

Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband Chapter 1661

Chapter 1661

Skyler: "So what are you asking?"

Zavier: "Didn't the Blue family teach you to fight back when bullied? Haven't they told you that if you're kind, you'll be taken advantage of?"

Skyler bit her lip, her blue eyes welling with unshed tears, as she shook her head, "No, they didn't."

All her life, she'd been taught to bite her tongue and take it on the chin. If she ever fought back, she was met with solitary confinement in the attic and the strap.

Skyler vividly remembered a time when she was little, and her uncle's kid, Tommy, had broken her favorite pencil case.

She was so mad that she pushed him. She wasn't strong enough to even make Tommy, who was older, flinch, but he dramatically plopped himself on the ground and started wailing, "She hit me!"

Tommy's cries quickly drew the attention of the adults. His mother swept him up in her arms, "Oh my baby, who hurt you?"

Triumphantly, he pointed at Skyler, "Her!"

Upon hearing this, Tommy's father gave Skyler a kick so fierce it sent her flying, "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

She was too small to withstand the blow and crashed to the ground hard. She tried to get up but couldn't move, looking up at her parents with difficulty, "Dad, Mom, he broke my pencil case."

Her uncle was livid, "So you hit him because he broke your damn pencil case? Bernard, is this what you teach? Can't have a son of your own, so you set your sights on mine?"

With that accusation, the matter blew up.

Knowing he couldn't compete with his brother's side of the family, Skyler's father hoisted her up, "I'll take her home and straighten her out."

But her uncle was relentless, "Is that all? Should we settle this ourselves, or should we take it to Father to decide?"

Tommy kept up his moaning and groaning.

Skyler's grandfather, hearing that his grandson had been 'assaulted', rushed over. They called in doctor after doctor to examine Tommy, but no one checked on Skyler, the one who was truly hurt.

After a parade of doctors confirmed Tommy was fine, just a bruised ego really, they still punished her. It wasn't just a slap on the wrist. They made her kneel in the room all night long.

She was just a little girl, not understanding why she was being punished when Tommy started it all by breaking her beloved pencil case. She later understood it was all because of her family favoring boys more than girls.

Just because she was a girl, she had to endure such unfair treatment.

The room didn't turn on lights at night. After the candles were burned out, and it became so dark that one couldn't even see their own hand in front of their face. The emptiness added a chilling sensation.

In the darkness, she thought she heard a woman's ghostly sobs. Terrified, she cried out for her parents to save her. But her cries were met with silence. There was no help coming.

Suddenly, a huge shadow loomed over her, its claws outstretched, and she fainted from fear.

When she awoke, dawn had broken. She was lying on the cold, hard floor, her thin dress offering no warmth, her body almost numb. She tried to stand, but her legs were stiff and uncooperative.

Her uncle appeared with Tommy, with a smirk on his face.

Tommy took off his pants and urinated over Skyler's head.

Her uncle didn't stop him, instead, he asked his son, "Feeling better now, champ?"

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The little boy's anger had finally subsided.

"Alright, buddy," her uncle ruffled his son's hair, his tone softening. "You head on out. Daddy's got a couple more words for this little brat." "Dad, I've got something to say to her too," Tommy piped up, defiance in his voice.

"Go ahead, son."

Tommy walked up and crouched beside Skyler. Perhaps finding her smelly, he covered his nose with his hand and said, "Push me again in the future? I'll pee on you again."

Skyler, her chin jutting out stubbornly, retorted, "You broke my pencil case first. And you tripped yourself."

"Dad, she's not admitting she's wrong," Tommy complained, turning to his dad.

The man stepped forward and kicked Skyler hard in the back. "Listen here, brat, my boy could do more than break your pencil case. He could bury you in a hole, and your parents wouldn't dare squeak about it."

The force of the kick curled Skyler into a ball, pain wracking her small frame. Yet, she remained defiant. "I'm not wrong. It was him..."

At that moment, she still hoped. Hoped that if she could just explain, her parents would stand up for her and protect her.

"Seems like you need to learn your lesson," the man sneered, giving her another kick before scooping up his son and leaving. "We'll have your parents teach you some manners."

After they left, Skyler's parents arrived shortly. Grimacing through the pain, she tried to tell them everything that had happened. But before she could finish, her mother cut her off. "If only you were a boy, how much easier things would be."

“Mama, he broke my stuff, and he fell on purpose.” Skyler pleaded for understanding.

