

## Chapter 114 Partners

Caden's expression was grim.

Noticing that, Alicia felt a pang of guilt. Without even knowing it, she had caused him some deep-seated trauma. "Why don't we look for the nearest hotel and get a room, so you can wash up?"

He scowled at her. "Do you really expect me to get in the car and drive when I'm this filthy?"

Alicia didn't know how to respond to that. She knew she was at fault here. She was in no position to argue, no matter how pissy Caden got.

"All right, how about I go buy you some body wash?" she suggested. "I need to buy a few things, anyway. I can get you the stuff you need."

Caden almost nodded in agreement when a thought struck him. His eyes darted to her lower half. "Are you wearing any underwear?"

Alicia blinked, visibly taken aback. "No," she answered, instinctively squeezing her legs together. "I was just about to buy some."

The hospital only provided gowns for the patients. Personal effects like undergarments were not included.

Alicia had been planning to buy a set of disposable underwear to use during her stay.

Caden gritted his teeth. He wasn't about to let her wander around without panties. He glanced back toward the bathroom. For a moment, the only sound that could be heard was the steady drip of the water from the faucet. "Hand soap it is, then."

Alicia awkwardly touched her nose. "Sorry."

"If you're really sorry, then you'd better start thinking about how to make it up to me."

Her head jerked up at that, but Caden had already disappeared into the bathroom, shutting the door behind him with a loud bang.

Alicia lay on the bed and took out her phone to text Monica that she was safe.

"I'm coming over right now," Monica replied. "Which ward are you in?"

Alicia basked in the warmth that her friends brought her. She promptly sent Monica the address.

A few minutes later, she heard Caden calling out from the bathroom. "Hand me my clothes, will you?"

Alicia glanced at the back of her hand. It was still attached to an IV drip. Nevertheless, she got off the bed and gingerly pulled the drip stand along as she took his clothes to the bathroom.

Knowing that he was naked, Alicia only opened the door a crack and thrust his clothes inside without looking.

"Come on, bring them in here," Caden chided.

Alicia kept her face averted. "Don't you think that would be a bit inappropriate?"

"What do you mean? You've already seen every inch of my body, haven't you?"

That had her sputtering. "That doesn't mean I should just take every chance to look at your naked body!"

Thankfully, Caden didn't say anything more. When he grabbed the clothes out of her hand, Alicia quickly closed the door and made her way back to the bed.

She had barely finished setting the drip stand back in place when Caden emerged from the bathroom, impeccably dressed as always.

Seeing her struggle, he strode over and lifted her onto the bed in one fluid motion.

"Thanks," Alicia said sheepishly. "Don't worry, I'll be sure to return the



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"Thanks," Alicia said sheepishly. "Don't worry, I'll be sure to return the favor next time you're hurt."

Caden glared at her. Next time? Was she hexing him or something? It wouldn't be such a loss if she just kept her mouth shut.

Alicia tucked herself under the blanket and asked, "Did anything else happen after I passed out? Did the Reyes family come over?"

"Yes," Caden replied. "They intend to apologize to you in person once you're fit to be discharged."

Alicia's chest tightened. "Are they really going to apologize, or will they take the chance to finish me off?"

Ted had suffered a great deal. Without Caden's protection, she would be a sitting duck, waiting for her hunters to fire the first shot.

They could torture her however they wanted, for as long as they wanted.

But Caden already knew she would think these things. "That's why I turned them down on your behalf."

Alicia breathed a sigh of relief. "Good job."

Caden grabbed a pack of tissues and began wiping his hands.

"You might have dodged a bullet today, but you won't always be so lucky. Although you got hurt within the Gray family's property, you should know that it is of no consequences to them, or the Yates family, for that matter. They can make it all go away with a snap of their fingers and a thick wad of cash. But the same could not be said for the Reyes family. They will definitely go after you to avenge Ted, and they will not be merciful."

Alicia fell silent. Her hands slowly balled into fists.





Caden glanced at her when she said nothing. He tossed the tissue into the trash and sat on the bed. Reaching out, he gently pried her fingers open, one by one, and set her hand, palm down, on the blanket.

"Are you scared? If that's the case, then the most sensible thing to do is to find someone powerful to back you up. Don't you agree?"

Alicia looked up, and she was met by his deep, meaningful gaze.

For a few seconds, she could do nothing more than stare at Caden in a daze.

She was torn, her emotions warring with her sense.

"Certain paths may appear absurd at first glance," Caden said, "but they may turn out to be the easiest route. Likewise, the steady, well-trodden roads may well lead you to a dead end. It's all about making the right choice."

"You're talking just like Joshua," Alicia muttered.

"Well, with me, there is mutual consent," Caden pointed out in an indifferent tone. "Can you say the same for Joshua?"

Alicia was at a loss for words yet again. "When did you find out?"

Caden shrugged. "When he touches you, you physically recoil. When I touch you, you get wet."

Alicia let out a small gasp.

Did this man have no sense of propriety at all?

She pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes. "You knew my intentions toward the Gray family from the start, but you didn't stop me. It's because you also wanted Joshua to fall from grace, right?"

"It's not just him," Caden said blandly. "The entire Yates family."

Alicia remembered the dream she had. Who would have thought that the mighty Caden Ward had endured such a difficult childhood?

"Your target is Joshua, and mine is the Yates family. If we do this, we



will have a clear deal. We will be partners. This isn't some friends with benefits type of situation, do you understand?" Caden leaned in slightly, as if to emphasize his next words. "It's completely different from your current relationship with Joshua."

Alicia's heart wavered.

She decided to be honest. "I've been staying with the Yates family because I want to use this identity to accomplish my goals. I'm nowhere near there yet, so I can't leave for now."

Caden was blunt as well. "Have you slept with Joshua during this time?"