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“How would I know? In any case, it had to be a family member of yours. It was a fancy car.”

A fancy car? It must've been Tobias, then.

I don't know anyone else who drives a fancy car apart from him. Or could it have been Jeremy? Oh, dream on. As if that b*stard would do anything for anyone but himself.

Skylar whipped out her phone only while making her way back home and found several missed calls from Tobias.

She then called him back only to hear an especially disgruntled voice. “You just got a new phone, but it still takes you that long to answer it?”

“I silenced it and kept it in my purse,” Skylar explained. “I've just checked it. Where's my mother?”

Tobias sounded slightly taunting. “What's the point in you knowing? It's not like you want to see her.”

He's keeping me on my toes even up till now? Skylar couldn't take it. “I want to see her. She's still my mother, after all, so please tell me where she is. Where have you taken her?”

Delighted to hear Skylar using the word “please,” Tobias gave her the hospital address.

“You should think this through, though. She's not in her best mental state at the moment.”

“Okay,” Skylar responded half-heartedly and hung up before Tobias had even finished.

You're heartless.

Spotting an ATM by the roadside, she took out the black card Tobias had given her and withdrew a thousand in cash. Then, she dropped by a fruit stall and bought a fruit basket.

Memories of her past were so vague that the young woman didn't know what her own mother enjoyed eating.

At the same time, Tobias stared at the notification of a one-thousand cash withdrawal on his phone and smirked.

Skylar was possibly the thriftiest woman he had ever met. She had only used one thousand despite having kept the card for so many days.

After that, Skylar carried the fruit basket to Haywest Hospital and obtained Miranda's ward number from the psychiatric department's receptionist.

At the door to Miranda's ward, a young, handsome, and gentle-looking man, who was dressed fashionably, stood there waiting.

The man's eyes seemed oddly familiar to Skylar as though they had once met.

"Hey there, pretty lady. You must've gotten the wrong room." The man stopped Skylar just as she placed her hand on the door handle.

Skylar glanced at the ward number, making sure she wasn't mistaken.

"Nope, my mom's just been hospitalized. This is her ward."

Sheldon eyed the woman before him with curiosity. Why would Tobias be interested in a girl whose mother just came out of prison?

Still, Sheldon refused to let Skylar in. He merely leaned against the door frame with a seemingly innocent smile.

"You can head in, but tell me, what's going on between you and my brother?"

"Your brother?" Skylar gazed at the young man in surprise.

Oh, it's no wonder their eyes look so alike! Although this guy looks a little softer.

Sheldon nodded. "Yup. My dear older brother's the one who made me pick her up from prison first thing in the morning. My name's Sheldon."

The man extended a hand toward Skylar, and she shook it. “I’m Skylar Jones – a friend of your brother’s.”

Upon hearing Skylar’s name, Sheldon thought back to what Avery had asked him that day.

This caused him to freeze up momentarily. What is my brother doing with such a trashy woman?

Compared to Tanya, he despised schoolgirls who sold their bodies to men. Aren’t you taking the phrase “robbing the cradle” a little too far, Tobias?

Sheldon suddenly became aloof, and his smile vanished. “Your mother’s been sedated, so she’s fast asleep. Go on in.”

Skylar noticed the change in Sheldon’s behavior upon hearing her name. He now looked at her as though she was an eyesore.

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Even so, Skylar couldn’t be bothered to care. She lightly pushed the door open, only to instantly hear a roar coming from afar.

“You’ve got some serious nerve bringing your mother here, Skylar!”

Skylar hurriedly shut the door to prevent Miranda from hearing the voice in the hallway.

What a lively day it was, having her father and his current wife, Irene Ziegler, suddenly show up today.

Skylar was bewildered. How did they know Mom’s been brought here? Did they sniff her out like dogs?

Seeing them again made her unable to control her emotions, but she masked her true feelings well and met their gazes casually.

"She's just finished her sentence, so she's getting treated at the hospital. Why can't I bring her here?"

Thomas glared at her. "You've become so brazen after we haven't seen each other for years. You even took your mother to Haywest Hospital. How do you intend to pay the bills? Are you going to come crying for my help when you land yourself in debt?"