Instead of support, her mother pinched her hard. “You little troublemaker, do you even know what you’re doing? At your age, all you do is make messes for me. Let me tell you, from now on, stay away from that boy.”

From then on, Skyler knew that regardless of right or wrong, there was no one to defend her. Faced with anything, she had to keep a low profile, using such foolish methods to protect herself. All to ensure that her young self could continue to live on.

“Stupid!” Xavier rolled his eyes at her.

Skyler pursed her lips and did not say anything.

Xavier couldn’t stand her meekness. “Skyler, you’re wearing my ring, and you let people talk down to you? It’s my reputation that you’re tarnishing.”

“I’m sorry,” Skyler murmured weakly.

“Don’t give me ‘sorry’! I hate that word!” Xavier snapped.

“I mean... my apologies.” she corrected quickly.

“Are you playing word games with me now?” he accused.

“No, I just...” Skyler faltered, at a loss. Apologies were all she had,

Xavier’s frustration melted into a mix of pity and resolve. “Listen to me, Skyler. If anyone dares to mess with you, you hit back hard. And if trouble comes, you’ve got me, your so-called fiancé, to handle it.”

For the first time in eighteen years, someone had told her to stand up for herself. Regardless of Xavier’s motives, or whether he meant it, those words thawed a part of her long-frozen heart. She stared up at him, a sincere, sweet smile spreading across her face. “Thank you.”

“Dummy, you smile like an idiot,” Xavier grumbled, but there was an unspoken softness as he turned to head into the bathroom. The sound of running water soon filled the space. Skyler stood still, not daring to wander or touch anything, just waiting for him.

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After what seemed like an eternity, the sound of running water from the bathroom finally ceased. The door swung open and Xavier, clad only in a towel wrapped tightly around his waist, emerged from the steamy sanctuary.

He was young and so well-built.

Skyler gasped, instinctively throwing her hands over her eyes, "Oh, um, there's a couch in the study, if you wouldn't mind me crashing there for the night."

Zavier, with a tone that brooked no argument, said, "There are fresh clothes for you in the walk-in closet. Go take a shower. I have a thing about cleanliness, and I'm not keen on having someone who smells like a day's work sleeping in my space."

Skyler removed her hands, catching another glimpse of Xavier's sculpted chest before quickly covering her eyes again, "So, you're okay with me sleeping on the couch?"

"I can't stand dawdlers," Xavier snapped.

"Got it, I'll go freshen up," Skyler said, understanding the cue.e2

She made her way to the walk-in closet. The Rivera family's staff had been considerate, providing her with several sets of clothes, including nightwear.

Thanks to the central heating, the biting cold from outside was a non-issue indoors, hence the nightwear was of a lighter spring-autumn variety.

The selection was also surprisingly sensual. Skyler hadn't even dared to wear such garments alone at home. The idea of donning them now, with Xavier in the next room, was unthinkable.

So, she opted for a simple set of base layers and a bathrobe.

The bathroom was spacious, stocked with a new toothbrush and a range of female-friendly products like shampoo and body wash. Everything a girl might need was at her disposal.

Skyler hurried through her routine, applied a dab of moisturizer, and wrapped herself up tightly before venturing back out,

She didn't dare glance toward the bedroom, instead heading towards the study. But to her surprise, Xavier was sprawled across the couch, with a thin blanket draped over him. He had taken over her intended resting spot.

"Uh, why are you sleeping here?" Skyler blurted out.

"It's my house. I sleep where I please. Do I need your permission?" Xavier retorted, his voice edged with irritation.

"That's not what I meant. I mean, if you're here, then where should I sleep?" she asked, a touch of nervousness in her voice..

Xavier pulled the blanket over his head, clearly uninterested in continuing the conversation, "The room's big enough. Find a spot."

Skyler looked around helplessly. In this suite, aside from the couch, the only other place to sleep was the bed in the bedroom. She didn't have the guts to invade Xavier's bed. What if she touched something she shouldn't and he tossed her out the window?

As Skyler wavered, Xavier's voice, deep and firm, cut through the silence, "Though I'm not fond of you, I don't make a habit of mistreating women."

Skyler didn't know what to say. She knew he didn't like her, and the feeling was mutual.

Suddenly, Xavier threw off the blanket, his frustration palpable, "Skyler, is there something wrong with you?"

She jumped at his harsh tone.

