The Offer

Chapter 24

A few hours later, Alan pulled the car up right at the foot of Madison's building, the engine still humming low in the hush of the residential street. He killed the ignition with a mechanical twist, hands trembling on the wheel, and shot off a quick text: "I'm downstairs."

His heart slammed against his ribs like a piston, a raw, visceral dread knotting his guts—the kind that makes every breath feel like a risk you might lose.

He'd spent the whole afternoon turning the idea over and over in his head: bail, spill everything to Madison, or just disappear for good. But that slimy hunch chewing at him, the sticky certainty that Rebecah really held the leash, had nailed him in place.



No choice. He repeated it like a mantra to deaden the panic.

He'd be a machine: execute the plan to the letter, say the exact words, make the exact moves, and let zero emotion leak through. Later he'd explain it all to Madison—she'd understand, she had to, once he confessed the blackmail, the video, the whole spiderweb he was caught in. She'd forgive him because she was his sister and they'd survived worse. At least, that's what he kept telling himself so he wouldn't shatter.

The building door finally opened and Madison stepped out, striding down the steps with quick, confident energy, her silhouette sharp against the harsh lobby light.



She was dressed for the night in something that walked the perfect line between casual and filthy: a short denim skirt hugging her hips, sheer black tights tracing every athletic curve of her legs, ankle boots clicking hard on the pavement, and a loose, flowing top with a deep neckline that let the soft shape of her tits show clearly under the thin fabric—no bra, nothing to hide behind.

Alan drank her in despite himself, eyes tracing how the outfit clung to her toned body, that effortless, fuckable vibe that would make any guy at the party lose his mind. He almost convinced himself it was just part of the game, just blending in, but a darker twist of unease coiled in his chest—her clothes made everything he was about to do feel heavier, dirtier, more real.

She yanked open the passenger door and slid inside, bringing a rush of cool night air mixed with her light, floral scent that hit him like memory and guilt at once.

Alan greeted her in a voice he tried to keep flat, but it still stumbled: “Hey, Madi. You… you look good tonight. Gonna have the guys dropping like flies.”

The words came out half-stuttered, forced, laced with a compliment he never gave her, and it sounded wrong in his own mouth.

Madison let out a short, surprised laugh, one eyebrow lifting as she clicked her seatbelt.

“Thanks? It’s weird hearing you notice shit like that. You sure you’re okay?”

She teased him lightly, but there was a flicker of real curiosity underneath, like she was already sniffing something off.

On the drive to the party the silence thickened between them, heavy and unwanted, broken only by the low growl of the engine and the occasional tick of the turn signals. Alan kept his eyes locked on the road ahead, headlights carving through the dark, brain boiling with the vile things he had to say to follow Rebecah's twisted script. Break the quiet and dive straight into the poison? Not yet.

Instead his gaze drifted—once, twice—to Madison's thighs, those black tights catching the streetlights in slick little gleams. Deliberate.

The first crack to unsettle her without setting off every alarm. Madison shifted, crossing her legs tighter, a soft cough slipping out, and she jumped in like she needed to fill the space: "Yeah… these are my new boots. Pretty cool, right? Haha."



Alan answered too seriously, voice low and rough: "Yeah, they look amazing on you."

And then he let his eyes travel over her on purpose—slow across her legs, lingering just long enough on the swell of her tits where the thin top stretched tight, drinking in the way the fabric moved with her breathing.

He forced a short laugh and snapped his stare back to the road, knuckles white on the wheel. He didn't catch it, but Madison—sharp as ever and never one to miss a thing—had started to flush, cheeks warming under her light makeup.

She blinked hard, trying to process the moment: that stare that didn't belong to her brother, the sudden intensity that felt all wrong, and especially the split second when his eyes had locked openly on her chest like he wanted her to notice. She turned toward the window, heart beating harder, saying nothing.

