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When she saw Shailene and Lydia stroll in hand in hand, her brows furrowed.

"Hmm, why are you here? This place isn't open to just anyone... especially not those who can't afford it," Shailene said.

"I'm a guest, so I'll be staying for free! But your dad is allowed to put you up here?" Skylar replied.

Lydia rolled her eyes. "You're just envious that Shailene has a great dad. I heard that you're an orphan? Aww, that's so sad!"

Just looking at the two girls had Skylar gaging; she found them to be extremely repugnant.

After Tobias ended the call, he rejoined Skylar and looked at the duo standing opposite them.

He reckoned that one of them must be Shailene.

Shailene was astonished. "How is it that you are here as well? King Hotel is not open to the public."

Tobias reached into his breast pocket and produced a name card which he placed into the girl's hand before he put an arm around Skylar's waist.

The girl's hand trembled. "You... You're Tobias Ford?"

Lydia looked just as shell-shocked.

They could scarcely believe how the man they called Skylar's boy-toy turned out to be Tobias Ford.

And to have him introduce Skylar as his girlfriend absolutely blew their mind.

Shailene threw the name card onto the floor in disbelief. "Don't think that you could try to fool us with that fake name card. Why would Tobias Ford be here? My dad says that he only visits once a year."

"Your dad's Yann Clover, right? As of this afternoon, your father is out of a job. If he asks, tell him that it was because you, his daughter, hurt my girlfriend."

He then looked towards the lobby manager. "Why did you let them in?"

The man understood him immediately. "We are sorry, Miss, the hotel does not host outside guests. We may have to ask you both to leave."

The two girls were dumbfounded.

Shailene remained skeptical. Her father had clearly told her that everything had been arranged.

"My father is Yann Clover. All of you should know who he is."

The manager maintained his genial tone. "Mr. Ford has requested that you exit the premises, so please allow me to show you out."

She looked at the backs of the couple walking away from them.

"Is that man really is Tobias Ford?"

"Miss," said the manager flatly as he gestured towards the exit.

When Shailene and Lydia were shooed out from the hotel, the former promptly called home to get her father to help.

To her surprise, it was her mother who picked up on the other end. "Your Dad had been informed by the human resource department that he had been dismissed... I don't think he's in the mood to dabble in your affairs."

"Next time, could you not say that I'm your girlfriend?" Skylar toweled her wet hair as she walked out. Her body carried the scent of the shower cream as the steam on her skin rose faintly into the air before it disappeared.

He was by the window and proceeded to stub out his cigarette when she approached. "Then what should I be calling you instead? My lover?"

"You should try to avoid scrutiny since you are about to become someone else's husband."

"Why do you need to keep reminding me of this? Does it really bother you?"

Skylar thought that was obvious. After all, she never wanted to get mixed up with a married man.

If she were given any other choice, she would have not gone down this path.

The young woman placed down the towel and went to sit by the window. She let the billowy air from outside wash through her senses.

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"Everyone at your wedding will know about us, and they will look upon me with pity and ridicule. I wouldn't want the ignominy of being known as the one who has been dumped."

Tobias paused with lips pursed. "I understand."

Upon that, Skylar heaved a sigh of relief. That went better than she thought it would.

Her subliminal despondence did not go unnoticed.

All of a sudden, she was swept up in a cradle and brought to the bed. Then almost half of his body mass melded unto her.

His lips were soft and gentle, as were the familiar moans they elicited from hers when they caressed upon her skin.

Guilt was the word when she wholeheartedly surrendered her flesh to this cursed addiction.

She allowed her bathrobe to be loosened and parted so she might tremble at his touch.

His long and slender digits were about to deepen her pleasure when their primal symphony was rudely interrupted.

Bang! Wood was smashed against concrete.

Someone had the door to the room violently thrown open.

Tobias was momentarily stunned. Skylar's hands remained hooked tightly around his nape for just as long.

