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With that, Wesley had no choice but to usher Skylar inside. However, his face clouded over when he saw her pulling a suitcase, and so did her Aunt Sharon's.

"Uncle Wesley, Aunt Sharon, can I stay here for a few days? I'll move out immediately once I get a job."

Sharon pursed her lips in dissatisfaction. "What's gotten into you, Skylar? You've always been a sensible child. Can't you see our situation now?"

Meanwhile, Wesley held his tongue.

"I won't bother you for long. I only need three days."

"Your cousins barely have a room for themselves now," Sharon said. "You don't wanna interrupt in their studies now, do you?"

Before things got out of hand, Wesley had Sharon follow him inside the kitchen before closing the door.

Through the door came the muffled voice of a woman. "What are you doing? Haven't you heard? It's easier to invite the devil in than to send him away. Do you seriously believe that she's gonna leave in three days? Besides, why do we have to take her in? It's not like she doesn't have a father, or her mother is dead."

"Skylar is my niece, after all. My mom told me to look after her before she died. It's no big deal to take her in for a few days. If she doesn't want to leave by then, I'll kick her out," Wesley said.

"No, not even a day."

"Then what should I tell her?"

Skylar stood transfixed on the spot, then smiling dryly, she carried her suitcase and walked away.

Wesley had sworn to Meredith on her sickbed that he would look after Skylar like she was his own daughter and take her in to live with them.

Alas, that was easier said than done.

Within days of her death, Wesley's family of four had forcibly occupied the house.

Skylar could still remember how Sharon had presented the property ownership certificate before her a week after Meredith's death.

Only then did she know Meredith had given the house to Wesley.

No matter how much Meredith had loved her, she couldn't deny the fact that her grandmother had favored Wesley over her. After all, he was her son, and she was just a maternal granddaughter.

If only the house was under her name, she would have barged in confidently and moved in.

But this house belonged to her Uncle Wesley now, and it had nothing to do with her.

Skylar dragged her suitcase along the street, feeling cold inside despite the warm winter sunlight hitting on her skin.

She stopped by the road and sat on her suitcase. After that, she decided to give Linda a call, inquiring if they needed an extra so that she could earn a quick three hundred.

Yet, Linda immediately hung up.

Sighing, Skylar continued to walk along the streets aimlessly, asking around if any of the restaurants had any job vacancy, be it a menial position.

Unanimously, without exception, none of the restaurants were hiring.

Having been walking from dawn to dusk, Skylar was on the brink of losing hope. Yet something didn't feel right.

Why does everyone seem so eager to chase me away? It's not like I'm not willing to work for ten per hour.

Clinging on to one last hope, Skylar came to the final restaurant, with a man in suit brushing past her as soon as she entered.

"Are you hiring, sir? I'm really hard-working," Skylar said and went on to promote herself at the checkout counter.

"We can't recruit you, young lady," the restaurant owner said eventually, taking pity on her. "You've got guts, huh? Who knows who you've offended. No one on this street will hire you. We're all trying to make a living here."

Skylar suddenly remembered the man who brushed past her, thinking that he looked familiar.

I think I saw him standing next to Tobias when I went to look for him that day.

"I'm sorry, Miss, but our restaurants won't be able to survive if we were to hire you," the owner added, feeling sorry for Skylar.

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Why is this man so cruel?

Skylar had thought that Tobias had let her go when he dropped her off at her uncle's place.

It seemed that the man had figured out that her Uncle Wesley and Aunt Sharon wouldn't take her in, and she would eventually have to survive on the streets.

He could make her lose her job at any minute in this big city.

Just then, Skylar's phone rang. It was a message from an unknown number: 611 Green Avenue. No. 201, International Garden.

Jeremy had always dreamed of buying a villa at International Garden if he ever became a celebrity. Thus, Skylar didn't have to know the street name to find the place since he had brought her there more than once.

Skylar replied: You jerk! Are you trying to kill me?

Tapping away furiously on the keyboard, her eyes were blazing in rage.

Tobias replied: Why would I? Your life is not that worth it.

Not wanting to be involved with him anymore, Skylar simply left him hanging.

Meanwhile, Tobias was fidgeting with his phone when his assistant, Cameron, came knocking on the door.

"These are the places Ms. Jones had been to today, Mr. Ford."

Cameron had been tailing Skylar all day, and he couldn't make head or tail of it.

Wasting no time, Tobias took the map from Cameron and let out a chuckle.

This woman sure can walk. She knows what job is good enough for her and didn't return to Elysium despite being driven to a corner.

Tobias then walked over to the window, staring at the twinkling lights outside.

This woman must be starving. Well, I guess it proves that she's not a materialistic woman for working at the nightclub back then. Perhaps she really needed the money to save her boyfriend. Haha, such an idiot is really a rare specimen.

"Where is she?" he piped up.

"She's at a twenty-four-hour convenience store," Cameron said. "She's ordered an Oden and had been sitting inside for three hours. Should I continue to follow her?"

Tobias picked up his coat. "No."