Alan bit the inside of his cheek until he tasted blood, cursing himself in silence. She hadn't reacted—not really—or at least that's what he wrongly believed, convinced she'd missed the way he'd stared at her tits. Which meant he hadn't gone far enough.

He was fucked if he didn't push harder. Rebecah was watching somehow, and failure wasn't an option.

Alan parked the car a few blocks from the party, in a quiet side street lined with bare trees that threw skeletal shadows under the streetlights. The engine gave one last sigh and fell silent. They climbed out without a word, the cool night air wrapping around them like an invisible shroud. They walked side by side toward the glowing house in the distance, muffled bass and bursts of laughter already leaking out, their footsteps cracking against the uneven sidewalk.



Madison tugged at the hem of her light top on instinct, pulling it down where it kept riding up over her hips. Alan kept his hands jammed deep in his pockets, brain churning like acid eating through metal, every step feeding the mission that was slowly corroding him from the inside.

The rest of the group was waiting out front like always—Larry in his wrinkled hoodie and that permanent dumb grin, Sean slouched against the wall scrolling on his phone, Bella waving wildly the second she spotted them.

The usual ritual kicked in the moment they joined: bro-hugs for the guys, hard back-slaps, crude jokes flying like punches.

“Fuck, Alan, you look like a goddamn zombie—did you sleep at all?”

Sean laughed, gripping his shoulder. Alan forced a tight smile and let out a mechanical chuckle that scraped raw in his constricted throat, but thankfully no one clocked it.

He blended right in, swallowed by the group’s easy energy while his mind stayed locked somewhere else. Bella pulled Madison into a quick, warm hug, arms tight around her with that sisterly vibe, then leaned in close to whisper right against her ear: “So… made up with the little guy yet?”

She jerked her chin toward Alan with a playful wink. Madison’s cheeks warmed instantly; she just shrugged it off with an evasive little laugh. “Yeah… something like that.”

They headed inside together, nodding past the burly organizer with his homemade badge at the door. Right as they crossed the threshold into the thickening crowd, Alan slid his hand onto Madison’s lower back.

It looked innocent enough—like he was just steering her through the bodies—but his fingers stayed there too long, tracing the gentle curve of her spine through the thin fabric, a slow, deliberate caress that dragged heat across her bare skin underneath before he finally pulled away like nothing had happened and kept walking.

Minutes later they were out back in the garden, string lights twinkling overhead, cold beers already in hand from the makeshift bar by the pool. The group claimed a low table and fell into the usual bullshit—exams breathing down their necks, that trash movie from last night, campus gossip spreading like wildfire.

Alan leaned against the wall, eyes sweeping the shadows and the growing sea of strangers, stomach twisting with the same sick question: was Rebecah actually here, watching from some dark corner, grading every single move he made? Madison caught the thousand-yard stare that didn’t belong at a party. She tilted her head, flashing a mocking grin.

“Hey, earth to Alan! Where the hell are you? You look like you’re waiting for Santa Claus.”



She laughed softly, trying to drag him back into the moment, but he only gave a distracted nod and a muttered “Yeah, sorry.”

That left a small crease of worry between her brows while she sipped her beer, quietly wondering what the fuck was wrong with him tonight. Around them the night kept building—Larry dropping terrible jokes that had Sean howling, Bella recounting some hilarious coffee-spill disaster from work, the whole group cracking up in unison.

Alan forced himself to look at Madison again, not blatantly, but enough that she’d feel it: his gaze sliding down the tight denim hugging her hips, tracing the sheer black tights clinging to her legs, then rising to the soft outline of her tits under that flimsy top, nipples faintly visible in the colored lights.

Every time his eyes lingered, a faint shiver ran through her. She felt it—unease pooling low in her stomach, something she couldn’t name yet. Their eyes met for a split second; she looked away fast, heart kicking harder against the noise of the party.

