

Love Spell 521

Chapter 521

Ruby walked over to Carlisle.

"Did you come to have BBQ too?"

"Yes."

Carlisle nodded calmly.

Ruby was disappointed that he hadn't asked if they would like to eat together.

However, she would not take the initiative to ask, so she smiled and said, "Tiffany and I own this restaurant. Today's meal is on us, so have whatever you like!"

Carlisle smiled and said, "Thank you very much."

Ruby had thought that Carlisle would refuse.

She had even thought about what she would say to make the atmosphere less awkward once he refused, but unexpectedly, he had accepted her offer.

She wondered if he was genuinely treating her as a friend.

Ruby smiled brightly.

"You're welcome."

"Carl!"

Sean and Lily walked over.

Ruby said, "It must be hectic in the restaurant. Tiffany and I will go and help!"

She then pulled Tiffany toward the restaurant.

Tiffany turned back and looked thoughtfully at Carlisle.

At that moment, she realized the reason behind Ruby's drastic change in character.

Carlisle looked at Sean and asked, "Has Gareth arrived?"

Sean shook his head.

"Not yet. He'll probably be here soon."

A beeping sound was heard. It was from a semi-trailer that had stopped suddenly by the roadside.

The trailer contained a transparent glass case, and a brand-new white car was inside.

The car was pure white and had coach doors. It featured an aerodynamic inlet grille and a gilded logo shaped like a tiny golden person. It looked luxurious and elegant.

"Damn. A Rolls-Royce?"

"Which rich man is giving presents to his girlfriend this time?"

"Wow! It's this year's latest Phantom model!"

The patrons outside the restaurant were buzzing with excitement.

Even the floor-to-ceiling windows on the second and third floors were filled with people who had gathered to admire the car.

The crowd took their phones out to take photos.

"Sarah... Is that the new car that Mr. Gust got you?"

Sienna covered her mouth in shock.

After seeing Sarah's BMW X5, Sienna read about luxury cars, and she saw the Rolls-Royce logo on the computer.

Rolls-Royce was a globally renowned brand.

The tiny gold man on the car itself was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Sarah was a little dazed at the sight of the car.

It was one of the most high-end luxury cars one could get.

She pondered if Austin had truly gifted her such an expensive present.

"Damn, woman! Which handsome fellow gave this to you?" a woman asked Sarah.

She looked enviously at the latter as she chewed gum.

Sienna answered at once, "It's from Austin, the son of Riverland's richest man!"

The woman was shocked.

"She's Mr. Gust's girlfriend?"

Sienna smiled and nodded. She took Sarah's arm and straightened up.

A Rolls-Royce was the symbol of status and influence.

Anyone driving this car would undoubtedly attract double takes on the street.

Sienna was very excited.

She had never imagined that she would be able to sit in a Rolls-Royce one day.

She thought that she was indeed living the life.

Sean looked enviously at the Rolls-Royce and said, "Carl, we'll be able to afford it in the future, won't we?"

Carlisle put a hand on his shoulder, smiled, and said, "Of course. Once Alumni Network expands, you can buy eight or ten with no problem, let alone one!"

Chapter 522

Sean pursed his lips and said, "Stop building castles in the air for me. Let's go and eat! It's freezing out here."

He wasn't even thinking about such a high-end luxury car.

His goal was to drive a BMW X5.

"Let's wait for Gareth."

Carlisle shoved his hands into his pockets to keep warm.

Sean took out his phone to take a photo of the Rolls-Royce.

However, Sienna and Sarah were in the shot.

Sean frowned slightly, but he couldn't be bothered to argue with them. He moved and continued taking photos.

Sienna seemed to be antagonizing him on purpose. She blocked his shot again.

Sean could no longer stand it and said, "Sienna, you're so ugly. Can you please stop standing in my shot?"

Sienna put her hands on her waist and said arrogantly, "Is that your car? Why are you taking photos of it?"

Sean may be the CEO of Alumni Network, but he was insignificant in the presence of that Rolls-Royce.

Sean laughed out of anger.

"It's not my car, but is it yours? Besides, is taking photos of it breaking the law?"

Sienna had been waiting for him to say so.

She said arrogantly, "This Rolls-Royce belongs to Sarah. You're not allowed to take photos without her permission!"

Sean looked sideways at Sarah.

Sarah tucked her hair behind her ear and smiled, saying, "If you want to take photos, you can take as many as you want once I've gotten the car!"

