

The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 3

The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 3

r

Chapter 3 Ayla

288 Vouchers

Chapter 3: Ayla

I woke up to the first rays of sunshine heating my naked body. I was grateful for the warm night of mid-summer. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't have made it through the night in my human form. My wolf still hadn't re-emerged, and I couldn't say I blamed her. The prospect of seeing Theo again this morning was hard enough for me. Dasha wouldn't be able to handle sensing his wolf again. She had told me he wasn't happy about the rejection.

But it had to be done.

And we had to accept it.

I wasn't going to break Kylee's heart like that. Especially if he actually loved her that much.

She would be happy. And I **had** to find a way to make that enough.

I sat up and looked out at the reflective pool. I stood up and I walked into the water. I submerged myself completely, washing my body clean of Theo, the mate bond, and every dream of finding my **soulmate**.

The ritual wasn't new to me. I did this after my father died. I came here to wash away the grief. And when my mother started to fall apart. When she started drinking heavier and gambling and I realized we were running out of the money Dad had left us. I had to m

ake some tough decisions to keep the family going. Once I made them, I came back here to forget the person I was. So I could be who my family needed

|||

Chapter 3 Ayla

me to be.

1288 (Vouchers

I came here **to** wash away all of the what-ifs and what-could- have-beens.

When I emerged, I started the long walk back home.

When I made it back to the house, I could hear the faint sound

of voices coming from inside. They had already arrived. I quickly collected my clothes from the lawn, putting them back on before heading inside.

I had to pause when I opened the door, bracing myself against **the** intoxicating scent that belonged to Theo. I had hoped the effects would have lessened by now since we broke our bond, but I wasn't that lucky. But again, I shook off the feeling and prepared to push through this like everything was normal.

I walked through the kitchen and into the living room, where, again, I found Theo alone. I could hear Ma and

Kylee down the hall, and I prayed they would be out soon. Theo's **hands** clenched when his eyes met mine. It wasn't hard to read the look of disgust he held in them.

I failed to hide the hitch in my breath, but I still managed to raise my chin. I wasn't about to let him see

how he **still** affected me. Just a few more minutes and we would both be rid of each other, at **least** for a **little** while. Hopefully, it would be enough time **for** the bond to dissipate and free us of all this.

"There you are," **Kylee's** voice rang down the hall.

I turned to **her** with **a smile**, returning her hug **as** she wrapped her arms around me. I held on for **a** minute, letting her

2/6

|||

Chapter 3: Ayla

proximity calm me.

“Where have you been? Why is your hair wet?”

18288 Vouchers

“She went out again last night,” Ma said with bitterness in her voice.

I had to stop myself from rolling my **eyes**.

“Ma, I just went for **a** run,” I said.

“All night?” she **said** haughtily.

How would you know? You were passed out drunk. I cleared my throat and brushed it off.

“I guess you guys need to get on the road,” I said, smiling down at Kylee as I rubbed her arms. Looking at the face of the girl I had **practically** raised since **she** was nine, I couldn't stop the lump in my throat. “I'm gonna miss you.”

“Hey, we'll **see** you soon. Come up whenever you're ready,” she said **as** she gave me another hug.

“I love you,” I whispered.

“I love you.”

She pulled away and I turned to my mother, taking her in my arms despite her hesitation

“Take care **of** yourself, Ma.”

“Kylee, let’s get going,” Theo **said** from the door.

With **a** few more smiles and **waves**, they walked out, closing the door behind them. I was standing in an empty room in an

Chapter 3: Ayla

288 Vouchers

empty **house**. **The** silence was deafening. And it **all** came crashing down. I sank **to** my knees, begging the goddess to just let it all go away, just for a **little** while. I just wanted to feel numb.

I lost track of how long I sat in that spot, staring without seeing. I didn’t even know Zeff was there until I felt him grip my arms.

“Ayls, what **the** hell? What’s wrong?” he **asked**, brushing hair out of my face, forcing me to look at him. “Ayla, what is going on?”

“I found my mate,”

I said, the corner of my mouth tipping up mockingly. “He’s scheduled to be mated to my sister.”

“What?” Zeff exclaimed, anger and concern twisting his handsome features.

Zeff was a good man. He had been there **for** me when no one else was.

He was the only person who

knew everything I went through. And here he was, listening to me tell him about meeting Theo, the mating ceremony, and my rejection. Why couldn’t he have been my mate? He should have been.

“Come on,” he said, lifting me up. “You’re coming to stay with me.”

