

Chapter 17 A Ride Home

Alicia was taken aback. She glanced back at Caden, her eyes wide with surprise and disbelief.

Caden had an inscrutable expression as he spoke a few words on his phone. His actions were always decisive and efficient, and this time was no different.

"Mr. Ward?" Lilliana blinked out of her daze and called out in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

The commotion had already caught the attention of passersby, and a small crowd of busybodies was starting to form around them.

Lilliana made to get out of the car, but Joshua grabbed her wrist and pulled her back.

"Stay in the car. There might be paparazzi lurking around here." He raised the car window, his sights fixed on Alicia and Caden even through the glass. "I'll take care of this."

Lilliana was still disgruntled. She had meant to humiliate Alicia, but she never expected Caden to be there as well.

How did those two come to know each other, anyway?

Lilliana put her sunglasses back on and huffed in resentment. "That bitch!" she muttered under her breath. "It hasn't been that long since your divorce, and she's already shacking up with your brother!"

Joshua's face darkened when he heard that. As much as he hated to admit it, Lilliana's words cut him.

With his jaw clenched, he unbuckled his seatbelt and got out of the car.

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The sight infuriated Joshua, and his expression turned grimmer with every step he took toward them.

"Caden," he called out in acknowledgment before reaching for Alicia's hand.

"Go on, give him back his jacket," Joshua chided her. "I'll take you home."

Alicia didn't even give him a chance to touch her hand. She pulled back with an indifferent look on her face and asked, "Who are you?"

Caden's face was devoid of any emotions, as though Joshua and Alicia's little confrontation was of no concern to him. But he stood his ground between the two, looming over Joshua like an impenetrable fortress.

"Stop being so stubborn," Joshua said through gritted teeth. "Your clothes are all soaked. You need to come home with me right away."

"In your dreams," Alicia retorted. "We're already divorced!" To reiterate her point, she grabbed Caden's sleeve and clung to it like a petulant child.

Caden lowered his head to glance at her delicate fingers.

When he raised his eyes, he found Alicia staring at him, looking lost and pitiful. "Can you give me a ride home, Mr. Ward?"

"Alicia!" Joshua exploded before Caden could reply.

Why the hell was she acting all coy and flirty toward Caden?

Caden's expression shifted slightly.

To everyone's surprise, he reached out and wrapped his arm around Alicia's waist. He pulled her into his embrace and smiled at his brother. "You should go and deal with your personal business, Joshua. I'll take care of mine." He cast a pointed glance to the car behind them, reminding Joshua of the woman waiting for him inside.

Joshua's hands balled into fists.

Just then, Hank drove up next to them.

Without another word, Caden pulled Alicia into his car, all while everyone stared and whispered among themselves.

As soon as the door to the backseat slammed shut, Alicia withdrew her hand from Caden's hold.

In response, he nonchalantly smoothed the wrinkles on his sleeves where she had grabbed him. "Tossing me aside after using me to your advantage?"

Alicia slid to the far side of the backseat and sat up straight, her legs pressed together, her hands on her lap. "Not at all. I just happen to be aware of your aversion to women. I simply didn't want to upset you."

She pulled the jacket tighter around her body. After a moment's contemplation, she took out her phone and transferred fifty thousand dollars to him.

"What is this for?" Caden asked after receiving the notification from his bank.

"The jacket," she explained. His jacket had been stained with coffee, so he must not want it back, right? Naturally, she had to pay for it.

Caden's eyes narrowed at his phone screen. "This is nowhere near enough. That suit jacket is much more expensive."

Alicia's jaw almost dropped at his audacity.

Why was he so petty?

Not much of a man, was he?

"How much, exactly?" she asked.

"Send me another fifty thousand."

Alicia's eyes widened. "What kind of second-hand jacket costs a hundred thousand?"

Caden leaned back in his seat and drawled, "If you don't have the money, then you don't need to pay."

He had barely finished speaking when Alicia quipped, "Thanks, then."

It was Caden's turn to be speechless.

But Alicia wasn't done yet. She pushed her luck further by saying, "Why don't you be a dear and send me back my fifty thousand altogether?"

Caden's upper lip twitched. He unlocked his phone and accepted the money transfer without saying a word.

Alicia let out a small gasp of indignation.

As the car cruised down the highway, Alicia leaned her head against the window. She felt sticky and uncomfortable. Now and then, she would tug at her collar to get some air and keep her body from suffocating in her wet clothes.

Luckily for her, Caden always kept a change of clothes in his car.

He pulled out one of his extra shirts and tossed it at her. "Change into that."

Alicia hesitated, unsure of how to feel about his offer. "It's all right. I'll take a shower as soon as I get home."

"The smell of coffee is about to knock me out," Caden replied flatly, not even looking at her. "It's starting to reek in this confined space."

Alicia gaped at him.

Was this bastard trying to insult her or was he suddenly swearing off coffee for the rest of his life?

Still, Alicia felt awkward to change in the car.

Sensing her reluctance, Caden closed the partition, effectively blocking Hank's view of the back seat.

Alicia gingerly removed the jacket. "Can you turn around as well?" she asked warily.

Caden raised an eyebrow, his gaze lingering on her chest. "Why all the fuss over A cups?"

Alicia's face flushed with indignation. She looked down and studied her chest for a moment, then brazenly pulled her shoulders back to puff out her girls. "Is there something wrong with your eyes? What A cup?"

Caden's lips curled into a smirk. He could almost feel the softness of her breasts as if they nestled against his palms. "Looks can be deceiving. One needs to feel the weight of it to know for certain."

Alicia's face, ears, and neck turned an alarming shade of red. With a huff, she turned her back to him and quickly changed into his shirt.

Caden shamelessly watched her, and took a particular interest in her slender waist. "Calling it an A cup is generous as it is," he continued to critique her. "If A-minus is a thing, it would be a more fitting measurement."

Unable to take any more of his snide comments, Alicia whirled around and threw the soiled jacket at his face. "Go to hell, Caden!"

Caden casually dropped the jacket to the floor, completely unfazed. "What, can't handle the truth?"

Alicia rolled her eyes. "Please! Stop projecting your own humility onto me."

Caden shrugged his shoulders and hummed. He saw no reason to defend himself. After all, there was no truth to her claims.

Opening the partition again, Caden happened to glance at the rearview mirror, and noticed that Joshua's car was tailing them.

He chuckled under his breath.

Alicia also noticed, but her reaction was a stark contrast to Caden's amusement. "Hank," she said, leaning over to the driver's seat, "can you please pull over by that trash bin up ahead?"

Hank had no idea what she was planning, but he complied without batting an eye.

As their car slowed down, so did Joshua's.

From behind the wheel, Joshua watched as the rear window of Caden's car rolled down. Then a piece of clothing flew out of the car, landing smack-dab into the trash bin.

Joshua's brows knitted.

"Wasn't that Alicia's dress?" Lilliana exclaimed in a shrill voice. "Why is she throwing it away? Wait, what is she wearing then? Oh, my! Is she and Caden actually... Are they getting it on in the car?!"

Joshua's hands tightened around the steering wheel, so much so that his veins bulged against his skin. 

