

Help! My One-Night Stand Is Examining Me?!

Chapter 301 We will

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Stephan immediately clasped Alana's hand tightly, looking at her with tenderness and affection.

"We will."

Alana couldn't help but blush; her heart seemed to be filled with happiness, and she was overjoyed.

It was only now that she truly realized she no longer seemed to resist the idea of marrying him.

Seeing this, Miranda seethed with frustration.

She kept scheming in her mind: she absolutely couldn't let Alana have the chance to marry into a wealthy family!

She sneered, "Oh my, that sounds better than a song. If you knew Alana was a child abandoned by her parents, with no background whatsoever, would you still be so devoted to her?"

The moment her grandmother heard this, her expression changed instantly. "Miranda, shut your mouth!"

She hated it most when people said Alana was a child abandoned by her parents.

It was pitiful enough that Alana had grown up without her parents; why did so many people keep bringing it up, stabbing her in the heart time and again?

Wasn't she pitiful enough already?

Miranda spoke with righteous conviction, "Mom, I'm just stating the facts! She has no father or mother, she's all alone, she's practically an orphan. What decent

family would accept a daughter-in-law like that!"

Hearing this, Alana's face turned pale.

Her grandmother was instantly so enraged that her chest ached. "You... you... you..."

Stephan's thin lips parted. "I will marry her!" His deep voice rang out with unwavering conviction.

Miranda, who had just moments ago worn a look of contempt, was now stunned by Stephan's resolute gaze.

Stephan said earnestly, "Grandmother, please believe me, it is Alana herself that I wish to marry. No matter what she's like, I will marry her. I don't care about her status, and I don't care about her background. I love her so much to care about those things."

He looked at Alana, his deep eyes focused and full of affection.

Alana gazed at the earnest expression on his face, her eyes growing slightly moist. His words, "I love her," touched her heart and made it flutter intensely.

Grandma had been very worried at first, her heart in her throat, afraid that Stephan might take offense.

But upon hearing him say that, her heart, which had been in her throat, slowly settled back into place.

Grandma said with emotion, "She's right. My granddaughter was abandoned by her own parents when she was little. She grew up with me. Children who don't have the love of their parents often have a harder time."

"That's why she's always been so sensible and resilient. No matter how difficult things get, she endures them silently and bears the burden on her own."

"But I hope her life from now on will be filled with sweetness. I hope all her hardships will pass, and that what awaits her is the beginning of happiness."

Stephan listened with a heavy heart, his tone firm. "It will be."

Grandma couldn't help but say, "I hope you'll love her dearly, spoil her, and never let her suffer any injustice."

Stephan replied solemnly, "I promise I will cherish her and spoil her, and I won't let her suffer any injustice."

Grandma smiled with relief. "Grandma truly wishes you both the best."

Stephan replied, "Thank you, Grandma."

Alana lowered her head; her eyes had unconsciously welled up again.

Meanwhile, Miranda stood before them like a clown, completely ignored. Furious, she stormed out of the hospital room.

Seeing Miranda leave, Grandma finally couldn't help but say to Alana, "Lana, go back to our community as soon as possible and dig up the wooden box I buried under that peach tree. Keep it with you, it's the dowry I'm giving you."

Alana bit her lip, her eyelashes slightly damp. "Grandma..."

That was Grandma's secret savings, accumulated over so many years; she couldn't bear to touch it.

Grandma said earnestly, "Do as I say. If you don't go back and get it, what if your aunt and uncle find it? That would be a real problem. I'll only feel at ease if you have it in your possession."

Unable to refuse, Alana nodded. "All right, I'll head back to our community in a little while."

Grandma still wasn't at ease. She turned to Stephan. "Stephan, I want you to help Lana. Protect the property I've given her, don't let anyone else get their hands on it."

Stephan nodded solemnly. "Alright."

After a moment's pause, he asked, "Grandma, should I have a lawyer come over to draw up an inheritance agreement?"

"An inheritance agreement?" Grandma was taken aback. She was elderly and lacked the necessary knowledge; she didn't understand these matters.

Alana looked at Stephan. "Stephan, I have the video Grandma recorded yesterday. Isn't that enough?"

Stephan explained, “The video recorded yesterday was done on the spur of the moment; it doesn’t actually have any legal standing.”

Alana was taken aback. “It doesn’t?”

She hadn’t studied law and wasn’t very familiar with such matters.

Stephan nodded. “That’s right. For audio or video recordings to be legally valid, they must be notarized in the presence of two or more impartial witnesses.”

“And yesterday, aside from you two, the two parties involved, I was the only person with no vested interest. We were one short, so the video has no legal standing.”

Grandma sighed.

In other words, she’d wasted her time yesterday.

Thank goodness she asked today; otherwise, she wouldn’t have known she’d wasted her time.

Grandma couldn’t help but ask, “So what should we do?”

“We should get a lawyer to handle the property notarization.”

Grandma said anxiously, “Then could you help me find one? I’m just an old woman, I don’t know much about these things.”

Stephan nodded. “Don’t worry, Grandma. I’ll take care of it for you.”

Grandma breathed a sigh of relief, thinking to herself, Thank goodness my granddaughter’s boyfriend knows about the law; otherwise, it really would have been a total waste of time.

Alana stayed in the hospital room with her grandmother.

Meanwhile, Stephan went out to make a phone call and contacted a lawyer.

As Grandma requested, he had an inheritance agreement drafted.

The lawyer worked quickly; once the agreement was drafted, he hurried to the hospital. The lawyer then read the agreement aloud to Grandma.

After confirming that everything was in order, he had Grandma sign and affix her fingerprint to the document.

Two copies were prepared.

One copy went to Grandma, and one to the lawyer.

Even if her grandmother were to lose her copy, the lawyer would still have a backup, and the agreement would remain legally valid.

However, before that, to strengthen its legal validity, the lawyer still had to take it to the notary office to have it notarized.

Everything went smoothly.

Miranda assumed that since Alana and Stephan were taking care of the old woman, she went home without knowing any of this.

If she had known that the old lady had secretly hired a lawyer to transfer her assets to Alana, she would have certainly thrown a huge fit and fought tooth and nail to stop it.

After Miranda rushed home, she immediately told her daughter, Joan, what had happened at the hospital.

