# The Offer

## Chapter 22

Madison hovered in that hazy limbo between wakefulness and sleep, her body twitching faintly, unwilling to commit to either side.

The morning light barely seeped into the room, slipping through half-closed blinds in a pale haze that cast soft, indistinct shadows across unfamiliar walls. She wasn't fully awake, nor entirely lost to dreams—just content.

A lazy, all-encompassing warmth held her captive beneath the tangled sheets. It took a moment for the strangeness to register; no familiar anchors to snag her foggy mind, just this cozy cocoon, swaddled in blankets like a protective nest. And that scent... so familiar, so soothing, saturating everything: the pillows, the linens, even the air itself.



A masculine aroma, musky with hints of cheap shampoo and faint sweat—intoxicating, almost. In her half-slumber, a unconscious smile tugged at her lips, and she drifted off again briefly, letting the smell cradle her like a comforting echo from childhood. Then, slowly, her breathing quickened, turning ragged, as if an unseen pulse throbbed through her veins.

She felt confined all at once, suffocated by the rising heat inside her, that once-welcoming scent now pulling her into a murky, stifling haze. A low, involuntary moan escaped her throat, her cheeks flushing in her restless sleep. She shifted on the mattress, clearly unsettled, brows knitting together, her body arching against some intangible surge—still asleep, trapped in those blurred visions haunting her, forbidden sensations burrowing into her subconscious.

The awakening hit hard, a jolt that left her gasping, eyes snapping open to stare at the alien ceiling.



This time, Madison bolted upright in bed, panting and slick with sweat, a deep, twisting discomfort coiling in her gut like a vise.

Faintly, awareness crept back, an inner whisper slicing through: no, no, no…

Still tethered to the dream, its lingering echoes overwhelming her, shame burning bone-deep from whatever had unfolded within—those raw flashes, those phantom caresses leaving a sticky warmth clinging to her skin. She shook her head to dispel the haze, and finally took in the room, recognizing nothing: faded posters on the walls, a desk cluttered with books…

Without thinking, her hand brushed something warm to her left—living skin, heated and real. She whipped around, her pulse thundering, and there he was, sprawled on his back: Alan.

Shock and panic hit her first, ripping through her like a live wire, stealing the air from her lungs in one brutal swipe.



What the… He was right there, in his boxers, bare-chested, sprawled out in the bed like it was the most ordinary thing—what the hell was he doing in her bed, damn it?

Her mind skidded for a second, those dream fragments still clinging to her eyelids, before reality slammed into her full force: that scent, this place—it wasn't her room at all. It was his. Everything flooded back in a messy rush—the night before, the tears, the bone-deep exhaustion that had pinned her down, the reluctant agreement to crash here.

She'd stayed at Alan's. But fuck, what was he doing right there next to her, like the bed was theirs to share? Panic surged again, her pulse hammering so wildly she thought it might rattle the whole room awake, even as she couldn't help stealing glances at him—that sleeping body, so serene, breathing steadily in the dim morning gray.

And just like that, the not-so-distant dream slithered back, sly and insistent, threading its forbidden echoes through her foggy thoughts: those illicit sensations that had drawn a moan from her in her sleep. She flushed hard, a betraying heat crawling up her face, and clapped a hand over her mouth as if to trap a curse—or worse, a confession—from spilling out.



But she didn't look away… if anything, her gaze lingered too long, almost against her better judgment, tracing the solid lines of his forearms draped across the sheets, those pecs rising and falling with each slow breath, casting faint shadows over his skin.

His abs, etched even in this filtered half-light, tightened just a touch with every inhale, that sharp V dipping down toward… She let her eyes drop lower, unbidden, skimming the outline straining against his boxers in that morning haze, and a raw tremor shot through her—shit, what am I doing!

She coughed instinctively, a rough, deliberate hack to snap herself out of it, to shatter this twisted pull keeping her rooted there.

But she hadn't seen it coming—the noise must have stirred Alan, a deep rumble rolling from his throat as he shifted just a little.

In a split-second reflex, Madison flipped onto her side, turning her back to him, lying stiff as a board on the bed—her gut instinct screaming to fake sleep, eyes squeezed shut, body frozen, but her mind ablaze.