Skylar smiled faintly. "What use is there calling for you? I begged for your help when my grandma was dying, but did you give me a single cent back then?"

Irene held onto Thomas' arm in grief. "This daughter of yours is getting real clever, Honey. She even managed to get a prisoner on death row released. If it weren't for her mother, my sister would've still been alive by now. Miranda's a murderer who should die behind bars."

In an excessive act of self-defense, Miranda had accidentally killed Irene's sister back then.

Skylar could still recall how she had just come home from school when Miranda was being taken away by the police.

She could never forget that sight. The neighbors had surrounded the young girl, gazing at her pitifully. Some even seemed rather gleeful.

Skylar raised an eyebrow. "Oh, please. I'm not that capable. It's not like I'm the one setting the law here. They told me to go fetch her, so I did. What's wrong with that?"

Sheldon sat on the long bench, spectating the family drama that was now taking place in front of his very eyes.

This girl sure has some guts to talk to her father like that.

He glanced at the person-in-charge inside the ward.

Meanwhile, Miranda had been sedated and was probably in dreamland at this very moment.

"You wench! I won't pay a single cent for the hospital bills. Your sister told me you've been working as a nightclub hostess. That's disgusting! You're as despicable as your mother – a disgrace to the Joneses!" Thomas raged.

Skylar's smirk was full of sarcasm. "I wouldn't have resorted to that if I had a choice, to begin with. Quit running your mouth, Thomas. You don't have the right to."

"You!" Thomas swung an arm at Skylar.

But the young woman grabbed his wrist before he could lay a finger on her.

There was no way she would let Thomas strike her again.

Infuriated, Thomas yanked his hand away. "Stop your mother's treatment at once, or I'll give you both hell for the rest of your lives."

Skylar thought she had grown accustomed to this man's harsh words. Yet, his latest threats caused her chest to tighten in pain.

"Am I interfering with your family matters?" A tall man slowly emerged within Skylar's line of sight.

The smile on Tobias' face remained faint, but at the same time, bone-chilling and frosty.

Thomas and Irene turned, whereas Sheldon immediately stood up as though he had been electrified.

Thomas watched as Tobias' eyes met Irene's. The older couple was completely bewildered as to why Tobias was here. Thomas, in particular, looked, especially tense.

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Then, Tobias walked toward them before placing an arm on Skylar's shoulder very naturally and pulling her into an embrace. "I'm not sure if I heard you clearly, but did you just say you wanted to give my girlfriend hell for the rest of her life? Don't you think that's a little too cruel of you, Mr. Jones?"

Skylar suddenly felt her nose tingle as an unfamiliar emotion began to build up within her.

At this moment, she felt like a wandering boat that had finally found a port where she could dock. The strangest thing was that it was this devil who made her feel this way.

Thomas was completely dumbfounded. Skylar is... Tobias Ford's girlfriend? The Tobias Ford? Am I dreaming?

Sheldon was even more taken aback. His gaze instantly fell on Skylar. As far as I know, this is the first time he's ever called a woman his girlfriend.

As Thomas remained in a daze, Tobias stared at him with his glacier eyes.

"I'm talking to you. Should I take silence as acceptance?"

Thomas took a deep breath and suppressed his fear. "You've got it wrong, Mr. Ford. I never said that."

Skylar frowned slightly. To her, Thomas had always been a hot-tempered and heartless man who had no qualms crossing any big shot.

Yet, he was now cowering before Tobias in fear and even trembled while speaking.

Skylar grew increasingly curious. Who on earth is Tobias, and how powerful is Ford Group?

With a crease of her brows, Skylar leaned into Tobias' arms. "I don't want to see him anymore. Can you tell him to leave?"

Thomas' expression took a complete turn, and he gazed at Skylar with nothing but affection. "Come home and have dinner with us sometime. I'll prepare all your favorite dishes."

Skylar didn't understand how Thomas could put on an act so skillfully to the point that it was disgusting.

Not wanting to see that face any longer, she walked to the end of the hallway and opened the window to get some air. The look on her face was as though she had put on an impenetrable mask that concealed all signs of sorrow.

I won't let anyone take me down again.

