

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

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Alana: How about around seven tonight at Sunny Café?

She would finish work at five, rush home to pack her clothes, and then head to the café. She should make it in time.

Stephan's stared at the message from Alana, a thought suddenly striking him.

She wants to buy him a coffee?!

At the thought of this possibility, the man's lips suddenly curved into a faint, small smile.

Little did he know, Alana merely wanted to arrange a place to return his coat. Once it was handed over, she'd be off in a flash.

Stephan: Alright.

Seeing the man had agreed to the proposal, Alana breathed a slight sigh of relief.

And so, she waited for the end of her shift.

But the heavens were not on her side; just as she was about to leave work, a sudden downpour began.

A sudden thought struck Alana, and she hurried home.

Sure enough, the laundry hanging on the balcony was completely soaked.

Including the man's suit jacket.

It was soaking wet, you could wring water out of it.

Alana hastily took down the jacket along with all the other clothes hanging on the balcony, placed them in a basin, and carried them into the bathroom to hand-wash them all over again. Little did she realise that as she washed the clothes, time ticked by, and it was already seven

o'clock.

By this time, Stephan had arrived at the café where he and Alana had agreed to meet.

He had changed into a fresh outfit on his way back, a crisp white shirt and black trousers.

This ensemble lent him an air of distinguished elegance, enhanced by a crisp, clean freshness. Combined with his handsome features and upright posture, he drew the attention of many patrons the moment he entered the café.

Particularly among the ladies, whose gazes unconsciously lingered on Stephan.

Upon entering, Stephan sought out a corner table and seated himself, ordering two coffees from the waiter.

One was black coffee, without sugar or milk, while the other was sweetened and milked.

After placing his order, he remained seated, silent.

He glanced at his phone from time to time, then looked out the window. The girls around him couldn't help but start whispering.

"That bloke's gorgeous, isn't he? Tall and handsome. I'd love to go up and ask for his number!"

"Don't be silly. Guys that good-looking usually have someone special. He's definitely got a girlfriend!"

"Exactly! Why else would he order two coffees? One of them must be for his girlfriend!"

"I'm so jealous of his girlfriend! To have such a gorgeous boyfriend, he's far more handsome than any actor I've seen on TV. He could make anyone swoon!"

"Don't get too envious. If he's that handsome, his girlfriend can't be too shabby either."

"But why hasn't his girlfriend shown up yet? He's been sitting by the window for ages now, half an hour, easily!"

“His girlfriend really is making him wait. If it were me, I wouldn’t be able to bear it, not a single minute or second! I’d probably even arrive at the café before him!”

“Me too, me too! His girlfriend’s got no heart for him!”

“Aaaah! If his girlfriend won’t cherish him, I’ll cherish him instead!”

Stephan heard the chatter from the girls beside him, and his stern brow furrowed slightly.

He glanced down at his phone again. It was already ten past seven.

Had that woman not arrived yet?

She’d agreed to meet at seven. He’d even arrived at the café twenty minutes early and ordered her a coffee.

Yet here he was, half an hour later, and she still hadn’t shown her face. Could it be that she’d stood him up?

Or had something urgent come up?

Even if urgent business has delayed you and you cannot arrive promptly, you ought to have given notice, shouldn't you?!

Stephan gritted his back teeth in frustration.

Fine, he'd wait a little longer. If she still didn't show up, no one should blame him for storming straight to her place!

After washing the clothes, Alana found the rain had stopped. She hung them out to dry on the balcony once more.

Having caught a bit of rain on her way back, her clothes and hair were slightly damp, and she feared catching a chill.

She went back into the bathroom and took a hot shower.

Emerging from the bathroom with her hair dripping wet, she wrapped a pink towel around her head.

Suddenly, she seemed to remember something and hurriedly grabbed her phone to check the time.

Oh dear!

It was nearly half past seven!

She was nearly half an hour late for their arranged meeting!

In her haste to rewash the wet clothes, she'd completely forgotten to send him a message cancelling tonight's meeting.

She wondered if that man had made it to the coffee shop yet?!

If he did, why hasn't he contacted her?

Besides, she'd already rewash the coat, so there was no way she could return it on time.

Alana was in a right panic. She quickly tapped her fingers to send him a message.

Alana: I'm terribly sorry, but I won't be able to return your coat tonight. It just started raining, and I'd hung your clothes out to dry on the balcony, they got caught in the

downpour. I've just washed it again and hung it out to dry, so I can't bring it over to return it. I'm terribly sorry, I was so busy I forgot to send you a reminder. Um, did you make it to the coffee shop? If you're there, please head back. I won't be able to make it to our meeting.

She sent several messages in succession, convinced her apologetic tone was impeccable, yet the man didn't reply to a single one.

Alana felt as though her head was splitting.

What on earth should she do?

She felt she'd thoroughly offended him.

What's more, he knew that representative from HG. What if he complained to them, and they refused to cooperate with her company? Bloody hell!

Let's hope he's not that petty!

Just then, her phone buzzed.

She glanced at the caller ID and her eyelid twitched. Without hesitation, she answered the call.

“Hello? Sorry, I was just...”

Before she could finish, a deep voice cut in.

“Come down!”

Alana froze. "Come down? Where exactly?"

“The entrance to your estate.”

Alana was stunned. He couldn't possibly... have driven straight over here?

Come...to settle the score with her?

She'd just been hoping he wasn't that petty a person, and now she'd been proven wrong so quickly?

Alana felt an inexplicable sting in her cheeks. "Er, you... wait a moment, I'll be right down..."

"Hurry up."

With that, he hung up.

Alana bit her lip, hesitated, then resolved to go down and see what was happening.

She snatched a dry towel, threw on a light jacket, and rushed out of the room without even combing her dripping wet hair.

Hurrying to the estate gates, she spotted a black Bentley parked conspicuously at the entrance. Her footsteps faltered momentarily before she hesitantly, slowly made her way towards it.

She pondered what she should say upon meeting him.

Should she apologise first?

Or should she explain first?

Lost in thought, her slender fingers had already tapped upon the car window.

“Er, Mr Hudson.”

Before she could finish, the door swung open abruptly, revealing the man’s cold, ruthless face with its sharply defined, handsome features.

His gaze swept over her indifferently, his pupils as dark as ink, betraying no emotion.

“Get in!”

His deep, magnetic voice sent a jolt through Alana’s heart.

She hesitated briefly before climbing in.

No sooner had she settled than the man’s icy voice cut through the air.

“Miss Martin, have you nothing to explain to me?”

Alana bit her lip. Explain?

Hadn't she already explained via WhatsApp? Had he not seen it?

Seeing her silence, Stephan's eyes darkened with a chill. "Did you deliberately stand me up? Take me for a fool?"

This was the first time Stephan had ever been taken for a fool, and by a woman, no less!

He couldn't fathom what had driven him to come here, but his mood was thoroughly sour, and he intended to vent his frustration on her!

As for how he would vent it, he hadn't yet decided.

Alana's clear eyes flicked towards the man with a startled glance.

Stand him up? Take him for a fool?

How could she dare?!

She had simply forgotten.

Though, in essence, the two seemed scarcely different.

After all, forgetting was rather like standing him up and playing games with him.

Still, Alana plucked up the courage to say, "No, I wasn't playing games with you! It's just that it started raining earlier, and your jacket hanging on the balcony got wet. I took them down and washed them again, so..."

Stephan's thin lips curled slightly, the curve betraying a hint of mockery. He didn't buy her explanation.

"And so you left me waiting at the café for over half an hour for nothing?"

The accusatory tone made Alana feel even more at fault, lowering her head, unable to meet his gaze.

"I... I'm sorry."

It was her failure to notify him promptly that had caused him to wait so long at the café.

Stephan's brows knitted slightly as his deep eyes fixed on her. "Is 'sorry' all you have to say?"

What else could she possibly say?

She didn't know.

Under his intense, unyielding gaze, she felt uneasy. Biting her lip, she finally lifted her eyes and asked, "Well then, what did you want me to say?"

Stephan narrowed his eyes at her, displeased. He'd waited like a fool in that coffee shop for so long, only to be met with a flippant "I forgot" and a "sorry" and that was it?!

He hadn't made this special trip merely for her apology.

Stephan's long-fingered hand tapped the steering wheel as he spoke slowly, lips curling.

"Miss Martin, my time is precious. If you truly feel you've wronged me, then think of a way to compensate me."

Alana froze.

Wasn't her apology enough? Now he wanted compensation too?

Indeed, this man wasn't one to be trifled with.

How had she managed to provoke him so carelessly?

She felt a pang of regret, but knowing she was in the wrong, she decided to ask first,

"How do you want me to make it up to you?"

Stephan found his gaze involuntarily drawn to the girl.

She appeared freshly bathed, her damp hair still clinging to her chest. Her exquisitely delicate features now bore a faint, alluring blush, like a ripe peach radiating a seductive aura.

Not only did her appearance resemble a peach, but the fresh scent of shower gel wafting from her body was distinctly peachy too.

It was quite fragrant.

She wore a pink dress, draped over a sheer, lightweight shawl, her soft, graceful figure hinted at beneath the fabric, carrying an intangible allure.

Her eyes, wet with moisture, were fixed upon him, wide and pleading, carrying a hint of innocent vulnerability.

She looked like a sweet, fluffy little white rabbit, tempting one to tease her mercilessly.

The thought of those two nights with her, the vivid, sensual scenes, unabashedly disrupted his thoughts.

It felt like an addiction, a nightly obsession.

He couldn't fathom what this longing was, a mere infatuation with her body? After all, only she could give him that sensation of ecstasy bordering on delirium.

Alana noticed the man remained silent for a long while, his gaze fixed upon her instead, an expression akin to that of a predator eyeing its prey, brimming with aggression.

She felt like a tempting morsel, ready to be devoured at any moment, and her heart tightened involuntarily.

“Mr Hudson, what exactly do you want me to compensate you for?”

Stephan met the girl’s pleading gaze and desperately wanted to say he didn’t want any compensation at all. He just wanted to ask her: why not come with him?

After all, his desire for her body was genuine.

But the thought of her already having a boyfriend forced the words back down his throat.

“I haven’t had dinner yet. Join me for a meal.”

Alana froze. "Is that all?"

Just accompany, not treat?

Stephan shot her a meaningful glance. "If you have any other ideas for compensation, I wouldn't mind hearing them in detail."

Alana choked on her words. "No need. Just dinner is fine."

After all, she hadn't eaten yet. If someone was treating her to a meal, she wasn't losing out.

"Fasten your seatbelt."

Just as Alana was about to reply with an "okay," her nose suddenly stung, and she couldn't help but shiver and sneeze.

She rubbed her slightly sore nose and gave Stephan an apologetic smile.

Stephan glanced at her. The girl smiled faintly, her eyes crinkling with a charming dimple that was utterly captivating.

His gaze darkened slightly. Noticing her slightly shivering frame and her hair, still damp from the rain, he frowned. With a press of his finger, he opened the car's storage compartment. He retrieved a spare dry towel and tossed it to Alana.

“Dry your hair.”

The towel landed on her lap. She froze. How did he know she wanted to dry her hair?!

“Er, thank you.”

Stephan hummed in acknowledgement. Though his own body burned with fever, he reached out and turned on the heater.

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As warmth filled the air, he glanced sideways at Alana. Seeing her no longer huddled and her furrowed brow finally relaxing, Stephan felt a sense of relief.

Alana dried her hair with the towel, seemingly feeling the car’s temperature grow a touch warmer.

She’d been riding her electric scooter home in the rain and had caught a slight chill. Now, the cosy warmth inside the car instantly banished the lingering cold from her body.

That felt lovely.

Alana couldn't help but glance at the man beside her. Had he turned on the heating especially for her?

Surprisingly, he was quite thoughtful.

The car pulled up outside an upmarket Western restaurant.

Alana had heard from colleagues that this Western restaurant was extremely expensive, costing over five thousand yuan per person.

Was he bringing her to such an expensive place to take advantage of her, perhaps hoping she'd foot the bill?

Just as Alana hesitated, contemplating a quiet escape, the man seemed to sense something and turned to look at her.

“Come on.”

With no other choice, Alana steeled herself and followed.

He led her into a secluded private room.

Stephan glanced through the menu before lifting his gaze to Alana. "Any dietary restrictions?"

Alana shifted uncomfortably. "Nothing."

Stephan promptly closed the menu and instructed the waiter, "Bring us your signature set meal."

The waiter smiled courteously. "Certainly, distinguished guests. Please be patient."

Alana peered out slightly and caught a glimpse of the menu cover.

There it was, clearly labelled: Signature Set Menu, priced at 88,888 dollars.

Alana's eyes dilated.

In all her years, she'd never spent such a sum in one go. This restaurant was certainly broadening her horizons.

Soon, the dishes arrived.

French steak, foie gras, caviar, and more, the table was nearly covered, featuring both hot and cold dishes, each plate exquisitely presented.

Alana stared at the spread, momentarily at a loss as to where to begin.