Carlisle's lips curled.

He said, "He's the one who wants to take photos. Don't drag me into it!"

The Rolls-Royce was almost certainly a gift from Austin to Sarah.

Carlisle did not want to embarrass himself.

Sienna pretended to be angry and said, "Sarah, why did you agree to let them take photos?"

Sarah pretended to be generous, saying, "We were all classmates in high school. It's not a big deal to allow them to take some pictures."

Sienna smiled.

"That's true. Let them take as many as they want!"

Sean immediately felt thoroughly humiliated.

He wouldn't have spared it another glance if he had known that the car belonged to Sarah.

Lily said disdainfully, "It's not like you bought it with money you earned. What are you bragging about?"

Sarah smiled.

"This is a gift from my boyfriend. With such a good boyfriend, why shouldn't I brag about it? If you can, you should boast too!"

"Oh, Sarah, stop talking! Lily and Sean are now very popular at the university. Have you forgotten that Sean's the CEO of Alumni Network?"

Sienna said passive-aggressively, "It's just that this CEO is looking rather frugal right now. He can't even buy a decent car! He and Lily take the bus when they go out on dates."

Sean looked frosty.

As a man, he did not like having his girlfriend looked down upon, especially by other women.

However, he had no way to retort to their insults.

Lily took Sean's clenched fist and stared at the duo.

She said, "So what? I like taking the bus. True love is not measured by money!"

Sarah only smiled.

"You're right, Mrs. Woodsen."

Ruby and Tiffany were standing nearby.

They hadn't entered the restaurant because of the commotion caused by the semi-trailer.

They had heard the entire conversation between Sarah, Carlisle, and the others.

Tiffany said in awe, "Ruby, your brother is so generous."

Ruby shook her head and said, "My brother didn't buy that car."

Tiffany looked surprised.

"Isn't that the car your brother bought for his girlfriend?"

Ruby burst into laughter.

"That's an imported car, and it's the best model. It probably cost about one million dollars.

Even my father wouldn't be able to buy such an expensive car. Plus, he has a family rule that no car we own should cost more than three hundred thousand!"

Tiffany almost choked on her saliva.

Her view of the world had been overturned once more.

A car worth eight million?

The world of the rich was hard to imagine.

Tiffany recovered and said in a small voice, "Isn't Sarah just going to embarrass herself then?"

After all, Sarah boldly claimed that the car was hers when it wasn't.

Tiffany felt that Sarah was sure to be humiliated later.

Ruby said with interest, "It would be even more humiliating if that car belonged to Carlisle."

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Tiffany shook her head and said, "It can't be. If it were Carlisle's car, he would have stood up for Sean!"

Having known Ruby for some time, Tiffany understood Sean and Carlisle's relationship well.

Carlisle wasn't just the real force behind Alumni Network but also Sean's best friend since high school. Therefore, Carlisle wouldn't sit idly by while Sean was being mistreated.

Little did Tiffany know, however, Carlisle had indeed chosen to ignore it. He observed that Sean had become competitive and enjoyed comparing himself with others. Carlisle believed that this incident could teach Sean a valuable lesson and encourage him to work harder.

Ruby added, "Could it be that Carlisle wasn't aware it was his car?"

Tiffany was startled.

"Well..."

Ruby looked at the semi-trailer and explained, "This is a gift delivery truck, so the recipient himself may be unaware of it."

Meanwhile, the semi-trailer had parked outside the BBQ restaurant. Two men in suits emerged, carrying a large stack of documents.

When one of the men, Gary, took out his phone to make a call, Sienna shouted, "No need to call! The recipient is right here!"

Sienna's voice drew everyone's attention.

Feeling nervous, Sienna held Sarah's arm and said, "That car belongs to my bestie!"

The envious gazes immediately shifted to Sarah. However, Sarah wasn't bothered by the attention at all. In fact, she had long been accustomed to it.

With a smile, Gary asked, "What's your relationship with Mr. Zahn?"

"Mr. Zahn? Don't you mean Mr. Gust? There seems to be some kind of mistake," Sarah frowned as she corrected Gary's careless mistake.

Gary flipped through the documents in his hands for confirmation. He initially thought he had made a mistake, but the recipient column clearly stated the car was for Carlisle Zahn.

"We'd better give the recipient a call, just to be sure," Gary's co-worker reminded him.