"That's gone far enough, Tobias." Claudia's bellow reverberated around the presidential suite.

Skylar was shuddering when Tobias quick hands wrapped the comforter over her to shield her.

Only her face was left visible when she shrunk beneath the sheets.

"Mom, why does it have to be so hard? When will I ever be free of this little vixen?" Tanya sobbed as she buried a tearful face into Claudia's shoulders.

Skylar's heart was racing so fast that it threatened to expunge itself from her orifices.

"Please. I can explain!" said the girl within the sheets.

She then fell silent upon realizing how futile that would be.

No amount of whitewashing was going to justify this sort of travesty.

Her mind then began to postulate all the different scenarios that would befall a mistress in an encounter with the man's wife – Getting her hair pulled; stripped; her teeth kicked in by a bunch of hired thugs.

At one point, she was dying to have his fiancée discover their affair so that he might leave her to her peace.

In hindsight, she wished otherwise because now she was dead scared.

Skylar was meeting her counterpart for the first time. Tanya was not merely stunning; she was unreal.

"Didn't you know we are to be married? How could you!" The wetness of Tanya's eyes soaked the fabric on Claudia's shoulder.

Even so, Tobias gnashed his teeth in annoyance. "Did you have to make such a fuss about it?"

Claudia's hand swiped across her son's cheeks before she held it to her own chest. Her trembling lips were bluish with rage.

"You're going to come home with me this instant. Should you refuse to cut all ties with this woman and do what's right by Tanya, I will disown you."

"Let's talk this over later. Just don't frighten her." Tobias responded.

His words sent the older woman over the edge. Her bloodshot eyes burned at the girl cowering in bed.

As much as Skylar wanted to step out, her own nakedness dissuaded her. She needed a hole in which to bury her shame.

"When are you going to stop tormenting me? Will you be happier if I was dead? Didn't you say that you love me? That you aren't serious about these women? That this is only because I can't satisfy you because of my pregnancy? Come home, and don't make mother mad anymore."

Claudia's face dropped when she heard that.

The older woman had been praying and hoping for Tanya to add to the family. Her own son had crossed the line this time.

For a man to fool around while his wife was with a child, one slap would never be enough.

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Tanya's improvised monologue left Tobias unimpressed.

To think she had the gall to claim that she was with his child when he had never even touched her.

He was about to grill Tanya when Claudia clutched at her chest again. Her bowed face contorted as her lungs gasped for air.

Immediately, Tobias dialed for emergency services while he propped his mother up. He feared her preexisting condition might be acting up at this very moment.

Skylar only stepped out to pick up the bathrobe on the floor when the room was emptied.

In his hurry, Tobias had left behind his phone and his watch.

The timepiece imprinted his warmth upon her hands.

It ticked crisply by the minute and seconds when held close. Should she not be happy?

His fiancée had finally caught up, and the climax was spectacular.

But why did Tanya's words felt like a stab in her chest?

When Skylar arose to regard the scenes outside the window, her mood sank.

Tanya was conceiving, and the child was his. Even if she needed to survive, and even if her mother needed funds for her recovery, she could not be so selfish as to persist in wrangling on with him.

If it was gratification that he sought, women were the balm he did not lack.

Skylar went to get dressed when her eyes fell upon the unsealed box of Okamoto Zero Ones.

That must be what Tobias had planned to use.

Scoffing, she then condemned it to the bin.

With her luggage at her feet, she passed his watch and phone along to the front desk.

"Mr. Ford might be back for these."

The manner by which the bonny receptionist regarded her was equal parts quizzical and contempt.

The sun had not risen when Skylar came out. Thus, rejoining the other students was not an option. She waited for hours by the roadside before the bus took her back to the city.

Then, she made a withdrawal of five-thousand with the black card the following morning.

Laura was hosting her friends at the International Garden as she usually did.

