

## Chapter 8 Please Me And The Ring's Yours

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Alicia let out a dry laugh before casually pulling two sleek knives, a bottle of pepper spray, and a handful of other self-defense gadgets from her bag.

The clatter of metal and plastic left Hank utterly speechless.

"Ms. Bennett, my boss just wants to return your belongings, not... kidnap you," he finally managed, eyeing the woman's small arsenal with disbelief.

Alicia blushed embarrassedly. "Right... sorry."

Then she lifted at the hem of her skirt to retrieve a small stun gun strapped to her thigh.

Hank's mouth twitched, trying hard to stifle his amusement.

Of all the women clawing for Caden's attention, eager to secure their place by his side, none had ever shown up ready for battle. He'd seen countless beautiful gowns in this line of work, but Alicia—well, she was the first to pair her dress with weapons, looking like she was ready to take Caden down herself.

Hank chuckled under his breath. No wonder Caden always seemed so intrigued around her. She was the perfect match for his boss—an unflinching nemesis.

After receiving the signal from inside, Hank stepped aside and opened the door. "You can go in now."

Alicia took a deep breath. She had steeled herself on the way over, convinced she wouldn't let him shake her.

But the second she stepped into the office and saw the man behind the desk, her walled fortress crumbled instantly.



No, it couldn't be.

"Caden?" she squeaked. As though hearing the cowardice in her own voice, Alicia straightened her posture and lowered her voice. "What are you doing here?"

Caden, dressed in a crisp suit that outlined his masculine figure perfectly, glanced up lazily.

His posture was relaxed, almost too casual, as if he'd been expecting her all along. "Why wouldn't I be here?"

Alicia's head spun. How the hell was this man so calm? She, on the other hand, felt like she was trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Clutching onto hope that this was all a huge mistake, she fumbled for her phone to double-check the address.

Caden's lips curved into a faint, knowing smirk. "You're not in the wrong place."

The atmosphere in the room seemed to drop a hundred degrees. Alicia's clammy hands trembled as she slowly lifted her gaze to meet his. "Then, that means... that night..."

He didn't even blink. "Yes. It was me."

No... Oh God, no!

Alicia felt as though her world had been turned upside down.

Caden, watching her unravel, leaned back in his chair with a lazy air, his eyes never leaving her face. "Still don't believe me?" he asked, his voice a slow drawl.

His fingers moved gracefully, revealing a ring that gleamed under the soft office light.

Alicia's expression shifted sharply as she lunged to grab the ring.

But Caden seemed to have anticipated this, smoothly lifting his arm out of reach.

Alicia, caught completely off-guard, stumbled forward, crashing into his chest.

The sudden impact left her momentarily breathless, his familiar scent filling her nostrils.

Caden's voice, smooth and teasing, rumbled low. "So desperate to hold me, huh?"

Heat crept up Alicia's neck, her ears burning in embarrassment. She instinctively tried to pull away, but Caden's arm dropped, keeping her locked in place. "What's this? Don't want the ring anymore?" His voice was almost mocking, the underlying trap clear.

Alicia's mind raced. It was obviously a trap.

Without the ring, Joshua would be a constant thorn in her side. But leaving it with Caden? This shrewd man's schemes would be infinitely worse.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, she took a moment to carefully weigh her options. Then, determined, she fixed her gaze on Caden and asked icily, "What do I need to do to get the ring?"

Caden's eyes glimmered with amusement, his gaze lingering on her flushed ears. A wicked smile curled his lips. "Take a seat first."

He patted his thigh suggestively, making her stomach churn.

Alicia glared at him, disgust written all over her face. "Ew, don't be gross."

"Ah, but it seems you're not serious about negotiating, dear sister-in-law," Caden drawled, clearly reveling in her discomfort.

Grinding her teeth, Alicia reluctantly inched closer.

Just before she sat down, she asked in a strained voice, "If I sit, will you hand over the ring?"

"Sit first."

But Alicia, refusing to be at his mercy, shook her head firmly. "Not until you promise me."

Caden twirled the ring between his fingers, raising it toward the open window.

Her resolve crumbled in the blink of an eye and she heavily plopped herself down on his lap.

The warmth of his body seeped through the thin fabric of her skirt, an unwelcome sensation spreading across her skin.

Her pulse quickened, the intimacy of the moment unbearable. Every second on his lap felt like torture. "Caden, stop playing games and just give it to me!"

Caden's grin faltered ever so slightly, realizing her patience had worn thin.

His voice softened, though the wicked gleam never left his eyes. "Please me. Make me feel something, and the ring is yours."

Alicia's thoughts swirled in a storm of frustration as she spat, "I'm your sister-in-law!"

"Exactly."

Her face darkened with fury, the heat rising to her cheeks.

Caden's lips curled into a smirk, but his eyes were as dangerous as a venomous snake's.

He always knew how to hit the nerve that would send her reeling.

But Alicia wasn't one to back down. "Fine, but I need to blindfold you," she declared, a mischievous spark flickering across her eyes.

Caden arched an eyebrow, curiosity piqued. "Getting creative, are we?"

"Are you going to put on the blindfold or shall I?"

Caden chuckled, his laughter a low rumble. "Do as you please."

Without hesitation, he pulled off his tie and tossed it to her.

Alicia caught it, her grip tightening as her own nerves threatened to betray her.

Steadying herself, she wrapped it around his eyes, her hands trembling only slightly before securing it in place.

Despite being enveloped in darkness, Caden stayed perfectly still, allowing her to do as she pleased.

Women had never stirred anything in him before—but that night, something within him had changed, like a dormant switch suddenly being flicked on.

Now, he wanted to know what had changed.

Alicia took a deep breath, her fingers brushing against his waist as she tugged his shirt free. A subtle heat bloomed under her hands as they slipped beneath the fabric, tracing the lines of his body.

Her touch, soft but deliberate, sent a faint shiver through him.

However, Caden couldn't help but sneer inwardly.

She could strategize flawlessly when it came to competing with him, yet around Joshua, she lost all sense. All this, for a stupid, cheap ring?

Pathetic.

Then, without warning, her fingers found his most vulnerable spot.

Pain shot through him like a lightning strike, and he jerked, veins popping out of his neck.

"Argh!"

His hand snapped to her wrist, gripping it tightly.

But before he could say anything, a knock on the door broke the tension.

"Mr. Ward," came Hank's voice from the other side, "Mr. Joshua Yates has an urgent matter to discuss with you."