"Right," Gary replied and made the call.

Sarah quickly took her phone out to stand by. A ringtone with lyrics sounded.

"We'll grow old together and watch the snowflakes fall..."

It was Carlisle's ringtone. He had specially requested a recording studio to record the song as his private ringtone.

Glancing at the unknown caller's number, Carlisle shifted his gaze to Gary in disbelief.

Sean looked at Lily in astonishment.

"Don't tell me that the surprise Gareth mentioned is..."

"It's highly possible."

Lily nodded, her lips pressed together.

Carlisle answered the call.

"Hello?"

"Hello, is this Mr. Carlisle Zahn?"

Gary's voice from the phone overlapped with his voice at the scene. Gary's gaze was fixed on Carlisle as he waited for his response.

"Yes, I am," Carlisle replied.

Gary swiftly approached Carlisle and asked, "Mr. Carlisle Zahn, I presume?"

Carlisle nodded in response.

Gary politely requested, "May I have your ID, please?"

Carlisle retrieved his ID from his wallet in his pocket and handed it to Gary for verification.

After comparing the ID number, Gary handed Carlisle the documents and said, "Please sign here."

Sean intentionally raised his voice, shouting, "Hey, hey, hey! Are you sure that this car isn't Ms. Gates'?"

Glancing at Sarah and Sienna, Gary smiled professionally and said, "Yes. Mr. Carlisle Zahn is the recipient. The matching ID number confirms this."

Sarah was dumbfounded. She found it difficult to believe that the car wasn't Austin's gift for her, and she wondered where the car Austin promised was.

Sienna was equally stunned. She wouldn't have ever imagined that the car belonged to Carlisle.

Chapter 524

Sienna couldn't help but wonder what gave Carlisle the right to own a car worth at least one million dollars.

A honking sound interrupted Sienna's thoughts. Another semi-trailer had arrived with a transparent glass case showing a pink Porsche Cayenne inside.

"Wow, look at that Porsche!"

"What's going on? Did all the wealthy people decide to gather around here for a barbeque today?"

"Can someone tell me how much that car is worth?"

"That's the Cayenne Turbo 4.5T, the latest model in 2004. The most luxurious version cost about 250 thousand!"

"It definitely can't match the price of the Rolls-Royce."

"Duh! Rolls-Royce is crowned the king of luxury cars. These two brands aren't even in the same league!"

If it weren't for the Rolls-Royce Phantom's presence, the 250-thousand-dollar Cayenne would have undoubtedly been the center of envy that night. Sarah would have been deeply fond of it, too.

However, Sarah couldn't muster any interest at the moment. As she stared blankly at Carlisle signing the documents, she could only feel an inexplicable displeasure in her heart.

After signing the documents, Carlisle called Francis over and handed him the papers.

"Take these. We're changing our ride."

Francis took the documents, his hands shaking. When he saw the Rolls-Royce in the parking lot earlier, he had wondered when Carlisle would get a luxury car like that. He hadn't expected that the exact Rolls-Royce that caught his eye would belong to Carlisle.

In other words, he would be a Rolls-Royce driver from then on. He could imagine how people would look at him when he drove this car.

Francis followed Gary to collect the car. After the Rolls-Royce was unloaded, Francis sat inside to experience its luxurious interior, thrilled by its design.

"Damn. I must get in there, too!"

Sean hurried over and jumped into the front passenger seat.

Carlisle remained aloof, recalling Gareth's suggestion that he change his car, to which he humorously replied that he had no money.

He hadn't expected Gareth to gift him a car, let alone one that was more expensive than his

Ferrari. He wondered how he could ever repay Gareth.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Sean leaned out and laughed loudly at Sienna and Sarah.

"How does it feel to be slapped in the face?"

The metaphorical slap was indeed painful. Sarah blushed in embarrassment. She suppressed her anger and signed the papers to collect her Cayenne.

As soon as she finished signing, she received a call from Austin.

"Sarah, have you received the car I ordered for you?"

"Yes," Sarah replied, displeased.

"What's wrong? Don't you like it?"

Austin frowned, noticing her displeasure. He wondered if a 250-thousand-dollar car couldn't satisfy Sarah anymore.

Sarah replied innocently, "Yes, I do. It's just that I accidentally made a fool of myself..."

Sarah explained to Austin how she had initially mistaken that Rolls-Royce as his gift. After listening to her recount, Austin was somewhat speechless.

