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Skylar placed her bag on the wooden chair and rested her chin on her hands while looking at Miranda, who was immersed in her own beauty. "Are you sure he's on a business trip? Maybe he's hiding from you. Just look for other men if you really want to have a man."

Miranda frowned and took a glance at Skylar. "I went to prison back then, but now, everything's different. I'll take back everything he owes me. It's time for us three to have a reunion."

Skylar felt there must be some secret between Miranda and Thomas, seeing as how Miranda was so confident that the latter would abandon his family to be together with her.

In Skylar's opinion, Miranda was more or less daydreaming.

She looked at Miranda curiously and spoke in a relaxed tone, as if she was talking about others' matters, even if it actually traumatized her.

She said, "Why do I feel that you've changed? You used to hate me to death in the past when I visited you with Grandma, and you're displeased that I'm not a boy. What happened to you?"

After voicing out her doubts, the tension in her heart was released, and she felt relaxed. Miranda's change was unbelievable and odd.

Miranda placed her hand on her daughter's shoulders and said seriously, "I have my pride to uphold, and I don't want my daughter to think I'm miserable. I was depressed in the prison, always thinking of going out and hoping to see the outside world again one day. And I received a chance to go on medical parole, so I grasped it and pretended to be crazy. I was a little sick in the head, but it wasn't too serious to the point of losing my mind. It's just that the doctors kept giving me tranquilizers and antidepressants."

Miranda's answer completely demolished Skylar's opinion of her. It seemed her mom wasn't hopelessly romantic but full of schemes.

However, Skylar felt that something was fishy behind Miranda's release from the prison. Miranda's mental condition isn't severe enough for her to be on medical parole, and it isn't easy to exploit loopholes of the law. How did she break out from the prison so easily? I don't think pretending to be crazy can achieve this.

Could it be Tobias was secretly helping her?

Then why didn't he tell me anything?

Walls have ears. Miranda's words were heard by the people eating meat fondue next door.

In a careful manner, Sharon deliberately locked the door and lowered her voice. "No wonder Miranda's out of the prison so fast. She's pretending to be sick!"

Wesley said nothing as he continued to cook the meat, all the while staring at the pot.

Looking at his cowardly behavior, Sharon was utterly furious. "I'm talking to you! When do you think she'll leave? We're not some charity organization, offering people a place to live."

Wesley sighed and said helplessly, "What do you want me to do? Mom didn't leave the house to Skylar, but she didn't remove Miranda's name, so half of this house belongs to her. I can't possibly kick her out. If you really want to say it, then go ahead."

Sharon was so enraged that she almost flipped the table, but she didn't dare to make too much noise as it might attract Miranda's attention. "I can't do that. Miranda killed someone before! Do you want your wife to die in her hands?"

Eva drank a sip of fruit juice to ease the spiciness and raised a brow. "Why are you guys fighting over this? She's on medical parole, but getting discharged doesn't mean she is free from her punishment. They are so foolish. Aunt Miranda is sentenced to life imprisonment and after she's released, she'll be in her seventies or eighties. So, she shouldn't be here now. Don't you guys understand?"

Sharon and Wesley exchanged glances, and it was as clear as day that they didn't understand what their daughter was hinting at.

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Eva urged, "I've made it so clear. Just call the police and let them take Aunt Miranda away. There must be some mistakes in the procedures causing her to be freed from custody. Once the police officers look into this matter, she'll be taken back to where she was."

Now that Eva had mentioned it clearly, she took out her phone and handed the task of reporting Miranda to her parents.

Sharon chickened out and elbowed Wesley. "She's your sister, so you should report her."

Looking at the numbers 999 on the phone screen, Wesley hesitated as he raised his hand and put it back down soon after. Miranda was his sister, and she had been taking care of him since they were young. Now that she was out of prison, he felt reluctant to send her back in.

His conscience wouldn't let him take the phone while his heart was conflicted, but Miranda living in his house had brought them a lot of inconveniences. His house wasn't that big to begin with and ever since Miranda stayed there, Sharon had been quarreling with him every day while their son was forced to stay at the school dorm.

Sharon glared at her husband and said, "You're so useless. Just take the phone. How hard could it be?"

Eva added fuel to the fire. "Dad, you're not betraying Aunt Miranda. You're just carrying out your duties as a good citizen. She doesn't seem like she suffered in the prison. We're not reporting her. Instead, we're helping her to find a better place."

Listening to Eva's words, Wesley finally mustered the courage and took the phone. However, he gave the phone to Sharon after hesitating for a few minutes.

