

Chapter 9 Can You Come Stay With Me Tonight

Ethan's POV:

I scrolled through my calendar on my phone. Next week was packed, back-to-back international meetings mixed with pack matters.

"Next Monday," I said, locking my phone and setting it aside. "I'm free that afternoon. We'll finish the paperwork then."

"Okay." That was all Lianne said. No hesitation. No argument. Not even a hint of reluctance.

The way she agreed so easily left a strange weight in my chest, like something lodged there that I couldn't quite clear.

I found myself glancing at her again. Streetlights flickered across her face as the car moved, lighting her features for a second before they slipped back into shadow.

She really was beautiful.

Her eyes were blue, her skin smooth and almost luminous under the passing lights.

Years of training had shaped her figure into something both graceful and strong, every line of her body balanced with quiet control.

I knew that better than anyone.

For three years, we'd been bound together, and in bed, we'd always fit perfectly.

She knew exactly how to draw out the most instinctive parts of me. Even now, if I let myself think about it, those memories came back far too clearly.

But it wasn't just her looks. Her mind was just as impressive.

She had once been the top warrior at the Pack Academy, until she suddenly lost her wolf and had to leave.

After that, she graduated from a prestigious university with degrees in both finance and computer science. At Voss Group, she built several high-end jewelry brands from the ground up. Her latest line, Sparkle, was already gaining serious attention.

A woman like her wouldn't stay alone for long.

The idea that she might find another mate after we parted felt like a knife sliding straight into my chest, painful and impossible to ignore.

Before I could stop myself, I asked, "Do you have someone you like?"

She turned to look at me, her eyes holding something I couldn't quite read.

After a brief pause, she nodded. "Yeah."

That single word hit harder than I expected.

Rage surged up without warning, hot and sharp in my chest. My hands tightened on the steering wheel until my knuckles turned white.

Of course, she'd agreed so quickly. She couldn't wait to be rid of me. Couldn't wait to go to him.

I'd always known there was someone else. Our fated bond suddenly felt like a cruel joke. Like the Moon Goddess was mocking me.

"So he likes you back, right?" I asked, the bitterness slipping into my voice before I could stop it.

I regretted it the moment I said it. But a part of me still hoped she'd deny it. Hoped he didn't feel the same way.

Lianne shook her head slightly, her voice distant. "No, he doesn't. He's been in love with someone else for years. She's his only one."

My stomach twisted. If he didn't want her, then why was she still holding on?

"If he doesn't love you, why keep going after him?" I asked, my tone sharpening "You're ending things with me for someone who's never going to choose you?"

She let out a quiet, empty laugh and turned to the window. "It's not about whether it's worth it. If feelings were that easy to control, I wouldn't be this tired. Anyway, we'll end our bond as soon as possible."

Hearing that she couldn't wait to end our mate bond snapped something inside me.

I slammed on the brakes. The tires screeched as the car jolted to a stop.

Before she could react, I leaned across the console, one hand gripping the back of her head, and kissed her hard. Those same red lips had been on my mind all evening.

Shock flashed across her face. She shoved at me, her fists hitting my back as she tried to pull away.

"Ethan, stop!"

Her scent wrapped around me, clean and sweet.

Something deep inside me stirred, raw and possessive.

I deepened the kiss, forcing past her resistance, not giving her the chance to breathe.

Her resistance slowly faded, her struggles weakening until they dissolved into soft, uneven breaths. Her fingers curled into my shoulders, gripping tightly.

I kissed her with intent, my hand slipping beneath the edge of her blazer, tracing the smooth skin underneath.

My wolf roared in my mind, restless and demanding urging me to tear everything away and claim her right here.

My fingers had just reached the first button on her blouse when my phone suddenly rang from inside my pocket.

I slid my finger across the screen to silence it, but whoever was calling

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would not give up. The ringtone cut through the small space, loud and insistent.

I glanced at the screen. It was Ivy.

Just like that, the heat in my body vanished.

I went still, my eyes locked on Lianne. Her clothes were a mess, and her unfocused gaze carried quiet surrender. Guilt twisted inside me, tangled with emotions I could not sort out.

After a moment that felt far too long, I finally picked up the call.

"Ethan..." Ivy's voice trembled on the other end. "Tomorrow's shoot is a lot. I'm a little nervous. Can you come stay with me tonight?"

"I'm coming," I said, my voice steady, almost distant.

I ended the call and looked back at Lianne.

She had already fixed her clothes. She sat upright, facing forward, her expression blank, as if none of it had happened.

She didn't even glance at me. That quiet distance cut deeper than anything she could've said.

"Let's go home first," I said, my voice tight.

I needed space from her.

Because if I stayed any longer, I might tear up the Rejection and keep her by my side, no matter what it took.