Now, all of them sprawled across scattered beanbags in the backyard grass, the roar of the party forced them to shout over the relentless bass pounding from inside the house—an endless sonic wall tangled with laughter and voices swelling like a rising tide. Alan had already knocked back a few beers, the icy foam sliding down his throat like a temporary sedative, loosening just enough of the knot of dread that had been chewing through him since the beginning.

For once the group hadn't split up yet—Larry was waving his arms through some lame-ass story about a law professor, Bella and Sean trading their usual teasing jabs, and even Madison looked relaxed, sipping her drink and shooting amused glances around.

Despite everything, Alan was almost starting to enjoy himself, the alcohol thinning the pressure just enough for him to ride the current, laughing mechanically at the jokes without putting his whole heart into it, but enough not to stand out.

At one point his gaze drifted toward the glowing house in the distance, sweeping lazily over the crowd pressed against the windows, and there she was: Rebecah, standing right behind Sean while he chatted with some stranger.



Her silhouette unmistakable, that cryptic little smile hovering on her lips. She was here, fuck—quiet but present, like a shadow keeping score. Alan froze solid, heart slamming hard against his ribs, the beer turning bitter on his tongue.

Shit, he couldn't fuck this up now; the pressure spiked like a rocket, a raw, visceral vise clamping down on his guts and yanking him straight back into Rebecah's twisted script, those exact moves he had to land without a single slip. And at the absolute worst moment, Madison called out to him, her voice slicing through the noise with that familiar sisterly worry: "Hey, Alan, toss me your keys. I'll drive us home later, or else stop drinking—how many have you had already?"

He seized the opening like a predator, sliding in close with one fluid motion and planting his hand firmly on her thigh, fingers pressing down just enough to sink into the soft flesh beneath the sheer black tights.

He laughed, forcing a chuckle that almost sounded natural: "Yeah, yeah, I won't drink much, I promise." He let his hand stay there a second too long, her body heat searing into his palm, before dragging it away in a slow, deliberate caress across a few inches, fingertips grazing the silky texture of the tights like the most innocent accident in the world.



Then he immediately scanned for Rebecah—but she had vanished, swallowed by the shifting crowd, leaving nothing but an empty space that cranked his anxiety even higher.

Madison shot to her feet, stuttering slightly as she turned to Bella: “I… I’m going to the bathroom. You coming with me?”

Bella nodded without questions and the two girls slipped away into the house, their silhouettes melting into the human tide. The guys were left alone for a moment, bullshitting like nothing had happened—Larry cracked a joke about some drunk idiot stumbling near the pool, and Sean laughed before turning to Alan and Larry with a sly grin: “So, boys, you planning to get laid tonight or what? Plenty of talent out here, check out those chicks over there.”

All three burst out laughing, Alan forcing a guttural bark to keep up, shrugging with a casual “We’ll see, we’ll see” that barely hid his growing impatience. Time dragged on, the girls still not back, but the guys didn’t sweat it—Sean ordered another round, Larry launched into a story about bombing a class that had everyone cracking up, the festive vibe carrying them like an unbroken wave.



Alan, though, was getting antsy, brain boiling with everything he was supposed to say, especially now that Rebecah was somewhere in the mix, invisible but everywhere, ready to punish the slightest mistake. He couldn’t afford to sit on his hands any longer.

Finally he threw out in a fake-casual tone: “Hey, guys, wanna head inside and actually have some fun? Music’s bumping in there, and it’s starting to get chilly out here.”

Sean and Larry nodded eagerly, fired up: “Hell yeah, let’s do it, time to heat up the dance floor!” They jumped up, Alan following with a knot in his stomach that only kept growing.

The party was in full throttle inside, the house turned into a swirling vortex of grinding bodies, bass lines that rattled straight through your bones, and strobing lights slashing multicolored shards across sweat-slick walls.

The guys were deep in it now—Sean thrashing his arms like a man possessed to the deafening electro beat, Larry screaming half the lyrics and cracking up, snatching a fresh beer from some random stranger’s hand.

