

Chapter 20 I'll Take You Away

Lianne's POV:

Ever since Ethan walked out, it was like he had dropped clean out of my life.

Day after day passed without so much as a message from him.

I couldn't bring myself to accept that. 

I kept reopening my social media over and over, scrolling through every half-baked rumor about him and Ivy, until my eyes turned dry and achy and I finally drifted off from sheer exhaustion. 

On Saturday night before turning in, I thoughtfully left a soft, amber light glowing by the bed.

Somewhere deep inside, in spite of everything, I was still hoping he might return in the middle of the night. 

But when I opened my eyes on Sunday morning the sheets beside me were still flat and undisturbed, cool and stripped of any warmth.

I looked up at the ceiling and let out a faint, self-ridiculing breath.

I was so pathetic. The mate bond would be severed tomorrow. He had already stomped on my pride, yet here I was, still clinging to the hope that he might give me something.

But I had loved Ethan for far too long.

From the unstable, brooding man trapped in a wheelchair to the untouchable Alpha he had grown into, I had remained beside him through the worst years of his life. We had slept on the same bed for three years, and somewhere in all that time, I had given him my whole heart. How was I supposed to accept it ending like this?

I stayed there for a long while before finally forcing myself upright.

Using my crutch for support, I slowly hauled myself toward the balcony.

The sun was beautiful today, and its warmth spread across my skin, but it could not thaw the cold buried inside me.

Tomorrow was Monday.

Once the bond was rejected, just as we had agreed, we might still have to stay under the same roof for a while so Harold's condition wouldn't worsen.

But by then, whatever bound Ethan and me together would be gone for good.

With nothing left between us, he could bring Ivy home in the open and parade their closeness right before my eyes.

And I would have no right to protest, and not even the right to feel jealous.

The thought alone made it hard to breathe. I didn't want to turn into some resentful woman lurking in the background, forced to watch someone else's happiness.

Just then, my phone buzzed with a message from Frank.

"Lianne, you said you'd stay in touch more, but you've been quiet lately. My mom's been asking about you for quite a while."

That was when I remembered the casual promise I had made. Reading those warm words on the screen, I felt a small stir in my chest and replied, "Sorry, Frank. I had a little accident at the studio yesterday. A rack came down and hurt my ankle, so getting around is difficult for me right now."

The video call came in almost at once.

On the screen, Frank looked anxious, his brows pulled together. "You got hurt? Is it bad? Why didn't you tell me earlier? I'm coming over right now."

I was going to turn him down, but when I glanced at the house around me, empty and hollow, a crushing loneliness washed over me.

"Okay," I said quietly. "And... could you bring me a small cake? I want something sweet."

Around noon, Frank arrived just like he said he would.

He carried two big gift boxes, saying they were supplements his parents had specially put together. When he saw me limping along with my crutch, his eyes filled with worry.

"You're here by yourself?" He cast a look around the lavish yet lifeless house, as though he could sense that something was wrong.

I stayed quiet for a moment before finally confessing with a bitter edge in my voice, "Ethan and I are mates. But we've run into trouble. Tomorrow, we'll go through the formal process of ending the bond."

Frank looked stunned, clearly not knowing about my relationship with Ethan.

After a long pause, he put the cake down and walked over, his eyes steady and sincere as they settled on me. "I don't know what happened between the two of you, but all I can see is that he hurt you and left you here alone."

He reached for me and lightly laid his hand over mine.

His palm was warm, steady, and comforting.

"If he doesn't know how to cherish you, if this place brings you nothing but pain..." Frank's voice was soft and gentle, yet unwavering. "I'll always be here for you. Whenever you're ready, I'll take you away."