# The Offer

## Chapter 6

Alan dropped heavily onto the worn-out couch beside Madison, the frayed fabric scratching faintly against his pants. The apartment was drowning in a thick, muffled silence, broken only by the distant tick of a wall clock and the low hum of the fridge in the kitchenette.

He turned toward her, his face a mix of exhaustion and worry, and tried one last time to talk sense into her, his voice low, as if he were afraid of waking something bigger than both of them.



“Madi, come on… She might say no, you know? We already brushed her off once, and she got the message. Why the hell would she agree to see us again just for… for that?”

Madison shook her head without even glancing at him, eyes locked on her phone, gripping it like a lifeline.

“It’s worth a try. She’s obsessed with us, you saw it, right? If she says no, whatever, we move on. But imagine if she says yes.”

He exhaled, dragging a hand through his messy hair.

“She’s nuts, Madi. Completely out of her mind. If she agrees, you know damn well she’ll want more than a kiss. She’ll push, she’ll climb all over the line, and we’ll be stuck in her crazy again.”

She finally turned toward him, a sharp, stubborn gleam in her eyes, her voice cracking like a whip.

“Then we negotiate. Less than last time. Just a kiss. That’s it. We set the limits, end of story.”

Alan hesitated, gaze drifting away for a second, then he let out, voice tight:

“That first kiss didn’t bother you? I mean… it was weird as hell, wasn’t it?”

Madison rolled her eyes, lips twisting into an annoyed smile.

“Stop acting like a kid… It was nothing. Just bullshit for some cash. That’s all.”



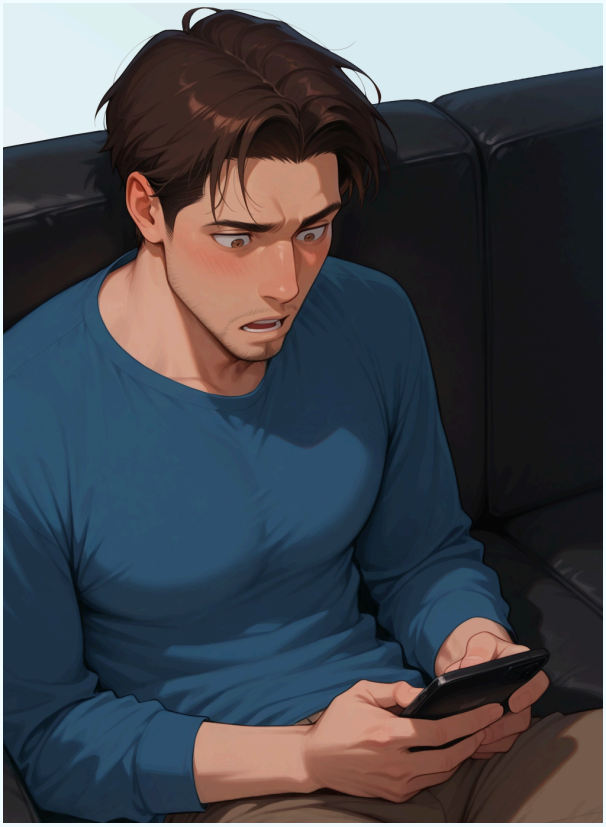
He felt a flicker of disappointment—how little it had meant to her, while he…

He shoved the thought away, shoulders slumping as resignation sank in.

“Fine. Okay. I’ll message her.”

Madison stared at him, her eyes locked onto his like she was waiting for something more solid, an immediate commitment. Alan caught on instantly, a faint, ironic smile forming.

“Alright, alright… I’m messaging her now.”



He pulled out his phone, typed quickly, fingers hesitating, and sent it off with a soft swoosh: “Hey Rebecah, wanna meet up again with me and Madi?”

He slipped the phone back into his pocket and stood, ready to head home and leave this madness for the night.

But the phone vibrated almost instantly—like she’d been sitting there, waiting.

He froze, pulled it out, frowned, and read aloud, surprised:

“‘Hi Alan! Of course, I’d love to! I’ve been thinking about you two all week, you’re so cute together. I’m free whenever, just tell me! 😘’”

Madison straightened up, victory flashing in her eyes despite how tired she looked.

“Ask her for Saturday afternoon. I mean… unless you’re busy. You’re free, right?”

Alan nodded, typed out a quick answer—“Saturday afternoon good for you?”—and sent it.

The reply came in under a minute:

“‘Perfect! We could go wander around town, grab a coffee? Nothing crazy, just to talk a bit. How does that sound? Kisses!’”

It looked innocent on the surface—just a friendly little outing—but they weren’t idiots. They knew it wasn’t innocent at all. Under that bubbly tone, something darker, hungrier, was lurking.

Still, Alan accepted anyway, typing a flat “Ok, see you Saturday” before pocketing his phone for good.

Before leaving, he turned to her one last time. Madison was already gone somewhere in her mind, staring at a blank spot on the wall as if she could see through it.