"What a coincidence," he remarked.

Sarah responded with an upset tone, "It sure was. Now everyone sees me as a joke!"

Austin took a deep breath and said, "I'm sorry, Sarah. I should have been more considerate and sent it to your school instead."

Sarah quickly responded, "No, Austin. I should thank you for the gift. It's fine. Let them have their laugh. It's not the first time I've been humiliated in front of Carlisle, after all."

"Sarah, baby, don't worry. He won't be laughing for long."

With that, Austin ended the call.

He had spent 250 thousand dollars on a luxury car to please Sarah, yet a million-dollar Rolls - Royce had overshadowed her moment. Sarah wasn't the only one feeling embarrassed. Austin felt the same.

Suddenly, a knock on the door interrupted Austin's thoughts.

"Come in," Austin responded indifferently.

Yuriel entered the room, his expression dark.

"Dad... Did someone upset you?" Austin asked cautiously.

Yuriel replied coldly, "Does your money grow on trees? Why did you buy a 250 thousand car for a university student?"

Chapter 525

Austin's lips twisted, wondering how his father had found out so quickly. He suspected Ruby had informed Yuriel about the incident since she was a Caulitorna BBQ investor.

"That's the money I made from trading stocks. It's easy money. It's as if it fell from the sky," Austin replied calmly.

Yuriel was aware that Austin had invested a lot of money in stocks. Despite Yuriel's concern, Austin never took his advice.

Feeling hopeless, Yuriel sighed and said, "You should stop investing in stocks while you're ahead. As for that university girl, don't take her too seriously. She's not worthy of you."

Already in a terrible mood, Austin became more irritated.

He raised his voice and shouted, "Don't do this, don't do that... You're annoying!"

Yuriel snorted coldly.

"I am your father. Shouldn't I be concerned about you?"

Austin leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes, ignoring his father's rage.

"If you were half as competent as Carlisle, I wouldn't be so worried about you," Yuriel remarked.

Despite being the wealthiest man in Riverland, Yuriel couldn't help but envy Carlisle's parents for having such a brilliant son, while his own was a mere disappointment.

Nonetheless, he was relieved that Austin was diligent at work and had no bad habits. Yuriel felt that if Austin had only some business acumen and some training, he might be able to shoulder his business empire.

Yuriel pulled a chair to sit down.

"I plan to acquire Alumni Network."

At that moment, Carlisle's Alumni Network had three million registered users. With its trajectory, it could reach ten million by the end of the month, making it a significant revenue generator in the Internet industry. Yuriel didn't think Carlisle should own such a money maker, so he planned to acquire it for 100 million dollars.

Austin cracked open his eyes and asked, "Are you sure they're willing to sell?"

Alumni Network's reputation had spread across the Riverland business community. Many angel investors were eager to contribute, yet Alumni Network did not intend to accept investments, indicating that Carlisle did not lack funds.

"If the number's right, I believe he'll sell it anyway," Yuriel replied confidently.

"How much do you plan to offer?"

"100 million!"

"100 million?"

Austin's eyes widened in disbelief.

He knew Alumni Network showed great potential but wondered if it was worth 100 million dollars. After all, it had only been launched for nearly a month.

Narrowing his eyes, Yuriel explained, "One must take risks to gain an advantage. Alumni Network's future commercial value would exceed 100 million dollars if not one billion."

"No, it can't possibly be worth one billion! The internet isn't fully popularized yet, so most students find it novel!" Austin exclaimed.

He refused to believe that Carlisle could make one billion from a mere website, surpassing the Gust family's achievements, which was the result of generations of hard work. He found it simply too good to be true.

Looking at Austin, Yuriel sighed and slowly explained, "Despite the internet not being fully popularized, Alumni Network has already attracted so much attention. University students nationwide will undoubtedly sign up for its membership once it becomes widely adopted!"

As much as Austin wanted to argue, he remained silent, not daring to question his father's business acumen.

Meanwhile, Gareth and a few others took their seats in a private room at Caulitorna BBQ. Carlisle sighed.

"Gareth, your gift was simply too much!"

The Rolls-Royce Gareth gifted Carlisle was shipped directly from abroad and cost about one million dollars after adding various taxes and fees to its selling price.

The shipment took about one month to reach the country. In other words, Gareth had purchased it a month ago. This explained why he had not been visiting the bar then he was tight on cash.