His wife was so furious that she scolded, "Coward!"

She took the phone and reported to the police, saying that an inmate escaped and came to their house, threatening their lives. Giving the address to the police officers, she urged them to come capture the inmate as soon as possible.

After reporting to the police, Sharon felt so relaxed that she started humming a tune.

Now, there won't be any outsider in our house.

Ever since Miranda stayed with them, not only did she feel suffocated, she lost her appetite and even had trouble sleeping at night.

Having stress weighing upon her every day, blisters appeared at the corner of her lips and it was getting on her nerves. She wished for the death of Miranda so badly.

Eva said wistfully, "We're so unlucky to have someone like her as our relative. She's dragging everyone down. Kevin can't become a civil servant if he wants, while I can't pass the background checks of the government. This is all because of Aunt Miranda, but why are we the ones taking the blame for it?"

Sharon widened her eyes in surprise. "Damn this Miranda! Dragging us down like this."

Then she shifted the blame to Wesley and scolded, "It's all because of your family members. I'm so unlucky to be married to you."

Meanwhile, Miranda asked, "Skylar, are you hungry? They are eating meat fondue next door. Do you want some?"

Skylar shook her head. "Not really. If they really want us to join, they could've asked."

Miranda smiled and said, "You're quite arrogant. Are you getting along well with the man who gave me the card? His wife's giving birth soon, but you're still involved with him. Well, I think you should break up with him and find another to spend your life with."

Hearing these words from Miranda, Skylar was shocked. In the past, Miranda had always wanted her daughter to marry someone rich, so that she could enjoy the rest of her life in fortune and wealth.

She didn't tell Miranda about everything, as it was way too hard to explain.

Checking the time on her phone, she got up from the couch. "I have to go. Did you call me here just to admire how beautiful your new gown is?"

Miranda tried to make her stay. "Why are you leaving in such a hurry? I told you I have good news to share. Eva is going to work in an international company as the CEO's assistant and she's about to get married. You'll need to come up with a plan for your life."

Miranda seemed more like a mom now, as she treated Skylar better.

Listening to Miranda mentioning Eva, Skylar recalled seeing Eva's photo on the coffee table last night.

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Tobias was so efficient in his work that the notice was announced by the HR department quickly.

Skylar was reluctant to listen to Eva's achievements as she admitted she was nowhere close to the outstanding latter.

Not only did she have excellent results, she received love from her parents and her lover. She was a natural beauty, and every relative deemed her to be successful.

In comparison, Skylar was just a pitiful child who had no one to take care of her.

Skylar brushed her off and said, "I know. I'll figure it out myself. I'll be off now... If there's anything, hit me up."

Before she exited the house, she heard somebody knocking on the door. Thinking that it was the delivery man, she opened the door with no hesitation.

At the door stood a few men in uniforms and peaked caps while the man in the middle was carrying a bag.

Skylar asked in confusion, "Who are you guys looking for?"

Miranda saw the police officers, but it was too late to flee. Lowering her head, she wished the earth would swallow her up completely, hiding her from them.

One of the police officers asked, "Is this Miranda Watts's house?"

Skylar didn't reply and asked, "What's the matter? Are you guys here to enumerate the residents?"

The police took out an arrest warrant. "We suspect that she broke out of prison, so we're bringing her back for an investigation."

Skylar thought everything would be peaceful, so she was caught off guard by the sudden waves of trouble crashing onto her.

Miranda lifted her head and pretended to be a fool. "You bad people! Where do you think you are taking me? I'm not a criminal anymore, so why are you guys here?"

Sharon was listening to the movements outside the room and she felt relieved, knowing that Miranda was going to be arrested.

What she wanted the most was for Miranda to rot in prison to save her family and herself some trouble.

Sharon praised her daughter happily, "My dear daughter, you're so smart! We should've done this long ago. Let's see how long this woman can last."

Eva chuckled, "You guys should learn to utilize the law. That way, she won't get to stay in our house."

Miranda was arrested by the police. When she was taken away, she was in handcuffs and many residents saw everything that happened.

Everyone was gossiping, saying that she shouldn't be pitied and deserved it, seeing how she got arrested after being released for a short while.

With doubts in her mind, Skylar stood at the intersection as she stared at the police car speeding away.

Before Miranda was dragged away by the police officers, she held onto Skylar's hand in a vice-like death grip, with tears welling up in her eyes. The words she said only carried the reluctance of having her freedom being snatched away from her once again.

Skylar followed the police car to the police station.