Yet, Skylar went upstairs without exchanging pleasantries. After she tore up the contract, his card and the necklace he gifted took over their place inside the locked drawer.

It took some deliberation before she decided to leave Tobias a note.

I'm leaving. Borrowed five thousand from you. I will find my own way to raise the money for my mother's medical expenses. Please help me to cover for one month at the time being. May fortune always favor the good.

Back at the hospital, the doctor came by the ward to run some checks on Claudia. She was fine but was cautioned against agitation.

Though Tobias felt more assured after a brief chat with him, his other set of emotions was set to ignite.

When he called Tanya to him, his eyes were severe, and his fuse was short.

"What were you thinking? Dragging my mother through the night to North Beach and landing her in a hospital?

Tanya's eyes and nostrils reddened when she was confronted.

"Your mother insisted on hiring an investigator, but I tried to stop her. You have to believe me."

"You've got a nerve. To think you would lie about something as serious as pregnancy. I've never been in your pants. We both know this."

The woman rested a hand over her abdomen. "You were drunk that night, remember? I've only just found out too. It really is ours."

A massive mitt shot up and took her by surprise. She felt the hardness of the wall behind as the fingers clenched around her throat. "You're lucky that I don't hit women. I'm well aware of what I did or didn't do. And how do I know that, you ask? It's because you disgust me."

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With her improving dramatics chops, he could imagine how much effort she must have devoted towards honing her craft around Claudia.

As Tanya watched him depart, the anguish on her face faded to nothing. Tobias was an astute one. Therefore, she was beginning to rue her decision, as now, she had to fret about where she might be able to find herself a baby.

The receptionist informed Tobias that Skylar had already checked out. His cellphone and watch were returned to him in a zipper bag. Anyone else who came across this might have taken it for a bequeathment if they did not know better.

When he got back to the villa, the wardrobe doors were wide open. Every compartment he checked turned up empty.

His lips twitched as he stuck a hand in his pocket. "Scurried off like a mouse, she did."

May fortune favor the good.

The last line on the note she left by the side table creased between his fingers. The man was no good person, and he was not ready for their transactional relationship to end.

More accurately, he was not tired of her youthful body. He was not usually into girls her age, but to him, she was a novelty. The thought of letting her off so easily was a little disconcerting.

Twenty-year-old like her straddled maturity and adolescence. A blank canvas such as Skylar deserved an artist like him. It would be a pity should she end up in the hands of another.

The man was confident that she would come back to him, even though she was a bit of a handful. He liked women who were pliant and submissive, being never one for the thrill of the chase.

He had called several times but without success, as his number had been blacklisted. It was just as well that she was so thorough, since bombarding someone over the phone was not amongst his inclinations either.

Unable to reach her, he could only wait until tomorrow to try to find her on campus. He figured that it should not be difficult to locate her, as it was not a big city. With the means she had at her disposal, the little sparrow would not be able to fly out of his grasp.

When he exited the International Garden by himself, he was a little morose. His thoughts came to Sheldon, and he wondered which nightspot that hedonist was at.

Sheldon tottered out of the nightclub towards his older brother when the latter came calling. The lad reeked of alcohol, and his upper body swayed unsteadily as though he could not find his feet.

Just looking at that decadent appearance of his made Tobias want to send the rascal's soul down to be reforged in the fires of the nether realms.

To get him to sober up, he took Sheldon to the tea room. Unlike his older brother, who had a flair for the refined, Sheldon was never comfortable in this cultivated setting no matter how many times they had visited it together. He much preferred the candor of an inebriated stupor.

"Regarding the issue between Tanya and myself, if you could spend more time with Mom and talk to her..."

Sheldon tossed back his cup and took the tea in a single gulp. He now understood why Tobias sought him out of his own volition. "Whatever it is that you are thinking, don't. If I were to open my mouth, Mom's going to kick me out of the house for sure. Marriage is going to happen only once anyway, so like, why not just get it over with? It's not like Tanya could control you afterward. Bring back a mistress or two, or whatever. She won't be able to do a damn thing about it."

