiles. “Anyway, I was going to tell you that no matter what, I don’t think I ever really stopped loving you as the years went on. Regardless of the stupid thing I did, I never stopped loving you. That was a mistake and I’m still sorry about it.”

“The past is the past. I don’t want you to keep brining it up.”

“I’m sorry cupcake.”

“I know. And it’s okay, just don’t keep bringing it up, please.” I say, reaching up to caress her cheek.

“Okay.” She nods. As she leans in to kiss me again her phone starts to ring on the bedside table, she grabs it to see who’s calling and furrows her brow. “I’ll be right back.” She says, getting off of me and walking out of the room. When she leaves, I reach over and get my glass of wine, taking a sip.

“What’s wrong?” I ask as Carmilla walks back into the room.

“Ell.”

“Is she okay?”

“She… she.” Carmilla says, trying to control her emotions. “Apparently she had a DNR, I knew she did, but, we just saw her today. Allie just saw her today.”

“Carmilla, it’s okay.” I say, wrapping my arms around her.

“Mama!” Allie cries out, walking into the room with tears streaming down her cheeks. She runs over to the side of the bed, reaching up for me to pull her into bed with Carmilla and I. “I had a dream about mommy, and then I woke up sad.” Allie cried into Carmilla’s shoulder.

“It’s okay monkey.” Carmilla whispers, kissing the top of her daughter’s head.

“Is mommy okay?” She asks, looking up at Carmilla with her sad blue eyes.

“She’s in heaven sweetie.” Carmilla says as tears begin to run down her cheeks.

“She’s a ghost now?”

“She’s a ghost now.” Carmilla answers, holding her daughter tight as they both continue to cry. I couldn’t help but wrap my arms around both of them, sandwiching Allie between Carmilla and myself.

-Carmilla POV-

I wake up with a jolt. Looking around to see I was in my bed, but Laura and Allie were nowhere to be found. My face stung a bit from the crying I was going all night, the thought of Allie losing her mother hurt ten times more than the thought of me losing my ex-wife.

“You’re up.” Laura chimes, walking into the room with a cup of coffee and a small smile. “Are
“As okay as I can be. What time is it?” I ask, taking the cup from her and taking a sip.

“It’s noon, your mother called the house, I told her you were sleeping and had a rough night. She spoke to Allie and said to call her when you were feeling up to it.”

“Thank you.”

“For what?” Laura asks, standing between my legs and running her fingers through my hair. I place my coffee on the bedside table and wrap my arms around her, resting my head on her flat stomach.

“For being you, just for being you. You also made a really perfect cup of coffee.” I say with a small laugh. I look up at her to see her smiling down at me. “I love you Laura.”

“I love you Carmilla.” She says, leaning down to kiss me. “The children are currently occupied with TV and sugary cereal, I figured I’d let Allie have whatever she wanted for breakfast and her request was Captain Crunch.”

“She only gets to have that on Saturdays.”

“Well it’s Sunday, and she had it twice this week so deal with it.”

“How’s Jack?”

“He’s trying to keep Allie happy. I told him what happened and he gives her a hug when he thinks she looks sad. He did that why my grandmother died a few months ago. He was hugging me all the time.”

“Nana Hollis died? You didn’t tell me.” I say, seeing as Nana Hollis was the nicest woman I have ever met in my life.

“It was almost a year ago now. Anyway, you mom is going to keep us updated. She thinks it’s better to be in touch with Ell’s mom for the time being, rather than you. You shouldn’t have to think about that.”

“Either way I’m sorry to hear that.” I say, resting my forehead against her abdomen again.

“It’s okay Carm.”

“I should probably go downstairs and show Allie that I’m okay.”

“Whatever you feel like doing.”

“I should, I have to.” I say, standing up and kissing her on the cheek before grabbing my cup and walking out of the room with Laura following me close behind.

“Good morning mama.” Allie says, running over to me as I walk into the living room.

“Good morning cupcake.” I say, kissing the top of her head.

“Morning Carm.” Jack says, walking over to give me a hug.

“Morning Jack.” I say, sitting down on the couch, watching Laura as she sits down beside me.

“Everything okay?” Laura asks quietly.
“Just thinking.”

“Care to share?”

“I wouldn’t mind this being my life.” I say quietly. “I know I shouldn’t be talking about this for a lot of reasons, but this doesn’t seem bad.”

“What doesn’t seem bad?”

“Waking up in the morning to you in my bed, to Jack being down here with Allie. This seems like the way life should be, you know?”

“Maybe one day you’ll have that, but not today or any time soon.” Laura says as she plays with my hair.

“I know. It would be nice though.”

“Carmilla I’ve only been back here for three months, I still have to figure out what’s going on with me financially, I can’t really see myself moving in any time soon, but one day we can see what happens, until then, it’s only on the weekends.” She explains.

“I know.” I smile, kissing her on the cheek.

“Everything will be okay. We’ll see where this takes us.”

“Okay.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her softly.

“Do you want me to go with you for the next couple of days or?”

“No, no. I don’t want her parents or family assuming anything, they already don’t like me enough as it is, I don’t want them hating me more for bringing my girlfriend to their daughter’s funeral.”

“If you need me though, don’t hesitate to call me.” She says quietly, holding my face in her hands.

“I know cupcake, and don’t think I won’t call you.” I smile.

“Aleksandra why won’t listen to me?! I told you to clean up this room an hour ago.” I say as I walk into the messy room. It has been a week since the funeral; to say it didn’t affect Allie would be a lie. It did. And in a defiant way, she doesn’t listen the way she used to and she doesn’t really care anymore.

“No, I don’t wanna.” She says from her desk.

“You have to keep your room clean Allie, there is no reason for you not to pick up your toys when you’re done playing with them.”

“I don’t want to clean, I like the mess.”

“Well I don’t like the mess, and I would like it if you helped clean up a bit.”

“No.”

“Aleksandra, please.”
“No, I don’t wanna. I want mommy.” Allie says, crossing her arms over her chest as she begins to cry.

“Oh sweetheart, I know you miss mommy.” I say, walking over to her and picking her up. “It’s okay to miss mommy, I miss mommy too.” I whisper, kissing the top of her head. “Mommy is always with you Allie, you know that.”

“But it’s not the same. I miss seeing her.”

“I know, it’s going to be hard for a little bit, but everything will get better. I promise.” I say, wiping away her tears with my thumb.

“Can Laura come over today?”

“Not today sweetie, she has to work.”

“I miss Laura. I like when she’s here.” Allie says quietly.

“I like when she’s here too sweetie.”

“She should live with us.”

“She can’t live with us, she has to live at her house for now.” I explain.

“Well I think her and Jack should just live here. Jack can live in the guest room and you and Laura can share.”

“We’ll see what happens sweet pea.” I say with a smile, leaning in to kiss her cheek. “Now how about this room?”

“Can you help me?” She asks with a sigh.

“I can help you.” I say, kissing her on the cheek. After we cleaned up her room, Allie said she was tired, so rather than making her stay up, I let her take a nap. I looked at the time and smiled as my phone started ringing. “Right on time.” I chime.

“What do you wait by the phone until I call?” Laura asks, amused.

“No, I do parent in between.”

“Well I was just wondering cause it was only one ring and you answered, usually it’s four or five.”

“Allie is taking a nap. She had a little bit of a break down today over Ell and she wanted to take a nap after we cleaned up her room.” I explain, sitting down on the couch. “She also insisted that you and Jack move in with us. She misses you.”

“Well, that’s an adult discussion.” Laura says sternly.

“I told her that in one way or another. She understands she just misses you a lot.”

“Well I miss her too, but I have to work all week, when is she going back to school?”

“She’s going tomorrow. Thankfully her teacher is understanding.” I explain. “Then I get to go back to the café.”

“Good, then I’ll have somewhere to go on my lunch break.” She teases.
“You don’t go anyway?”

“Danny doesn’t make as good of a cup of cocoa as you do.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

“You should.”

“What are you doing Friday?” I ask quietly.

“I don’t know, you tell me.” She says playfully causing me to smile.

“How do you feel about dinner? My mom is willing to watch Allie for me; she thinks I need a night out. She wants Allie to sleep over her house.”

“And my dad would be more than willing to spend time with Jack.”

“So it’s a date.”

“It’s finally a date.” She teases.

“It’s finally a date.” I say with a chuckle.

“I can’t wait. I have to go Carm, I’ll talk to you later.”

“Okay cupcake, I’ll talk to you later. Have a good day. I love you.”

“I love you too, call me if you need me.” Laura says before hanging up the phone.
“Mama?” Allie asks, walking into my room.

“Yes shorty?”

“When are you taking me to nana’s?” She asks as she climbs up onto the bed.

“When I’m done getting dressed.” I say, shuffling through my closet.

“Is that gonna be soon? I want to go there now, she promised me my favorite ice cream.”

“I know monkey, go play for a little bit and I’ll be ready before you know it.” I smile, walking over to the bed and kissing her on the cheek as I pick her up and place her on the floor. As soon as Allie runs out of the room, my phone started to ring. “Hello?”

“Hey Carm.”

“Hey cupcake, what’s wrong?” I ask, stopping what I’m doing.

“I have to cancel tonight.” She says quietly.

“Why, what happened?”

“Jack doesn’t feel good, my dad has to go into work tonight cause someone called in sick. I’m really sorry. Can we reschedule?”

“Yeah, we can reschedule. What’s wrong with Jack?” I ask, rethinking my outfit.

“He’s running a bit of a fever.”

“Do you need anything, does he need anything?”

“No thanks Carm, it’s okay. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, your son it sick. There’s nothing to be sorry about. Tell him I said to feel better and that I’ll see him soon.”

“Okay. I’ll call you later.”

“Okay creampuff.” I say, hanging up the phone and tossing it on the bed. “Allie, say goodbye to Sunny, we’re going to nana’s!”

“Okay mama!” She shouts, running out of her room and down the stairs.
“Mom, my head hurts.” Jack whines from his place on the couch.

“I know sweetie, we ran out of medicine and I can’t leave to get it.” I sigh.

“Who’s that?” Jack asks when the doorbell rings. I get up and open the door to see Carmilla standing on the porch with a smile and a shopping bag in one hand and a coffee tray in the other.

“I come bearing medicine and tea for the sick.” She says with a smirk as she holds up the bag. “And cocoa for the mama.”

“You saved the day.” I say, opening the screen door for her. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” She kissed me on my forehead as we walk into the living room.

“Hi Carm.” Jack says with a smile.

“Carmilla brought some medicine for you.” I say, taking the bag from her to see the fever reducer.

“That’s the kind I get for Allie, I don’t know if he likes that kind, there’s two others in there if he doesn’t. There are also some cough drops in case.” Carmilla explains.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” I give Jack some medicine and let him watch TV while Carmilla and I walk into the kitchen.

“You have no idea how grateful I am right now. Thank you so much.” I say, stepping closer to hug her. “I’m sorry about out date.” I mumble into her chest.

“Don’t be sorry. You did what I would have done.” She says, kissing the top of my head.

“Lilita still took Allie?”

“Yep, my mom likes to take her whenever she can, so I would have been alone tonight either way.” Carmilla shrugs, leaning in to kiss me softly.

“That’s good.”

“Especially when I change my plans last minute to come and make sure Jack and you are alright.” She smiles.

“You really didn’t have to do that. But you have no idea how much I appreciate it.” I say, leaning in to kiss her again.

“I know you would have done the same for me if it were reversed.”

“Of course I would do something like this for you, no hesitation.” Carmilla smiles as she pulls me in for a hug.

“So what do you want to do? Are you hungry, do you want a drink? Jack is probably sleeping on the couch now so we have some time alone.”

“I’m okay right now, thank you though cupcake.”

“Okay, I’m gonna run upstairs and get my laptop, I have to finish my article. I’ll be right back.” I say, kissing her on the cheek and running up to my room quick. I grab my laptop from my desk and
open the drawer to grab a book. I run back into the kitchen to find Carmilla talking on the phone.

“I love you too, be good for nana. Sleep tight.” She says before hanging up her phone.

“Is Allie alright?”

“Yes, she just called to say goodnight.”

“This is yours.” I say, handing Carmilla the book when she walks over to me. “I found it on a box in the back of my closet. I was surprised it was still there to be honest, I though I threw it on the lawn that day.” I say with a small chuckle.

“I’ve been looking for this book for ten years.” Carmilla smiles as she flips through the tattered copy of Jack Kerouac’s, *On the Road*. “I can’t believe you still have it. I had to buy a new copy of it when I realized I was never going to find it.”

“Does that copy look like this one?”

“As the years went on, yes, it became this worn. You know it is my favorite book. Well one of my favorites.”

“I found it in my bedside table drawer when I came home that night, I was going to throw it away, but I threw it at my closet instead.” I explain as I open my laptop and start working. “You’re really going to make this hard aren’t you?” I ask when I feel Carmilla kissing my neck.

“I didn’t come here to watch you work.” She whispers in my ear before kissing the side of my head.

“I know you didn’t.” I say, turning to face her and kiss her softly. “But I have to get this done. I already finished writing it, I just have to finish reading it over to make sure it makes sense.”

“Okay.” Carmilla smiles.

“It’ll only be a few minutes, can you go check on Jack?”

“No problem.”

“Even if he’s asleep, feel his forehead please.”

“Yes ma’am.” She says, kissing me on the cheek before walking into the living room. I read through my article rather quickly, seeing as I have already read through it twelve times since I finished writing it this afternoon. After finishing up and emailing it to the editor I got up from the table and walked out of the kitchen to see Carmilla staring at the wall of pictures in the hallway.

“Jack looks the same as you do when it comes to your baby pictures.” She says with a smile, pointing to the wall.

“Yeah, I’m happy he looks more like me than his father.”

“How’s your mom?”

“She’s good. I haven’t seen her in a long time, I think the last time I saw her was when Jack was born. I talk to her often though. We try to talk every weekend. I miss her, I wish she was here.” I say quietly.

“Where is she?”
“She’s in New York. She’s writing Plays, which is something she couldn’t do here. So she waited until I graduated to really make the leap and move there to do what she loves.” I explain.

“I heard that she just left without warning.” Carmilla says.

“Who told you that?”

“Laf did.”

“Funny seeing as I never spoke to Laf about it really, they’re so nosy.” I scoff.

“Don’t be mad at them. You know Perry and Laf just like balance and I think it was easier to assume she just walked out.” Carmilla says, wrapping her arm about my shoulder. “And you know Perry’s parents especially love gossip so that’s probably where it started.”

“My mom always liked you, you know.”

“I know she did.” Carmilla says with a smirk. “We should go visit her one day, take the little ones and go to New York.”

“That would be nice.” I smile.

“We’ll make it happen then.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss me. “Jack still feels warm by the way, he’s sound asleep.”

“At least he’s sleeping.” I sigh. “I couldn’t get him to sleep all afternoon. Could you do me a favor?”

“Whatever you need.”

“Can you carry him up to his room please, I don’t think I can do it, and I don’t want him staying on the couch all night.”

“No problem at all.” Carmilla smiles leaning in to kiss me on the forehead as she walks into the living room, effortlessly scooping Jack into her arms.

“I’ll show you where his room is.” I lead the way up the stairs and to Jack’s room. “Don’t trip please.” I say, realizing Jack never go around to picking up some of his toys. Carmilla places Jack in his bed gently and making sure he is comfortable before kissing the top of his head and walking out of the room with a small smile. I feel Jack’s head one last time before walking out of the room, being sure to keep the door open just in case.

“I hope he feels better soon.” Carmilla says as I walk into the hallway.

“So do I. I don’t like when he’s sick, it really takes the life out of him.” I sigh. “He was very sick a couple of years ago, he was in bed for weeks, and in the hospital for a couple of days, it wasn’t nice seeing him like that at four years old, so whenever he gets sick, I get nervous.”

“Don’t be nervous, I’m here and I’ll rush him off to wherever he needs to go.” She says, kissing my forehead.

“I love you.” I say quietly.

“I love you too, I love you so much cupcake.”

“Mom.” Jack whines from his bed. I sigh and open the door to see him sitting up in bed.
“What’s wrong Jack?”

“I’m hungry.”

“That’s a good sign.” I sigh, brushing the hair off of his wet, sweat covered, forehead. “What do you want?”

“Pizza.” He smiles.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, just in case you don’t feel good later, how about soup?”

“Your soup mommy, not that yucky can stuff.”

“I still have some of my soup, I know you don’t like that canned soup.” I smile, kissing him on the forehead.

“Is Carm still here?”

“Yeah, she’s in the hallway.”

“Can she come in here for a little while?”

“Sure.” I say, walking out to where Carm was standing, looking at the pictures on the wall. “He asked for you.” I chime.

“Oh really?”

“Yep. I’m gonna run downstairs and make him some soup, keep him company while I’m gone.” I smile, kissing her quickly before going down stairs.

-Carmilla POV-

“Hey kiddo, how do you feel?” I say, walking into the boy’s room and sitting at the foot of his bed.

“I feel like poop.” Jack exasperated.

“I can only imagine.” I say with a small laugh.

“Where’s Allie?”

“She’s with her nana for the weekend.”

“Oh, I was supposed to have man time with grandpa tonight, but then I got sick. I’m sorry you and my mom couldn’t have adult time.”

“It’s okay Jack, don’t be sorry, your mom and I will make time to have adult time again when you feel better. What matters right now is that you feel better.”

“Okay Carm. When I feel better can Allie come over to play with me?”

“I think that can be arranged.” I smile. After talking with Jack about his week at school, and him going into drastic detail the tadpoles they have to watch in science class, Laura came walking through the door with a tray. I jumped up and grabbed the tray for her. “Sit up kid.” I say to Jack, placing the tray on his lap.
“Thank you mom.” He smiles, looking at the bowl of soup. “Thank you too Carm.”

“No problem short stack.” I smile, pulling his desk chair next to the foot of the bed so Laura could sit on the bed.

“Carm said you and her are going to have adult time when I feel better.” Jack says with a smirk.

“Oh did she now?” Laura chimes, raising an eyebrow at me.

“Only if you want to.”

“Of course.” Laura smiles.

“Can I have kid time with Allie one day?”

“You have kid time with Allie every time you come over.” I chuckle.

“I know but we don’t go out like adults do.”

“That’s because you’re barely old enough to cross the street on your own.” Laura says.

“So when I’m old enough to cross the street I can have alone kid time with Allie?” He asks hopeful.

“We’ll think about it.” Laura says, looking at me with a smile.

“Okay mom.” He chimes as he begins eating. After, once again, going into drastic details about the tadpoles in science class and talked about how they are going to turn onto frogs, Jack was finished eating and felt tired again. “Will you be here when I wake up Carm?”

“We’ll see.” I say quietly. “Sleep tight.”

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight sweetie, if you need me come get me or yell for me.” Laura says, kissing her son’s forehead.

“Night mommy.” Laura and I walk out of his room and make our way into her room.

“When does your dad come home?”

“I don’t know, it depends, why? Are you afraid he’s going to chase you out like that one time?”

“Because your dad nearly walking in on us was something to take lightly.” I say, shoving Laura playfully when she starts laughing.

“You tried to go out the window half naked.” Laura says in a fit of laughter.

“Not my finest moment.” I sigh.

“Can we just discuss the face that you were wearing boxer briefs with little chickens on them?”

“No we cannot.”

“They were my favorite.”

“And you’re talking about them. And I know they were your favorite cause you always stole them
from me.” I smile at the memory. “I still have them you know. I don’t wear them anymore, but I still have them.”

“Oh you do, do you? I want them.”

“You want them?”

“Yes, I want them.”

“We’re gonna share clothes like we did in high school?” I laugh.

“Wanting a simple pair of boxers is far from sharing clothes, Carmilla. Besides they have meaning.”

“That’s why I never threw them away.”

“And now I want them.”

“Are we really having this discussion? Are we really discussing underwear?” I say, sitting down on her bed beside her.

“Yes we are.” Laura says with a smile.

“You’re too much.” I say, lying down.

“You love me.” She smiles, lying down beside me, resting her head on my chest as I wrap my arm around her.

“I never stopped.” I kiss her forehead.

“I know.” Laura looks up at me, and smiles.

“I see you left the tiny human behind this time.” Mr. Hollis says from the doorway.

“She’s with my mother.” I say, sitting up in Laura’s bed.

“How’s Jack?”

“He’s sleeping now. He finally ate a little while ago.”

“Good. Are you girls behaving?”

“Of course we are daddy, don’t worry.” Laura says with a smile.

“I wouldn’t do anything bad under your roof sir.” I say, feeling nervous.

“Good, because the last time I remember you in this room, you were trying to climb out that window.” He says with a smirk, pointing to the window next to Laura’s bed.

“Not my finest moment sir, but I won’t do anything like that ever again.”

“Good. I trust both of you; I mean you are both old enough to know better now. I’m off to take a shower and go to bed. Goodnight, and if you stay over Carmilla, tomorrow morning I want you to call me Sherman, not Mr. Hollis, or sir. Got it?”

“I got it. Goodnight Sherman.” I say with a small smile.
“Goodnight daddy.” Laura chimes.

“Goodnight sweet pea.” He smiles, walking to his room.

“Well look at you moving up in the world, my dad is letting you call him by his first name.” Laura teases.

“It only took a lifetime.”

“I know. If it makes you feel better, Theo never made it to that point, he always had to call my dad Mr. Hollis.”

“Well that makes me feel a bit better.” I smile.

“It should.” She says, kissing me on the cheek. “Are you going to stay over or are you going to go home?” Laura asks, getting up from her bed and walking over to her dresser.

“I think I’m gonna head home. I have to let Sunny out, make sure she hasn’t retaliated and destroyed the house.” I say, getting out of bed.

“That’s okay. I’ll walk you out.” Laura says, taking my hand in hers and leading the way to the front door. Laura slips on her shoes before opening the door and walking outside to my car. “Thank you again for saving my evening and Jack.” Laura smiles, taking both of my hands in hers and playing with them.

“ Anything for you.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her.

“When is Allie coming home?”

“Sunday, mother wants to keep her as long as possible over the weekend. It gives me a chance to catch up on some things.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah.” I say watching Laura carefully. “What?”

“Nothing.” She kisses me again. “I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

“Okay cupcake.” I kiss her softly. “I’ll talk to you tomorrow.” I smile, kissing her one last time before getting into the car.

“Be careful getting home.”

“I will, call me if you need anything for Jack.” I say, closing the door and backing out of the driveway. I look up to see Laura waving to me; she smiles and blows me a kiss. I blow her one back before driving away.
“Hey Laura.” Danny says as I walk through the café.

“Where’s Carmilla?”

“She didn’t come in today, she didn’t say why, she just said she wasn’t going to be making an appearance today? Why?”

“She hasn’t been answering her phone, her mother said she dropped off Allie and hasn’t heard from her since.” I say, feeling myself become more panicked.

“Have you gone to her house?”

“No, I didn’t think that far, I only just got the messages from her mother because I was working.” I snap.

“Don’t rip my head off.” Danny says, throwing her hands up.

“I’m sorry, I’m gonna go to her house, if you hear from her tell her to call me please.”

“No problem.” I storm out of the café, get in my car and drive to her house. I walk up to the door and knock a few times before looking for the key she gave me. I dig through the bottom on my bag and find it just as the door opens. I look up to see Carmilla standing there and staring at me.

“Why are you here?”

“Are you seriously asking me that?”

“What do you want?” She asks, crossing her arms over her chest.

“I’m here to check on you, your mother has been calling me all day, Danny said you didn’t come by today at all, you haven’t talked to me in a couple days… what’s wrong?” I say, opening the screen door and pushing past her.

“Nothing’s wrong, I just needed some time alone.”

“You can do that by giving someone warning you know.”

“I guess I didn’t think of that.” She says quietly, closing the door behind her.

“Have you been drinking?” I ask, realizing the scent of alcohol on her was strong.

“I have been.” She admits, stumbling past me as she walks into the living room.

“Why?”

“Because I can.” She slurs.
“Why are you doing that to yourself?” I ask, sitting next to her on the couch and taking the bottle of vodka off of the table. “I know you like to have a glass of wine, but I’m assuming this was a full bottle not too long ago.” I say, waving it in front of her.

“You don’t know anything.”

“Try me.” I say, standing up and walking to the other side of the coffee table.

“Please Laura, just leave me alone.” Carmilla sighs, sinking into the couch as she begins to cry.

“What’s wrong Carmilla? I won’t be able to help if you don’t tell me what’s bothering you.” I say, placing the bottle on the bookcase and walking over to sit next to her, holding her as she cries.

“I can’t do this anymore. I still don’t know how to be a full time parent, work, be a good girlfriend, and find time to grocery shop…. I can’t do any of it.” She cries into my shoulder.

“Don’t let that come in the middle of how well you’re doing with your sobriety.” I say, running my fingers through her hair. “You’ve only really just became a full time parent a little over a month ago. It’s hard; no one said it would be easy. I don’t want you going into this state just because you don’t have time to pick up a gallon of milk. And Danny is doing very well taking care of the café, of course she doesn’t make as good of a cup as you do, but she’s keeping it afloat.” I say with a smile, feeling her chuckle against my neck. “Everything will be okay Carmilla, I don’t want you to worry about anything okay? You’re an amazing mother, you’re an amazing girlfriend, and there is nothing for you to feel worried about.” I say, kissing the top of her head.

“I love you Laura.” Carmilla says, lifting her head to look at me.

“I love you Carm.” Carmilla smiles at me before leaning in to kiss me softly. “Don’t go off into hiding just because you are having a rough time.”

“I’m sorry, I should have called you sooner, I called my mom this morning, what set me off was Allie throwing her toy at me after I told her to clean up her room. I didn’t know what to do so I called my mom.”

“Just wait until she’s a teenager and she’s throwing other things at you.” I tease.

“I don’t even want to think about that. I put her in timeout, but I don’t understand the rules of timeout so I just sat her on the step at called my mom to come get her and talk to her.”

“You could have called me.”

“You were at work. I didn’t want to bother you at work.”

“I don’t work for the President Carm, I work for a paper. And you know me well enough to know that I get my work done fairly quickly, and for you I’d answer the phone right away.”

“I’ll remember that for next time.” She says with a small smile.

“Is everything else okay? Is there anything else bothering you?”

“I’m okay cupcake, I promise.” She says, kissing me again. “How was your day?” Carmilla asks, getting up from the couch and walking into the bathroom to wash her face.

“It was good, aside from worrying about you.”

“I’m sorry about that.”
“I know Carm, I just want you to know that you’re not alone. Keep that in your mind.”

“I will.” She says, plopping down on the couch. “Where’s Captain Jack?”

“He’s with my dad.”

“I miss him.”

“I know you do, it’s been a busy week. Which I’m sorry about too, I know we haven’t seen each other in over a week, and I’m really sorry about that.”

“It’s okay cupcake.”

“Not if you freak out like this, it’s not okay.”

“Look, I don’t want to fight about this.”

“No one is fighting.”

“I feel like it will turn into one.” Carmilla says, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“Why do you feel that way?”

“I don’t know! Look can you just go home?”

“So now you’re kicking me out?” I say, getting up from the couch.

“I didn’t mean it like that.”

“How did you mean it then?”

“I just need some time alone.”

“That clearly helps you, seeing as you drowned your thoughts in about half a bottle of vodka.”

“I’m not gonna drink, I promise. I just, I need some time to be by myself. Please.”

“I don’t want to do that.” I whisper.

“Why not?” Carmilla asks, walking over to me.

“I don’t want to leave you alone. I’ll go get Jack and we can get Allie from your mom’s and have a nice night together. We can sleepover.” I say, placing my hands on her shoulders.

“Why don’t you move in with me?” Carmilla whispers, placing her hands on my hips and resting her forehead on mine.

“I’m not ready for that yet.”

“How come? You and Jack practically live here anyway, the other day I was doing the laundry and found a pair of Jack’s underwear.” Carmilla laughs.

“I – I don’t know, I’ll think about it.”

“Why do you have to think about it?”

“Because there are children involved Carm. I have to see how Jack feels about moving again, and
Allie would have to get used to the idea that it won’t just be you and her anymore. That two other people will be here all the time. If the circumstances were different, then I would move in, but I can’t because they are what they are.”

“I know. I know.” Carmilla sighs.

“It will happen soon enough, and it isn’t like you live a million miles away, you live a few blocks over.” I say with a smile, leaning in to kiss her softly.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” I say with a smile, caressing her cheek. “Do you still want me to leave you alone?”

“I think I do.” She whispers.

“Then I’ll leave you alone.” I say, kissing her on the cheek and giving her one last hug.

“I’ll call you when I feel better, I think I’m gonna just take a nap.” Carmilla says, walking me to the door.

“I just want you to feel better as soon as possible. I don’t like you to be like this.”

“I know cupcake. I’ll call you as soon as I wake up.” She says, kissing me on my forehead.

“Okay Carm.” I smile.

“Be careful getting home.”

“I will.”

-Carmilla POV-

“Carmilla?” My mom calls out as I walk through the front door. She pokes her head out from the kitchen and smiles. “Hello dear, how are you? Do you feel better?”

“Yeah, I feel better. Where’s Allie?”

“Allie is outside playing with Will.” She says as I walk over to the back door and look out to see Allie smiling, as Will chases after her in the backyard. “She missed you a lot this weekend.”

“I missed her a lot too mom.”

“Don’t lose sight of who you are Carmilla, you tend to do that and it leads you down a messy road. You’re old enough to stop making messes, you know better than to do things that’ll harm yourself. But you have to do things for Allie too now. Just know where your head needs to be, and it’s outside with the princess crown on her head.”

“I know mom.” I sigh, opening the back door and walk out onto the deck. I smile as I hear Allie laughing as she runs around the yard. After a moment, she looks over at me; he smile grows wider as she makes a beeline for me.

“Hi mama!” She shouts, jumping into my arms. “Do you feel better now?”
“I feel a lot better now.” I say, kissing her on the cheek. “Where you good for nana?”

“Yeah I was really good, can we go home? I miss Sunny.”

“We can go home, do you want to finish playing with Uncle Will?”

“No, I want to go home and be with you mama.”

“Okay, go run inside.” I say, kissing her cheek and putting her on the deck, watching her run into the house.

“Are you doing okay?” Will asks as he walks over to me.

“I’m as alright as I can be, Laura came by yesterday and talked to me, I spoke to her last night too.” I shrug.

“She’s keeping you afloat, don’t screw that part up.”

“I know I don’t plan on it.”

“Good.” He says, crossing his arms over his chest. “Now, I think we should sell the bar.”

“Okay.” I say with a nod.

“Really, you aren’t going to fight be with that?”

“Nope, I don’t go there as much anymore, when you show me everything, it looks like we’re losing money a bit, so there is no reason to keep it open, I’d rather take the money we get from selling it and stash it away for Allie. The café is making double the money anyway.”

“Fine by me.” Will says, throwing his hands up in mock surrender.

