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At the same time, Harry secretly tailed Skylar as he wanted to prove that there was nothing going on between them.

Everyone had their own take on the fiasco. As much as he tried to explain that she went off with another man, no one was sold on it.

At that moment, Skylar had run to the beach upon receiving Tobias's call. There, he stood tall with his strapping shoulders and poised back towards her.

The sand fell from the pebble as she took aim at him with it.

She had wanted to pick up a bigger one but did not have the guts for it.

When he turned, the breeze sweeping across the water ruffled her hair, which flitted and whipped along as though beholden to its will. The woman was so lithe that a single gust threatened to bowl her over.

The only part he found satisfactory about her body was her bosom. It had the right amount of suppleness and fitted amply inside his hand.

"So this is your idea of a field trip? Hanging around the beach? Fishing?"

"There's still the bonfire party after dark, with lots of hot school girls. But they are all proper ladies, so you shouldn't get any funny ideas."

She still thought of him as a player who used and discarded women.

Talking relationships with him were like sending a moth to a flame.

His eyes narrowed. "Surely you are not taking me for a dog that humps every leg I see? I'm not unprincipled, if you must know."

She put a hand to her forehead. Anyone had the right to say that unabashedly, except him.

Their first encounter inside an operating theater had no emotional basis. They had just been acquainted then. If that did not count as unprincipled, she would not know what did.

She was wearing a white shirt on top of a black camisole. The fiery intensity of her nail polish matched the claret of her lipstick. Her tresses reached down and spilled over her shoulders.

In that getup, Skylar looked like a pinup straight out of a movie poster from the eighties.

When he saw that she had so little on, he brought her close and used his body to warm her.

He did not dislike that she put a face on, as it did not bother him.

"I know a good spot. Lots of trees with little traffic. Shall we meet there tonight?" His hand was already cruising along her thin blacks straps seeking out his favorite haunts.

"Don't. Someone's going to see us... My reputation already stinks so bad that I'm probably never getting married."

His teasing touch had left her weak at the knees, as it always did. She hated when that happened.

"With me around, what have you got to worry about? Tonight at eight. I'll see you there."

The dreadful man was so serious on the surface that he was hard to get close to.

But underneath, he could get pretty crazy.

"I. Don't. F*ck. In. Public. Aren't you worried that the boars might get you?"

"I was thinking about paying homage to nature. Whoever said we are going to f*ck in public? You cheeky little girl!

She coughed while her face ran red to the ears.

Someone else watched from a distance as Skylar frolicked with the man from last night. As they kissed and hugged, he also saw how Tobias's hands never left her rear.

Harry had that all on a video which he posted to the class's chat group as proof that he was not her boyfriend.

Just like that, Skylar Jones had once again become the eye of the storm.

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Shailene: We can't see his face! His height and frame look like he might be someone from campus security.

Harry: Don't know, don't care. Just don't drag me into it.

Lydia: Could she take so many at a time?

Harry: I heard that they are going to meet in the forested area at eight tonight. To. F*ck.

Skylar needed to go back and show her face for a while because she was already on the instructor's bad side.

Before she left, Tobias threw her his coat. "There won't be anyone to take care of you if you're sick."

She draped it over her arm. As she had already been labeled a slut, she did not want to confirm that by going back wearing a man's coat.

Without looking back, she said, "The universe provides. Warm water is my panacea."

She had not gone very far before she remembered something important.

"Does the King Hotel allow for family?"

"Theoretically, no. My mother primarily comes here for short stretches just to rest and recuperate."

She recalled his mother, who had visited at her place previously.

From the way Claudia carried herself, Skylar could tell she must have been an impressible character in her youth.

The young woman then shrugged. "There's a b*tch from class who said that her father's going to put her up in your mother's room, along with her friends."

She thought to throw in that last bit just for some extra pizzazz.

The sting from the claw marks on her arms still had her seething.

She had enough of being the boiling frog. Someone else's gonna get it this time, and it's not going to be me!

The man was smart; hence, he had a good grasp of what she was thinking.

For one, his mother never stayed in the same room.

To him, tapping on connections to gain occupancy was not something out of the ordinary either.

Thus, this request was not something he would have entertained on any other day.

But since she had already asked, he decided to make an exception. "Alright. What's her name?"

Her eyes burned. "Shailene Clover."

"Okay, I'm on it. Remember tonight. Don't be late."

She had not the vaguest idea what he meant earlier about paying homage to nature. Was he going to prance around naked under the full moon?

Skylar was summoned by the instructor the minute she stepped in. "You seem to be quite easy about your newfound notoriety, young lady."

"No, I'm not! Whatever was said on the forums simply isn't true."