She wanted to learn about the situation, but she was blocked by the police officers at the entrance, so she could only wait outside from evening until past midnight.

Shivering from the cold weather, she went to a convenience store nearby and bought a cup of hot coffee.

When she went back to the police station, she stopped a police officer in his tracks. He was one of them who went to Wesley's house to arrest Miranda.

Rushing her way to the police officer, she panted heavily, gasping for breath. "What's the situation with Miranda Watts? Can you please tell me?"

The police officer sympathized with the girl as she was waiting in such freezing weather outside.

He disclosed, "The results stated that she didn't return to jail after her medical parole, so she committed a crime against the law. She'll be taken away to the prison she used to stay in tomorrow, and she'll be locked up now."

Skylar's heart sank, even though she was mentally prepared for the worst.

Miranda was sentenced to life imprisonment for committing intentional homicide, so there was no way she would be released after a decade.

However, Skylar found it hard to accept that her mother would be taken away the next day.

She pursed her lips and said, "Is there a way to turn this around?"

The police officer answered, "I don't think so, as there is evidence of her breaking out of the prison. Young girl, the weather is freezing, so you should go back home. You can visit her when she's in jail. There's no point in waiting as you won't be able to meet her now."

Skylar couldn't figure it out. Everything was fine until now... How did the police officers find out?

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"You're the ones who found out about this?"

The policeman refused to elaborate any further, knowing that going into too much detail might result in disciplinary action for him. So he just shook his head and waved down a taxi, then got in it and left.

The fact that Miranda had put on her new dress today specifically to show Skylar but was now being made to wear a prison uniform left a bitter taste in her mouth.

Her feet felt as heavy as lead as she stood helplessly by the roadside, staring at the brightly lit-up police station. The building was literally right in front of her, yet she couldn't bring herself to take a single step forward.

The phone in her pocket rang. Noticing that the call was from Tobias, she cleared her throat and shoved down her swell of emotions before answering it.

"I just got back. Where are you? Why aren't you home?"

There was a long pause as Skylar inhaled deeply through her nose, then replied, "I'm in front of the police station. My mom's in there."

"Send me the address. I'm coming over."

Just as he had promised, Tobias soon arrived at the police station. The sight of him getting down from his car made Skylar feel as if the earth had finally stopped swaying under her feet.

Running straight to him, she wrapped her arms around his waist and buried her head into his chest.

"What's wrong? You seem upset, did someone bully you?" He asked, running a hand through her hair soothingly.

His voice was low and deep, but gentle.

"My mom is going to be sent away tomorrow, and I don't know what to do. She was arrested just this afternoon."

Skylar felt Tobias' chest rise and fall against her face as he sighed. "Why didn't you say so earlier? You should have called me as soon as it happened."

Skylar didn't know what to tell him. Maybe she hadn't wanted to cause trouble for Tobias, or maybe she just hadn't thought about him in her moment of panic.

But Tobias understood the reason why, even if she didn't say it out loud.

In her book, asking him for help whenever she got in trouble was not an option. Even now, she still stubbornly believed that she could handle everything by herself.

But there were just some things she couldn't muscle through with pure determination alone.

This situation was completely out of her hands. She was a mere college student with no connections, no community resources available to her, and no social influence.

"How long are you going to hug me for?" Tobias whispered into her ear.

It was only then that Skylar snapped out of her daze, pulling away from him as she wiped at her teary eyes.

"Sorry. I'm kind of disoriented right now."

Tobias didn't mind. He was already used to seeing Skylar in a disoriented state.

Patting her back, he reassured her, "Don't worry. Your mom will be fine. It's my fault for being too busy and not properly managing my time as of late."

His tone and attitude exuded an aura of absolute confidence that calmed her nerves.

Skylar couldn't go into the police station, but the chief of police immediately came out to greet Tobias as soon as the man entered. His attitude was so meek and humble, it seemed like he would have gotten on his knees if Tobias simply asked.

Tobias made Skylar wait in the corridor for him. He then spotted a vending machine that sold various types of snacks and buns, moving to stop a female officer who was passing by.

The officer froze up as she stared at the man in front of her. Standing at a height of nearly two meters tall with a perfectly symmetrical face and deep-set, handsome features, the sight of him made her become much more alert than any caffeine ever did.

Is this the start of my fairytale love story?

“How does this machine work? My girlfriend is getting a little hungry.” The man’s words immediately shattered her fantasy.

He’s lucky he’s so good-looking. I nearly misunderstood this as a very unpleasant way of flirting.