“There, list it and go through the process, call me when I need to sign papers.” I say, turning on my heels and walking into the house.

“Let’s go mama.” Allie chimes as she walks back into the kitchen, dragging her bag behind her.

“Let’s say goodbye to nana first monkey.”

“Bye-bye nana, thank you for the weekend.” Allie says, walking over to my mom, standing on her toes to give my mom a hug and a kiss.

“You’re welcome sweetie, be good for mama.”

“I will.”

“Thanks again mom.” I say, walking over to give her a hug.

“You’re welcome Carmilla. Just remember what I said earlier.”

“I will mom, don’t worry.” I smile, turning to look at Allie. “Ready to go?”

“Yes mama.” Allie smile as I pick her up and rest her on my hip and picking up her bag.

“What do you want to eat for dinner?” I ask as we walk out to the car.

“Can we make pizza like we did with Laura?”
“We can do that.”

“Can Laura come over?”

“I want to spend time with you first, maybe she can come over after we cook dinner.”

“Okay mama.” Allie smile. “I want to make the pizza look like a cat! Can we get a cat mama?”

“We can look into getting a cat if that’s what you want.”

“It can be Sunny’s friend.”

“We’ll see sweetie.” I say, situating her in the car and kissing her cheek.

“I love you mama.”

“I love you too sweetie.”

“Laura!” Allie chimes, running into Laura’s arms as she walks into the kitchen.

“Hello there, Princess Allie.” Laura says, picking her up and kissing her cheeks.

“Where’s Jack?”

“Jack is having a sleepover at his friend’s house tonight.”

“Oh, so it’s just you, me, and mama? That’s fun!”

“It is fun.” Laura says, putting Allie down as she walks over to me. “Hi.”

“Hi.” I say, wrapping her up in a hug.

“Are you okay?” She asks quietly into my ear.

“I’m okay cupcake, don’t worry.” I say, kissing her softly. “So just the three of us tonight?”

“Yep, Jack had last minute plans with a friend from school.”

“That’s good.” I smile, letting go of Laura so I could finish cleaning up the kitchen. “There’s some leftover pizza on the stove if you want any.”

“No thank you.”

“It was so good Laura! Mama and me made it homemade. It looked like a kitty before we cut it up.” Allie explains.

“That’s really cool.”

“Mama said she might let me get a kitty, that way Sunny could have a friend.”

“That’s awesome sweetie.” Laura says, running her fingers through Allie’s hair.

“Yeah it is, mama can I have some ice cream?”

“Nit tonight monkey, we didn’t buy any at the store today, remember you said you wanted cookies?” I say, walking over to the cupboard with the cookies in it.
“Can I have some cookies then?”

“Yes you may. You can gave two cookies and some milk and then it’s off to get ready for bed.”

“Okay mama.”

“Laura do you want a cookie?” I ask, watching her smile a bit.

“Just one?”

“You can have two like Allie.” I say with a wink and a smile.

“Thank you Carmilla.” Laura says, reaching into the package to get her two cookies.

“Is Laura sleeping over?” Allie asks with a mouthful of cookies as I pour her a glass of milk.

“If Laura wants to sleepover, she can.” I say with a small smile.

“I always sleepover silly, you know that.” Laura says playfully.

“I know, but Jack’s not here and you always stay over with him.”

“Well I can still stay over even if he isn’t with me.”

“Okay Laura.” Allie says as she goes back to munching her cookies.

“Is Allie all settled?” Laura asks as I walk into my bedroom to find her sitting on the bed.

“She is.” I say with a smile, crawling onto the bed and lying on top of Laura, kissing her abdomen.

“Snug as a bug.” I kiss my way up her body. Laura runs her fingers through my hair and smiles as me as I look up at her.

“What are you thinking about?” She asks quietly.

“How gorgeous you must have looked when you were pregnant.”

“Oh yes, the swollen ankles and weight gain sure made me feel sexy.” She says sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

“I bet you still looked sexy no matter how you felt.” I say, shaking my head slightly.

“Would you ever have another?”

“I don’t know if I want to. I still have some time to decide, but as on right now, I can’t see myself having another baby. What about you? Would you have a baby?”

“I don’t know if I’m cut out for it really. I don’t know if that is something that I could handle right now in my life, or in general.”

“I think you would be a great mother-to-be. Not to mention, you’d probably look so good pregnant.” Laura coos, running her hand up and down my back.

“I’ll have to think about it cupcake.” I say, leaning in to kiss her passionately and running my hands under her shirt.

“What are you doing?” She whispers with a small smile.
“All this baby talk has me wanting to make one.” I say playfully.

“You’re missing a key piece of anatomy to do something like that.” She teases.

“I guess you’re right, but that doesn’t mean I can’t make you feel good.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her again.

“You always make me feel good, even when you don’t touch me.” She whispers against my lips.

“But you love it when I touch you.” I pull at the hem of her shirt, she raises her arms over her head and I pull it off in one swift motion, tossing it behind me.

“I’d be a liar if I said otherwise.”

“The biggest liar ever.”

“Carmilla?” Laura asks quietly as I begin kissing across her bare chest. I hum my acknowledgement to her question. “I know you love me, like I understand that. But the meaning of the word is very broad, like you could love a celebrity, or love pizza, but how do I know you love me to the full extent of the word?”

“I love you to the fullest extent of the word and then some.” I say, kissing her softly. “I don’t want you to believe otherwise.”

“Okay.” She says quietly and nodding her head. Laura reaches up and cups my cheek. “I love you too. Just as much, if not more.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less.” I smile, kissing her again.

“Mama.” I hear Allie whisper; I open my eye to see her standing in front of me with her teddy under her arm and blanket in her hand. “I had a bad dream, can I sleep with you.”

“Yeah, you can get in.” I saw quietly, grunting as I pull her into bed and settle her between Laura and I.

“Mama, how come you only have underwear and a shirt on? You always go to be in pajamas.”

“I got hot.” I mumble, making myself comfortable again. “Go to sleep Al.”

“Okay mama.” She says, kissing me on the cheek and turning on her side to face Laura, kissing the tip of her nose.

“Carm it’s too early.” Laura mumbles in her sleep, causing Allie to giggle. “That is the giggle of a little girl who has magically appeared in Carmilla’s bed.” Laura smiles, opening her eye to see Allie smiling at her.

“I had a bad dream Laura.” Allie whispers.

“Well we can’t have that.” Laura mumbles, wrapping her arm around Allie and pulling her close. “Go to sleep little one.” Laura says, kissing the top of her head.

“Okay Laura.” Allie says, nuzzling into Laura’s front. I smile, wrapping my arm around both of them.

“I love you.” I say, kissing the top of Allie’s head.
“We love you too.” Laura mumbles, drifting back off to sleep.
-Carmilla POV-

I open my eyes to see honey blonde hair in front of me. I smile to myself; waking up next to Laura is the only thing that manages to make me feel whole. I pull her closer to me, breathing in her scent.

“Why are you awake before me on a Saturday?” Laura mumbles, turning over to face me.

“Because I wasn’t up all night working like someone in this bed.” I tease, leaning in to kiss her softly.

“I’m sorry, I was behind and had to finish.” Laura says through a yawn. “But at least I have the weekend to just spend with you and the little ones.”

“That is true.”

“What are we going to do today?”

“Well, if we didn’t have kids to worry about, I could tell you a few things that I would like to do.” I say playfully, leaning in to kiss her.

“But the odds aren’t playing that way.”

“I think it’s supposed to snow today, we’re stuck inside.” I say, reaching for my phone and checking the weather.

“Ah, this weekend will be the real test of the kids getting along.” Laura says, sitting up in bed and stretching her arms over her head. After hounding her for several weeks, and having Allie convince her to do so, Laura was getting ready to move in. Jack was excited to be moving in, but not excited to be moving again in general. After some convincing that this was the real last time he would have to move, he agreed and was happy to do so.

“Well they’re going to have to get along either way, this weekend isn’t going to matter when it comes to the next sixteen years or so.”

“I know, but still.”

“At least they will have neutral areas, rather than having to send just Allie to her room and not having a place for Jack.”

“True.”

“And, you’ll get to sleep in this amazing bed every day for the rest of your life.” I chime, leaning in to kiss her.

“Proposing so early I see.” She teases as she continues to kiss me.

“Well I do love you enough to feel like that is something I can commit to.”
“I don’t want to talk about this just yet, I’m moving in first. Once Jack and I are settled then we’ll discuss marriage.” Laura says, running her fingers through my hair.

“Okay.” I smile, kissing her softly as we hear the little pitter patter of feet coming down the hallway.

“Hi mama, hi Laura!” Allie shouts, jumping up onto the bed as best as possible.

“Hello princess.” Laura says, giving Allie a hug and settling her on her lap.

“Good morning.” Allie smiles.

“How did you sleep monkey?” I ask, running my hand through her tangled mess of curls.

“I slept good mama.”

“That’s good sweetheart.” I say, kissing her on the cheek.

“Hi everyone!” Jack says, rushing into the room and jumping on the bed, settling onto my lap.

“And how did you sleep sir?” Laura asks with a smile.

“I slept good mommy.”

“Good.” Laura says, leaning over to kiss his head.

“Mama, can you make waffles for breakfast please?” Allie asks, looking at me with puppy dog eyes.

“I can’t say no to that face.” I smile, picking up Jack from my lap and put him on the floor.

“Can I help Carm, mom?” Jack asks, looking up at Laura.

“Just wash your hands before you touch anything.” Laura says with a smile.

“Okay mommy.” Jack says, running out of the room with Allie trailing behind him.

“I’m on breakfast duty.” I shrug, leaning over to kiss her, and get out of the bed.

“Carm?”

“Yes cupcake?”

“Do we have chocolate chips?” Laura asks with a childlike smile.

“You want chocolate chip waffles?” I ask watching as she bites her lip to contain her smile and nods. “I’ll see what I can do.” I chime, kissing her softly before making my way out of the room. “C’mon rugrats! I need you downstairs ASAP.” I say, watching the two children bolt out of the bathroom, sitting on the top step and watching them have a race to see who can get to the bottom faster while sliding. I smile to myself at the thought of this being a constant in my life before I know it.

“Carm do I get an apron thing like Allie?”

“I think I have an extra one lying around for you.” I say, following the kids into the kitchen. I turn on the coffee pot before walking into the pantry to get the ingredients and the extra apron for Jack.
“Mama where’s my flower apron?” Allie asks, squeezing between my leg and the doorframe.

“It’s in the laundry room on your hook, it had to get washed.” I say, watching her run across the kitchen and into the room.

“I got it mama, help me tie it?” She says, running into the kitchen with the apron strings flying behind her. I tie both Allie and Jack’s aprons and set everything up in order for them to take turns doing something. I stood between them and told them when to do; Allie seemed to be getting frustrated on a count of Jack being in the mix of helping. One thing that will be hard for both kids, is adjusting to not being the only child anymore. “Mama can I have chocolate chips like Laura?”

“Yes you can.” I smile, kissing the top of her head. We finish making breakfast and have the table set; I look up to see Laura sitting at the table with a small smile. “I didn’t even see you come in.” I say, placing the plate of waffles on the table.

“I was quiet like a ninja.” She teases, taking food onto her plate. “You’re very great with the kids.”

“Thank you.” I smile, kissing the top of her head as I pour her a cup of coffee.

“We made chocolate chip waffles, your favorite Laura.” Allie announces with a smile.

“Thank you Allie.”

“Mama can we put up the Christmas tree today?” Allie asks with a mouthful of food.

“We can do that. It’s gonna be a long day inside anyway.” I smile, looking over at Laura to see her with a face-splitting grin. “You okay over there?”

“Christmas is my favorite holiday.”

“Oh boy, here we go, nothing has changed apparently, Jack your mother is a maniac when it comes to Christmas.” I say, looking over to see Jack sigh.

“I know, she’s crazy, mom already started decorating Grandpa’s house as soon as Thanksgiving was over.” He explains looking as his mother with a small smile.

“Christmas is the best time of the year!”

“But you go overboard mom.”

“I like Christmas just like Laura! Right mama?” Allie chimes in with syrup on her face.

“That’s right, just like Laura.” I say, wiping her face. “After breakfast, I’ll go into the attic and start getting the boxes down.”

“Yay!” Laura and Allie shout in unison.

“Jack you can go watch TV in my room if you don’t want to help decorate.” I say, watching him nod his head.

“Thank you Carm.” After we finished eating breakfast and listening to the animated discussion between Allie and Laura about the holidays, I was looking through the attic for the Christmas boxes.

“Mama?”
“Yes Aleksandra.” I grunt, pulling out a box.

“Can we go visit mommy for Christmas?” She asks quietly, I turn around to look at her sad eyes.

“Of course we’ll go visit mommy for Christmas. She’s going to be with us no matter what. You know that.”

“I know mama. I miss her.” Allie whispers with tears in her eyes.

“You can miss her all you want sweetie. It’s perfectly okay.” I say, picking her up and kissing her on the cheek.

“Christmas isn’t gonna be the same.”

“I know it’s not.”

“But Laura will make it fun! I like Laura a lot mama. She’s like a new mommy, but not really.”

“I know what you mean sweetie. I like Laura a lot too. I like that she’s on our lives.”

“Is she gonna be my new mommy?” Allie asks innocently.

“That’s a discussion for Laura and I to have okay, but not for a long time. I don’t want you thinking about that.”

“Okay mama. Can I get a kitty for Christmas?”

“We’ll have to see what Santa brings you, don’t forget you have to write your letter soon.”

“I know mama. Can I go down by Laura?” Allie asks, walking towards the ladder.

“Hang on sweet pea.” I say, chasing after her. “Laura!” I call down the ladder.

“Yeah Carm?” She asks, looking up into the attic.

“Can you watch her please, she wants to come down.”

“Come on Princess Allie.” Laura smiles, holding her arms out. I put Allie on the ladder the right way.

“You remember how to do this?” I ask, watching her as she carefully takes each step at a time before Laura catches her.

“Hi Laura.” Allie smiles as she wraps her arms around Laura’s neck.

“Do you need help Carm?”

“A little bit. Can you just grab what I hand you?”

“Of course.” She smiles. After getting several boxes down, and struggling with the Christmas tree box, we were back downstairs and decorating the living room. “You don’t get a real tree?” Laura asks as she watches me take out the pieces of the tree from the box.

“It’s easier to start Christmas early with Allie when Ell was around, if I didn’t have a fake tree Christmas wouldn’t have lasted as long as it did, therefore, fake tree.”

“And sometimes the decorations fall off a real tree when it starts to die.” Allie chimes in.
“That too.” I smile, kissing Laura on the cheek. “Do you want anything?”

“No thank you.” Laura smiles, kissing me softly when Allie isn’t paying attention. “Let’s get decorating.” She smiles, kissing my cheek before rummaging through the box of Christmas tree decorations. “You still have this?” She asks, pulling out an old ornament of a black cat with a Santa hat on.

“Yes I still have it.” I say with a small smile.

“And I still have the cookie you gave me.”

“I would imagine so.”

“Maybe I’ll come put it on this tree.” She smiles, hanging the cat up.

“We’ll put it next to the cat.” I smile, kissing her cheek.

“Come on Curly Sue, I never ask you for anything.” I chime, leaning next to her locker.

“What’s in it for me then?”

“I’ll see if the Brainiac will go with you to that Shakespeare thing you want to go to this weekend. You know how persuasive I can be.”

“What am I doing?” Perry sighs as she closes her locker.

“You’re seeing if the new girl wants to hang out as a group tonight, I know she likes you and will go along with you way more than she will listen to me.”

“Laura is hardly the new girl anymore, she’s been here for a couple of months now, the only reason she’s new to you is the fact that you have your nose shoved in a book or you’re hiding from class.” Perry says, rolling her eyes at me. “But I’ll see what I can do.”

“You know you’re the best.” I say with a smile, kissing her on the cheek.

“Will LaFontaine go with me you think?”

“They’re crazy about you, I doubt they would pass up a date with you.” I smile, making my way towards class. “Wanna go out with Perry this weekend?” I ask Laf as I walk into class and sit down next to them at the lab table.

“Really?”

“Yes really, she’s trying to get the group together to welcome the new girl and in return I said I would ask for her.”

“When do you see Perry?”

“Next period. So that’s a yes?”

“Yeah.” Laf smiles. After the school day was over and everything was set for the night I went home, showered and changed before heading back out to go to Perry’s house.
“Where are you going?” My mom asks as I walk to the bottom of the stairs.

“Study group with everyone at Perry’s.”

“When will you be back?”

“I don’t know, ten, eleven the latest.”

“Okay, please call me if anything.” She says with a small smile.

“Will do mom.” I say, kissing her on the cheek before walking past her. I walk two blocks to Perry’s house and let myself in, seeing as her parents weren’t home. “Hi.” I say quietly when I see that Laura was already there.

“Hello.” She says quietly, not wanting to make conversation with me.

“Come on cupcake, cat got your tongue?” I tease, smiling as she rolls her eyes.

“My name isn’t cupcake, or creampuff, or gumdrop. It’s Laura. And yours is Carmilla. See I can call you by your name.”

“I thinks that’s the most words you’ve said to me in the whole time I’ve come into contact with you.”

“You’ve literally talked to me twice. Why are you even talking to me now?”

“Because we are here for the same reason and I’m not going to be rude and not talk to you.” I say with a small smile.

“Can you just drop the names then?” She asks with a sigh.

“Okay Laura.” I say quietly, biting my lip to hide the smile that wanted to spread across my face. “Tell me a bit about yourself?” I ask, leading the way into Perry’s kitchen.

“What would you like to know?” She chimes.

“Well where did you move here from?”

“I’m originally from California, my parents moved me here because my dad got offered some better paying job or something. I’m an only child, so that’s fun. My mom likes to write a lot but she works as a schoolteacher right now, but I hope one day she really takes the jump and strives for what makes her happy. As for me, I want to go into journalism when I graduate high school, what about you?”

“I’ve lived here my whole life, I have a brother Will who you may or may not know from school, he’s younger than us. My mom is a lawyer and my dad isn’t around.” I shrug. “I don’t know what I want to do with my life just yet.”

“You still have time to decide, I always knew I wanted to be a journalist for a long time now. It’s interesting to me.”

“As long as it’s something you know you’ll be happy doing with your life cupcake.” I smile, watching her blush slightly. Talking to Laura was easy, after everyone arrived and we studied a little bit, Laura and I went outside and sat in the yard talking about everything and nothing at the same time.
“It’s getting late, I should probably get going.” Laura says, standing up.

“Do you really have to go?” I ask, following her as she starts to walk back into the house to get her things.

“Yeah, my dad has a curfew and I don’t like to upset him.

“It’s only nine-thirty though.”

“My curfew is ten, if I’m not home five minutes before hand he’ll start to worry. He’s extremely over protective of me.” She says, walking over to the kitchen table to get her things.

“Let me walk you home.” I say, the thought of not talking to Laura anymore for the night started to get me anxious.

“I’d like that.” She smiles, pulling her bag onto her shoulder. We said our goodbye’s and Laura and I resumed our discussion as we started to walk to her house. “Thank you for walking me home.”

“It’s no trouble.” I say with a smile.

“It was nice getting to know you.” Laura says quietly.

“It was nice getting to know you too.”

“I’d like to get to know you some more. I mean if you want to. I don’t want you to feel forced into it or anything like that. We don’t have to do anything special, maybe get coffee or ice cream, something like that.” She rambles nervously as I walk her to her front door.

“I’d like that Laura.” I say with a chuckle. “Here, put your number in.” I say, handing her my phone, she smiles and digs through her bag and hands me her phone. We exchange number and I laugh when I see she put herself in my phone as ‘Cupcake’. “I thought you didn’t like the nickname?”

“It’s grown on me.” She shrugs, taking a step forward and kissing me on the cheek. “Goodnight Carmilla. I’ll see you in school tomorrow.” She smiles, opening the door and walking into her house.

“You okay mama?” Allie asks, walking over to me with a concerned look.

“Yes sweetie, I was just thinking. I’m sorry.” I smile, kissing her on the cheek.

“Are you gonna put the start on the top mama?”

“When we’re all done decorating it monkey.” I say, standing from the couch and walking over towards Laura, wrapping my arms around her from behind, resting my chin on her shoulder.

“Hello.” She says turning to face me.

“Hi.” I kiss her softly.

“Everything okay?”

“Do you remember when we first met?”
“You were an epic jerk the first time we met, that was until we went to Perry’s and actually had a conversation. Then I realized you weren’t as much of a jerk and you made everyone thing you were.” She smiles, kissing me again. “I still think you changed your attitude just for me, but it doesn’t matter.”

“There was always something about you Laura Hollis that made me feel different in a good way. From the minute I saw you.”

“We’ll save this discussion for later okay?” She says quietly.

“Okay.” I nod, giving her a quick kiss. We finish putting things on the tree, calling Jack down to join us for the tail end of things. “Allie come here.” I say, holding my arms out for her, she runs and jumps into my arms. “Do you want to do it?” I ask, holding the star up to her.

“Really mama?” She asks with a wide smile.

“I think you’re old enough.” I say, kissing her cheek and holding her up high so she could get the star on as best as possible. I put her down and adjust it a bit so it would stay up.

“Jack, do the honors.” Laura says, watching Jack run over and flipping the switch, turning the lights on the tree.

“The tree is so pretty Carm.” Jack says, rushing over to the couch, sitting between Laura and Allie. “You did a good job everyone.”

“Thanks you honey.” Laura says, kissing the side of his head.

“Can we watch a movie?” Allie asks, looking up at me.

“What do you want to watch?”

“Frozen!”

“We can watch it one time, got it?” I say putting my finger up to make a point.

“Thank you mama.” She says, standing up on the couch and kissing me on the cheek. Laura insisted on making popcorn, so once we were all settled on the couch with snacks and drinks, I put the movie on. Allie was bouncing with excitement seeing as it was her favorite movie. Laura looked over at me and smiled, reaching across the back if the couch to hold my hand, squeezing it lightly and mouth ing ‘I love you’.
You Two are a Thing…

Chapter Notes

This chapter has a bit of an insight into Carmilla and Laura's relationship from when they fist met. If the flashbacks are something you like, feel free to let me know :) thank you for all the kudos and comments. I appreciate hearing from you :)

You Two are a Thing…

-Carmilla POV-

“Where do you think you’re going?” My mom asks as I walk out of my room and make my way towards the stairs.

“I’m going out.” I say, pulling on my leather vest.

“Out? Out where, it’s nearly nine o’clock.” She says, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Mom, don’t worry, it’s Friday anyway. I won’t be out too long, I promise.” I say reassuringly walking up to kiss her cheek.

“Midnight, Carmilla, I don’t care, not a minute later.”

“Don’t worry mom. I promise.” I smile, walking down the stairs and out the door. Thankfully Laura only lives a block and a half away, which was the easy part of sneaking over. The hard part came when it was time to sneak into her house. Seeing as her room was on the second floor and was extremely hard to access, after many failed attempts and a sprained ankle, we decided early on the climb into her window was not a good choice. So, I walk through the gate with a pocket full of pebbles I gathered from the walk over, and walk just under her window. I follow the classic cliché of tossing the pebbles at her window. I smile when I see her come to the window and look at me with an excited grin. I walk over to the back door and wait. She comes to the door, opening it as quietly as possible.

“Upstairs.” She whispers.

“Laura, you in the kitchen?”

“Yes daddy, do you need something? I’m just grabbing a water bottle.” She says as I walk out of the kitchen and quietly move up the stairs.

“Can you get your mother and I the bag of chips in the cabinet.” I hear Mr. Hollis call out as I walk into Laura’s room. After a few minutes Laura comes walking through the door.

“Hey.” She says quietly, closing the door behind her.

“Hey cupcake.” I chime, pulling her into a hug when she gets closer to me.
“How was your day?”

“How boring. I – I missed you all day.”

“I missed you too.” Laura smiles, letting me go and taking my hand to lead me to her bed. We sit down with our backs against the wall. She pulls my hand into her lap and plays with it absentmindedly.

“You okay cupcake?”

“Yeah, just tired. I wish my dad wasn’t so strict.” She mumbles.

“I know, he’ll come around soon enough. I mean we aren’t even all that official yet.”

“I know. My mom likes you, she always asks about you and how you’re doing. I talk to her about us a lot. She even wished my dad wasn’t so overbearing.”

“You’re his baby girl and his only kid. I think it would be odd if he wasn’t as protective as he is.” I say, tucking a fallen strand of hair behind her ear.

“I guess you’re right. I just wish he would ease up a little bit, I mean I’m already seventeen, I think I know what’s right from wrong at this point without his help.” She huffs, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Everything will be okay cupcake, just give him some time.” I say, kissing the side of her head.

“I really like you a lot Carm.”

“I really like you a lot too cupcake.” I smile, watching her carefully as she leans in slightly, I meet her half way and kiss her softly. It’s not frantic, or rushed, but it is comforting in a way, to know that no matter what I was still able to find someone to put up with my shit for the most part. Laura is the first to pull away, I open my eyes to see hers are still closed and she has a small smile on her face. “You alright there Laura?”

“Yeah, I’m perfect actually.” She says quietly, opening her eyes and looking at me with a wider smile.

“Well that was a sight.” Mrs. Hollis says from the doorway.

“Fuck.” I say under my breath.

“Carmilla did you climb in through the window?”

“No, she came in the back door.” Laura says, standing up from the bed.

“If Sherman sees you in here, he may just kill you.”

“I’m sorry Mrs. H. I’ll go home.” I say, getting up and walking towards the door.

“You’re lucky he’s in the shower right now. Hurry up.” Mrs. Hollis says, smiling softly. “Laura you can walk her out.”

“Thank you mom.” Laura smiles, running over to me, taking my hand in hers and leading the way down the stairs and to the front door.

“I get to see the front door now.” I joke, resulting in Laura rolling her eyes.
“You’re an ass.” Laura says as we walk out onto the front porch.

“I’m pretty sure that doesn’t matter to you.” I tease, placing my hands on her waist and smiling when she puts her arms around my neck.

“Within reason.” She shrugs, leaning in to kiss me. “Be careful getting home.”

“I will creampuff, don’t worry.” I say, kissing her forehead.

“Text me when you get home.”

“I will.” I smile, kissing her one last time before walking away.

-Laura POVs-

“You alright cupcake?” Carmilla asks as she walks into the kitchen.

“Yeah, just watching the kids.” I say, staring out the back door to see Jack and Allie trying to build a snowman. “Allie looks like she’s singing the song from Frozen.”

“That movie is evil.” Carmilla says, walking up behind me and wrapping her arms around my waist, resting her chin on my shoulder. “You sure you’re okay?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?” I say, placing my hands over hers as they rested on my stomach.

“I don’t know.”

“I’m perfect Carm. Don’t worry.” I say with a smile, turning around in her arms.

“How long have they been out there?”

“Maybe half an hour. Why?”

“We should bring them in for a break. I don’t feel like dealing with sick kids later in the week.” Carmilla says, kissing me softly before letting me go. “Can you make them cocoa? And you can make yourself a cup too.” She adds with a wink. I roll my eyes, doing what she asks. “Hey little monsters, get your butts inside for a break.”

“Okay mama.” Allie says, running up to the door.

“Jump on the mat outside, you know the rules, I don’t want the snow in the house.”

“I know mama.” Allie says, jumping up and down, she walks in and starts taking off her gear, Jack following Allie’s lead with jumping outside.

“I like Carm’s backyard mom, it’s bigger than grandpa’s.”

“Well it will soon become your backyard too kiddo.” Carmilla says, pulling Jack’s hat off.

“Not yet though Carm.” Jack informs as he climbs onto the chair.

“I know Captain Jack.” Carmilla says, ruffling his hair and kissing the top of Allie’s head as she walks around to my side of the counter.
“Mama?” Allie asks as I place her cup of cocoa in front of her and one in front of Jack.

“Yes monkey?”

“Are we a family?” She asks innocently, looking down at her cocoa.

“What do you mean by that sweetie?”

“Are Laura and Jack our family?” Carmilla and I look at each other for a moment, having a silent conversation about how to handle the question. Carmilla smiles wrapping her arm around my waist.

“Yeah, they are our family.” Carmilla says, looking at me while she speaks.

“Yay! I got a brother by magic!” Allie announces, leaning over to give Jack a sideways hug.

“Does that mean Carm is my mom too?” Jack asks.

“No, it doesn’t.” I say, wiping his lip from his whipped cream mustache. “You can still call her Carm, you don’t have to call her mom or anything like that. She will be like a mom, but she isn’t your mom. The same goes for you Allie, I’m not a replacement mom I’m still Laura.”

“I don’t want to call you mommy anyway, I don’t want another mommy I still miss my own mommy.” Allie says as her eyes welling up a bit.

“Don’t cry monkey. Laura isn’t replacing anyone.” Carmilla says, walking back around the counter and pulling Allie into her arms.

“I don’t want a new mommy. I don’t want Laura to be my new mommy.” Allie sobs into Carmilla’s shoulder.

“She’s not going to be a new mommy, you’re only ever going to have me and mommy. Okay? Just because mommy is in heaven doesn’t men she isn’t still your mommy.”

“Allie, does it bother you that Jack and I are moving in?” I ask, walking over to her and Carmilla. I place my hand on the little girl’s back.

“No, I like that you’re gonna live here. I love you. I just don’t want you to be my mommy too. I have mama and I don’t want a new mommy.”

“I’m not going to be your new mommy, no matter what, I’m not trying to be your new mommy sweetie, I promise. I love your mama a whole lot, and I’m just here to help her out a bit and spend time with her.”

“Okay Laura.” Allie says quietly. She straightens out and looks at Carmilla, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. “Can I finish my cocoa now? I wanna go finish my snow man.”

“Okay Al.” Carmilla says, kissing her daughter’s forehead before settling her back in the chair. Once the little ones finished their drinks and took a quick bathroom break, they were both getting back in their snow clothes and running outside again.

“I feel like I’m wedging myself into her life.” I say quietly, watching the kids play outside.

“You’re not wedging in on anything Laura, she’s just still very upset about Ell. She’ll come around soon.”

“But what if she doesn’t?”
“She’s five. She probably forgot about what happened already, she’ll be okay. Everything will be okay.” Carmilla says, kissing me on my forehead.

“I don’t want her to resent me or something like that.”

“Again, she’s five, she doesn’t know what that even means. Everything will be okay.”

“I hope so.” I say quietly, looking out the window again. Laughing as I watch Allie throw a snowball at Jack, hitting him in the head. “She’s an ass hole just like her mother.”

“It’s the Karnstein way.” Carmilla shrugs.

“Guess who.” Carmilla whispers in my ear as I put my books into my locker.

“Gee, I wonder who it could be.” I tease, turning around and smiling at her as she pulls me into a kiss.

“Ew, you and Elvira are a thing?” Danny grimaces as she walks over to us.