"You standing here like a statue will affect my sleep." He barked at her.

Skyler quickly stepped back, "Sorry."

With a sudden movement, Xavier sat up, "Get to the bed and sleep. Don't make anyone think I'm abusing you."

Skyler bolted for the bed. It was his idea, not hers. She couldn't be blamed.

Cautiously, Skyler climbed into the bed, pulling the covers over herself. The bedding, freshly washed, was devoid of any unpleasant odors, carrying only a faint scent of detergent.

After a busy day and having dinner at the Rivera family in the evening, enduring both physical and mental exhaustion, Skyler was clearly very tired. However, lying in bed, she couldn't manage to fall asleep no matter how hard she tried.

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She pulled out her phone, intending to send a message to Iris, only to find a barrage of unread messages on WhatsApp—all from Iris.

[Skyler, I miss you!]

[The first day without you has been so long.]

[The flowers we planted together in the summer have grown tall. They'll be blooming by the time you come back.]

[Can I start school early in the Capital?]

[Mom and Dad had a fight today. It got physical, and both got hurt.]

[Why aren't you replying to me? Don't you want me anymore?]

Reading this, Skyler quickly typed a reply.

[Iris, what are you thinking? How could I ever not want you? I just went to take a shower, and I'm replying as soon as I saw your messages.]

Iris: [You scared me. I thought you didn't want Iris anymore.]

Skyler: [Iris, you're the dearest to me, and there is no way that I could abandon you.]

Iris: [Skyler...]

Skyler continued, [Iris, I want to bring you to the Capital soon too, but I'm not quite there yet. Give me some time to figure things out, then I'll see if I can bring you over to the Capital.]

Skyler knew all too well that bringing Iris to the Capital wasn't going to be easy. First, she needed the financial means, and second, she needed the consent of the Blue family elders.

The Blues had raised the sisters, squeezing every ounce of value from them. How could they easily let Iris go?

It was a daunting path, but to lift her sister out of misery, she had to try.

Iris: [Okay.]

Skyler: [Did they take their anger out on you after their fight?]

Iris didn't reply, but her silence spoke volumes to Skyler.

Skyler typed again, [Did they hit you?]

Iris, ever sensible, didn't want her sister to worry too much. [If they tried to hit me, I ran. They didn't catch me. I'm a big girl now. Don't worry about me.]

Ten years old. Just ten. At that age, many kids were still coddled in their mother's arms, not considered "big" by any stretch. But they'd been forced to grow up fast, lacking the normal love that would allow them to be children:

Skyler: [Silly kid, don't lie to your sister.]

She knew the drill. When their parents fought, she had been their punching bag. She'd stand there, take the verbal lashing, and take the hits. If she dared to flee, it would invite a relentless pursuit.

Now that she wasn't home, all their parents' anger would descend on little Iris. The thought of her sister enduring what she had been through made Skyler's nose sting, and tears began to fall.

Thankfully, they were communicating through WhatsApp text. Otherwise, her sister would be worried about her too.

Iris: [I'm not lying.]

Skyler wiped away her tears forcefully, [Iris, I promise you, just give me a few more months. I will find a way to get you out.]

She must! Skyler told herself that no matter what, she had to find a way to free her sister from the control of the Blue family.

Iris: [Okay. Take care of yourself too. I heard it's getting really cold in the Capital. Buy yourself some warm clothes, and don't get cold.]

Skyler: [I will.]

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Skyler and her sister wound down their conversation, and the moment they said their goodbyes, Skyler's fingers were already flying over her phone to check her bank app. She squinted at the balance displayed on the screen.

Back when she was in Southern Port, the Blue family wouldn't give her any money, and she wasn't allowed to take on part-time jobs. Her family wouldn't let her do anything that could bring shame.

The figure in her account was the result of tutoring gigs she'd taken up since moving to the Capital. Over ten grand – not bad. That kind of cash could stretch a whole year in a small town, covering rent and living expenses if she pinched pennies.

But the Capital was a different beast. Sky-high rent, and landlords demanding a year upfront? A joke. She couldn't even cover the deposit, let alone think about the extra costs once her sister joined her.

Determined to bring her sister to the Capital sooner rather than later, Skyler resolved to find another part-time job on top of her current one, aiming to rake in more cash each month.

With her mind made up, she put the phone down and tried to sleep. But sleep was elusive. She tossed and turned in her borrowed bed.