Panic clawed at her from the inside, her heartbeat ramping up to a frantic rhythm that echoed through her chest and pounded in her temples. Was he awake? She didn't dare twitch an eyelash, holding out for any hint, anything that would confirm the nightmare. Alan shifted in the bed, sheets rustling followed by a low, garbled grunt, like a murmur trapped in his throat.

The sound of his voice in that tight, enclosed space sent a jolt racing through her from head to toe—a sharp current that tightened her throat and left her skin tingling. Shit, he's up! she thought.

She forced herself to mimic steady breathing, deep and even, as if buried in deep slumber, but every muscle in her body coiled tight, rigid and on the verge of snapping. She waited, locked in that limbo, unsure what she was bracing for—a word? A touch?

The silence dragged on, thick and suffocating. Alan moved again, and she felt the mattress dip under his weight… he was inching closer. Slowly, relentlessly. She held her breath, lungs burning, her pulse thundering so loud she swore he'd hear it.

Then, out of nowhere, Alan's arm looped around her—a solid, claiming hold that cinched her waist, yanking her body flush against his in an uninvited embrace. His bare chest pressed into her back, a scorching heat that crashed over her like a breaker.



She wanted to scream, to shove him off and shatter the contact, but nothing came out—just a silent gasp lodged in her knotted throat.

What the hell is happening, why is he touching me like this!? she thought, terror detonating inside her, twisting her guts into knots.

Alan tightened his grip, his arm flexing around her middle, and worse, he slung a leg over hers, trapping her fully in that forced spoon, his thick thighs grinding against her own, his hips brushing her ass in an unbearable closeness.

She was caged, Alan enveloping her everywhere—his breath hot on her neck, his massive frame wrapping her like a living restraint, warm and overwhelming. For a wild second, she wondered if it was still a dream, some twisted extension of the hazy visions that had plagued her all night, but everything screamed reality: the solid feel of his skin, his heft, that hold with zero innocence.

Full-blown panic hit her then, a storm of jagged thoughts battering her—why? Why now, after everything? Revulsion churned in her stomach, leaving her queasy, this touch reducing her to some cheap possession, her own brother—her little brother—daring to cross that unspoken boundary with a boldness that chilled her to the core.



Tears stung her eyes, a sob building in her chest, and just as she geared up to exhale, to finally push him away in a muffled outburst… Alan's snore erupted right by her ear, hitting like a seismic shock—a rough, resonant rumble that vibrated against her skin.

She went rigid, her body seizing up in the dawning truth. Alan let out another one, louder this time, the warm, damp air grazing her earlobe like an accidental brush.

It clicked for Madison at last, like a mental latch giving way in her frantic haze: he was out cold. Sound asleep.

A crushing weight lifted off her chest in an instant, relief slamming through her so hard it left her reeling, her taut muscles going slack all at once despite the hold still pinning her in place.

She nearly burst out laughing, that jittery bubble trapped in her throat, but she held still, caught in his grip—that solid arm slung around her waist, his leg hooked over hers like a claiming weight. Yet in a heartbeat, Madison found herself smiling, a hesitant, almost ashamed curve to her lips in the quiet. It was mortifying, this unwanted closeness, his body radiating stifling heat against hers, but what she'd imagined just seconds ago… no, Alan wasn't like that, she told herself, shoving aside the stubborn dream fragments still trying to cling.



Another snore ripped out then, louder than before, a raw, throaty rattle that buzzed right against her ear, the moist warmth grazing her neck.

This time, Madison let a soft exhale slip, a muffled chuckle rippling through her shoulders in the oddity of it all—ridiculous, bizarre, almost funny in its gut-deep awkwardness.

Okay, she was eased now, but… Alan's body was plastered to hers, fitted in that flawless spoon, his bare chest mashed against her back, his hips grazing her ass in a way that had her flushing anyway.

He was asleep, sure, but would wriggling free jolt him awake?