“Yes, Groot, Laura and I are a thing, now if you don’t mind could you please move.” Carmilla says, rolling her eyes a bit.

“Be nice. What’s up Danny?” I ask, taking Carmilla’s hand in my own and lacing our fingers together.

“Practice is moved from today to tomorrow. I was put in charge to tell everyone.”

“Okay no problem, thanks Danny.” I say with a small wave as she walks away from me. “Why are you so rude?”

“Because she interrupted my favorite thing about the morning.”

“And what’s that?”

“Kissing you as soon as I get to school, seeing as you leave so early to get here, I can’t walk with you anymore.”

“You walked with me to school one time this week, and all you did was complain, I like to be early and punctual.” I defend myself as we walk to our first period class.

“Yes, I understand that. But there’s a difference between getting here early to be on time and have security let you in because you’re here before the buses even pull up.”

“Okay, I see your point. It’s not going to change though.”

“I could only imagine how you’re going to be in college, you’re going to be the biggest suck up and get to class so early people will think you sleep in lecture halls.” Carmilla teases.

“You’re gonna regret making fun of me.”

“Oh really, how is that?” She asks as we stop in front of our classroom.

“You know that thing you like so much that I do?” I say with a small smirk.

“You wouldn’t.” Carmilla says with wide eyes.
“Yeah I won’t. Never again will I do that.” I say.

“I’m sorry cupcake, I didn’t mean to tease you.”

“You’re so cute when you’re scared.” I smile, tapping the tip of her nose and walking into the classroom.

“You’re mean when you do that.”

“I know.” I chime. When the last bell rang I smiled as I made my way to my locker, my heart started beating a little faster when I saw Carmilla standing by my locker reading a book, something she always did.

“Hey shorty.” Carmilla says with a smile, closing her book and putting it in her bag.

“I’m not even an inch shorter than you.” I say, rolling my eyes as I approach my locker.

“I’m just kidding with you.” She smiles, kissing me on the cheek.

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Are you coming over today?”

“I don’t know. I have to go home first either way.”

“Okay, my mom keeps wanting to meet you.” Carmilla says, rolling her eyes.

“I’d love to meet your mom.”

“I could only imagine.” Carmilla sighs, shaking her head a bit.

“Do you not want me to meet her?”

“No, I do. I just don’t want her to like be overbearing. She has the tendency to do that.”

“Hello, you’ve met my parents, you know how overbearing my dad can be. I think I’ll be okay.” I smile, closing my locker. “Everything will be okay Carm. I’m excited to meet your mom.” I say, leaning in to kiss her softly.

“Let’s go then cupcake.” Carmilla says, taking my hand in hers.

-Carmilla POV-

“Sweetie is that you?” My mom calls out as Laura and I walk through the door.

“Yeah mom, it’s Laura and I.” I say, leaving my bag in the step. “You can put your bag there until we go upstairs.” She does as she’s told and sighs. “Don’t be nervous.” I say quietly, taking her hand in mine and kissing her on the cheek. We walk into the kitchen to find my mom starting dinner. “Mom, this is Laura. Laura this is my mother, Lilita.”

“It’s very nice to meet you Ms. Karnstein.” Laura says with a small smile.

“Please sweetie, call me Lilita.” My mom says with a smile. “Are you keeping my daughter in check.”
“I sure am Lilita.” Laura teases, elbowing me playfully.

“Picking on me right away I see.” I roll my eyes. “Mom, Laura is going to stay for dinner.”

“Did your parents say it was okay?”

“Of course they did, I had to go there before I was able to come home.” Laura says with a nod.

“Okay, no problem.” My mom says with a smile. “I don’t want to be a pain in the butt kind of parent, but Carmilla can you please keep your door open?”

“Okay mother.” I say, rolling my eyes.

“Thank you.” I grab a drink for Laura and I before making out way upstairs.

“I pictured your room to be just like this.” Laura says over her shoulder and we walk into my room. “Books everywhere, slightly messy, posters of old bands on the walls.”

“You stalking me cutie?”

“No, you’re just very readable.”

“Is that so? And here I thought I was the least readable person ever.” I say, sitting down on my bed, placing our bags on the floor.

“Well you thought wrong.” Laura chimes, sitting down beside me and kissing me.

“My door is open sweetie, I don’t want to get started with something that could get interrupted at any moment.” I say, placing my hand on her cheek. “You are so beautiful Laura.” I whisper, looking into her eyes deeply. “Don’t get bashful.” I say when she bows her head, as her face turns red.

“It’s hard not to around you.” She says quietly.

“Why is that?”

“You always make me feel good, there’s just something about you that I – I can’t explain it. I just get all… I don’t know how to explain. You just manage to make me really happy Carmilla. Like so beyond happy.”

“You make me happy too.” I smile, kissing her again.

“I’m sorry I got mad at Laura before.” Allie says as I tuck her into bed. “I don’t want her to be mad at me.”

“She isn’t mad sweetie.” I say, brushing her hair out of her face.

“I like Laura a lot. I just don’t want another mommy right now.

“She isn’t going to be another mommy for you monkey, you still have only me and mommy in heaven.”

“Okay mama. I love you.”

“I love you too munchkin.” I say, leaning over and kissing her forehead.
“I came to say goodnight.” Laura says quietly, knocking on the door before walking into Allie’s room.

“Goodnight Laura.” Allie chimes.

“Goodnight Allie.” Laura says, kissing Allie on the cheek.

“I’m sorry I got upset.”

“It’s perfectly okay for you to get upset sweetie, I’m not here to replace anyone.”

“I know.” Allie says with a smile. Laura and I kiss her goodnight one last time before walking out of her room.

“She feels bad.” I say as Laura and I walk into my bedroom.

“She’s a kid. It’s nothing to lose sleep over.” Laura shrugs as we get into bed.

“I love you Laura.” I say, lying on my side to face her

“I love you Carmilla.”

“I think we should get Allie her kitten she wants for Christmas.”

“I think we should do that too.” Laura smiles.

“What does Jack want the most out of everything?”

“You really want to know?”

“Yes I do.”

“All he really wants, more than anything in the world, is for me to be happy again.” She says with a small smile, tears welling in her eyes slightly.

“That kid has a lot going for him at six.” I say with a small chuckle, wiping the tears from Laura’s eyes.

“He’s my little boy. I love him so much.”

“I know you do. Just as much as I love Allie.”

“We’re a family.” She says with a smile.

“That we are. Unofficially but at the same time, very officially.” I say, leaning in to kiss her.
"Mama?" Allie asks, sitting in the middle of my bed, watching me fold laundry.

"Yes munchkin?"

"Is Santa gonna bring me a kitty?"

"I don’t know. If you’re extra good we’ll just have to see what happens next week."

"Okay mama. When is Laura coming home?"

"Soon." I smile, kissing Allie on the cheek before putting the laundry away. Laura and Jack have officially moved in a week after Allie’s little episode, everything seemed to be falling into place now.

"Okay. Can you help me down, I want to go play with Sunny." Allie says, holding her arms up to me. I reach over and pull her off the bed, kissing her cheek and putting her on the floor. "Thanks mama.” She says, running out of the room.

"Whoa. Watch out sweetie, you know you’re not supposed to run in the house.” Laura says from the hallway.

"I’m sorry Laura.” Laura walks into the room and sighs, placing her stuff on the chair by the door and lying on the bed.

"Hi.” She says quietly.

"How was work?"

"Long, I had to rewrite my article twice because my computer was acting weird and decided to crash on two occasions.”

"Well your laptop is a little obsolete cupcake.”

"I know, but I can’t afford a new one yet.” She sighs.

"Why didn’t you use a computer at work?"

"Because the server was down too or something, besides I’d rather use my own computer anyway. How was your day? How are the kids?"

"They were good. Jack did all his homework and is playing some game in his room. Allie was going to play with Sunny when she crashed into you. As for me, I’ve been folding everyone’s laundry.” I say, holding up a t-shirt. “By the way. I never thought you would still be wearing underwear with little ducks on them.” I say playfully, holding up the pair in question.

"You can make fun of my ducky undies, but you can still wear boxers with cheesy little hearts on
them?” She says, digging through the basket to find them. She smiles when she finds them and holds them up in the air, waving them back and forth a bit. “Here they are.”

“Oh, okay.” I say, snatching them away. “I won’t make fun of your underwear anymore.”

“Good.” Laura says with a playful smile, leaning across the pile of clothes to kiss me. “I missed you today.”

“I missed you too.” I say, kissing her again.

“I like coming home to you after a long day.” Laura whispers against my lips, smiling slightly.

“I like you coming home to me too. I like it a lot.” I smile, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” I say, kissing her again.

“Ew, that’s gross.” Jack says, walking past the room.

“Jack not too much longer on your DS, you know you aren’t allowed to play past four-thirty.” Laura says, getting off of the bed.

“I know mom, but it’s not time yet, I still have…” He looks at his Ninja Turtle wristwatch. “Ten minutes. It says it’s four-twenty. And twenty plus ten is thirty.” Jack explains with a smile.

“So go play Jack, ten minutes will fly by.” I say, picking up one of the piles and walking out of the room to put it in the hall closet.

“What are we doing for dinner?” Laura asks, wrapping her arms around me from behind.

“Pizza. I don’t feel like cooking, you’re tired, let’s just do pizza.” I say, placing my hands over hers.

“That’s fine with me.” She says, kissing the back if my neck. “I’m gonna go shower.”

“Oh.” I say, turning with a smile, kissing her quickly. After Laura got out of the shower, we ate dinner, listening to the day that Allie had at school, followed by the day that Jack had at school, Jack talking about how much he loved learning about how a volcano works and how Perry showed the class how it works. Every so often I would steal a glance and a small smile with Laura from across the table. Everything felt right for once, everything felt whole again and nothing would change it. I loved the family that we were becoming and there was nothing that was going to change that.

“Mama?” Allie asks with a mouthful of pizza.

“You know you’re not supposed to talk with food in your mouth sweetie.”

“Sorry mama.” She says, finishing chewing before speaking again. “Can I be excused? I’m full.”

“Yes you may.”

“Thank you mama.” Allie says with a smile, getting up from the table and throwing away garbage. Jack soon followed, cleaning up after himself, only for both of them to be put to bed before they knew it, leaving Laura and I alone in the living room with peace and quiet.
“Are you okay?” Laura asks as we sit on the couch and watch TV.

“Yeah, why?”

“You seem quieter than usual. That’s all.”

“I’m fine cupcake, I’m just thinking about how to get away with getting Allie her kitty.

“Of course you are worried about that.” Laura chuckles. “I’m sure Laf and Perry wouldn’t mind hanging on to the kitten until Christmas Eve. My dad wouldn’t mind doing that for us. We still have some time, we’ll figure it out.

“We have a week. I have to go to the shelter soon so we’re guaranteed to find what she wants. I think we should go tomorrow.”

“We can go tomorrow.” Laura smiles, leaning over to kiss me on the cheek.

“Oh Carm, look at that one!” Laura chimes, stopping in front of one of the cages with a tabby kitten curled up in a ball sleeping.

“Allie wants a black cat cupcake, but he is cute,” I say, tugging at Laura’s hand. We walk past a few more cages, Laura stopping to look at every cat and kitten along the way; we final find the one we were looking for. The little kitten was sat in the front of the cage, his little head tilted to the side looking at me curiously, his green eyes were shocking yet soft. I reached out a bit to pet him between the slates. He automatically began purring. “This one. He’s the one.” I say with a smile. I look at him for a moment, noticing the small fleck of white on his chest and the tip of his left ear.

“He looks like you, if you were a cat that is.” Laura says quietly.

“Allie is going to love him.” I smile. We tell the person on the floor that we want him, after filling out the proper paperwork, we had to agree to leave him there overnight so he was double checked to make sure he was up to date with all of his shots and if he had any medical problems, he also had to get fixed seeing as we requested it.

“So there we gained a day without having to worry about where to keep him.” Laura says as we walk out of the shelter.

“That’s good. You think tomorrow after work you can bring him to your dad’s? We’ll drop off everything today so he’s prepared and all.”

“Yeah, I can do that.”

“Thank you.” I smile, kissing her quickly as I open the car door for her.

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-Laura POV-

Carmilla and I are woken up to Jack and Allie running into our room and jumping onto our bed.

“Wake up mama! It’s Christmas! Come on Laura.” Allie says, sitting down on me. I open my eyes
to see her smiling wide at me. “Hello.” She chimes, kissing me on the cheek.

“Good morning to you too.” I say with a smile, we look over to see Carmilla has pulled the comforter over her head. “Why don’t you two go downstairs quick, do not touch the presents until Carmilla and I are down there.”

“Okay mom.” Jack smiles, running out of the room with Allie close behind him. I pull the comforter off of Carmilla’s head and kiss her on the cheek.

“Merry Christmas.” I whisper in her ear.

“Merry Christmas to you too.” She mumbles, turning on her side to kiss me. “This is the most exciting Christmas morning I’ve had in a long time.” She says as she blinks her eyes a couple of times, trying to wake herself up.

“We should probably go downstairs before we miss the real excitement.” I smile, kissing her again before getting out of bed.

“I’ll be down in a minute.” Carmilla says through a yawn. “I have to get the kitty out of his crate thing.” She says, nodding towards the en suite bathroom.

“Okay, I’ll keep her away from the kitten paper.” I say with a smile, walking out of the bathroom. Carmilla had the bright idea of wrapping all of the kitten things in kitten wrapping paper, and left all of Allie’s other gifts wrapped in regular holiday paper. Jack on the other hand wasn’t getting anything special so he got a couple of extra toys he asked for and all of his stuff was wrapped up in Star Wars paper. I make my way downstairs and see both kids shaking boxes, trying to figure out what was in the boxes; Jack looks up at me with a guilty look, tossing the gift that was in his hand aside.

“You have to wait for Carmilla okay, both of you do. But I will let you both look at your stockings.” Before I can even get the full word out, both kids run over to the mantel and take their stockings off of the hooks. Carmilla walks into the room, the small cat clinging to her chest. Allie looked up for a moment and then back down at her stocking. Then her head shoots up and she smiles, rushing over to Carmilla dropping her stocking in the process.

“Is that kitty for me?” She asks quietly.

“If you want the responsibility of taking care of him, yes, he is yours.” Carmilla says. I walk over to the bookcase in the corner of the room and grab my camera, making sure to capture our first official holiday together.

“I promise mama. Can I hold him?” Carmilla hands the kitten over to Allie; she takes him in her arms gently and scratches behind his ears. “Hello kitty. You’re mine now. I think I’m gonna name you Chip. Can I name him Chip mama?”

“You can name him anything you want to.”

“I like Chip.”

“Chip it is then.” Carmilla smiles before kissing her daughter on the cheek. “Merry Christmas sweetie.”

“Thank you so much mama.” Allie smiles.

“I’m gonna let you in on a secret okay? All of the presents with the kittens on them are from Laura,
and me okay? Santa brought you everything else.” Carmilla says with a wink.

“Okay mama.” Allie was reluctant to put Chip down at first, but was happy when the cat settled himself into her lap and continued taking his nap, until Allie woke him up to show him all of his new toys and different treats Carmilla and I wrapped for him. Carmilla gets up from the couch and walks over to the tree, she reaches behind it and pull out a box she smirks as she places it in front of me.

“What’s this?”

“Something.” She shrugs, kissing the top of my head before walking into the kitchen. I tear the paper back to see that she bought me a brand new laptop. I smiles a bit as she walks back into the room moments later with a tray of cocoa for me and the kids, and a cup of black coffee for her.

“You didn’t have to do this.”

“I wanted to, you needed it, and it’s Christmas.” She smiles, kissing me on the cheek. “If you must know it was on sale, I got it for a decent price.”

“Thank you.” I say quietly, leaning in to kiss her softly. “I got you something too.” I chime, getting up from the couch and walking over to the tree, I find what I’m looking for and nearly skip over to Carmilla with a smile on my face. “Here you go.” I say, sitting down next to her. Carmilla rolls her eyes at me with an amused smile on her face.

“It’s small.” She chimes, shaking the box playfully. “I could only imagine what it is.”

“Just open it and stop the shtick.” I say, shoving her playfully. I watch her as she rips the paper and opens the box. She pulls out the long chain with a heart shaped pendant on the end of it. “Now I know, you aren’t a fan of jewelry – ”

“You still have this? I could have sworn you threw it away when I gave it back to you.” She says, pulling the necklace on over her head.

“I’ve thought about it many times, I’m not going to lie about that, but at the same time I felt like I really couldn’t bring myself to throwing it away.”

“Thank you.” She smiles, placing her hand on my cheek and pulling me into a kiss.

“You’re welcome.” I whisper against her lips, kissing her again.

“Mama, when we go to nana’s can I take Chip?” Allie asks, walking over with Chip in her hands.

“We have to leave him home sweetie, he’ll be okay in his crate.”

“Okay.” Allie sighs. “Are you sure he’ll be okay?”

“I’m super extra sure.” Carmilla says, kissing Allie on the cheek.

“Thank you again mama.” Allie kissing her on the cheek and hugs her. “Thank you too Laura.” Allie says, kissing me on the cheek and giving me a hug.

“You’re welcome Allie.” I smile.

“Thank you mom and Carm.” Jack says, running over to us with a small stack of games for his DS that we bought him rather than Santa. “And thanks to Santa for some of the stuff, but the sticker said you and Carm got me these.” He says, hugging me before walking over to Carmilla to hug her.
“You’re welcome little man.” Carmilla says, giving him a kiss on his cheek, something she has never done before. Jack was too preoccupied with his new games to really notice, but Carmilla caught what she did and her face turned slightly red.

“Go upstairs and get dressed, we have to go to grandpa’s and then we’re going with Carm to her mom’s.”

“Okay mom. Can I bring my DS with me today?”

“You can bring it for the car and you can only one of your new games.”

“Okay mom.” He smiles, running up the stairs.

“Allie take Chip upstairs I’ll be up there soon to help you get dressed.” Carmilla says.

“Okay mama.” Once Allie is upstairs, Carmilla turns to look at me. “This is what it feels like to be domestic at the holidays?” Carmilla asks, resting her forehead on my shoulder.

“I’m assuming, seeing as this is the first holiday I’ve had like this.” I say, kissing the top of her head and playing with her hair. “Thanksgiving doesn’t even count because that was just chaotic.”

“That was, but this Christmas, this is something I didn’t think I would experience fully. Like the whole being woken up bit and not going and splitting time between our parents with the kids… I never thought I would have this life.” Carmilla says quietly, looking up at me with a small smile.

“It’s nice to have a family.”

“It is, our unofficially official family.” Carmilla smiles wider, leaning in to kiss me. “Are we going with you to your dad’s?”

“He said you are more than welcome to if you want to.”

“I’ll see what Allie wants to do.”

“Okay.” I smile, kissing Carmilla once more before getting up from the couch and heading for the stairs. “I’m gonna shower quick.”

“The only down fall of having small children around is not being able to shower with you, seeing as it is inappropriate.”

“That it is, one day we will have the house to ourselves long enough to make that happen.” I say with a wink and a grin.

-Carmilla POV-

“Merry Christmas nana!” Allie says running towards my mom as she walks out of the living room and over to us.

“Merry Christmas sweetie pie.” My mom says, picking Allie up to kiss her on the cheek.

“Merry Christmas mom.” I say, kissing her on the cheek.

“Merry Christmas sweetie. Where’s Laura?”
“She stopped at her dad’s quick with Jack.”

“You didn’t want to go?”

“I’m not ready for that yet, I had enough domesticated overload for the day.” I say, walking into the living room and sitting down on the couch.

“Mama and Laura got me a kitty! I named him Chip!” Allie announces proudly.

“That’s wonderful sweetie, and it’s a big responsibility. You ready for that?”

“I wanted a kitty really bad. I love him so much, I’m gonna take real good care of him.” Allie says with a big smile as she climbs onto the couch, curling up next to me.

“Good.” My mom says with a smile. “Will should be here soon, he’s bringing his girlfriend with him.”

“Willy boy has a girlfriend?”

“He does, you have been so busy with your family it’s hard to keep up with you.”

“Yeah well, you do for your family.” I smile, wrapping my arm around Allie and kissing the top of her head.

“Laura and Jack they’re our family, right mama?” Allie asks, looking up at me.

“Right sweetie.”

“I love them.”

“I love them too.” I smile.

“When are they gonna get here?” Allie asks.

“Whenever they get here.”

“Is that my favorite niece?” Will asks from the entryway of the living room.

“Hi uncle Will!” Allie says, running over to him and jumping into his arms to hug him.

“Merry Christmas Allie Cat.”

“Merry Christmas uncle Will.” She says, kissing him on the cheek.

“Allie, this is my girlfriend Betty.”

“Hi Betty, I’m Allie.”

“Nice to meet you Allie.” The blonde says with a smile.

“You have hair like Laura’s, but Laura’s is prettier. You’ll meet Laura later, she’s my mama’s girlfriend.” Allie informs Betty, wiggling out of Will’s arms.

“Well then.” Will says with a nod. “So, this is Betty, you’ve met my mother already. This here is my darling sister Carmilla.”

“Nice to meet you.” I say with a small smile.
“Wait, Carmilla? Oh my, you’re Laura’s girlfriend? That means that’s the Allie she is always telling us about.” Betty says, slightly confused by the realization.

“I’m sorry, I don’t follow what you’re saying.” I say.

“Sorry, I work with Laura. We share a desk space.” She chimes.

“Huh, Laura hasn’t mentioned anything.”

“She’s a work horse, she loves her job, always has her head down and gnawing on a pencil while she abuses her poor keyboard. I only started working there about two weeks ago, she only noticed me when I asked her about the pictures on her desk.” Betty shrugs.

“Oh, okay, yeah I remember now, she mentioned having a desk buddy. It was brief though, that was the same night Allie decided to try and jump from one couch to another.” I say, rolling my eyes at the memory of having to rush Allie to the Emergency Room.

“Small world.” Betty chimes as Will hands her a drink.

“Laura should be here soon with her son.” I smile, I feel my phone go off in my pocket and pull it out to see Laura calling. “Hey.”

“Carm, I have to talk to you.”

“Clearly, I wouldn’t see any other reason for calling.” I say, walking out of the living room and into the kitchen.

“I don’t mean to put you in the position, but would you mind coming here for a little bit and then we can go back to your mother’s?”

“Why is that Laura?” I sigh.

“My mother is here.”

“Your mother?”

“Yes my mother, she’s here. It was a surprise, my dad knew of course.”

“I’ll see what I can do, I’ll try to get out of here with Allie, I just have to talk to my mom.”

“Okay, she’s going to be in town for a little bit, but she was asking about you and really wanted to see you today.”

“I’ll let you know. I love you.”

“I love you too.” Laura chimes, hanging up the phone. I shove my phone back into my pocket and walk back into the living room.

“What’s wrong?” My mom asks as I nearly run into her.

“Laura called, her mom is in town and wanted to see me. Laura said she insisted on seeing Allie and I today, is it alright if I run over there?”

“You can do that. We still have to wait for Mattie to make her grand appearance, who knows how long that will take, so yeah, go and then come back when you can.”
“Thanks mom.” After convincing Allie that it was okay to leave and nothing was going to happen if we did, we were on our way to Sherman’s house.

“Is Laura’s mommy nice?” Allie asks as I help her out of her car seat.

“Laura’s mommy is very nice sweetie, I promise.” I say, holding her as we walk to the front door.

“Okay.” She says, resting her head in my shoulder. I knock on the door, greeted by Laura who is standing there with a wide smile.

“Hi.” She says quietly, leaning in to kiss me as I walk through the door. “Hello Allie.”

“Hi Laura.” Allie says, reaching out for Laura to take her. We get out of our coats, Allie refusing to let go of Laura.

“Are you okay?” She asks me quietly.

“Yes, I’m okay. Where’s your mom?”

“She’s in the kitchen. Jack is up stairs playing with a few cousins.” Laura takes me by the hand, leading the way into the kitchen where her mother is sitting down at the table laughing with unfamiliar faces of Laura’s family. She looks up and sees us walking into the room and stops.

“Well, if it isn’t Carmilla Karnstein. You have grown up so much since I last saw you.” Lisa chimes, walking over towards me to wrap me up in a hug. “You still have that mysterious way about you.” She says, holding me by my shoulders and smiling. “And who is this beauty?”

“This is Aleksandra, my daughter.” I say proudly.

“Mama only calls me Aleksandra when she’s using her upset voice. She usually calls me Allie.” Allie chimes, straightening her back.

“Well aren’t you smart.” Lisa chimes.

“You look like Laura. Laura you look like your mommy.” Allie chimes as she looks between Laura and Lisa. “People say I look like my mommy, but my mommy is in heaven now, she was sick and the doctor couldn’t make her all better. I miss her, but she’s always with me. Laura is kinda like a mommy, but I don’t call her mommy, I call her Laura.”

“You’re daughter is quite the talker.”

“Seeing as when we walked in she seemed like she didn’t want to utter more than a grunt.” I tease, placing my hand on the little girl’s back.

“Well I don’t know what your mommy looks like, but you do look a little bit like your mama here. You have the same eyes and the same air of mystery.” Lisa says with a smile.

“Everyone says I have mama’s eyes but look like mommy. Almost by magic.”

“She knows a lot for her age.”

“Allie asks a lot of questions, and she gets the general answer. She knows that it really takes a daddy and a mommy to make a baby, but she is extra super special because she has, sorry had, two mommies that loved her more than anything in the world. She doesn’t need a daddy to get the same kind of love. Isn’t that right monkey?”
“Right. And daddies give scratchy kisses. Laura’s daddy has a hairy face and when he gives me a kiss on the cheek it’s always itchy. Mommies don’t do that.” Allie informs, causing everyone to laugh a bit.

“I’m sure Laura told you I’ll be in town for a few days, I would love to catch up with the two of you. Seeing as by some sheer shot of luck you are back in my daughter’s life, I would like to discuss what all of this is going to become. Especially due to the involvement of my grandson now.”

“I promise you, nothing is going to happen, I refuse to ever do anything to Laura that is hurtful and untrustworthy. I will never hurt your daughter again Mrs. H.” I say, wrapping my arm around her waist and kissing her on the cheek.

“Mama always does that to Laura. Sometimes Laura turns red like a tomato.” Allie chimes, looking at Laura and I with a wide smile. “See you’re red like a tomato now.”

“Okay, why don’t you go play with Jack and his cousins, they’re in his room. There’s a little girl about your age, her name is Madison.” Laura says, putting Allie on the floor and watching her run out of the room and towards the stairs.

“She seems like a handful.” Lisa says.

“Depends on the day.” Laura says, looking at me with a smile. Without really thinking about it, I lean in and kiss Laura sweetly.

“You two are just as sweet as ever.” Lisa coos. “Be nice to her though Carmilla. I don’t want history repeating itself.”

“I promise, I won’t do anything like that to her again.”

“Besides, I’m pretty sure Jack will kick her ass if she hurt me.” Laura chimes.

“Yeah, yeah. How is everything with you though Lisa how is city life and all of that? Laura says you’re writing plays.”

“Well I’m working on it. I write a lot, I have one play that’s just waiting for the right director, and I haven’t liked any of the ones that have read it. Even though I’m not directing it, I want someone who knows what they’re doing seeing as it’s not my forte. But loving every minute of it either way. I had one off Broadway play produced a few months ago, limited engagement, sadly the director of that play went back to London to direct on the West End.” Lisa shrugs.

“Good for you. You’re doing what you love and that’s all that matters.”

“Exactly, how about you?”

“I own a café in town. I went to college and didn’t really follow through with it, seeing as Allie was born and all of that. Things just went the way they went.” I shrug. “The business is doing well, and I get to be home everyday in time for Allie and now Jack so it works out.”

“As long as you can support the family you have developing and you aren’t going to waste time, that’s all that matters.”

“I know. And Laura works really hard and long days doing what she loves, she deserves to come home to a quiet household without having to worry about cooking or cleaning, she doesn’t have to think if Jack got his homework done or not. I do everything for her.”
“She’s such a good housewife.” Laura teases, placing her hand on my chest.

“She seems like a keeper.” Lisa smiles. “I can’t wait to catch up with you two more this week. I would love to see your home and really talk.”

“Don’t worry mom, we will get together as soon as possible. Maybe ever tomorrow.”

“We’ll talk about it in the morning. I don’t want to keep your mother waiting, Carmilla. It was enough for you to have to leave her to come see me.”

“I really don’t mind, she doesn’t either, we’re waiting for my sister to show up anyway.”

“How is Mattie doing?”

“She’s doing well, she’s some kind of business owner or something with fashion, I’m not really all that sure, but I know she’s happy with whatever she is doing.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah, she’s going to read me the riot act when she finds out that Laura and I are together again. She was very upset with me when I screwed up. She likes Laura a lot.”

“I didn’t know Mattie was coming.” Laura says.

“Yeah, I only found out this morning, I’m sorry I didn’t tell you.”

“No, it’s fine. We should get the kids and go to your mother’s.”

“Whatever you feel like.” I smile, kissing her on the cheek.

“I’ll go get them and then we’ll go.”

“Okay.” I smile as Laura walks out of the kitchen.

“So, do you plan on marrying her this time?” Lisa asks, crossing her arms over her chest.

“It’s a bit too early to ask, but I would like to when the time is right. It was easy to pick up where we kinda left off, but at the same time, we’re still learning different things about each other that we didn’t know before.”

“I understand, but at the same time my daughter deserves to be happy with someone for once.”

“I understand.” I say with a small nod. “Laura deserves all the happiness, and when the time comes, I will give it to her.”

“That’s all I ask. Things happened and I wasn’t a big fan of that Theo character, he still isn’t a good father to Jack.”

“I know. I know.”

“Ready?” Laura asks, walking up to me and placing her hand on the small of my back.

“Yeah, I just need to get my coat.” I say, smiling as Laura hands it to me. “You’re the best.”

“I know.” She smiles wider, kissing me on the cheek before giving her mother a hug.

“Bye Grandma.” Jack says, running into the room and wrapping Lisa in a tight hug.
“I’ll see you this week sweetie.” She says, kissing the top of his head.

“Okay, you get to see my room at Carm’s house! It’s my house now too, but it was Carm’s first.”

“I’m looking forward to it.” She smiles. Laura walks over to give her mother a hug. “It is always nice to see you Laura.”

“I love you mom.”

“I love you too my girl.” Lisa smiles, kissing Laura on the cheek. “Carmilla, it was nice to see you. Keep an eye on her.” She says, pointing to Laura.

“I will. Don’t worry.” I smile, giving Lisa a hug.

“It was very nice meeting you Allie.”

“Nice to meet you too.” Allie smiles as she reaches for my hand. After leaving the Hollis household, we made our way back to my mom’s house, only to find that Mattie had arrived earlier than usual and nearly fell over when she saw Laura walk into the house with me.

“Little Laura, you aren’t so little anymore. You’ve matured so much, darling. Who is this little fellow?”