He hesitated, then spoke quietly:

“You know she’s gonna say weird shit… and ask for even weirder things, right? There’s pretty much no chance this—”

“I KNOW,” she cut in, sharp but not angry—more like stressed, her voice rising as if the words burned on the way out.



She folded her arms, avoided his eyes, her whole body wired tight.

Alan just nodded, throat tight, and left without a goodbye, the door closing softly behind him.

—

The rest of the week vanished in a blur, a whirl of routines sped up by an undercurrent of dread, as if time itself were shoving them toward the inevitable. Alan and Madison kept crossing paths on campus, but something was unmistakably off—this tense pull between them, silences that stretched just a bit too long, glances that slipped away before they could meet.

During a quick lunch with the group on Wednesday, in the packed cafeteria where the smell of greasy fries blended with the constant clatter of trays, Bella narrowed her eyes as she looked back and forth between them.

“Okay, seriously, what’s going on with you two? You’re avoiding each other like you’ve got the plague. Is it about the job, Madi? Or the car?”

Madison forced a smile, poking distractedly at her mixed salad with a flimsy plastic fork.

“Yeah… a bit of both. It’s just… stressful, you know? I’m hunting for work between classes and the car situation…”



She let the sentence drift, and Alan picked it up, his voice neutral as he chewed on a tuna sandwich.

“The garage called yesterday. Final verdict: the frame’s fucked. Fixing it would cost more than the car’s worth. It’s dead. Straight to the junkyard.”

Sean nodded with a sympathetic wince as he drowned his nuggets in ketchup.

“Damn, rough. But hey, at least you weren’t hurt. And about the job, Madi—my uncle said he could get you an internship at his bank. Not glamorous, but it pays.”

Larry, slouched in his chair, drowning in his oversized hoodie, added with a mouth full of burger:

“Yeah, and until you’re back on your feet, we can drive you around. My car’s free. Smells like old cigarettes, though.”

They all laughed—forced, fragile—using jokes to wallpaper over the tension, convinced the weird vibe between Alan and Madison was just the fallout of normal student-life

disasters: the lost job, the car twisted into a wreck on a garage lot, the bills hanging over them like ghosts.

No one dug deeper; why would they? College life was made of these small implosions, these weeks where everything collapsed only to somehow bounce back later. But Alan felt the weight of their secret constantly, that upcoming meeting with Rebecah prowling around his mind like a shadow he couldn't shake. He avoided Madison's eyes whenever they were all together, burying himself in engineering labs—hours spent calculating stress loads and bending moments, equations that at least had clear answers, unlike… this.

Thursday night, after a late class on structural systems that left him with a pounding headache, Alan dragged himself back into his cramped apartment and flicked on a rerun of some football match without paying attention to it. He scrolled on his phone, ignoring the group chat where Bella spammed stupid memes to lighten the mood.



Madison, on her side, spent the evening alone at her place, surrounded by stacks of printed résumés and job websites open on her laptop. She fired off a few applications, throwing anxious glances at her shrinking bank balance, evaporating like ice under a blowtorch despite Rebecah's money. Stress ate at her, a knot in her stomach that never loosened, and she caught herself counting down the days until Saturday, as if that absurd outing could magically fix everything.

And then Saturday arrived—like turning a page too fast, before you were ready.

—

Alan woke with a start, sunlight already beating through the half-closed curtains of his tiny apartment, turning the room into a steaming sauna. He groaned and checked his phone: almost noon. Shit.

He trudged toward the bathroom, the floorboards creaking under his heavy footsteps, trying—and failing—to push the meeting with Rebecah out of his mind. No chance. It looped endlessly, like a bad song you can't switch off, a mix of dread and some twisted curiosity gnawing at him.

Madison had called earlier, her voice sleepy but firm on the phone:

"Don't forget to pick me up, okay? Around two. I'll wait downstairs."

He had muttered a distracted "Yeah, yeah," but now, alone with his thoughts, the weight of it all crashed down on him like a suffocating blanket.

He poured himself coffee into a chipped mug, the black, scalding liquid steaming in the stagnant air of the apartment. Sitting on a wobbly stool, he took a sip and thought:



Fuck... At first I really believed Beca was sincere—that big smile, those shared laughs, all that sweetness.

But now he knew better. Her mind was a mess.

A twisted obsession, a game for her.

And for them?

A trap slowly snapping shut.

He wondered what she would say, do, or ask this time. A simple walk and coffee, she'd said, but he wasn't buying it—nothing about her was ever innocent.

Then his mind drifted, pulled along by some invisible current.

He imagined her bringing up that threesome idea again, with that half-joking, half-dead-serious tone that had already made his skin crawl.

He let out a shaky laugh into the empty room—ridiculous, right?

But the picture stuck.

Beca—who was far from ugly, hell, the opposite—with those perfect curves and that look that promised everything.

And then Madison…

Jesus. That part was way too fucked up.