When Joan heard that Alana's boyfriend owned a conglomerate worth tens of billions, she was instantly consumed with jealousy.

She immediately went online to look up her boyfriend's background.

She shared what she found with Miranda: "Mom, the name of the Hudson Group CEO is exactly the same as Alana's boyfriend's name. Could these two be the same person?"

Miranda asked anxiously, "Did you find any photos?"

Joan shook her head. "I didn't find any clear photos. They're either of his back or blurry, so we can't make out his face clearly."

Miranda said sourly, "Hmph, since the photos don't prove they're the same person, that means they might not be the same person! Who knows? That man might even be an imposter pretending to be the CEO of Hudson Group!"

Joan couldn't help but say, "Mom, what if he really is the CEO of Hudson Group? If that sourpuss Alana were to marry him, wouldn't she be stepping right into a wealthy family and becoming the CEO's wife?"

Miranda felt panicked.

Joan stamped her foot in frustration. "Mom, if that wrench Alana can go from rags to riches, what's that supposed to make me? I'm better than her. The man I end up with absolutely can't be outdone by her!"

“Oh, I know, but good men are hard to come by these days!”

If they were easy to find, she would have found one for her daughter by now.

After all, her greatest dream in life was for her daughter to marry into a wealthy family, become a wealthy lady, and then take her, her mother, along to enjoy a life of luxury.

Joan pouted. “Then help me find one! Someone handsome, with a great body, and rich, preferably better than Alana’s boyfriend!”

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Chapter 302 Right out the door

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Joan actually had her eye on Alana’s boyfriend, but unfortunately, he wasn’t interested in her.

She couldn’t understand what was wrong with her. She would have stripped down and thrown herself at him, yet he wouldn’t even touch her, he just kicked her right out the door.

Just thinking about it was humiliating!

Miranda felt torn. “Sweetie, if you put it that way, you might as well just go steal Alana’s boyfriend.”

Joan retorted angrily, “I’d love to steal him, but he doesn’t want me!”

Miranda was exasperated, “Oh my, if you ask me, you were just too impatient yesterday. Who goes up to a man and starts taking off her clothes to seduce him right away? He’ll think you’re not a proper girl!”

Joan pouted. “I couldn’t help it. He’s so handsome, I’ve never seen a man that handsome before. I just couldn’t resist.”

Miranda said, “In my opinion, you have to reel men in slowly, tease them little by little. He goes to the ward every day with Alana to visit Grandma. Why don’t you come with me? We’re bound to run into him. Once we do, you can start teasing him little by little.”

“Men are all big pigs, they can’t change their philandering ways. If you tease him back and forth, he’ll eventually give in!”

Joan felt a surge of excitement. “Will this really work?”

“Why don’t you just give it a try and see?”

Joan thought to herself, Well, I’ll give it a shot!

Meanwhile.

At the hospital.

After lulling her grandmother to sleep, Alana stepped out of the ward.

She saw Stephan taking a call in the hallway and didn’t want to disturb him just yet.

She waited until he finished his call before walking up to him and wrapping her arms around his lean waist.

Stephan let her hold him for a moment before gently pulling her hands away. Then he turned around and embraced her again.

“Is Grandma resting?”

“Yes, she’s resting.”

Stephan lowered his gaze and brushed aside the soft strands of hair from her forehead. “Are you tired?”

Alana shook her head. “Not really. I’m fine.”

Stephan didn’t call her out on it. Having spent so much time with her, he’d noticed that no matter how tired she was, she would never readily admit it.

It wasn’t that she liked to tough it out; she was simply used to it.

Perhaps it had something to do with her childhood experiences.

Her parents' divorce and the fact that they abandoned her must have been a huge blow to her.

Besides, he still didn't know why her parents had divorced back then.

"What did you think of what I just said to Grandma?"

Alana blinked. "The things you said?"

Stephan cupped her face, his dark eyes fixed on her delicate, beautiful features. "I was talking about coming to ask for your hand in marriage."

Alana bit her lip, her heart fluttering slightly. "Stephan, haven't I told you before that I don't really want to get married in this lifetime?"

Stephan nodded. "Yes, you have. And I told you that I'll wait for you, until the day you're ready to marry me."

Alana lowered her eyelashes, thought for a moment, and decided to be honest with him about what was on her mind.

"Actually, I'm quite afraid of marriage. I'm afraid of taking that step. I'm afraid that once we're married, our relationship will change, and we'll never be able to go back to the way things are now."

Stephan gazed intently at her and asked earnestly, "Why? Why do you think our relationship will change for the worse? Why not get better and better?"

Alana bit her lip, momentarily at a loss for words.

Stephan fell silent for a moment, as if he had guessed something. "Is it because of your parents?"

Alana pressed her lips together and slowly nodded.

"My parents are definitely a big reason why I'm afraid of getting married."

Stephan paused for a moment, then took her hand and led her over to sit on a nearby chair.

"Can you tell me about your parents?"

Alana buried her face in his chest and began to recall the past.

“I don’t really know much about how their story began; most of what I know comes from my grandmother. My grandmother said my parents were in love at first. They were together in college, got married right after graduation, and then had me.”

“From the time I was born until I was two or three years old, their relationship was still pretty good, at least, it was very harmonious. My dad went to work every day, and my mom stayed home as a housewife, taking care of me. When my dad came home from work, there was always a table full of steaming hot food waiting for him. But gradually, life suddenly changed...”

“I don’t know what happened, but my dad started coming home later and later, and less and less often, sometimes he wouldn’t come home for days.”

“My mom would often argue with him about it, and he’d say she was unreasonable. At first, it was just minor arguments every few days, but it gradually escalated into major fights, and even physical altercations. Every time they fought, I was right there, hearing every word.”

“At the time, my mother suspected my father was seeing someone else, so she’d check his phone every few days. If she found the slightest hint of something suspicious on his phone, she’d start a huge scene.”

“My father claimed it was all just casual flings related to work, that all men are like that, and asked my mother to understand and be more forgiving. My mother was soft-hearted and forgave him time and time again, but all she got in return was him becoming more and more aggressive.”

“Their arguments grew fiercer and more hysterical, and they even started getting physical with each other. On several occasions, she was accidentally injured.”

Alana had hated seeing her parents fight, so she ran over to try to break it up again. Her father accidentally pushed her, and she fell, slamming her arm on the ground and breaking it.