“This is my son Jack, Jack this is Carmilla’s sister Mattie.”

“You don’t look like you would be Carmilla’s sister.” Jack says.

“I know sweet child, I was adopted before Carmilla was even born. Her and William were practically miracle children according to mother.”

“Oh, okay.” Jack shrugs as he runs into the living room.

“How was your trip home?” I ask, giving my sister a hug.

“It was pleasant, I fly out again in the morning so I won’t be here too long. But seeing as itty-bitty Hollis is back in your life, I may have to make an appearance again sooner rather than later.”

“Whatever you say Mattie.” Laura says, rolling her eyes a bit as she walks towards the kitchen where I could hear my mother talking.

“Why do you have to pick on her still?” I ask, shoving Mattie a bit.

“I don’t mean it. It’s a force of habit. I’ll try not to do it again. You know regardless of my teasing I always liked her and I was very disappointed in you that you played your silly games with her.”

“I know you were, things are different now, there are children involved, I don’t think I’ll ever do something like that to her again.”

“You better not.”

“I won’t, I can’t. Allie is just as attached as I am, I can’t make her grow up with a broken family of any sort.”

“As long as you know that within yourself.”

“Trust me I know.”
“Mama, I want to open my presents, can you at Auntie Mattie stop talking already?” Allie sighs.

“I guess that’s our queue.” I say with a small laugh, following Allie into the living room where everyone was gathered. Laura and I sat together on the one couch, watching the two kids rip away at their neatly wrapped gifts. I wrap my arm around Laura’s should and hold her closer to me. “I love you.” I whisper in her ear, falling into our own little world when she looks at me, and smiles shyly.

“I love you too, so much.” She says, kissing me softly. “And I love our family.”

“I love our family too.” I smile, looking back at Jack and Allie to see them talking with everyone and to each other about the things they were unwrapping, feeling very content with life.
Differences…

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Differences…

-Laura POV-

“Carm my mom is going to be here any minute and you still haven’t even attempted to move from the couch.” I say, walking into the living room to see Carmilla still watching TV.

“I’ll go now. Okay?” She says getting off of the couch and kissing me as she walks out of the room. “Why are you shaking?” She asks as she places her hand on my waist.

“I’m nervous.” I say quietly, resting my head on her shoulder.

“Why?”

“I just haven’t seen my mom in a while and now you and I live together, she’s never been to the house before. I just want her to know that everything is okay, and she has nothing to worry about.”

“Okay, there is nothing to worry about anyway.” She says, kissing the side of my head. “She’s going to be preoccupied with the kids anyway, it’s not going to matter.”

“I know, but still.”

“Don’t worry. I’m going to go change and I’ll be down in a little bit.” Before Carmilla reached the top of the stairs, the doorbell rang. I sighed and walked over, opening the door to see my mother smiling as she stands on the porch.

“Hello sweetie.” She chimes as I open the door for her.

“Hi mom.” I smile as she kisses my cheek.

“Hi grandma!” Jack says, rushing down the stairs.

“Hi Laura’s mommy.” Allie says, following close behind Jack.

“You can call my grandma too sweetie, it’s okay.” My mom says, giving Allie a hug.

“Okay grandma.” Allie says with a big smile.

“Where’s Carmilla?”

“She just went upstairs, she’ll be down in a minute. Do you want anything?”

“No thank you I’m okay right now.” She says, taking off her coat and walking into the living room. As she walks through the house, she eyes everything carefully. Taking in all of the pictures in the walls, and the décor that can only be described as Carmilla.

“Hey Lisa.” Carmilla says as she rounds the corner of the stairs, walking up behind my mother.
“Hello Carmilla, how are you?”

“I’m good. You?”

“I’m doing very well thank you. You have a lovely home by the way.”

“Oh thank you.”

“You are welcome.”

“Can I get you something?”

“No thank you.” My mom smiles as she sits down on the couch.

“Mama, Laura’s mommy said I could call her grandma.” Allie says, skipping over to Carmilla.

“That’s very nice monkey.” Carmilla says, running her fingers through her daughter’s hair.

“Do I have to stay with you guys? I want to go play with Chip in my room. He likes his tunnel you got him for Christmas.” Allie whispers in Carmilla’s ear, clearly not quietly enough.

“You can go play with Chip until lunch is ready.” Carmilla says, chuckling as Allie makes a beeline for the stairs.

“Thank you mama.”

“Can I go play my game mom?”

“You can go play sweetie.” I say, kissing him on the cheek.

“You two are very good parents.” My mom chimes.

“Thank you.” I smile, taking Carmilla’s hand in mine as we sit down on the couch opposite my mother.

“Why don’t you two go out for the afternoon, I’ll watch the kids.”

“No mom, I don’t want to do that to you, I missed you. It’s nice seeing you.”

“It’s just so nice to see how well you’ve grown up, even with the way things went in your life, you’ve handled everything well.”

“What does that mean?”

“Seeing as you were so conflicted when you got pregnant with Jack, you were able to handle the obstacle very well.” My mom shrugs.

“I love my son very much and I wouldn’t change him coming into my life for anything at all. I don’t know what you’re thinking, but I never loved him any less than I do right now.”

“But you still wanted to – ”

“With all due respect Mrs. Hollis, but you’re upsetting Laura and I don’t find that to be fair.” Carmilla says, holding onto my hand.

“Yeah well the fact that Laura even let you into her life again after the disgusting thing you did to her just goes to show my daughter’s judgment on some topics.”
“Your daughter’s judgment is only for her to worry about, I mean, look at you, your pride and joy turns eighteen, graduates high school, and you pack up at leave to fulfill some dream of yours.”

“Carm.” I warn quietly, looking at her with tears in my eyes. “Stop.” I whisper.

“What are you going to let your mother say those things to you? She doesn’t seem like she was the top rate as far as parents go.”

“I raised my daughter very well, thank you very much.”

“Yeah, you loved her so much and raised her until she was an adult then you leave her and her father flat because you wanted to make it big.”

“I’m not going to have you talk to me like this.” My mom says, getting up from the couch.

“Go, have fun. That’s all you’re able to do is leave Laura and show up when it’s convenient for you.” Carmilla snaps as my mother begins to storm out of the house.

“Where’s grandma going? Why are you crying mom?” Jack asks as he continues his way down the stairs. “Why was she yelling at you?”

“Don’t worry about it honey.” I say, walking over to him.

“Grandma makes you cry all the time, she isn’t nice.” Jack says, wrapping his arms around my legs.

“Well we probably won’t see grandma for a while again.” I say, running my fingers through his hair and leaning down to kiss the top of his head. “I love you sweetie, I love you so much.” I pick him up and hug him tight.

“I love you so much too mommy.” Jack says, kissing me on the cheek. “Carm loves you too mom.”

“That I do kiddo.” Carmilla says, wrapping us both into a hug.

“Group hug!” Allie shouts, running down the stairs with Chip in her arms as she crashes into Carmilla and I. Carmilla bends down and picks up her daughter, resting Allie on her hip.

“We love you Laura.” Carmilla says with a grin before leaning in to kiss me softly.

“I love you guys too.” I whisper against her lips, kissing her again.

“Carmilla what are you doing?” I whine as she drags me across the park to the lake on the other side.

“We’re going to have a nice quiet time.” She says with a grin. “I’m channeling my inner sweetness, sweetness.”

“Okay but why are you pulling on me. I can keep up with you.”

“I don’t want anyone seeing us, I have a reputation to uphold and I don’t need wandering eyes catching me in the middle of doing something sweet.”

“No one will see you. This place is empty and it’s early. Which did I mention how surprised I am that you managed to get yourself out of bed before noon on a Saturday? I find that very hard to believe.”
“Yeah well, you seem to have kick started something in me.” Carmilla chimes, kissing me on the side of my head. We reach the lake area and I smile when I see a small picnic set up not too far from the shoreline.

“When did you do this?” I ask as we sit down on the blanket.

“I’d be lying if I said I did this. The only person that knows how sweet I can be is Laf, and I paid them to set this up for us.”

“At least you let one other person know how sweet you really are.” I smile, leaning over to kiss her softly.

“Well two other people. My mom knows how crazy I am about you, she knows that I plan all of this kind of stuff for you.” Carmilla says quietly, bowing her head to hide the blush that is growing on her cheeks.

“Don’t be embarrassed.” I say, placing my hand on her cheek and tilting her head up to look at me. “I think this is sweet. I think you are sweet and you shouldn’t be ashamed of that.”

“I know cupcake, sometimes it’s just hard to get out of a rut though.”

“Well I feel so strongly for you that you may be stuck with me for a while.” I say with a small laugh.

“Well six months is practically a lifetime. We should have rented a U-Haul by now.” She teases, leaning in to kiss me. We pick at the food that was packed for us, cookies being the only thing I zero in on while Carmilla eats an apple. “You wanna know something?” She asks, moving to sit behind me. She wraps her arms around my waist as I lean my head back against her shoulder.

“Tell me.” I say, taking her hand in mine and lacing our fingers together.

“I think it’s safe to say that, now you don’t have to say it back or anything like that, I wouldn’t be mad or upset. But I think I’ve fallen in love with you.”

“You’ve fallen in love with me?” I ask, biting my lip to hide my growing smile.

“I have indeed, I love you Laura Hollis”

“I love you too Carmilla Karnstein.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her softly.

-Carmilla POV-

“You okay cupcake?” I ask, walking into the bedroom and lying down behind Laura, wrapping my arm around her waist.

“Yeah I suppose. I mean I don’t believe my mom would do something like that. But then again, you called her out on it and I think that made her more mad.”

“She shouldn’t be that way. She has no reason to.” I say quietly, kissing Laura on the shoulder before she turns around in my arms to face me.

“I think that’s why she doesn’t come around anymore, she tries to keep herself from fighting with me or something. I feel like she always wants to say something, but it’s easier for her to stay away than it is for her to come around.” Laura rambles.
“I know cupcake, everything will be okay. She’s going home and everything will be back to normal soon.” I say, kissing her forehead. “I love you.”

“I love you too Carm. I love you so much.” She says, pulling me closer to her. “Carm?”

“Yes.”

“Can we bring the kids to your mom’s? I – I want to be alone with you.”

“I’ll see what I can do. I’m sure she will love to have the kids.” I smile, kissing Laura softly.

“So what do you want to do?” I ask Laura as we walk back to the car after dropping the kids off at my mother’s.

“I just want to be quiet with you at home.”

“I’m perfectly fine with that.” I smile, kissing her softly as I open the car door for her. Before we go home, we stop and pick up some food, Laura had a craving for Chinese, and so that is what she got. It was odd to be home without the kids being home.

“It’s quiet.” Laura says, resting her head on my shoulder as we sit on the couch watching TV and eating dinner.

“This house hasn’t been this quiet in a long time, I don’t miss it.” I say, watching Chip play with one of his toys in the corner.

“Do you ever wish you didn’t have Allie full time? Like do you wish Ell didn’t pass away?”

“I don’t know, I don’t think Ell would have given me the full rights that she was promising me. I miss her, I miss her for Allie’s sake.”

“You’re an amazing mother Carm. Even with Jack, you are a good parent.”

“Thank you.”

“Can we talk about something?” Laura asks, sitting up a bit.

“Whatever you want to talk about.”

“We haven’t been together for all that long, but we have a history, despite what happened between us, we were pretty good together. What I’m getting at is; where do you see this going? I know we’re living together and all of this but like what is happening?”

“We are going to go with the flow and not rush things. I love what we have right now; there is no reason to force the idea of marriage or something like that. Besides, I feel like we should talk to the children about us getting married before we do it. Whoever beats the other one to the punch, that is.” I smile and wink as I lean in to kiss her.

“I love you so much Carm, I would marry you in a heartbeat, but I agree I think we should talk to the kids first, explain it to them.”

“But we’ll wait a little while”

“You know, we’ve been alone for so long and have yet to take advantage of it.” Laura says huskily as she moves to straddle my hips.
“Oh, I see what you’re getting at.” I tease, grabbing her bottom and standing up, readjusting her a bit and gaining balance as I walk out of the living room and towards the stairs, taking each step carefully as I make my way to our room.

“You’re strong.” Laura smiles, brushing my hair out of my face.

“I workout when I have the time. And carrying Allie around has its perks.” I smile, dropping her onto the bed.

“You are unbelievable.” Laura chimes, leaning up to kiss me.

I’m woken up to a small paw tapping at my forehead. I open my eyes to see Chip looking down at me as he is sat at the top of my head on my pillow. The little cat tilts his head to the side as I yaw. I move to sit up and he jumps into Laura’s place on the bed. “You’re up.” She chimes, walking into the room in one of my old band t-shirts.

“That has been the number one shirt you manage to steal from me every time.” I tease, smiling as she walks over to me and hands me a cup of coffee.

“Are you complaining?”

“Not at all.” I say, biting my lip as she leans in to kiss me.

“Good. So I think we should just stay in this bed all day.”

“As much as I love that idea, I think we have to get our kids sooner or later.” I say, letting the duvet fall off of my bare chest.

“Well seeing you like that makes me want to forget about the kids.”

“Yeah, well sadly we can’t forget.” I say, picking up one of the t-shirts off of the floor.

“I know, but we can prolong getting them, you mom likes when she gets to watch them. Jack even loves her like his out grandmother, which I think he needs.”

“Okay, oh I know what we can do, we can get stuff for tomorrow. We have to host New Years Eve remember?”

“I almost forgot, who’s coming?”

“Everyone. Old and new, it’s going to be fun.” I chime.

“I can’t wait. I have to make sure my dad is coming, he might already have plans, I don’t know.”

“It’s not a huge deal if he can’t. I usually let Allie stay up, or at least let her think she’s staying up seeing as she usually passes out way before midnight. I don’t know what you do with Jack…”

“We do the same thing. The latest he ever made it was nine-thirty.” Laura chuckles.

“Have I ever told you how much I love your laugh?”

“Maybe once or twice.”

“I love your laugh, for a third time.” I smile, placing my cup on the bedside table and leaning over to kiss her softly.
“Cupcake?” Carmilla asks as she walks into the kitchen.

“Yes?”

“Come sit down, have a drink with us.”

“I’m fine, really.”

“Go have a drink, I’ll take over from here.” Perry says, taking the knife out of my hand as shoving me over. “I can’t drink anyway.”

“Okay, okay.” I sigh, walking over to the table and fixing myself something to drink.

“Is that a grown up drink mom?” Jack asks, running up beside me.

“It is sweetie, I’m only having one until later.”

“You can have grown up drinks ma, it’s okay.” He smiles.

“Thank you sweetie.”

“Can I have soda? If you get to drink grown up drinks, I want to be able to drink soda. Grape soda.”

“You can drink grape soda.” I smile, kissing the top of his head. I walk out of the kitchen and Carmilla takes my hand in hers as we walk into the living room where everyone is talking. I walk over to Laf and sit down beside them.

“Hey, there you are.” They say, patting me on the shoulder. “How’s Perry is she okay?”

“She’s relentless of course, nothing will keep her out of the kitchen, not even being eight months pregnant and not being able to stand for a long time.”

“You’re telling me. The doctor says she’s supposed to stay in bed as much as possible and yet, here she is always up and going. But I love her to pieces, she puts up with me, even though she yells at me when I get carried away with science.”

“I heard that!” She calls out from the kitchen. “I don’t yell at you, I get annoyed.” She says as she nearly waddles into the room with a plate of cheese and crackers in her hand.

“I love you sweetie.” Laf chimes, jumping up so Perry could sit.

“You better.” Perry snaps, grinning when Laf leans over to kiss her curly hair.

“Hey mama.” Allie asks, walking over to Carmilla who is sitting on the arm of the couch next to me. “Can you have a baby? Aunt Danny has a baby and I like her so much. She’s so cute.”

“Well Laura and I have to talk about that monkey, I don’t know if it’s the right time just yet.” Carmilla explains.

“When will it be the right time?”
“When we know, we’ll tell you.” I say, taking Allie’s hand and giving it a small squeeze.

“Okay Laura.” Allie says, walking back over to where Danny was sat with Kirsch holding their daughter Scarlet.

“Hey Xena, hand the little thing over.” Carmilla says, taking a sip of her drink before placing the glass on the coffee table and walking over to Danny.

“Do not drop my kid or I will kill you.” Danny threatens as she hands Scarlet over.

“Why would I do that? I’ve held kids before and have a daughter that is five years accident free on a count of me. Anything that happened to her was her own accidental self.” Carmilla says, cradling the baby in her arms and walking back over to me. Something about her holding a baby seemed so natural. It was almost as if she was meant to be a mother.

“Not gonna lie, you holding that baby is turning me on.” I whisper in her ear.

“That’s weird cupcake.”

“You’re very maternal, I like that.” I shrug. “Here, I want to hold her.” I place my glass next to Carmilla’s and take the baby from her arms; I look down into piercing blue eyes. “You have your daddy’s eyes little one. And your mother’s hair.” I say, running my fingers over her soft hair gently.

“I understand why you said what you said. Something about you holding her is so attractive cupcake.” Carmilla chimes, kissing the top of my head.

“You do know that you two aren’t as quiet as you think, right?” Laf states loudly.

“Yeah you aren’t, here give me back my kid.” Kirsch says, getting up and taking Scarlet from me.

“Hey!”

“You two can make heart eyes when you have your own baby. Don’t let mine be in the middle of that.”

“Okay, okay.” Carmilla says with a smile, raising her hands in mock surrender. I excuse myself to the bathroom and walk upstairs and into our room, I hear Carmilla come into the room behind me, closing the door over. “You want one.”

“I never said that.”

“You don’t need to. Perry is having one. Danny has one. Jack is six and Allie is five. You want to have another crying, pooping, and messy diapers every minute, spit-up drenched shoulders and rags kind of time. I can see it. You can’t hide that from me.”

“Don’t you want to do it again? At least one more time, the kids would like a little brother or sister running after them. I would love to see you in full on mom mode from day one. It would be nice.” I say, walking up to her and wrapping my arms around her waist.

“I don’t know. Now isn’t the time.” Carmilla sighs, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“When will it be the time?”

“Laura it’s only been what, four months since we’ve been back together? We already live together, we talk about marriage, and I don’t want to throw the discussion of a kid into things when it isn’t
the right time for it. We should wait a while and see what happens.”

“What does that mean? Are you going to flake out on me? Are you going to cheat on me again?”

“Why do you have to go to that right away? I just feel like four months into a relationship isn’t an ideal amount of time to be together and be discussing kids. It doesn’t matter the past we have, how long we’ve known each other or the collective amount of time we have, I don’t want to talk about children yet.” She sighs, walking over to the bed and sitting down.

“I’m not getting any younger, and if I’m going to end up being the one that has the baby, I don’t want to wait forever.” I say, sitting down beside her.

“You won’t. Right this minute isn’t a good time, but when the time feels right, we will both know.” Carmilla says, wrapping her arm around my shoulder and kissing the side of my head.

Chapter End Notes

So instead of Carmilla's mom being a total you know what, I made Laura's mom that... maybe you agree with it or not. Either way, thank you for reading and commenting and all of that real motivating stuff :)

If you want to talk, make suggestions or whatever else, you can pop over and find me on tumblr;

juli-with-a-chance
Planning…

Chapter Notes

So the back story in this chapter is the one that has been mentioned since chapter one, well part of it. Hopefully you like it, and hopefully you feel it ties into the story the right way.

Planning…

-Carmilla POV-

It's been a couple of months since the talk about marriage and babies. Seeing as now Laura and I have been together for a total of six months now, the talk about having a baby is still a dominant subject.

"Mama?"

"Yes sweetie?" I say, pushing my glasses on top of my head.

"Can you help me with this?" Allie asks, sitting on my lap and placing a piece of paper in front of me. "I don't like math."

"You're allowed to not like math. I don't like it either." I whisper, kissing the side of her head. After helping her with her subtraction sheet, with a few frustrated grunts and nearly breaking an eraser, she was beginning to understand what was going on.

"I don't like this." Allie sighs.

"I know kiddo. You'll be okay." I hug her before she gets off on my lap and runs out of the room. After a moment I feel a pair of arms wrap around me from behind. "Hey." I say quietly, turning my head to see Laura smiling, she leans in to kiss me sweetly. "How was the doctor?"

"It was good. I wish you would have come with me."

"I know but the little ones needed to be watched over." I say as she walks around and sits on my lap.

“I know.”

“So what happened?”

“I have to go back in a couple of weeks.”

“I’ll go with you to the next appointment.” I say, kissing her on the cheek.

“Okay.” She smiles, resting her head on my shoulder.

“Is everything okay?”
“I don’t know Carm.”

“Something happened and you aren’t telling me.”

“I – I don’t want to talk about it.” She whispers, kissing my neck softly.

“You’ll tell me when you’re ready, right?”

“Yes. I promise.” Laura smiles sadly as she gets off of my lap and walks out of the kitchen. I sigh, pinching the bridge of my nose as I get up from the table after hearing the doorbell ring. I walk over to the door and open it to see Laf and Perry standing on the porch with their son, Tyler.

“Hey guys, I forgot you were coming over.” I say as I open the door.

“Is everything okay?” Perry asks as Laf follows behind carrying Tyler.

“Laura went to the doctor, something happened and she wouldn’t tell me just yet.” I shrug as we walk into the living room.

“Oh, I hope she’s okay.” Perry says, taking Tyler out of his car seat.

“Hi Laf, Hi Perry.” Allie says, skipping into the room with a smile on her face as she looks at Tyler in Perry’s arms. “Hi Tyler.” She whispers, kissing the baby on his forehead.

“Mama, I want a baby.”

“Sweetie, that is something to talk about now. It something for Laura and I to discuss.”

“Okay.” She sighs, walking out of the room with her head down.

“She’s very insistent lately.” I say, rolling my eyes.

“Isn’t her birthday coming up?”

“Yeah, it’s the eleventh. My little girl is going to be six. Enjoy this baby time while it lasts, before you know it they’ll be six.”

“I know, even though he’s only three months old, he is growing up too fast.” Perry chimes.

“Hey guys.” Laura says, walking into the room with a small smile, she sits down on the couch beside me, curling into my side.

“Hey Laura, how are you?” Laf asks.

“I’m alright. How’s Tyler?”

“He’s doing good, do you want to hold him?” Perry asks with a smile.

“N-no it’s okay.”

“Are you sure you’re okay sweetie?” Perry asks. Laura nods on response, resting her head on my shoulder. The time Laf and Perry spend consist of Jack and Allie wanting to play with Tyler and falling all over him. After a few hours Tyler became unbearably fussy and Laf and Perry decided to leave. As they left, Laura walked upstairs without a word. The kids were confused as to why Laura wasn’t around for the rest of the night as well as not joining us for dinner. After putting them both to bed I walk into the bedroom to see Laura sitting in the middle of the bed with her laptop
typing away like a mad person.

“Hey babe.” I say, lying on my side next to her.

“You never call me babe.” She says, not looking up from her computer.

“Are you okay?”

“No.”

“Why don’t you want to talk about it?”

“Because I don’t want to talk about it.” She says quietly, closing her laptop and looking at me with tears in her eyes.

“Cupcake.” I say quietly, wrapping my arms around her. “You know you can talk to me.”

“I don’t know how to.” She cries into my shoulder. “I love you so much Carm. I just want you to know that.”

“I love you too Laura, I love you so much. You know you can tell me anything, there is no reason not to tell me what happened today.”

“It didn’t work. I’m not pregnant. The doctor said we can try again in a couple of weeks.”

“It’s not your fault. These things happen.”

“I know. It’s just hard. I feel like it is my fault.”

“Don’t feel that way, you’ve been doing everything right, there is no reason to feel that way.” I say, kissing the top of her head.

“I just wanted to know that it worked. It’s so much harder this way.”

“Everything will be okay.” I say, holding her a bit tighter.

“I hope so.” She whispers, kissing me on the cheek.

“It will, I promise.” I say with a small smile.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“What if something happens and I can’t get pregnant? What will we do?”

“We’ll figure something out. I don’t want you to stress about anything. I want you to stay calm and know that everything will work out when the time is right.” I reassure her.

“I can’t believe you!” Laura shouts, tears streaming down her face as she storms out of my bedroom and down the stairs.

“It’s not my fault your girlfriend can’t keep it in her pants.” Elsie chimes from my bed.

“Shut up and get the fuck out of here!” I shout, throwing Elsie’s clothes back at her. “Laura wait.” I chase after her as I put a shirt on, catching her at the bottom of the stairs; she’s sat on the step
crying, almost like she slipped on her way down, making her more frustrated than she was already. “Let me explain.”

“Explain what? What is there possibly to explain? Everything was quite clear. Elsie was on top of you, both of you half naked and you allowed her to be!” She shouts again, shoving me away from her.

“I screwed up, I’m sorry.” I cry, fighting the tears that were threatening to fall.

“It’s been a year Carmilla! A whole year, and today of all days, I come over to find you like that with someone else. On our one year! Who does that? Why did you do this? Why?”

“I – I don’t know, I wasn’t thinking, we were studying and one thing lead to another, I’m sorry.”

“I have to go.” Laura says, getting up from the stairs and shoving me out of the way.

“Laura?” My mom asks, walking through the door just as Laura was leaving. She looks up at me with anger in her eyes. “What did you do?”

“I fucked up.” I cry. “I fucked up bad mom.” I can’t stop myself from sobbing, I sit down on the step and feel a hand on my shoulder; I look up to see Elsie trying to comfort me. “If you know what’s good for you, you will get out and never show your face to me ever again. You’re such a manipulative bitch. You made me ruin everything good I just had.”

“Carm – ”

“I said GET OUT!” I scream, pushing her hands away from me and pushing at her legs so she would move. “GET OUT, GET OUT, GET OUT!” I sob, throwing a fit like a four-year-old being denied their favorite treat. “GET OUT. GET OUT. GET OUT.” I keep chanting, covering my eyes with the heels of my hands; feeling myself beginning to hyperventilate from the all of the crying I was doing. Feeling as if my body wasn’t going to be able to regain control.

“Carmilla, you need to calm down.” I hear my mother say in front of me. She has her hands on my shoulder, trying to calm be down as best as she can, saying soothing words and telling me to even my breathing or else I would have to go to the hospital. After what felt like forever, but in reality was only minutes, I began to calm down. I cried into my mothers shoulder for nearly an hour as we both sat on the stairs. “Everything will be okay.”

“Nothing will ever be okay. She’s probably never going to talk to me again.” I say quietly.

“Laura will come around.” My mother says, kissing my forehead as she runs her fingers through my hair. She pulls backs and looks at me, giving me a reassuring smile.

“I don’t think she will.” I whisper, feeling myself lose control again. My mother holds me tight for nearly another hour on the stairs as I cry again.

“Uhm, I don’t know what happened, but based on the mess of pictures and knick-knacks that are currently decorating the front lawn, I can only assume you and Laura broke up.” Will says, walking up the stairs. “Sorry, I just want to get through.” He says, stepping over our mother and I. I get up from the steps and walk out onto the front porch and see exactly what Will said. The yard littered with photos of Laura and I. As well as different gifts I gave her over the months. I sigh, walking up to my room to get an empty shoebox before going back outside and cleaning up the mess. I go back upstairs and put the box in my closet. With a sigh, I change into something comfortable and tell my mother I’m going for a walk.
“I’ll be back.” I say as I walk past her office.

“Carmilla, don’t do anything reckless.” She warns.

“I won’t, I promise.”

“You have your phone?” She asks as I pull it out of my shorts pocket. “Have it on please, I’ll call you in a little while.”

“Okay mom.” I say with a small smile, walking out of the house. The first thought in my head was to run full speed to Laura’s house and apologize. But that would fall under the category of ‘reckless’ in my mother’s eyes. So instead, I walked to the park down the street and a few blocks over. I was happy to see that there was no one else around. I sat down on the bench and sighed, looking up to see the bright splashes of pinks and oranges as the sun was beginning to set, making the clouds look as if they were purple. I sigh, fighting the urge to cry again.

“You would show up here.” I hear someone say from my right, I look to see Laura, he cheeks wet from crying and flushed. “Why would I think you wouldn’t be here?”

“I don’t know. This is where we come when we’re upset.” I say, feeling a lump form in my throat. Laura takes the liberty of sitting down on the other side of the bench.

“What’s gonna happen?” She asks quietly, looking over at me with tears in her eyes.

“I’m sorry. I did something unforgivable. I’d understand if you never spoke to me ever again.”

“The fact that I’m speaking with you now already goes against that.” She says with a sniffle. “When I walked into your bedroom and saw what I did, I thought it was a twisted nightmare, I thought it wasn’t real. Sure enough it was. I don’t know what made you do that, but I know that I don’t think I can forgive you for it.”

“I’ve loved you for the longest time, I – I did something that I can’t even forgive myself for getting caught up in. No matter what I tell you, you may not believe me. I could tell you that she forced me into doing it. She manipulated me into thinking it would be okay. But the whole time, I knew it wasn’t. I got caught up in the moment and made a horrible mistake. But that doesn’t matter because you made up your mind about things, and you don’t want to forgive me for the mistakes I’ve made. I will never stop loving you. I don’t think it’s possible to. You are amazing, smart, so, so beautiful. And I just threw that all away for a quick lay, that didn’t even become that. You walked in at a pivotal moment in that decision-making. Things would have gone further if you didn’t walk in… but I still can’t talk you into forgiving me.” I say quietly, looking at her to see hurt, anger, and sadness in her eyes.

“I don’t know of there is anything you can do to make things better.” Laura whispers as she shakes her head a bit.

“I’m sorry.”

“I know.” She says quietly, getting up from the bench and kissing me on the top of my head before walking back in the direction of her house.

“Please leave me alone Carmilla.” Laura says quietly as she lies in our bed.

“Cupcake.” I whisper, kneeling beside the bed and running my fingers through her hair. It’s been a couple of months since the last time she tried to conceive, failing both last time and this time.
Thankfully the kids, now six and seven, were at their friends’ house when we came home from the doctor. Laura ran into the house and into bed before I could even turn the car off.

“I can’t have a baby this way! There was nothing wrong when I had Jack and now it’s just one failed attempt after the next!” She cries out.

“Laura, it’s okay, you’re not a failure. I know that’s probably how you feel, but you aren’t.”

“I’m twenty-eight years old, healthy as I can be, and I can’t conceive a baby! There is something wrong with me, I am a failure.”

“I still love you.” I say quietly, kissing the top of her head. “I still love you no matter what.”

“I want to try one more time, if it doesn’t work then we’re not doing it again.”

“Okay. That’s perfectly fine.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her softly. “I have something for you.” I say, walking out of the room for a moment.

“I don’t want anything Carm!” I hear Laura call out as I walk into my office and get what I need. I walk back into the room to see that Laura changed out of what she had on and into something more comfortable; she was sitting on the bed waiting for me. I walk over to her and place a box in front of her.

“Wow, a cardboard box. What a lovely gift.” She says sarcastically.