However, despite his tight finances, he had been willing to spend over one million dollars to buy Carlisle the car as a token of his genuine and loyal friendship.

"Some friend I am, huh?"

Gareth grinned, his brows raised.

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"You sure are an amazing friend," Carlisle replied with mixed feelings.

He held up his glass and toasted, "To Gareth!"

Sometimes, a toast was worth more than a thousand words of thanks.

Sean smiled cheekily as he asked, "So, Gareth, when will you get me a car too?"

Glancing at Sean, Gareth asked, "Are we that close?"

Sean rubbed his nose and replied, "We've known each other for some time, haven't we? I'd say we're quite close."

Gareth smiled and said, "How about we make a bet? If your Alumni Network has more than ten million registered users, I'll give you a Porsche!"

"What? Ten million users?"

Sean yelped like a dog with its tail stepped on.

He wondered if Gareth was making a joke. There were only 20 million university students nationwide, so Gareth was asking for at least half of them to register.

Gareth picked up a sausage and grilled it.

"Alumni Network has great potential. Thanks to the referral reward system, it reached three million registered users in such a short time. As long as the system continues, Alumni Network will keep attracting new users. I estimate that approximately 70% of university students nationwide will join the website!"

If Alumni Network surpassed ten million users, its subsequent commercial value would be immeasurable. By then, Sean's net worth would skyrocket, and Gareth would be more than happy to buy him a luxury car.

However, Gareth would prefer not to gift him a Rolls-Royce. After all, it wouldn't be appropriate for Sean to drive the same car as his boss, Carlisle.

Carlisle chimed in, "The referral reward system will be terminated at the end of December!"

Sean asked with concern, "Will this discourage university students from registering? Gareth was right the referral reward system is why most students joined Alumni Network.

"According to the backend data, 2.9 million of the three million users signed up through invitation codes. The remaining tens of thousands probably didn't bother with the codes and signed up directly instead."

Sean worried that canceling the referral reward system might reduce the enthusiasm of existing users to invite new ones.

However, Carlisle reassured him, "I estimate that Alumni Network will have over 20 million

registered users by next year, accounting for 95% of the country's university students. Once every university student uses Alumni Network, new students will naturally be enticed each year!"

With 2.9 million invited users, Alumni Network had to issue 2.9 million rewards, each worth six dollars, totaling 18 million dollars. When Alumni Network surpassed ten million users, the company would have to spend 60 million dollars on rewards. It was essentially buying

users.

Carlisle's goal was to attract users with the website's appeal and reputation and ensure user engagement for future viral marketing.

"Carl, you're even crazier than Gareth," Sean remarked, feeling immense pressure.

He wondered how many servers they would need to support 20 million users.

"Am I? Penguin Group has about 300 million registered users now!"

"Are we competing against Penguin Group?"

"Well, we're not that different, after all..."

Carlisle had no intention of directly competing with Penguin Group, the current leader in the internet industry.

While Penguin Group offered its service to all users nationwide, Alumni Network was only available to university students.

Carlisle was also hesitating, wondering if he should open Alumni Network to the public. Only then could the website reach its peak potential.

However, if Alumni Network were to be publicly available, it might become a mixed bag and potentially disappoint many users.

Carlisle decided to take things slowly. His current priority was to capture the university student market.

As he pondered, he added, "In the future, Alumni Network will offer features for users to listen to music or watch movies together. It will also include farming games."

Carlisle remembered that Farm Fun, released in 2009, would become a nationwide hit upon its launch. In his previous life, he used to set alarms so that he would wake up in the middle of the night to harvest crops.

"Listening to music or watching movies together?"

Sean stared at Carlisle in astonishment while Gareth took a sharp breath.

They thought it was a brilliant idea.

Chapter 527

A feature that allowed users to listen to their favorite songs and watch their favorite movies with their loved ones? That would definitely win over every campus couple!

At the sight of the gang's stunned expressions, Carlisle smiled and asked, "Any problems?"

Sean shook his head.

"No, not all all. Carl, what exactly goes on in your brain? How do you come up with such awesome features? I'll have the R&D department start working on these features immediately!"

He swiftly took out his phone, eager to get the features online as soon as possible. He was confident that these features would become a major highlight of Alumni Network.

"Hold your horses," Carlisle suddenly interjected.

"We can take our time to implement these features."

Piqued with curiosity, Gareth asked, "What about the farm or ranch thing?"