"Aren't you going to see your mother?" Tobias placed a hand on Skylar's waist from behind.

Skylar turned and heaved a sigh of relief upon realizing that Thomas and Irene had left.

Had Tobias not been here, that couple truly could have been able to put a halt to her mother's treatment.

Skylar shook her head. "Thanks for getting me out of that situation. I won't be seeing her, though. I've already taken a peek at her through the window, and she's sleeping. She might get too worked up if she wakes up and sees me."

Thanks to all of today's events, Skylar truly felt awful.

Tobias took off his coat and draped them over her shoulders. "The wind's really cold. If you're not going to see her, you should head back."

With a stagger, Sheldon leaned against the wall and pinched his thigh. Is this a dream?

He actually gave her his coat? Hell's going to break loose if anyone at home finds out about this!

Sheldon felt sorry for Tobias. Mom's been threatening him to marry Tanya. What's going to happen now that he has a girlfriend?

After that, Skylar followed Tobias into the car.

But the moment they got in, the man pressed her down against the leather seat.

Tobias gazed at Skylar as she tried to open the car window. Is this guy nuts?

He's acting like this even when the driver's in here too!

"Didn't I say I'd take care of this? Why did you insist on coming over yourself? Do you think I'm playing around with you?" Tobias growled as he held the woman by her jaw.

Skylar struggled relentlessly beneath him to no avail.

"She's my mother! Why can't I see her?" she insisted, not comprehending why Tobias was mad.

This man is way too unpredictable!

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Tobias gazed at her sternly. "You were afraid I'd go back on my word and end up not taking your mother here, weren't you? That's why you came here to verify things. You said you didn't want to see her, but here you are anyway."

Skylar closed her eyes. This guy's way too sharp! He knows exactly what I'm thinking.

"But how can I trust you? It's not like we're that close or in an actual relationship."

Tobias let go of her and returned to his seat. Amidst his frosty presence, he silently cautioned himself to remain clearheaded.

"Not that close? How many times have we done it with each other? You told me all this, and I promised to help you, so stop doubting me."

Skylar glanced out the window, feeling helpless and anguished. Deep down, she was so insecure that she couldn't trust anyone.

Upon returning to International Garden, Skylar prepared to close the door, thinking that Tobias wasn't going to stay the night.

She had also figured out his routine; the man would come every three days for official duties.

"What are you doing? I haven't entered yet." Tobias held out his arm, and Skylar nearly closed the door on him.

The woman cast Tobias a glance. "But I thought you wouldn't be staying tonight. I have to wake up early tomorrow for a school trip, so I can't stay up too late."

Yet, Tobias paid no heed to her words.

He walked to the living room and took off his necktie. "I don't have the energy to spend the whole night in bed with you either. You, on the other hand, seem rather enthusiastic about your school trip tomorrow."

Skylar removed the coat Tobias had given her and tossed it on the couch. "I'd only look anti-social if I don't take part in school activities. Besides, you should head back, Mr. Ford. Your fiancée's probably waiting for you."

Tobias narrowed his eyes. This woman seemed more capable of ruining the atmosphere than he was.

"You've been mentioning my fiancée pretty often lately. Does she bother you?"

Skylar shrugged. "Who am I to feel bothered? I'm well aware of my place and the transactional relationship that we share."

For some reason, Tobias felt slightly crestfallen. Such a feeling wasn't something he ever wanted.

The man had no idea why he was furious at Skylar.

He pulled her into his arms and spoke above her head in his deep voice. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again. For now, I can give you anything apart from giving you a status. All you have to do is obey and trust me, and I'll never mistreat you."

Skylar was no fool. Having clearly remembered Tobias' previous terms, she noticed the subtle changes he had just made.

He used to promise her that he could give her anything she wanted, apart from making her officially his. Yet, this exception had now become temporary.

Nevertheless, Skylar obediently flashed him a smile. "Okay. I'll be a good girl. I want everything apart from being a title."

Being under his care, she had obeyed him. What kind of life have I gotten myself into?

First, she had to sell herself for Jeremy.

And now, she had to fawn over Tobias for the sake of her mother's treatment expenses.

The woman couldn't help but feel disappointed. Will I ever have a chance to start over?

