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Skylar gazed back into Tobias' eyes, showing no intention to back down. "I said I've been wrongly accused. I haven't done anything wrong. Why would I sell myself out anyway? It's not like I'm that insatiable or that the black card you gave me isn't enough! I'm no saint, but you should stop judging others based on your own preconceptions!"

Tobias lifted Skylar's chin. The woman had such a firm look in her eyes, perfectly concealing her nerves.

"You act all high and mighty in front of me, but why couldn't you say anything to the cops? All you did was feign innocence."

The way he grabbed Skylar's chin hurt so much that she began to grip his arm tightly.

With that, Tobias let go of her and left the interrogation room.

Skylar called out to the man, only to watch him leave. She then slouched over the table.

At one point, the woman thought a Prince Charming was about to save her from this mess.

Alas, she forgot that Tobias was far from a Prince Charming; he was a wolf that devoured everything without even leaving any bones behind.

A few minutes later, Skylar was taken out of the interrogation room. Her hands instantly felt lighter after having her cuffs removed.

Tobias stood at the end of the hallway not far from her, and next to him was an elderly, white-haired man dressed in a police chief's uniform.

The man continuously bowed his head, while Tobias looked haughty as usual.

Standing afar, Skylar couldn't hear what they were talking about.

Then, the female officer, who had talked about breaking her own daughter's legs, called out to Skylar. "I'm sorry about what I said earlier, Ms. Jones. I went too far. Don't take it to heart, okay? Please tell Mr. Ford to let us off. We can't afford to lose our jobs."

Skylar furrowed her brows. Once again, she had experienced a taste of Tobias' power over the law and authorities.

Even the female officer who had behaved so arrogantly before this was now apologizing to her.

Still, Skylar had no mercy to spare. "Well, that's your problem. You cops are supposed to fight for justice, but instead, you accused me of things I never did. You deserve to lose your jobs."

The female office burst into tears. How could this girl be so cruel? She has no sympathy at all.

It was already past midnight by the time Skylar and Tobias walked out of the police station. They weren't far from the sea, so the night breeze was especially chilly.

Tobias took off his black windbreaker jacket and tossed it toward Skylar.

The latter failed to catch it, thus causing it to fall to the ground.

Seeing the jacket come into contact with the soil on the ground, Skylar hurriedly bent over to pick it up before dusting the dirt off it.

She looked rather unusual wearing the outerwear of a man of Tobias' height but instantly felt much warmer thanks to it.

Instead of feeling cold, her stomach began to growl now. The young woman was so famished that she could even smell seafood in the air.

Harry, who had also been released, was still furious over tonight's events. He spotted Skylar leaving with a man in a black suit and entering a Maybach.

Despite not catching a glimpse of the man's face, Harry saw his figure clearly. The man was tall and broad, and he had short hair.

He's definitely not the old man in the thread.

How many men does that girl even have, then?

Inside the car, Skylar's heart raced as though she had committed a crime.

"I'll return your jacket after washing it," she finally said, breaking the silence. "But I can give it back to you now if you're cold."

"It can't be washed."

Skylar felt the jacket's fabric. "Why not? It's not like it's made of paper. Well, I can have it dry cleaned."

Tobias raised an eyebrow slightly. "It costs thousands to clean this windbreaker."

Hearing that, Skylar immediately took the jacket off and shoved it into Tobias' hands. "You fraud."

Just as Skylar turned, Tobias caught sight of the red mark on her neck, and the smile on his face instantly vanished.

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Tobias' eyes turned so frosty that Skylar couldn't help but shudder.

What's with this guy? His mood changes like the weather!

Suddenly feeling the air around them become thinner, she carefully gazed at Tobias.

The man swiftly held her by the neck. "You're actually screwing other guys behind my back, huh?"

Skylar's eyes turned bloodshot. Unable to breathe, she stared straight into Tobias' pupils.

As the man let go, she let out a few coughs and panted wildly.

"What the hell did you do that for? It's not what you think! I was clawed by someone! You're a grown adult, and you can't even tell the difference between a scratch and a hickey?"

In a fit of rage, she chastised Tobias for lashing out at her without knowing the truth.

Tobias placed a hand on Skylar's neck once again, but the latter instinctively moved away, having already been traumatized by what he just did.

The man's dangerous eyes narrowed. The mark on Skylar's neck looked way too vague under the car's dim lighting.

"Take me back. It's already late, and I want to sleep." Skylar felt agonized.

She realized how unlucky she always was. Nothing good ever happens to me.

Just when I finally decided to have fun during an excursion, this happens.

At this point, all Skylar wanted to do was to hide in a dark corner where no one would bother her.

"Take you back? So you can sleep with your male classmate and get caught?" Tobias's voice sounded more chilly than the night breeze.

"Should I sleep in the streets, then? I don't want to freeze to death! Or how about you let me sleep in your car tonight?"

Tobias told the chauffeur to head to King Hotel.

"That hotel is closed to the public. It's only for staff members," Skylar remarked upon realizing where they were going.