“Open it you dummy.” I say, rolling my eyes at her. She smiles, tucking her hair behind her ear as she opens the box. She pulls out a smaller, wrapped box, and opens that one. She continues the process, getting a bit more frustrated as the time goes on until she reaches the final box. She opens it and out falls a diamond ring. She looks down at her lap and places her hand over her mouth. “We went through a long time we’ve known each other. We had our ups and downs; there was a point where I thought I would never see you again. I was beginning to think that you would never come back to Silas ever again. Until the say you walked into my café out of nowhere. We’ve been together again for nearly a year, and it has been a pretty amazing year, no matter what. Our kids are best friends, you and I have rekindled something that never went out like we thought, and it has been the happiest time in my life. I love you Laura, there is nothing in this world that will change that. And I think it’s time to take it further. So, Laura Hollis…” I say, taking the ring from her lap and holding it out to her. “Will you marry me?” She looks at me with tears in her eyes and nods her head. Not being able to form any words, I slip the ring onto her finger and she throws her arms around my neck and giving me a kiss.

“I love you.” She whispers against my lips before wrapping me in a tight hug.

“I love you too.” I say, kissing the side of her neck.

“Did you do it mama?” Allie asks as we walk to the car after leaving her friend’s house.

“I did.” I smile, helping the little girl into the car.

“Did she say yes?”

“She did.”

“Did she cry?”
“She did.”

“Happy tears right?”

“Really happy tears.” I say, kissing my daughter’s cheek.

“We’re gonna have a big party now, right?”

“We have to plan the big party first monkey.”

“Okay mama. I love you, and I love Laura.”

“We love you too sweetie.” I smile, closing the door and getting into the car.

“We’re gonna be a real family now, right mama?”

“I guess you can say that.”

“I want to call Laura mommy, if that’s okay. I miss my mommy, but I think I want to call Laura mommy now.”

“You can call her whatever you want sweetie.”

“Okay mama.” She chimes.
“Mommy?” Allie asks as she walks into the laundry room. The thought of her calling me mommy was something that didn’t take a long time to get used to, she felt like a daughter to me as it is, and it didn’t bother me at all.

“Yes sweetie.” I say as I load the washing machine.

“Can you take me to Emma’s house? Mama doesn’t want to.”

“Why doesn’t mama want to?”

“I don’t know, she won’t come out of her library room, I asked her to take me and she said to ask you.”

“I’ll take you to Emma’s house. I just have to finish what I’m doing. You’re having a sleepover right?”

“Yeah, I put my pajama’s in my bag, but I don’t know what kinda clothes to put, mama always does it.”

“I’ll help you.” I say with a smile as I put the last of the clothes in and close the door with a loud thud. After helping her get what she need, and once she said good bye to Chip, I drover her to her friend’s and came home to find that Carmilla still didn’t leave her library. “Carm?” I ask, opening the door to see her writing away in journal.

“What’s up cupcake?”

“Are you okay?” I ask, walking into the room and sitting down on the ratty couch.

“I just got this really good idea and I can’t seem to stop myself. I don’t know what’s happening.” She says as she continues to look down at her notebook.

“I took Allie to Emma’s for the night. Jack is in his room playing videogames, I think his friend Josh is supposed to come over later on.”

“Okay cupcake. I think once I hit a wall I’ll come out of here.”

“Okay, I have some work I have to do anyway. I’ll leave you alone.” I say, getting up from the couch and kissing the top of her head before walking out of the room and closing the door behind me. I go into our bedroom and open my laptop, before I know it three hours have gone by and Carmilla is walking into the room with a smile on her face as she throws herself down onto the bed. “You’re done?” I say, running my fingers through her hair as she nods against her pillow. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“No, I want to read through it tomorrow and see where I stand.”

“I didn’t know you still wrote.”
“We find out something new every day.” Carmilla smiles. “For instance, what’s going on?” She says, placing her hand on my stomach.

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out.” I smile, kissing the top of her head. “Your answer is in the bathroom.”

“Ew you saved the pregnancy test and left it on the counter?”

“It’s not in the open you idiot, it’s in a Ziploc bag.”

“That’s supposed to make it better?”

“Well if you weren’t channeling your inner Hemmingway you would have found out sooner.” I roll my eyes at her as she gets off of the bed and walks into our bathroom. After a second I hear her gasp.

“Really?” She asks, walking out of the bathroom with her hands over her mouth.

“Yes ma’am.” I say as she walks over to me, moving my laptop to the chair beside the bed, before straddling me and kissing me hard.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” I smile as she kisses down my neck and torso, lifting my shirt to kiss my abdomen.

“I love you too littlest one.” She whispers against me before kissing me there again. 

“We’re gonna be okay.” I say, running my fingers through her hair.

“What about them?” She asks, patting my abdomen. “Are they going to be okay?”

“I have to go to the doctor tomorrow to make sure everything is okay. I don’t see why they wouldn’t be okay.”

“I want to go to the doctor with you.”

“Of course you’re going to come with me.” I say with a smile, leaning over to kiss her sweetly.

“We’re going to raise a baby together.”

“We’re raising two already.” I chuckle.

“No, I know that. But this one, this one we get to raise together from the beginning. Witness them take their first steps and say their first word. You have Jack’s firsts and I have Allie’s, but we get to share this one.” Carmilla says sweetly.

“Hey mom!” Jack calls out from the hallway.

“Yes sweetie?” I say, pulling my shirt down and kissing Carmilla on the cheek.

“Josh is going to be here soon.”

“Okay.”

“We’re going to tell them when Allie is home.” I say.
“Whatever you want to do cupcake.”

“We can’t not tell Allie, if anything she would want to know first. Jack won’t really care all that much.”

“Then we’ll wait until tomorrow after the doctor.” Carmilla says, kissing me quickly before getting out of the bed.

-Carmilla POV-

“Carmilla you’re making me nervous.” Laura says, placing her hand over my bouncing knee.

“Sorry cupcake.” I say, placing her hand over mine. “I just want everything to be okay.”

“It will be, don’t worry.” She smiles. The nurse finally calls us into the room and we sit and wait for the doctor. Dr. Jacobs walks in with a bright smile.

“Okay, let’s get started.” The doctor says, pulling up Laura’s shirt and squirting the ultrasound goo on her lower abdomen. “And there is the little bean.” She chimes, pointing to the blob on the screen. “By the looks of it, you are about six weeks. Congratulations.” Dr. Jacobs smiles.

“Hi mama!” Allie says as I stand in the foyer of her friend Emma’s house.

“Hey monkey, get your stuff together.” I say, watching the two little girls run upstairs.

“Hi Carm!”

“Hi Emma.” I say with a small wave. “Was she good?”

“She is always a pleasure Carmilla.” Emma’s mother, Natalie, smiles.

“That’s good. Thank you again for having her.”

“Never a problem, she is welcome whenever she wants to come by.”

“Ready mama. Thank you Mrs. Jones.” Allie smiles while giving Natalie a small wave.

“Bye Allie.” Emma chimes.

“Bye Emma.” Allie says, wrapping the girl in a hug.

“Alright kiddo, we have to get home.”

“Okay mama.” Allie says, taking my hand in hers as we walk out of the house. After the short drive back home and Allie filling me in on the events that took place while she was at Emma’s, Allie was running full speed into the house. “Hi mommy!” She shouts, running into Laura’s arms.

“Hello there.” Laura says, kissing the top of Allie’s head. “How was your night?”

“Really fun. Emma’s mommy let us make ice cream sundaes for dessert yesterday, I put cookies on mine.”

“Whoa, just like I would do.” Laura smiles.
“Allie, come here for a minute.” I say, holding my hand out for her to take, leading her into the living room and sitting her on the coffee table in front of Laura and I, as we sit on the couch.

“What’s wrong mama?”

“Nothing is wrong, Laura and I just have to talk to you about something.”

“Am I in trouble?”

“You’re not in trouble sweetie.” Laura says, placing her hand on Allie’s knee. “We just have some news, good news.” Laura smiles at me. “Really good news.”

“Monkey, how would you feel about a little brother or sister?” I ask, watching her calculate her answer.

“I think I would want a little sister, that way I could play with her when she’s old enough. A little brother would be annoying, then I’d have two brothers and be stuck in the middle.” She explains, crossing her arms over her chest. “Wait a minute, are you having a baby?”

“Laura is.” I smile.

“Laura is having a baby?!” She shouts.

“I am. They’re growing in my tummy as we speak.” Laura says with a smile.

“Like magic?” Allie asks, reaching out and placing her hand on Laura’s stomach.

“Like magic.” I say with a smile, in awe of my daughter’s amazement.

“When do we find out what it is?”

“Not for a long time sweetie, but as soon as we know, we will tell you.” Laura says, placing her hand on Allie’s cheek.

“Okay mommy. I can’t wait.” Allie smiles as she throws her arms around Laura and holding her tight. “I love you.”

“I love you too sweetie.” Laura says, kissing Allie on the cheek.

“And I love you mama.”

“I love you too monkey.” I say, kissing Allie on the head.

“Can I tell nana?”

“We’re not gonna tell nana just yet, we’re going to have a little party and tell everyone at once.” Laura says.

“Okay. That’s gonna be fun.”

“It will be a lot of fun.”

“I want to go play with Chip, I missed him.” She says, getting off of the table.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were having a baby?” Jack shouts as he runs down the stairs. “You tell Allie, and you don’t tell me? What’s that about? That’s not fair?”
“I’m sorry honey, we were just going to call you down to tell you.” Laura says.

“But why didn’t you tell me first, I’m the oldest, I should have been told first.” He says, crossing his arms over his chest.

“We’re sorry kiddo. We didn’t know if you would be as excited as Allie is.” I say, placing my hand on his shoulder.

“Well I am excited, but I want a brother. I want to teach him how to do cool things, like ride a bike and hit a baseball. So make that happen.”

“We can’t just make the baby a boy, that’s not how that works.” Laura says.

“Well I hope it’s a boy. There are too many girls here already, I’m outnumbered.” Jack states.

“We’ll hope for the best.” Laura says, kissing her son’s forehead.

“Okay ma. I’m happy you’re having a baby. I just want to know if it’s a boy.”

“When we know we’ll tell you.” Laura smiles.

“Oh. I’m gonna go play my game.” He says, running back up the stairs.

“Well we thought wrong of him.” I say, grabbing the remote and turning the TV on.

“We did.” Laura says, resting her head on my shoulder.

“You okay?”

“I’m perfect.”

“Good. I just want you to know, I wasn’t really around a lot when Ell was pregnant, like I don’t know what to expect. I don’t know if you’ll have weird cravings, or morning sickness. I don’t know how to deal with the mood swings and all the other stuff that goes along with it. But I’m going to try my best to understand what’s going to happen with you and what all the stages are going to be. I’ll even read baby books and all of that stuff.”

“Carm, you’re going to be okay. We’re going to be okay. If you want to read books, be my guest. But just know that as long as you keep cookies in the house at all times, we should not have an issue.”

“There are always cookies anyway.” I smile, wrapping my arm around her.

“So there, we shouldn’t have an issue.” She says, kissing me sweetly.

“You’re a dork.”

“I’m your dork.” She chimes, taking the remote from me and changing the channel to watch re-runs of Dr. Who.

“I hate this show.”

“Deal with it.”

“Whatever.” I sigh, rolling my eyes before kissing the top of her head and watching the show.
“I love you.”

“I love you too cupcake.”

“This is the show where they talk funny.” Allie chimes, walking into the room with Chip in her arms. “I like this show, it’s cool.”

“You’ve turned my own daughter into a nerd.”

“Well she’s half mine now too so…” Laura says, sticking her tongue out at me.

“Yeah, I’m half Laura’s now.” Allie teases, running over and sitting on the other side of Laura.

“Well then.” I say, getting up from the couch.

“Where are you going?” Laura asks.

“I’m gonna start dinner.”

“Hi nana!” Allie says, running towards my mother as she walks into the house. “I missed you.”

“I missed you too sweetie, are you being a good girl?”

“Extra good.”

“Well then I guess a present is in order.” My mother smiles as she reaches into her bag and pulling out an envelope.

“Thank you nana, I’m gonna go put it in my piggy.” Allie says when she opens the envelope and sees money in it. She smiles as she skips upstairs to her room.

“Hello sweetheart.”

“Hi mom, how are you?” I say, giving her a hug.

“I’m doing well.” She smiles as we walk into the kitchen. “Hello Laura.”

“Hello Lilita, can I get you anything?”

“I would like a cup of tea if it isn’t trouble.” Mom says, sitting down at the counter.

“No trouble at all.” Laura smiles as she fills the kettle with water.

“You’re all set Laura, there shouldn’t be a problem with the washer anymore.” Sherman says as he walks out of the laundry room.

“Thank you daddy.” Laura chimes.

“So, why did you call us both here?” Sherman says, cutting to the chase.

“Why does there have to be a reason other than spending time with you?” I say, standing beside Laura and wrap my arm around her waist.

“Well the last time you called us here it was to tell us you got engaged. So there is something going on.” Lilita says as Laura fixes her cup of tea.
“Okay, well we do have something to tell you but we promised Allie could tell you.” Laura says with a smile. “Allie!”

“Yeah.” Allie smiles as she runs into the room and climbs onto Lilita’s lap. “Can I tell them?”

“Yes you may.” I say with a smile.

“Mommy is having a baby!” She shouts.

“Laura? Really?” Sherman asks with a small smile.

“Yes. I’m pregnant.”

“We were gonna have a big party and tell you, but then they changed their mind and just had you and nana come over.” Allie explains.

“Well congratulations.” Sherman says, getting up from the chair and giving Laura a hug.

“That’s lovely, girls. Congratulations to both of you.” Lilita smiles giving Laura a hug. “How far along are you?”

“Seven-ish weeks. Maybe even eight.”

“That’s wonderful sweetheart. I’m sure you’re keeping yourself nice and healthy.”

“Yes, I’m taking all the vitamins, trying not to eat too many cookies. Everything is coming along.” Laura smiles, taking my hand in hers and lacing our fingers together.

“Well I am very proud of you Carmilla, and I’m very happy for you Laura.” Lilita chimes.

“Thanks mom.” I smile.

“I feel the same way girls, I’m extremely happy for both of you.” Sherman chimes.

“Thank you daddy.” Laura smiles.
Yet another chapter? I seem to be turning them out left and right, until I hit the wall of course. Anyway, I hope you enjoy yet another chapter :)

-Carmilla POV-

“Carm?” Laura whines as she walks out into the backyard.

“What’s up cupcake?” I ask as I tend the vegetable garden. “Hey, look at this tomato, it’s the size of Allie’s head.”

“That’s huge. Anyway, are you almost done?”

“Yeah, what’s wrong?”

“My back hurts.” She pouts.

“You want me to rub it?” I tease.

“Please.”

“Okay.” I whine, in a mocking tone, smiling when Laura rolls her eyes at me. Laura was about three months along and she was beginning to show. I finish checking on everything and turn on the sprinkler before going outside.

“Allie liked picking the vegetables.” Laura says as we walk into the house.

“Well I left her some for when she get’s back from my mom’s tomorrow.” I smile, putting what I just picked in the sink. “How do you feel today?”

“Tired.” She whispers, resting her forehead on my shoulder. I turn and kiss her forehead.

“Want to know something?”

“I guess.”

“You look hot pregnant.” I chime, turning and placing my hands on her hips.

“You think I look hot no matter what.” Laura smiles.

“Because you do. I have the hottest looking fiancée in the entire world.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her softly. “I love you.”

“And I want a back rub.”
“Okay, okay. Let’s go.” I say, taking her by the hand and taking her up to our room. She lies down on her front on the bed and I straddle the back of her thighs gently.

“Hey Carm?”

“Yes?”

“What are we going to do for the baby’s room? I don’t think the older kids should have to be made to share a room.”

“I’m going to get rid of the old couch and move some of my bookshelves to the basement. Or I’ll just call Kirsch to help me move everything down there.”

“You don’t mind doing that?”

“Why should I mind?”

“I don’t know. When I was pregnant with Jack, asking Theo to clean out the spare room to fix it up for Jack was like asking him to give me his kidneys or something.”

“Well I’m not a jerk like that. I want my kid to be comfortable, and have his or her own space. So if that means relocating my stuff it’s not an issue.”

“You’re a really awesome mother.”

“So are you.” I smile, kissing Laura’s shoulder.

“I love you.” She says, turning to lie on her back.

“And I love you.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her softly.

“We should go out and see a movie or something.”

“What about Jack? Or did you forget that he was here?” I tease, lying on my side next to her and placing my hand on her stomach.

“He’s so quiet, I forgot he was here.” Laura laughs as she sits up in bed. “I should go check on him.”

“I’ll go, you stay here and relax.” I say, kissing her quickly before getting out of bed and walking across to Jack’s room. I open the door to see him playing his video games. “Hey kiddo.”

“Hey Carm.”

“What are you doing?”

“I’m playing Minecraft, I’m building a house.” He says, pointing to the TV. “I’m getting hungry though, can I have some lunch?”

“What do you want?” I ask, walking into the room and picking up a few of his toys.

“Peanut butter and jelly, please.”

“No problem. Why don’t you pause your game and wash up, I’ll meet you in the kitchen.”

“Okay.” He says, getting off of his beanbag chair and walking out of the room. I walk past the
bedroom to see that Laura had fallen asleep. I close the door over and walk downstairs meeting Jack in the kitchen. He sits at the counter and watching me make him lunch.

“One PB&J, on white bread with no crust, cut into triangles.” I smile, placing the plate in front of him; he smiles up at me with a toothless grin.

“Thank you Carm.”

“Oh and let’s not forget the chocolate milk with extra chocolate, and if mom asks?”

“I had regular milk.” He laughs. “Can I ask you a question?” Jack asks with his mouth full.

“What’s up kid?”

“Did my mom like you before she met my dad? I never saw my mom kiss girls, and you and her kiss all the time. She never used to even kiss my dad.”

“Your mother and I have known each other for a long time. Way before you were born. Your mother and I liked each other very much, so yes, your mom did like me way before she met your dad. I don’t know what happened between your parents, I don’t really know if I answered your question, but the way grown ups feel for each other has the tendency to change a lot.”

“Do you think I was an accident?” Jack asks as he plays with his lunch rather than eating it.

“Why would you think that?”

“Well, sometimes whenever grandma would come over she would call me an accident when she thought I wasn’t around. And mom would say I wasn’t, and grandma would do that mean laugh she does.”

“You were not an accident kiddo, you were a blessing. Your mother loves you more than you’ll ever know. Don’t listen to anything anyone else says about you. You are the sweetest kid in the world, and nothing will change how your mother feels about you. You’re not an accident, don’t even think that.” I say, walking around the counter and kissing the top of his head. “I love you too you know. Almost like you’re my kid too.”

“I feel like you’re another mom, I don’t want to call you mama like Allie does, but I still love you like a mom. I just like that I get to call an adult by their name.” He smiles. “I’m the only kid allowed to call a grown up by their name.”

“Well aren’t you awesome.” I smile, holding him close. “I love you Jack.”

“I love you too Carm.”

“Finish up your lunch so you can play your game, your mom is taking a nap.”

“She sleeps a lot lately.”

“That’s because the baby is taking some of her energy so they can grow big and strong. She’ll start to feel better soon and not be so tired.”

“Okay. I’m happy she’s having a baby. Every time she holds Scarlett or Tyler, she gets really happy. I like mom to be happy. I think a baby will make her happy.”

“I think a baby will make her happy too.” I smile.
“You make her happy Carm.”

“And she makes me happy kid.”

“A family makes each other happy. We’re all happy.”

“That’s true kiddo.” I kissing the top of his head and ruffle his hair. After he finishes his lunch and helps me clean up, he brings me up to his room and shows me the game his been playing. It’s a silly game, but he is excited to share it with me.

“What are you two up to?” Laura asks through a yawn, leaning against the doorframe.

“I’m showing Carm my game ma.”

“I see. Did you eat today?” Laura walks into the room and sits down on Jack’s bed.

“Carm made me a PB&J.”

“Okay. Not too much longer with the game though. I would like it if you straightened up the room a bit.”

“Okay mom.” Jack says, taking the liberty to shut off the game right away rather than waiting. “Hey mom?”

“Yes.”

“I miss dad.” Jack says as he moves around his room.

“You’re allowed to miss him.” Laura says, pulling at a loose string on Jack’s duvet.

“Can I call him?”

“You can talk to him, when do you want to do that?”

“Maybe when I’m done cleaning?”

“Okay.” Laura nods, getting up from the bed and walking out of the room. Jack doesn’t waste any time cleaning up his room and is sitting on our bed next to Laura in no time. Laura gets her phone of the bedside table and dials the number before putting it on speaker.

“Hello?” A male voice says on the other line.

“Hi dad!” Jack smiles.

“Hey kiddo. How are you?”

“I’m good, I miss you.”

“I miss you too Jack, I miss you so much.”

“I lost a couple of teeth, mom and I moved out of grandpa’s and we live with Carm now.” Jack explains, his innocents not knowing better.

“Who’s Carm?” Theo asks, Jack looks up at me and furrows his brow, almost like he doesn’t know if he should say anything.

“Mom’s friend.”
“Jack is your mother there?”

“Yeah she’s right here.” Jack says, fighting tears due to the change in Theo’s tone of voice.

“Can you put her on please?”

“Bye dad.” Jack whispers, getting off of the bed and running out of the room.

“Laura?”

“Hi Theo.” Laura says quietly, running her fingers through her hair. “How are you?”

“Oh I’m amazing, I come home from work one day to you and Jack gone, and you decide to give me a call once in a while and yet, you don’t let me see my son.” Theo says in an angry tone.

“Yeah well you aren’t the best of people so.”

“You took my kid away from me.”

“I don’t want to talk about this now, please, it’s bad enough that Jack is upset now. You always manage to upset him.”

“Who’s Carm?” Theo asks bluntly.

“She’s an old friend.” Laura says, looking up at me.

“Are you with her?”

“That’s not your business.”

“Please make it my business, especially if my son is being exposed to that sickness of yours.”

“Saying things like that is what makes the situation none on your business.” Laura says becoming more impatient.

“Yeah well, my kid is involved and I don’t know his being in a toxic environment.”

“Okay buddy.” I say sarcastically, taking the phone away from Laura. “Apparently the only toxic environment your kid has ever been in is the one where you were around. Laura and I are no concern of yours, nor is the well being on your son seeing as you don’t even care to check in on your own time. So here’s a little piece of advice, next time you get a call from Laura’s phone you get on and talk to your son the way a father should. Don’t make your son feel bad for saying something that would make you mad. And don’t you dare speak to Laura the way you just did. She is a wonderful woman who, regardless of who she loves, is raising your son to be quite the proper little gentleman. So by all means believe what you want to, but the truth is, your kid is being raised by two women who love and care for him more than you will ever care to do yourself.” I say, hanging up the phone and tossing it on the bed. “There is more to this Theo story than you care to share.”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Laura mumbles.

“You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to. I won’t make you.”

“You are my life now, you, Jack, Allie, the baby. You are all that matters now. I don’t care about him. I never really did. Things just happened, I got pregnant, Jack is an amazing result of something that wasn’t great.”
“Speaking of that. Jack feels like he was a mistake, he thinks his an accident.”

“Why would he think that?” Laura asks sadly.

“You’re mother has a big mouth.”

“I hate my mother a lot of the time.” Laura says, running her fingers through her hair.

“I think I helped before though. I talked to him and told him not to feel that way.”

“I’m going to talk to him about it later.”

“Talk to him more about his dad. Tell him that what happened before isn’t his fault, it’s his father’s.”

“I guess.” Laura sighs, lying back against the pillows. “I love you Carmilla.”

“I love you Laura.” I say, leaning down to kiss her, and pulling back and resting my forehead against hers. “I’ll do anything to make you and the kids happy. I won’t let anyone hurt you or them.”

“You’re the best.” Laura smiles.

“I love you cupcake. I’ll do anything for you.”

“Even make me fresh cookies?” I laugh lightly before leaning in to kiss her.

“Even make you fresh cookies.”

“I love you.” Laura shrieks, pulling me in for a kiss.

“I love you.”

-Laura POV-

I sit on the edge of the pool, soaking my feet and I watch Carmilla play with the kids. I can’t hide the smile on my face, something about seeing the three of them happy. Jack swims over to me, his floaties making it a little hard for him to move his arms. “Why aren’t you swimming mom?”

“I don’t feel like it sweetie, you and Carm and Allie have fun.” I say, running my fingers through his wet hair.

“Can I jump in?” He asks, swimming over to the steps.

“Yeah, just make sure Carm is over there to catch you.”

“What am I doing cupcake?” Carmilla asks, walking over to me, seeing as we were on the shallow end.

“Make sure he doesn’t go under.” I say, pointing to where Jack was standing on the diving board.

“No problem.” She smiles, swimming over to the deep end of the pool. “Ready kiddo?” She asks, holding her arms out for Jack. Jack smiles as he runs and jumps into the pool, he goes under briefly before popping back up and laughing.
“That was fun Carm.”

“I could imagine, just not too much okay. You know the water hurts your ears when you jump in a lot.”

“I know Carm.” Jack says as he climbs onto the duck float.

“Hi mommy.” Allie says as she swims over to me.

“Hi sweetie.” I say, brushing the wet hair off of her face. “Are you having fun?”

“Yeah, but I’m getting tired.” She says through a yawn.

“Do you want to get out?”

“Yeah.” She says, swimming to the steps.

“What’s wrong sweetie?” Carmilla asks.

“I’m tired mama, I want to go inside now.” Allie says as she pulls off her floaties and gets her Frozen towel off of the fence.

“Okay, Laura will help you out of your bathing suit, put your big shirt on.”

“I know mama.” Allie chimes as I open the gate for her. After helping Allie out of her wet bathing suit and into her t-shirt, we sat in the living room and watched TV while Carmilla helped Jack get out of his wet bathing suit and into something dry. Jack comes barreling into the room jumping onto the couch next to me.

“Jack, you know you shouldn’t do that.”

“I’m sorry mom. Carm is just changing and will be down soon.” He explains as he gets himself comfortable. Before we knew it, Carmilla was walking into the room in a pair of basketball shorts and a black tank top.

“What’s on the agenda?” She asks, sitting on the other side of Allie so the kids were between us.

“I wanna watch a movie!” Jack says.

“Me too.”

“Okay what do you want to watch?” I ask, watching the kids jump off the couch and run over to the shelves with all of the kid movies on them. Allie comes back with Frozen and Jack comes back with The Good Dinosaur.

“Allie, you always spick Frozen, pick something else.”

“Okay mama.” Allie sighs, trading Frozen for Zootopia.

“So we’ll watch The Good Dinosaur first and then we’ll watch Zootopia.” I say, handing the DVD to Carmilla.

“Okay ma, can we have popcorn and lemonade?” Jack asks.

“I’ll take care of that kiddo, want to come with me and help?” Carmilla asks, waving Jack to come with her. He jumps off the couch and follows her into the kitchen leaving Allie and I on the couch.
Allie moves over and curls into my side.

“You okay sweetie?” I ask, running my fingers through her damp curls.

“I’m tired.” Allie says, moving her hand and placing it on my small baby bump. “Is the baby comfortable in there?”

“The baby isn’t that big yet, but they’ll be comfortable in there as they grow.”

“Can they hear me if I talk to them?”

“I don’t know. But you can talk to the baby all you want sweetie, before you know it they’re going to be nice and big. Sometimes when a baby hears a voice when they’re on the mommy’s belly, they know the voice when they’re born. So the more you talk to them, the more they’ll know you when they’re born.”

“So I knew who my mommies were even before I was born?”

“Yep. And your mothers knew you before you were born.”

“That’s magic.” Allie chimes. I laugh and kiss her on the top of her head.

“That it is sweetie.”

“Here Allie.” Jack chimes, handing Allie her Frozen cup with lemonade in it.

“Thank you Jack.”

“You’re welcome Allie.” He says, climbing onto the couch.

“Here’s a lemonade for you.” Carmilla says with a smile, handing me a glass and giving me a kiss. “And an extra gooey cookie.” She whispers, handing me a homemade cookie.

“Thank you.” I say, kissing her again before she walks over to the other side of Jack. She hands each kid their own bowl of popcorn before pressing play on the movie. The movie played for about twenty minutes before both kids were asleep. Allie resting her head against my shoulder and Jack resting his against Carmilla’s, popcorn falling out of his mouth. Carmilla looks and Jack and snickers before grabbing her phone off of the end table and taking a picture of the kids. She gets up slowly, readjusting Jack so that his head was resting on the pillow. I follow her lead and do the same thing with Allie. We take the nearly full bowls of popcorn into the kitchen and place them on the counter before Carmilla takes me by my waist and pulls me in for a kiss. “What was that for?” I smile, playing with the fine hair at the base of her neck.

“Because I should be allowed to kiss my beautiful fiancée without an explanation.” She says, leaning in to kiss me again. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” I smile as she places her hands on my belly. “You know, the curiosity that Allie has for the baby is amazing. She asks so many questions, she’s so intuitive.”

“She is, she’s a smart little girl.” Carmilla smiles proudly.

“She is. She’s going to be a good big sister. And Jack is going to be a good brother.”

“We lucked out with some pretty good kids. I mean they even got along well from the beginning.”

“I know. I love it.” I smile, kissing Carmilla again.
“Would you change anything in your life if given the chance?” Carmilla asks quietly.

“I don’t think so, I think everything needed to happen the way it did in order for us to grow individually before coming back together again. I would change anything with

“Theo or my mother; I would change us falling apart. It all helped us come together again.”

“When did you get all sentimental on me?” Carmilla smiles as she leans in to kiss her on my neck softly.

“I’ve always been sentimental you dummy, you were just always too cynical to realize.” I tease.

“I suppose you’re right.”

“I know I’m right.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her. “You make me the happiest I’ve ever been, you know that right?”

“Of course I know that.” She smiles cockily.
“Mom, let me go please.” Jack whines and I hug him tighter. “Your belly is in the way too.”

“Just have a good day at school, my little boy is going into the second grade. You’re getting so big.”

“Cupcake, the day is going to be over if you don’t let him go.” Carmilla says, pulling at my elbow lightly.

“I’m sorry.” I say, smiling at Jack before standing up straight. “Have a good day sweetie, I’ll be here to get you later.”

“I know mom.” Jack smiles, running towards one of his friends.

“Have a nice day Allie, I can’t believe you’re starting first grade.” I coo, feeling myself well up again.

“Okay, you’re obviously over emotional and need an nap.” Carmilla says, taking my hand in hers. “Have a good day sweetie, make lots of friends and learn something.”

“I will mama.” Allie says kissing Carmilla on the cheek before kissing me. We stand there for a moment with the rest of the parents watching the kids funnel into the building.

“Come on cupcake, I see a double chocolate chip cookie in your future.”

“I love you.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her on the cheek.