Heading to his boss' orders, Cameron nodded and exited the office. Mr. Ford's wedding is approaching, so why is he asking me to tail another woman?

Cameron was reminded of Tobias' fiancée, Tanya Hanson, who had the beauty of a goddess and would easily make men fall head over heels for her.

Although Skylar wasn't too bad herself, she was far beneath Tanya in terms of maturity.

The bell to the convenience store's automatic door rang. Skylar was sitting at the table by the window, job hunting, while charging her phone.

"Stop searching. No one will dare to hire you," said a cold voice.

Skylar wasn't surprised as she had grown accustomed to Tobias' abrupt appearance, as though he had installed a tracker on her.

"All thanks to you for driving me to death," Skylar said placidly, her heart growing numb.

"Don't make it sound so serious." Tobias sat across from Skylar. "Sign this contract, and all your problems will be solved."

Skylar accepted the contract that smelled of freshly printed ink.

Partnership agreement. How tactful.

She skimmed through the contract, then glanced up at Tobias with fear and undisguised disgust in her eyes.

It was a servitude contract, in which it was clearly stated that all the employer's needs should be met.

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Of all the benefits that she could enjoy, what caught her attention the most was that the employer would pay for the employee's tuition and living expenses for four years of college.

A breach of contract would require the employee to compensate the employer with thirty million for emotional distress.

"If there's no problem with it, you can sign on the contract now," Tobias piped up and took out a pen.

Instead of signing, Skylar put down the contract. "What a psycho. Why do I have to sign this contract? I'd rather work as a garbage collector than sign this crap."

"I suppose no one would dare to recycle the garbage you've collected," Tobias said composedly, knowing that she would reject him.

And they said a woman's heart is vicious. Men can be as vicious as well once they set their minds on something.

Nonetheless, Tobias was not in a hurry for her to sign the contract. Thus, he leisurely got up to his feet and went over to the counter to get a coffee.

At the same time, Skylar thought about the contract long and hard.

She was aware of her situation now—penniless and homeless, like a stray.

If she were to disagree, given the man's stubbornness, she wouldn't know how she would be threatened by him again.

There was no escape this time.

Without much choice, Skylar picked up the pen and scribbled her signature on the contract.

She had thought that would be it. But to her surprise, Tobias picked up the contract and tore it to shreds in front of her eyes when he came back.

"I'll print a new one for you. Your handwriting is too ugly. You even got your name wrong."

Skylar's little game was ruthlessly exposed.

At this moment, Tobias' phone rang. "I gotta go," he said after answering the call.

"Is your fiancée checking in on you?" Skylar mocked. "Are you trying to make me a homewrecker?"

That seemed to take Tobias by surprise as he didn't expect Skylar to be so well-informed about Tanya.

"It's a little complicated, but you're not a homewrecker as long as I'm still single," Tobias said.

How she wished for Tanya to discover her sooner so that she could end things with him.

No sooner had Tobias left than she was picked up by someone to a luxurious villa at International Garden.

The villa was lavishly renovated, which was pretty much expected since it was located at International Garden.

"Nice to meet you, Ms. Jones," a female housekeeper greeted, then ushered her to the second floor. "This will be your room from now on, Ms. Jones. Just call me anytime if you need anything."

As compared to being homeless, Skylar was grateful enough to have a roof above her head.

She opened her suitcase that contained only a few seasonal clothes and toiletries.

This was all she had. She simply tidied up a little and hung the clothes in the closet.

Skylar heaved a sigh of relief when she saw the empty closet, reckoning that Tobias probably wouldn't be living with her.

Feeling lonely and desolated, she switched on the TV to have the sound accompanying her.

Since Meredith had passed away, she would usually switch on the TV when she was alone. Though most of the time, she wasn't aware of the contents of the programs.

She had only wanted to listen to the sound, as though someone was talking into her ears and would usually drift off to sleep with the TV still on.

"May we have Thomas Jones to the stage for the ribbon-cutting ceremony?"

Skylar's heart thumped when she heard Thomas' name from the TV. The last time she had met him was when she was still in middle school.

That was when Meredith had told her to reach out to him when she couldn't afford her school fees for high school.

With the memory fresh in her mind, Skylar still remembered that it was pouring that day.

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Yet when Thomas saw her, he didn't even let her in as he taunted her at the door. "Just seeing your face reminds me of your murderer mother. You two disgust me."

Thomas then whipped out a stack of cash from his wallet and threw them onto her face. "Take this and leave. And don't you dare show up in front of me ever again."

It also happened to be Avery's birthday that day. She was walking out holding a cake just as Skylar was about to leave.

"Skylar, have some cake before you leave," she said, acting kind.

But Skylar pushed her aside, and the cake fell to the ground. "Why did you do that?" Avery whimpered.

Young Skylar was freezing from the cold, yet Thomas did not give a tinker's damn as he booted her in the stomach.

With the unpleasant memories flashing before her eyes, Skylar turned off the television.

Skylar and the Joneses were at daggers drawn. Even if she was driven to despair, she had no thoughts of seeking Thomas' help.

