

Chapter 19 Once Again, I Had Made A Fool Of Myself

Lianne's POV:

By the following morning I was already cleared for discharge.

Right on schedule, the driver waited at the hospital entrance to take me back, yet Ethan never showed up after leaving the night before.

A faint, self-directed smile crossed my lips. What had I been expecting? That the sudden hug last night meant something to him, or that he would put me first and cancel his plans with Ivy?

Once I got home, the injury in my ankle made it impossible to return to the office. I brought my laptop upstairs, settled into the bedroom, and worked from the bed instead.

Time slipped by without notice, and before long, evening arrived.

The door opened without warning and Ethan stepped inside with a tray in his hands.

He had changed into dark gray loungewear, and his expression looked far more composed than before.

"Dinner," he said, placing the tray on the nightstand.

I didn't respond and simply began eating.

He didn't walk away. Instead, he moved toward the cabinet nearby and took out the medicine I had been given earlier.

"This is what they prescribed for you earlier." Holding the white pill bottle between his fingers, he glanced at the label. Then his eyes lifted slightly. "For your stomach?"

A sharp tension gripped my chest, and my breathing faltered for a moment.

That wasn't stomach medicine. It was prenatal vitamins I had gotten through someone, carefully hidden.

To make sure he wouldn't suspect anything I had already swapped the original label with one from a stomach medication bottle.

"Uh... my stomach hasn't been feeling great lately," I said, forcing my voice to stay steady as I reached for it.

Right then, the oily scent from the food drifted up.

My stomach twisted instantly, and a wave of nausea surged up my throat.

Without thinking I pushed the tray aside and bent forward, unable to hold it back.

Ethan stopped what he was doing and placed the bottle down, his brows drawing together as he watched me. "Is it really that bad?"

"I already told you," I replied, grabbing a tissue and wiping my mouth as a cold sweat formed across my forehead.

Before he could question me further, I quickly shifted the focus. I pointed toward my ankle, my voice turning rough. "My ankle's starting to hurt again. I think the medication's worn off. Can you help me change the dressing?"

Ethan stayed silent, studying me for a while, but in the end, he let it go without asking anything more.

Without saying a word, he turned away, picked up the first-aid kit, and sat at the edge of the bed.

Reaching out, he took hold of my injured foot with his hand.

The moment his skin met mine, a faint shiver ran through me before I could stop it.

His touch felt warm, his palm firm, and the light roughness of his skin brushed against mine, leaving behind a subtle, tingling sensation.

Lowering his head, he focused on his task, his movements unexpectedly careful.

As he began removing the bandages, his fingers would occasionally graze my ankle, and each brief contact stirred something I couldn't ignore.

My eyes stayed on him, tracing the lines of his face, from the sharp

bridge of his nose to the eyes that usually held nothing but distance, now carrying a quiet concentration.

He dipped a cotton swab into the ointment and applied it slowly over the swollen area.

Watching the way his fingers moved with such precision I felt a strange sense of being looked after.

Just as he was about to finish, his hand suddenly paused.

The shift in his expression was immediate, turning serious in an instant.

I knew at once. Ivy was reaching him again through the mind link.

Without warning he rose to his feet and tossed the ointment back into the kit.

"I've got something to deal with," he said, already heading toward the door.

"Ethan!" The name slipped out before I could stop it.

His steps halted, but he didn't turn around.

"Will you... come back tonight?" I asked, my voice low, and that faint trace of hope in it made me hate myself.

"I'll try," he answered, his tone flat.

Something tightened in my chest. "Is it about Ivy?" I asked. "What happened to her?"

Only then did he glance back, his eyes turning cold. "Don't ask about things that have nothing to do with you. Just rest."

After that, he walked out without another look.

I stayed where I was, my gaze fixed on the ointment still sitting on my ankle, not yet absorbed, and a bitter feeling crept in.

How pathetic. To him, I probably meant nothing at all compared to Ivy.

Pulling my legs in, I lowered my head against my knees, letting the tears fall freely onto the smooth silk beneath me. ①

Once again, I had made a fool of myself. ②

