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Irene descended the stairs, her face as pale as a ghost. The mere sight of her was depressing.

Ever since Thomas had divorced her, the woman had become a shell of a person, barely taking a step out of the house. The only time she seemed to regain energy was when she grew aggravated at the sight of Skylar on TV. She wanted to smash the electronic device into pieces.

Avery got up and helped Irene sit down on the couch. "You still haven't heard anything from

Dad?" She'd never once seen Thomas after the divorce.

Irene's eye twitched in annoyance. "He has no right to come back here. Let him spend the rest

of his life with that witch of a woman and her daughter for all I care. Our house no longer welcomes him."

Avery was upset that her parents were still having a cold war with each other. That being said,

she didn't harbor any pity towards Thomas; he had been the one to push their once happy family to the brink of falling apart.

Why is he so biased towards Skylar? I was the one who's been his precious, spoilt princess since young!

Skylar lost track of time in the bathroom; her mind solely focused on repeatedly scrubbing soap all over her body.

That had been her first time being so "intimate" with such an ugly guy, and she prayed that it would be her last. She'd never felt so humiliated before.

She could hear Madelyn happily greeting Tobias downstairs as she slipped a bathrobe on

without bothering to tie the ribbon together, letting it hang off of her frame.

Skylar had gotten into the habit of not wearing underwear when around Tobias.

She'd always hated the constricting feeling of wearing bras, and used to only wear a cotton undershirt under her clothes before her debut as a celebrity. Drinking in the sight of the woman before him, Tobias spoke up, "Get changed. I'm taking you somewhere."

It was raining outside, and her hair was still dripping wet from the shower she'd just taken.

Her legs were tired and sore from having stood on stage all day, and the back of her ankles had blisters.

Do the designers for these big brands think that women have no bones in their feet or

something? Their shoes are horrible to wear.

"But it's getting late," Skylar pointed out. "I just want to rest at home."

When Tobias reached up to touch Skylar's flushed face, she unconsciously took a few steps back.

Just the mere motion of someone moving to touch her made her recall the greasy fat guy

from the morning and caused her to taste bile in her mouth.

"I'll drive you there. It's not like the rain is going to bother us that much."

Sighing, Skylar eventually caved and agreed, worried that Tobias would think she was being

unappreciative of his kindness.

How she wished she could be as impulsive as any other ordinary girl and have the freedom to

reject his advances whenever she wanted.

When she put on her clothes and went downstairs, she couldn't find Tobias anywhere. "Mr.

Ford went out to start the car up," Madelyn informed her. "Perhaps he was worried that it

would be too cold for you and wanted to start the heater up in advance. How kind of him!"

Skylar honestly didn't know what Madelyn saw in Tobias, nor why the woman constantly praised him whenever he came up in their conversations. It felt weirdly like a mother-in-law slowly warming up to her future son-in-law.

Skylar needed a moment to get comfortable after stepping into the car that protected her from the cold wind and harsh rain outside. If it weren't for him, I'd be tucked into bed and sleeping soundly right now.

After last time's lesson, Skylar now remembered to put on her sunglasses when she went out.

"What's with the sunglasses?" Tobias joked. "Are you pretending to be a legally blind person?"

They soon arrived at his house, not far from the Fords' old residence. He had only brought her here once all throughout the duration of their entire relationship.

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Remembering Tobias' obsession with cleanliness, Skylar cleaned the soles of her shoes before entering the house.

When they were inside, the man went to the bathroom to retrieve a warm towel for her. She

received it and bent down, ready to wipe her shoes off when he suddenly said, "That's for your

hair and face. You got wet after getting down from the car, didn't you?"

After a moment of hesitation, she reached up and used the towel to dry her hair off, hanging it

back in the bathroom once she was done.

Her gaze fell upon the toilet. The cover was open, and there were no feminine products by the

washbasin. Everything that was there was all arranged neatly.

Knock, knock.

Skylar quickly composed herself and opened the door, greeting Tobias with a smile. "You did a good job at cleaning up the bathroom."

She didn't say anything more, but he knew she'd stayed so long in there to check if there were any traces of another woman's presence.

He led her to the dining room, where she cautiously took a seat down at the table. She felt weirdly antsy and not as comfortable as she was with Madelyn. Opening the kitchen refrigerator, he took out a box and placed it on the table in front of Skylar, who merely stared blankly out the window and didn't seem to notice at all.

Is she still thinking about the incident from this morning?

The pictures of that accident would likely come up in future web searches of "crazy fan behavior," and the story would never be laid to rest.

It was only when Tobias called her name once more that Skylar snapped back to reality.

Why did Tobias bring me here? He has to know about what happened at the mall today. Why didn't he ask about it or offer any words of reassurance?

She watched as he opened up the box, revealing the medium-sized cake inside with a

"twenty-two"-shaped candle perched on top of it.

Oh. She'd completely forgotten today was her real birthday.

She'd once briefly mentioned to Tobias that the birthdate on her identity card and her real

birthdate was different. When registering for the card, she had altered her birthdate to be

several months earlier than the real date so that she could apply for school early.

Back then, government background checks hadn't been as strict, so she hadn't needed any

sort of connections to do so. It came as a surprise to her that Tobias still remembered this

fact.

The dark forest chocolate cake was clearly an afterthought of his that had possibly been

randomly bought off a bakery on the street. It wasn't properly decorated, nor did it look very

appetizing.

He'd likely realized last second that today was her birthday. After all, she'd forgotten all about it as well.

Skylar had never been one to place much importance on birthdays ever since she was a child.

Her grandma would cook a simple dinner for her to celebrate, but that was about it.

No one else celebrated her birthday, and no one else other than her grandma remembered the actual date.

Skylar wrapped her arms around Tobias' waist, burying her face into his chest and taking in the familiar scent of white sandalwood.

Her vision blurring with tears, she told him, "You're too nice to me. I didn't think you'd

remember my birthday. The cake is a little small, though."

He gently ran a hand through her hair. "I thought you were on a diet. You wouldn't be able to

finish it all if I'd bought a larger cake anyway, so I figured a small one would do."

Skylar pouted, moved by how considerate he was being towards her.

"Did you get me a birthday gift too? Or a card at least?"

She instantly deflated when she saw him pull a long, thin rectangle-shaped box out from his suit pocket.

If it had been a square-shaped box, she could have at least hoped for a ring.

A Swarovski necklace laid inside the box, and she rubbed at her eyes before holding it up close to inspect it.

It wasn't that she had expensive taste, but she was surprised to see Tobias gift something that only cost several hundred. The Claude Monet he'd gifted her last time nearly cost ten million.