Alan moved with the crowd, body rolling mechanically through the packed dancers, pretending to lose himself in the music while his mind stayed razor-sharp, eyes cutting through the chaos with forced casualness, hunting for Madison among the tangled silhouettes, clinking glasses, and sparks of laughter. They finally spotted the girls right in the middle of the dance floor, also inside now, moving with drinks in hand, bodies swaying under the flashing lights—Bella’s hair plastered to her forehead with sweat, Madison sipping hers with a slightly forced energy. The guys pushed closer, shouting to be heard over the sonic storm.



“Fuck, where were you two? We were looking everywhere!”

Sean yelled, yanking Bella against him for a quick, hungry kiss.

Alan stayed quiet, just nodding, his eyes locked on Madison.

She didn't speak either, her gaze flicking away from his for a split second before disappearing back into the crowd. He knew exactly what he had to do, but the thought ate at him like acid—touch her here, in front of everyone? Dance with her, press in too close, plant that sick little seed of discomfort without tipping off the others? His heart hammered against his ribs, but before he could make the first move, Madison stepped in close, leaning up to whisper right against his ear, her warm breath brushing his skin: "I thought I saw Rebecah earlier..."

Her face was flushed, stressed, eyes bright with a raw vulnerability that made her look suddenly younger, softer.

Fuck, Alan already knew—she was here, watching from somewhere in this human sea, grading him, waiting to punish.

He swallowed hard and forced a smile, trying to kill the tension: "Shit... forget her, Madi. Just have some fun instead of pulling that face..."



She gave a small pout, lips pressed into a childish grimace, but started moving again, hips swaying hesitantly to the beat, the hesitation screaming her inner unease. Their friends were only a few feet away, lost in their own bubble of noise and lights, and Alan felt the window snap open—this was it, no more chances, not with Rebecah haunting the crowd like a ghost.

He stepped in behind her, body almost flush against hers, and started dancing, pressing just a little too close, hands sliding onto her hips in a lingering, ambiguous hold that followed the rhythm like a dirty secret.



He forced a low, rough laugh into the curve of her neck, hot breath ghosting over her bare skin. Madison froze for a heartbeat, body going rigid under the unexpected contact, but when he finally pulled back she spun to face him, cheeks burning crimson, brows furrowed in pure confusion and silent accusation.

Alan swallowed again—fuck—a curse twisting in his gut. He'd gone too far, too fast. The discomfort now hung thick between them like smoke in the sweaty, pulsing air.

Without warning, Madison snatched his wrist, fingers clamping down with a desperate urgency that screamed how rattled she was, and dragged him away from the deafening roar of the dance floor.

She zigzagged through sweaty bodies and spilled drinks until they reached a quieter corner near the kitchen.

The air hung thick with the stench of flat beer and greasy snacks—a brutal slap compared to the chaos they'd just left—but at least the noise had dropped to a distant thrum, giving them space to actually hear each other.

Or rather, to have this confrontation. She didn't beat around the bush. She spun on him, eyes bright with a toxic mix of confusion and unease that knotted her throat.

“What the fuck are you playing at, Alan? Why the hell have you been so weird all night?”



She stammered, voice cracking in jagged bursts, words tumbling out like she was barely holding back from exploding.

She was too uncomfortable to name the specifics—those lingering stares, those touches that were anything but innocent—so the vague accusation simply hung heavy and silent between them.

Her heart pounded so violently she could feel her cheeks burning under the makeup.

A cold, merciless light clicked on in Alan’s mind: this was it. The moment.

Like a robot, he buried every real feeling deep down—the visceral hatred for Rebecah, the slimy disgust at what he’d already done and what he was forcing on his own big sister, the nausea clawing through his guts.

He looked her dead in the eyes, diving straight into her troubled gaze without flinching.

“I lied, Madi.”

She hung on every word, heart slamming against her ribs, the whole world seeming to slow as the air crackled with electric tension that prickled across her skin.