He tried not to think about it, tried to shut the door on it, but the images forced their way in anyway, hot and intrusive:

Rebecah and Madison kissing, mouths open, tongues tangled in something far too intimate;

both of them kissing him, their warm mouths sliding over his skin;

both of them stripping slowly, clothes falling in soft, silky whispers…



He choked mid-sip and spat some of his coffee onto the floor, the drops splattering across the worn-out linoleum.

“Fuck—what the hell is wrong with me?” he barked, disgusted with himself.

He was spiraling, and he knew it.

“You sick fuck.” he muttered to himself as if insulting himself would snap him back to reality.

He crouched down to wipe the spill, throat tight, wiping angrily at the mess while his heart hammered too fast, betraying him.

—

Early afternoon, Alan honked from the curb at the base of Madison’s building. She appeared almost immediately in the doorway, hurrying down the stairs with her coat thrown over her shoulders like an improvised cape. She climbed into the car—a beat-up little sedan he’d borrowed from a friend since the Ford was out of commission—slamming the door shut with a dull thud.

“Hey,” she muttered as she buckled her seatbelt, avoiding his gaze for a second.

“Hey,” he answered, fingers tight around the steering wheel.

Their eyes met—just a heartbeat, stretched-out, heavy—and then they both exhaled at the same time, a nervous, clumsy laugh slipping out like a confession. They had no idea what they were walking into with her, but they knew damn well it wouldn’t be a casual hangout. Not a harmless coffee. Not small talk.

With Rebecah, everything twisted sideways.

Alan started the engine; it coughed, then settled into a low purr. His voice came out flat:

“I’ve got a bad feeling about this, Madi…”

She let out a tiny laugh, the kind you force to clear the air in a cramped car.

“It’s fine. We just have to spend an afternoon with a crazy girl who’s gonna pay for everything…”

But Alan didn’t laugh; his jaw tightened, a look that clearly said don’t bullshit me. He kept his eyes on the road, lips pressed together.

Madison sighed, folding her arms over her chest.

“It’s fine… If it gets too weird, we bail, okay? We take the kiss, nothing more… I really need the money, Alan, I’m serious.”

He shrugged, giving her a short nod that basically meant whatever you want.

Silence dropped again, thick, as they drove toward the meeting spot, campus streets giving way to downtown—shop windows lit up under a dull sky.

—

They drove the rest of the way in silence, the city spreading around them with its busy sidewalks, glossy storefronts and crowded cafés under an unusually bright sky. Alan parked in a lot beside the shopping mall—a big, modern place with gleaming glass facades and flashing neon signs blinking like silent invitations.

They got out, the cool air slapping their faces, and stood at the main entrance, leaning against a concrete pillar, scanning the crowd: families juggling shopping bags, groups of teens laughing too loud, couples walking hand in hand.



They waited. Still no sign of Rebecah.

Alan checked his watch every few seconds while Madison crossed her arms, trying way too hard to look relaxed. Time stretched, thick and expectant…

Until a sleek black sedan rolled up across the street, the engine purring like a tamed predator. The back door opened, and Rebecah stepped out—glamorous and hot as hell in a tight dress hugging every curve, heels clicking on the pavement, a coat tossed over her shoulders like she owned the place.

People actually turned to stare as she walked past—one guy almost tripped over his own bag, a

woman eyed her with envy, a group of teens murmured behind her—she pulled attention the way other people breathed.

Then she spotted them across the street, and her whole face lit up—bright, joyful, unfiltered.

She crossed over with quick, graceful steps, slipping between cars like she was born for it, and reached them without a second of hesitation.

“Madison!” she exclaimed, opening her arms wide for a hug like they were long-lost friends.

Madison stiffened, startled, but let herself be pulled in, wrapped in Rebecah’s warm, heavy perfume that clung like a smoky veil.

Then Rebecah turned to Alan, her smile stretching even wider. She hugged him too—pressing her body against his with a boldness that hit him like a punch.



Her chest pressed tight against his torso, soft and firm all at once, and Alan froze for a moment, thrown off by the sudden closeness, by the heat of her body radiating through thin layers of fabric, by that short electric jolt that shot straight through him.

He pulled away gently, avoiding her eyes.

Bubbling with excitement, Rebecah stepped back and clapped her hands together like an overly thrilled teenager.

“So happy to see you guys again! Wanna start with some shopping? There are amazing stores here, and I spotted some insane sales on clothes. Nothing crazy, just a chill afternoon, yeah?”

She said it with the most innocent tone, a casual shrug, a playful wink—as if this were the most normal weekend outing in the world.

But Alan didn't buy it for a second. That bubbly tone hid something hungrier, something lying in wait beneath the surface.

He pretended, nodding with a forced smile, letting Madison take the lead while he kept a step behind, following them toward the entrance as the roar of conversations and background music swallowed them whole.

The afternoon was going to be long… stuck between two girls shopping.