As soon as she said that, Mr. Duggan put a phone in her face. Since Skylar was excluded from the class chat group, her heart sank when she saw the video.

Harry must have switched camps long before he sold out.

Everything about that titillating recording was obvious, save for the faces of Tobias and herself.

Her lips twitched. "My boyfriend and I were just kissing and cuddling. Isn't that what couples normally do?"

The instructor's eyes darkened as he shook his head in disapproval. "You're hopeless. If you are so desperate, you might as well get out and go get yourself knocked up."

Hearing that from an educator left the young woman flabbergasted.

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It was eight, and Skylar was making her way toward the location mentioned earlier while cussing.

The trees, the shrubs, and the darkness all looked the same to her. With her poor sense of direction, she reckoned she might not be able to get out if she lost herself inside.

She would be damned if some bear had decided to show up halfway and pick her up for its supper.

So in Tobias's honor, the girl mentally exhausted every colorful expression in her library of expletives.

Then, she received a call.

He told her that he would take her, and they would wait outside King Hotel together for her classmates.

After that, she went on to quietly rescind what she said about him.

In the thick of night, the music that blared in the distance from where the bonfire party was held reached her ears.

This merriment and revelry had no place for her.

She pulled the lapels of Tobias' coat closer as she trudged through the dark towards the rendezvous point.

Tobias leaned by the side of the entrance. He had one hand on his hip and another on a lighted cigarette.

Tapping at the watch on his wrist impatiently, he finally saw her coming.

She took her place beside him. "Are you sure we aren't doing anything highly embarrassing? We are in the middle of nowhere."

"Look, if you really want me to do something to you, just say so. It's a bit chilly out here, but I'm game if you are."

Skylar blushed and averted her gaze while ignoring him.

She was not going to provide him with any more ammunition to shoot herself in the foot with.

The girl stumbled a few times on the unlit path. And more than a few times her eyes darted to the left and to the right to check if there were any hungry beasts staring back.

"Do you have night blindness?"

She picked up her pace. "Healthy people like me don't really get to suffer from diseases of affluence."

He turned around and held her hand. There was a spot of coolness inside her palm.

Her fingers lifted to reveal a jade pendant encrusted in gold. She lifted her eyes to him and furrowed.

"Your sign makes you prone to encountering the supernatural. Hang on to this for good luck."

Skylar shuddered to think that he even knew her sign.

Compared to any ghost, this seemingly omniscient man scared her even more.

When she saw the necklace's exquisite workmanship and the clarity of the jade within, a thought struck her.

It would not be a bad idea to pawn off the item, pay for her mother's treatment and then take her far away from here.

Good riddance to studies and the future.

Where her reputation was at right now, it would only get worse for her should she ever become famous.

She knew the black card Tobias gave her must be tied to his phone number.

Thus, if she were to withdraw a significant sum, it would not elude the wily old fox's attention.

Should she upset him, she might be slapped with another label of scammer. Ironically, this time, it might be her own turn to go behind bars.

A gift, however, was a different story. She had the right to decide what to do with it.

"Just a small trinket. It isn't worth much."

That did much to burst her bubble as the best-laid plans went to waste.

Meanwhile, Tobias thought that the crestfallen look on her face looked rather endearing under the murky moonlight.

Besides, he was definitely not telling her that he acquired the antique necklace from Hendricks Auction House in a bid that started from twenty-eight million. The man was not interested to know whether it could actually ward off evil. At the end of the day, he just wanted to give it to her.

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The ends of the gold chain were clipped together before Tobias could try to help her put it on.

The girl was quick; that spoke to her independence.

After he spent much time with her, he had learned that she was the hands-on type.

Were it up to any other woman, they would have coquettishly commented about how much they liked it and asked for their suitor to put it on for them.

Tobias held her hand anew as the cawing of a murder of crows spiraled overhead. The path grew more foreboding the more they advanced.

There was hardly any warmth emanating from his palm.

When they finally came to halt before a spot where a standing statue was prominently featured, Skylar swallowed hard. Oh God, I knew it! I knew this was all too good to be true – he's going to kill me here!

"You are not going to conduct a blood sacrifice, are you?"

He looked straight at her without speaking.

Then his lips curled into a smile. "Whoops."

Skylar's legs stiffened and refused to move when her subconscious mind screamed for them to run. Her face trembled in her hands as she dreaded to look upon the man's face.

"It's no wonder you won't leave me alone. Killing is against the law. Have a heart, Tobias, and let me go."

"The law' are just two words for someone like me who has already known the blood of countless innocents with my hands."

A childlike whimper was elicited from between her paralyzed lips.

That led him to finally understand what drew him to her.

"Please. I don't want to die." At this moment, the sky opened up and cast its bloodless light upon the earth. Skylar was now able to see Tobias's hardened face illuminated in its entirety.