Tobias cast her a glance. "So you're saying even the boss isn't allowed to stay there?"

Realization instantly dawned on Skylar. She had forgotten who Tobias was.

Everything felt like a dream to her now. Why would someone like him be involved with me, of all women?

He could get any girl he wants with just a snap of his fingers.

Upon arriving at the hotel, Tobias finally took a good look at Skylar's neck under the dazzling lights. It was indeed a scratch mark.

The manager showed up at the lobby to personally welcome the CEO on his late-night arrival.

Every other staff member on duty did the same, greeting him with reverence.

This was a sight Skylar had never seen before. She kept her head low, deliberately maintaining a distance from Tobias.

Everyone knew Tobias had a fiancée, yet here he was showing up at a hotel late at night.

Who was Skylar to indecently crawl into the CEO's bed?

Tobias didn't come here often. Whenever he did, though, it would be to accompany Claudia, and they would use the presidential suite on the top floor.

With the ring of the elevator, Skylar felt her chest tighten. All she wanted was a place to sleep tonight. She didn't want to come to a hotel with Tobias under everyone's odd gazes.

After a long night, it was already early morning by the time they arrived upstairs.

Skylar took off her coat and glanced around. The place looked far more extravagant than she had thought.

I still have a little bit of money. These words that Tobias had once said echoed in her mind.

Skylar's arm was revealed to be full of red scratch marks. Not only that, but her lip was wounded, and the corner of her eye was slightly bruised.

Tobias held the woman's arm, causing her to use her other hand to pull her sleeve down and cover the scratch marks.

Being ganged up on was nothing to be proud of.

Even so, Tobias had already seen her wounds. His tone turned gentle and comforting to the ears.

But if one were to listen carefully, the man still sounded extremely frigid. "What happened? Did you get into a fight?"

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"I guess I kicked their asses back there. Then again, it's not like they were that hard to deal with," Skylar said.

Tobias beheld the girl's pint-size frame intently and listened to her bravado without comment.

"Who's been picking on you? You could just tell me."

Be it a few simple words, they meant the world to her.

Because no one else said anything like that to her. Ever.

All the other kids heckled her and called her mother a murderer when she was little.

Her grandmother taught her that poor children could not afford to pick fights with anyone. Endure it. Take the high road. That was what she would always say.

And whenever she needed someone to have her back when she got older, Jeremy was nowhere to be found.

Skylar shook her head. "I can take care of this myself!"

She reminded herself that she should not harbor such expectations from someone like Tobias.

And so, she left it at that.

Neither was he going to make her, as he had his own ways of finding out.

Her belly then proposed to change the subject. She held a hand to it when it started growling too loudly.

Tobias picked up the phone and called for room service. He ended the call with a specific request. "We'll have something healthier."

Half the contents of the bottled water were emptied to help stave off her hunger pangs.

"I don't like healthy," she said.

Her palate leaned towards savory. Even Laura's home cooking was deemed a tad too light.

In fact, hot sauce was an indispensable staple for her in almost everything.

Tobias went for the first-aid kit from which he acquired and passed along the iodine tincture. "A lighter palate will help with the healing."

Skylar glanced down at the wound on her arm and did not think it warranted a trip to the hospital. She reckoned that it would be fine before long.

Their orders were tabled fairly quickly. To her, the plant-based cuisine was more aesthetic than appetizing.

But beggars could never be choosers. Hence, she picked up the cutlery anyway.

"Did you choose to bunk with a guy on purpose?" Tobias's question was not helping.

"There's a rumor spreading in the campus' forum. The girls in class are shunning me because they believe that I might have something contagious."

She then dolefully thrust out her phone towards him to prove her case.

His reaction to the post was unexpectedly mild.

Not quite what she had hoped for, but her disappointment was fleeting.

She almost forgot that whatever was between Tobias and herself was just a game.

His detachment, as such, was more than appropriate.

"So like, who's this guy to you?"

She picked up the fork to shovel in another mouthful of salad. "Never met him! I don't know who posted that, cause I've never taken that photo."

Tobias remained a picture of calm. "Did you try finding out?"

That reminded her that she had yet to check in with Penelope regarding the IP tracing.

Penelope: I'm too much of a noob to be able to nail down this champ. So sorry, babe.

Skylar tapped away and sent back an "Ok" emoji.

She exhaled before she turned back to Tobias. "I can't identify the culprit. Do you think the hackers from your company might be able to help?"

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"You're supposed to be the one satisfying my whims, not the other way round. This wasn't part of the deal," Tobias said.

Skylar lowered her head in silence.

Truth be told, she thought she might be pushing her luck with him here.

"Let's just forget it. It doesn't matter who's behind that keyboard, seeing how messed up everything already is."

Unbeknownst to her, he had already sent the link to the IT department, as he could tell at a glance that the photograph was doctored. He was curious to know who could have done something so sinister and why.

After that, he pulled her into his arms and took in the lightness of her scent. "Try to stay out of trouble, yeah? An old man like myself can't be running around cleaning up after you."