“I love you too cupcake, come on. I have to pop into the café and check on things. You can get your cookie there.” We get into the car and take a short drive to the café.

“Hey boss.” Danny says from behind the counter. “Hi Laura.”

“Hey Danny.” I say with a smile.

“How are you feeling?”

“Good, not tired as much anymore, but now I’m craving weird things.” I laugh.

“I remember those days. I think the weirdest thing Kirsch ever had to make me was sweet pickles with hot sauce. Sure enough I hate both things now.” Danny grimaces.

“All I ever want to eat is chocolate cookies, Carmilla is starting to get fed up.”

“I could imagine.”

“Did you order more green tea?” Carmilla asks, walking in from the back room with a clipboard. “There’s only one case left back there, and there’s only two cases of decaf coffee.”
“Yes boss, I ordered everything this morning.”

“Good.” Carmilla chimes, putting the clipboard on its hook by the door. Before getting me a couple of cookies out of the display. “Perry dropped these off this morning.”

“Thank you.” I say as she hands me the cookie.

“You’re very welcome cupcake.”

“You two are gross.”

“Yeah well, you won’t see us for a while, that’s why I stopped in today.” Carmilla says, walking back around the counter. “Oh, you ordered more cups and lids too right?”

“Yes. Don’t worry about it.” Danny says with a smile.

“Okay, okay. Laura and I have to go to her dad’s house, I just promised her a couple of cookies.”

“Okay, have fun.” We say out goodbyes and follow Carmilla out of the café. We drive to my dad’s house, and on the way we discuss baby names.

“I think we should pick Sarah for a girl, and Damien for a boy.” Carmilla says.

“Well I like Kristen for a girl and Edward for a boy. But we’ll call him Eddie.”

“I think the kids should have the final word.” Carmilla smiles as we turn onto the street. “Cupcake, I thought your dad was away for the week.”

“He is why are you asking that?”

“Whose car is that in the driveway?” Carmilla asks as we pull up to the house. I look out the window and realize the car. “Are you okay? Who’s that?”

“That’s uhm, that’s Theo.” I whisper, making eye contact with him as he’s sat on the front porch.

“That’s the douche?” Carmilla asks with a small laugh as she unbuckles her seat belt.

“Are you getting out of the car?”

“Yeah. I’m not going to let him intimidate me.”

“Carm, please.”

“What did he do to you that’s making you so scared?”

“He’s just manipulative and screwed up.”

“Well we promised your dad that we would check on his plants and get the mail, so I’m going to do that. If you want to come with me I promise you I won’t let him do anything to you. I won’t let him near you.” Carmilla says, taking my hands in hers. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” I smile, taking a deep breath before getting out of the car. We walk up to the house, Carmilla not leaving my side for a second.

“Hi Laura.” Theo says, standing up from the step.

“Hi.” I say quietly.
“You’re pregnant.”
“I am.”
“You look good.”
“Yeah.”
“Who’s this?”
“I’m Carmilla.”
“You’re the one who told me off?” He scoffs.
“I am.”
“So you left me for her?” He asks, crossing his arms over his chest.
“No, I left you because you’re a fucked up person, Carmilla came along after the fact.”
“Are you getting married?” He asks, nodding to the engagement ring on my finger.
“That’s not your business.” Carmilla snaps.
“My son is with you two, so yes, it is my business.”
“Okay, but you barely act like a father to your son. It’s been a year and you’ve spoken to him twice on the phone and sent him a birthday card. If you were really concerned about the kid, you would talk to him more often and actually make an effort to see him.”
“That’s not any of your business.”
“I’m with Laura, your son lives with me so it is my business. Whether you like it or not, it is my business.” Carmilla explains.
“I want Jack. I want to see him.”
“You can’t see him now, he’s at school.” I say. “If you want to see him I can’t deny you that, but it will be in a public place. You will not see him at my home, or at his school. I don’t need you turning this into something more than it is.” I explain.
“I won’t, I understand. How about after school today? I just want to see him for a little bit.”
“And then what? Go back into hiding.” Carmilla says. “I don’t think this is a good idea.” She whispers in my ear, looking at me worried.
“Why don’t you mind your business?” Theo snaps.
“Don’t talk to her like that.” I say.
“I know you love her and all, and you went back to being a fucking dyke, but I don’t want her input.”
“Don’t call her that either. Look you just showed up here for whatever reason and I was going to give you the opportunity to see Jack. But you snapping like that, it makes it hard for me to want to allow you to see him. Your temper is what screwed things up for you.”
“I’m sorry Laura, I don’t mean it.” He sighs.

“That’s not the first time I’ve heard that.” I say, feeling a lump form in my throat and tears well in my eyes. Carmilla wraps her arm around my waist.

“I think the best thing you could do right now, is just leave.” Carmilla says, causing Theo to get angrier.

“Don’t tell me what’s best for me!”

“You’re upsetting Laura and therefore you are upsetting me, you don’t want me to get upset pal.”

“Both of you just stop! Carmilla let’s go inside. Theo if you don’t leave, I will call the police. Just know what got you into this position and realize why you can’t see your son.” I say, taking Carmilla by the hand and walking into the house. I slam the door shut and lock it. I rest my back up against it and slide down so I was sitting against the door. The moment I hit the floor I started crying hysterically.

“Oh cupcake.” Carmilla says, sitting down next to me and wrapping her arms round me and kissing the side of my head. “That guy is a dick.”

“You have no idea.”

“D – did he ever hit you?” Carmilla mumbles into my head. I cry again, not being able to find my words, I nod and she holds me tighter. “I love you cupcake, and I will never lay a finger on you in an aggressive way whatsoever. I will never lay a hand on the kids either. You are all too precious for me to even attempt to do something so disgusting.” She says, kissing my head again.

“I love you Carmilla.” I whisper, looking up and her pulling her in for a kiss.

“I love you too.” She smiles, tucking a piece of hair behind my ear. Carmilla turns and peaks through the curtain of the window. “He left.”

“Thank goodness.” I sigh.

“I understand cupcake, we won’t talk about it anymore.” Carmilla says, kissing the side of my head. We finish up what we had to do at dad’s house and make our way back home. “We should start talking about the wedding.” Carmilla mentions as we turn onto our street.

“I know we should, but maybe we should wait for the baby. Or just elope.” I shrug.

“You don’t want the ceremony and stuff like that?”

“I don’t really know Carm. I just want to be your wife without all the bells and whistles, if I can do it tomorrow I will.”

“If you really don’t want to have that, then we won’t.” Carmilla shrugs.

“Do you want a wedding?”
“I mean, the party I would like. The ceremony would have been fun for the kids, but at the same time I want you to be happy. If you don’t want all the bells and whistles as you put it then we won’t have them.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too cupcake. We could always just go down to the courthouse and get married that way; then we can have a party and all that when the time is right. We can just fake everyone out for now.”

“We’ll see what happens.” I say, getting out of the car. I wait for Carmilla to unlock the door before walking into the house and straight up the stairs to our bed.

“Are you okay Laura?”

“I’m just tired.”

“Okay.” Carmilla says, walking over to where I lay on the bed. “I love you.” She says, kissing my forehead.

“I love you too.” I smile.

-Carmilla POV-

“Hi mama, where’s mommy?” Allie asks as she walks out of the school.

“She was sleeping monkey, I didn’t want to wake her up.”

“Hi Carm, where’s mom?” Jack asks.

“She’s taking a nap sweetie.”

“Oh, okay. Will she be up when we get home?”

“Probably.” I shrug, taking both kids by the hand as we walk towards the car. Both Jack and Allie taking turns telling me about the first day. “It sounds like both of you started school on the right foot.” I smile, getting out of the car and opening the door for them. They run out of the car and through the garage. I follow them into the house and see Laura standing in the kitchen making the kids a snack. “Hey.” I say, kissing the side of her head.

“Hey.”

“You alright?”

“I’ll talk to you about it later.” She whispers.

“Okay baby.” I nod, kissing her cheek.

“The good thing about school again, is that they go to bed without a fight.” I say, walking into the living room and sitting down next to Laura. “Are you okay?”
“I don’t know.” Laura whispers, resting her head on my shoulder. “Theo, he texted me. He said that he hates you; he threatened to hurt you if you didn’t let him see Jack. I can’t live like this. I can’t have him threatening you.”

“And I can’t trust him to see Jack and not do something reckless…” I say quietly. “I don’t want Jack to see him.”

“I don’t want Jack to see him either. But I think it’s best for him, I think he should see his father.”

“Okay, but at the same time why should he be allowed to see Jack after a year of not even talking to him? I’m not his mother, I know I don’t have a real say in this, but I don’t think this is a good idea.”

“You are a mother to Jack just as much as I am.” Laura says, taking my hands in hers. “I value your opinion on the topic, there isn’t anything you say to me that I don’t consider I just don’t want Theo threatening you.”

“What’s he going to do, try to take Jack away?”

“He has no leg to stand on and he knows it.”

“So we shouldn’t worry about anything. Besides, if we have to call in reinforcements, I’m pretty sure Kirsch will have no problem beating up Theo. And I know for a fact Will would love to beat someone up. We’ll just see what he has the nerve to do.” I reassure Laura with a soft kiss. “I won’t let him hurt you.”
-Laura POV-

“I can here swishing.” Allie says as she presses her ear to my belly. “Are they swimming in there? Mama says the baby sleeps in a water bed kinda thing.” She says, switching sides so she was able to listen and look at me.

“They aren’t swimming, but mama is right about the water bed part. They kinda just float.” I explain, smiling at the pure sense of amazement Allie gets she asks about the baby and listens to the answer.

“That’s like magic.” She says in awe. “Can they here me talking?”

“They’re big enough now, yes. Their ears aren’t as good as yours, you remember how in the summer mama used to talk to you underwater?”

“Yeah, she sounded funny.”

“Well that’s how the baby hears you right now. Until they’re born, that’s how they hear all of us.”

“Are you gonna take pictures with us and mama with your belly? Emma’s mommy did that when Emma was in her belly, the pictures are all over the house. She took the pictures with Emma in her belly and everyone was touching Mrs. Jones’ belly.”

“I don’t know sweetie, I’ll think about it.”

“I don’t like the pictures really, they seem silly.” Allie says, scrunching up her nose. I couldn’t help but laugh.

“Then we won’t do that.” I smile, running my fingers through her hair. “Your hair is getting so long, I think you need a little cut.”

“I don’t wanna get it cut yet.”

“You don’t have to.”

“Mama said once that if I let if grow super long, I could get it cut and donate it to the little kids that are sick and have no hair. You know the ones in the commercial on TV?”

“I know sweetie, and I think that is a really good idea.”

“Mama said if I did it she’d get me a treat and I’d make her very proud. The longer my hair is, the more kids I help!”

“You’re a very kind little girl. You’re going to be a very kind adult.” I smile, leaning to kiss Allie on her forehead.

“Mama tells me that all the time.” Allie smiles. “When is mama getting back?”
“Soon sweetie, mama had to run to discuss work with Aunt Danny.”

“I know; she just always takes forever.”

“I know how you feel kiddo.”

“When are you and mama gonna find out if I’m getting a brother or sister?”

“She and I want it to be a surprise for all of us.”

“Oh okay. I still hope you’re a girl in there.” Allie whispers to my belly before giving it a quick peck. “I’m gonna go play with Chip.”

“Okay sweetie.” I smile, watching her climb off of the bed and run out of the room. I pick up my laptop and start editing articles. My boss knew I would be relentless when it came to not doing anything while on my mandated bed rest and maternity leave, that he gave me the job of editing certain articles to alleviate the load of the primary editor.

“You never stop working.” Carmilla smiles as she walks into the bedroom.

“You know I get bored if I don’t have something to do.” I smile, looking at her over my laptop screen. She walks over with a smile and gives me a kiss. “How was your meeting?”

“It was good, we’re thinking about hiring someone else just so Danny could have more time off.” She says, sitting down on the bed. “And how are you?” She asks, placing her hand over my belly and leaning down to kiss it lightly.

“Everything is good.” I smile, running my fingers through her hair.

“How is the tiniest one?”

“They are doing great. I can’t wait to give birth at this point, but I also love being pregnant. I love how amazed Allie is when she asks questions about the baby and how she genuinely is interested in the answer that I give her. She’s so smart Carmilla, and I’m so proud of her.”

“I’m proud of her too cupcake, she’s growing up to be a proper little girl. Thanks to you and me.” She smiles.

“I think that was happening before I came around.”

“Not all that much, no. You being around just helped her grow more so than just me.”

“Well I’m happy to help.” I smile, leaning down to kiss her. “And you’ve done all the same with Jack, and I can’t help but admire how protective you are of him.”

“I feel like he’s just as much my son as he is yours.”

“That’s true, and I feel the same about Allie.”

“As you should. Are we still waiting to know what the baby is?”

“I would like to. I mean, we can find out whenever you want to.” I say, getting off of the bed and walking over to my dresser. I open the top drawer and pull out an envelope. “The last appointment I went to, when you got out of the room, the doctor handed me this. I told her I didn’t want to know what the baby is, but at the same time we would get impatient at one point. Then she smiled and wrote something on a piece of paper and stuck it in the envelope, she told me to open it when I
want to know the answer.” I hand Carmilla the sealed envelope.

“Do you want to know?” Carmilla smiles as she starts playing with the envelope.

“I’d be lying if I said no.” I smile, sitting on the bed.

“Do you want to open it?”

“You can open it.”

“Okay.” Carmilla takes a deep breath before tearing at the envelope. She pulls out the slip of paper and smiles. “Before I tell you, are we keeping this from the kids?”

“We’ll find a way to tell them before the baby is born.” I smile.

“So we won’t tell them until our daughter is born, got it.” Carmilla states, looking at me with a smile.

“Our daughter?”

“Our daughter.” Carmilla nods, wrapping her arms around me and pulling me in for a kiss. “Allie is going to be so happy.” She whispers against my lips.

“Allie is going to be ecstatic.” I say with a teary smile.

“Did you want a daughter or a son?” Carmilla asks as she wipes away my tears.

“I wanted a healthy baby, and that’s what I got. And she just so happens to be my daughter.” I say, looking down at my belly.

“Now the great debate begins.” Carmilla teases. “What are we going to name her?”

“Ah, yes. Why don’t we wait until we see her? We may pick a name and she may not look like the name fits her.”

“Okay. That’s what Ell and I did when she was pregnant with Allie. We were excited that we were having a girl, and we didn’t name her until we saw her, but we did have a list.”

“What made you snap? For lack of a better term.”

“I think realizing that she was in fact having a child, and even though I loved her, I didn’t want to have a child with her as much as I thought I did.”

“You’re not going to flake out again are you?” I ask quietly.

“No, oh god no. I can’t do that to you; I would never do that to you. I want to raise this little girl with you more than anyone else. I love you so much Laura, and you’re carrying my daughter. Our daughter. I’ve always thought about what it would be like to have a family with you. I know you’ve heard this, but I’ve fell so hard for you the minute I laid eyes on you, you brought out feelings that I never thought I would feel. I love you. I love you so much and can’t imagine raising this family of ours without you.” Carmilla says, placing her hand on my belly. “I love you Mrs. Karnstein.” She chimes. Carmilla and I decided to have a small ceremony in the local church, and by small it was literally twelve people there. But it was what we agreed on and I wouldn’t change it for anything.

“I love you too Mrs. Karnstein.” I smile, leaning down to kiss her.
“So, I think we should tell them today.”

“I think we should set up the room and then let them open it and let it speak for itself. We’ll make the room pink and purple, maybe even blue, we don’t have to follow the stereotypes. We can go to the hardware store and just pick out colors.”

“I think purple would be a nice choice. We can paint the room that color, get white furniture, and make it look all pretty. I can’t wait. I may actually have some of Allie’s stuff down in the basement. Her crib and all of that was beautiful and a bitch to put together so I refused to throw it away.” Carmilla says, taking me by the hand and leading me into the basement. “I’ll have to get Kirsch or Will to help me bring it upstairs, of course we’ll have to paint the room first.” She says, sitting on the old couch that was moved out of the room already.

“I think it will look good in the room. We should just get a new mattress and bedding of course.”

“Oh yeah, all of that we gave to Ell’s cousin when Allie grew out of the crib. We also gave away most of Allie’s clothes, but kept some things. We don’t have to have a baby shower if you don’t want one. But I know that once we tell my mom and Mattie, they will buy everything in sight regardless.”

“We should tell them first, and let them know that we are going to keep it a secret from Allie and Jack until we get the room painted and decorated.”

“I’ll call them if you want to.” Carmilla says, taking her phone out of her pocket. “Hey mom.”

“Hello Carmilla.” I hear Lilita says, when Carmilla put her on speaker.

“You’re on speaker mom.”

“Hello Laura, how are you feeling?”

“I’m feeling good Lilita, everything is going along smoothly.”

“Good. I’m happy to hear it. So what’s up? Do I need to watch anyone this weekend?”

“No, we actually called to tell you something.” Carmilla smiles. “You tell her.”

“Well, Lilita, Carm and I called to tell you that we’re having a little girl. You’re going to have a granddaughter.”

“Oh really? That’s wonderful news, I can’t wait to tell Mattie.” Lilita coos. “Unless you two want to tell her.”

“No mom, it’s okay. You could probably get a hold of her faster than either of us anyway.” Carmilla says.

“Okay sweetheart. I’m so happy for both of you. I will see you soon, tell the kids I send my love.”

“Okay mom, talk to you later, bye.” Carmilla says before handing up the phone.

-Carmilla POV-

“Carm!” Ell shouts, running into the bedroom and jumping on the bed with a smile on her face, knocking the book out of my hand.
“To what do I owe the pleasure of losing my place?” I chime, putting my hands on her waist as she leans in to kiss me.

“I’m pregnant!”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I just took a test.” She says, leaning in to kiss me again.

“We’re having a baby.” I whisper, feeling something other than happiness.

“Are you okay, do you not want it?”

“I do, I – I want the kid.”

“You don’t seem like you want the kid.” She says, her face falling a bit as she sits back and looks at me.

“I do Ell, I want to have a baby with you. I love you.” I say with a smile, trying to convince her and myself.

“Well we are going to have a little human running around soon.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss me again before getting off of my lap.

“I’m going to call my mom.”

“Shouldn’t you wait until after the first appointment? I mean, isn’t it bad luck to tell people too early?”

“I think you’re right. Oh my god, I’m going to have to get books and read up on this. I have no clue what I need to do.”

“So let’s go to the bookstore, I’m always up for a trip there.” I say, getting out of bed.

“Okay, I’ll just get my bag.” Ell smiles. We walk around the bookstore; a basket in one hand and Ell’s in the other as she drags me through the first time mother section of the store. It was a small section, which was thankfully right in front of the philosophy section. Anyone walking past would see me as the uninterested half of an expecting couple. “Carmilla, come on, why would you just humor me and act interested.”

“I am interested, but I didn’t read this work by Sartre, you know he’s my favorite.” I say, holding up the book and putting it in the basket.

“I know, but I would like for you to just humor me.”

“I’m humoring you, doting wife at your service.” I smile, kissing her on the cheek.

“If you don’t want to have the baby...” She trails off, giving me a knowing look.

“I want to have the baby.” I say, forcing a smile. “I want to have a kid with you.”

“Okay.” She smiles, kissing me softly before turning her attention back to the books.

“Mama! Come here!” Allie shouts excitedly as we walk through the museum. I smile, and follow her to where she ran off. “Look at that! It’s ginormous.” She says, looking up at one of the
dinosaur bone displays.

“It is.” I say, placing my hand on the top of her head. “A billion years ago, that was walking around in our yard.”

“Really?”

“Yep, maybe not our yard exactly, but they were walking around here.”

“That’s so cool. Why did they go away?”

“Because a big meteor came and crashed to earth, causing them to get sick as die.”

“Like a giant germ?”

“Something like that.” I smile.

“Mama, what’s a meteor?”

“It’s a shooting star.”

“Shooting stars bring germs that kill dinosaurs?”

“No, but. How about we go to the bookstore and I get you a book on stars.” I say, picking her up.

“Okay mama.” Allie says, putting her arm around my back as I carry her out of the museum. “When are we going home to be with mommy? The baby didn’t hear my voice today and I want it to know me when it’s born.”

“We’re going to go home after the bookstore, mommy had to run around with Jack for a little while and she is going to call me when she gets home. Which should be soon.” I say, looking at my phone to see the time.

“Allie.” I say, watching her look up at me. “I’m going to be right over here, don’t move until I come get you. I will be right back.”

“Allie. Can I get two books today?”

“You can get two books.” I smile, helping her into the car.

“Thank you mama.” She smiles, kissing me on the cheek before sitting. The short ride to the bookstore was filled with Allie talking about the museum and how cool it would have been if dinosaurs were still around. We’re walking through the bookstore, Allie rushing to the children’s section while I follow behind her. She sits down in one of the chairs and starts getting lost in the books.

“Aleksandra.” I say, watching her look up at me. “I’m going to be right over here, don’t move until I come get you. I will be right back.”

“Allie.” I say, walking out of the section and over to the fiction section. “See? I see you, you see me.”

“Allie.” Allie smiles, turning her attention back to her books. I get lost in reading the spines, see who wrote what, who wrote more, who just started. Getting lost in the first couple of pages of different books that would go into the basket. I look over at Allie to see a small pile building next to where she was sat. I feel someone try to wrap their arms around my waist.
“Why would I know you’d end up here?” I hear Laura whisper in my ear.

“Because your wife and step-daughter are bookworms beyond belief.” I smile, turning to kiss her softly. “Where’s Jack?”

“My dad called and wanted to take him to a last minute hockey game. So I thought I would come here, look at a couple thing, see if I could by chance find you.”

“You know me so well.” I smile. “Do you want anything? Did you do everything you had to do?”

“Yep. Perry called me before and said everyone was almost done, she was just picking up her air purifier to help with the toxins from the paint.”

“What would we do without Perry?”

“I don’t know.” Laura smiles. “Where’s Allie?”

“She is the kid with the book fort forming around them.” I say, pointing over to her. “Al!” I say, she looks up and smiles when she sees Laura, she rushes over to us, running to hug Laura.

“Hi mommy! Hi baby.” Allie says, kissing Laura’s belly.

“Hello sweetie, did you have a good day with mama?”

“We went to the museum and I saw the big dinosaur that used to live in our yard.”

“Cool.” Laura smiles.

“Go pick out one of the books you were looking at and then I’ll take you to the books about stars.” I say watching her eyes light up and run back over to her pile. She goes through about ten of the books before she picks the one she likes. I let her pick one of the books on stars; it was mostly pictures and also told about the planets after we paid we walked out to the parking lot. “Did you park far?” I ask Laura as she digs for her keys.

“I wanna go home with mommy in her car!”

“You have to go with mama, she has your seat I don’t.”

“I can sit in Jack’s seat. It’s the same seat, mine’s just pink.” Allie looks up between the two of us.

“You can ride with mommy.” I say, kissing Allie on the top of her head.

“Yay, thank you mama.”

“I’ll see you home.” I say to Laura, as we walk up to her car. “Be careful.” I say, stopping to give Laura a kiss.

“You too, see you at home.” She smiles as Allie climbs into the car. We both pull up the house at the same time even though we left the bookstore going in different directions.

“I like going with mommy.” Allie says, running over to me.

“Good to know.” I smile, taking her by the hand. “We have a surprise for you.” I say, looking over at Laura.

“Are you ready?” Laura asks, taking Allie by the hand. We lead her into the house and up the stairs
to the baby’s room.

“My surprise is mama’s office?” She asks, looking up at us confused.

“It isn’t mama’s office anymore sweetie, it’s the baby’s room.” Laura says.

“Oh, so what’s the surprise part?”

“Well, mommy and I know the kind of baby we’re having.” I explain.

“Oh, so the surprise is if I’m getting a brother or sister?” Allie smiles.

“Yes, you can do the honors.” I smile, gesturing for her to open the door. Allie smiles up at us one last time before opening the door, she pushed it open to reveal a pale purple room. Pictures of flowers and smiling animals were hung up on the walls; the white furniture was perfect with the color of the room.

“Is mommy having a girl?” Allie asks with a big smile.

“Yes I am sweetie.” Laura smiles, rubbing her bump. “You’re going to have a sister.”

“Yay!” Allie says, running over to Laura. “I’m going to be the best big sister ever to you.” She says to Laura’s belly.

“Are you happy?” I ask, kneeling down to be eye-level with Allie.

“Yes mama, I am happy. I can’t wait for my sister to be born.”
There is a Problem...

There is a Problem...

-Carmilla POV-

“Carm.” Laura whines, shaking me awake. “Carmilla, wake up.” She says, shaking me harder.

“What?” I mumble in my sleep. “What’s wrong?”

“I have to go to the hospital, I don’t know what’s wrong. Something isn’t right.” I sit up in bed and turn on my light; I look over to see Laura clutching her belly.

“I’ll call your dad to come and watch the kids, I don’t want an ambulance scaring thing.” I say, reaching for my phone. Sherman rushed to the house and was here within minutes.

“Are you okay?” He asks, rushing into the house.

“I don’t know what’s wrong.” Laura cries. “I’m scared.”

“You’ll be okay, the baby will be okay.” He says, kissing the top of her head.

“I’ll let you know what happens.” I say reassuringly. “Don’t let the kids get nervous. I don’t know what you want to tell them, but let them know I’ll call when I can.” I take Laura by the hand and lead her out to the car. We rush to the hospital shortly after getting into the emergency room; the doctors and nurses pursed me out of the way.

“No! Don’t make her leave!” Laura cries.

“I’m sorry but you have to go.” The nurse says, pushing me away.

“Why, why can’t I stay with my wife?”

“We have to figure out what’s going on, for the safety of your wife and the child you need to stay here.”

“Our daughter, the child you are referring to is our daughter.” I say angrily.

“I’m sorry, your daughter’s safety is our number one priority as well as your wife’s so please, Mrs. Karnstein. I need you to go wait. If we move her we will tell you. We will keep you updated.”

“Can I just tell her I’ll be outside, please?”

“You have two minutes.” The nurse says, stepping aside.

“Cupcake.” I say, taking her hand in mine and brushing the hair from her face.

“I’m scared Carm.”

“I know. Everything is going to be okay. I promise, nothing is going to happen. They want to make sure you and Valentine are okay. They don’t want me to get in the way, you’re more important right now. I will be right here, the nurse is going to let me know everything that’s going on.” I say,
kissing her forehead. “I love you, I love you so much, I’m going to be here waiting for you when they figure everything out.” I kiss her softly one last time.

“Mrs. Karnstein.” I feel my body jolt awake.

“Where’s Laura?”

“You’re wife is stable. But she is in intensive care. I know these are words you may not have wanted to hear for eight weeks, but would you like to meet your daughter?” The doctor asks quietly. “She is in the NICU, we had no choice but to do an emergency C-section. The placenta started to rupture, we had no other choice, if we didn’t do the procedure, you would have lost your child and possibly your wife.” The nurse explains as she leads the way to where Valentine was. I walk into the room, seeing different babies in incubators with tubes coming from every direction, we stop in front of one of the incubators, a small baby lie sleeping, a small pink hat on her head, different tubes and sensors on her body. I gasp at the sight of her, tinier than any baby I have ever seen, she was missing the vital time she needed to grow in the womb, all due to the freak accident the occurred. I sit down in front of the box.

“Is she going to be okay?” I ask, touching the glass.

“She will need to be here for a while. We’re feeding her through the tube in her nose. She’s only three pounds, but there is hope. I don’t see her not growing up to be a happy and healthy baby. Her heart and lungs seem to be okay right now, we are watching closely to see if there are any issues. I think she will make a full responsive recovery. But of course there is always a risk, and health issues that could come along the way. Nothing too severe, the potential for asthma is very likely, but we’ll see.”

“Does Laura know?”

“She does, she hasn’t seen the child yet, but she knows it needed to be done.”

“Can I see her?”

“Yes of course.” The doctor smiles sadly. She leads me to where Laura was lying in her bed looking out the window to see the sun rising over the snow-covered trees.

“She was supposed to be born on Valentine’s Day.” Laura whispers as I walk over to her and sit down at the foot of the bed.

“She decided to join us for Christmas time instead.” I joke.

“Is she okay?”

“She’s going to be okay.” I smile, leaning over to kiss her forehead. “She’s a Karnstein, and a Hollis. The kid is tough.”

“Tell me this isn’t my fault.” Laura whispers, looking at me with tears in her eyes.

“This is far from your fault. It was just a freak thing that could happen to anyone. You are not to blame.”

“I feel like I did something wrong.”

“Cupcake, you are healthy, you don’t drink or do drugs. You don’t even eat foods with Red 40 in them. You did nothing wrong.” I say, moving to lay behind her and wrap my arms around her. “It
does feel weird though knowing Val isn’t in there.” I say, kissing the side of her neck. “But she is going to be okay. The most that could be wrong with her is that she could get asthma, that’s all.”

“I want to see her.”

“I don’t think now is a good time, you should try and get some rest. A lot happened to you and I want you to get better.”

“I want to see my daughter.” Laura demands.

“No, I’m not letting you.”

“Why, is it that bad, is there something you aren’t telling me?”

“No, I promise everything is okay, I just don’t want you to get upset. When you see her it could be quite shocking.”

“You make it seem like she has two heads.”

“I-if you want to see her, I’ll get you a wheelchair and take you to NICU.” I sigh, getting out of the bed. I come back into the room with a wheelchair and wheel Laura to the NICU, leading her over to where Valentine is. Laura gasps a little at the sight before she begins to cry.

“I want to hold her.” She tells the nurse, who very carefully takes Valentine out of her incubator, wrapping her up in a thick blanket, being mindful of the different wires coming from the little girl’s body.

“Hello there. You decided to scare mama and I didn’t you? You were too eager to wait any long to come into the world. Allie is going to be happy to meet you, but a little heartbroken to know you are going to be fragile for a while. I love you so much Valentine.” Laura kisses the baby’s forehead lightly. “You look like mama.” She whispers, looking up at me with a smirk.

“Her hair is lighter though, well what we can see of it.” I smile, crouching down beside her.

“She’s going to have a full head of it before we know it.” Laura smiles, leaning over to kiss me. “She’s going to be okay… Right?” She asks the nurse.

“We’ve seen this a lot, all of the children grow to be just as healthy as their peers. You just have to give her time.”

“Where’s mommy?” Allie asks as I walk into the house.

“Is everything okay?” Sherman asks, handing me a cup of coffee.

“Monkey, I want to talk to Sherman for a minute, then I’ll let you know what’s going on okay?”

“I wanna know where mommy is.”

“Mommy is with Valentine. Okay. They are at the hospital, I will take you to see them later.”

“Okay mama.” She says, bowing her head as she walks upstairs.

“What happened?” Sherman asks as we walk into the kitchen.

“Something with the placenta, either way, little Val decided to come into the world eight weeks
early.”

