

Chapter 15 Did I Say You Could Go

Lianne's POV:

I all but ran from the private room, not once daring to glance over my shoulder at Ethan's face.

Once outside the restaurant, Frank looked at me with real worry. "Lianne, are you alright?"

I nodded, said I was tired, and hurriedly went my separate way from him.

During the entire drive back, the picture of Ivy pressing a kiss to Ethan's cheek kept circling through my head.

It was so natural, so intimate.

Ethan, who was always proud and unreadable, had actually shown something close to tender indulgence.

My stomach twisted so hard it made me feel ill. A wave of vertigo hit me, and my sight began to blur.

I had no choice but to stop by the roadside, clutching the steering wheel so tightly my fingers went bloodless while I fought to breathe.

"Baby, I'm sorry. I feel awful right now."

Slumped over the steering wheel, I finally couldn't hold the tears back anymore.

It was a long time before I managed to pull myself together enough to start driving again, and at last, I made it back to the villa I used to call "home."

That familiar Rolls-Royce was already sitting inside the garage.

With my handbag gripped in hand, I forced my leaden steps into the living room.

The lights were low, yet even through the darkness, I noticed Ethan at once.

He sat on the couch, still wearing the sharp black suit from before.

He was reclined there with one forearm covering his eyes, hiding most of his features. He looked like he was either resting or lost in thought.

I paid him no mind and went straight toward the staircase.

"You're home?" His deep voice sliced through the stillness in the room.

I said nothing and kept walking upstairs without breaking stride.

I needed a shower—to rinse away the fatigue, and to scrub off that sickening trace of Ivy's perfume that still seemed stuck to me.

Warm water streamed down my body, but it did nothing to thaw the cold lodged inside my chest.

Looking at my pale face in the mirror, I breathed out a long, weary sigh.

After my shower, I quickly wrapped myself in a large bath towel.

When I pulled open the bathroom door, I thought Ethan would still be downstairs. Instead, he was seated squarely in the middle of our bed.

His eyes were fixed on me, blazing and unrelenting.

Under that piercing stare, my pulse sped up. Without thinking I gripped the towel tighter over my chest and said coolly, "I'm sleeping in the guest room tonight."

"Stop." Ethan spoke without warning, clear impatience sharpening his voice. "Lianne, what exactly are you making a scene for? Is this all because I told you to drink to Ivy in that private room?"

I stopped short and looked back at him, one brow lifting. "Do I not have the right to be upset? You disgraced me in front of everyone, and you still expect gratitude from me?"

"Disgraced?" Ethan let out a mocking laugh, then rose and walked straight toward me. His broad figure instantly cast a shadow over mine. "I did it for the bigger picture. Ivy is going to become the Luna of the Thorn Pack sooner or later. What is so wrong about you getting close to her in advance?"

"Luna?" I let out a laugh like I'd just heard the most ridiculous thing in the world, the edge of mockery curling on my lips. "Ethan, did you forget? I am your mate. I would never lower myself to please a home-wrecker."

"Who are you calling a home-wrecker?" Ethan's expression turned grim in an instant, and a violent glint flashed across his eyes.

"Isn't she one?" I held his stare without backing down. "Until our bond is formally ended, anything she does counts as intrusion. You shield her, indulge her, and even grind my dignity into the dirt for her. What exactly do you think you're doing?"

"Enough" Ethan charged forward, his big hand locking onto my shoulder with enough force to nearly break it. "Lianne, stop acting like you're innocent. Who was that man in the parking lot earlier?"

He bent close, warm breath brushing my neck, yet somehow carrying a terrifying chill. "You've wanted out of this bond for a long time, haven't you? You've been dying to throw yourself into your lover's embrace and live happily with him, right? Is that why you signed the Rejection without a second thought?"

Every word hit like a blade, driving into my already broken heart and ripping it to pieces.

As I looked at him, it suddenly felt as though I were facing a complete stranger.

Three years together, three years of loyalty—in his eyes, none of it had been worth anything.

He could spend entire nights with Ivy, shame me in public for her sake, yet he couldn't stand seeing another man anywhere near me.

That warped possessiveness turned my stomach.

"Believe whatever you want." I was far too drained to explain anything

anymore. "Let go of me. I want to sleep."

I tried to tear my arm free from his hold and turned toward the door.

"Did I say you could go?" Ethan's voice split with fury he could no longer restrain.

He jerked hard on my wrist. It happened so fast that I lost my balance, my body tipping sideways as my footing gave way.

"Careful!" Ethan blurted out, instinct taking over as he caught me and dragged me hard against him.

My back slammed into his firm chest, his powerful arms locking tightly around my waist.

But in the middle of that chaotic struggle, the bath towel, which had only been loosely secured around me, slipped off from the force of the movement.