At this moment, she heard a noise downstairs. Recollecting herself, she tiptoed her way to the mouth of the stairs.

The housekeeper, Laura, was helping Tobias with the slippers.

Son of a gun... Tobias is actually here?

Skylar quickly retreated into her room and locked the door, playing a snoring sound from her phone and blasting it through the speaker at the door.

"Where is she?" Tobias removed his coat and gave it to Laura.

"She should be resting upstairs, Mr. Ford. Do you need any supper?"

"No, thanks," he said tersely.

Laura watched as Tobias went up the stairs. She had been guarding the villa for a long time, but it was her first time seeing Tobias coming over at this hour, not to mention bringing home a woman.

At that moment, Skylar had stuck her ear against the wall.

From the hallway to Skylar's room, Tobias could hear the deafening sound of snoring.

Hmph, only a pig would snore that loud. Does she think I'm that daft?

He turned the doorknob, but found that it was locked.

"I have no time to play games with you."

Even so, Skylar couldn't hear Tobias clearly through the door.

"Could you get me the spare key?" Tobias said to Laura.

What's up with this girl? She just moved in, and she's shutting out Mr. Ford already?

Skylar, upon hearing someone unlocking the door, quickly jumped into bed and buried herself underneath the blanket.

She had totally forgotten about her phone that was still playing the snoring sound on repeat.

But the sound was soon interrupted by a phone call.

Tobias picked up her phone on the ground, only to see the word “Hubby” flashing on the screen. This guy again!

At the same time, Skylar wanted to sit up to answer her phone, but her guts told her not to.

“Hey, your hubby is calling you. Are you sure you don’t want to pick up?” His cold voice sounded out in the room.

Skylar pretended not to hear anything as she squeezed her eyes shut.

Seeing that she was continuing her act, Tobias deliberately answered the phone and turned on the speaker.

“Skylar, where are you? Your clothes are still at my place. When are you going to pick them up? I’ve already washed your underwear.”

Jeremy’s frivolous voice was heard.

She’s even thrown her underwear at another man’s house? Tobias’s eyes were instantly filled with hostility.

“Skylar, are you listening to me?” Jeremy asked.

Sh*t, Jeremy. Are you freaking crazy or something? I don’t remember you being this clingy when we first started going out!

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It was because Jeremy had needed someone to look after him, and Skylar had stayed at his place for a few days.

Skylar was still pretending to be asleep while keeping her cool. Heck, she even changed her posture just to make it seem convincing.

“She can’t hear you, Jeremy. She’s sleeping.” He spoke into the phone.

"Who are you? Why are you answering my girlfriend's phone?" Jeremy said with a strained voice.

Tobias' lips quirked up. "Stop calling her at this hour. You're disrupting our sleep," he said. Hanging up the phone, he then threw it right in Skylar's face, hitting her right at the bridge of her nose.

Ow! You b*stard, I won't let you get away with this!

Skylar sat up with a groan, rubbing her nose.

"Even if your hand slipped, do you have to smash the phone right on the bridge of my nose?" she gave him a death stare.

Highly amused, Tobias quirked an eyebrow at Skylar.

Looking at her fair and baby-like soft skin, he had to admit that she was beautiful.

But her gaze was piercing like thousand sharp knives at him.

"I did that on purpose!"

Ugh, I should have added "no violence" into the contract. Skylar lay sprawling on the bed. "You might as well just kill me now. I'm done with this life."

Indeed, Skylar didn't know what was the meaning of her life now.

Not long ago, she was still dreaming about settling down with Jeremy and giving birth to his child.

Now that everything had turned into dust, all her hopes had been destroyed.

"Are you sure?" Tobias put on a contemptuous look on his face. "Then why are you here?"

He sat on the side of the bed and closed the distance between them. Skylar squirmed back.

Tobias reached out, draped an arm over her shoulders, and pulled her into his embrace. The damned white sandalwood cologne reminded her of that night at the operating room.

"It's not a good day for me. But it's up to you if you want to force yourself on me. I heard it's bad luck to do that with a woman who's having her period."

Skylar was still hoping that Tobias would give her a break tonight.

In spite of that, he snuggled his head onto her shoulder, breathing into her neck. "So what?"

Feeling a chill traveling down her spine, Skylar swallowed a lump in her throat and emphasized, "It's the second day today, and I'm warning you—it's pretty heavy."

She glanced up at the clock on the wall. It was already three in the morning.

What the heck! Why are we even discussing this at this hour?

"How long more are you going to keep this up?" Tobias grabbed her wrist, looking impatient. "Is it so hard to comply with me? Don't you wanna do it again after that day?"

Frankly speaking, Skylar didn't want to relive that alien sensation from that night at all. However, she dared not shake her head lest she offended Tobias, so she nodded.

He looked at Skylar, who was scared silly in amusement.

Look at her, all tensed up. Tsk-tsk, you have so much to learn, little girl.

Tobias didn't really mean business when he said that. The red blotches on the sheet had proven that Skylar wasn't lying.

He relaxed his grip on her hand, and only then did Skylar sigh in relief, having avoided a catastrophe.