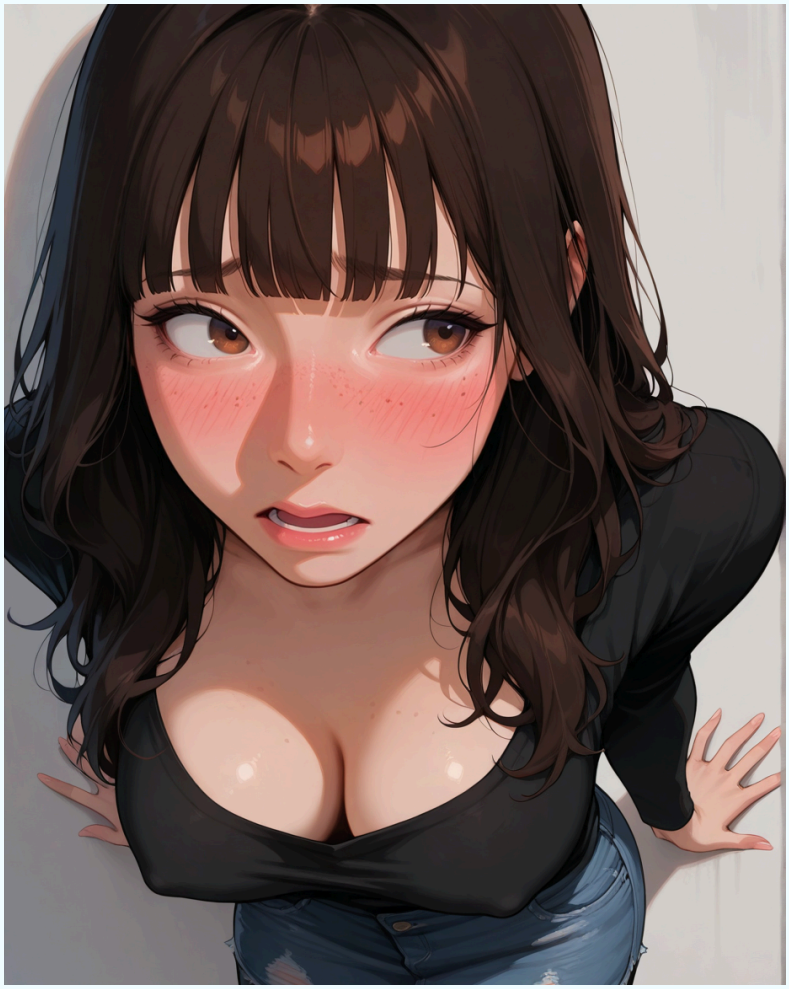
He kept going, voice low and measured, every line sounding like he’d rehearsed it a hundred times in his head: “I still feel like complete shit about it, fuck… I can’t stop thinking about that night… Your body…”

Madison cut him off instantly, a choked gasp ripping from her throat as her eyes flew wide.

“Wh-what… fuck, shit,” she stuttered, the words shattering like glass in her throat.

Her gaze whipped frantically around—the kitchen shadows, the blurry figures drifting past—before she whispered, more to herself than to him, voice trembling: “Not here. Not here!”

But Alan didn’t stop. The words kept coming, relentless, thickening the suffocating discomfort between them like dense fog.



She grabbed his arm again, nails biting into his skin, and hauled him upstairs in a frantic rush, taking the steps two at a time, heart in full panic. She shoved open the first door she saw—an empty bedroom with bare walls lit only by a dim bedside lamp, the bed messy like a silent witness—and slammed it shut behind them with a sharp, final click that echoed in the sudden quiet.

Back pressed hard against the door, chest heaving wildly under the thin fabric of her top, she fought for breath, hands shaking against the wood as if to stop herself from bolting. Finally she looked at him, eyes flooded with bewilderment and a creeping, ugly fear that gripped her throat, and blurted out in a trembling voice: “What the fuck did you just say to me?!”