The idea sparked a fresh twist of unease in her belly—how the hell was she supposed to slip out quietly, without jostling him? Alan's breathing filled the room, steady and deep, his scorching frame sealed to hers in that spoon… damn, she thought, the curse echoing in her skull like a stifled swear. Minutes ticked by, and Madison was stuck in the same spot, rigid in that imposed stillness, making feeble attempts to inch away—a subtle hip shift, a careful tug to free her leg without yanking.

But no dice; every twitch risked rousing him, and she couldn't face that, not yet. The discomfort was building for real now… fuck, she looped in her head, the word spinning on repeat, cranking up the tension—that shared heat, this accidental intimacy dragging her back to those hotel nights, to glances she'd never own up to.

Her mind churned: what if I just bolt? Leap up and bail from the room? Or slide out low, under the sheet, like some kid dodging a shadow monster?

Maybe I could— BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

Madison's alarm blared at the absolute worst possible second, that piercing beep-beep shredding the quiet like a full-blown emergency siren, jolting her already wired body into overdrive.

Alan snapped awake with a muddled grunt, while Madison lunged for her phone on the nightstand in a frantic swipe, jabbing at the screen with a shaky thumb that nearly slipped right off.

In the same beat, Alan fumbled for the light switch with a clumsy snap, flooding



the room in harsh glare that blinded them both—his bleary, sleep-puffed eyes locking onto his sister's wide ones, frozen in panic under the unforgiving brightness.

He furrowed his brow, brain still fogged over, mumbling a rough, disbelieving "Huh? Madi, that you?" as if the pieces of reality were struggling to click together in his head.

She was utterly still, kneeling on the bed with her mouth hanging open in a silent O of shock, her pulse slamming so hard it felt like her chest might cave in—trapped right there, laid bare, with him staring back, bare-chested in the merciless light.



It hit Alan then, the puzzle snapping into place: the night before, the couch, sleepwalking on autopilot straight to his room.

Heat rushed to his face in a scorching wave, and his gaze dipped unwillingly over Madison—a quick flash of her exposed chest hitting him like a gut punch. He whipped around fast, tangling in the sheets, choking out a muffled curse—"Fuck!"—while slapping a hand over his eyes in dramatic cover, the other groping blindly for anything at all.



“Shit, sorry! I… I don’t know what…”

He tripped over his pants from last night crumpled on the floor, using the mess to scoop them up in an awkward grab.

“Shit, sorry…”

He half-dressed in the adjoining living room, hopping into the pants off-balance, his heart racing wild as he fumbled the buttons. Piecing it together in his mind—he must’ve wandered back to bed in the night, on instinct, totally blanking on his sister crashed there.

Okay… no big deal, he told himself to calm down, but damn, she looked completely… he wasn’t sure, freaked out? Stunned?

That frozen look on her face, like she'd seen a ghost, twisted something in his stomach without him getting why.

He ducked into the kitchenette to brew some coffee, the machine's hum kicking in like a mechanical sedative, just to give himself something to do.

Madison showed up moments later, cheeks still flushed, hair a wild mess, dodging his eyes for a long stretch before finally meeting them. Alan jumped in with an apology, voice low and halting: "Sorry, Madi… I must've forgotten you were here, woke up on autopilot and… yeah…"

She waved him off vaguely, forcing a laugh that rang a bit hollow but eased the knot anyway.



"It's nothing… Really. I figured, you were always a sleepwalker as a kid."

Alan could tell it bugged her still—that averted gaze, those lingering pink cheeks hinting at something deeper, maybe tied to the last few days, all the buildup between them. He apologized again, clumsy about it: "For real, I didn't mean to…"

And then he caught her noticing he was still shirtless, her eyes flicking briefly over his chest before snapping back up. He let out a nervous chuckle to lighten the air: "Didn't exactly have time to get dressed…"

He offered her coffee, pouring a steaming mug with a strained smile, but Madison was already gripping the door handle, bag slung over her shoulder like an exit strategy.

She turned it down gently but firm: “Nah, thanks… I’m not sticking around, got stuff to do this morning.”

So he didn’t push, just nodded with an “Okay, see you later” that hung in the air like a rushed goodbye, the door clicking shut behind her with a final echo in the sudden quiet of the apartment.