She was admitted to the hospital and had her arm put in a cast; it took several months to recover. Once, they were arguing on the street, and the fight eventually turned on her.

Her mother pointed at her father and screamed, “The biggest regret of my life is marrying you and giving birth to your child! If it weren’t for Lana, I would’ve left long ago, I wouldn’t have stuck around with you all this time!”

Her father snapped back, “Then get out! Take our daughter with you, I won’t stop you! You only gave birth to a daughter, not a son. I don’t care about her!”

“Why should I be the one to leave with her? You were the one who insisted I have her. I went through so much to give birth to her, how dare you just say you don’t want her and walk away?”

“If I’d known back then that you were carrying a girl, I never would have let her be born!”

The argument grew fierce, and then they left Alana behind... alone, in the middle of the night, standing helplessly on the cold street for a long time.

That was the first time Alana experienced the pain of being rejected and abandoned by her parents.

Shivering from the cold, she asked herself through her tears.

What had she done wrong?

Why did her parents despise her so much, why didn’t they want her?

She was such a good girl...never crying, never throwing tantrums, and always helping her mother with the housework.

But what had she done wrong?

Why did they all see her as a burden, why didn’t they love her, and why did they even abandon her on that deserted, pitch-black, freezing street?

And it was precisely because of this incident that she always felt abandoned and rejected.

Everyone would reject her and cast her aside.

On top of that, aside from her grandmother, almost no one around her was willing to be sincere with her. With so many people mocking and belittling her, she always felt she didn’t deserve to be loved.

This led to her feeling inferior and afraid of being loved.

Just like at the beginning, when she didn’t dare face Stephan or accept his love.

Yet she clearly longed to be loved; the more she lacked something inside, the more she craved it.

So in the end, she couldn’t resist Stephan.

It was Stephan who gave her the will, the courage to break through her inner insecurity and dare to love.

Hearing this, Stephan couldn't help but pull her in his arms closer.

He had never imagined that she had endured so much pain at such a young age.

How had she managed to endure it all at such a young age?

His heart ached, and he couldn't help but lean down to kiss her forehead, soothing her with, "It's okay, don't say anything anymore. I understand now."

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Chapter 303 No intention

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Alana shook her head, wanting to continue. Now that she had started, she had no intention of holding back.

"There's one more thing, the event that left the deepest impression on me, the one that marked the complete breakdown of my parents' relationship."

At the time, her mother had taken her, still a child, to a hotel to catch her father in the act.

She and her mother had witnessed her father in bed with another woman, both of them completely naked.

As a child, she didn't understand what was happening. She only knew that her mother seemed to lose her mind in that moment, she stormed in like a madwoman, pulled them apart, and then started throwing things at them.

The scene was chaotic.

The two women wrestled with each other like shrews. Her father did nothing, turning a blind eye to it all and watching coldly from the sidelines.

He saw her, a young child, standing helplessly at the doorway, expressionless, as if he didn't even consider her his daughter.

It was only when the hotel staff arrived that this farce finally came to an end.

It was precisely because of this incident that her mother and father fell out, eventually leading to their divorce.

“So, I used to think what was the essence of marriage? Was it the starting of love and end with mutual loathing? Stephan, I’m so afraid. I’m afraid that one day, our relationship will end up like that too...”

Stephan’s Adam’s apple bobbed painfully. So, she didn’t want to marry him because she had witnessed her parents’ unhappy marriage firsthand, that was why she had so little hope for marriage.

Was she afraid that if she married him, she would go through the same thing her parents had?

But he wasn’t like her father.

And she wasn’t like her mother either.

So, their future together would certainly be different from her parents’ outcome.

Stephan cupped her face and kissed her repeatedly. “Lana, I’m truly sorry about what happened to your parents. But trust me, we won’t end up like that. I know you won’t believe me when I say this now, but I’ll prove it through my actions.”

Alana nodded slightly, then wrapped her arms around him, unable to hold back. “Stephan, no matter what happens to us in the future, if you stop loving me, please tell me. I won’t cling to you or act hysterically like my mother did. I’ll choose to let go. I won’t put us both in a difficult position...”

Hearing this, Stephan’s heart ached deeply. “Silly girl.”

Next, Alana planned to take Stephan back to their rural neighborhood to dig up the wooden box her grandmother had hidden under the peach tree.

But before they left, she hired two caregivers to look after her grandmother.

Mainly because she didn’t feel comfortable leaving her grandmother in the care of those relatives.

Once everything was settled, she set off with Stephan.

Since their neighborhood was a bit far from the hospital, the only way to get there was by bus.

So Alana and Stephan bought two bus tickets and boarded the bus together.

The bus had a strong, pungent smell, and it was packed with people, a jumble of various odors.

Stephan had never ridden on a bus like this before, and for a moment, he found it hard to adjust.

He was mostly choked by the various odors.

To make matters worse, the road back to the neighborhood was bumpy and uneven; the wheels would occasionally hit a pothole, causing the bus to bounce up and down and sway from side to side.

Several times, Stephan felt as if he was about to be flung out of his seat.

Alana, on the other hand, was used to it. She usually took this kind of bus when she came back, and when passing through these rough stretches of road, it felt like bouncing on a trampoline.

When she first started riding them, she used to get terribly carsick and even vomit, but now she felt she'd gotten used to it.

She just hadn't expected that, after all these years, the road back home would still be so bumpy and uneven.

Hadn't the government allocated any funds to repair it?

She noticed that Stephan didn't look too happy, and she wondered to herself if a wealthy young master like him had ever ridden in a vehicle like this before.

He... surely wasn't getting carsick, was he?

With that thought, she couldn't help but ask with concern, "Stephan, are you okay?"

His handsome face remained tense. "I'm... fine."

Alana said earnestly, "If you're feeling sick and need to vomit, just let me know. I'll have the driver bring a bag so you can use it."

Stephan blinked.

Vomit?

He, Stephan Hudson, had never done anything so outrageous or undignified.

But the next second, the car jolted violently again.

Stephan's body was jolted up and down once more, and instantly his stomach churned violently. It felt as though something was churning and writhing wildly inside him, making him feel absolutely miserable.

The veins on his forehead throbbed as he seemed to be struggling to suppress something.

