

Chapter 33 Why Did You Cheat

Alicia woke up as she was unceremoniously deposited into the car.

She instinctively huddled into herself, all while surveying the interior of the vehicle with wide, wary eyes.

"Where are we going?"

Hank turned to look at her and smiled. "It's all right, Miss Bennett. It's just me and Mr. Ward. You are allergic to alcohol, so we're taking you to the hospital right now."

The mention of a hospital immediately had Alicia on high alert. "No! Please, can we not go?"

Hank paused and looked over at Caden for guidance.

Caden himself didn't like being in a hospital. A moment of silence passed before he spoke, but his expression remained inscrutable. "Just drop by a pharmacy and get her some antihistamines, then take her home."

Hank agreed and started the car.

The car glided down the road slowly, but the sharp turns here and there couldn't be avoided.

With each swerve, Alicia's head seemed to spin twice as fast.

When they finally pulled over in front of her apartment, she had to peel her eyes open and pull herself out of the car. No sooner had her feet touched the ground than her knees buckled, and she almost crumpled to the ground.

"Mr. Ward." Hank spoke up, unable to bear seeing her in such a state. "Shouldn't we help her upstairs, at the very least?"

Caden watched Alicia through narrowed eyes. She staggered forward, swaying from side to side with every step she took.

"She can still walk, can't she?" Caden said dryly.

"I know Miss Bennett has a stubborn streak, Mr. Ward, but she is actually a very nice person."

"If you're so concerned about her, why don't you go and help her, then?"

Hank felt a twinge of unease when he heard that. His grip on the steering wheel tightened, but he made no move to get out of the car.

Alicia continued to struggle until she finally reached the lawn.

At that point, Hank found himself speaking up again. "Are we really just going to leave her here, Mr. Ward?"

Caden's face was still blank, but a muscle ticked in his jaw.

What a stubborn little minx. She was practically crawling as she drifted in and out of consciousness, yet she still refused to ask for help.

Taking a deep breath, Caden got out of the car. "Hand over the antihistamines."

Hank quickly complied. As he passed the medicine, he noticed the cut on Caden's hand. "Mr. Ward, did you get scratched by a stray cat again?"

Caden huffed with impatience. He strode away from the car without answering Hank's question.

Alicia was surprisingly docile when she was drunk, and she answered Caden's questions readily.

It didn't take him long to get her unit number.

He helped her up to her floor and opened the door of her apartment for her.

Caden continued to hold Alicia up with one arm while he fumbled for the light switch with his free hand.

A clicking sound rang out in the room, but the lights didn't turn on.

Caden froze for a second and looked down at his feet.

He felt nothing at first, but the dim light coming from the hallway made him realize that he had stepped on a mouse trap.

The pain slowly set in, growing more intense by the second. Caden gritted his teeth and kicked his foot free with a frustrated grunt.

He glanced at the still unconscious Alicia, a litany of curses already docked on the tip of his tongue. But he held himself back.

It would be better to scold her once she was awake and sober.

Caden finally found the light switch and flicked it on.

The apartment wasn't large. It only had one bedroom, but it was neat and tidy.

Caden gingerly set Alicia down on the sofa.

Her eyelashes fluttered, and she squinted her eyes open.

Thanks to the alcohol, her usual hostility toward Caden was nowhere to be found. If anything, she looked dazed and confused.

Caden placed the medicine on the coffee table. "These are antihistamines. Be sure to take them."

He made to leave, but Alicia's hand suddenly shot out and grabbed his sleeve.

Caden looked back at her with a slight frown.

Alicia opened her mouth to speak, but in the next second, her vision went dark.

She froze in shock for a couple of seconds, then her hand jumped from Caden's sleeve to his forearm, clutching it tightly.

Caden pursed his lips and looked out the window. The lights in the complex were all out.

It must be a power outage.

Afraid that he would leave, Alicia scooted closer to Caden.

Caden tried to pull his hand free, but Alicia reacted quickly. She pounced on him, wrapping her arms around him in a desperate embrace.

Caden couldn't remember the last time he saw her act this vulnerable. "Aren't you supposed to be all tough and brave?" he scoffed. "What, are you actually afraid of the dark?"

He felt Alicia stiffen, but she said nothing in response.

She was, in fact, absolutely terrified. She didn't even care if Caden mocked her for it.

Caden still had her phone, so he switched the torch on to light up the room.

Coincidentally, a message popped up on the screen. It was someone from the apartment complex group chat, informing the tenants that the power would be back in about half an hour.

He relayed the message to Alicia, then reached for the medicines and took out one pill.

"Open your mouth."

Alicia shifted her head to face him and obediently opened her mouth. She was conscious of her actions, though her mind was still a little slow on the uptake.

And so, without much thought, she flicked her tongue against Caden's finger as he popped the pill into her mouth.

Caden swallowed audibly at the warm and wet sensation against his skin.

"Still the temptress, even in something as mundane as taking medicine."

Alicia blinked at him, her eyes still a little glassy. Without having any water to swallow the pill with, it quickly dissolved in her mouth.

She nuzzled Caden neck and muttered, "It tastes awful."

He could definitely hear the whine in her voice.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked coldly.

Alicia didn't answer.

Caden suddenly felt a wetness against his throat. Warm tears were trickling down his collar and disappearing into his shirt.

He found himself holding Alicia flush against his chest.

This was the second time she cried today. How unusual.

Alicia continued to weep silently for a few minutes before she slowly lifted her head.

Caden had set her phone on the coffee table, and the light coming from it cast a large shadow over his handsome face.

Alicia cupped his face with both hands and stared up at him in a daze. Her wide, watery eyes were like twin pools, beckoning him closer.

"Why?" she rasped. "What did I ever do to you? Why do you treat me like this?"

Caden remained calm. "Alicia, take a proper look at me. I am Caden, not Joshua."

Alicia leaned against him with a broken sigh.

Fresh tears streamed down her cheeks as she touched her forehead against his.

Caden frowned. He had never liked getting involved with women, and he especially hated having to deal with them when they were emotional, but something in Alicia's eyes had him rooted to the spot.

"Two years ago," Alicia began, her voice aching soft. "Why did you cheat? The first place was supposed to be mine, everybody knew it."

Caden's breath caught in his throat.

Alicia hadn't mistaken him.

Caden's gaze bore into her face. "Who told you I cheated? It was Joshua, wasn't it?"

Alicia's lips curled into a self-derisive smile.

She had performed exceptionally well in that competition two years ago. She had been slated to win first place, but the judges changed their decision at the last second, and gave the award to Caden instead.

Joshua had told her all about it. He had looked into the matter, and discovered that Caden had orchestrated the whole thing.

If he hadn't snatched the first place from her, her parents would have returned early that day. Perhaps they wouldn't have died.

Her silence was all the confirmation Caden needed. He sneered and said, "Of course it's him. Whatever Joshua says is the truth, right? You believe everything that comes out of his mouth."