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Later, Skyler bought a new phone and entrusted Xavier to deliver it to Iris. It was then that the two sisters reconnected. They made a pact the phone was not to cross the threshold of the Blue family household. They couldn't risk another discovery. So Skyler would only call at agreed-upon times when Iris could safely answer.

"I'm just so thrilled to hear from you." Iris chattered away on the phone, a stream of updates and stories spilling out. Skyler could almost see her sister's animated gestures through the line.

Knowing that Iris was doing well eased Skyler's mind..

As they were about to end the call, Iris' voice dropped to a murmur, "Skyler, are you really not coming home for Christmas? If you don't, I'll be all alone."

Skyler's heart clenched. She made a snap decision. "I'll be there, Iris. I'll come home on Christmas Eve."

Christmas Eve was always a hive of activity in the Blue family, everyone buzzing with tasks and preparations. Nobody would notice if Iris was absent. Skyler figured she could slip in unnoticed at that time.d2

After hanging up, she immediately booked a flight from the Capital to Southern Port, making sure all her bases were covered.

Having tied up all her loose ends at work on the last day before the holiday season, Skyler approached Carter. "Mr. Carter, I've wrapped up my tasks. Anything else you need from me?"

"Are you getting ready to go back to school? I'll give you a ride." Carter said.

Skyler, not keen on mixing her personal life with work, gently declined, "You're busy, Mr. Carter. I wouldn't want to trouble you."

But Carter persisted, "There's a bit of work chatter I'd like to go over with you. With the holidays around the corner, I don't want to eat into more of your time. We can talk on the way."

Cornered by his insistence, Skyler reluctantly agreed.

However, as they descended to the lobby, Skyler was caught off guard by the sight of Xavier leaning against his car, a cigarette in hand, impossible to miss as she stepped out of the elevator.

Carter chuckled. "Ah, your fiancé's here to pick you up. That explains the refusal."

Without diving into explanations, Skyler offered an awkward smile and bid Carter farewell.

Approaching Xavier, she was met with his gruff voice, "What did Carter want?"

"He had some work stuff to discuss. He was going to give me a lift back to campus, but when he saw you, he left," Skyler replied. "Do you really think it was just work he wanted to talk about?" Xavier's tone was skeptical.

"What else would it be?" Skyler shrugged.

Xavier poked her forehead teasingly. "You naive thing."

"Don't poke me." Skyler pouted, swatting his hand away.

Xavier made another jabbing gesture, "I'll do whatever I want."

Dodging his playful attack, Skyler asked, "You're here to give me a lift?"

"Yeah. Mom wants us to have dinner together. I was nearby and thought I'd swing by to pick you up," Xavier explained.

"I could've taken the subway. It's convenient."

"Then go. Take the subway. Don't get in my car."

“Why wouldn’t I? You’re here already.”

Zavier tapped her head again. “You are not that silly after all.”

Skyler feigned offense, “Keep that up, and I’ll get mad, you know.”

Laughing, Zavier teased, “So you’ve got a temper now?”

Skyler shot back playfully, “Even a cornered bunny can bite, and I’m a whole lot more than a bunny.”