

Chapter 19 Why Are You So Afraid Of Alicia

The sleek black car rolled to a stop in front of the aging apartment complex.

Alicia stepped out without a glance back, her heels clicking softly on the pavement as she walked away. Inside the car, Hank watched her retreating figure.

With a wry smile tugging at the corners of his mouth, he broke the silence. "Mr. Ward, you like Miss Bennett, don't you?"

Caden's face remained impassive, his expression as unreadable as ever.

"Have you been drinking? What's with the bullshit?"

Hank cleared his throat awkwardly, feeling the shift in the atmosphere. "But, if you didn't like her, then why did you kiss her?"

A slight crease formed between Caden's brows as he turned his head just enough to catch Hank's eye in the rearview mirror. "If the moment calls for it, I could kiss anyone—even you."

Hank blinked, thrown completely off guard. "Huh?"

Caden, uninterested in Hank's confusion, shifted his gaze toward the worn building before them.

The place was old—not exactly dilapidated, but far from comfortable, with peeling paint and windows that had seen better days.

Compared to Joshua's luxurious villa, this was a stark contrast—a far cry from the life Alicia had once known.

She had clearly left with nothing but her pride, and this apartment was the bitter reminder.

Typical Joshua. He never left anything behind for those he discarded.

Leaning back in his seat, Caden's fingers drummed rhythmically on the armrest, his expression cold and detached. "Let's go."

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At the hospital, Lilliana lay in bed, rigid with worry.

Her hands rested protectively over her small belly, her breath shallow as she barely dared to move. Her fear for the baby consumed her every thought.

Joshua hovered over her, dutiful and attentive. He catered to her every whim, making sure the press couldn't get a whiff of where they were. Every detail was handled with precision—he couldn't afford to let a single photograph leak to the media.

By the time evening rolled in, exhaustion settled over him like a heavy weight. He exhaled slowly, finally finding a moment of peace, though it was far from restful.

Lilliana, her earlier anger now softened by his efforts, still refused to meet his gaze.

The tension between them lingered, stubborn as ever, until Joshua began his gentle coaxing. Slowly, she relented, letting him hold her, though a shadow of warning still hung in her eyes.

"If you ever yell at me like that again," she murmured, her voice low but firm, "I'm leaving you."

Joshua fell silent, fixing his contemplative gaze on her.

A soft chime from his phone broke the silence.

Joshua shifted in his seat, avoiding Lilliana's curious gaze as he checked his phone.

"Mr. Yates, Mr. Ward dropped Mrs. Yates off at the apartment complex and left shortly after. We've kept a close watch all night, and no one else has entered Mrs. Yates' home."

Without a word, Joshua deleted the message, his expression unreadable.

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When Lilliana was finally discharged from the hospital, the first thing she heard was news of the competition for the theme song.

"Alicia?" she muttered, her brows furrowing in disbelief. Had she heard correctly? A scornful smirk tugged at her lips. "She wants to compete

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with me?"

Gerry, with an amused grin, nodded. "Yes, that's right. Alicia, Joshua's wife."

Lilliana's expression stiffened, her nails digging into her palm as she gritted her teeth. "They're already divorced."

"Is that so?" Gerry arched an eyebrow innocently. "I hadn't heard. I thought they were still keeping their marriage under wraps."

The comment prickled at Lilliana's nerves, making her wonder if Gerry harbored some unspoken grudge against her. But she quickly brushed the thought aside, deciding she was just overthinking things.

"I don't care if Alicia's competing against me," she said with a dismissive wave of her hand. "Rest assured, Mr. Hopkins. I won't disappoint you."

Gerry couldn't help but burst into laughter, his howls filling the entire room.

"Oh, I'm betting on Alicia," he said, his voice casual yet cutting.

Lilliana's smile faltered, a chill spreading through her veins.

"But don't take it too hard," he added with a chuckle. "Caden's rooting for you. I'm just in it for the thrill of the challenge."

Internally, Lilliana scoffed at Gerry's apparent lack of taste. Alicia? Really?

As soon as she stepped outside, she wasted no time pulling out her phone and dialing Joshua.

"Can you still reach that songwriter, Iris?" she demanded, her tone brisk.

Joshua, preoccupied, responded absentmindedly. "Who's Iris?"

"The artist who wrote my song last year," Lilliana snapped, quickly lowering her voice as she glanced around to ensure no one was listening. "You know, the ghostwriter. Find her for me. I need another song."

Joshua barely looked up from his task. "You're working with Caden now," he replied flatly. "Don't cheat; you'll just get caught."

"But I'm in the middle of a competition!" Lilliana's eyes gleamed with fierce determination. "I'm competing against Alicia. I have to outshine her completely!"

Beneath her boastful tone, however, lingered a trace of unease.

Her recent rise to fame had been swift, but her new songs? They lacked the spark that propelled her to stardom in the first place.

She needed to crush Alicia, but writing her own music was out of the question.

Joshua hesitated, Alicia's name causing him to falter, and he finally tore his focus away from his work.

"What do you mean she's competing with you?" he asked slowly, his voice strained with curiosity. "Why would she do that?"

"Why else?" Lilliana scoffed in disdain. "She's jealous of me—overestimating herself, as usual."

Joshua stared into space in a daze.

Was Alicia going after Lilliana because of him?

"Okay, I'll find Iris for you," Joshua said in a cheery tone, snapping out of his trance. "But no more 'ghost-singing', understood? If you get caught, Caden will destroy you."

"Whatever." Lilliana rolled her eyes, dismissing the warning.

Joshua pulled out his phone, quickly tracking down Iris' contact information. He offered the same fee as last time, certain she'd accept.

But Iris' response was swift and blunt. "It's been a while. My rates have changed."

"Then name your price."

"Five million."

Joshua's eyes nearly popped out of his head. "Last year, you only charged three hundred thousand!"

"Do you want my services or not?"

His jaw clenched. Spending that much on Lilliana's behalf wasn't part of

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the plan. Irritated, he called up Lilliana, his tone edged with impatience. "You'll have to write the song yourself."

"I haven't written in ages," she stammered, nervously tugging at her sleeve. "I'm out of practice, and my voice... it's not what it used to be. Five million is fine, but she has to sing it for me. Just like last year."

Joshua's lips curled into a mocking smile. "Lilliana, why are you so afraid of Alicia?"



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