

The Price of Lust

Alex's sparkling blue eyes looked pale gray in the dim light of the airport. The street light he was parked under cast a dark shadow over the windshield, leaving only the slim silhouette of a man visible from the outside. The radio hummed inaudibly in the background and Alex fiddled his thumbs against the steering wheel, waiting for his next customer. He fumbled around in the center console and pulled out a green, bent box of Newports. He tapped the box gently against his palm then pulled a slightly-bent cigarette out of the pack. Alex rolled down his window and lit the cigarette, delicately flicking it occasionally to ash it. The taste of warm mint filled his mouth and entered his lungs; as the smell of smoke filled the taxi with each exhale, it began to mask the familiar smell of old leather seats.

The airport never slept. Flights came in and out constantly and so did the people. An endless stream of cars looped through the Arrivals pick up. Carly walked out of the doors to gate 3, her rolling suitcase dragging behind her, jumping over bumps in the airport tiles and dropping with a thud onto the concrete outside. It was 2 in the morning and the airport lacked its usual breath of life, yet people still trickled through. Carly scanned the drive for a taxi and found only one sitting in the shadows of the night.

Alex saw someone approaching and threw his cigarette out of the window quickly. A small woman with long brown hair approached the taxi with a suitcase rolling behind her. She looked to be in her mid-twenties but the darkness made it hard to tell. He stepped out of the car and opened the door for her.

"Let me help you with your suitcase," Alex said sheepishly. He felt his heart skip a beat as the beautiful woman came closer to him.

"Thank you," Carly replied.

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Alex could smell her perfume lingering on her clothes as he got closer. Her lips were a cherry red that stuck out vibrantly among the dark shadows that cloaked her face. She made her way into the backseat of the yellow cab as Alex put her suitcase into the trunk and closed it.

“Where to?” Alex asked as he returned to the worn driver’s seat.

“Drake Hotel on Walton Place, please,” she responded. Alex could see the details of her face more clearly in the dim light of the backseat. She looked to be about 24. Her bright green eyes stood out against her pale skin and chocolate brown hair. He put the taxi in drive, and the airport vanished in the rearview mirror.

Carly sat in the back seat of the taxi which smelled like smoke and a pine scented car freshener. She was caught off guard by the appearance of her taxi driver. He had light blue eyes that contrasted delicately with his dark brown hair. He was wearing a red flannel that was cuffed above his elbows and black jeans that fit him tightly. *He can't be any older than 26* she thought to herself. Her brain finally processed all of the information that it had taken in during the last 5 minutes and she realized that she found him extremely attractive.

“What brings you to the city?” Alex asked his passenger, staring at her occasionally in the rear view mirror. He tried his best to look casual. Uninterested. Normal.

“Work,” she replied softly.

Silence filled the car that left Alex with an uncomfortable feeling in his stomach. Silence bothered him, and even more so when he had an attractive girl in the back of his cab. He needed to make conversation.

“What’s your name?” he asked her.

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She giggled quietly.

“Is that a question a taxi driver is supposed to ask his clients?”

Alex laughed in reply.

“Well, I’m Alex.”

“Carly.”

“It’s very nice to meet you, Carly.” Alex turned towards to her to give her a quick smile. She was captivated by its brilliance.

“I’m here on an assignment.” After a short silence, Carly decided to elaborate. “I don’t think I’m supposed to say this but, I’m here investigating that serial killer case.”

Alex’s eyes brightened with interest.

“The one they’re calling the Black Dahlia copycat?”

“Yeah. It’s one hell of a case. There’s virtually no evidence, just dismembered bodies”.

The killer was leaving the bodies of young, pretty females cut in half and strewn across the city. He left no DNA, no traces; all that was left at each crime scene were dead body parts and a white sheet of paper with the anarchy symbol scrawled across it.

“How long are you going to be here then?” Alex asked her.

“For however long murders keep happening here, I guess” she replied.

“Do you know anyone who lives here?” Alex was trying to think of the right things to say in order to make an impression without coming on too strong.

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“Not at all,” Carly chuckled a bit. She felt a little overwhelmed by being thrown into a big city alone. Being alone was not something that Carly was good at. She could already feel the impending anxiety surrounding her.

“Well don’t worry, you’ll make friends fast. How could anyone ignore a girl as beautiful as you?” Alex said.

A silence echoed throughout the car. Alex realized how creepy he must have sounded to her.

“Sorry, that must have sounded weird,” he mumbled to her.

She laughed.

“It’s fine. It probably isn’t as weird as saying I think my cab driver is pretty hot.”

Alex could feel his face slowly turning red. He eased on the brakes and put the car into park.

“Uhm, we’re here.” This was the part where his passenger would pay him, get out of the car, he’d give them their bags and they’d leave. He would never see them again and he would think nothing of it. But this time, he dreaded the thought of her leaving that worn-out back seat.

If it were any other time, or any other circumstance, Carly wouldn’t have asked what she was about to. She would have paid Alex, grabbed her bags and retreated to her hotel room. For some reason, tonight was different. Carly couldn’t shake the feeling of lust that was overwhelming her along with the inescapable loneliness that the big city was plaguing her with, even with the alarm sounding in the back of her mind. She decided to go against everything she was ever told or taught and all of her best judgment.

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“I usually don’t do this but considering I don’t know my way around the city at all, would you want to come to my room with me?” Carly asked sheepishly.

Alex was surprised by this offer.

“Of course,” he replied, desperately trying to hide his smile.

They walked into the hotel together holding hands, searching for room 584, floor 12.

Alex made his move as soon as Carly closed the door to her hotel room. He pinned her against the wall and kissed her hard. They worked their way over to the bed slowly taking off each other’s clothing. Alex’s wallet tumbled out of his pocket and onto the floor as he took off his pants.

Carly, standing in only her bra and underwear, leaned over and picked it up.

“Have anything interesting in there?” She smiled as she opened it.

All she found inside was \$20, a credit card, a drivers license and a white sheet of paper with the anarchy symbol scrawled across it.