Seeing this, Alana thought to herself, "Oh no..."

"Um, Stephan, if you can't hold it in, you can ask the driver to pull over. You can get out and relieve yourself..."

Stephan clenched his teeth tightly and ground out, "I'm fine."

"Are you really okay?"

"I'm fine."

"Alright, but if you can't hold it in, you absolutely, positively have to let me know."

Stephan sighed, heavily.

He was a real man...how could he possibly not hold it in?!

He had to hold it in no matter what; he couldn't lose face in front of his girlfriend.

But as the minutes ticked by, the bus showed no signs of arriving anytime soon.

He gripped the armrests of the seat tightly and asked through gritted teeth, "When will we get there?"

Alana wasn't sure. "Probably... about ten or so minutes."

There was no greater sorrow than a heart that has given up hope.

A few minutes later, the bus pulled into the station.

The moment the bus came to a stop, Stephan could no longer contain himself; he shot out of the vehicle like a spring.

Alana froze for a second, then immediately ran after him. "Stephan?!"

When she caught up, she saw Stephan standing by a trash can, vomiting violently, his chest heaving painfully.

Alana's heart ached at the sight. Unable to resist, she pulled some tissues from her bag and moved closer.

Stephan seemed to sense her presence and said without turning around, "Don't come over."

Alana stopped in her tracks and asked, puzzled, "Why?"

Stephan furrowed his brow and took a deep, ragged breath. "I have a reputation to maintain. I don't want you to see me looking this miserable."

Alana felt a pang of bittersweet emotion.

He was vomiting like this, and still so concerned about his image.

Besides, she loved him... no matter what he looked like, she would still love him.

However, out of respect for his dignity, Alana didn't move any closer.

Instead, she waited until he had mostly recovered before stepping forward, picking up the tissues she'd prepared, and gently wiping his mouth.

Stephan gripped Alana's wrist and said with a touch of self-deprecating humor, "I never thought a little bus ride could leave me in such a sorry state."

Alana gazed at his handsome features and said earnestly, "It's your first time riding one, isn't it? I couldn't stand it either when I first started riding them. Stephan, you've done remarkably well to endure it this long."

Stephan chuckled and ruffled her hair. "I swear, as soon as I get back, I'll send people to tear this road up!"

Alana's eyes widened. "What? If the road gets destroyed, how was she supposed to get home now?"

Stephan couldn't help but chuckle as he gently flicked Alana's small, pert nose. "Yeah, we'll just rebuild it."

He'd have to come back later to ask for Alana's hand in marriage; he couldn't possibly look this disheveled.

Alana couldn't help but chuckle.

Well, he almost gave her a heart attack.

She unscrewed the cap of a bottle of mineral water and handed it to him. “Have a sip of water to rinse your mouth.”

Stephan took it, swished a few mouthfuls of water around, and after drinking most of the bottle, he felt a little better.

After a brief rest, the two set off again.

After all, it was still quite a distance from the station back to Alana’s village.

It wasn’t a long walk, but it wasn’t short either, about two kilometers.

After walking for about half an hour, they successfully arrived. It was a place called Halin community.

Walking into the village, the surrounding buildings all had a certain vintage feel to them.

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Chapter 304 A ghost town

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Many villagers had moved to the city, and few returned, so the place looked deserted, as if they had walked into a ghost town.

Occasionally, they’d come across a few adults gathered together chatting, or a few children playing and roughhousing.

Those returning from the city clearly had a different demeanor from the villagers who had lived there all their lives.

So the appearance of Alana and Stephan naturally caught the villagers’ attention.

One middle-aged woman, looking at Alana curiously, said, “Isn’t that... Lana, the Martin family’s granddaughter?”

Alana recognized the woman as the neighbor who often brought her grandmother treats.

“Aunt Rosa, it’s me.”

Aunt Rosa realized who she was, “It really is Alana! I haven’t seen you in ages. You’ve grown so beautiful... I almost didn’t recognize you. But aren’t you working in the city? Why are you back home?”

Alana replied, “My grandmother is sick. I came home to check on her and visit my home while I’m at it.”

Aunt Rosa nodded. “Oh, right. Your grandmother’s sick. How is she now? Is it serious?”

“She’s out of danger for now. We just need to take good care of her from here on out.”

“That’s a relief.”

Aunt Rosa couldn’t help but glance at the man standing beside Alana, eyeing him curiously. “And this is...”

Alana glanced at Stephan and introduced him, “He’s my boyfriend.”

Hearing this, Stephan couldn’t help but let the corners of his mouth turn up slightly.

“That’s right, I’m Alana’s boyfriend.”

Aunt Rosa was surprised. “Oh my, your grandmother was always asking when you’d bring a boyfriend home. I never thought you actually would! This young man is really handsome...tall and well-built. He looks like a city guy, isn’t he?”

Alana nodded. “He is from the city.”

Aunt Rosa said, “Lana, you’ve made a great choice. City folks are the best. If you marry into the city, you won’t have to come back to the countryside and suffer.”

Most people in the countryside prefer city life. They haven’t seen much of the world and think that anyone who can live in the city is a cut above the rest.

It seems that was how most people in the countryside think.

Alana smiled but said nothing more.

After exchanging a few pleasantries with Aunt Rosa, Alana continued leading Stephan deeper into the village.

They ran into a few familiar faces along the way, and Alana greeted them all.

When asked about Stephan by her side, she told them honestly that he was her boyfriend.

Stephan asked with a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, “Lana, you tell everyone I’m your boyfriend. If I don’t come to ask for your hand in marriage and bring you home, won’t that make me a total jerk?”

Alana blushed slightly. “If I didn’t say you were my boyfriend, I bet you would have started throwing tantrums.”

Stephan chuckled, “Then why don’t you just say I’m your husband? I’d be even happier if you said that.”

Alana blushed and whispered, “Wait until you come back next time to ask for my hand in marriage.”

Stephan’s eyes lit up, looking almost incredulous. “What did you say?”

Alana bit her lip, struggling to contain her shyness. “I said, when you come to ask for my hand next time, I’ll... introduce you that way.”

Stephan was thrilled; he felt every cell in his body buzzing with excitement, radiating his exhilaration.

He gripped Alana’s shoulders and stared intently at her face. “So, does that mean you’ve decided to marry me?”