Just as Stephan was about to pick up his chopsticks, he noticed Alana frozen in place, utterly transfixed.

He frowned. "Why aren't you eating? Doesn't suit your taste?"

Bitting her lip, Alana looked at him and asked cautiously, "Er, excuse me, but this isn't... going to be on my tab, is it?"

Stephan almost choked on his food.

"No."

Alana remained wary, she didn't want anymore debts. "Could it be we're splitting the bill?"

Stephan remained expressionless. "You still owe me money. How dare you suggest splitting?" L

Alana shook her head earnestly. "Absolutely not! If you want to split the bill with me, I'm not eating this meal!"

Stephan's mouth twitched slightly. "I'm treating. Eat without worry."

Hearing this, Alana immediately relaxed, her expression softening into a smile. "Why didn't you say so earlier? If you had, I wouldn't have been so nervous."

Stephan again was confused.

When did he ask her to pay earlier?

“Well then, thank you for treating me, Mr Hudson, I shan’t stand on ceremony.”

Alana certainly didn’t stand on ceremony with Stephan. She picked up her knife and fork, sliced a generous portion of steak from her plate, and promptly stuffed it into her mouth, chewing heartily.

She was famished, feeling as though she could devour an entire ox at that moment.

This lavish spread was just what her appetite needed.

After that, she ate quietly, not uttering a word, concentrating solely on her meal.

Stephan watched as her took bite after bite, her cheeks puffing out like an adorable little hamster.

Well, knowing she wouldn’t have to foot the bill, she seemed to be enjoying herself rather well. She’d completely forgotten there was a man sitting opposite her.

Stephan suddenly lost all appetite, folding his arms across his chest.

He leisurely observed the woman across from him, whose eating manners were far from ladylike.

It was the first time he'd encountered a girl who ate so casually in his presence.

She took large bites, seemingly unconcerned with maintaining any semblance of grace.

Every woman he'd encountered before would open her little mouth, dab at her lips with a tissue, and take forever to eat, barely touching her food.

He found such women insincere and affected, utterly pretentious.

Alana, however, struck him as refreshingly delightful and earned his renewed respect.

She seemed...quite unlike any woman he'd encountered before.

Alana sensed the intense scrutiny across the table and began to feel uneasy about eating.

She couldn't help but glance at him, her cheeks still full. "Why... why aren't you eating?"

"I'm not particularly hungry yet."

He was the one who hadn't eaten and had called her over to dine with him, yet now he claimed he wasn't particularly hungry.

She couldn't fathom what this man was thinking.

The table was cleared of most of the dishes.

Most of it had ended up in Alana's stomach.

Alana set down her chopsticks and dabbed her mouth with a napkin. "Well, I'm full."

Stephan also set down his chopsticks. "Right then, I'll take you home."

Alana glanced at his bowl of rice, barely touched. Her lips parted as if to speak, but she hesitated and ultimately said nothing.

Stephan accompanied her out of the private room and made his way slowly to the front desk to settle the bill.

Just as they were leaving the private room, a group emerged from the booth opposite.

They were several ladies dressed in high-end designer labels.

Chatting and laughing, they made their way towards the front desk together.

Suddenly, one of the women pointed at a tall, slender figure clad in black and exclaimed in surprise, "My, that tall young man over there, doesn't he bear a striking resemblance to your son?"

Cynthia followed the gaze and saw the man standing at the front desk paying the bill. It was none other than her rebellious son, Stephan.

Even from behind, she recognised him instantly as his mother.

But why was he accompanied by a girl?

That little rascal, could he actually have taken her advice to heart and started looking for a girlfriend himself?

Now that would be a most welcome development!

At this moment, a lady of means inquired,

"Mrs Hudson, there's a woman accompanying your son. Who might she be?"

Mrs Hudson naturally replied, "Well, what do you think? She's my son's girlfriend, of course! That little rascal, secretly seeing someone and springing a surprise on me?"

"Oh, that's absolutely marvellous! Now that your son's actively courting a girlfriend, you won't have to fret about arranging matchmaking dates for him!"

"Indeed, indeed!"

"Shall we go and see who this young lady is? From the back, she looks rather pretty."

"Quick, quick, go on! If they leave, we'll miss our chance!"

Several ladies were itching to go.

Mrs Hudson wanted to go up with her friends, but Stephan had already settled the bill and was leaving the restaurant with Alana.

They were a step too late.

Mrs Hudson decided this wasn't the ideal moment to meet her future daughter-in-law. "No need to rush," she said. "If we all go up abruptly, we might frighten the poor girl. I'll just ask the lad about it when we get home!"

If she truly was his girlfriend, she'd have him bring her home.

Mrs Hudson was secretly delighted, already dreaming of her son's wedding and the joy of holding her grandchild.

In the car.

Stephan remained unaware that his mother had witnessed him bringing a woman to the restaurant.

He was driving, engaging in casual conversation with Alana.

"I never would have guessed someone so petite could eat quite so much."

Alana blushed. Truth be told, nearly everything on the table had ended up in her stomach.

She protested softly, "I didn't want it to go to waste."

Stephan raised an eyebrow. "Waste what? It's not your money being spent."

Stephan watched the flush spread across her cheeks, his Adam's apple suddenly throbbing with a hint of hungry desire. His voice grew low and husky as he asked, "Or could it be... you're worried about my money?"

The teasing tone made her flush again, and she instinctively retorted, "Of course not."

"I just... don't want to waste the food that farmers worked so hard to grow."

The man snorted. "Is that so?"

Alana's tone was unwavering. "Yeah."

Stephan's found her earnest expression inexplicably amusing. "Miss Martin, eating this much, can your boyfriend afford to keep you?"

Alana pursed her lips. "I don't rely on men to support me. I earn my own keep."

Stephan studied her intently. "It's not that I doubt your ability to support yourself. It's just that in the eyes of a man with responsibility and integrity, he should give his woman this world."

What sort of man is he if he can't even support his own woman?

Alana gulped.

Is he serious?

Did he genuinely think that?

Well, his values are rather sound, then.

After all, she'd heard tales of men who not only refused to spend money on their women but actually spent their women's money instead.

Stephan asked casually, "Where's your boyfriend?"

All this time, he hadn't seen her boyfriend appear by her side.

She appeared to be perpetually alone.

Alana felt uneasy, avoiding his gaze. Why was he prying about her boyfriend?

Wasn't that a bit presumptuous?

Weren't they still too unfamiliar to be prying into each other's personal affairs?

She sidestepped the question. "Mr Hudson, aren't you asking a bit too much?"

Stephan snorted. "You're rather protective of this boyfriend of yours, aren't you?"

Was she worried he might take action against her boyfriend because of her?

He wasn't that unscrupulous.

Alana was completely bewildered.

What had she done to warrant such protection?

She couldn't comprehend it.

Alana glanced out the car window and hurriedly said, "Er, Mr Hudson, we're almost at the estate entrance. Let's stop here."

"What's the matter? Can't I just drop you off at the estate entrance?"

Alana explained, "It's so late, and your car is rather conspicuous. If others see me getting out of your vehicle, it wouldn't reflect well on either of us."

Stephan frowned. At the end of the day, she just didn't want to be associated with him, did she?

Did she simply... dislike interacting with him?

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A faint wave of irritation washed over him.

Nevertheless, he pulled over to the kerb.

His tone grew slightly colder. "Get out."

"Thank you for treating us tonight, Mr Hudson, As for the coat, I've washed it already. I'll return it once it's dry. Of course. If you wish to have it now..."

Before Alana could finish, Stephan cut her off, his expression still impassive. "Just return it once it's dry."

Alana choked slightly before finally uttering, "Oh."

"Right then, I'll be off. Goodnight."

Alana unbuckled her seatbelt, stepped out of the car, and walked away without looking back. Stephan stared at the girl's slender, graceful silhouette, lost in thought, his mind wandering to who knows where.

The sweet, delicious scent lingering in the car from the girl's presence refused to dissipate for a long while.

Suddenly, a call came through, interrupting his thoughts.

He glanced at his phone to see it was his mother calling.

His brow furrowed, a sense of

reluctance mingled with resignation washing over him.

Swiping to answer, his voice was measured. "Hello, Mum."

Mrs Hudson cut straight to the point, "Where are you now?"

Stephan "At home."

"You're lying. I just saw you at a restaurant. And you were with a girl. Who is she? What's your relationship with her?"

Stephan's eyes dilated.

Cynthia pressed on. "Don't play dumb. Tell me, is that girl your secret girlfriend?"

Stephan paused briefly. "No."

"No. You were not taking that young lady out for a private meal? I had no idea you, a man too busy to even attend arranged meetings, would have time to dine

with a young lady!"

"It was merely dinner. Not a date."

"I don't care! That girl must have some connection to you. Bring her home so I can have a proper look at her."

Stephan pinched the bridge of his nose. "Mum, you're asking too much."

Cynthia laughed in exasperation. "How is that unreasonable? I simply wish to meet my future daughter-in-law!"

Hearing the words 'future daughter-in-law' sent an inexplicable flutter through Stephan's chest, leaving his throat feeling oddly ticklish. "Me and her... it's nothing serious."

"Still pursuing her?"

Stephan didn't know what to say.

"If you're pursuing her, put your foot down. Get her secured quickly. I'm waiting to hold my grandchild, understand?"

"If you want babies, go have some with my father. Don't come whining to me."

"If I had one with your father, would it be the same as holding your own child. Don't change the subject. Get her to commit already. I'm waiting for you to bring her home to meet the parents."

Stephan knew his mother's relentless nature. He gave a perfunctory reply, "Right then." He didn't take it to heart.

Cynthia hung up satisfied, already dreaming of cradling grandchildren in both arms.

Stephan lingered for a moment before driving back to his flat.

Upon returning to the flat, he saw the black chaise longue in the living room.

Suddenly, he recalled the girl lying beneath him on that very sofa, a blend of innocence and allure, emitting soft, seductive moans that were utterly bewitching.

His Adam's apple bobbed as a surge of heat raged through his body, refusing to subside...

He was actually, relishing it madly.

Alana returned home, pondering Stephan's invitation to dinner that evening. It felt rather inexplicable.

But baffling though it was, she didn't dwell on it. She went to her room to organise her work materials, and when the hour came, she lay down to rest.

In the dead of night.

Alana stirred in a daze, feeling a feverish heat in her head and a chill throughout her body. She felt terribly unwell.

She must have caught a cold.

She tried to struggle out of bed to take some medicine, but she simply didn't have the strength. Thus, by the following day, Alana's cold had unhesitatingly worsened.

Not only did her head feel heavy and her legs light, but she was utterly exhausted and couldn't stop sneezing.

She struggled to her feet, swallowed a cold tablet, and only after tidying herself up did she set off for work.

She rode her electric scooter, buying steamed buns and soy milk on the way to take to work. Upon arriving at the office, Alana ate her steamed buns while still unable to suppress her frequent sneezing.

Carla shot her a concerned look. "Lana, you don't look too well. You've been

sneezing constantly, have you caught a cold?"

Alana sniffed. "A bit. I've already taken some medicine, so it's nothing serious."

Carla nodded. "Right then."

"But if you're genuinely feeling unwell, you ought to take a day off."

"It's only work. No need to push yourself so hard. Your health comes first."

Alana smiled. "Thank you."

At that moment, Dane emerged from the office and approached Alana.

"Alana, the HG representative requested your contact details yesterday. Has he been in touch?"

Alana shook her head. "No."

"I see..."

Dane's tone carried a hint of regret.

"Then keep an eye on your phone. Should the HG representative contact you, inform me immediately."

Alana nodded. "Right."

Her phone was already set to ring mode; any incoming calls or messages would catch her attention immediately.

Dane departed.

Alana immersed herself in her work.

The entire morning passed without the HG representative contacting her.

She'd probably only asked for her contact details on a whim.

Yet Alana still found herself glancing at her phone from time to time.

What if the HG representative did get in touch?

Noticing Alana's frequent glances at her phone, Vera couldn't resist a sarcastic remark.

"Alana, stop looking. What if HG representative did ask for your contact details? She might just be teasing you, having a bit of fun. You're taking it far too seriously, aren't you?"

"How utterly foolish. HG is a busy person. Why on earth would she bother contacting a lowly nobody like you?"

"Have you no sense of your own standing?"

Alana frowned. "Vera, have you eaten shit? Your mouth stinks. Get away from me." Carla chimed in, "Vera, shut your trap. Can't get green to ask for your number

yourself? So jealous you're dripping with sourness. Whether he contacts Alana or not is none of your business! Always sticking your nose in where it doesn't belong!"

"You!"

"You lot!"

Vera's face twisted with fury as she turned and stormed off.

Alana and Carla, relieved to have peace, shared a knowing smile.

The entire day passed.

Not only had Alana's cold failed to improve, it seemed to have worsened.

On her way home from work, she sneezed while cycling and nearly collided with a car. Fortunately, she managed to swerve in time, otherwise a collision might well have occurred. Upon reaching a chemist near her neighbourhood, Alana went inside to purchase some stronger cold medicine.

