

## Chapter 31 Keep Praising

As Alicia and Caden approached the entrance of the restaurant, they saw Gerry stepping out from inside.

He found himself standing right between them and asked, "Did you experience any trouble on the way here?"

Caden responded casually, "Everything was taken care of."

Gerry still looked a bit shaken as he pressed further. "Did you really run into something? Thank goodness you went to check on it. But why were you so eager to find Alicia at that moment?"

Caden paused for a moment, casting a quick glance at Alicia.

"I lost something and needed to check the dressing room. It's a flat one," he explained.

"What the fuck?" Alicia growled inwardly.

She could tell what he meant by that. "Caden, you're nuts," she grunted.

Gerry frowned in confusion. "What in the world are you talking about? A flat one? What exactly is that?"

Alicia remained silent, choosing not to respond.

Caden smiled slightly, enjoying the exchange.

Once they entered the private room, Alicia turned to Gerry and asked, "Today, Lilliana experienced a major incident. As her boss, why didn't Caden take any action?"

Gerry chuckled at her question. "Caden purchased the company that Lilliana works for just for fun. He's a relaxed boss who doesn't stress about things."

"But with such a significant loss, doesn't he care at all?" Alicia pressed.

"A loss?"

Gerry nearly burst into laughter. "You've been arguing with Caden for such a long time, and you still don't understand him."

Alicia's curiosity deepened. "Lilliana is under his supervision now. Their interests are connected. How can there be no loss involved?"

Gerry spoke to her without reservation. "Before Caden returned to the country, he already acquired several major platforms. He just hadn't made any public announcements about it. Now, with the promotion of Lilliana's new song, all the money that the Green family and Joshua invested is going straight into Caden's pocket."

Alicia stood there, completely stunned.

It finally clicked for her that Caden's strategy was designed to outsmart Joshua.

Caden was well aware that Joshua held a grudge against him. He was always eager to compete in every aspect of their lives.

Even though Joshua lacked the funds, he would undoubtedly redirect money from his own company to keep up with Caden in supporting Lilliana.

In the end, all of Joshua's efforts would amount to nothing.

The money had vanished, Lilliana was exposed for lip-syncing, and it was only logical for her to terminate her contract with the company.

Caden turned a profit without incurring any losses, and in the process, he succeeded in repulsing Joshua.

Alicia turned her gaze toward Caden.

He took a slow drag from his cigarette, the smoke curling around him.

A smile lingered on his lips. It was a blend of sophistication and mischief.

Alicia couldn't help but mutter, "Cunning."

He truly was cunning.

Caden flicked the ash from his cigarette and casually remarked, "Keep the compliments coming. I enjoy hearing them."

Alicia asked, "So, did you know all along that Lilliana was lip-syncing?"

"I knew that her song was purchased." Caden maintained a steady gaze on her. "I just didn't expect that the seller would be you, Miss Bennett."

Alicia responded with a surprised, "Oh."

"So, when you went to the dressing room looking for me, your intention was to praise me," she continued.

Caden then looked away, chuckling as he said, "Did your dignity also end up in my car?"

Alicia pressed her lips together, trying to hide her frustration.

Gerry watched the interaction between them.

"It has been so many years. Aren't you both tired of fighting?" Gerry asked thoughtfully. "This time, you are both targeting Joshua. Why not put your differences aside and join forces?"

Alicia's smile faded quickly.

Her expression turned grim, and her brows furrowed in impatience as she processed his words.

Caden remained unfazed as he said, "I cannot align myself with someone so foolish."

Gerry stood there, momentarily at a loss for words.

Noticing the tension in the air, he cleared his throat and suggested, "Would you like a drink? I have some excellent options."

Alicia shook her head. "I'll pass. I tend to get drunk easily."

Caden stayed quiet, showing that he had no interest in drinking either.

After Gerry poured himself some drinks, he became noticeably more talkative. He asked with genuine curiosity, "Do you think Joshua will

continue to hold onto Lilliana after this mistake?"

Alicia took a sip of her juice and replied, "I recall you don't interact much with Joshua. What makes you dislike him so much?"

Gerry chuckled in response.

"It's because he and Caden don't get along!" In a confident voice, he declared, "Anyone who crosses my best friend also makes an enemy of me."

Alicia was at a loss for words.

In a clear voice, Caden stated, "He's almost drunk, and he's putting on a show for you to sway your emotions."

Alicia's mouth twitched.

"Has Joshua ever antagonized you?" she asked.

Caden chuckled at that. "Why do you sound like you're interrogating me? Do you feel sorry for that asshole?"

"No, but if you're annoyed, you don't need to answer," said Alicia.

"I am annoyed. Your question is frustrating."

The air became rife with tension.

That was the nature of the relationship between Alicia and Caden. Invisible conflicts often erupted without warning.

These moments served as reminders of their sharp and irreconcilable past.

Before long, Gerry became completely intoxicated.

He slumped over the table, dozing off into a deep sleep.

Caden, on the other hand, kept drinking. His emotions remained hidden behind an unreadable facade.

The private room fell into an unsettling silence.

Alicia sensed that Caden's current coldness was a result of her presence, prompting her to consider leaving.

Gerry lay heavily intoxicated, and she thought about reminding Caden of this fact. However, she hesitated, choosing to keep her thoughts to herself.

Just as she prepared to stand up, a bright light suddenly illuminated the building across from the window.

Instinctively, Alicia turned her gaze toward it.

Across the street stood an enormous billboard.

At that moment, a photo appeared on the screen.

It was a photo of Joshua and Lilliana.

In the image, they appeared particularly close, both smiling brightly at the camera.

As the screen scrolled, bold words caught Alicia's attention. "Lilliana, will you marry me?"