Alana blushed and said, “It’s still too early for that. Let’s wait until my grandmother is discharged from the hospital and I return to back to the city to meet your parents first.”

After all, she didn’t know if his parents would approve of them. If his parents didn’t approve of her, there was nothing she could do.

Stephan smiled and couldn’t help but pull her into his arms.

“Alright, once we’re back in Beijing, I’ll take you to meet my parents.”

Alana hugged him back, a smile spreading across her face.

A group of children ran over and, seeing the happy couple embracing, couldn’t help but tease them.

“How embarrassing!”

“So embarrassing! Hugging right out here on the street!”

Alana, being a bit shy, couldn’t help but nudge Stephan’s chest. “Okay, stop hugging me.”

Stephan said shamelessly, “I’m hugging my wife. Those little brats just can’t have what they want, so they’re just jealous of me.”

Alana playfully punched Stephan and scolded him.

“We’re almost at Grandma’s house. Let’s hurry up.”

They turned a corner and arrived at Grandma’s house.

The door was a pair of wooden double doors, locked, yet easy to push open.

Alana took out her keys and unlocked the door. What met their eyes was a charming little courtyard.

The little courtyard was usually tended to with care by Grandma, who had planted all sorts of flowers, plants, fruits, and vegetables.

It was lush and full of life. Several fruit trees stood in front of the gate: lychee, peach, pomelo, and a grapevine supported by a trellis in the corner.

There was also a swing swaying beneath the lychee tree.

Alana’s memories were immediately stirred.

She remembered how, as a child, she used to envy the other kids who got to eat fruit, while she didn’t.

That child would hold the fruit up in front of her to show off.

“Alana, my parents bought me some fruit today. You don’t have any, do you?”

“You don’t even have a mom or dad, so of course no one would buy you fruit!”

“You’re so pitiful...you have nothing!”

Alana would run home in tears.

Her grandmother saw how upset she was and asked her why she was crying.

She didn’t tell her grandmother the real reason; she just told her that she wanted fruits, she wanted to eat lots and lots of fruits.

As soon as Grandma heard this, she took her out to buy some fruit without a second thought, and she even bought a few fruit trees to plant in front of their house.

Grandma cared for them with great love, and the trees grew tall and strong. Every year they bore an abundance of fruit, and she never went without again.

There was also a swing, which Grandma had made for her.

Whenever she felt bored, she would sit on the swing while Grandma pushed her from behind.

There was also a small vegetable patch.

Every day, Grandma would water and harvest the vegetables in the garden, while she played nearby, catching crickets and grasshoppers, getting her hands and clothes covered in mud.

Grandma saw this, but she never scolded her; she just wanted her to have fun.

Come to think of it, Grandma was truly very patient with her.

Stephan noticed Alana's eyes gradually welling up with tears. He furrowed his brow, immediately pulled her into his arms, and cupped her soft cheeks. "Why are you crying?"

Alana's eyes welled up with tears. "It's nothing."

"It's just... this place holds so many memories of me and Grandma. Thinking about the house being demolished someday... I just feel a little reluctant to let it go."

Stephan gently ruffled her hair with his large hand and said affectionately, "If you're reluctant, then we won't tear it down."

Alana blinked. Just because she couldn't bear to tear down the house, did that mean she didn't have to?

She might not be able to, but Stephan might have the financial power to make it happen.

Still, the deed was still in her possession; she hadn't handed it over yet. She'd wait until she received official notification from the government before deciding what to do.

Alana took Stephan's hand. "Come on, I'll show you my room."

The room Alana had lived in as a child was small, but it had plenty of natural light. She hadn't stayed there in a long time, but the room was spotless and tidy.

Clearly, her grandmother had taken excellent care of it.

The room was small, so there wasn't much space for furniture.

There was just a 1.5-meter bed, a wardrobe, a desk, and a chair.

There were a few old books on the desk.

Those were the textbooks she'd brought home after graduating from college; she hadn't had time to put them on the bookshelf yet.

Opening the drawer, she found some girl's combs, a small mirror, and hairpins inside.

The small mirror even has a crack in it.

She no longer used many of these things and had even thrown some of them away.

She hadn't expected her grandmother to have secretly retrieved them and put them back in the drawer.

As she rummaged through the drawer, she also came across several photos taken when she was a child.

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Chapter 305 A trap

Chapter 305 A trap

In the photos, she had two cute pigtails, was being held in Grandma's arms, and was smiling at the camera.

Stephan picked up one of them; the photo had been stored for so long that it was already quite blurry.

"Is that you in the photo...the girl missing two front teeth?"

Alana's cheeks flushed slightly.

He really was observant, he noticed right away that she was missing two front teeth.

When the photo was taken, she was in the middle of losing her baby teeth; her two front teeth had fallen out first, and the new ones hadn't come in yet.

Looking closely, it was a bit unflattering.

When Stephan saw Alana blush, he guessed it was her.

He curved his lips into a smile. “You were such a cute kid.”

Alana pouted. “No way, I looked awful.”

Plus, she was missing two front teeth.

Stephan raised an eyebrow. “I actually think it’s pretty cute. But you’re cuter now.”

Alana grumbled under her breath. What a smooth-talking man.

Stephan couldn’t take his eyes off the photos. He quietly slipped one into his pocket, intending to take it home and keep it as a treasure.

Alana continued sorting through the old items in the room and even found the drawings she’d made as a child.

“I never would have thought Grandma would have kept even the drawings I made as a child.”

He picked up one of the drawings; the writing on it had faded slightly over the years.

“What is this?”

“Oh, this is Grandma weeding in the field, and me catching fish in the river.”

Stephan found it amusing. “You know how to catch fish by hand?”

Alana pouted. “I can, but the little fish swim too fast...I almost never catch any.”

She almost always came back empty-handed.

Stephan couldn’t help but chuckle, involuntarily picturing a little girl running into the river and frantically grabbing and fumbling at the little fish.

“That’s so cute.”

After that, Alana chatted with Stephan in the room about many amusing childhood stories and took a tour of the house before remembering they had business to attend to.

After all, once they’d retrieved the wooden box, they’d have to hurry back.

Following her grandmother's instructions, Alana went to the corner outside the house and picked up a hoe.

Stephan had never seen a hoe before.

"How do you use this?"

Alana raised an eyebrow. "Watch me."