The chemist, noticing the unhealthy flush on her cheeks, advised her that if the medication proved ineffective, she should seek hospital treatment for an intravenous drip rather than persisting with it.

Alana nodded, collected her medicine, paid, and headed home.

Back home, enduring dizziness and discomfort, she boiled some noodles for sustenance before immediately taking the medicine.

Just as she was about to retire to her room, she noticed the black coat hanging on the balcony. She walked over and touched it, it was already dry.

Worried that returning it too late might upset him, Alana hesitated only briefly before taking out her phone to send him a message.

Alana: Your coat is dry. When would you like to collect it?

The message was sent, but there was no reply for a long time.

Having taken her medication, Alana felt drowsy. She lay down on the sofa, closed her eyes, and drifted off to sleep.

Her head pounded so fiercely she didn't notice the phone screen lighting up repeatedly.

Stephan was entertaining several business partners. Amidst the clinking of glasses, he happened to glance at his phone and saw Alana's message.

Picking up his phone, he found, unsurprisingly, that it was about returning the coat.

However, he had engagements that evening, and even if he went to retrieve the coat, it would be very late.

Stephan: Can't make it tonight, let's reschedule.

The message was drafted, yet he hesitated to send it.

For some reason, she was still on his mind, and he fancied popping around to see her.

Perhaps it was because he'd had a bit too much to drink.

In the silence, he deleted the message he'd just composed and replaced it with:

Stephan: I'll come around later to pick up my coat.

He sent it and waited a while, but no reply came. He couldn't tell if she'd seen it or not.

Stephan furrowed his brow, set his phone aside, and ceased staring at it.

The social engagement concluded an hour later, nearing nine o'clock.

Settling into the backseat of the car, Stephan pressed his fingers to his temples.

Only then did he recall something. He picked up his phone and glanced at it, that woman still hadn't replied.

He paused briefly before composing another message.

Stephan: I'm coming over now.

The message was sent, only to vanish without a trace.

He felt a vague unease. That woman didn't seem the type to ignore a message.

Besides, she was the one who'd asked when he'd like his coat back, there was no reason for her to ignore him.

Did something happened?

Alana had no idea how long she'd been asleep when, in a daze, she faintly heard her phone ringing.

But her head ached so badly she couldn't tell whether it was the throbbing in her skull or the phone ringing.

She let it ring on.

Yet the ringing persisted relentlessly, as though determined to keep sounding until she answered.

Finally certain it was her phone, she reached out, found it, and answered without checking who was calling.

"Hello...Who is this?"

"It's me."

The man's deep voice reached her, clearing the fog in her head slightly.

"Mr Hud...Mr Hudson."

"I'm terribly sorry, I'd just fallen asleep and didn't hear your calls..."

Stephan was exasperated. He'd called her so many times, and she'd simply been asleep?

He'd been genuinely worried something might have happened to her, nearly calling the police in desperation.

He couldn't help but grow angry. "I've called you over a dozen times just now. Are you a pig? Sleeping so soundly?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sorry...." Alana started to apologise, but was suddenly overcome by a fit of coughing, her cheeks flushing crimson.

The violent coughing made the man's heart tighten, inexplicably. "What's wrong?"

Alana coughed, trying to control it but she couldn't. "It's nothing...I...caught cold...that's..."

Stephan frowned. She had a cold? How serious was it?

"Have you taken any medicine?"

"I have..."

Still coughing like that after taking medicine?!

"I'm currently downstairs at your building. Tell me which block and flat number you're at?"

"Ahem, Mr Hudson...there's no need for you to come looking for me. I'll just bring your coat over..."

Stephan had no patience for this. "Tell me your door number, or I'll go knocking on every door myself!"

Stephan replied instinctively, "Block B, flat 513."

The moment the words left her mouth, the man hung up.

Realizing he might be coming round, Alana struggled to her feet from the sofa. Forcing herself upright, she went to the balcony to retrieve the coat, folded it neatly, and placed it in a bag. No sooner had she finished than the doorbell chimed.

Carrying the bag, Alana walked to open the door.

A dark figure burst into her field of vision.

The man seemed to have rushed over, slightly out of breath, looking weary from his journey. His black suit carried the chill of the night wind.

His deep, dark eyes fixed upon her, holding her gaze with an intensity that made her feel uneasy.

She tugged at the bag in her hand, prompting him, "Mr Hudson, I'm terribly sorry. It's my fault for not feeling well and making you come all this way. Here's your coat..."

Stephan ignored the coat she offered, his gaze fixed intently on her instead.

Her complexion was poor, her face flushed and puffy, her spirits low. She looked utterly wilted, like a flower on the verge of withering.

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

The sight stirred a pang of pity within him.

Alana bit her lip and reminded him again, "Mr Hudson, your coat." Stephan paused briefly before taking the bag from her hands.

Biting her lip, Alana said, "Mr Hudson, I'm feeling rather unwell. I'm afraid I can't entertain you any longer. Well then... goodbye..."

In the dead of night, a man and a woman alone together.

If anyone discovered a man visiting her at night, it would surely invite gossip.

Best to see him off promptly.

Stephan paid no heed to her words, instead glancing through the open door into her room.

It was spotless, radiating the cosy warmth of a young woman's space.

"Do you live here alone?"

Alana hesitated before nodding. "Yes."

Learning she lived alone, Stephan felt an inexplicable sense of relief wash over him.

He pressed on, "And your boyfriend?"

Seeing the girl's silence, his tone turned slightly sharp. "You're ill, and your boyfriend didn't come to look after you?"

Alana's face flushed crimson as she replied stubbornly, "Mr Hudson, I'm perfectly capable of looking after myself."

Stephan frowned. "You're this ill and still trying to put on a brave face?"

"I'm not..."

Before Alana could finish her sentence, she couldn't help but start coughing. Her face crumpled in discomfort as the fit raged on.

Stephan couldn't help but reach out and pat her back.

"Come inside first. Have a glass of water."

He then took hold of her shoulders and guided her straight into her room.

Alana was too preoccupied with her coughing fit and the throbbing, swollen ache in her head to mind the man entering her room.

Stephan guided her to the sofa and asked, "Where's the water?"

Alana raised her hand, pointing weakly towards the kitchen. "Kitchen."

Stephan immediately set off towards the kitchen.

The girl's kitchen was surprisingly tidy. He glanced around, found the cupboard, and took out a cup.

He then located the thermos flask, which still contained water, lukewarm, likely freshly boiled. Stephan poured a large cup and carried it out.

Approaching Alana, he carefully fed her most of the cup. Only then did her complexion begin to improve.

Lying limp on the sofa, she murmured weakly, "Thank you..."

"You're welcome." Stephan placed the cup on the coffee table before turning his attention back to Alana. Having spent time by his mother's side, he possessed some basic medical knowledge.

On seeing her complexion, he immediately concluded.

"You've got a fever, you know?"

Stephan stared at her and pressed, "Do you have a thermometer?"

Judging by her appearance, the fever seemed rather high.

Her face was as red as a monkey's bottom.

And she claimed she just got a cold? Can't even tell the difference between a cold and a fever?

Utterly daft!

Alana replied, "The thermometer... it's broken. I haven't bought a new one yet."

Stephan stood up: "Then get ready. Come with me to the hospital."

Alana felt awkward about letting the man take her. "I'll go myself. You've been through enough trouble tonight..."

Stephan couldn't be bothered with her excuses and simply lifted her off the sofa.

Caught off guard, Alana gasped, her arms instinctively wrapping around his neck.

"Alana..."

Stephan lowered his gaze, observing her wide-eyed, flustered expression. "How on earth do you expect to manage on your own when you're this ill?"

"You silly woman, can't even tell the difference between a cold and a fever."

Alana blinked.

His words shut her up completely.

Stephan took Alana to the nearest hospital.

Worried she might be cold, he draped the freshly laundered coat over her shoulders.

Alana sighed.

Right, that'll need washing again.

The doctor took Alana's temperature: thirty-nine degrees. A high fever. She needed intravenous fluids.

Stephan arranged a private ward for her to rest and receive the drip.

No sooner had Alana settled in with the drip attached than she blurted out, "Mr Hudson, it's quite late now. You should go home. There's no need for you to trouble yourself any further."

Stephan sat down in the chair beside her and couldn't help but glare at her. "Shut up!"

Alana gulped.

What had she said wrong?

She merely wished to spare him any inconvenience, was that truly a fault?

Seeing the pitiful look in her eyes, Stephan couldn't bring himself to be harsh. His tone softened as he said, "Just lie still. We'll talk once the drip's finished."

Alana murmured, "Oh," and didn't press the matter.

During the infusion, drowsiness overtook her once more, and she felt sleepy.

But with a man watching over her, she felt too embarrassed to sleep, so she kept fighting it. What if he suddenly left and no one was there to change the drip once it finished?

Stephan seemed to read her thoughts, speaking softly, "If you're feeling sleepy, sleep. I'm not going anywhere."

She pouted:

Was this man a mind reader?

How could he possibly know exactly what she was thinking?

Still, she was truly exhausted. She couldn't hold on any longer.

Ultimately, she succumbed to the wave of drowsiness and slowly closed her eyes.

The girl's breathing gradually steadied.

Stephan gazed at the sleeping figure on the bed. Her exquisite face was rosy, her skin as fair as snow, exquisitely beautiful.

Her slender lashes were long and curled, her nose delicate yet high-bridged, her lips full and tender.

Asleep, she looked as docile and soft as a little white rabbit, making one irresistibly tempted to reach out and stroke her, to knead her softness.

As Stephan entertained this thought, his hand moved of its own accord to touch her.

The moment his palm touched her delicate skin, he realised it was uncomfortably hot.

Perhaps the coolness of his palm disturbed the slumbering girl.

She couldn't resist rubbing against his palm, her voice sweet and soft. "So... so comfortable..."

Stephan felt as though his heart had melted away, a strange tenderness spreading through his chest.

Reflecting on his peculiar behaviour that evening, worrying about her, fearing she might have come to harm.

He had personally rushed to her home, taken her to hospital when she was ill, and even tenderly looked after her while she was receiving intravenous treatment.

He asked himself: when had he ever shown such concern for a woman?

Yet here she was, appearing out of nowhere.

And what was even more unexpected was that the woman he was now worrying about and caring for was another man's girlfriend?!

It was an utterly unbelievable and inconceivable thing he had done.

Stephan stared at the girl for a long moment, his eyes dark and brooding. His thin lips moved slightly. "Alana, it's been so long, and your boyfriend still hasn't shown up. He's being rather irresponsible towards you."

After a moment's silence, he clenched and unclenched his knuckles several times, seemingly resolving himself to something.

"Why not...break up with him and come to me instead?"

His voice was barely audible, and the sleeping girl naturally couldn't hear a word.

After uttering those words, Stephan felt he might be losing his mind.

He was actually encouraging a sick woman to dump her boyfriend and be with him instead? What difference was that from a man encouraging his mistress to cheat on her husband?!

Still, her boyfriend was utterly irresponsible. Not only did he neglect his seriously ill girlfriend, but he hadn't even sent a single message.

It was as if he'd vanished off the face of the earth.

Truth be told, he'd already worked himself into a rage on her behalf before Alana had even shown any sign of anger.

Stephan couldn't resist pinching the girl's flushed cheek. "What a foolish woman."

A night passed.

Alana's flushed, feverish cheeks gradually regained their normal colour.

The first light of dawn fell upon her face.

Her eyelids fluttered, slowly opening to reveal a white ceiling.

Her eyes darted around, taking in her surroundings, before she realised she was still in the hospital.

Last night...

That man had suddenly barged into her home, then carried her off to the hospital for examination and an IV drip. And then...

Where was he?

Alana scanned the room, finding no one else present. Could it be...he'd left?

When had he left?

He'd left so abruptly, she hadn't even had a chance to thank him properly.

The thought barely formed when the tightly shut ward door abruptly swung open.

A figure as straight as a pine tree strode straight in.

The man paused upon seeing Alana awake. Alana's beautiful eyes widened in obvious bewilderment.

The man had left, and she regretted not having thanked him.

Now he had returned, and she felt awkward once more, unsure what to say.

In the end, it was the man who broke the silence first.

“Awake?”

His deep, magnetic voice sent a flutter through Alana’s chest.

It must be said, his voice was truly lovely, that kind with a uniquely cool, crisp quality, so absurdly captivating it could make one pregnant.

Her cheeks flushed slightly. "Er... I’m awake."

Stephan gave a cool, detached hum before saying, "I bought you breakfast."

“Not knowing what you like, I just picked up a few things."

And by 'just a few things', he meant several breakfast bags.

Crystal dumplings, pork buns, dumplings, congee, soy milk, fried dough sticks...

Seeing the vast array laid out on the table, Alana was momentarily speechless.

So much food, she didn't know where to begin.

Fortunately, she wasn't fussy and could try a little of everything.

Alana politely thanked the man before slowly climbing out of bed. She reached out and selected a small bun from the array of breakfast items.

Just as she was about to take a bite, she noticed the man staring intently at her.

