

Chapter 14 Lianne Was Mine

Ethan's POV:

The moment Ivy's lips touched my cheek, there was no warmth, no affection—only a sharp tightening of my spine and an overpowering impulse to pull away.

As I turned my head slightly, my gaze caught on someone standing in the doorway.

It was Lianne.

She stood there, framed by the dim light from the hallway, her face unreadable.

Yet, despite the distance, I could feel the weight of her eyes drilling into me with an intensity I couldn't ignore.

Arthur, my wolf, growled in my mind—a low, uneasy sound that echoed my growing unease.

In an instant, a wave of betrayal rushed over me, suffocating in its intensity.

"My apologies. Wrong room." Lianne spoke, her voice flat.

She even offered a polite smile, her eyes skimming over both Ivy and me as if we were complete strangers.

I couldn't stop the rush of irritation that surged within me as I remembered her in another man's arms earlier. With a cold edge to my voice, I asked, "Dining with a friend?"

"Yes," she answered shortly, offering no further explanation.

Oscar Harding, a slightly tipsy friend who was already familiar with Lianne, let out a laugh. "Well, if it isn't Lianne? What have you been up to lately?"

"Busy with the Sparkle advertisement," she replied, her tone polite but distant.

Oscar laughed again, his finger pointing toward Ivy, who sat on my lap. "What a coincidence. The endorser's right here. Is this overtime for you?"

Lianne didn't take the bait. Instead, she walked straight to the table, picked up an empty wine glass, and poured herself half a glass of red wine, all under the watchful eyes of everyone in the room.

"Since we've bumped into each other, I'd like to propose a toast." She raised her glass, her eyes finally meeting mine. Her voice was flat, almost mechanical. "And to you, Alpha."

My fingers tightened around my own glass, the grip so firm my knuckles turned white.

For three years of our marriage, Lianne had called me "Ethan" with such tenderness, even in our most intimate moments, her cheeks flushed with warmth.

But now, that single word—Alpha—felt like a dagger to the heart, severing every thread of intimacy between us. It turned us into nothing more than cold, distant figures, separated by status and duty.

After the toast, Lianne made to leave, but Oscar wouldn't let it slide. "Hey, Lianne, that's not fair. You toasted everyone, but missed Ivy. She's, after all, our pack's future..."

The unspoken meaning of his words lingered in the air, felt by everyone.

"Come on, Lianne. Toast to Ivy. You'll be working together for a while," another voice joined in.

Ivy, ever the diplomat, feigned understanding. "Let it go. Lianne doesn't look well. Don't push her."

"That won't do," Oscar countered, his gaze shifting to me. "Ethan, don't you agree?"

I looked up, my eyes meeting Lianne's.

Her hand, clenched tightly at her side, betrayed her struggle to maintain

composure.

Just as my resolve faltered, a man appeared in the doorway.

It was the man from the parking lot. When he saw Lianne, he reached out instinctively to take her arm.

"Lianne, let's go," he said.

Something inside me snapped.

My authority was being challenged. My mate, the one who should be mine, was about to walk out with another man.

Without thinking I grabbed the wine bottle, poured a small amount into a glass, and thrust it in front of Lianne. "Lianne, do this for me. Toast to Ivy."

As the words left my lips, even I was taken aback. I knew she couldn't drink alcohol. Yet seeing that man by her side, remembering their connection, stirred something dark and possessive within me that drowned out all reason.

"You're unwilling?" I added, my tone carrying a clear, menacing edge.

Lianne stared at the glass in front of her, her face paling as she locked her gaze onto it.

For what felt like an eternity, she finally reached out, grabbed the glass, and raised it toward Ivy. She drank it all in one swift motion.

The liquid hit her hard, and she immediately broke into a violent coughing fit, her eyes red from the effort.

Without another word, she reached for the arm of the other man, and without looking back, they hurried out of the room.

A thick, uncomfortable silence fell over us.

"Tsk. What's with Lianne?" someone muttered under their breath. "She's gotten so arrogant with those big endorsements."

"Yeah, throwing a tantrum right in front of Ethan. How childish"

In an attempt to win favor, Jimmy Smith, a man eager to please, leaned in with a suggestion. "Ethan, a secretary like her is nothing but trouble. She's so pretty. Why not marry her off to someone random? Get her out of your way, and save her from being a burden to Ivy."

"Marry her off?" I repeated the words slowly, the darkness in my eyes becoming palpable.

In one fluid motion, I drove my foot into Jimmy's knee. The sickening sound of his bone snapping filled the room, and his painful scream echoed loudly.

As he howled in pain and crumpled to the floor, I towered over him. "Don't ever utter those words in my presence again. My staff is not for you to dictate."

I turned to Ivy, my voice frosty. "The driver will take you home."

Without giving her a chance to respond, I stormed out, the weight of betrayal and jealousy choking the air.

Lianne's sweet scent still lingered in the room, now tainted by the presence of that other man. It was maddening unbearable.

Lianne was mine. Even if I didn't want her, I would never allow anyone else to take her away.

