

Chapter 4 Her Nemesis

Alicia's only concern now was leaving Joshua, so she ignored his question and asked flatly, "Are the divorce papers ready yet?"

That word again—"divorce". Irritation flickered across Joshua's eyes.

"What's the rush?" he snapped, his voice cold and sharp. "My father's finalizing his will, and if word gets out about my divorce, it'll ruin my standing. Now, pack your things—we're having dinner at the Yates Mansion this afternoon."

With Caden's return, the family was throwing a welcome-home dinner for him.

They also hoped that by doing so, it'd lift the spirits of Jerald Yates, Joshua's father.

However, maintaining the charade of a happy marriage was the last thing on Alicia's mind.

"I'm not going," she announced curtly. "Just get the divorce finalized and stop wasting my time."

Joshua laughed, a sound that held no warmth. "Oh, come on, Alicia. Stop pretending. You hid the ring because you don't actually want to leave me, right? You can't stand the thought of being without me."

He leaned in, smirking, and added, "You've worked hard these past two years. Even if we divorce, I'll still take care of you—as long as you keep me happy."

Alicia's eyes widened, disbelief turning into anger.

Hid the ring?

Couldn't bear to be without him?

His arrogant words sounded like nails on a chalkboard to Alicia's ears.



With a sharp sneer, she shot back, "Oh, Mr. Yates, how could I possibly make you happy? Don't worry, I'll return the ring—wouldn't want this plain Jane to irk you, right? Once you have it, we're finalizing the divorce immediately."

But Joshua wasn't fazed by her venom.

He thought he knew her too well, convinced this was just another ploy to get his attention.

Without thinking too much, he tossed a bag at her. "We've got guests today. Dress appropriately, and don't make me look bad."

Alicia looked down at the bag, her mind flashing back to the countless times she had visited the mansion dressed in modest, unassuming clothes—doing everything to blend in, to please him and his family.

But now, with their divorce looming on the horizon, Alicia no longer cared to play the part of a dutiful wife. After slipping into the outfit, she carefully applied a touch of makeup, just enough to bring out the vibrance in her already flawless complexion.

The subtle enhancements accentuated her smooth skin and delicate features, lending her a certain glow.

When Joshua saw her descending the staircase, he froze for a brief moment, eyes lingering.

Perhaps it was the way the dress hugged Alicia's graceful curves, making her seem more alluring than usual.

Or maybe it was the hint of color in her cheeks, as though she had just had the most passionate sex in her life.

Passion? Sex?

Joshua's heart tightened in his chest.

Alicia was still his wife. Who else could've slept with her? He must've overthought. ⓘ

At the entrance of the Yates Mansion, they both slipped into their familiar roles, masking the tension between them with practiced ease.

Alicia casually looped her arm through Joshua's, their movements synchronized as they walked into the courtyard.

Though Jerald was too ill to receive anyone, the grand hall bustled with life, relatives filling the space with chatter.

The noise hummed around her, but for some reason, as soon as Alicia crossed the threshold, a sharp chill pricked at her skin.

She instinctively looked up, her gaze immediately drawn to the figure lounging casually at the far end of the room.

Legs crossed, dark shirt unbuttoned just enough to reveal a sliver of his collarbone, the man oozed arrogance, his presence commanding.

When Alicia's eyes finally met his— a familiar, authoritative stare that pinned her in place— her mind raced as emotions began to surge uncontrollably.

Joshua noticed the shift in her demeanor, his brows furrowing as he asked, "What's going on with you?"

Alicia's breath caught in her throat. One word escaped her lips, barely audible. "Caden?"

Just the mention of his name sent a chill down her spine. To her, Caden was the embodiment of her nightmares.

Due to their families' friendship, their paths first crossed at the tender age of ten.

Caden, having taken a year off, transferred to her school, and from that moment, Alicia's perfect world began to unravel.

She could no longer claim the top spot. No matter how relentless her efforts, no matter how late she stayed up studying, Caden was always a step ahead. He would outscore her by the smallest of margins—a point, maybe two—leaving her perpetually stranded in second place.

Anyone else might have accepted defeat, settled into the role of runner-up.

But not Alicia.

Born into the once prestigious Bennett family, she was raised under the suffocating weight of living up to her family name. Excellence wasn't just a goal—it was the currency by which she could earn her parents' affection.

Failure was not an option, yet Caden had the audacity to snatch away everything she'd worked for with what seemed like effortless ease.

It was as if he'd set his sights on her from the very beginning, and Alicia, stubborn to a fault, refused to back down.

Their rivalry spanned over a decade, a relentless battle fought both openly and in the shadows, and their final showdown took place in college, just before their graduation, at the national competition. 🎯

Alicia poured her heart and soul into that moment, her focus razor-sharp as she aimed for nothing less than perfection. And she achieved it, having garnered a perfect score. But Caden, ever the serpent, had bribed the judges, twisting the results in his favor. Alicia was forced, once again, into second place.

The sting of injustice was deep, but the harshest blow came from her father, Phil Bennett. Over the phone, his voice dripped with disappointment in her ranking.

Alicia, having grown accustomed to his tirades, said nothing. She waited for his anger to ebb, then asked quietly, "I'm graduating soon. Will you come back?"

Her mother, Donna, had always been her softer solace. She comforted Alicia that day, promising they'd be there for her graduation.

But life had other plans. Phil and Donna, rushing back from Itrubisite to attend the graduation, perished in a tragic plane crash.

Overnight, Alicia's world crumbled, left an orphan in this cruel world.

Since that day, she had never challenged Caden again. Afterward, Caden left Warrington to build his career overseas.

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"He's back for the inheritance," Joshua muttered, his voice barely audible.

Alicia cast him a sidelong glance as he continued, "With a family empire as big as ours, an eldest son like him wouldn't give up so easily."

Her brow furrowed slightly.

It was true—the Yates empire was massive, a legacy most would kill for. But Caden had accumulated his own fortune, surpassing even the family's vast wealth.

Did he really care about the inheritance?

Then again, this was Caden. Competing was in his blood. Even if he didn't care about the fortune itself, he'd fight tooth and nail just to win, to toy with everyone else.

The man had a knack for stirring chaos purely for his own amusement.

Alicia had been his rival for as long as she could remember, and even now, the thought of giving him so much as a glance felt like a waste of energy. She turned to walk away.

But Joshua caught her wrist, his grip firm yet tense. "I know you two don't get along," he said. "But he's still my elder brother. We need to maintain appearances."

Her body stiffened at the touch, and she immediately tried to pull her hand free, her skin crawling beneath his grasp.

Joshua's frown deepened. "Alicia, behave," he hissed.

Irritation flared in her chest. "I'm not refusing to go in. Just let go of me first. I don't want your filthy hands touching me."

A flicker of something dark passed over Joshua's face, and instead of releasing her, he intertwined their fingers, squeezing them tight.

Alicia bit her tongue, silently fuming.

As they neared, Caden's gaze slowly lifted, his eyes narrowing in a lazy, almost bored assessment of them.

"Caden," Joshua greeted, his tone strained, meeting his brother's gaze with forced cordiality.


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 +120 Points at most

Caden's eyes flicked to their entwined hands, a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth.

"Your girlfriend?" he asked indifferently, as though he didn't recognize Alicia.



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