"Have you...have you eaten already?"

Stephan replied: "Not yet."

Alana wondered why, with so much breakfast spread out before her, he hadn't picked anything up to eat.

But seeing him staring at her like that, could it be... he liked the meat bun in her hand?! Hesitating for a moment, Alana still offered him the bun in her hand. "Well, here, have this."

Stephan raised an eyebrow slightly as he looked at the bun the girl offered.

The plump, white meat bun looked as pale as her own hands, somehow making it look rather appetising.

Stephan said nothing, but reached out to take the bun.

Alana frowned.

It seemed she hadn't misjudged him, he'd clearly set his sights on her steamed bun.

With the buns gone, Alana settled for dumplings instead.

Halfway through her dumplings, she noticed the man staring at her again.

So Alana asked, "Care for some dumplings?"

Stephan stared at the girl with her cheeks stuffed full. "Feed me."

Alana froze. "Eh?"

Feed him?

That... wouldn't be quite right, would it?

Wouldn't that be a bit suggestive?

But the man's deep, intense gaze fixed upon her, suggesting he wasn't joking.

Alana forced herself not to overthink it. She picked up her chopsticks, picked up a dumpling, and offered it to the man.

Stephan watched her, his gaze flickering slightly before he slowly leaned in, opened his mouth, and took the dumpling.

The dumpling, bursting with savoury juices, tasted remarkably delicious as he ate it.

Only after feeding him did Alana realize belatedly that she had used the very chopsticks she had just handled herself.

She couldn't help but blush.

Good heavens, how could one make such a colossal blunder?!

Stephan smirked: "More, please."

Hearing this, Alana flushed even deeper and hastily picked up a fresh pair of chopsticks for him.

"Here are the chopsticks. You can eat up yourself."

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

Stephan frowned slightly at the chopsticks thrust into his hand by the girl.

What he wanted to eat were the dumplings she picked out for him, not ones he picked himself. The breakfast proceeded with an awkward silence.

Alana, having eaten her fill, glanced at the man still lingering in the room, her mind filled with puzzlement.

Wasn't he leaving?

A man and a woman alone together in one room, how awkward.

Besides, they... weren't exactly close, and the relationship was still so awkward.

If he wasn't awkward, she certainly was.

Besides, if he had business to attend to, he could simply leave. There was no need for him to be so considerate towards her.

Alana was pondering this, just about to speak.

Suddenly, a female nurse walked in.

"I'm here to take the patient's temperature."

Alana swallowed her words.

Stephan said nothing, stepping aside slightly to allow the nurse to approach Alana unhindered.

The nurse took the thermometer and helped Alana place it under her armpit.

"Thank you," Alana said, politely.

"You're welcome."

The nurse smiled, then couldn't help but glance at Stephan, who stood more rigidly than a door guardian.

His profoundly chiselled features, sword-like brows, starry eyes, and a high, straight

nose, were like a divine countenance meticulously sculpted by God, flawless beyond reproach. Not only was the man exceptionally handsome, but he carried an aura as cool as mist, exuding an innate sense of nobility far beyond the ordinary.

She withdrew her gaze and looked at Alana with envy.

"Miss, he must be your boyfriend, eh? He's rather handsome."

"Not only handsome, but incredibly thoughtful and caring too. Last night, it was he who looked after you all night long."

Alana gasped, glancing at Stephan with a flustered expression.

He actually... looked after her all night?

The entire night, without leaving her side?!

Unbelievable.

As shock washed over her, Stephan happened to glance her way, his gaze deepening.

Alana flushed inexplicably, unable to meet the man's gaze as she stammered an explanation,

"Er, you've misunderstood. He...he's not my boyfriend..."

“Eh?”

Now it was the female nurse’s turn to be stunned.

To be so hands-on in caring for an ill woman, and he’s not even her boyfriend?!

The nurse felt awkward. "My apologies, I assumed you two were a couple..."

Alana felt equally awkward. "No..."

The nurse gave a low cough. "Though you’re not now, it doesn’t mean you couldn’t be in the future. You two seem rather well-suited."

Alana blinked.

How did this get so absurd?

Are nurses this gossipy too?

Stephan shot Alana a dark look before speaking flatly, "Nurse, five minutes are up. Has her temperature been taken?"

"Oh, nearly forgot."

The nurse tapped her forehead before instructing Alana to retrieve the thermometer.

Checking the thermometer, it read 36.5 degrees, back to normal body temperature.

The nurse gave Alana a few instructions, take medication on schedule, ensure adequate rest, before departing.

Once the nurse departed, the ward was left with only Alana and Stephan.

Alana met the man's deep, dark eyes.

Remembering how the nurse had mistaken them for a couple earlier, she couldn't help but feel awkward again.

"Er, the nurse mentioned you looked after me all night."

"Thank you..."

Stephan's voice cut through the silence, cool and detached. "Is that reasonable?"

"Hm?"

Alana was baffled. What was reasonable or unreasonable?

Stephan remained expressionless. "You were ill and hospitalised all night. Not only did your boyfriend not come to look after you, but he vanished without a trace, showing no concern whatsoever. Is that reasonable?"

Wait, why was he so fixated on her non-existent 'boyfriend'?

Seeing her silence, Stephan frowned, utterly exasperated. "Has your boyfriend kicked the bucket?"

Alana stared at him in bewilderment, her doe-like eyes widening. "Why are you being so...aggressive?"

Stephan's expression remained icy. "How am I being aggressive?"

He looked fierce while talking.

Alana considered for a moment. "Er, aren't you leaving yet?"

Stephan's expression grew even colder. "You're kicking me out?"

After tending to her all night, nursing her back to health, she'd simply throw him out like this?

Was she really that ungrateful?

Alana panicked. Why was he misunderstanding her intentions?

"No, that's not it. I just thought, since you'd been here all night yesterday, I was worried you might have things to

attend to, so..."

"If you have things to attend to, go ahead. Don't worry about me."

Stephan snapped. "It's fine."

Alana choked on her words.

What on earth?

Why was the atmosphere growing increasingly awkward?

Stephan stared at her, his deep eyes fixed intently, as if he could bore a hole through her.

"So eager for me to leave?"

Alana stammered, "No, not at all..."

It was just that she wasn't accustomed to having a man by her side.

And this man, was the man she'd been intimate with.

Stephan shot Alana a glance, seemingly seeing through her thoughts. His thin lips curved slightly. "I'll wait until your boyfriend arrives before leaving."

He was rather curious to see just how utterly despicable her boyfriend was. Not only did he ignore her when she was ill, but he also made her cling to him so desperately.

Alana gasped.

Wait until her boyfriend arrived before leaving?

Then he certainly wouldn't be leaving anytime soon.

Alana glanced at the man and spoke slowly, "Well, I suppose I ought to be off..."

Meaning: Don't wait. You would be waiting in vain.

Stephan grimaced.

His gaze fixed on Alana, dark and intense. Very well. This boyfriend couldn't even be bothered to pick her up from hospital.

So this was the kind of irresponsible scoundrel she was dating..

Stephan's thin lips twitched slightly, as if finding his own behaviour rather ridiculous. Why was he meddling in other people's relationships?

Didn't he look like a complete buffoon?!

Frowning, he refused to look at her again and turned to leave.

Seeing the man turn and leave, Alana froze for a moment. Then, as if remembering something, she hurriedly picked up the coat left on the bed. "Er, your coat..."

But the man had already vanished from her sight, seemingly not having heard her words.

Alana felt a pang of unease. Oh well, she'd take it back, give it a proper wash again, and return it to him properly.

After taking her medication, Alana proceeded to settle her hospital discharge paperwork. When it came to settling the medical fees, she was informed they had already been paid in full. She didn't need to guess who had paid it.

A peculiar sensation flitted through Alana's mind.

She'd assumed that once he'd left, that was the end of it, yet here he was, having settled her medical bills.

After all, her illness had nothing to do with him.

Why go out of his way to do this?

After pondering it, Alana inquired about the exact amount of the medical bill, then

transferred the funds to the man, noting it was for medical expenses.

She added an extra two hundred dollars as a token of gratitude for his care the previous night. Though two hundred dollars might not be much to him, it amounted to nearly her entire savings.

Stephan sat in the driver's seat, his sharply defined fingers twirling a lit cigarette.

A faint haze of smoke drifted, veiling his sharply defined, cold features.

He didn't particularly enjoy smoking; the acrid taste stung his throat and felt unpleasant.

Yet occasionally, the sharp sting of smoke as it slid down his throat offered a fleeting numbness to his nerves, allowing him momentary respite from troublesome matters and people.

Stephan drew on the cigarette, his thin lips slowly exhaling a smoke ring, slow and lingering. His mobile phone vibrated.

His slender fingers lightly swiped across the screen, revealing a transfer notification.

It showed Alana had transferred one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars.

The exact amount, with no change, clearly indicating she didn't want to be in his debt.

Stephan's lips twitched in an inexplicable way.

How could she possibly be anything but a bloody fool?!

Without much hesitation, he tapped to accept.

Since she didn't want to be in his debt, he'd oblige her.

Stephan bit down on the cigarette butt, drew another drag, then stubbed out the remaining half in the ashtray.

He pressed his foot to the accelerator, preparing to drive away.

As his gaze drifted to the window, he caught sight of Alana emerging from the hospital.

She wore a long, orange-yellow dress, a remarkably bright colour.

The orange dress made her skin appear exceptionally fair, smooth and delicate, as if it could glow with its own light.

Her jet-black hair swayed in the breeze, the hem of her skirt fluttering lightly as she walked with such graceful steps she resembled a butterfly in flight.

Stephan found himself involuntarily following her with his gaze.

He watched as she slowly made her way to the bus stop sign at the hospital entrance, where she sat down on the bench to wait for her bus.

He frowned for a moment, tempted to simply press the accelerator and drive away.

But then he saw her, a girl standing all alone at the bus stop.

Perhaps his brain had short-circuited again, for he drove the car up to her.

“Get in.”

The window slid down, revealing Stephan’s chiselled features.

Alana held her phone, having just sent a message to her boss requesting half a day off.

After all, arriving at the office at this hour would already count as being late.

Having just sent the message, she looked up and froze upon seeing him.

He hadn't left yet?

Noting her dazed expression, Stephan repeated impatiently, "Get in the car."

Alana instinctively replied, "No need to trouble yourself. I'll wait for the bus..."

Stephan pressed his thin lips together, his dark gaze fixed on her with an unyielding intensity that brooked no argument.

Alana felt a pang in her chest under his gaze.

The rest of her words died on her lips.

After a moment's hesitation, she pulled open the door and climbed in.

Once seated, she remembered to fasten her seatbelt.

Stephan caught her flustered movements out of the corner of his eye. His thin lips twitched.

"Where to?"

Recalling she'd already taken leave, Alana replied, "Home."

Stephan pressed the accelerator without expression, setting the car in motion.

The car moved slowly.

Whenever she found herself alone with the man before her, Alana was overcome by an inexplicable sense of tension.

Her slender fingers fidgeted with the seatbelt as she asked, somewhat uneasily,

"Why haven't you left yet? I thought you'd left long ago."

"Came out for a smoke."

"Oh."

No wonder there was a faint whiff of smoke lingering in the car.

Alana bit her lip. "Well, smoking isn't exactly good for your health."

She recalled a relative from her childhood who had died of lung cancer due to smoking.

Stephan's expression remained impassive. "Mind your own business."

That was rich coming from him though.

Alana eyed him.

She'd only meant to offer a well-meaning reminder.

If he didn't want to listen, so be it.

“Er, thank you for paying my medical fees earlier.”

“You’ve already thanked me, and you’ve even transferred me twelve hundred and fifty.”

After a pause, his slightly indifferent gaze swept over her. "Did you transfer an extra two hundred just to make it two hundred and fifty, so you could call me a two-hundred-and-fifty?"

Alana’s clear, beautiful eyes widened instantly. "No!"

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

"I didn’t mean it that way!"

“I transferred you an extra two hundred to thank you for looking after me last night. I absolutely did not mean to call you a two-bit fool!"

Stephan snorted derisively. "A mere two hundred dollars? To fob off a beggar?"

Alana bit her lower lip.

Her Two hundred dollars had been dismissed.

Well, if he disdained it, so be it. She hadn't exactly asked him to look after her all night.

Besides, she didn't have much money to begin with. Giving him two hundred dollars was already stretching her finances to the absolute limit, wasn't it!

Two hundred dollars could see her through a week or two if she scrimped and saved!

The more she thought about it, the more she felt it wasn't worth it.

Alana puffed out her cheeks. "If you're so disgusted by this two hundred dollars, then transfer it back to me."

Stephan glanced at the slightly annoyed girl. Her puffed-out cheeks resembled a steamed bun with a full cheek, white and tender, looking utterly delicious.

“I should transfer the money back to you?”

“Yes.”

He disliked it anyway, didn't he?

“So I looked after you all night for nothing?”

Alana glared at him. She hadn't asked him to look after her.

He'd offered to look after her of his own accord, didn't he?!

