

Chapter 10 Make Sure You Show Up On Time Tomorrow

Lianne's POV:

Ethan didn't come home last night.

I lay alone in the cold bed, staring at the ceiling until the first light of dawn crept through the windows.

That desperate, reckless kiss from the night before felt unreal now. Like something I'd imagined.

Ethan really was ruthless. He'd set me on fire, then walked away and spent the night with another woman.

Today was the official shoot for Sparkle, our new jewelry campaign.

Even if the bond between Ethan and me was about to end, and my place at Voss Group wouldn't last much longer, I had poured everything into this collection. All I wanted was to finish it properly. At least that much.

But just before the shoot, I got the call.

Sia Payne, the model I had personally chosen for Sparkle, had been replaced at the last minute. By Ivy.

I called Ethan right away.

"You already approved the Sparkle campaign," I said, my voice unsteady despite my effort to stay calm. "Why replace Sia? She fits the brand perfectly."

"Because Ivy's back," he replied, his tone flat, like it was nothing worth discussing. "She needs a strong start. Sparkle's our flagship line, so she'll be the face of it."

It was for Ivy. Now that she was back, he'd do anything to clear the path

for her.

"And if I say no?"

I could accept the bond ending. I could even step aside and let him choose someone else. But I wasn't going to stand there and watch him hand over everything I'd built like it meant nothing.

"I'm speaking as the Alpha of the Thorn Pack," he said, his voice turning cold.

No one in the pack could go against the Alpha's order.

My throat tightened, every word scraping on the way out. "Understood. If that's the Alpha's decision... I'll cooperate."

I turned and walked out, shutting the office door behind me with more force than I intended.

I rushed into the restroom at the end of the hall, locked the door behind me, and bent over the sink, dry-heaving.

My stomach twisted violently, but there was nothing to bring up. I hadn't eaten all morning. Only bitter acid burned its way up my throat.

I looked into the mirror and barely recognized myself. My skin was pale, my eyes red and tired, and the reflection staring back felt like someone else entirely.

My hand drifted down to my still-flat stomach. Tears slipped free, falling onto the cold porcelain sink.

"It's okay, baby. We'll leave soon. Just hang in there a little longer," I whispered softly.

After washing my face, I forced my swollen eyes open and made it to the studio half an hour early.

Everything was ready. Lights, set, cameras. The crew was already in place, dozens of people waiting, the tension obvious in the air. Only Ivy was missing.

I tried calling her. Straight to voicemail.

"Lianne, it's been over an hour, yet Ivy still hasn't shown up," whispered Fiona Ballard, the lead makeup artist. "These influencers just keep getting worse. Give them a little backing and they start acting like they own the place."

She didn't say Ethan's name. She didn't have to. We all knew exactly who she meant.

I tightened my grip on my phone watching everyone hold their frustration in.

Another thirty minutes passed. The entire studio had gone quiet, the tension thick enough to feel.

"Alright, everyone," I said, standing up. "You can pack up and head home. I'll cover today's losses myself and report to Voss Group. Everyone, thank you for waiting."

"But if the company holds us responsible..."

"I'll take it. This is on me," I said calmly.

One by one, the crew started to leave. Soon, the studio fell completely silent.

I sank onto the couch in the lounge area, flipping through a fashion magazine without really seeing the pages.

My thoughts kept drifting back to last night. To Ethan walking away.

Was he with Ivy right now? In some luxury suite, close to her?

Was he kissing her the same way he kissed me, or was he gentler with her?

The deeper I let my thoughts run, the tighter the pain in my chest became, like something dull and rusted digging in and twisting deeper.

I didn't know how long I sat there before the studio door suddenly swung open.

Ivy walked in like she owned the place. She was dressed in designer clothes, a takeaway coffee in hand, moving at an unhurried pace. There

< Chapter 10 Make Sure You Show Up On Tim... +120 Points at most
was a smug ease in every step.

Her eyes sparkled with quiet triumph.

"Oh, Lianne. I'm so sorry," she said sweetly, covering her lips with one manicured hand, her tone dripping with fake innocence "Ethan was just... relentless last night. Kept me up until sunrise. I could barely get out of bed this morning. You get it, right?"

The scent of his cologne clung to her.

When I saw that sugary, fake smile, something inside me finally snapped.

"This is your last warning, Ivy." I stood, meeting her gaze, my voice cold and steady. "If you're late to another shoot because of personal issues, I'll take it to the board myself and have your contract terminated. Sparkle doesn't need someone who can't even show up on time."

Her smile slipped for a fraction of a second before shifting into something fragile and wounded.

She walked closer, hips swaying, then held out her coffee to me.

"Don't be like that. I came to apologize, didn't I? I even brought you this. Special order. Try it?"

"I don't want it." I frowned and reached out to push the cup away.

Before I could even touch it, her wrist jerked suddenly.

"Ah!"

Her scream rang through the empty studio.

The coffee spilled all over her white silk blouse, the dark liquid spreading across the fabric in an ugly stain.

I froze, my hand still hanging in the air.

I hadn't touched her.

"Lianne, I know you hate me. I know you're jealous of what Ethan and I have. But you can't just throw hot coffee at me!"

The tears fell too easily. Too perfectly.

It was an act. A bad one.

"Ivy, if you keep pulling stunts like this, people are going to stop believing you. You're clearly not ready to shoot today, so go home. Just make sure you show up on time tomorrow."

I turned toward the door, done with her nonsense.

But the instant I opened the studio door, I went completely still.

Ethan was standing right outside.