He understood the appeal of listening to music or watching movies together but was puzzled

by the idea of farming or raising animals on Alumni Network. It sounded dull to him.

"It's a mini-game where you can grow various crops on a farm," Carlisle explained.

"That's lame," Gareth remarked, finding it unappealing.

"It's actually quite interesting. Imagine your friends or alumni visiting your farm and stealing your crops..."

Carlisle briefly described the fun of growing and stealing crops online.

Gareth's attitude immediately changed upon hearing that the users could enjoy the game with all their friends.

"Awesome... If you steal my crops, I'll have to pay you back by stealing from you. That sounds fun!"

Sean conveyed Carlisle's ideas in a text message and sent it to Lily. After Carlisle finished eating his grilled sausage, he craved more, so he ordered two more servings from the waiter.

Carlisle suddenly turned to Owen and asked, "So, Owen, how's the performance of Account Farming Studio recently?"

Owen quickly swallowed the beef in his mouth before replying, "In November, we earned 480 thousand and spent 300 thousand on purchasing new computers."

Carlisle nodded in satisfaction.

"Not bad!"

At this rate, Account Farming Studio would become a standout in the industry, generating millions monthly.

Sean was deeply impressed.

"Carl, you were born to do business. Who would have thought game account farming could be such a money maker?"

He then turned to Owen and said, "Owen, you'd better pray more diligently when you visit the church!"

Taking a bite of chicken drumstick, Owen mumbled, "Carl's the one who taught me how to make money. What does God have anything to do with it? If anyone deserves my prayers, it's Carl-"

Gareth choked on the spicy buffalo wings.

Sean smacked Owen on the back of his head and said, "Watch your mouth!"

Realizing his mistake, Owen quickly stood up and apologized, "I'm sorry, Carl! I didn't mean

With a smile, Carlisle waved his hand dismissively and said, "Sit down and eat. We mess with each other like this all the time."

When he and Owen used to hang out online, they often exchanged playful insults. Since starting work, Carlisle had missed that kind of carefree camaraderie, even more so as he grew older.

Despite being reborn, Carlisle's mental age remained over 40 years old, so he cherished having a few good friends with whom he could joke and banter.

Owen sat back down awkwardly.

"I'll punish myself with three drinks for saying the wrong thing!"

"It's alright. Come on, it's just a joke. I can take a joke like that!" Carlisle rolled his eyes, feeling slightly annoyed.

Chapter 528

Gareth quickly agreed, "That's right, Owen. It's no big deal since we're all friends here. Just be more cautious in public, especially at important business events. Be extra careful with your words and actions on those occasions."

Owen blushed and nodded.

"Got it. Thanks for the advice, Gareth."

Changing the topic, Carlisle said, "Sean, didn't you get an advertisement deal? What kind of ad is it, and how much are they paying?"

Stretching out his leg, Sean pointed at the logo on the side of his grey chunky boots and said, "It's Fortbird. They're offering us five million a year."

Fortbird was a well-known domestic shoe brand and a prominent company from Midew State. At its peak, it had over three thousand branches and a market value of 40 billion. It was crowned the king of domestic shoe brands.

"Did you accept it?" Carlisle asked, sipping his tea.

Five million in advertisement fees was no small amount. In Riverland, there were tens of thousands of businesses, but only a few thousand of them could exceed five million in annual profit.

Nevertheless, Carlisle wasn't entirely satisfied with Fortbird's offer. Based on his estimate, Alumni Network would have had more than ten million registered users by the end of the month.

Yet, Fortbird's proposed advertisement fee seemed to be based on an estimate of only three million users.

"Not yet. This is a big deal. I definitely need your advice before moving forward!"

Sean grinned.

"Five million, Carl. That's a huge step forward!"

Sipping his drink, Gareth casually remarked, "We've already invested over 20 million into Alumni Network. Five million only covers a quarter of that!"

Sean argued, "In other words, I only need another three advertisement deals to break even in a year!"

Carlisle pondered momentarily before saying, "Five million is a bit low. I think we should consider charging them by cost per click, or CPC for short."

"CPC? Won't we end up losing money with that?" Sean asked.

He was familiar with the four ad pricing models:

"Cost per Impression" (CPI) would be charged according to the number of times the ad was displayed, per impression, or per thousand impressions.

"Cost per Click" (CPC) would be charged according to the number of times the ad was clicked.