But she only voiced her complaint internally, not openly.

After all, she was genuinely grateful for the effort he'd put into looking after her.

“You won’t take the two hundred dollars as a token of appreciation? What exactly do you want? I’ve no more to spare.”

Stephan’s deep eyes fixed upon her parting lips, their vivid colour like a rose, impossibly delicate and alluring.

Merely observing them stirred an overwhelming urge to kiss them.

“Wanting to thank me is simple.”

“What?”

He said nothing, instead abruptly pulling the car over to the side of the road. He unbuckled his seatbelt, leaned over, and drew near her.

The potent scent of masculine pheromones enveloped her as his broad, muscular frame instantly overshadowed the petite girl before him.

He lowered his eyelids, his deep gaze fixed on the girl’s beautiful, slightly flustered and helpless eyes. His thin lips parted. "Kiss me."

What?

Kiss him?

Alana stared wide-eyed at the handsome face mere inches from hers.

His pupils were pitch-black and profoundly deep, his expression stern, showing no sign of jest. Her heartbeat quickened involuntarily. "You... I..."

Stephan's piercing gaze locked onto her flushed cheeks.

Her cheeks flushed crimson, her lips growing even more vividly rosy.

A sight to savour, stirring a restless desire within him.

His voice was low and husky, tinged with restrained desire. "Looking after you all night, asking for a kiss in return, that's not too much to ask, is it?"

His proximity was too close, his scent too potent, sending Alana's thoughts into a whirl.

She forced herself to remain composed.

"Mr Hudson, this is not appropriate..."

Stephan leaned closer, his dark eyes deep and intense.

He radiated an overwhelming sense of dominance, his presence intensely oppressive.

"Why is it inappropriate?"

Alana gritted her teeth. "I have a boyfriend."

Well, if she claimed to have a boyfriend, surely he wouldn't... go too far?

Stephan's gaze instantly grew colder.

Hmph.

She dared to bring up that irresponsible boyfriend of hers?!

Have all the men in this world gone and died?

Must she hang herself on a crooked tree?!

The more he thought about it, the angrier he grew. Fixing his gaze on the luscious red lips mere inches away, he captured it without a second thought.

"Mmm..."

The moment Alana's tender lips were captured by his teeth, shock left her mind blank.

He... how could he...

The instant Stephan bit down on the girl's lips, he tasted a soft, sweet fragrance.

Just like her breath, pure and sweet, instantly intoxicating, impossible to resist.

He couldn't resist deepening the kiss, fierce and intense, as if intent on robbing her of every breath and drop of moisture.

Alana's eyes widened in shock before she snapped back to her senses, struggling against him. "Mmm, no..."

But her struggling hands were easily seized by the man, raised high, then pinned behind her back.

His entire body descended upon hers, pinning her supple frame beneath him.

Her cheeks flushed crimson, her lips kissed into a glossy sheen, plump and luminous.

Her eyes were large and watery, brimming with moisture, reflecting a mix of shame and anger.

She resembled an angry, helpless little white rabbit.

Not only utterly harmless, but she only made one want to tease her more. Teased thoroughly.

Alana's hands were pinned down, her body held firmly in place, leaving her utterly powerless to resist.

The man pinning her down bore a burning gaze, brimming with aggression, like a wolf eyeing its prey, a tempting little catch.

Her lips trembled slightly as she pleaded softly, "Enough, we've already kissed. Enough..."

How could it be enough when he'd barely tasted the sweetness?!

Moreover, the girl's soft, pleading voice did nothing to deter him; instead, it only stirred the beast within him.

Unbidden, Alana's mind flashed back to that night, when he'd pinned her beneath him, ravishing her without restraint.

The more she begged, the more forceful he became, his intensity only growing.

Finally, her body went limp, utterly powerless to resist as he took what he desired.

Suddenly, as if sensing something, he released her tender lips. Staring at her flushed cheeks, his gaze intense, he asked, "Feeling it now?"

His husky voice carried a hint of teasing and restrained desire.

Hearing this, Alana felt even more ashamed, her body twisting in struggle.

"You... let go of me..."

The unfamiliar sensations coursing through her body felt utterly strange.

She clearly didn't want this, so why...

Stephan curved his lips, pinching her pale, delicate chin with one hand as he stared into her alluring face.

"Shall we do it again? To properly satisfy you?"

His words struck Alana as nothing but frivolous.

He seemed no different from those lecherous scoundrels who had bullied her.

Her anger boiled over. "No!"

"Let go of me! I'm getting out of this car!" Stephan had no intention of letting her off so easily. She was clearly stirred by him too.

He intended to kiss her once more.

But his lips landed on her cheek.

For she swiftly turned her face away.

Alana's eyes were bloodshot, her teeth clenched so tightly she could barely hold back the tears welling up in her eyes.

"Stephan, stop this!"

"I'm not the kind of woman you think I am!"

Stephan frowned, his irritation rising at the sight of her tear-stained eyes and pitiful

expression.

He disliked seeing her cry.

"I never thought you were loose."

Alana sobbed, softly, her voice trembling with accusation, "But you do think I'm loose! Otherwise, why would you kiss me whenever you want, or do as you please without regard for my wishes?"

Stephan drew a deep breath, feeling for the first time utterly powerless to defend himself. "Fine. I won't kiss you, nor demand you sleep with me. Now stop crying, will you?"

Seeing her tears not only irritated him but also left him feeling a touch of helplessness.

After all, he'd never bullied a girl into tears like this before.

Alana still felt utterly miserable, her lashes glistening with tears, looking utterly aggrieved. "You've already kissed me..."

Stephan fixed her with his gaze, speaking with deadpan seriousness, "Yes, I did kiss you. If you feel you've been wronged, then kiss me back. I won't resist."

Alana glared at him, eyes wide.

As if to say, how could there be such a shameless man in this world?

“Let go of me!”

“I’m getting out of this car!”

This man was far too dangerous. She couldn’t bear to stay here a moment longer.

Stephan glanced at her fierce expression.

Truth be told, her fierce expression wasn’t frightening at all. Rather, she resembled an angry little wildcat with its fur standing on end, exuding a hint of charm.

Nevertheless, he released her hand.

The moment the man released her grip, Alana swiftly unbuckled her seatbelt and pushed open the door.

Grasping her mobile phone and a bag, she climbed out, intent on leaving.

But as if remembering something, she tossed the bag back to the man.

“Here’s your coat. I’m not washing it for you!”

“And since you kissed me just now, remember to return my two hundred dollar compensation!”

He’d kissed her, after all, she wasn’t about to let that shameless man get away with it!

With that, she shot the man in the car one last glare before walking away without looking back.

Stephan looked down to see that what she had tossed at him was none other than the coat he’d draped over her shoulders.

He’d deliberately left it in her hands, planning to retrieve it another time.

Now she'd simply tossed it back at him.

Stephan lifted his gaze once more towards the direction she had departed.

Like a gust of wind, she vanished in the blink of an eye.

He was still savouring the memory of that kiss he hadn't been able to resist.

Though he'd made her cry, he did not regret kissing her.

Alana walked straight home.

She was furious, her eyes still red when she arrived home.

Because that man had looked after her all night yesterday, she thought he seemed rather decent, so she still harboured a little fondness for him.

But the moment she recalled his recent series of frivolous advances, she felt he was no different from those sleazy, shameless scoundrels! She resolved to earn the thirty thousand dollars swiftly and repay him. Then wipe the slate clean and never see him again!

Alana took half a day off and returned to work the next day. Several colleagues gathered around to ask after her.

She smiled and replied that she was fine, the illness had passed.

Two quiet days passed.

During this time, she hadn't managed to get in touch with Stephan.

However, the two hundred dollars she'd given him still hadn't been returned.

Every time Alana thought of it, she couldn't help but feel a pang of resentment.

That scoundrel, taking without giving back, utterly shameless!

One morning.

The project department held a brief meeting.

After the meeting, Dane specifically asked Alana and Vera to stay behind.

"I've just received word that the green representative will be playing at Blue Mountain Golf Club around ten this morning. Prepare yourselves and depart with me."

Alana and Vera both acknowledged the instruction.

They left the meeting room.

Vera shot Alana a glance and declared haughtily, "Alana just you wait. This time,

I'll definitely get to Mr HG before you do!"

Alana only glanced at her.

She couldn't be bothered with such a show-off. Around ten o'clock.

Alana, Dane, and Vera arrived at Blue Mountain Club.

Blue Mountain Golf Club was renowned as a playground for the wealthy elite.

It operated on a membership system, with entry restricted solely to club members.

To become a member, one must spend upwards of a million yuan.

Dane was not a member of Blue Mountain Golf Club, but he had connections and borrowed a friend's membership card, which granted him entry.

The trio entered the club together. After a brief enquiry, they ascertained the precise location of HG.

The Blue golf course was vast, and it took them quite some time to locate Jules.

From afar, they could see her sleek blonde hair, clad in a crisp white golf outfit with a baseball cap, her posture as she raised her club exceptionally spirited and dashing.

Seeing HG Representative playing with such fervour, the trio dared not disturb her

immediately and waited in the rest area instead.

Upon reaching the rest area, Alana immediately spotted a familiar figure.

The man sat in his seat clad in black casual wear, legs crossed, exuding an air of pampered idleness and nonchalance.

His strikingly handsome features made him impossible to overlook.

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

Alana froze for a moment, momentarily unable to process the sight.

How small was this world, after all?

How on earth had she run into him again?

Stephan had come to the golf course today simply because he felt restless and needed to get out and unwind.

Coincidentally, Jules had been full of energy these past few days, constantly pestering him. She claimed it was her first time in this country and insisted he take her to see the city's famous and outstanding sights.

He couldn't be bothered with sightseeing, so he'd simply brought her to the golf course instead. They played several rounds together, with him winning every single one, utterly pointless.

Yet Jules' competitive spirit had been ignited. She was determined to beat Stephan at least once and was now diligently honing her skills.

Stephan grew weary after a few rounds and headed to the lounge for a brief respite.

During the break, he nibbled on fruit offered by his attendant, his mind drifting into blank spaces.

He couldn't pinpoint what he was pondering, yet a slender, ethereal figure kept flickering through his mind, refusing to fade.

Stephan couldn't help but wonder if he was ill, whether he ought to visit the hospital and have his brain examined by a neurologist.

Why else would he keep thinking about that heartless woman?

Three days now, three whole days without contact, without seeing each other.

He couldn't fathom why, but he found himself craving her presence more intensely than ever.

Lost in these tangled thoughts, Stephan suddenly sensed a gaze resting on him.

He turned his head slightly and immediately caught sight of its source.

The girl possessed exquisitely delicate features and skin as pure and white as snow.

She wore a white shirt and blue jeans.

The high-waisted design accentuated her slender waist, her legs long and shapely.

Her demeanour was clean and elegant, radiating an indescribable purity.

He froze momentarily on seeing her.

It seemed he hadn't expected the girl who had just been in his mind to appear in the next moment.

Yet the moment she met his gaze, she promptly averted her eyes, as though caught in the act of wrongdoing.

As though she wished to have nothing whatsoever to do with him.

Stephan gave a low snort, a vague irritation stirring within him.

What was this?

Was she so unwilling to see him?

The moment the man looked her way, Alana promptly averted her gaze.

She didn't know why she'd looked away; it had been an instinctive reaction.

She didn't want him to catch her stealing glances at him.

Yet the man's gaze seemed to cling to her, burning intensely like a blazing fire that made Alana feel utterly uncomfortable.

Just then, Alana spotted Jules turning back, seemingly exhausted from his workout, his forehead glistening with sweat.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted clean towels and bottled water on the rest area table.

She walked over, picked up a dry towel and a bottle of water, and approached Jules. "Miss Jules, you've worked up quite a sweat. Here, let me dry you off with this towel." Jules felt a flicker before her eyes, and a delicate, beautiful face appeared before her.

The girl wore her hair in a high ponytail, a faint smile playing at the corners of her mouth. Dressed in a white shirt and blue jeans, she radiated youthful vigour and exuberance.

Her presence was refreshingly uplifting.

She recognised the pretty girl instantly, a flicker of surprise crossing her eyes. "It's you. I remember you. Your name was...A...Alana, wasn't it?"

Alana smiled again. "It's me. I'm honoured you remember my name."

Jules couldn't help but laugh aloud.

"With looks like yours, I'd be hard-pressed to forget."

Alana's cheeks flushed slightly.

Foreigners were so direct, compliments came effortlessly from their lips, nothing like the reserved, subtle manner in this city.

In any case, her praise made Alana feel rather embarrassed.

Alana shyly handed Jules a towel. "Here's your towel."

"Thank you."

Noticing the blush on her cheeks, Jules couldn't help but raise an eyebrow, tempted to tease her.

So she bent down, leaning her head closer to Alana. "How about you dry me off instead? What do you say?"

Alana froze for a moment, noticing the playful, teasing glint in Jules' emerald eyes.

A faint sense of unease stirred within her.

But she didn't dwell on it. Perhaps Jules was simply accustomed to being looked after.