And in the darkness of the neighboring room, Xavier was wide awake too, his mind relentlessly replaying Skyler's timid, helpless demeanor. In his twenty years, he'd never seen anyone take insults lying down without a single retort.

What a spineless creature! It was almost embarrassing to associate with her.e2

Irritated, Xavier grabbed his phone and shot a message to a contact, [Look into the Blue family from Southern Port for me.]

The reply came swiftly. [Didn't I send you their file days ago? What, you lost it? Or you don't trust my info?]

Rubbing his temple in frustration, Xavier texted back, [I couldn't care less about their business dealings.]

[So what are you interested in?] the contact prodded.

Before Xavier could respond, another message popped up, [Don't tell me you've fallen for the Blue family's little girl? Come on, Xavier, you're smarter than this. You know as well as I do that a timid mouse like her is no match for you.]

Xavier's brows knitted together, [Who said anything about falling for her?]

[Just making sure. Your wife should be lifting you up in business, not dragging you down with constant neediness,] the contact retorted.

[Just find out what she's been through with the Blues these past years,] Xavier typed, exasperated.

[The Blue family's on its last legs, and even if you don't call off the engagement, your clan surely will. Whatever she's been through, it's her problem. Don't waste your time on her.]

Xavier didn't want to spend energy on someone so insignificant, but curiosity about her past gnawed at him. [Just do the search, and save me your opinions.]

[Fine, fine, I'll get you the dirt. But remember, your priority is uncovering the truth behind Brodie's death and fulfilling his last wish. As for women, once you're on top, you can have your pick. Don't let a pretty face cloud your judgment.]

[Enough!] Xavier shot back.

He tossed his phone aside, pulled the blanket over his head, and tried to sleep. But like Skyler, he couldn't.

Next door, there was a rustling sound from the bed.

"Can't sleep?" he called out.

Skyler's voice was barely audible, a whisper really, "Did I wake you?"

"Just sleep. I'm not some undiscerning glutton. I don't just devour anything in sight," Xavier said.

Skyler went silent. She knew his kindness. He had given up his bed for her and told her to learn to fight back. She was grateful.

And she wouldn't dare expect anything more,

Neither of them slept that night.

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Skyler and Xavier had both tossed and turned through the night. Thankfully, their youthful vigor meant they didn't look much worse for wear come morning.

Xavier was quick to freshen up and head out. Skyler had to wait until he was done with the bathroom, so she left a bit later.

Little did she expect to bump into Nora right outside her door. It seemed Nora had been lying in wait, "Skyler, darling."

Nora scrutinized her, taking in Skyler's flushed cheeks that seemed to bloom like roses due to afterglow, "Did you sleep well last night?"

Skyler nodded, "Thanks for asking. I slept like a log."

Nora's eyes narrowed, "Walk for me, let's see."

Bewildered by the request, Skyler complied. She had only taken a few steps when Nora's voice, sharp as a knife, sliced through the air, "Did Xavier touch you last night?" e2

Skyler's eyes widened in shock, her head shaking frantically, "Nora, we're not even married yet, he wouldn't do that."

Nora's temper flared, "And why haven't you taken the initiative? You must know what you're here for."

Skyler stammered, "I..."

Nora cut her off, "Skyler, don't tell me you don't know why the Blue family sent you to the Riveras? They didn't send you to be the little princess here. You're here to give Xavier his first-born son."

Skyler was silent.

"Didn't your mother have 'the talk' with you before sending you over?" Nora prodded.

Skyler mumbled, "Aunt Nora, I..."

She had been taught, yes. But how could she possibly broach such an embarrassing subject? After all, she was barely eighteen.

"So you were taught, but didn't learn a thing?" Nora pressed.

Skyler remained silent.

Nora demanded, "Cat got your tongue?"

Skyler apologized, "I'm sorry."

Nora scoffed, "You're so clueless, and you can't do anything right. After your classes today, I'm going to pick you up and give you a proper lesson. If you don't get it this time, and if there's no child from Xavier within six months, you're out."

Skyler opened her mouth to retort but thought better of it.

"Aunt Nora, if I don't want to have a child, who can force me?" Suddenly, Xavier's voice came from behind them.

Both Skyler and Nora shivered at the sound.

"Zavier, I'm just looking out for your future," Nora trembled.

Zavier strode towards them with deliberate steps, “Aunt Nora, I’m well aware of what I’m doing. I’m an adult, and I don’t need others making decisions for me.”

