

Chapter 40 A Gift For The Big Shot

Alicia had also begun to notice that someone had been quietly helping her from behind the scenes.

Her first instinct was to call Monica.

When Monica answered, she sounded frustrated. "I hired some trolls to tear Lilliana apart online," she admitted. "But I don't have the money to censor the trending searches. That stuff costs a fortune, and my dad locked my credit card. Ugh, I'm so done with him!"

Alicia mulled over Monica's words, and only one other person came to mind: Gerry.

Without delay, she called him, and her suspicions were confirmed.

Feeling a bit uneasy, Alicia said softly, "It's just gossip—people talking behind my back. It's not like they're hurting me physically. You really didn't need to waste your money on this..."

Gerry, lounging comfortably, put her on speaker but didn't respond right away. Instead, he glanced over at Caden, who was sitting across him.

Caden, with his long legs casually crossed, had his eyes glued to his phone, mindlessly scrolling. He showed no signs of joining the conversation.

Unbothered, Gerry turned his attention back to Alicia. "I didn't spend that much," he finally replied. "The real help came from another big shot."

Alicia's brow furrowed with confusion. "Who's this mysterious benefactor?"

Once again, Gerry's gaze flicked toward Caden, but he didn't reveal the answer right away, instead choosing to tease her.

"Are you free?" he asked, segueing into another topic smoothly. "Come over. We can chat, have a little fun, and I'll introduce you to this 'big shot.'"

Alicia caught the implication immediately.

She always had a good working relationship with Gerry, and now that she was in trouble, he was helping her by offering her an opportunity to meet someone powerful.

This was how things worked—mutual benefits, carefully cultivated relationships.

"So, what's this big shot like?" she probed further. "I'd like to give him something."

At this, Gerry's eyes gleamed with mischief. "He's... well, let's just say he's not as strong as he used to be. Maybe you could get him some Viagra."

Alicia was momentarily speechless, then shot back with dry humor, "Mr. Hopkins, are you running some shady side business by any chance?"

Gerry couldn't help but burst into hearty laughter. "If you two ever manage to strike a deal, it'll be nothing short of a miracle."

A glint of realization flashed in Alicia's eyes.

This big-shot Gerry was hinting at, could it be...?

After ending the call, Gerry couldn't help but lick his lips and grin. "I'm genuinely curious, Caden. Why'd you suddenly decide to help Alicia this time?"

Caden paused, his eyes never leaving the screen. After a few quiet seconds, he replied loftily, "It's not helping. Think of it as a down payment."

Gerry's brow lifted in intrigue. "What do you mean by that?"

Caden didn't answer, his expression unreadable.

Just then, a light knock on the door interrupted their conversation.

The manager entered with a warm smile and announced, "Mr. Ward, Mr. Hopkins, your drinks have arrived."

Behind him, a few strikingly attractive women followed, each scantily clad.

They sauntered in and served the drinks, but they didn't leave right away. Instead, they gracefully slid into the seats beside Caden and Gerry.

Gerry, wasting no time, wrapped his arm around the waist of the girl beside him, pulling her close as she giggled, feeding him a sip of his drink. He leaned back in his chair, obviously enjoying the attention.

Caden, however, didn't so much as acknowledge the girl who sat beside him.

His gaze lingered on her for a moment— cold, distant, as if he were studying her rather than savoring the moment.

The girl, unaccustomed to such an aloof reception, flushed under his icy stare. "Mr. Ward," she said with a soft, hopeful tone, "is there anything you want to eat? I can feed you."

Caden's expression hardened, his eyes darkening with irritation. "No need," he said flatly, turning his head away as if her presence disgusted him. "And keep your distance."

The girl's smile faltered, clearly caught off guard by his sudden shift in mood.

But she wasn't ready to give up so easily. Patrons as wealthy as Caden didn't come along every day, and she wasn't about to let him slip away. "Mr. Ward, don't be so cruel," she coaxed, leaning closer despite his rejection. "Tell me what you enjoy—I can do anything to please you."