“Can I ask you something, maybe it’ll get you thinking about something else, I don’t know. Why did you pick the name Valentine?” He asks, leaning back against the counter.

“Laura said she was very close with her grandmother, who I can only assume is your mother, she never really specified. She told me her grandmother was names Valentine and she always loved the name. If Jack was going to be a girl she was going to name him Valentine, but instead named him after her grandfather, which I can only assume again is your father.”

“My father’s name was John, but everyone called him Jack.” Sherman smiles. “My mother’s name was one that Laura always loved, she told me that she was going to name her daughter that if she ever had one, she wouldn’t care if her spouse liked the name or not, that’s what she wanted to name her.”

“Well lucky for you I fell in love with the name, we went through several names before she finally said that one a few days ago. It also was a coincidence that she was due on Valentine’s Day, that was after we picked the name.” I smile. “The kid is a Karnstein, that’s what I have to keep reminding myself.”

“She is a Hollis too, the kid is going to get through this.” He says, walking over and wrapping his arm around my shoulder. “Just make sure you do the right thing.”

“I know.”

“What’s going to happen with Laura?”

“She needs a blood transfusion, she should be able to come home tomorrow. Val has to stay there for a while. They don’t know how long exactly, she has to gain weight and they have to keep her warm.”

“She’ll be home, waking you up at three in the morning before you know it.” Sherman smiles.

Laura, please.” I say following her around the house.

“I have to clean Carm, the house is filthy.”

“The house smells like bleach, you need to calm down.”

“No, it’s dirty, everything needs to be clean.”

“Laura!”

“What?” She shouts looking at me with tears in her eyes. “What Carmilla?”

“You need to sleep, you’re exhausted.” I say, grabbing her shoulders.

“I can’t sleep. I can’t rest. My daughter is in the hospital right now, she isn’t home with her family, she’s alone.” Laura cries.

“And how do you think I feel? She’s my daughter too. I feel the same way you do, but I’m not going into some kind of panic like you are.”

“Well sorry that I care about her!”
“And I don’t? Is that what you’re saying? You’re saying that I don’t care about my kid?”

“You didn’t care about the first one until you grew up.”

“So that’s what you think of me?” I say, taking a step back from her.

“N-no.” Laura says, shaking her head frantically.

“Then why say it?”

“It was the heat of the moment, I’m sorry. Carm! Where are you going?” Laura calls after me.

“Carmilla!”

“What are you doing here?” Will asks as he opens the door.

“I need a drink.” I say, shoving past him.

“Oh no way. You are not having a drink.” He says, chasing after me.

“I had a fight with Laura, and my kid is in intensive care, I am having a drink.” I say, picking up the bottle of Jameson and a glass.

“Carmilla, you’ve been sober for over a year. I’m not going to allow you to fall – I guess that’s too late.” He sighs as I drink, wincing as the alcohol burns my throat for the first time in months.

“That is a feeling I don’t miss.” I say, shaking my head a bit. “Although it got numb after a few years. I can’t tell if I miss this or not.” I swirl the liquor around in the glass before downing the rest of it.

“If you get sick, I’m not holding your hair back.”

“I’m not asking you to.” I fill the glass half way again.

“Is this worth it? Is drinking again worth it?”

“No, of course not, but will it make me feel temporarily better, yeah.”

“What about Laura? Is this all worth what you’re doing to her, and Val?”

“It’s not worth it, I just…”

“You know this is one of the first places Laura is going to come to right?”

“She doesn’t know you live here.”

“You think Perry or Danny won’t tell her. You think Betty won’t say anything?”

“I’ll be gone before she gets here.”

“What are you going to do? Run away like you’re best at? Are you going to think that’s going to stop her? She isn’t Ell, Laura won’t let you get away with this by holding your child over your head.”

“I fucked up. That’s all I know.”

“Fucking up? You ran away from Laura and proved her point.” He says with a cynical laugh. “You
can’t run away from things you don’t like to hear. Wait until mom finds out.”

“She won’t find out.” I snap, finishing the second glass.

“And how do you know that?”

“Because you aren’t going to say anything.”

“You really think – what the fuck!” He shouts after I throw the glass and it shatters next to his head.

“Shut up, William! Shut up!”

“Why, you don’t like hearing that mother is going to rip you a new one for hurting Laura and abandoning your child again? Well that’s what you’re doing by being here rather than at the hospital with Valentine! Don’t keep being a fuck up Carmilla, especially when you were so good for the past year.” He says, throwing me a bottle of water. “Get sober and get to the hospital, I guarantee your wife is there with your daughter.” I sigh, chugging from the water bottle as I hear my phone ring in my pocket.

“Where are you?” Laura asks frantically. “I’m sorry for what I said, it wasn’t right. I was angry, I didn’t want to upset you.”

“I-I’m at Will’s.” I whisper.

“You did something.”

“I did.”

“Something stupid.”

“Yeah.” I sigh, pinching the bridge of my nose.

“She opened her eyes today. While you were off being a jerk, you missed a milestone.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, those are the only words you know how to say without meaning them.” Laura says before she hangs up on me.
Reasoning...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Reasoning…

-Laura POV-

“You’ll be able to come home soon, or at least that’s what they tell me. I don’t know how soon is soon, but I can’t wait for you to come home. Allie, she’s your big sister, she can’t wait to meet you. Jack can’t wait to meet you. Even our cat, Chip, and dog, Sunny, seem anxious. I know mama can’t wait for you to come home either. She loves you Val, she loves you so much even though she is having a bit of a problem right now. I said mean things to her and she’s upset with me. I didn’t mean what I said; I was just upset that you aren’t home yet.” I say to Valentine as I rock her in the rocking chair. She’s been here for a couple of weeks, thankfully she is beginning to gain weight, but she isn’t allowed to leave the hospital just yet. I hear someone clear their throat from behind me; I look over to see Carmilla standing in the doorway with a shopping bag, a stuffed elephant’s trunk sticking out of the bag.

“I know she already has a bunch of animals at home, but I just couldn’t leave this downstairs.” She says, pulling the elephant out of the bag. “He, or she, they were in the gift shop and I couldn’t leave them. I also brought you something, I know it’s not cookies, but it’s sweet. Again, it’s what they had downstairs. I wanted to get here as soon as I could; when I walked in I just had to bring something up here so you would know that I was sorry. I mean, I guess me coming here would mean that. But I can’t lie to you, I drank at Will’s, I couldn’t help it. What you said to me really upset me, I didn’t want you to think less of me when it comes to Val based on my past with Allie, I would never do that to you, or her. I would never walk out on you, on my family. I can’t do that and never will. I promised you that. I promised I would never leave you or walk out on you.”

Carmilla rambles, handing me a box of candy and the elephant. “I love you Laura, I love you, Jack, Allie, Valentine. I love all of you. I – I messed up today, I drank for the first time in a very long time and I want you to know that I will never touch a drink again. Upsetting my family isn’t worth it.”

“You turn into a rambling dork when you know you’re wrong.” I smile. “Open this box please.” I say, handing the candy back to her. She smiles and does what she’s told. “I didn’t come after you because I knew you would come back. I knew you wouldn’t fuck up epically.”

“I drank.”

“Yeah, you had one drink, maybe two? But you came here right away. You knew you had to be with your family.”

“I did.” She nods.

“If you were still your old self, you wouldn’t have come here.”

“No I wouldn’t have.”

“So that alone shows you are a changed person. You drank and yet still knew where you had to
“I love you cupcake.” She says, leaning over to kiss me.

“I love you too Carmilla.” I whisper, kissing her again.

“Can I hold her?” I nod, getting up from the rocker and handing Valentine over to her.

“It’s easier to hold her if you sit, the wires don’t go far.” I explain.

“She’s so small. It’s one thing to see her; it’s another to hold her. If that makes sense, I don’t know if it does.”

“It does, I thought the same thing until I held her. She doesn’t look as tiny as she feels.”

“No she doesn’t.” Carmilla says, looking at Val carefully. She smiles when the baby opens her eyes and looks at Carmilla. “Hey there.” Carmilla coos. “Welcome to the wonderful world of chaos little one.” She smiles, holding Val up a bit to kiss her forehead. “You have your mommy’s eyes.” She whispers.

“She has your nose. Just like when you were a baby.” I smile.

“She has your chin.”

“She has your toes.” I laugh.

“I don’t know how that works.” Carmilla says confused, looking at Val’s feel.

“Her toes look like yours, just like how Jack’s look like mine.”

“I see what you mean.” Carmilla smiles. “She’s going to be one good looking lady. We’re going to have to chase the boys and girls away with a stick.”

“But we won’t judge if she ends up not liking anyone, or whatever orientation she feels comfortable with.”

“Of course we won’t. The same goes for Allie and Jack. What?” She asks with a smile.

“Seeing you holding a baby, being all maternal, I’ve fallen in love with you again.” I say, leaning in to kiss her.

“Just wait until I volunteer to change dirty diapers at two in the morning.” She says wiggling her eyebrows.

“I don’t know how I’ll contain myself.” I smirk, running my fingers through her hair. “Don’t do anything you’ll regret.” I whisper.

“I won’t. I promise.”

-Carmilla POV-

“Mama, when is Valentine coming home?” Allie asks.

“When she’s healthy enough to. She didn’t have enough time to grow big and strong in mommy’s
belly so she has to be fed special food to make her strong.”

“Can’t you feel her home?”

“They only have the special food at the hospital.”

“When can I see her? I haven’t even seen her yet.” Allie whines.

“We can go see her now if you want to.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, we just have to get Jack first.”

“Okay mama.”

“Now, she’s still too small for either of you to hold her. She’s fragile and tinier than most babies.” I explain to Jack and Allie as we walk towards the NICU.

“Is she sick?” Jack asks.

“She was born before she was ready, she’s going to be okay, but right now she’s just too tiny.”

“Is she going to get big?”

“She will, it will just take some time.” I explain to him. He bows his as we walk into the area where Valentine is.

“Why is she in that box?” Allie asks, tugging at my hand as we walk over towards Laura.

“She’s in there to keep warm. She isn’t big enough to be warm by herself.” Laura explains, picking Allie up to get a better view.

“Why not a big blanket?”

“When she’s awake she can be in the blanket, she was out all morning, and it was time for her to go back.”

“Is she gonna come home like that?” Jack asks.

“No, Val’s just in that until the doctors feel like it’s time for her to come home.” I say, putting my hand on his shoulder.

“She’s pretty.” He smiles, walking up closer to her.

“She looks like mommy.” Allie chimes. “When can she come home?”

“The doctors think she will be able to come home in a week or two.” Laura explains.

“Will she still be tiny?”

“No, she’ll be a bit bigger.”

“She’ll be home in time for Christmas?” Jack chimes.

“I don’t think so sweetie, but we can always celebrate Christmas at home and come here after you
Laura smiles.

“Okay.”

“You ready?” I ask, pulling the bag higher up on my shoulder. I look over to see Laura fixing Val’s hat and making sure she was extra bundled on her car seat.

“It’s cold out there, I’m just making sure she’s warm enough.”

“Please, she’s plenty warm, no need to get the heated blanket.” I tease, handing Laura the bag in exchange for Valentine.

“She’s finally going out into the world for the first time in weeks. I just want her comfortable.” After spending Christmas in the hospital, everyone making their rounds to see Val, we were able to take her home about two weeks later. It seemed like forever and a day since she was born, but it has only been a month. Valentine improved enough for us to take her home. She was still as tiny as ever, but it was nice to know she was finally coming home.

“She’s going to be okay. I promise.” I smile, giving Laura a quick kiss before we walk into the hallway.

“It’s always bittersweet to see them go.” The nurse says with a sad smile. “She was one of the easier ones. I wish you both the best.”

“Thank you.” Laura smiles.

“Let’s take this mini cupcake home.” I smile, looking down to see Valentine fast asleep.

“She’s home, she’s home!” Allie shouts as we walk into the house, causing Valentine to start to cry. “I’m sorry.” Allie says quietly, bending down to get closer to her.

“You scared her.” Jack says, shoving Allie away.

“No I didn’t!”

“Both of you stop it.” Laura says. “Jack apologize for shoving Allie, it wasn’t nice.”

“I’m sorry.” He mumbles. “Why doesn’t she have to apologize kiddo.”

“If you would have ran in here before you would have heard her apologize kiddo.” I say, walking into the living room, putting Val’s car seat on the coffee table.

“Can I hold her?” Allie asks as she leans on the coffee table.

“Sit all the way back on the couch.” I say, watching her do as she’s told. “Hold your arms like this.” I say, demonstrating what I mean, I get Val out of her car seat and put her in Allie’s arms, making sure to put a pillow under Allie’s arm by Valentine’s head. “You’re holding a baby kiddo.” I smile.

“A real baby.” Allie says excitedly.

“I’m next.” Jack smiles with a smile. I hear the faint clicks of a camera and look to see my mom taking pictures and crying a bit. Laura smiles as she walks into the room and sits down beside Allie.
“Can we get one picture with the five of you? Allie holding Val, then we’ll do one with Jack.” My mom asks with a smile. Jack climbs onto the couch and sits on the other side of Allie. After the photo shoot my mom put us through and the endless exchange of Val between Allie and Jack, it was time for Val to get fed.

“Can I go with mommy?” Allie asks.

“No monkey, stay down here.” I say, grabbing Allie by her arm.

“Why not?”

“Valentine needs her feeding time to be calm. And mommy needs it to be quiet. You can see her when it’s time for you to go to bed.”

“Okay.” Allie sighs.

“It was a long day for Val, she came home for the first time, she had a lot of pictures. She’s going to be here forever monkey, don’t worry. You’ll see her so much you’ll get sick of her.” I say, running my fingers through her hair.

“I will never get sick of her, I love her.”

“I love her too.” Jack says from the couch.

“You two are going to be awesome big siblings.” I smile.

“We love her, she’s our little sister. We are going to be extra nice to her.” Jack says.

“Yeah.” Allie agrees.

“Goodnight Val.” Allie says, kissing Valentine on her forehead.

“Goodnight.” Jack says doing the same thing. Laura walks both of them out of our room to put the two kids to bed. I sit cross-legged on the bed with Valentine in my lap, I hold her so she’s facing me, holding her as she sleeps soundly. I stared at her sleeping form, watching her little chest rise and fall, getting lost in something I never experienced whole-heartedly with Allie.

“You look at her like she’s your entire world.” Laura says, walking into the bedroom.

“Because she is.” I whisper, not breaking eye contact with Val. “She’s so small.”

“She’s a baby.”

“I never held Allie. I never got a chance to look at Allie like this.”

“So that’s why you look at her like she’s an angel.”

“She is an angel either way.” I smile, looking over at Laura as she sits on the bed beside me. I lean over to kiss her softly. “She’s our angel.” I smile again.

“She is.” Laura smiles, kissing my cheek as I look at Valentine again.
Thank you for reading. I love hearing from you guys, and I love that you are enjoying this story (even with the upcoming curveballs). Hopefully you enjoyed this chapter, I don't know much about premature babies and things like that, but I did some research to make it seem as realistic as possible.
Old Habits Die Hard…

This chapter contains Carmilla being a bit of a jerk, as well as dealing with demons.

Aside from that, the S3 BTS may have ruined me. If you didn't see it, I don't know what to tell you, you should have seen it by now.

Enjoy the chapter.

Old Habits Die Hard…

-Laura POV-

“Where’s Carm mom?” Jack asks as he walks into my bedroom and climbs onto the bed.

“She had to go in to work sweetie.” I say, burping Valentine.

“That was a while ago though.”

“I know sweetie, why don’t you go downstairs and get ready for grandpa, he’ll be here soon. And Lilita should be here for Allie.”

“Okay mom.” He says, kissing Val’s head before walking out of the room. I get up from the bed carefully, making sure to not wake up Val seeing as she fell asleep in an instant. I put her in her crib before following Jack downstairs.

“Hello Laura.” Lilita smiles as she walks through the door. “Where is Allie?”

“Hi nana!” Allie says on queue as she runs in from the kitchen. “Let’s go, oh wait I have to say bye to Valentine.”

“She just fell asleep sweetie, I don’t want you to wake her.”

“But I have to tell her I love her.”

“She already knows sweetie.” I smile, kissing the top of her head.

“Okay. Tell her I love her when she wakes up. And tell mama I love her when she gets home.”

“I will, I promise.” I smile, giving her a hug.

“Where is Carmilla?” Lilita asks, pursing her lips.

“I don’t know.” I mouth with a shrug. Lilita gives me a look of disappointment. “Al, go get your stuff from your room and be quiet. Jack you too; grandpa will be here any minute. Tip-toe like we talked about.” They do as they’re told and Lilita watches them make their way up the stairs.
“Where is she?” She whispers, being mindful of the kids potentially being in earshot.

“I don’t know. She have been home by now, she was only running to the café to take care of something.”

“Has she been acting odd?”

“No, Valentine has been home a week and she’s been the whole time, today was the first time she left.”

“Are you concerned?”

“I – I don’t know. I mean she’s been gone longer that she said she would. I don’t want to make it something it isn’t.” I explain, crossing my arms over my chest.

“If she isn’t home soon, call me.” Lilita says, putting on a bright smile as she sees Allie walk down the steps.

“I will. Have fun with nana.”

“We’re gonna have so much fun.” Allie whisper shouts. “I love you mommy, see you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“Hey little monkey.” My dad chimes as he walks through the door.

“Bye-bye grandpa Sherm.”

“Have fun with your nana sweetie.” He says, kissing Allie on the cheek as she walks out the door with Lilita. “Hey big monkey.” He smiles, wrapping me in a hug and kissing the side of my head.

“Hey dad.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Carmilla is just out longer than expected. I’m handling it.”

“If you need me, you know to call me.”

“I know daddy.” I nod.

“How’s Valentine?”

“She’s sleeping right now, she should be out for a little bit. It’ll give me time to clean up a bit.”

“Don’t over work yourself.” He says with a small smile. “Okay, Jack, let’s go. We have a game to get to.”

“Yay, hockey!” Jack shouts quietly.

“Have fun with grandpa.” I say, kissing Jack on his cheek. “And make sure Silas kicks the other team’s butt.” I chime.

“I will mom, I promise.” Jack smiles, kissing me on the cheek before walking out of the house with my dad. I let out a sigh when the door closes behind them, only to feel frustrated moments later seeing as Carmilla is still failing to make an appearance or phone call.
“I have to clean, keep myself occupied.” I say to myself, grabbing the baby monitor and clipping it to my pocket.

“Cupcake.” Carmilla chimes as she walks into the kitchen through the garage.

“Where the hell have you been?” I ask as I finishing loading the dishwasher and slamming it shut. “You’re drunk.” I say, as I get closer to her, smelling the alcohol on her breath.

“No, I promise.” She slurs, stumbling through the kitchen to the fridge.

“You’re such a fucking liar.”

“That’s a big bad word coming from you.”

“You’re a jerk when you’re drunk.”

“I’m sorry cupcake, let me make it up to you.” She smiles, walking over to me and kissing me sloppily.

“Get off Carm.” I say, shoving her into the cabinet. “Why are you like this?”

“I dunno. I went to the café, then I got lost along the way.”

“Lost? What the hell kind of thing is that to say? You got lost? Who says that?”

“I do. Now where’s that little bundle of joy?”

“You’re not going by Valentine, she’s sleeping and I don’t need you to wake her up.” I say, getting in her way so she wouldn’t leave the kitchen.

“C’mon cupcake, let me see her.” Carmilla whines.

“No, I’m not letting you.”

“You’re not going to let me see my kid? Like at all?” She asks, nodding her head a bit “Okay.” She mumbles before shoving past me roughly, knocking me on my feet. I hit my head against the wall with a thump, causing Carmilla to look down at me, and start crying. “Shit cupcake. I’m sorry; I didn’t mean to push you like that. Is your head okay? Do you need anything? I fucked up, I’m sorry I fucked up.” Carmilla rambles, sitting on the floor next to me and wrapping her arms around me.

“You have two choices.” I say, rubbing the back of my head. “You either go back to you meetings as soon as possible, or you do full rehab. Pick one.”

“Meetings, I’ll do the meetings.”

“And I don’t care if I have to drag the kids with us, you are not allowed to go anywhere alone anymore. You had me worried all day, you were only supposed to be gone for a half hour, it’s been four.” I wiggle out of her embrace and make my way upstairs when I hear Valentine crying.

“Whatever you want me to do cupcake, I’ll do it.” Carmilla says, following me into Val’s room.

“Laf will take you to and from meetings, someone is going with you every time you leave.” I say, looking down at Valentine.

“Whatever you say Laura, I love you. I’m sorry for upsetting you today and making you worry.”
“Yeah.” I say quietly, walking over to change Val’s diaper.

“Please cupcake.”

“What do you want me to say?”

“Anything.” She whispers from behind me.

“You’re a fucking idiot.” I say, turning to face her for a moment, placing my hand on Val’s torso so she doesn’t move. “You’re an epic fucking idiot.”

“But you love me.” She smiles shyly, placing her hands on my waist.

“I can’t stop.” I whisper, turning my attention back to Val. Carmilla doesn’t let me go as I continue attending to Valentine.

“I’m sorry I disappoint you cupcake.” She whispers in my ear before kissing my neck.

“I know you are.”

“I’m going to get better.”

“You said that to me once before, prove it.” I say, cradling Val in my arms.

“I will.” She whispers, resting her forehead against mine. “I love you cupcake, and all our mini cupcakes.”

“Then do the right thing without getting lectured every time you do the wrong thing. You should know better. You messed up when Val was born, I know you’ve been drinking since that first day, I just haven’t said anything until now.”

“How did you know?”

“You never drink tea, you never have ever drank tea, you thought you could trick me by putting Jack in a teacup. I’m not stupid. And you thought hiding your bottles in the garage would fool me.”

“I’m really sorry Laura.” Carmilla whispers, a tear falling down her cheek.

“I know you are.”

“Can I hold her?”

“You’re not holding our child when you can barely hold up your head. Go take a shower and a nap.”

“Okay.” Carmilla nods, walking out of the room.

“Your mama better get her act together.” I whisper to Valentine as she looks up at me with her honey-brown eyes and smirks. “You have mama’s smirk.” I say, sitting down in the rocking chair. “You have a lot of mama’s qualities.” I run my fingers over her peach fuzz of hair. “I know it can’t really happen that way, I know scientifically it doesn’t work that way, but I don’t want to think differently. I love you Valentine, and I know mama loves you too, I know she loves you so much. She just is a little lost at the moment.”
"I’m going to get Allie and then I’ll be right back, I promise.” I say, wrapping my scarf around my neck.

“I don’t want you going alone.”

“And I don’t want you dragging out Val just to prove a point. It’s freezing, it’s snowing. How about I stay on the phone with you until I get there?”

“That’s fair.” Laura sighs.

“I love you cupcake, I promise yesterday was my last screw up.” I say, wrapping her in my arms. “No more stupidity, I’ll go to meetings, I’ll go along with everything you want. I promise. What happened with Valentine just threw me into over drive; I didn’t know what to do, what would happen. I’m okay now.” I lean in and kiss her softly.

“Okay.” She nods, kissing me again before letting me go. “Be extra careful please, it is snowing.”

“I will, I’ll call you when I get in the car.” I smile. The ride to my mom’s house consisted of me talking to Laura about the idiots on the road that can’t seem to drive in the snow. “I’ll be home in a few minutes. I love you.” I say as I get out of the car.

“I love you too, be careful.”

“Will do cupcake.” I open the door to my mom’s house. “Hello?” I call out, wiping my feet on the rug.

“Hi mama!” Allie shouts, bolting through the house. “I missed you yesterday, did mommy tell you that I love you. I told her to tell you when you got home.”

“She did pumpkin.” I lie, picking her up and kissing her cheek. “Where’s nana?”

“Up in her office. I saw Auntie Mattie yesterday! She gave me a present for fun.”

“That’s nice sweetie, go watch your shows okay? I have to talk to nana.”

“Okay mama.” She says, giving me a hug before I put her down. I walk up the stairs and take a deep breath before opening the door to my mom’s office. I walk in to see her on the phone; she looks up at me and purses her lips.

“I’ll have to call you back. Yeah we’ll pick this up soon.” She hangs up the phone. “Where the hell were you yesterday?”

“Making a mistake.” I say, sitting down on the couch by the window.

“Yeah no shit.” She says, getting up from her desk. “You’re dancing a thin line Carmilla. I hope you know that.”

“I’m sorry mom.”

“Did you apologize to Laura? That’s the person that needs the apology.”

“We spoke, yes.”

“And?”
I’m going back to the meetings. Oh, send Laura a text or call her that I’m here talking to you; I don’t want her to worry. It was hard enough convincing her to let me leave the house without her.” My mom points her phone at me and grins.

“There I sent her a picture.” She chimes.

“Whatsoever. But I promised her that I would stop everything. I have to.”

“No shit you have to. You screwed with Laura once, I don’t need you doing it again.”

“I don’t need to do it again either mom.”

“You should go talk to your therapist again.”

“I didn’t like him.” I grimace, shaking my head.

“You can always find someone else.”

“I know, but I don’t know. I just want to get over everything.”

“Your demons are yours to deal with. But you can’t deal with them by drinking. You have to deal with them properly.”

“My demons don’t go away no matter what I do mom, you don’t understand that.” I whisper. “They’ve always been there. Everything good in my life gets screwed up because I never feel good enough. I never felt good enough. Now I have Laura back and I still feel unworthy of her, I have a daughter that deserves a better mother, I have a step-son that would be better off no knowing me, and I have another daughter that could grow up to have god knows how many medical issues, if any at all.”

“Valentine is nothing you can control. Things happen, she is going to be okay Carmilla. Allie is a sweet and wonderful girl that would be lost right now if it wasn’t for you. And Jack is turning into quite the young man with the help of you. You’re worth so much more than you give yourself credit for.” My mom says, walking over to give me a hug.

“I just feel like no matter how hard I try, something is always going to happen.”

“You’ve always felt this way since you were twelve, I know that about you. The only person that changed you was Laura. You and I both know that, and yet, you manage to only lose that feeling after you’re with her. Why is that?”

“She’s too good for me.” I shrug.

“Don’t feel that way, let her help you. She is the only person that has loved you through all of your shit.”

“Except that time with Elsie.”

“But she came back to you. No matter how long it was, she came back.”

Carmilla you were supposed to be home twenty minutes ago.” Laura says as I walk through the door with Allie.

“Hi mommy, where’s Valentine?” Allie asks as she takes off her coat.
“She’s in her swing sweet pea.” Laura smiles. “Where were you?”

“I stopped at the store.” I say walking into the kitchen.

“Why?”

“I wanted to get you these.” I say, pulling a bouquet of flowers out of the bag, followed by a package of cookies. “I had a talk with my mother. Put things in place.” I say, kissing Laura on the cheek.

“Thank you Carm, these flowers are beautiful.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss my cheek. “I love you Carmilla, no matter what.”

“I know cupcake. I love you too, no matter what.” I smile.
-Carmilla POV-

I wake up to the sound of hushed giggles. I open my eyes to see Allie standing in front of me with a wide grin. “Happy Birthday mama!” She shouts as she jumps in the bed.

“Thank you monkey.” I chime, wrapping my arms around her in a hug.

“Happy birthday Carm.” Jack says, walking into the room.

“Thank you kiddo.” I say, leaning over to give him a hug before climbing onto Laura’s side of the bed. “Where’s mommy?”

“She’s gonna be up here in a minute.” Allie says, lying against the pillows.

“Happy birthday.” Laura smiles, carrying in a tray of pancakes with a candle in them. “Make a wish.” She says, placing the tray on my lap. I close my eyes and blow out the candle.

“Thank you.” I smile, leaning up to kiss Laura softly, and pulling away when Jack and Allie make gagging noises. “Can you get Val?”

“Yeah, I’ll get her, she should be up by now.” Laura says, walking out of the room. She comes back into the room with Valentine in her arms.

“Hello little one.” I smile, holding my arms open for her. Valentine is three months old, she is growing perfectly and you wouldn’t know she was premature when she was born. I kiss Val’s cheek and settling her on my lap.

“We got you a present!” Jack says excitedly.

“Did you?” I say with a mouthful of pancake.

“Yeah, mom hid it in my room.” He says with a smirk, looking at Laura.

“If you know where it is, go get it.” Laura says with a smile watching Jack run out of the room before walking over and sitting on the bed beside me.

“Mama, how old are you?”

“Old enough to know everything in the world.” I exaggerate.

“You’re being silly mama.”

“I know monkey, but I am old. I’ve been around for a while.”

“Have you and Laura known each other forever?”
“We have.” Laura smiles, running her fingers through Allie’s hair.

“Happy birthday Carm!” Jack says, running back into the room with a box wrapped in purple paper.

“Thank you shorty.” I tear away the paper and open the box to see all different things.

“I picked out the candle mama, it smelt the best.” Allie says. I smile as I pull the candle out of the box and see that the scent is pine. “It smells like Christmas trees.”

“It does.” I say, opening the candle and smelling it. “It’s my favorite.”

“You’re welcome mama.”

“I drew you a picture of our family, and mom framed it.” Jack says with a smile.

“It’s very nice Jack, you did a great job.” I smile, putting it on the bedside table. “I’m going to hang it up on the wall. Thank you sweetie.”

“And I got you two presents.” Laura says quietly.

“Well look at you being an over achiever.” I tease

“Why don’t you two go run downstairs and watch your shows before we have to start getting dressed.” Laura says, picking up Jack and Allie and putting them on the floor.

“Okay.” They say in unison and run downstairs. Laura smiles, leaning in to kiss me softly. “Happy birthday.” She whispers against my lips.

“Thank you.” I smile, kissing her again. “So what are the presents because I see only one thing in here?” I chime, reaching into the box as Laura takes Val from my lap.

“You get the other present later.”

“Oh that’s how we’re gonna do that?”

“Yep.” She winks.

“You’re evil Hollis.”

“Mrs. Karnstein. You know that.” She smirks.

“You’re evil Mrs. Karnstein.” I whisper in her ear.

“Open your present.” I kiss her one last time before doing as I’m told. I reach into the box and take out the last present. I unwrap it to see, a leather-bound notebook with ‘CK’ etched in the front. “I noticed you were writing a lot now, I’m assuming it’s helping with your sobriety, at least that’s what I’m hoping. I love you Carm, I love that you’re getting better. I want you to keep getting better; I will do anything to make sure your keep getting better.” She says quietly, tucking my hair behind my ear.

“I love it. I love you. Thank you cupcake.” I smile, leaning over to kiss her. “I love you so much.”

“I love you so much too Carmilla.”

“Thank you, I can’t wait for my present later.” I say, wiggling my eyebrows.
“You’re too much.” Laura smiles, shoving me playfully. “We have to get dressed soon, your mom wants us over for lunch.”

“Oh okay cupcake.”

“Happy birthday to my beautiful daughter!” My mom chimes as we walk into the house.