The young woman looked at him. Her eyes widened at how his tone could have graduated from cold to warm, then affectionate.

She held her head close and nodded quietly.

Trouble always found its way to her, whether she wanted it or not.

When Tobias stepped out of the shower, Skylar was sprawled out on the bed. Her chest rose and fell subtly.

He leaned over and tucked the girl in, all the while marveling at how she could lull herself to sleep practically anywhere.

The wound on her arm still looked raw, and the iodine tincture had been placed at the side untouched.

Tobias dabbed the swab with the tincture and rubbed it over her arm with the lightest of touches.

His movement was slow and deliberate while he constantly monitored her expression.

As Skylar clambered groggily out of bed the next day, she noticed the yellowish stain upon her wound.

She figured that it must have been his handiwork, as it seemed improbable that she could have done that in her sleep.

Meanwhile, Tobias was still asleep despite it being close to roll call. As Skylar got dressed, she noticed that his phone was on the carpet.

It was only when she picked it up that she realized that he was still using an Android model from several years ago.

She did not take him for the nostalgic type.

Unlike him, though, she was stuck with her old phone previously due to her finances.

The display on his phone awoke to show notifications for a dozen missed calls. All of them from Tanya.

That weighed heavily on Skylar's conscience. She felt like she had hurt the woman and was single-handedly destroying the life the latter was trying to build together with him.

She went as far as to imagine that they might be getting married because Tanya was with a child.

Perhaps it was not convenient for an expectant woman to get into that kind of stuff with him at the moment. So maybe that was why she was roped in.

That very thought gave her goosebumps.

When she extended her hand to place the phone on the side table, she was intercepted at the wrist. His half-awakened inflection was low and husky. "Do you find my phone that fascinating?"

The mobile device fell some ways and onto the bed when her grip loosened unexpectedly. "Your fiancée had called many times. She must be worried sick since you hadn't been home all night."

"How considerate of you. Would you be so kind as to call her back on my behalf and tell her that I'm with you?" he said.

Skylar blinked silently and tentatively. What the hell is he talking about? Is this guy even serious?

"I really feel for her. Like me, she has given so much for so very little in return."

Tobias got up from the bed and calmly adjusted his cuffs. "Unlike her, you still found a way to be empathetic in spite of your circumstances. You should know that not everyone is deserving of it."

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The young woman did not understand their problems. As a matter of fact, she would rather not know.

This man was like a poppy – captivating, sedate, but deadly.

With that, she chose not to speak.

"I'll stay here with you until the three days are up." When he called out, she stopped at the door and looked over her shoulders towards him.

"You need to prepare for your wedding, so don't let me hold you up," she said.

"I don't need to hear your unsolicited opinion," the man replied.

Skylar was afraid of how she would cope without his tyranny when he finally decided to boot her aside.

Hence, she chose restraint.

Nearly everyone knew what happened by the time she went back to the hotel.

It was hard not to, considering the manner by which Harry and herself were taken into custody last night.

The news got more exaggerated the more they spread. It was even said they were buck naked when they were taken away.

Even Avery from the class next door got wind of it.

Meanwhile, Harry was pretty shaken up and looked like a shell of his former self overnight.

When Skylar found him, it was just him on a rock, staring guietly out at the ocean.

She came up from the side and extended the newly purchased bottle of water towards him.

"Hey, I'm really sorry about yesterday."

Her eyes lighted up when he received the peace offering from her.

In the next second, she heard it splash upon the crashing waves.

"I knew I shouldn't have agreed to share a room with you. Do you think a bottle of water is going to make up for it?"

"I didn't expect things to turn out this way. I'll go explain to everyone."

"Who do you think is going to believe anything that comes out of your mouth, huh?"

"There's nothing else I can do if you don't trust me. I can only say that I'm sorry."

"Besides, why are you messing around with all those different guys? You're still so young. Would it kill you to go without money?"

That lodged a lump in her throat, but nonetheless, she eked out a smile. "You may be right, but who wouldn't want to go on living?"

Then, Skylar turned to head back to their hotel room. It was time to pack up and leave. Harry was in enough trouble as it was.

She doubted anyone would notice her absence at the bonfire party later.

At lunch, the entire class congregated around Shailene Clover, whose father was a department manager at Ford Group.

"You know, guys, my dad pulled a few strings to get me a room at King Hotel because he was worried that I might not be used to the rooms here."

The others cast looks of envy her way. The King Hotel, which was a stone's throw away, was an absolute dream compared to the three-star dump they were in.

Lydia placed a hand on Shailene's shoulder. "Do you think your dad could get me in there too?"

"You know I'd always look out for my girls. You can move in with me after the bonfire party. I heard that they have a spa, enzyme bath and stuff."

Lydia was not at all pleased about Shailene taking the spotlight off of herself but was willing to overlook that in exchange for better accommodations.

Her expectations were for all the selfies and TikTok videos she planned to shoot and tag at King Hotel to trend.

After all, the exclusivity of the place would take the luster off even the socialites and their Bulgaris.