After the female officer taught him how to use the vending machine, Tobias chose a bun, some ham sausages, and a bowl of porridge. To his dissatisfaction, the porridge was cold.

Setting the food on Skylar’s lap, he told her, “Wait here for me. I’ll handle everything and your mom will be out before dawn.”

Skylar’s previous anger towards Tobias’s “punishment” melted from the warmth with which he looked after her.

“Isn’t this all very troublesome for you?” she asked, looking up at him.

He smiled slightly. “Not at all. Make sure to eat everything I bought for you.”

Skylar watched Tobias walk away and strike up a friendly conversation with a few uniformed police officers at the end of the hallway.

What are they talking about?

She peeled open the packaging of the bun and took a bite, recognizing the taste of the coconut-flavored filling.

Time ticked by slowly. Tobias was long gone, as were the several uniformed police officers.

Her phone vibrated in her pocket, and she switched it on to read the new messages from Eva.

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Eva: How is Aunt Miranda doing? Don’t worry too much. You have to trust the justice system. There’s just some stuff that we can’t control.

Skylar scoffed. If Eva was telling her to “trust the justice system”, then clearly she had already predicted the outcome of this situation. She had suspected that Eva had something to do with the police showing up at her house, and now here she was, pretending to care about Skylar.

Having nothing to say to Eva, Skylar decided to ignore her messages.

It was two in the morning when Tobias finally reappeared. Skylar instantly got to her feet as he walked towards her, asking him, “What happened?”

He didn’t offer a response, instead waiting for a while until a hysterical Miranda was eventually brought out by the police.

When the police had told her that she was innocent and free to leave, she nearly fainted from excitement, thanking every god and deity out there for watching over her.

This was the start of Tobias and Miranda’s awkward first meeting at a police station.

He took the initiative to introduce himself by greeting her and saying, “Hello, I am Skylar’s boyfriend.”

Taken aback, Miranda began recomposing herself, visibly nervous from how tightly she was gripping her skirt. “What should I call you? I am so grateful to you for getting me out of there.”

“Just call me Tobias,” he answered, smiling. “And you’re welcome. I’ll be sending you home now.”

Miranda still looked apprehensive. “I won’t be arrested again, right? This whole ordeal has really taken a toll on my weak heart.”

“As long as I’m around, you will not get arrested, so you don’t have to worry about that,” Tobias promised.

Skylar let out a long sigh of relief. Now, there was another issue for which she was indebted to him.

The chief of police walked them right to the entrance of the police station, going on and on about “having caused trouble for Mr. Ford”.

But Tobias didn't hold back. "I hope similar incidents of arresting innocent citizens never occur again," Tobias told him, blatantly gaslighting the chief of police into believing that it was his men who were at fault.

Skylar and her mother got onto Tobias' black Ferrari.

Miranda's eyes lit up at the sight of the expensive vehicle. Her mood had changed so abruptly, it was as if she had already forgotten everything that happened that day.

"How much does a car like this cost?"

Skylar sighed, rubbing her temples. "Mom, could you please calm down? The car doesn't matter right now."

Tobias glanced back at Miranda while he was driving. "Do you have a driving license, Ms. Watts? If you'd like, I can gift the car to you."

"Don't. She can't drive," Skylar rushed to stop him.

Miranda's jaw fell open. Although she was, by all means, a metaphorical gold digger, there was no way she could accept such an expensive gift, explaining hurriedly, "No, no! It's fine! I'll just... I'll just look at it."

It was already very late. Miranda, worried she might disturb her brother and his family's sleep, asked if she could stay at Skylar's for a while.

Staring out the window, Skylar mumbled, "You won't be disturbing their sleep. If anything, they'll be elated to see you back home."

That was a lie. She wanted to witness the disappointment on Eva and the others' faces.

Skylar's explanation made sense to her mother. Miranda's brother had to be worried for her, especially because she had been arrested so suddenly.

Tobias stopped the car by the roadside to go to a convenience store, and Skylar got out with him.

"Are you hungry?" she asked.

Tucking a stray lock of hair behind her ear, he shook his head. "I'm running out of some... supplies at home. I don't want to have to run out to get them right before we do "it"."

Skylar bit her bottom lip, muttering through gritted teeth, "Are you a demon? Don't you ever get tired?"

Tobias enjoyed Skylar's embarrassed reaction and took pride in flustering her this way. "I'm just a man who's pursuing what I want. You've heard of the saying "there's no such thing as a free meal", right? I helped you... So you have to repay me."