"Cost per Action" (CPA) would be charged according to specific actions taken after seeing the ad, such as downloads or purchases.

"Cost per Duration" (CPD) would be charged according to the length of time the ad was displayed, either monthly or annually.

Fortbird and Alumni Network were discussing a CPD model with annual payments. Sean thought it was a decent model. Regardless of the ad performance, his company would receive five million in payment.

Since he wasn't a fan of online ads himself, he worried that Alumni Network's users wouldn't click on the ads, potentially resulting in low CPC revenue.

"Don't worry. Let's go with the CPC model at 0.04 cents per click," Carlisle said.

"...I don't quite get it. With CPC, clicks from the same IP address are only considered as one click. We have three million users now. Even if all our users click on the ad, it would only give us a sum of nine hundred thousand dollars."

Sean was puzzled. A person as intelligent as Carlisle surely understood the maths, right?

Carlisle picked up a piece of salmon to grill and explained, "To ensure a good user experience, we can't have too many ads on Alumni Network. I can accept two ad slots at most. In other words, if we charge annually, we can only accept two ads a year.

"However, with the CPC model, we can accept and rotate multiple ads. We might only have three million users now, but what if we get five or even eight million users this month?"

Chapter 529

Carlisle's explanation had enlightened Sean. Sean took a hearty gulp from his drink and smiled bitterly.

With liquor trickling from the corner of his lips, he said, "Will I ever have a brain like Carl's?"

Gareth patted Sean on the shoulder to comfort him.

"How could you compare yourself to Carlisle? He's like a freaking fortune teller!"

Nodding in agreement, Sean replied, "Exactly! How can I compete with a freak like this!"

Lily stepped on Sean's foot, reminding him not to be rude to Carlisle.

Smiling awkwardly, Sean poured himself another drink.

"Alright, let's drink!"

After a few rounds of drinks, everyone was full, and it was about time to wrap up. Lily went to pay the bill but was informed by the waiter at the front desk that the meal was already paid for.

"Carl, do you know the owner here?" Sean asked curiously.

Ruby, who happened to be descending from upstairs, said, "Of course he does. Carlisle and I are classmates!"

Approaching Carlisle, Ruby greeted him with a nod and asked, "How was the food?"

"Pretty good," Carlisle replied.

Caulitorna sure knew how to prepare their BBQ. The flavors were rich and lingering, leaving an enjoyable aftertaste.

Ruby giggled.

"Then you should come more often. Your meals at Caulitorna BBQ will always be on the house."

Carlisle gently smiled.

"If you don't let me pay next time, I might not come again!"

Carlisle accepted Ruby's treat this time because he acknowledged her as a friend. He noticed Ruby had indeed changed significantly and was trying to make amends for what she had done to Tiffany in the past. Thus, he was willing to accept her gesture of waiving the bill.

Ruby stuck out her tongue.

"Alright. We'll charge you the regular price from now on. But promise you'll come by more often to support our business."

"Sure. I'll have my colleagues come here for gatherings sometimes," Carlisle replied, nodding while smiling.

Narrowing his eyes, Sean glanced at Carlisle and Ruby, sensing something was off. It was evident that Ruby was hitting on Carlisle. Sean wondered if Carlisle had moved on so quickly.

Lily felt irritated as she watched Carlisle and Ruby chatting happily, her eyes tinged with rage.

"Why, this womanizer! How dare he flirt around while Wanda is away. I must watch him closely for Wanda," thought Lily.

"Carl, Sean needs to talk to you about some work-related matters."

Lily made up an excuse to get Carlisle away.

Noticing Carlisle's glance at him, Sean was dumbfounded. He turned to Lily, who signaled him with her eyes and finally realized her intention.

"Oh, right! I have something very important to discuss with you. It's confidential company matters, so we'd better talk in the car," Sean said.

Carlisle noticed Lily's eye signals to Sean and immediately grasped their intentions.

He smiled and said, "Sure, let's go!"

He then turned to Ruby and said, "I have something to take care of. See you, Ruby!"

Ruby nodded.

"I'll see you out."

"It's alright. You should get back to work," Lily responded, not wanting her to send Carlisle off.

"In that case, please come again next time!"

Ruby glanced at Lily, aware that she was trying to prevent her from getting closer to Carlisle.