He came close and ran his fingers through her hair. "You are always talking about ending it all. But you are obviously not ready for it!"

Admittedly, he was right.

As she was gripped by her fear and terror, she saw him retrieve two sticks of candles which he lighted up using a flame drew from a spark wheel lighter.

She held her nose against the rising white fumes in case they were an incapacitating agent.

He then raised the candles between his hands and bowed to the statue before he planted them at its feet.

"This is the guardian of this mountain. My mother's really into this stuff, and we used to visit every year... You didn't really believe that I was going to kill you, did you?"

Skylar's mouth was agape. And there she was. Petrified, and begging for her dear life.

She kicked herself for misinterpreting a completely innocuous activity and getting all worked up for nothing.

After all that, she patted down her own chest as her heart was still throttling. "Why didn't you just say so? Did you think that was funny?"

He wrapped his hands around her from behind in a reassuring embrace. "It was alright, I guess. You squawked like a quail, just like my baby brother."

At the same time, the rustling of leaves and branches disturbed the stillness of the forest.

Still fidgety, Skylar exchanged glances with Tobias. "Did you bring along bodyguards?"

He shook his head slightly. "Why do you ask?"

Footsteps from a distance drew closer and closer.

Harry emerged at the head of the pack with the rest of the class in tow. The lure of the bonfire party apparently paled in comparison to the promise of a raunchy live stream.

Someone had even brought along a high-definition camera.

The dozen over powerful beams of white swept seemingly at random before invariably coming to rest upon Tobias and Skylar.

To avoid their blinding glare, Skylar buried her face in Tobias's chest.

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The veins on Tobias' temples raised and throbbed.

There were some audible groans of disappointment when the newcomers saw that the couple was both properly dressed.

The good looks of the man stood in polarity with the awfulness of his expression.

Has it not started? Did we show up too early?

Tobias relinquished his grip on Skylar. "Who the hell are you lot? Turn off your flashlights!"

He disliked the way the light left his sensitive eyes unbearably dry and reddish.

"Uh, we're just passing through..." Harry said.

"They are all my classmates. Let's just forget it."

Despite that, Tobias was not to be persuaded.

He stormed up to Harry and snatched his torchlight from him. "Didn't anyone tell you that it's rude to shine your light on someone else like that?"

Unwilling to appeared cowed, Harry retorted, "It's too dark to see the way. Then again, what are you two doing in the bushes at this hour?"

Tobias's face scrunched into a terrible scowl. "Whatever I do with my girl is my business. Who are you to demand that I explain myself?"

The reaction from those gathered was immediate. They did not think Skylar really had a boyfriend.

At that instant, they started to wonder how the photo of her with the old man posted on the forum even came about.

Shailene, who was amongst the group, thought she might have seen Skylar's boyfriend somewhere before. She just could not remember exactly where.

Skylar thought the more others knew about the relationship between Tobias and herself, the more complicated things could get.

"There are mosquitoes everywhere, and they're killing me. Come on, let's head back."

Given the coldness of the night, Tobias thought that hers was a terrible excuse.

Perhaps it was his intimidating presence that convinced the students to turn their torches off.

"Don't mind us. We're leaving," Harry said.

Having led the others on a wild goose chase, he had now put himself in a spot.

"Just like that? Aren't you going to apologize?"

Left without a choice, Harry grudgingly offered one up under his breath.

Tobias raised the torch he took from Harry and hurled it onto the ground with force. The anger in his eyes had yet to dissipate.

"I'll let this slide, for now. If any of you followed us here on purpose, you'd better pray that I don't find out."

Harry's lips tightened while he averted his gaze.

As Skylar followed Tobias out, she caught a glimpse of Harry's ashen face and thought he had it coming to him.

With this, she considered both of them to be even.

As she had anticipated that she could not return to that room with Harry, she had her things moved back to King Hotel beforehand.

This would be yet another night she shared a bed with Tobias.

When there was only the posse of students left, Shailene took a swing at the grass beneath her feet. "Coming all this way, for this? They don't even have their clothes off. What a bummer."

Lydia, on the other hand, fronted Harry with arms akimbo. "Your intel better be good next time."

She then put a hand to her chin. "Skylar's boyfriend is pretty good-looking. He's at least one ninety, and with those features, he could be of mixed parentage."

"It's no wonder she needs money so badly. She has herself a boy-toy to feed! Shame about that face, though," Shailene sneered.

When they got back to King Hotel, Tobias stepped to the side to field a call while Skylar sat quietly on the couch in the lobby.

She initially sat with legs crossed before she put them down after feeling a little self-conscious.

"Come on in, babe." Skylar eyes widened when she heard Shailene's voice.