Caden's gaze flicked back to her, an unsettling edge in his voice. "Anything?"

The girl's eyes lit up with eager anticipation, nodding quickly, certain that her persistence was paying off.

Moments later, the door creaked open again, and Alicia entered. The air in the private room shifted as she took in the scene before her.

The women were filing out, one of them particularly distraught, wiping at her eyes with trembling hands as she let out quiet sobs.

Alicia's curiosity was piqued, her eyes sweeping over the girl before settling on Gerry and Caden.

"Did you two bully her?" she asked, her lips curving into a subtle smile.

Gerry laughed, clearly entertained. "Not me! It was Caden—he's the one who bullied her and made her cry!"

Alicia's eyes naturally drifted to Caden.

He was dressed in his signature black shirt that clung to his sculpted torso, making even the most mundane color seem dangerously appealing.

His devilishly handsome face bore no emotion, but his very presence radiated an allure that was hard to resist.

Despite his cold demeanor, he had an inexplicable magnetism that drew people in.

Memories of the surveillance footage flashed through Alicia's mind—those intimate moments where Caden's touch had seemed so practiced, so devastatingly skilled. A strange emotion stirred inside her as a thought crossed her mind.

Did... Did he use those same deft hands on other women, too?

She blinked away the thought, a mischievous glint flickering in her eyes as she took her seat. "I see," she said lightly, a teasing lilt in her voice. "Men who are impotent usually overcompensate by getting a little... creative, don't they?"

Caden's head snapped up, his gaze locking onto hers, eyes flashing dangerously.

Before the tension could thicken, Gerry's boisterous laughter broke the silence. "That's exactly what happened! That girl tried her best to seduce him, and what did Caden do? He made her stay and give a PowerPoint presentation instead!"

Alicia's eyes nearly popped out of her head.

The corner of her mouth twitching, she grumbled, "That's... really perverse."

Caden's voice cut through the moment with a calm, unsettling edge. "There are things far more perverse, Miss Bennett. Perhaps next time, I'll show you."

Alicia's breath caught in her throat.

His words, delivered so smoothly, seemed harmless at first, but the implication beneath them made her skin prickle.

Before she could respond, Gerry, oblivious to the undercurrent of tension, laughed. "Why just show Alicia? I want to see, too!"

Caden's gaze flicked over to Gerry, and a slow, almost teasing smile tugged at his lips. "If you insist."

Alicia blinked, momentarily speechless.

She couldn't shake the traumatizing image his words had planted in her mind.

The joke, however, flew right over Gerry's head. Grinning, he noticed the two bags Alicia had brought with her, piquing his curiosity.

"What did you buy?"

Alicia took a steadying breath and handed him one of the bags.

"This is for you, Mr. Hopkins. Just a small token of thanks for your help. I hope you like it."

Gerry eagerly opened the bag, his eyes lighting up at the sight of a designer gift set tailored for men.

Nestled beside it were several elegantly packaged scented candles.

He pulled one out and gave it an appreciative sniff, a contented smile crossing his face. "This smells great. What brand is it?"

Alicia smiled softly, pride evident in her voice. "Actually, I made them myself. I know you deal with a lot of stress, so these candles are



designed to help with relaxation and sleep. If you like them, I'd be happy to make more."

Gerry, a man who was used to having everything at his fingertips, was touched by the sincerity of the gesture. It was rare for him to receive something made with such thought.

He nodded in appreciation and carefully tucked the candle back into the bag.

"What's in the other bag?" Gerry asked curiously.

Alicia's smile turned playful, her eyes gleaming with mischief as she picked up the second bag and slid it across the table toward Caden.

"Just like you recommended, Mr. Hopkins—Viagra for Mr. Ward."

Caden's expression darkened instantly, his playful demeanor vanishing.