Nora’s expression shifted between hues of anger and embarrassment, a kaleidoscope of emotions.

Zavier turned to Skyler, “I just went over this with you last night, and you’ve already forgotten? You really are a scatterbrain!”

Skyler apologized again, “I’m sorry.”

She wanted to stand up for herself, but without the protection of family and lacking the strength to defend herself, any resistance would only bring more trouble.

Unexpectedly, Zavier closed the distance between himself and Skyler. With a swift movement, he wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her close, “Skyler, remember this: you’re my fiancée. You represent me, wherever you are. I won’t let anyone bully you.”

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Clearly, that was a jab at Nora.

Nora wasn’t used to taking flak like that, her temper flaring, “Zavier, you’re getting way too big for your britches!”

Zavier glanced up, his gaze icy, “Aunt Nora, if you acted the part of an elder, I’d naturally give you all the respect and love you deserve. But if you don’t even respect yourself and fail to set an example, how can you expect me to show you any respect?”

Nora retorted, “What about you? Do you act the part of the junior?”

Zavier replied coldly, “I’m still young, and I learn by watching my elders. If you show respect, I’ll follow suit. If you don’t, neither will I.”

Nora was speechless.

Skyler watched with wide-eyed fascination. Zavier's arrogance wasn't just directed at her or people at school. No matter who crossed him, he maintained that same haughty demeanor. He was much like her, a pawn in the family's game.e2

She had no choice but to swallow her pride, but he seemed to do as he pleased. Skyler was dying to know his secret. When the opportunity arose, she was determined to get some tips from him.

"Zavier, that's no way to talk to your aunt like that," chided Kalene, who had just arrived. Her eyes briefly flitted over Skyler, wrapped in Zavier's embrace before she addressed him, "You should apologize to your aunt Nora right this minute!"

Zavier cast a glance at Kalene but said nothing, simply leading Skyler away.

Nora watched their retreating figures, trembling with rage. Kalene quickly came to her side, comforting, "Nora, Zavier's always been headstrong, even with me. Don't stoop to his level."

Nora struggled to suppress her anger, "Kalene, if it weren't for Brodie's sake, and out of respect for you and my brother Samuel, I'd never back that rascal Zavier."

Kalene sighed, "I know. We've spoiled Zavier since he was a baby, so that's why he's turned out like this. But he's not a bad kid at heart."

Nora grumbled, "Who knows what kind of love potion that Blue girl has fed him? He's fiercely protective of her, and he hasn't even touched her once. Kalene, Zavier is meant to take over Rivera Inc. We can't have him led astray by a woman."

Kalene assured her, "Zavier knows his limits."

Nora countered, "He's still young, sometimes those limits blur."

Kalene pondered, "I think it's not about being smitten; it's more about him staking his claim. Remember when he was a kid, and Joshua accidentally broke a toy Zavier was about to toss? If it were you or me, we'd have let it slide. But not Zavier. He still gave Joshua a thrashing. His things are his, whether he wants them or not, and no one else is allowed to touch."

Nora considered this perspective but remained wary, “You’re too soft-hearted, always looking on the bright side. That Blue girl is not as innocent as she seems. The more pitiful she acts, the more she triggers Xavier’s protective instinct. We need to keep a closer eye on her, and make sure she doesn’t get a hold on Xavier.”

Kalene agreed, “I’ll take your advice. I’ll have someone watch over her. She won’t get out of line.”

Nora warned, “Don’t blame me for meddling. I don’t want to see the empire that Brodie and Hudson, and your husband worked so hard to build fall into the hands of schemers.”

Kalene assured her, “How could I blame you? With Brodie’s accident, Hudson and your brother were devastated. Xavier was too young. If it weren’t for you, the Rivera family would have already been devoured by the others.”

Nora was resolute, “With Hudson’s health failing and Samuel still mourning Brodie, Xavier is our only hope. We can’t afford any missteps with him.”

Kalene nodded in understanding, “I get it.”

The Rivera family had a strict routine. Everyone was up and gathered in the living room, waiting to have breakfast with Hudson.

When Xavier descended the stairs with Skyler, all eyes instantly turned their way.

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Dustin, lacking any sense of subtlety, blurted out, “Xavier, I thought you weren’t keen on that Blue family girl? Why are you holding onto her like she’s your teddy bear?”