I didn't protest. The goddess had given me this one little blessing. I was numb. Zeff held me up by my waist and led me out to his car. He tucked me into the passenger seat and disappeared into the house again, only to emerge a few minutes **later** with a duffel bag in hand.

He pulled out and **drove** us **the** twenty minutes to his house. Just like before, he helped me inside, this time sitting me on

ΔH

|||

Chapter 3 Ayla

288 Vouchers

the big, comfy leather couch in his living room. I loved this couch. We had spent a lot of time on this couch, watching movies, talking about **books**, brainstorming ideas for work. This was **like** a second home to me. But even that felt wrong now.

Zeff's phone rang in his pocket. He cursed as he pulled it out, checking the screen.

"Fuck," he said. "Honey, I have to take this. I'll be right back, okay?"

I nodded. He answered the call, kissing my head before walking out of the room. Alone again, I pulled my feet up onto the couch, tucking them into my chest as I wrapped my arms around my knees. Silent tears began to fall. The numbness was wearing off.

It was time to snap out of it. I needed to move on.

I heard Zeff coming back, and I quickly wiped the tears from my **eyes**. No one had seen me cry. Not since the night my father died. I wasn't about to change that now. Not over someone **like** Theo. He paused, giving me a look. He knew I'd been

crying. It always bugged him when I did that. Not that I often cried anyway, let alone enough for anyone to see it. But Zeff was always trying to get me to open up more.

He came and **sat next** to me, putting an arm over my shoulder and pulling me into him. I let myself relax some. This was the first thing since Theo walked into my life that felt normal, felt comfortable. He leaned his head on mine, rubbing his fingers along my arm.

“Did you get my laptop?” I asked quietly.

5/8

Chapter 3 Ayla

28H (Voucheru

His chest rose and fell heavily. “Yes, but we’re not going to worry **about that** right now.”

I pushed off of him, **going to** the duffel **bag** he left by the door.

“I have to **send** Carla my chapters. I didn’t get to it last night.”

—

“Ayla,” Zeff said, getting **up** and coming to pull me away from the bag. “You’re not going to do this. You’re not going to bury yourself in work. You’re going to deal with this – we’re going to deal with this together. Screw him, okay. He’s a dumbass. You deserve so much better than some asshole who doesn’t see how incredible you are.”

I wanted to roll my **eyes**, but it wasn’t just about him.

“He took my family, Zeff. I would have gotten over him just rejecting me because of Kylee. At least she would be safe and happy.”

“Screw them,” **Zeff** said angrily.

“Zeff,” I warned. He wasn’t exactly Kylee’s biggest fan. There was a big age difference between the two of them, **and** she kind of annoyed him. But he always respected how protective I was of her.

“No, Ayla. I’m sick of this shit. They either treat you like a servant or a bank. They don’t care what their actions do to you as long **as** they keep getting what they want.”

“Zeff, that’s **not** fair,” I protested. My family wasn’t perfect, but **they** were my family. They loved me in their own way.

He moved to say something **else** but thought better of it.

Chapter 3 Ayla

288 Vouchers

“Fine,” he conceded. “Then **Kylee’s** happy. **He** can try to keep you from going to see them, but they’ll be back to see you. You believe that, don’t you?”

I hesitated for a moment, but **I** did believe that. “Yes.”

“Okay, then get over him.” He took a step toward me, reaching up to hold my chin. “He’s not the only one who can take care of you, Ayla. He may be stupid enough not to want you, but I’ m not.”

My breath caught in my throat. He **had** told me about his feelings before, but we both avoided going down that road with each other. We knew we could find our fated mates at any time, and we didn’t want to deny each other that.

“Move in here with me, Ayls,” **Zeff** said. “There’s nothing stopping us now.”

“Zeff, you still have a **mate** out there somewhere.”

“Ayla, stop. I’m thirty–four and well–traveled. If I was going to find her, I would have long before now. We both know that.”

Suddenly his lips were on mine. I was shocked, but mostly because it felt good. I felt wanted. I kissed him back, not wanting to give that feeling up. I leaned into him – until Dasha came charging to the forefront, growling and snarling that someone who wasn't our mate was touching us.

I ripped myself from Zeff's embrace. Breathing heavily, the pain of the severed bond renewed. I clutched my chest.

"Ayia."

"I can't. The bond. It's still there. It hasn't faded yet."

778

Chapter 3: Ayla

288 Mouchelt

Zeff

pulled me into his arms. "Okay. It's okay. We can wait. We'll take it slow. But I want you here with **me**. You're not staying in that house alone."

I rested my head on his chest. "Okay."

He squeezed me tighter. **I still** didn't know if we could make this work, but I wanted to try.

Chapter 4 Theo