Besides, Jules' request might be a test of sorts.

If she passed this test, negotiating their collaboration would likely be much smoother.

With that thought, Alana immediately stood on tiptoe and gently draped the towel over Jules' head.

Jules was exceptionally tall, standing at a full 1.8 metres.

At just 1.65 metres tall, Alana found it rather a struggle to dry her hair.

Jules lowered her gaze, observing the girl mere inches away.

The exertion of wiping her hair caused a flush of heat to rise, leaving her cheeks rosy.

Her skin was naturally fair and delicate, and now, with a hint of rosy flush against her pale complexion, she resembled a budding flower, utterly captivating.

Particularly as a faint, pleasant fragrance wafted from her, as soft and sweet as she herself. Jules stared intently at the girl before her, her desires stirring within.

Too beautiful, too tempting!

A feast for the eyes indeed!

What to do?

She desperately wanted to kiss her.

Girls kissing girls wasn't illegal in this country, was it?

At this thought, Jules pouted her lips, ready to press them against Alana's rosy, tempting little cheeks.

But before Jules could press her lips against Alana's, a sharp, low cough echoed through the air, making Jules' lips tremble.

She whipped her head round and, unsurprisingly, met Stephan's piercing gaze.

Gloomy and terrifying.

As if his property were being coveted by another species, it brimmed with warning and menace.

Jules blinked.

And he claimed he had no interest in the young lady.

That possessiveness was overwhelming, boundless in its intensity!

Due to Stephan's warning glare, Jules' refrained from making any rash moves towards Alana for the time being, even though he desperately wanted to.

Alana, however, remained utterly oblivious to the currents swirling beneath the surface.

Her entire focus was on attending to

Jules' needs, leaving no room for anything else.

Having wiped him clean, she slowly withdrew her hand.

"There, all done now."

The strenuous effort had left a thin sheen of sweat on her forehead, her fair complexion flushed with a delicate blush.

Jules chuckled, softly. "Thank you. You're a real sweetheart."

Alana picked up the bottle of mineral water she'd placed on the floor moments before, blinking at Jules. "Would you like a drink?"

As she spoke, she unscrewed the cap and offered it to Jules.

Jules happened to be thirsty and accepted without hesitation, taking a large gulp from the bottle.

Dane and Vera, seeing that Alana had already made contact with the HG

representative, had no time for anything else. They hurried over to Jules' side.

As Dane wasn't very proficient in English, Vera took the initiative to speak.

"Miss Jules, we are representatives from Wells Beauty Company. My name is Vera Davis. Might we have a few minutes of your time to introduce our company?"

Jules' brow furrowed.

Such a formal introduction meant they were undoubtedly here for business.

But her mind was set on having fun today, not work.

She found it thoroughly irritating when people brought up work while she was enjoying herself. Unfortunately, Vera failed to notice Jules' impatience, instead striving to showcase her impressive capabilities.

Therefore, before Jules could utter a word, she launched into a passionate discourse on the company's business philosophy and core principles.

Jules grew increasingly impatient.

But being a gentleman of refinement, he felt it would be rude to interrupt. Alana, noticing Jules' furrowed brow, keenly sensed her displeasure.

So she spoke up, "Miss Jules, you've been exercising for quite some time now. Standing must be rather uncomfortable. Shall we head over to the lounge area and sit for a while?"

Jules had been thinking exactly that. Hearing this, she raised an eyebrow at Alana. "Very well."

With that, she paid no heed to Vera and strode straight towards the lounge area.

Alana was about to follow when Vera grabbed her arm.

Having been interrupted by Alana, Vera was thoroughly annoyed.

"Alana, what's that supposed to mean? Can't you stand seeing me outshine you?"

She was on the verge of persuading Jules to agree to collaborate with their company, yet Alana had to go and interfere.

Alana's expression turned cold as she brushed Vera's hand away without hesitation.

"Vera, have you gone blind? Can't you see Jules is growing distinctly impatient with your remarks? Besides, she's just finished exercising and is dead tired. Having to listen to you drone on must

be bloody annoying, don't you think? Even if you're eager to partner with HG, you ought to proceed gradually. Wait for the right moment, it's not too late to bring up the collaboration then."

Vera was rendered speechless, unable to retort.

Alana couldn't be bothered with this useless teammate and strode towards Jules.

However, the awkwardness was palpable.

Jules' seat was positioned very close to Stephan's, just one seat apart.

Alana bit her lip, hesitating whether to approach.

Jules beckoned her over with a friendly wave. "Alana, come sit with us."

He patted the empty seat beside him.

It was the very seat between her and Stephan.

Stephan's deep, inscrutable gaze also turned towards her.

The man's inscrutable gaze made Alana feel pressured. She smiled and politely declined, "No need, I'll just stand here."

Jules chuckled. "Don't be so formal. Besides, I don't like people standing in front of me when we talk. Do come and sit."

After much hesitation, Alana relented.

She took small steps to the seat between them and sat down.

However, as she sat down, she deliberately shifted her hips slightly, distancing herself a little further from Stephan.

Stephan noticed her subtle movement and pressed his thin lips together.

Deliberately avoiding him?

It seemed he'd resolved to play devil's advocate with her.

Stephan lifted his foot slightly.

With his gleaming black leather shoe, he deliberately brushed against the girl's ankle. Caught off guard, she nearly leapt from her seat in alarm.

Yet she managed to restrain herself, preventing any major display of embarrassment. Only her clear, beautiful eyes, as pure as water, shot him a glare.

As if displeased by his teasing.

At last, he could no longer be ignored.

Stephan's thin lips curved into a faint smile.

Jules discreetly observed the subtle exchanges between them.

Curiosity and gossip stirred within her. What exactly was the nature of their relationship?

"Alana, do you know my friend?"

Alana turned to face Jules, instinctively retorting, "No, I don't!"

She clearly didn't want to be associated with the man beside her.

Stephan's thin lips curled slightly as his shoe brushed against hers once more. Not too hard, not too soft.

It made Alana's ears burn.

What on earth is this scoundrel up to?

Sneaking a nudge against her ankle, didn't he fear being caught?

He might have no shame, but that didn't mean she didn't.

She shifted her foot discreetly.

Alas, the man's leather shoes seemed glued to hers, scraping against her from time to time. It made her heart clench.

This man was thoroughly despicable to the core!

Jules pretended not to notice the spectacle unfolding beneath her feet, her gaze suggestive.

“You truly don’t know him?”

Alana bit her lip emphatically. "I don't know him."

Jules hummed in acknowledgement, casting a meaningful glance at Stephan.

Judging by how desperately Alana was trying to distance herself from a certain man, it seemed likely that man was harbouring unrequited feelings.

Now that was rather interesting.

It was rare indeed that Stephan, who was perpetually aloof, ascetic man, like a cold, distant flower, had ever been unable to suppress his one-sided infatuation with a woman.

After all, he was famously unapproachable when it came to women.

Chapter 38 Captivatingly beautiful

Jules emerald eyes settled on Alana. Her exquisitely delicate features were indeed captivatingly beautiful.

A faint smile touched her lips as she inquired, "Alana, might I call you Lala? After all, addressing you by name alone feels rather formal."

Alana, her head already throbbing from the cruel man's taunts beside her, hadn't quite caught the question clearly. Instinctively, she replied, "Y-yes..."

Stephan's brow furrowed.

Lala?

What an intimate nickname?

Jules pressed, "Lala, you're so lovely, do you have a boyfriend?"

Faced with Jules' sincere smile, Alana suddenly found herself unable to utter a lie.

"I... I don't."

Stephan frowned.

What did she mean by that?

In front of him, she'd claimed she already had a boyfriend.

Yet why did she tell Jules she didn't have one?

Which statement was actually true?

Jules looked surprised. "You don't have a boyfriend yet?"

Her gaze drifted indifferently towards Stephan before her eyebrow shot up in surprise. She leaned in slowly towards Alana. "Well then... how about I be your partner?"

Alana's eyes widened. "Eh?"

Jules observed her stunned expression, her clear, distinct pupils widened, rippling with shimmering light, beautiful and moist.

Her expression perfectly matched her astonished, dazed look.

It must be said, she looked utterly adorable.

Jules couldn't resist reaching out to pinch Alana's cheek. The soft, delicate skin felt incredibly supple.

She chuckled, "Just teasing you."

Alana breathed a sigh of relief.

That had truly scared the life out of her.

What woman tells another woman she wants to be her partner?

Unless she was gay.

Stephan shot a glance at the pair beside him, furrowing his brow as he spoke in a cool tone.

"Jules, one more round."

Jules shook her head. "No thanks. You're too good. I can't beat you."

Jules affectionately draped an arm around Alana's shoulder. "Lana, do you play golf? Let's play together."

Alana hesitated, shaking her head. "I... I don't know how."

Jules patted her shoulder. "No worries, I'll teach you."

Unable to refuse, Alana nodded. "All right. Stand up. I'll start by showing you the swing."

Jules pulled Alana to her feet and picked up a golf club.

"Right then, come and stand in front of me."

"Follow my lead, grip the club."

"Spread your feet slightly apart, knees slightly bent..."

After adjusting Alana's stance, Jules moved behind her, pressing close as they gripped the club together.

"Picture the ball right beneath your feet, then swing through with power..."

Jules was practically pressed against Alana. Looking down, she saw her high ponytail and her delicate, rounded earlobes.

Her profile was fair and exquisitely sculpted.

Her slender neck, with strands of hair softly twining around it, appeared all the more fair and alluring.

So close she could almost smell the faint fragrance emanating from her.

Oh dear, she felt like taking another bite.

Such a sweet, soft girl, who wouldn't adore her? Who wouldn't want to kiss her?!

Alana remained utterly oblivious to the burning intensity in Jules' eyes.

She simply treated it as a task, approaching it with earnestness.

She turned her face away, asking earnestly.

"Is that so?"

Jules snapped back to attention. "Ahem, yes."

"Now, let's swing together. Follow my rhythm, starting light, then building in intensity..."

Stephan's dark eyes involuntarily lingered on their overlapping hands and the uncomfortably close proximity.

His brow furrowed, a faint unease and irritation lingering in his chest, refusing to dissipate. It was only intensifying.

The two of them...

How much longer must they continue this charade?

It's merely a swing technique, is it truly necessary to instruct them at such length?

And even going so far as to teach them personally, step by step?

Jules hadn't failed to notice the piercing glare fixed upon her from behind.

But she couldn't care less. After all, he hadn't lifted a finger.

If he didn't make a move, she wouldn't be blamed for doing so.

Even heroes couldn't resist a beautiful woman~

After practising with Jules for a while, Alana found herself sweating profusely from the exertion.

After all, this was an intensely focused sport that tested one's patience.

She fancied a trip to the loo, and might as well splash her face to clear her head.

Jules pointed her in the direction of the washroom.

Alana had barely set off for the lavatory.

Stephan, who had been sitting motionless, suddenly rose to his feet.

After using the facilities, Alana emerged to splash water on her face.

Her cheeks, flushed pink from the heat, felt much more comfortable after a splash of cool water. She took a tissue, carefully patted the moisture from her face, tossed it into the bin, and then turned to leave.

The moment she stepped out, she collided with a man emerging from the men's lavatory.

Alana's heart skipped a beat. Without sparing the man a second glance, she hurried away. But before she could get far, he seized her wrist, and the world spun.

There she was, pinned against the cold wall by the man, who pressed himself forcefully against her.

She lifted her gaze and met the man's pitch-black pupils, deep and terrifying.

"You... let go of me..."

She couldn't help but struggle.

Her free hand instinctively pressed against his chest, slapping him in a mix of shame and anger.

Stephan lowered his gaze, fixed upon her. To him, her struggles felt like nothing more than a tickle, utterly without force.

"Why did you ignore me? Why did you say you didn't know me?"

Alana glared at him, clenching her teeth. "Why should I acknowledge you? We're not even close."

Stephan lowered his head, his scorching breath brushing against her delicate cheek.

"Kissing and sleeping together. doesn't that count as being close? Then what, in your eyes, constitutes being close?"

Alana's flushed crimson.

Stephan's gaze lingered on her flushed cheeks.

Freshly washed, her fair skin glowed with a faint sheen of moisture.

Her lashes were damp, her eyes clear and luminous, utterly captivating.

For a moment, he truly wanted to kiss her right then and there.

But he forced himself to restrain.

Lowering his gaze, he asked earnestly,

"Just now, when you told Jules you didn't have a boyfriend, was that true?"

Alana, still fuming, replied without hesitation.

"No, it wasn't."

Stephan's large hand, clasping her slender wrist, tightened abruptly.

Alana felt a sharp twinge of pain and couldn't help but say, "Let go."

"I don't want anyone to discover we know each other."

Stephan frowned. "Why?"

Alana bit her lip. He was asking that knowing full well.

Who in their right mind would want their fling exposed?

Her voice softened. "Let go of me first, then we can talk."

People could come by any moment, and she certainly didn't want anyone to see them in such an intimate tangle.