Jillian eyed Skyler, who was nestled in Xavier’s embrace, with a hint of displeasure in her voice, “Silly boy, you still don’t get it? Looks like your granddad will be bouncing a great-grandkid on his knee any day now.”

Skyler was at a loss for words. There was no point in explaining. No need to justify herself to these people.

Zavier greeted cheerfully, "Good morning, guys. Skyler and I have morning classes, so we won't be joining you for breakfast. We've got to run."

With that, he didn't wait for their approval and whisked Skyler away.

Zavier was a rule-breaker, and nobody could really tell him what to do. So naturally, the chatter about Skyler resumed.

Jillian scoffed, "They say the Blue family is high society. But what kind of high society girl doesn't even greet her elders?"e2

Matthew chimed in, "Not every child of a prestigious family is going to have impeccable manners."

The gossip grew wilder with each passing remark until Hudson appeared, and the group's murmurs faded.

Once they were outside and away from prying eyes, Skyler finally felt uncomfortable, "Zavier, you can let go of me now."

Zavier stopped in his tracks but his arm remained snug around her waist, "What's the matter? Afraid I'll take a bite out of you?"

His presence was overwhelming, and Skyler instinctively shrank back, "Nobody's watching us anymore. You don't have to keep up this act."

Zavier released Skyler, "You may be timid as a mouse, but at least you're not foolish enough to think I'm protecting you because I'm fond of you or anything."

Skyler knew her place.

Zavier prodded, "Cat got your tongue? What's the mouth for if not for talking?"

Skyler retorted, "Besides talking, I can eat with it."

Saying more often led to more troubles, and Skyler learned this lesson at a very young age. Therefore, right now, she tried to speak less and avoided arguing whenever possible.

Zavier studied her lips, which moved silently before him, plump and rosy like ripe peaches, utterly enticing.

Peaches were sweet, but were her lips just as sweet? Realizing his thoughts were straying, Zavier almost wanted to slap himself for having such improper ideas about a young girl. He grumbled, "I've never seen you eat much either. Look at you, skin and bones. Eat more, or else the Blue family will think we're mistreating you at the Rivera house."

Skyler murmured under her breath, "They couldn't care less."

Nobody was concerned about whether she went hungry. They were only interested in what advantages she could bring them from her association with the Rivera family.

Zavier didn't catch her words, "What was that?"

Skyler glanced at her wristwatch, "I'm about to be late. Can you drop me off outside the estate, maybe at the nearest subway station?"

Zavier raised an eyebrow, "Well, aren't you getting bold."

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Skyler, "If it's inconvenient for you, forget about it."

Zavier didn't respond to her and simply got into his car.

Skyler just stood there, frozen, not daring to move an inch. She hadn't even mustered the courage to ask for a ride to school. She was merely hoping for a lift out of the suburban maze to catch the bus or subway more easily.

Taxis in the Capital were a luxury she seldom afforded; public transport and walking were her usual modes of transport. Every penny saved was a penny earned, after all..

But it seemed even a short trip to the edge of the neighborhood was too much to ask of him. No matter. She'd just have to hustle a bit faster. Missing one lecture probably wouldn't set her back too much.

“Skyler, what are you still standing there for?” Xavier’s voice suddenly snapped her out of her thoughts.

Was he actually offering her a ride? A rush of gratitude flooded her as she quickly yanked open the passenger door and hopped into his sports car. It was a two-seater, so the passenger seat was her only option.e2

Zavier smoothly pulled out of the driveway as Skyler whipped out her phone to check the map. They just needed to head right out of the neighborhood for about a kilometer to find a subway station. On foot, that would take her about ten minutes, but with a press of Xavier’s foot on the pedal, they’d be there in a flash. “Zavier, you can just pull over here. This is perfect, thanks.”

He didn’t even glance her way, just floored it past the subway entrance by several hundred meters.

Skyler got the message. “Thank you, really.”

“For what?” Zavier grunted.

“For giving me a lift. Otherwise, I’d be on that subway going round in circles for an extra hour.”

“It’s on the way, not like I went out of my way for you.”

“And for standing up for me.”

Zavier raised an eyebrow, “I just praised you for not being dumb, and now you’re making me regret my words.”

“I know you were protecting your own reputation when you helped me, but whatever your reasons, it helped me too, and for that, I’m thankful.”

Zavier shot her a quick look, “Idiot.”