With that, she hoisted the hoe onto her shoulder, walked to the base of the peach tree, raised the hoe, and plunged it into the ground.

She was tiny and looked delicate, but with a single swing of the hoe, she dug deep and pulled out a clump of dirt.

She kept at it, stroke after stroke, humming softly to herself.

Stephan smiled. Watching her dig, he quickly got the hang of it.

"Let me do it."

Alana had just gotten into the swing of things. "No, I'll do it."

Stephan walked over and, without waiting for a response, pressed his hand firmly on her shoulder.

"Be a good girl, let me try. I've been dying to."

Alana looked up at him, her dark eyes blinking.

After just a few strokes of the hoe, beads of sweat had already formed on her forehead, a layer of glistening droplets.

A few strands of hair clung to her damp brow, looking soft and delicate.

Stephan raised his hand, gently sweeping the strands of hair from her forehead and tucking them behind her ear.

Only then did he take the hoe from her hands.

Alana didn't stop him; she was actually quite curious to see how a man like Stephan, who had never handled farm tools before, would go about hoeing the soil.

After taking the hoe, Stephan took off his jacket, handed it to Alana to hold, and began to mimic the movements she had just used to hoe the ground, starting to dig.

At first, his movements were quite stiff, and several times, he nearly struck his own dress shoes with the hoe.

After all, he'd never hoed before, let alone seen it done. His initial clumsiness left him feeling a bit embarrassed.

Fortunately, Alana didn't mock him.

Plus, he was a quick learner and got the hang of it in no time.

Don't let the simple-looking motions fool you, it's actually quite strenuous. At least more so than in bed.

Once Stephan got the hang of it, he couldn't help but glance at Alana. "Is your man any good?"

That slightly smug expression was a bit like a big dog seeking its owner's approval and praise.

Alana found herself unable to suppress a chuckle.

The man was wearing a shirt, black dress pants, and a pair of black leather shoes as he hoed the ground. He looked so refined, yet performing such a down-to-earth task made him look a bit comical.

Besides, in Alana's eyes, hoeing was a simple task, she'd been doing it with her grandmother since she was a child.

However, since it was his first time, she offered some encouragement: "He's great."

Stephan curved his lips. "So, does your man look handsome when he's hoeing?"

Sweat trickled down the man's jawline, making him look incredibly sexy.

The muscles in his swinging arms were well-defined, firm, and powerful.

He exuded an undeniable masculine charm.

Alana nodded sincerely, "Yeah."

The man began to press his advantage. "Then give me a reward...a kiss."

Alana thought to herself, What a scheming man, he'd been secretly setting a trap for her all along.

Seeing how hot and sweaty he was, Alana walked over and kissed his thin lips.

She also took out a tissue and carefully wiped the sweat from his forehead.

Stephan was thoroughly satisfied and felt even more energized; in no time, he had dug the wooden box out of the ground.

Alana seized the moment to lift the wooden box out of the mud.

The wooden box was wrapped in a red plastic bag. She tore open the bag to reveal the box inside, which was largely undamaged.

Alana brushed the dust off the wooden box, then took out the key her grandmother had given her and unlocked it.

Upon opening the wooden box, Alana was utterly astonished by the jewels hidden inside.

There was quite a lot of gold and jade.

The gold included chains, bracelets, earrings, and rings, all feeling heavy in her hands. There was also a fair amount of jade, a vibrant emerald green in color and appearing to be of good quality.

Stephan helped inspect the contents. Setting the gold aside for the moment, he remarked, "This jade bracelet looks quite old...it must have been passed down through the family. If we had it appraised, it could easily fetch several million."

Alana blinked. "I never would have guessed Grandma was a hidden millionaire."

Stephan smiled. "She probably doesn't even realize how much these jade pieces are worth."

"True." Alana flipped through the passbook again.

Sure enough, there was over a hundred dollars in it.

It was all thanks to her grandmother, who had diligently saved every little bit over the years.

After saving for decades, she'd actually managed to accumulate so much money.

Alana had to say, the elderly are much better at saving money than young people. Besides the passbook, there were the property deeds.

Everything was kept in perfect condition, with no damage at all.

After checking the contents of the wooden box, Alana took out a pen and paper and recorded everything one by one, thinking she would take the list back to her grandmother to verify and see if anything was missing.

Now that she was back in her hometown, Alana decided to take Stephan to meet her grandfather.

In fact, she hadn't seen her grandfather since she'd come to live with her grandmother.

Her grandfather had passed away too early, apparently, he had fallen ill and passed away when she was just two years old.

However, her grandmother had told her that her grandfather had held her when she was born.

If the man hadn't passed away, he would likely have doted on her just as much as her grandmother did.

So, she planned to take Stephan to meet her grandfather and make him happy.

Her grandfather was buried on the hill behind the house, not far away.

Alana led Stephan to her grandfather's grave.

Seeing that the headstone was dirty, she crouched down and gently wiped it clean with a wet wipe.

Then she placed a bouquet of small chrysanthemums in front of the headstone.

"Grandpa, I've come to see you."

"Grandpa, Grandma just had surgery a couple of days ago and is very weak, so she couldn't come see you. But please rest assured, Grandma is out of danger now and doing fine."

"Perhaps, if you're watching over us from heaven, you're silently protecting Grandma too. Thank you for that."

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Chapter 306 Very good to me

Chapter 306 Very good to me

Alana said a lot, and finally, she took Stephan's hand. "Grandpa, look, this is my boyfriend, Stephan Hudson. Isn't he handsome? Not only is he handsome, but he's also very good to me."

"He's truly wonderful, the kindest man I've ever met in my life. I really like him. And I want to... marry him. Grandpa, you'll give me your blessing, won't you?"

Stephan paused for a moment, then knelt down beside Alana and solemnly made a promise.

"Grandpa, please rest assured. Alana is the only love of my life. I will take good care of her."

A gentle breeze blew by at just the right moment, brushing against their cheeks, warm and gentle, as if offering them the best possible answer.

After saying goodbye to Grandpa, the two set off down the mountain together.

By the time they returned to their neighborhood, both Alana and Stephan were feeling a bit hungry.

Alana didn't want to go home on an empty stomach. Seeing that there were still some sweet potatoes and taro at home, she boiled a few of each, intending to take them along for the journey.

