

## Chapter 9 The Girlfriend

Hank's sudden voice sent a jolt through Alicia, causing her to withdraw her hands as though she'd seen a ghost.

But Caden, who was in agonizing pain just now, wasn't about to let her slip away so easily. His hand shot out, restraining her as he barked toward the door, "Let him in."

All the color drained from Alicia's face.

"Caden, are you insane?" she hissed, panic lacing her voice.

They were both a tangled mess of disheveled clothes.

If Joshua walked in now and saw them like this, he'd never agree to the divorce!

Caden, still wincing from the pain, kept his face cold and unyielding. "Now you're scared? You weren't so shy when you tried to break my cock earlier."

Alicia looked at him incredulously, her defiance rising to the surface. "You're the one who dragged me into this mess in the first place!"

Before she could say more, the door swung open, and Hank's footsteps echoed in the hallway.

Without thinking, Alicia turned to flee, but Caden's strong arm snaked around her waist, pinning her between him and the desk.

Desperate, Alicia lashed out. She grabbed Caden's hand and sank her teeth in—hard.

It wasn't just a playful nibble—it was a vicious bite.

Caden's brows knitted together in pain as his grip on her involuntarily loosened.

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The footsteps grew closer, each one chipping away at Alicia's composure. Left with no other option, she shoved Caden away and dropped to her knees, scrambling under the desk.

As soon as Joshua entered, he found a disheveled-looking Caden slumped in his chair, hair tousled, an unreadable expression darkening his features.

Being a man himself, Joshua quickly pieced things together. "Caden, I'm sorry; did I come at a bad time?"

Beneath the desk, Alicia curled into a tight ball, her heart thudding wildly in her chest.

She could practically feel Caden's gaze burning into her hiding place, half expecting him to expose her any second.

A thick, tense silence hung in the air for a few beats.

Then, Caden slowly leaned back, his chair creaking under the movement, and grabbed a tissue to press against the bleeding bite mark on his hand.

His voice, like ice, cut through the quiet. "You sure did. A minute earlier, and you would've witnessed something a lot more... interesting."

Joshua chuckled. "I thought you don't get involved with women?"

"That depends on the woman," Caden replied, his voice cool, almost lazy.

Alicia's body stiffened, a familiar tension creeping up her spine.

Joshua, in an attempt to lighten the mood before discussing business, forced a smile. "Oh? So, what kind of woman could possibly make you break your own rules?"

Caden let out a low, almost sinister laugh, his eyes narrowing. "Do you really want to know?"

The sudden change in his tone sent a ripple of unease through the room.

Joshua's confidence faltered, and his smile wavered. "Who's the girl?" he asked.

For a brief, charged moment, the air between them crackled with tension.

Alicia could almost hear Joshua's gears turning, connecting the dots that pointed to her. But Caden enjoyed toying with his little half-brother.

He let the question hang in the air for a tad too long before casually shifting the conversation. "So, what brings you here?"

Joshua swallowed hard, the words he wanted to say stuck in his throat.

He tugged Lilliana closer to his side, using her presence as a shield.

"I came to talk about the entertainment company you acquired recently," he said, his voice a little too forced. "Caden, I know you've just returned, and I know you probably have an elaborate plan in place, but Lilliana's situation... it's delicate. If you're willing to back off from the deal, I'll pay you double."

Alicia's heart skipped a beat. She hadn't thought Joshua, shameless as he was, would be brazen enough to parade his mistress in public.

Lilliana?

That was the same name Monica mentioned... the name of the person that purchased the drug.

She strained to catch every word, her pulse quickening.

Lilliana, carefully composed, began speaking in a soft, practiced tone as she explained her case.

But Caden barely seemed to register her words. His attention was on Joshua, a cold smirk tugging at the corners of his lips. "Double, hmm? Quite the generous offer. What exactly is your relationship with her to make you so charitable?"

"She's my girlfriend," Joshua replied without missing a beat.

Caden's smirk deepened, his dangerous gaze flicking from Joshua in front of him to Alicia under his desk.

"Your woman, huh? That explains a lot." He leaned back, the mockery in his smile as sharp as a knife. "But tell me, Joshua. Before you make such a generous offer, shouldn't you run it by your wife?"

"Alicia never meddles in these affairs, nor does she have any right to," Joshua said flatly.

At this, Caden cast a lazy glance down at Alicia, who was curled up beneath the desk, trying to make herself invisible.

Alicia hugged her knees to her chest, her face devoid of color.

The poor thing looked so fragile.

Caden tossed aside the blood-stained tissue with a casual flick, his voice icy as he addressed Joshua. "That's enough. Your money means nothing to me."

Joshua had expected this.

He remained calm and quickly proposed a counter-offer. "Then I'll triple it, if that's what you want."

A mocking smile tugged at the corner of Caden's lips. "You must really treasure your precious lover, huh?"

His devilish charm and undeniable good looks made even Lilliana blush.

Joshua's expression hardened. He pulled Lilliana behind him, his voice dropping to a dangerous tone. "If you've got a problem, take it up with me."

Leave her out of this."

Caden's gaze never wavered. "You're not important enough for me to bother with."

A flash of frustration crossed Joshua's face, but he knew better than to argue.

Caden had always towered over him, casting a shadow that Joshua could never seem to escape. Pushing further would only open more opportunities for Caden to humiliate him.

Lilliana, sensing the tension, smiled softly, attempting to smooth things over. "Mr. Ward, I apologize. We were out of line. Since the deal is already set, it wouldn't be fair to ask you to step back. Sorry for the disturbance. We'll be on our way."

It was a graceful exit, sparing Joshua from further disgrace.

But as they turned to leave the office, Joshua's gaze snagged on something—a familiar bag sitting on the coffee table.

It was Alicia's.