Lily and Carlisle seemed to have known each other since high school. In other words, she and Carlisle had a closer relationship than Ruby and Carlisle. Thus, Ruby understood that it would be unwise for her to insist on seeing Carlisle off now. And so, Carlisle and his friends left the BBQ restaurant.

Chapter 530

Feeling the cold wind outside, Lily shivered and remarked, "So cold..."

At the sight of Sean about to take his coat off, Lily quickly stopped him and frowned.

"What are you doing?"

"Giving you my coat."

"You'll freeze, you silly goose!"

Lily rolled her eyes, yet her heart was warmed by the gesture.

Sean patted his chest proudly and responded, "The cold could never take down a fit body like mine!"

During the days Sean spent accompanying Lily in the hospital, he had come to realize just how close he had been to losing her forever. Thus, after Lily was discharged, he pampered her dearly.

"Hello? How about some consideration for us single folks?" Gareth, trailing behind, said with a deliberately envious tone.

Owen nodded in agreement.

"Yeah. Are you flaunting your relationship because we don't have girlfriends?"

Sean shot a glare at Owen.

"This is none of your business, you brat."

Owen was only a few months younger than Sean and Carlisle, but he started school two years later, making them see him as two years younger.

Puffing up his chest, Owen declared, "I'm not a kid! I'm about to turn 18!"

Gareth's eyes widened as he looked at Owen.

"So, you're not 18 yet?"

With an embarrassed smile, Owen replied, "Next Sunday will be my 18th birthday!"

Gareth patted Owen on the shoulder and said, "That means the CEO of Dragonaire Studio will officially become an adult too. I'll throw you a big celebration."

After a moment of hesitation, Owen lowered his head and said, "I... I want to celebrate it at home..."

Every year, Owen's parents would arrange his birthday celebration in advance. He had been looking forward to celebrating his birthday with his mother's homemade dishes and letting them know he had finally grown up.

Gareth shrugged.

"Alright then. You can handle the celebration yourself. I'll prepare a big birthday gift for you!

Since Carlisle regarded Owen as a brother, Gareth treated Owen as one of his own. Moreover, as the second-largest shareholder of Dragonaire Studio, Gareth felt it was essential to treat Owen, the CEO of Dragonaire Studio, well. After all, the company's performance relied heavily on its CEO.

Owen smiled and nodded.

"Thank you, Gareth. I'll look forward to your gift!"

After interacting with Gareth over the past month, Owen had come to understand his character. If he turned down Gareth's friendly offer now, Gareth would definitely be upset.

Since they would be working together for a long time, Owen decided to accept Gareth's gift and return the favor on Gareth's birthday. He understood the importance of reciprocity.

Sean draped his arm around Owen's shoulder and said lewdly, "Owie, since our company hasn't started making money yet, I probably can't gift you a huge pile of cash. How about I set you up with a lady for your birthday instead? I'll make sure you become a real adult!"

As soon as Sean finished speaking, Lily pinched his arm and asked angrily, "What are you talking about? Your laugh sounds so sleazy."

"It's nothing," Sean replied, coughing to play it cool.

Lily turned to Owen and asked, "Owen, what did Sean just say to you?"

Before Owen could answer, Sean quickly pulled Lily toward the street, saying, "Forget it. Let's go for a walk! Bye, Carl, Gareth, Owen!"

"Sean, I heard what you told Owen just now. Do you often sneak around behind my back?"

"No! I haven't even kissed a girl yet!"

"Yeah, right!"

Lily scoffed.

"You don't believe me, do you? Well, feel free to test me. Then you'll see how bad my kissing skills are!"

"Dream on!"

As Sean and Lily continued their playful bickering while leaving, Carlisle watched them from a distance, a smile tugging at his lips.

Owen suddenly turned to Carlisle and asked, "Didn't Sean mention he has something important to discuss with you? Did he forget?"

"It's been taken care of. You should go home and get some rest now," Carlisle replied, tightening his coat collar and stuffing his hands into his pockets.

"Alright. I'll check out the office first!"

Owen nodded and hailed a taxi at the roadside.

With his hands in his pockets, Gareth hiccuped and said, "Owen should get a car soon. What kind of CEO doesn't have his own ride? It's rather shabby!"

Carlisle chuckled and replied, "We're on a tight budget right now. Once the company starts making money, we'll ensure the CEOs each get their cars."

If it weren't for the Rolls-Royce Gareth had gifted him, Carlisle would still be driving a Mazda.