But since Grandma didn't like using gas, the family still cooked over a wood fire.

Alana washed the sweet potatoes and taro, placed them in a pot with a little water, and then began building a fire with firewood.

Stephan was of almost no help during this process.

He watched Alana bustling about the kitchen, her skill so impressive it was almost heartbreaking.

He never would have imagined that such immense strength could be contained within her petite frame.

It made him look at her with new respect.

They were almost done cooking.

Alana poked the sweet potato with her chopsticks to make sure it was cooked through, then picked it up and set it on a plate to cool.

She wrapped a sweet potato in a paper towel and handed it to Stephan. “Try it. See if it’s good.”

Stephan said nothing, but he pulled out a paper towel, walked over to her, and carefully wiped the smudges off her face.

She had accidentally gotten her face dirty while lighting the fire, making her look like a little tabby cat.

Watching the man wipe her face so earnestly, Alana couldn’t help but blush slightly. She realized her face was dirty, too.

“It’s been so long since I’ve started a fire, so I’m... a little rusty.” She hadn’t even noticed she’d gotten her face dirty.

Looking at the man’s focused gaze, she bit her lip and asked, “Do I look ugly?”

Stephan eyes were deep and intense, his movements gentle. “It’s okay, it’ll come off with a quick wipe.”

As he spoke, he couldn’t help but lean down and kiss her soft cheek.

There was only tenderness, not a trace of disgust.

Alana gazed at the man’s handsome face, now so close, and couldn’t suppress the flutter in her heart.

How to put it? When faced with the man she truly loved, no matter the time or place, she still couldn’t help but feel her heart flutter.

Stephan took the sweet potato from Alana’s hand. It was as big as his fist and looked impossible to take a bite out of.

“How do you eat this?”

“Peel it.”

Peel it?

Stephan tentatively moved his fingers and ended up snapping the sweet potato in half.

Then, looking completely bewildered, he turned to Alana with a puzzled expression. As if asking, “Is this the right way to peel it?”

It was the first time Alana had ever seen Stephan look so adorably clueless and flustered.

He was so adorable she couldn't resist the urge to pick him up and give him a kiss.

She smiled and said, "I never would have guessed you didn't even know how to peel a sweet potato."

She had always thought he could do anything.

Stephan had a thick skin; even being teased by her didn't bother him. "I've never eaten this kind of thing before."

Alana lowered her eyes. That made sense.

As the son of a wealthy family, how could he have ever come into contact with something like sweet potatoes?

In the countryside, sweet potatoes are a household staple; in times of poverty, they're even eaten as a staple food. But he was different from her.

Different social classes and circles meant they had different experiences.

After spending so much time together, she had even forgotten just how vast the gap between them really was.

But when she thought of how he had set aside his privileged upbringing for her today, hoeing the soil, helping her wash sweet potatoes and taro, and even learning to build a fire with her...

Alana smiled, her heart warming. "Come on, I'll show you."

She picked up the half-eaten sweet potato from Stephan hand and showed him how to peel it.

Before long, Stephan, a quick learner, had successfully mastered the art of peeling sweet potatoes.

Under Alana's expectant gaze, Stephan took a small bite.

It was soft and sticky, with a faint sweetness, quite delicious.

Plus, since he was already hungry, most of the sweet potatoes and taro ended up in his stomach.

With their hunger satisfied, it was getting late.

The two of them quickly packed up a few things, walked back to the station, and took the bus back to the hospital.

The ride was still bumpy all the way.

By the time they returned to the hospital, it was already evening.

Alana learned from the caregiver that her grandmother had fallen asleep, so she and Stephan headed back to the hotel to rest.

After all, they'd been on the go all day, and both looked exhausted. Back at the hotel, they had a quick meal, took a shower, and went to bed early.

Late at night.

The hospital corridor was quiet, with almost no one passing by. Taking advantage of the quiet, Agnes slipped back into the ward. "Ma, I've come to see you again. I'm sorry for everything. I'm so sorry that this is the only way I can see you. I feel so guilty toward you; I can't dare to see you openly."

"I haven't come back to see you for all these years. You must be very angry with me, right? I've been so selfish. It's only natural that you'd resent me."

"Oh, I saw Lana. She's just the same as ever. I feel guilty toward her, too, and I can't dare to see her too. She must feel the same way you do, she probably holds a grudge against me. After all... I left her without a second thought and never went back to see her."

"I've heard that Lana is doing very well, and much of the credit for that goes to you. Thank you. You've taken such good care of her all these years..."

Agnes muttered to herself, saying a lot. She thought the woman was asleep, so she murmured these things under her breath, assuming she wouldn't hear.

So she let her emotions run free.

Little did she know that her old lady, lying in bed, had already silently shed many tears...

Dawn was breaking.

Everything returned to calm.

The hospital room remained quiet, as if no one had ever been there.

Alana and Stephan came to visit Grandma in the morning. Seeing that she was still asleep, they didn't disturb her.

However, Stephan noticed something had fallen on the floor.

He walked over, bent down, and picked it up...

It turned out to be a photograph.

In the photo, a woman stood beneath a locust tree, holding a little girl in her arms, her smile gentle and warm.

He recognized her at a glance: the girl in the woman's arms was Alana.

Yesterday, he had looked at several photos of Alana from her childhood; he had even slipped one of them into his pocket.

However, the Alana in this woman's arms was clearly much younger than the one he'd seen yesterday, even more innocent and adorable.

The girl's hair looked soft and fluffy, her face pale and plump, her lips pink, and her eyes...like grapes...large and round.

Alana had no idea what Stephan had found; she walked over curiously. "What's this?"

When she saw the woman in the photo, her expression changed instantly.

Stephan turned around and saw her face suddenly go pale; he already had a hunch about what was going on.

Alana's lips trembled slightly. "Did you just pick that up off the ground?"

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Chapter 307 Of her being

Chapter 307 Of her being

Stephan pressed his thin lips together and looked at her with concern. "Yes."

Alana closed her eyes briefly.

There was no way this photo could have appeared in the hospital room out of nowhere, let alone been left lying on the floor.

The only possibility...

Someone had been in Grandma's room and accidentally left a photo behind.

And that person was...

Alana took a deep breath; deep down, she already had a hunch.

"Let's step out of the room first. We don't want to disturb Grandma."