“Thank you mom.” I say as she kisses my cheek and wraps me into a hug.

“My little girl, her last year in her twenties. I feel old.”

“Oh shut it mom.” I tease.

“Happy birthday you old fart.” Will says, with a smile, walking over to hug me.

“Yeah, yeah. Your endearment kills me.” I smile.

"Yeah well, I can't change things now."

"I know." I roll my eyes at him.

"How are you, how is everything going?"

"It's day by day. I have Laura to thank for keeping me on the straight and narrow, I would be lost without her."

"I know what you mean, I feel the same way with Betty. But I'm happy you're doing better." He smiles, giving me a hug.

“Where’s your ball and chain?” I ask as we walk into the kitchen.

“She’s in the bathroom.”

“How is everything with her?”

“Good, we’re doing really well.” He smiles.

“You’re going to pop the question?”

“Shut up.” He says in a hushed tone. “I might. I just do know yet.”

“When the time is right, you will know. Trust me.” I smile at Laura when she walks into the room with Valentine in her arms. I lean in to kiss Laura when she gets close to me, then pulling away to kiss Val on the cheek. “This big goof is uncle Will, I know you haven’t seen him in a while, and you don’t really understand me, but it’s a friendly reminder.” I say to Valentine, watching her stare at me before smiling.

“Don’t tell my niece I’m a goof, let her find that out for herself.” Will says with a smile.

“Hey Laura.” Betty says, walking into the room. “Hello Carmilla, happy birthday.”

“Thank you Betty.”

“Hey Betty, did you finish that article about the mayor yet?” Laura asks.

“Almost done, I know you wanted it but I’m happy I was able to get a cover story, bring you down
“from your throne.” Betty teases.

“My throne is being a mom.” Laura smiles, letting Valentine wrap her little hand around Laura’s finger.

“I don’t mean for this to be personal, you don’t have to answer if you don’t want to, but did you always want to be a mother?”

“Yes, I did. I love my children, all three of them, very much. I wouldn’t change anything.”

“I would love to be a mother one day.” Betty chimes, looking over at William whose face turned bright red.

“I see this is a discussion you haven’t had yet, Willy boy.” I tease, nudging his shoulder.

“I think we have other things to discuss first, don’t you Betty?”

“Yeah.” She smiles and nods, leaning in to kiss Will.

“Ew.” I say, watching William look at me confused.

“All I ever see is you and your wife sucking face, and you say ew?”

“I’m only teasing, jeez.”

“Anyway, Carm can you come help me feel Valentine?”

“No problem cupcake, lead the way.” I say following Laura out of the kitchen and up to my old bedroom where there was a crib set up for Valentine. “I love you.”

“I love you too Carm.” Laura smiles as I hand Valentine over to her so she can begin feeding. “Are you okay?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?” I say, sitting down on the bed beside her.

“I don’t know, I just want to be sure.”

“I would let you know if I wasn’t.” I say, kissing the side of her head. “I’d feel a lot better once we get home and I know what the other part of my birthday present is.” I whisper in her ear.

“That time will come soon enough.” She smiles, leaning over to kiss me.

“Are you ready Carm?” Laura asks from inside her walk-in closet.

“Cupcake, I’ve been ready since you called me over. I was happy I was able to walk through the front door this time.”

“Okay, close your eyes.” She says, peaking around the door to make sure I was doing what I was told. I hear her shuffling around and sighing. “Okay.” I open my eyes to see Laura standing at the foot of her bed in maroon lace bra and panties. I couldn’t help but blink a few times, making sure what I was seeing wasn’t a trick. “Do you like it?” She asks, her face red and demeanor was shy. Losing sense of all verbal communication, all I could do was nod. She smiles and walks closer to the bed, climbing on and crawling over to me, straddling my waist before taking my face in her hands and kissing me passionately. I wrap my arms around her waist and flip us over. “You never let me top.” Laura pouts.
"You're such a liar." I say playfully. "When you look like this, I can't help myself." I say kissing
down her neck.

"How bad would I be if I said my parents were going to be home in half an hour?"

"Good thing I don't have to take a lot of clothes off of you cupcake." I say sitting up a bit. "I, on
the other hand have too much on." I add, pulling my t-shirt over my head and tossing it aside while
Laura unbuttons my pants. She giggles and pulls down on top of her again.

"I love you."

"I love you too cupcake."

"Are they sleeping?" I ask, as Laura walks into our room.

"Yep, all three of them are sound asleep." She smiles, walking over to straddle me. "Are you read
for the rest of your present?"

"I've been ready since this morning." I smile, leaning in to kiss up and down her neck.

"You need to let me go."

"I don't want to."

"You have to." She whispers, kissing me again before climbing off of me. "Two seconds." I sigh
and sit up in bed, watching her walk into the en suite bathroom. I rub my face a bit, patting my
cheeks to wake myself up a bit. "You ready?"

"Of course I am baby." I hear her sigh before walking out of the bathroom. "Déjà vu." I smile,
remembering the day when we were in high school and she walked into the room in a lace bra and
pantie set. The only thing different about this time was the fact that she walked out in a navy blue
corset with matching lace panties.

"You like it?" She smiles, walking over to me.

"You could have walked out here in a paper bag and I would love it." I say, getting out of bed and
meeting her halfway. I place my hands on her hips and lean in to kiss her passionately. "You're
always sexy Laura, even when you're covered in spit up and are exhausted. There isn't a time I
don't think you're sexy." I lift her up and she wraps her legs around me.

"I love you." She whispers before kissing me again.

"I love you too." I smile, laying her on the bed. "As much as I love this on you, I want to see it off
of you."

"Do the honors." She whispers, pulling me in for a kiss before I pull away and take in the view,
smiling to myself. I start to undo the corset when the faint sounds of crying fill the room. I sigh and
chuckle. "This is what being a parent is?" She laughs, leaning up to kiss me.

"I'll get her." I say, kissing Laura before getting out of bed and walking into Valentine’s room.

"What's up nugget? You have perfect timing." I say, taking her out of her crib. "But I don't mind, I
love mommy no matter what. We could go months without doing it and it wouldn't bother me, I
still get to have her in my arms when I wake up. Look at me talking to you like you understand." I
say, walking over and sitting down in the rocking chair and giving her a pacifier. "Your mommy is
such an amazing woman, I love her so much Val, and she’s very beautiful too. I mean you interrupted the first time we would have done anything in a while, but it’s all okay with me. I know she’s listening in on me, but I don’t care, it’s not like I wouldn’t tell her these things to her face.” I smile when I see Laura out of the corner of my eye. I look up to see her in an oversized t-shirt. “I still appreciate your effort cupcake, but mini muffin here knows how to kill a mood.”

“I know. But we can always get it back right away.” Laura winks, walking further into the room.

“Someone is in the mood.” I tease.

“This is the first time I felt sexy in months.” Laura admits, hiding her face a bit.

“Hey, don’t ever feel any less attractive for whatever the reason my be. You’re beautiful Laura.”

“I think you just being sick, we’ll call it, it made me feel like you didn’t care. The only other time we did anything you were wasted.”

“Hey, I’m sorry if I ever made you feel unwanted or not sexy. I’m so sorry.” I say, getting up from the rocker when I realize Val fell back to sleep. I put her back in her crib and take Laura by the hand, walking back into our room. “I’m not that person anymore.”

“I know. I just feel like we never did anything unless you drank, it made me feel shitty.”

“I’m sorry I made you feel shitty, cupcake. I’m so, so sorry. Is that why you bought this?”

“A little.” She admits, looking up at me sadly. I lean in and kiss her softly and lovingly, pushing her back onto the bed and pulling the t-shirt over her head. I pull at the corset, ridding it from her body.

“I love you.” I whisper against her body before kissing her all over the place, softly and methodically. I caress her cheek and look into her eyes to see she was crying slightly. She closes her eyes when she sees me staring; I lean in and kiss each eye. “I love you more than you could ever care to know.”

“I love you more than anything Carmilla.” She whispers, opening her eyes to look at me.

“Nothing will change that.”

“I know.”

“I’m sorry for everything I have put you through and will put you through. I can’t promise that our life is going to be easy, I will struggle, and I have before. But I know that with you and the kids by my side, everything will be easier. If it will make you feel better, I will make sure we have sex every night.” I say, causing Laura to smile.

“Every night?”

“You think I’m kidding?”

“I don’t know if it will be possible.” She smiles.

“Well I don’t want to schedule our sex life. I mean I could pencil you in for eleven o’clock every evening this week.” I tease, receiving a playful shove.

“We’re not having a scheduled sex life.” She says, leaning up to kiss me.
“Good.”

-Laura POV-

I wake up to the sound of Valentine crying. I open my eyes and blink a few times to readjust to the early sunlight that was streaming into the room through the curtains. I turn to see Carmilla beginning to stir in her sleep. “Are you going to get the screaming child?”

“Yes.” I say, kissing Carmilla’s cheek before getting out of bed and pulling on the t-shirt from the floor. “I know you’re half asleep, but our children don’t need to be scarred when they run in here and see you naked.”

“I’ll put a shirt on.” Carmilla mumbles, opening her eyes and looking at me with a smile. “Your post sex bed head is sexy cupcake.”

“Thanks.” I say, rolling my eyes before walking out of the room and getting Valentine. “Hello monkey.” I chime, taking Val out of her crib and closing the door over to feed her. “This is what being a parent with a sex life is like.” I whisper to myself. “Always worrying about the kids walking in. I miss being carefree, Val. But I wouldn’t change you or Jack or Allie for anything in the world.” I say, kissing Val on the forehead and smiling.

Chapter End Notes

So the teaser trailer for S3 may have ruined me. I can't wait for the full trailer, and I'm assuming I'm not the only one :) I hope you enjoy this quick filler chapter. I don't know how much longer this one is going to be. I still have two other Fics to get back to before I start another (Hopefully I don't start another just yet). If you want to drop by and say hello or discuss this story or ideas for another, don't hesitate to drop by my tumblr; juli-with-a-chance :)

Thank you again for reading.
-Carmilla POV-

“Come on Val, you can do it. Say mama, say it.”

“Carm, she isn’t going to do it.” Laura says, handing me a cup of coffee.

“She will, I know she will.” I say, smiling up at Laura as she sits at the table across from me.

“Come on Val.”

“Carm, leave her alone, let her eat her breakfast in peace.” I sigh and watch as Valentine feeds herself cheerios.

“She’s getting big.”

“She is, I can’t believe this little monkey is already a year old.”

“I can’t either. She’s growing up so fast.”

“At least now is the fun part. We get to teach her how to walk and talk, see how she learns different things. And my least favorite thing, potty training.” Laura grimaces. “Although she doesn’t have a penis she can whip out whenever she needs to go. Jack would literally pee on every surface he could and laugh about it.”

“Well I remember when Allie was potty training it wasn’t hard. Ell even got her one of those potties that sang.” I say, rolling my eyes. I look over at Val again to see her picking at the cereal on her tray, looking at it and tossing it on the floor with a giggle before looking at Laura and I clapping her hands happily.

“She’s being silly.” Laura chimes, reaching over to adjust Valentine’s glasses. “I hate these things, I can’t wait until she gets real ones, these goggle things are ridiculous.”

“Yeah well, they’re easier for her, you know that.”

“Still annoying.” Laura sighs, looking at the clock about the entryway. “I have to get ready.”

“Okay.” I smile as she leans down to kiss me before walking out of the kitchen. I watch Valentine watch Laura walk out of the kitchen.

“Ma!” She shouts, reaching towards Laura.

“Oh you call out for mommy and not me, I see how it is.” I sigh.

“Did she just?” Laura asks, walking back into the kitchen.

“Yeah, she called out for you.”
“You made mama jealous.” Laura smiles, kissing Val on the top of her head.

“Ma.” Val says, looking up at Laura with a smile.

“And who is that?” Laura asks, pointing at me.

“Ma.” Valentine chimes, looking at Laura with a smile.

“Very good sweetie.” I say, kissing Val’s cheek.


“You’re so smart.” Laura says, taking Val out of the high chair.

“Hand her over before you’re later than you already are.”

“Okay. I’ll see you later my smart little munchkin.” Laura says, kissing Val on the cheek before handing her over to me.

“I’ll go put her down in the living room.”

“Okay.”

“Hurry up and get done.” I smile, patting Laura’s ass.

“It’s just you and me kiddo.” I say, walking into the living room to see Val awake in her playpen.

“Ma.” She says with a smile.

“That’s right kid. You have two of us though. That may be a little confusing for some time, but you’ll get the hang of it.” I tell her, kissing her cheek as I lift her into my arms. “You’re super smart though, you’ll get the hang of it in no time.” The rest of the day consisted of me having to watch children’s programming and not being able to get away from Val for more than a second. Every time I got up to go to the bathroom or get a drink she had to come with me. “Alright kid, but you’re going to walk this time, you already kinda know how, but you’re going to do it without holding my hand.” I say, placing her on her feet, her chubby hand grasps my finger tightly. “Let go of mama.”

“No!” She shouts, looking up at me through her honey-brown curls. She shakes her head back and forth causing her curls to bounce.

“Okay, but we’re gonna try later.”

“No.” She shakes her head again.

“You’re stubborn, just like me.” I smile down at her.

“Ma.” She says, wrapping her arms around my legs.

-Laura POV-

“Hello?” I call out as I walk into the house after a long day at work.

“Hey mom!” Jack shouts, running to give me a hug.
“Hi sweetie, where’s everyone?”

“Allie is upstairs playing with her cat, Carm was taking a nap, and Val was taking a nap too the last time I checked.”

“Thank you sweetie. Here, you can take a slice and sit by the TV.”

“Thank mom.” He says, following me into the kitchen so I could put the pizza box on the counter. I walk upstairs and find Allie.

“Hey mommy.” She says, getting off of her bed and giving me a hug.

“Hey monkey, how was your day?”

“Good.”

“Did mama help you with homework before she took a nap?”

“Yeah she did.”

“Good, there’s pizza downstairs. Grab a piece and a juice box and meet Jack by the TV, I’ll meet you down there soon.”

“Okay mommy.” I smile, following Allie out of her room and going to my bedroom. I walk in and find Carmilla and Valentine fast asleep in our bed. I walk over and kiss Carmilla on the cheek, causing her to stir a bit.

“Hey cupcake.” She says, her voice still thick with sleep.

“Hey. How was your day?”

“It was good, we kinda fell asleep for a while after Jack and Allie got home.”

“I see that.” I smile, changing into something comfortable. “I got pizza for dinner.” I say, walking over to the bed, picking up Val gently. I walk her into her room and put her in her crib.

“Her schedule is going to be messed up.” Carmilla says, stretching her arms over her head.

“I have to be up late tonight anyway, I’ll take care of it.”

“Why do you have to be up?”

“I have a few things to edit, an article to write, I didn’t have a lot of time to do it at the office so I decided to bring it home.”

“Don’t be up too late though, you have to get up early.”

“I know.” I smile, walking over to her when she gets up from the bed to kiss her. “I love you.”

“I love you too. Val wouldn’t stop saying ma today. And no.”

“At least she’s talking. I don’t care what she’s saying.”

“This is strange.” I say, setting Val on my lap as I sit at my desk and start working on my article. “You’re up at, nine o’clock, you’re usually fast asleep at this time. Mama is taking advantage of you being up, she’s sleeping. I would think she would be up.”
“I am up.” Carmilla says, walking into the room, her hair wet from a shower. “I showered, that’s probably why you thought I was asleep. I wouldn’t leave you to take care of her and work.” She takes Val from my lap and walks over to the couch with her. “Mommy always thinks I’m doing something I’m not.” I hear Carmilla whisper in her ear.

“I heard that.” I stay facing my laptop.

“If that computer had feelings, it would have you arrested for assault.”

“I guess it’s how I get my aggression out.”

“That’s why I though you went to the gym.”

“No, I go to yoga classes at the gym, that’s to relax.”

“I don’t care how it makes you feel, all I know is that I want you to keep doing whatever it is you’re doing.”

“Is that your well of appreciating my fitness routine?”

“Yes.” She quips; I look over my shoulder to see her smiling widely.

“You’re lucky I love you.”

“I tell myself that every day.” I sigh and get up from the desk, taking my laptop with me to sit on the couch next to Carmilla. She wraps her arm around my shoulder, and her other arm tightly around Val’s belly. I turn to Carmilla and smile before leaning in to kiss her.

“No!” Valentine shouts, putting her chubby hand on my cheek, pushing me away from Carmilla.

“Well then.” I say, smiling at Valentine and kissing her on the cheek.

“Ma.”

“Yes, I am your mommy. I know that’s a lot for you to say right now, but that’s who I am.”

“Yes.”

“Okay, I’m ma.” I smile.

“Ma.” She says, turning to Carmilla.

“That’s right kiddo. I’m ma.” Carmilla smiles as she leans down and kissed Val on her forehead.

“We love you monkey.”

“We love you so much.”

Chapter End Notes

A short chapter to move things forward, seeing as I have fallen into the trap of starting a new story, I will be juggling a bit until I hit a wall on the other story. Thank you all for the support and love for this story, I hope you enjoy this chapter :)
Some Things don’t Change…

Chapter Notes

Season 3 has ruined me in more ways then one. I took the time to finish this up while rewatching it for a third time. The end has come folks, thank you for sticking through this story and loving it as much as you did/do. It means more to me than you could known :)

Some Things don’t Change…

-Carmilla POV-

“Carmilla!” Laura yells up the stairs. “Get down here!” I sigh and get up from the bed, walking downstairs

“Yes my darling wife, what can I do for you?” Laura and I have been married for five years now. It was a crazy five years. Jack is now twelve, Allie is eleven, and Valentine is just turned six.

“Don’t get cute.” She snaps. “I need you to help me with these goodie bags for Valentine’s party.”

“Yeah mama, help.” Valentine chimes, her glasses nearly falling off of her face.

“That’s what mama’s are for.” I say, kissing the top of her head and pushing her glasses on her face before walking over to Laura and give her a kiss on the cheek. “I love you.”

“I’d love you more of you helped.” Laura shoves a box of fruit snacks in front of me.

“What ever happened to candy in a goodie bag?”

“Artificial everything.”

“Says the girl that lived on cookies.”

“Yeah well.”

“Can I have a cookie?” Valentine asks.

“Yeah you can.” Laura says, walking over to the cabinet.

“Does that mean I get one too?” Allie asks, walking into the kitchen.

“Did someone say cookies?” Jack says as he walks in behind Allie.

“You’ve corrupted our children, how do you feel?”

“Accomplished.” She chimes, handing each kid a cookie.

“Thank you.” The three say in unison.
“You’re welcome.” Laura smiles.

“Where’s my cookie?” I pout as I continue to fill bags. I feel her place her hand on the small of my back.

“I’ll give you something sweet later.” She whispers in my ear.

“Oh really?”

“Yeah really.” She smiles, leaning in to kiss me. “Finish filling those goodie bags, or you won’t get your treat.”

“And there’s the threat.” I tease.

“When is everyone coming for my party?” Val asks.

“Soon monkey, before you know it all of your friend will be here.”

“My best friend is Natalie. She was my friend since Perry was my teacher in kindergarten.”

“She’ll be here before everyone sweetie.” Laura says.

“Okay mommy.”

“Are you hiding from Valentine’s party mama?” Allie asks as she walks into my room to find me sitting in the middle of the bed.

“Don’t tell mommy.” I say, waving Allie over. “I don’t want to be down there.”

“I don’t either, but she’s going to find us.” Allie says as she climbs onto the bed with a book in her hand.

“Are you reading Harry Potter?”

“Yeah, I found it on the shelf, I took the jacket off and out it in its place like you taught me to do so it doesn’t get lost.”

“This is the third one, when did you read the other two?”

“Before this one, duh.” She smiles.

“Don’t be smart.” I say, nudging her shoulder. “I just can’t believe you read the other two, you’re only eleven.”

“Well I’ll be twelve soon and I know how to read. Mommy said this was her favorite book when she was little, and I wanted to read it too.”

“It was her favorite book. She used to reread them over and over again.”

“Mama?”

“Yeah monkey.”

“Do you remember my real mommy?” She asks, playing with the corner of the book. “I know Laura isn’t my real mommy, but it was so long ago that I don’t really remember her all that much.”
“Your mommy was a wonderful woman, and although she and I never got along, she was still the best mommy I could ask for you.”

“But you love Laura more right?”

“Aleksandra, you were brought into the world surrounded with so much love, whether your mother and I loved each other that much is a story for another day, all that matters is that Laura stepped up to fill that role with me.”

“Can we go visit mommy? We haven’t gone in a while.”

“We can go visit her.” I smile, kissing Allie on the side of her head. “I think you’re old enough now. Mom wanted me to wait until you were sixteen, but twelve is a mature enough age, I mean, you are a Karnstein, the definition of mature.”

“You and uncle Will were fighting over Monopoly the other day, I don’t think that’s mature.” Allie shakes her head and smiles.

“That’s because your uncle is a cheat.” I say as I walk into the closet and finding the box I was looking for. I rummage through the box and smile when I find the envelope. “Your mother gave me this before she passed away, she told me to keep it safe until you were sixteen, although she said to give it to you on your birthday, she isn’t here to yell at me for giving it to you sooner.” I smile.

“Do I have to read it now?”

“You can read it whenever you are ready monkey, even if you want to wait four more years, just keep it in a safe place until you do read it.”

“I’ll put it in my desk drawer so I know where it is.” She says, getting down from the bed. “Thank you mama.” Allie smiles as she gives me a tight hug.

“You’re welcome sweetie.” I kiss the top of her head and smile as she walks out of the room.

“You’re lucky Allie came out of this room or you would be in more trouble later. Why are you hiding from the party?” Laura asks, closing the door over a bit.

“You know hoards of small children freak me out.”

“But you can’t leave me down there all alone.”

“You’re not alone, Laf and Perry are with you.”

“But they aren’t my wife and the mother of the birthday girl.” Laura says, walking over and wrapping her arms around my waist. “They don’t keep my calm like you do.”

“I keep you calm? I though I aggravated you?”

“Only when you’re being annoying you don’t keep me calm, other than that, you always keep me calm.”

“I love you cupcake.”

“I love you too.” She smiles, leaning up to kiss me. “We have to get downstairs before the girls are done with their project.”
“There better not be glitter on every square inch of the downstairs.”

“There wasn’t even glitter involved.”

“Good.”

“There was paint though.”

“Seriously? Jesus, Laura, there better not be paint everywhere.”

“Perry is supervising, I doubt there will be paint anywhere but the pictures.” Laura says reassuringly.

“There better not be any paint anywhere.”

“Everything will be okay.”

“Never again are we having a party at home, okay? We’ll do bowling or indoor mini golf.”

“Whatever you want sweetie.”

“Thank you for my party mommy.” Val says as she runs into the room in her pajamas and jumping on the couch.

“You’re very welcome sweetie.” Laura says, kissing Val on the cheek.

“Thank you too mama, I had so much fun.”

“That’s all that matters monkey.”

“Mommy?”

“Yes sweetie?”

“When is the baby coming?” She asks, placing her hand on Laura’s small baby bump.

“Before you know it you’ll have a little brother or sister.”

“I hope it’s a brother.”

“Why is that?”

“Because then Jack will have a brother and not be the only boy around. I feel bad that there isn’t another boy for him to play with.”

“That’s very nice of you to think that way monkey. Mommy and I hope for a boy too for that same reason.” I say, kissing Valentine in the top of her head.

“So when they get born we’ll find out?”

“Yep. We’ll wait until they’re born for it to be a surprise.” Laura chimes.

“Okay mommy.” Val smiles as she rubs her eyes.

“Why don’t we get you to bed monkey?” I say, getting up from the couch and picking her up. “Kiss mommy.”
“Goodnight sweetie.”

“Night mommy.” Valentine waves as I carry her up to her room. I get to Val’s room and lay her down in her bed to see that she was already asleep before she hit the pillow. I took off her glasses and put them on her bedside table before tucking her in and kissing her on her forehead.

“I love you monkey.” I whisper, walking out of her room and turning off the light. I walk across the hall to Jack’s room to find him sitting on his beanbag chair playing his video game. “Hey little man, bed time.”

“Carm, five more minutes?” He whines, not looking away from the TV.

“Five more minutes, I’ll check on Allie and then off to bed. I don’t care what you’re trying to beat in this game, but you have to hurry it up.”

“I’m gonna kick your butt!” He shouts at the TV, jumping to his feet. I shake my head and walk into Allie’s room to see her reading under the covers with the lights off and a flashlight. I smile, turning on her switch; I hold back a laugh when her head pops out from the covers.

“Mama! Turn that off!”

“Why? You’re going to hurt your eyes and it’s time for bed.”

“But I’m almost done! I just found out that Sirius Black is his Godfather! And Scabbers is a bad guy! A bad guy mama!”

“Well I think that’s enough reading for you for today.” I say, walking over to her. “Book and flashlight please.” I hold out my hand and chuckle as she hands everything over reluctantly and sighs dramatically. “You’ll find out what happens tomorrow bumble bee.” I kiss her on the forehead and tuck her in.

“It’s getting intense mama. I can’t wait to start the next book!”

“I know sweetie. Go to sleep, come in my room and get the book first thing.” I smile.

“Okay mama, tell mommy I said extra goodnights.”

“I will.” I walk back into Jack’s room to see him standing up in front of his TV. “Bed.”

“But Carm, I can’t save and I almost – I got him!” Jack says, jumping a bit. “I beat him!”

“Good, now save and bed.” He does as he’s told and gives me a hug before climbing into his bed. “Goodnight Carm. Tell mom I said goodnight.”

“No problem kiddo.” I smile, kissing his forehead before shutting off his light and making my way back downstairs. I walk into the living room to see Laura looking through an old photo album. “Hey.”

“Hey.” She smiles, looking up at me as I walk up behind her, leaning over the couch and kissing her softly.

“Do you want anything?”

“No I’m okay.” She smiles, I walk into the kitchen to get myself something to drink before sitting down beside her.
“Whatchya looking at?”

“Baby pictures. I miss them being this tiny.”

“That’s why we agreed on one more tiny person.” I say, placing my hand over her bump. “And we will wish they would never get big and fall into a vicious cycle. But this is our last one. Four is more than enough.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” I smile, leaning in to kiss her. I look at the page of pictures; most of them were of Valentine in this album. “Remember when she threw her bowl of spaghetti across the table?”

“It landed right in Allie’s lap and while Allie was crying, you and Valentine couldn’t stop laughing. You set a great example that day.”

“The kids all said goodnight to you by the way. But it was funny, Allie’s face was priceless.” I turn to face Laura and smile, leaning in to kiss her softly. “I’m happy we were able to raise a family together cupcake.”

“I’m happy too.” She smiles kissing me again. “I never thought it would happen, if I’m being honest.”

“I know. I felt the same way.” I whisper, resting my forehead against hers. “I love you, no matter what I always have and always will.”

“I know sweetie. I know.”

“Come on mama! Come see what Valentine can do!” Allie says, pulling me out of the kitchen and into the living room.

“Okay kiddo, you don’t have to pull me.” I say, letting go of Allie’s hand. We walk into the living room to find Laura sitting on the floor with Valentine across from her. “What’s there to see?” I ask, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Are you ready?” Laura asks with a smile. “Come sit.” She pats the space beside her. I sit down and lean back on my hands. “Just watch her.” I sit there and stare at Val as she plays with the shag rug before looking up and smiling at me. Before I know it she’s getting to her feet and stumbling over to us.

“Well aren’t you getting big.” I coo as she falls into my arms. “I can’t believe it.”

“She’s growing up Carm. She’s walking all by herself.”

“I can’t stand it, stop getting big.” I say, kissing Valentine’s chubby cheek. “I love you monkey.”

“Ma!” She says, placing her hand in my cheek. She then looks over at Laura and smiles. “Ma!”

“That’s right sweetie pie.” Laura chimes, kissing Val on her cheek. “You’re so smart.”

“Val is getting really big mama.” Allie chimes, walking over to sit in my lap.

“She is.”

“Soon she’s gonna be big enough to play games with.”
“That’s right.”

“I love her mama, and I love you and mommy.”

“We love you too sweetie.” Laura chimes, kissing Allie on the cheek.

“Al, put the book away please.”

“Can I hold Troy?” She asks, not making eye contact with me.

“You can hold Troy, yes.” I say, handing her little brother over to her. “Be very mindful of his head okay.”

“Okay mama.” She smiles, taking the baby from my arms.

“I get to hold him next Carm!”

“Of course you can Jack.” I smile, kissing the top of his head. I walk over to Laura and run my fingers through her hair. “Are you okay?” I whisper, kissing her forehead.

“I’m perfect Carm.”

“I love you. Thank you for everything you do.”

“I love you too.” She smiles, leaning up to kiss me. “And that you for all that you do too.”

“Mama?” Valentine asks as she walks into the room.

“Yes monkey.” I say, holding Troy up to my shoulder to burp him.

“Can I hold the baby?”

“Climb up.” I say, looking at Troy once I heard the small burp leave him. I wipe his mouth and put a pillow on Val’s lap. “Remember what mommy and I told you?”

“Always hold his head so it doesn’t fall back and hurt him.”

“That’s right.” I smile, handing the baby to her. “The pillow will help you.”

“I know, I know.” She says, looking down at Troy and smiling.

“He’s tiny.”

“I know he is. Soon he’ll be big.”

“Bigger than me?”

“Maybe one day.”

“But he’ll still be my little brother. Even if he’s bigger than me.”

“Of course sweetie.” We both look up when we hear the shutter of a camera go off.

“Mommy, why are you always taking pictures?”
“So that way when you get older, you will remember how adorable you were little.” Laura smiles, walking into the room and putting the camera on the dresser. She walks over and sits down on the bed. “You are a very good big sister.”


“It’s okay sweetie.” Laura says, walking Troy in her arms. “He’s still a little baby, he gets fussy sometimes, and you don’t have to be scared.”

“Okay mommy.” Val says as she moves to sit on my lap.

“Don’t get upset kiddo. Troy is still a baby, they get scared sometimes when a mommy or a mama isn’t holding them.”

“Okay mama.” After all the kids had their turn holding Troy it was time for bed. Thankfully the routine was set so it was easy to get all three of them to bed in a matter of minutes. After locking up the house and turning everything off I made my way back upstairs and into our bedroom to find Laura feeding Troy. I lean against the doorframe and smile at her, after a moment she looks up and smiles shyly.

“What?” She asks, tucking her hair behind her ear and looking down at Troy.

“You’re beautiful.” I whisper, walking further into the room.

“And you’re repetitive.” She teases, handing Troy over to me in order to burp him. She readjusts her shirt and looks up at me with a smile. “I love you.”

“Now who’s repetitive?”

“Do you think we did good?”

“What do you mean?”

“With raising our family and being together, growing up. We did good with all of that right?”

“We did amazingly well cupcake.” I smile, leaning over to kiss her. “I wouldn’t change anything at all.”

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