Stephan murmured, "What if I don't want to let go?"

The more she tried to distance herself, the less inclined he was to grant her wish.

He'd always been rebellious.

Alana couldn't help but glare at him, her almond-shaped eyes bright and clear.

"You... you're going too far..."

"What if I am?"

"You..." Alana was fuming, tempted to bite him.

She'd never encountered such an insufferable man!

"Stephan, show some restraint!" She addressed him by name once more.

Last time, he recalled, it had been in the car when he'd kissed her against her will and she'd been furious.

This moment mirrored that one perfectly.

Like a little wildcat with its fur standing on end.

She was telling him to behave himself?

He was always reserved and restrained, how could he not know the meaning of self-restraint? Yet whenever he encountered her, his self-restraint seemed to flee of its own accord, never to return.

Stephan lowered his gaze to meet hers. The girl stared back with her beautiful, moist eyes, their clarity tinged with a hint of vexation.

Though clearly vexed, the expression on her face, part pout, part scowl, didn't seem like anger at all. Rather, it resembled a childish tantrum.

The sound that escaped her lips was soft and sweet, utterly devoid of any threat. It only... made a man want to press his advantage.

Suddenly, his throat tightened, and he yearned to kiss her.

"Alana, break up with that boyfriend of yours and come to me, I..."

Before he could finish, footsteps approached.

Several uniformed staff members were approaching.

Taking advantage of the man's momentary daze, Alana swiftly pushed him away and took off running.

Stephan hadn't even registered what was happening when the girl in his arms slipped away. And she was running like the devil was after her.

He clenched his jaw in frustration.

He refused to believe she could run forever.

No sooner had Alana returned than

Stephan followed close behind.

And after Alana returned, she dared not even glance in Stephan's direction.

Stephan's gaze, however, grew increasingly unabashed.

Jules sensed the subtle tension between them but chose not to dwell on it.

She smiled and invited Alana to play golf together.

Having just instructed Alana, it was now time to see the results.

Vera, observing Jules' interaction with Lin Yuan from the sidelines, seethed with jealousy.

Seeing the pair preparing to play golf together, she couldn't resist approaching them. "Miss Jules, might I join you both for a round?"

Jules arched an eyebrow. "Do you play golf?"

"No, I don't."

Vera gazed at Jules with earnest eyes, hoping she would teach her golf just as he had taught Alana.

"Can you teach me?"

"Ah, I'm afraid I don't have the time. You'd best ask your friend to teach you, he's far better at it than I am." With that, Jules pointed towards Stephan, hoping to offload Vera's troubles onto him.

Vera turned to Stephan, unable to suppress a blush.

She had recognised him long ago, as the man in the private room that night.

He was the one who'd taken Alana away.

Yet just now, Alana hadn't interacted with him at all.

She couldn't fathom what sort of relationship Alana had with him.

But regardless, it couldn't stop her heart from fluttering at the thought of him.

She approached the man and asked in a sweet, coquettish tone, "Mr Hudson, would you be so kind as to teach me golf?"

Stephan glanced up at Alana, his brow furrowing at her utterly indifferent demeanor. Seeing him approached by another woman, she seemed utterly unmoved.

Did she truly care so little for him?

His tone grew colder. "If you wish to learn, find yourself a coach."

Vera's face fell.

To be refused so bluntly.

This man was showing her no respect whatsoever.

Noticing Jules and Alana had already headed to the court, Stephan lifted his stride to follow.

He showed no inclination whatsoever to linger alone with Vera.

Vera stamped her foot in frustration, unable to resist, and thick-skinnedly followed after them.

Jules and Alana arrived at the tee box.

Upon reaching the tee box, Jules began explaining the rules of golf to Alana.

As Alana was a beginner, they positioned themselves on the white tees.

The white tees were suitable for amateur players, making them ideal for a beginner like Alana.

Professional players, however, opted for the black tees.

Alana grasped only bits and pieces, but from what Jules said, it seemed success meant getting the ball onto the green and then into the hole.

Moreover, the fewer strokes taken to hole the ball, the better.

The ultimate achievement, naturally, was a hole-in-one.

However, not everyone can achieve a hole-in-one.

Even for professional players, the probability of achieving it was minuscule.

Jules demonstrated for Alana.

A hole-in-four.

Though not a professional player, achieving a hole-in-one in four strokes was already quite impressive.

Alana tried several times without success, inevitably feeling a bit disheartened.

Missing the target direction was one thing, but sometimes she couldn't even make contact with the ball.

It seemed this elegant, aristocratic sport simply wasn't for her.

"Clumsy!"

"Your grip on the club is all wrong."

A deep, magnetic voice sounded from behind her.

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

Before Alana could react, her hands gripping the club were enveloped by a large, firm grasp. Instantly, a warm, solid male body pressed against her back, enveloping her entirely.

The familiar masculine scent reached her, causing her heart to tighten.

Before she could utter a word, his other hand seized hers.

Both hands clasped hers tightly.

Her breath caught again.

The man seemed to lean close to her ear, his voice low and husky. "Don't be nervous."

"Relax a little."

"Aim in the direction..."

As if bewitched by his voice, Alana found herself unconsciously following his instructions.

Finally, they swung their clubs together.

Thwack.

As the club struck the ball, it soared high into the air, tracing a perfect arc before landing precisely on the green and dropping into the hole.

Alana couldn't help but gasp in excitement. "A hole-in-one!"

She'd actually witnessed a hole-in-one!

After the initial thrill, she seemed to realise something. Turning her head, she caught sight of Stephan's coldly handsome face.

At that moment, he enveloped her in a protective embrace, shielding her petite frame completely.

His presence, his very breath, was so intense it demanded attention.

Most crucially, their hands remained tightly clasped together.

Alana's face flushed crimson instantly.

She opened her mouth to speak.

As if sensing her intention, he instantly released her, stepping to stand beside her with his hands casually tucked into his pockets.

His voice was neither loud nor soft. "Serve in that position just now. Understood?"

It seemed as though what had just transpired was merely a routine coaching session.

Alana had been about to accuse him of being frivolous, but upon hearing his deadpan tone, she swallowed her words.

Jules' sarcastic tone cut through the air. "Impressive. Teaching a novice to swing and then holing it in one shot. It's a shame you're not a professional athlete."

Stephan remained composed. "Pure luck."

To Jules, however, it was pure pretence.

Hardly anyone was watching him, what was there to put on airs for?

Vera followed over and saw the man who had just refused to teach her now instructing Alana on her swing. The jealousy welling up inside her was palpable.

She couldn't fathom why everyone seemed to gravitate towards Alana.

What charm did she possess?

To her, Alana was nothing but a vulgar vixen, utterly distasteful, how could she compare to Vera's own refined elegance?

Alana tried the method Stephan had just taught her, swinging the ball several times.

Sure enough, she made noticeable progress.

It had to be said, that man, though thoroughly unpleasant, was rather skilled in certain areas. Recalling how he'd pressed close behind her back and those little gestures he'd made, a flushed

warmth crept over her.

Her peripheral vision couldn't help but glance at the man standing not far away.

He stood lazily, his gaze fixed straight ahead.

His features were cool and sharp, his bone structure impeccable, strikingly handsome.

Noticing her gaze, he glanced over, his pupils as dark as ink.

Alana felt inexplicably uneasy and quickly averted her gaze to avoid the danger of meeting his eyes.

After playing several more rounds, both Jules and Alana were feeling rather tired.

Jules as prone to perspiring heavily; his shirt was now soaked through, damp enough to wring out.

"Right, I'm done. Off for a shower."

Noticing Alana was equally drenched in sweat, she suddenly had an idea.

She promptly hooked her arm around her shoulder, batting her eyelashes. "Come on,

accompany me to the showers."

Truly, she was a sweet, soft little beauty, even her sweat carried a heady fragrance,

intoxicatingly sweet.

If only they could bathe together, the scene would be utterly intoxicating.

Alana froze, unable to respond.

A deep, displeased voice cut through the air.

"Jules!"

Jules looked up to meet Stephan's dark, displeased eyes, and couldn't help but let out a soft sigh.

Right then, the possessive chap was jealous again.

Getting jealous over a woman? That's quite something.

Jules released Alana's shoulder. "Just teasing you. I'm off for a shower. Wait here for me." Alana hummed in acknowledgement.

No sooner had Jules left, Stephan had already drawn near without her noticing.

Alana instinctively tried to pull away.

The man suddenly spoke up, "Don't get too close to her. She's a lesbian."

A bewildered gaze turned towards Stephan, as if asking, 'Who's gay?'

Stephan shot her a glance. "Jules. She's gay."

Alana shot Stephan an even more bewildered look. "Why are you telling me this?"

Stephan frowned. "Didn't you notice she likes you?!"

Stephan observed Alana's expression of disbelief, slowly drawing closer to her.

Clenching his jaw, he warned, "Be careful. Don't let her lure you into bed. You'll regret it when it's too late! In fact don't let any other person, man or woman seduce you."

Alana bit her lip, unable to resist glaring at the man.

What utter nonsense was this man spouting!

Jules seemed perfectly decent.

She gritted her teeth. "If anyone's going to seduce me, it'll be you! Not her!"

Stephan's eyes darkened, his gaze now unashamedly hungry for her.

"I do indeed wish to seduce you. Will you let me?"

Alana's eyes widened in shock at the man's audacity.

How could he... utter such words with such unearthly grace?!

“No.”

“One seduction, and the thirty thousand you owe me is settled.”

Alana, flushed with anger and shame, retorted, "I told you, I'm not that sort of woman!"

Stephan stared at her, his gaze suddenly turning earnest.

"Then be my girlfriend."

Alana stared at him in utter shock.

Asking her to be his girlfriend?

Was he serious?

This was likely a ploy to get her into bed, wasn't it? Therefore, she replied without hesitation, "I refuse."

Stephan was close to bursting.

Don't be fooled by his outwardly calm demeanour.

But inside, a storm was brewing.

For this was the first time he'd ever confessed his feelings to a girl, asking her to be his girlfriend.

As the words left his lips, he felt an unexpected pang of trepidation.

He feared she might refuse.

But then he recalled that he'd never been turned down by a woman before.

Therefore, this time should be no exception.

Yet to his utter astonishment, she actually turned him down.

For the first time, the man who had always been invincible, who could effortlessly achieve anything he set his mind to, experienced a sensation called defeat.

His brow furrowed. "Why did you reject me?"

Alana took a deep breath and replied diplomatically, "I have a boyfriend."

Stephan scoffed. "That boyfriend of yours is irresponsible. Break up with him."

"Break up with him and come to you? I don't even know you that much."

"We can get to know each other."

Alana glared at him. How could he be so stubborn?!

She cut straight to the chase. "I don't like you!"

Stephan stared at her, his gaze intense. "In bed, you didn't say that."

Alana felt her cheeks flush involuntarily.

Suddenly, she recalled that night in his house, when he'd pinned her down on his large grey bed. He'd nibbled her earlobe, his voice low and husky, utterly sensual, talking dirty to her, while her slender fingers dug deep into his hair roots, and with a hint of a sob, she had begged for more, feeling such overwhelming pleasure.

The past was too embarrassing to recall.

Alana's face was flushed crimson.

Her shame was overwhelming.

"You made me say all those things to you!"

The man retorted in a low voice, "Didn't you enjoy it then?"

Alana's face was crimson as blood, "Please, don't say any more..."

"I can't. So will you consider becoming my girlfriend?"

"No."

Spotting Jules emerge, Alana promptly abandoned Stephan and dashed over without pause.

Stephan watched Alana abandon him and dash to Jules' side, grinding his teeth inwardly. This ungrateful little thing was proving a tough nut to crack.

But no matter how tough she was, he'd find a way to crack her.

The game concluded.

Alana seized the opportunity to invite Jules out for a meal.

The implication couldn't have been clearer: it was about discussing a business partnership. Jules raised an eyebrow, hesitated not a moment, and readily agreed.

The group headed straight to a nearby upmarket restaurant.

Stephan, being part of Jules' group, naturally accompanied them.

During the meal.

Dane and Vera were exceedingly attentive, showering Jules with compliments.

Alana, however, found herself utterly speechless.

After all, the two of them had monopolised all the compliments.

Jules had long grown accustomed to such flattery, finding it thoroughly insincere.

However, having made the pleasant acquaintance of Alana today, she felt quite content and didn't mind the flattery.

She looked at Alana and said, "Bring the contract over tomorrow. I'm staying at the HG Hotel."

It was clear she'd agreed to sign with their company.

Provided the contract was sound, the collaboration was as good as sealed.

Overcome with excitement, Dane immediately offered Jules several glasses of wine.

Vera also raised her glass several times.

Alana, fresh out of university, wasn't much of a drinker. Seeing Dane and Vera both offering toasts, it would have been awkward for her not to reciprocate.

So she poured herself half a glass and downed it.

Alana downed the half glass in one gulp. After swallowing it, her throat felt sour and dry, with a burning sensation.

Within seconds, her face flushed crimson.

A deep, full flush.