Stephan nodded.

The two left the room together, and Stephan closed the door behind them.

He glanced at Alana and noticed she looked a bit dazed, as if lost in some unknown memory.

He didn't ask her anything; he remained quiet, not wanting to disturb her.

After what seemed like an eternity, Alana finally spoke. "The woman in the photo is my mother."

Her face remained calm as she spoke.

It was as if the word "mother" stirred not a single ripple in her heart.

Stephan paused for a moment, then slowly reached out and gently embraced Alana, resting his chin on her head. "Mm, I see."

Alana's tone was flat. "I never would have thought she'd come back after all these years."

She paused. "I thought she had abandoned Grandma because of me. I even secretly blamed myself for a long time because of that."

Although Grandma blamed her Mom for abandoning her, arguing with her endlessly, and even telling her to get out and never come home again.

But the deeper the love, the harsher the criticism.

Late at night, when all was quiet, she had seen her grandmother silently shedding tears out of longing for her mother.

Grandma must have felt utterly helpless.

And the one who caused all this was her.

She had once thought that if only she hadn't been there, none of this would have happened.

Without her, none of this might have happened. She was the one to blame.

Stephan felt a sharp twinge in his chest. She was the one who had been abandoned; she was the most innocent of all.

Yet she still blamed herself for the pain her grandmother felt at losing her daughter.

How could her small, fragile frame bear so much?

Stephan clenched his teeth. "This isn't your fault. The ones at fault are your parents. It was their selfishness and shirking of responsibility that led them to abandon you. You were so young back then, what could you possibly have done to change things? So, whatever you do, don't fall into this trap of self-blame and let it shackle you with guilt."

Seeing that she remained silent, Stephan pulled her into a tighter embrace.

He kept reassuring her, doing his best to mend her fragile heart.

"Alana, it really isn't your fault. You've done a wonderful job. You're strong, gentle yet resilient. You've built the person you are today all on your own. Believe in yourself. You've always been amazing, you were amazing before, you're amazing now, and you'll only get better from here on out. Just be yourself and stop overthinking things, okay? It breaks my heart. I'm so worried about you. Do you know that?"

Hearing this, Alana seemed unable to hold back her emotions any longer. Her eyes instantly turned red, brimming with tears.

She clenched her teeth tightly.

These words, she had always kept buried deep within her heart, never sharing them with anyone.

She was used to enduring it all, because she had once been abandoned as a burden, she felt like a complete outsider.

Would things have been different if she hadn't been there? She had once given up on herself.

But because her grandmother had never abandoned her and had always given her warmth, she began to feel that she wasn't so worthless after all.

At the very least, there was someone by her side who cared for her and loved her.

Her grandmother cared for her, and she cared for her grandmother.

It was because of her that Grandma had a falling out with her own daughter and lost her. Seeing her grandmother in pain hurt her more than anyone else.

So she blamed herself for all of it.

Even though it wasn't her fault.

But her grandmother was the only relative left who was willing to love her, so she cherished her with the utmost care and guarded her with the utmost care.

How could she bear to see her grandmother sad?

She kept these worries bottled up inside, holding them in, holding them in, perhaps until they turned into a heartache.

But now, she had confided these worries to Stephan. He had comforted her; his tenderness and compassion had opened a small crack in her heavy, barren heart.

Through that crack, tender new shoots seemed to sprout, and her heart felt much lighter. The power of words is truly that strong.

"Is that true?"

"Do you really think I'm that amazing?"

"Yes, my Alana, you are."

Faced with abandonment by her parents, mistreatment from those around her, endless rumors, and even bullying, yet she never gave up on herself, never let herself sink into despair.

Every day, she continued to live with strength and determination, growing wild like a weed, resilient and beautiful.

How could she not be amazing?

If it were anyone else, they wouldn't have been able to do what she did.

Alana smiled, her eyes brimming with tears.

Because she, too, felt that Stephan was right. Deep down, she was slowly coming to accept herself.

She felt amazing, too.

Alana looked up at the man's handsome face, her beautiful eyes moist and flushed.

"Stephan, kiss me." She had intended to thank him, but those words of gratitude suddenly turned into "Kiss me."

He had once said that he preferred actions over mere words of thanks.

Stephan gazed deeply into her eyes for a few seconds, then lowered his head without hesitation and pressed his lips against hers.

His kiss was passionate and lingering, yet tinged with tenderness, a love that penetrated to the very core of her being.

Alana felt the man's overflowing love for her, intense and passionate.

She couldn't help but wrap her arms around his neck, constantly meeting his kiss and responding to him.

The two of them, locked in each other's embrace, longed to merge into one another.

After what seemed like an eternity, they finally parted.

Alana breathed heavily, her red lips parting slightly. "Stephan, I want to make love to you so badly..."

Stephan's breathing was slightly ragged. Upon hearing this, his dark eyes fixed on her, seemingly in disbelief.

"What did you say?"

Alana's cheeks were flushed an intense shade of red.

She hadn't expected herself to suddenly utter such a bold statement.

She had always been... so reserved and conservative.

But at this moment, she longed to be held tightly in his arms, to become one with him in body and soul, to feel his fierce, domineering love seep deep into her very bones...

She lifted her moist eyelashes and bit her lip. "Stephan, I... want to make love to you."

His eyes darkened instantly. Having been together for so long, how could he not know her true feelings?

His large hand clasped the back of her head.

“Then let’s do it!”

“Now, right this minute!”

Alana’s mind went blank for a moment.

Now? Right now?

Before she could gather her thoughts, he scooped her up and carried her into an empty hospital room.

He quickly locked the door, then took a few strides and pinned Alana down on the bed.

Before she could react, his thin lips pressed hard against hers.

Hurriedly, her clothes were stripped away.

The man moved his attention from her cheeks to her neck, working his way down, kissing every inch of her delicate skin.

He spared not a single inch.

Her body reacted before her mind could catch up, and Alana couldn’t help but cling tightly to him.

Suddenly, the man paused.

Alana looked at him nervously. “What’s wrong?”

Stephan was already on the verge of losing control; his large hands gripped her slender waist.

He buried his handsome face in her chest, breathing heavily, forced to restrain himself.

“I forgot to bring a condom.”

Alana bit her lip and whispered. “Then we don’t need it.”

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