The corner of Tobias' lips lifted. "Just get it over with? I know what I want for myself. Would you like to be tied down by any woman yourself? To be shackled by the chains of marriage?"

Sheldon chuckled as he thought his older brother was trying to fob him off. There was no way Tanya Hanson would be able to control Tobias, pregnant or otherwise.

It was clear to him that that woman was playing her last hand and going all-in against Tobias. He was intrigued to see how she would be able to wrap this show up.

Sensing a storm brewing, there was no way he was going to fish in these turbid waters.

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Sheldon reminded him, "I would advise you to hold your horses. It's not the time to cancel your engagement as Mom is still too weak. Is it because some lady is desperately giving you pressure?"

Leaning into his chair, Tobias ignored his question. He then remarked with his eyes closed, "I knew it. It's a waste of time to get you to do anything. Keep a close eye on Tanya. She seems to be up to no good as she caused many outrageous incidents recently."

Sheldon was jolted by how brutally honest his brother was.

Meanwhile, Skylar returned to school with her luggage in tow. When she checked the calls she blocked, there were three from Tobias. He adhered to his rule of not calling more than three times if the recipient failed to pick up.

If he blocked her, it would simply be redundant.

After completing the administrative procedures for her accommodation, Skylar looked forward to her new dormmates. The moment she opened the dormitory door, she was dumbfounded when she saw Avery.

Avery too was caught by surprise. Rolling her eyes at Skylar, her gaze was filled with disdain.

She reminded everyone with a smirk, "Going forward, all of you should lock up your valuables. I can't believe the management decided to squeeze one more in here without seeking our opinions."

Ignoring her, Skylar put down her luggage. As her phone lit up, she brought it out to check. When she saw that it was Tobias, she was so nervous that her hands perspired slightly.

Tobias: I'll come visit you tomorrow. See ya.

Under the dim moonlight, Skylar looked out the window. She was so nervous that her heart pounded furiously. It was as if Tobias had put a GPS tracker on her and haunted her like a lingering spirit.

It seemed he was enjoying himself and not tired of playing this game.

Wendy asked, "Avery, do you want to have something together at the cafeteria?"

Avery yawned. "I don't feel like it. Why don't you help me get something instead? Besides, you're being mean for not inviting Skylar along."

Avery squinted her eyes and stole a knowing glance at Skylar.

Meanwhile, Skylar had packed her things and headed towards the cafeteria alone.

After her meal, she had to work part-time at the school's cafe. Hence, she had no time to argue with Avery.

After Skylar left, another dormmate, Yasmin, asked, "Avery, do you hate Skylar? Why are you asking us to avoid her and forbidding us from talking to her?"

Avery replied with a gentle smile, "She is an old classmate of mine and we go way back. Her reputation is in tatters so decent girls like us better stay away from her."

Yasmin pursed her lips. However, she didn't dare protest.

She felt Skylar was someone decent because she was mostly quiet and considerate of others. She constantly tried not to be a bother.

Coincidentally, it was mealtime and the cafeteria was packed.

To save money, Skylar ordered some soup with bread.

"Soup with bread? It seems your days have been miserable since you left me."

Skylar looked up and saw Tobias sitting opposite her. A week had passed since they last saw each other. He seemed to have lost weight. Plus, the stubble on his face simply reinforced his haggard look.

And yet, he appeared in the cafeteria in all his glory.

Skylar scanned her wary eyes around. "Why did you come here for? This is a school."

Tobias pushed a plate of steak over to her. "How long do you want to avoid me? Not only did you change your phone number, but you also even moved away."

"We are over. Just let me go. I don't want to do something against my conscience."

Skylar's words smack of helplessness. She decided to pull herself away from the brink and not allow herself to indulge further.

She was worried that she would fall for Tobias if they continued their so-called relationship.