Tobias, on the other hand, was rather displeased to hear Skylar's remarks so calmly.

It was obvious that this woman wasn't into him at all. She had practically been forced into serving him.

While at the hospital, Skylar hardly ate anything, yet Laura had taken the day off. But even if the latter didn't, she couldn't really be counted on.

Tobias headed upstairs to get changed.

Meanwhile, Skylar went to the kitchen, finding herself a small pot and taking a pack of instant noodles out of the refrigerator.

She stood in front of the stove, watching as the water inside the pot began to boil.

Her head was filled with the scene of Tobias rescuing her from her sticky situation earlier today.

At that very moment, Skylar actually felt as though she finally had a reliable man to lean on, but Tobias was quick to snap her out of her fantasies.

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Tobias finished taking his shower when a fragrant aroma wafted over from the coffee table in the living room.

In the meantime, Skylar sat on the carpeted floor with a huge glass bowl on the table.

Then, using a fork, she unhesitatingly proceeded to slurp her noodles.

Such a sight was eye-opening to Tobias. All this while, none of the women who dined with him had ever eaten this way.

They always said they were full after a few bites of salad or dared not even open their mouths.

Yet, Skylar nearly had her entire face in the bowl.

Watching Tobias stare at her as though she were a freak, Skylar got up and headed into the kitchen.

Then, she swiftly grabbed another fork, walked over to Tobias' side, and handed it to him. "I can give you some of my food if that's what you want. There are two eggs in here, and the fork is clean. I haven't used it."

Skylar emphasized the last sentence. She knew Tobias was a germaphobe, so there was no way he would use someone else's fork.

It would be a struggle for someone like him to enjoy shared dishes. He surely wouldn't be able to withstand having to taste another person's spit.

To her surprise, Tobias grabbed the fork and casually tossed it into Skylar's bowl. "It doesn't matter even if you've used the fork. It's not like I haven't kissed you everywhere."

He spoke nonchalantly, but his words made Skylar flush a deep red all the way to her ears.

She touched her face and silently reminded herself to calm down.

"If you want to eat, you should be eating at the dining table. What's with your weird habit of eating at a coffee table?" Tobias remarked, like a grown adult lecturing a child.

Having a strong desire to stay out of trouble, Skylar hurriedly carried her bowl of noodles to the dining table.

She began to wonder if Tobias was a Virgo. Why is he so nitpicky?

Yet, the man wasn't this particular in bed. He would always kiss and bite on her.

Why does he have a problem with me eating at the coffee table? Isn't this what youngsters do? Or should I stand up and eat instead?

Shouldn't it be fine as long as I'm not eating while lying in bed?

Still, Skylar proceeded to eat at the dining table and no longer tried to ask Tobias if he wanted some too.

She calmly slurped on her noodles even as she heard Tobias' phone ring non-stop.

Skylar pointed to her lips, meaning to ask Tobias if she needed to be quiet. It would be a disaster if the man's fiancée called and found out that there was another woman next to him.

However, Tobias ignored her, indicating that it didn't matter what she did or didn't do.

He then turned off his phone and tossed it on the couch.

The next day, Skylar woke up to find that Tobias had left, although she didn't know when.

She casually opened her drawer and took out a morning-after pill that she had bought prior.

It was said that this pill was harmful to a woman's body and should not be taken more than three times a year.

Skylar frowned as she counted silently in her head. This is... the third time.

She then remembered how Tobias had asked her if she wanted a child last night while they were both drenched in sweat. If you have my child, everything will be solved.

Skylar shuddered as she recalled his words.

How dumb would I be to have his child? Wouldn't the child only end up being cooped up inside the villa with me? They won't even get to be a legitimate child!

Then, I'd just end up being a single mother and raise the child on my own.

Upon hearing the doorbell rang, Laura pretended not to hear anything.

She was a totally different person whenever Tobias wasn't around – a complete sluggard.

Skylar put on her pink, fluffy indoor slippers and headed downstairs to answer the door, thinking that Tobias had come back for something he had forgotten.

“Hello, Ms. Jones. I’m Tobias’ mother, Claudia Stokes. Can I come in?”