Her head felt a bit fuzzy too.

Yet she forced herself to hold it together, refusing to show any sign of intoxication.

Yet her crimson cheeks betrayed her entirely.

Stephan's gaze swept over Alana. Having remained silent until now, he set down his

chopsticks and finally spoke.

"Since we've had our chat, let's head home."

Jules, noticing Stephan's frequent glances towards Alana, gave a disapproving click of her tongue.

She spoke up, "Right then, we'll call it a day."

Dane and Vera, their purpose achieved, made no attempt to detain them, politely

offering farewells.

Jules and Stephan took their leave first.

Dane, Vera, and Alana remained behind.

Dane eyed Alana, his eyes crinkling with amusement. "Lana dear, you've been a real asset today. We've secured this contract largely thanks to your efforts."

"Once the contract's signed, you'll be well rewarded."

Alana felt a bit light-headed but forced herself to stay composed. "Thank you." "Since everyone else has left, I shall take my leave too. Manager, see you tomorrow."

With that, she turned and walked away.

Dane noticed Alana was slightly tipsy. Her rosy cheeks were utterly tempting.

He wasn't about to let her off the hook, quickly intercepting her. "Since we all came together, so we're all leaving together! I'll drive you home!"

Vera was no fool either; she saw straight through Dane's intentions towards Alana. Her eyes darted about as she chimed in,

"Exactly! Manager Dane has a car, let him drive us all back together!"

Alana evaded Dave's touch and coldly refused, "No need. I'll just take a cab back."

"Besides, you've all been drinking. Driving under the influence isn't advisable. You'd be better off arranging a designated driver."

With that, she walked straight out.

Dane hesitated to stop her, but then reconsidered. There was no rush; after all, securing this collaboration depended on Alana.

With that thought, he shifted his focus to Vera.

"Vera dear, why don't you come to the hotel with me tonight?"

Vera felt utterly sick to her stomach.

That old goat, unable to get his hooks into Alana, now wanted to spend the night with her as if she was some second choice. Was she some sort of revolting spare wheel?

Despite her revulsion, she leaned in coquettishly. "Mr Dane, I'll accompany you if you wish. But regarding the contract with the HG representative, you must let me replace Alana."

Dane, his mind clouded by lust, nodded eagerly. "Fine, fine, fine. Whatever you say."

After all, the HG representative might not insist on Alana personally presenting the contract for her signature.

Vera's lips curved into a smirk before she finally agreed to accompany Dane to the hotel.

In the end, whoever secured the contract would take the credit!

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

Alana stepped outside the restaurant. The night breeze cleared her head a little.

But she still felt dizzy.

Her head felt heavy and her legs weak.

Had she known the drink was so potent, she would have taken smaller sips.

Alana shook her head, pulled out her phone, and tried to book a cab.

Before she could complete the process, several men on motorbikes, sporting brightly colored hairstyles, roared past.

They then turned back, pulling up beside Alana and whistling incessantly at her.

“Oi, lovely, where are you headed?”

“Fancy a lift, sweetheart?”

Alana frowned. Seeing these men dressed in non-mainstream styles, looking rowdy and thuggish, she knew at a glance they were no good.

“No thanks, I’ve already hailed a cab.”

With that, she walked away, consciously distancing herself from the group.

The ruffians quickly hopped on their bikes to chase after her.

“A cab, eh? It’s rather unsafe for a lovely lady to take a cab at night. What if you encounter a pervert driver?”

“Come on then, come on! There’s plenty of us. We’ll make sure you get home safely.”

The thugs dismounted and surrounded Alana completely.

Wherever Alana tried to go, they blocked her path.

Seeing their hostile intent, Alana clutched her phone tightly, her lips trembling slightly.

“Don’t come any closer. I... I’m calling the police...”

She made a move to dial 110.

But a yellow-haired thug reached out and knocked the phone right out of her hand.

Her phone hit the ground, the screen shattering instantly.

The thugs closed in on her.

With her phone shattered, Alana lost her means of deterrence and was instantly overcome with panic.

Compounded by her current dazed state and unsteady gait, escape seemed impossible. Helplessness overwhelmed her.

Suddenly, a piercing car horn blared.

A blinding beam of light swept over them.

Several thugs were blinded by the glare.

"Who's there?"

"What's with the blinding light?!"

"Mind your own business!"

Amidst the thugs' curses, a cold, low-pitched voice cut through the air.

"Get lost!"

The group turned to look in the direction of the voice.

The man emerged slowly from the car, his movements deliberate and unhurried.

A sleek black shirt clung to his frame, accentuating his icy, aristocratic bearing.

A lit cigarette dangled between his fingers. After exhaling a faint smoke ring from his sensual, thin lips, his icy voice echoed once more.

“Get lost if you don’t have a death wish.”

The smoke veiled the man’s sharply chiselled features, yet failed to obscure the steely intensity in his dark, piercing eyes.

Dangerous and sharp.

Piercingly so.

The thugs instantly realised this man was not to be trifled with.

His attire and the innate aura emanating from his very being were not those of an ordinary man. Add to that an aura of authority that commanded respect without a word.

It was enough to make one's heart sink after prolonged exposure.

The thugs exchanged glances, spared Alana, and scrambled back onto their motorbike to make their escape.

Alana's taut nerves finally relaxed a little.

But her body had been held taut for too long; as the tension eased, her legs buckled involuntarily.

Just as she was about to collapse to the ground, an arm wrapped around her waist in the nick of time.

Pulling her into a solid, sturdy embrace.

She caught a whiff of that familiar, potent masculine scent.

Alana's hands instinctively clung to the man's powerful arms, her lips trembling slightly. "Thank you..."

She was too flustered to even meet his gaze.

Perhaps he was mocking her weakness.

Stephan lowered his gaze, observing the girl's face, slightly pale with fright, her eyes

brimming with tearful glints. She appeared utterly shaken and pitifully vulnerable. His heart suddenly tightened.

He couldn't help but gently pat her back, soothing her.

"There, there. Don't be afraid. I'm here."

The bad man has run away."

The man's gentle reassurance made Alana's nose sting with unspeakable sorrow.

It felt as though it had been ages since she'd last experienced such tender care.

Perhaps captivated by this sensation of being cherished, she instinctively buried her face in his chest.

Stephan lowered his gaze, watching the girl nestled against his chest, a flutter stirring in his heart.

He couldn't resist pinching out the cigarette butt between his fingers, flicking it lightly into the nearby bin.

Then, bending down, he kissed the girl's head tenderly.

Only then did he lift her into his arms and walk slowly towards his car.

Alana remained immersed in the lingering fear of the danger she'd just faced, so when the man lifted her, she offered little resistance.

She merely clung tightly to the hem of his coat, clutching him like a lifeline,

drawing warmth from his body.

He carried her to the front passenger seat and buckled her in with a deft motion.

Then, he moved to close the door, intending to drive away with her.

Alana suddenly snapped out of her daze and seized one of his hands.

“My... my phone...”

Stephan lowered his gaze to see her pale, delicate fingers clutching his wrist tightly.

The touch was soft.

“It’s broken. You don’t need it anymore.”

Alana lifted her damp eyes and insisted stubbornly, "I need it... I can still have it re...”

Stephan pressed his thin lips together, then raised a hand to ruffle her hair, as if to soothe her.

"Very well. I'll retrieve it for you."

Only then did Alana release Stephan's hand.

Stephan slammed the car door shut, walked back, and tossed Alana to the ground before picking up the phone with its shattered screen.

Glancing at the phone, it looked ancient. probably only worth a few hundred dollars.

The screen was shattered, who knows if it'd even work. Stephan felt a bit put off, but he took it back anyway.

Sitting in the driver's seat, he handed the phone to Alana. Alana accepted it and offered another thank you.

She tried pressing the power button.

The screen lit up.

It seemed the phone itself wasn't damaged, only the screen was shattered. Once back, she could have the screen replaced and continue using it.

Alana slipped the phone into her pocket.

By now, her nerves had settled considerably, and she felt less frightened.

Perhaps it was because this man was by her side.

Somehow, she felt a little more secure.

Biting her lip, she glanced at him out of the corner of her eye. "Just now... weren't you leaving with Jules? How come you're still here..."

Stephan's tone was cool. "I left something in the restaurant. Came back to fetch it."

Little did she know, the "something" he referred to were none other than her.

Alana, oblivious to the subtext, nodded and murmured, "Oh," before adding, "Thank you for earlier."

Had he not appeared in time, who knows what state those ruffians would have left her in.

She was feeling rather tipsy again, her body limp and weak, certainly no match for so many men.

She was profoundly grateful that Stephan had appeared to save her.

His thin lips twitched. "I don't want your thanks."

Alana bit her lip and asked, "What do you want then?"

His turned his gaze back to her, his eyes fixed on her with intense focus. "I want to kiss you."

The moment she had buried her face in his chest, looking pitiful and utterly endearing, he had wanted to kiss her.

He'd wanted to kiss her until the world spun.

But in the end, he'd restrained himself, kissing her forehead instead.

Now she asked him what he wanted.

Naturally, he laid bare his heart without reservation.

Alana's cheeks flushed. "You..."

Noting her reaction, Stephan averted his gaze and said with restrained composure,

"If you don't want to, then don't. I won't force you."

Were it not for her recent fright, he would have kissed her until she was breathless.

Alana held her breath, her face flushing crimson.

Finally, she managed to utter,

"You saved me this time, so that should cover the two hundred dollars I owe you in compensation."

Stephan sighed.

The little minx was still harbouring thoughts about those two hundred dollars?

He'd assumed her request to have it transferred back was merely a jest.

After all, it was only two hundred dollars , he didn't even think it was worth mentioning.

Stephan's glanced at her. The girl's flushed cheeks, her soft and adorable expression, were utterly irresistible.

"So if I transfer two hundred dollars to you, you'll give me a kiss?"

Alana didn't even hesitate. "No way."

Stephan snorted with amusement. He knew it.

He said nothing, pressing the accelerator and driving away.

Seeing the car start moving, Alana felt an inexplicable surge of nervousness.

"Where are you taking me?"

"My place."

Her breath caught.

Had she just escaped the snake pit only to leap into the wolf's den?

Her voice trembled as she demanded, "Let me out!"

"I'm getting out!"

Stephan couldn't help but chuckle at her flustered reaction. "Just teasing you. We're going to your place."

Alana exhaled in relief at his words.

Stephan shot her a sidelong glance. "Is that really how you see me? As some uncouth bloke?"

Alana pouted. "Yes."

"Not only are you uncouth, but you're downright terrifying, you'd force a kiss on someone." She considered herself being quite polite, at least she hadn't called him a filthy rogue outright.

Stephan's gritted his teeth inwardly, feeling utterly chagrin-filled.

Why couldn't this woman utter a single kind word?

After all, he had just saved her.

Yet she wouldn't even offer him a single kind word.

He escorted the girl to the entrance of her residential compound.

Stephan, seeing her motionless for some time, turned his head, intending to say they'd arrived.

But what he saw was Alana already lying asleep in the front passenger seat. Her face was turned slightly towards him as she slept.

Her eyes were tightly shut, lashes fluttering occasionally.

Her sleepy expression was sweetly innocent, her breath shallow.

Her cheeks were still rosy, looking utterly adorable. Had she simply drifted off so peacefully in his car?

Was she not afraid that he might...

Take advantage of her while she slept?

After all, he wasn't exactly a man of integrity...

Stephan stared at Alana's sleeping face, his gaze darkening considerably.

He wanted to kiss her, but he wasn't quite that beastly to take advantage of her vulnerability. If he were to kiss her, it would be when she was fully conscious.

He wanted to wake her, yet found himself strangely reluctant to do so.

It was rare for her to be so docile and quiet by his side, and he privately wished to prolong this moment.

Truth be told, he found his own feelings rather baffling.

Was his preoccupation with Alana merely a simple craving for her body, or was there something else.

But whatever it was, his desire for her body was undeniably real.

He had always been a man of few desires, with little need for women.

At times, he even found women troublesome, less important than his work.

In his high position, women threw themselves at him in droves.

Countless women had been sent directly to his bed by business associates.

Yet he felt not the slightest inclination towards them.

He found them utterly insincere, drawn only by his wealth and influence, with few genuine in their affections.

But since meeting Alana, she shattered some of his preconceptions about women.

His involvement with Alana, likely fuelled by his own intoxication that night, had clouded his judgement, leading to an indiscretion he'd never otherwise permitted.

Afterwards, she vanished without a trace. She didn't discuss any arrangements with him, nor did she demand he take responsibility.

Even when they met again, she merely stated she wished to treat that night as though it had never happened, wanting nothing more to do with him, a clean break.

He assumed it was merely a ploy to play hard to get.

But over time, he realised she wasn't what he'd initially thought.

She genuinely seemed repelled by him, unwilling to draw near.

Even when he asked her to be his girlfriend, she remained unmoved and flatly refused him. He admitted that her uniqueness had somewhat captivated him.

He wanted to possess her, to make her his own.

Even though she already had a boyfriend.