How could there be someone so naive? Slap her, then hand her a candy, and she’d still smile. Zavier had no idea that for Skyler, who had faced nothing but bullying and coldness all her life, even the smallest kindness felt like a burst of sunshine in the dead of winter.

Zavier didn't say another word, and Skyler turned to look at him. His features were impeccable, even from the side.

"You're really handsome, no wonder so many girls at school are into you," she said with disarming directness.

Her frankness actually threw Xavier off his game.

"You're a good person, too, Skyler continued. His words might be sharp, but she sensed a kindness beneath.

"I don't need your opinion on whether I'm a good person or not," Xavier snapped back.

Skyler fell silent. What set him off this time? Better to keep her mouth shut.

They left before the morning rush, the roads were clear, and Xavier drove fast. In less than thirty minutes, they were nearing the school.

There was still time, so Xavier pulled over at the intersection near the school and said, "You can get off here."

"Okay," Skyler replied, gathering her things, She knew she'd make it to class with time to spare, thanks to the unexpected ride.

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Chapter 1670

As she swiftly hopped out of the car, Xavier added, "This marriage of ours is bound to be called off sooner or later, so try not to mention it to anyone."

Skyler nodded, "Don't worry, I won't let anyone at the university find out about us."

Zavier paused, then continued, "Even though we're going to annul it, you better not start dating anyone else before then. The Rivera family is all about keeping up appearances. I might let it slide, but the Riveras definitely won't let you off easy."

Skyler replied, "Thanks for the heads-up."

After a moment's thought, Xavier went on, "Remember what I taught you yesterday. If I ever see someone push you around again and you don't stand up for yourself, don't expect me to step in next time."

Skyler affirmed, "Got it."

Zavier's gaze drifted away as he floored the accelerator, and the car shot off like an arrow, leaving Skyler in the dust.^{e2}

Skyler collected her thoughts and started walking when she heard someone calling her name from behind, "Skyler?"

She turned to see her roommate Vivian, "Hey Vivian, good morning."

Since Vivian seldom stayed in the dorm, Skyler didn't know her as well as the other roommates, which made interactions a bit awkward. But Vivian was the outgoing type. She enthusiastically linked her arm with Skyler's, "Aren't you a dorm dweller? How come I bump into you so early outside the campus?"

Skyler replied, "I stayed over at a relative's place last night."

"Vivian, didn't you say you had no relatives or connections in the Capital when the school started? How come all of a sudden you have a relative?"

Skyler was flabbergasted. At the start of the semester, she'd said she had no family in the Capital because Xavier had essentially kicked her out and was reluctant to acknowledge her as his fiancée.

Skyler's silence led Vivian to jump to conclusions, "Skyler, you couldn't possibly be... you know..."

Skyler asked calmly, "Couldn't possibly be what? Just say what you mean, no need to get worked up."

Vivian looked around to make sure no one was listening and whispered, "You haven't been kept by someone, have you?"

The insinuation was offensive, not only to Skyler's integrity but also to her dignity. Even the usually composed Skyler couldn't tolerate such slander, "Vivian, we are roommates. Why do you slander me like this?"

Vivian was quick to clarify, "I hope I'm wrong. I've heard of rich folks preying on college students, and I just didn't want you to get duped."

Seeing that Vivian wasn't being malicious, Skyler felt a twinge of guilt, "I know what I'm doing, and I'm not that kind of person."

Vivian nodded, "I know you're not. You work part-time to make ends meet. I'm just worried about you. Take care of yourself."

Skyler thanked her, and they arrived at the university just in time for class. The entrance was bustling with students. To Skyler's surprise, Xavier, who had driven off some time ago, was still at the gates. He stood there, hands in his pockets, leaning against a tree, surrounded by his usual entourage.

When Skyler glanced over, he caught her eye for a fleeting moment before returning to his conversation, and then they all headed off

campus.

As Skyler moved towards the campus, their paths crossed. Xavier suddenly stopped and called out loudly, "What are you, a snail?"

Skyler was taken aback. Although he didn't name her directly, she knew he was taunting her. She couldn't possibly walk as fast as his car could drive, and she had been delayed by running into a classmate.

One of the guys with Xavier chimed in, "Xavier, that's on me. I shouldn't have made you wait."

Xavier said nothing and walked on.

Skyler wanted to hurry back to the dorm to grab her notebook and then head to class. But Vivian held onto Skyler's arm tightly, "Skyler, oh my gosh, that was Xavier. I feel like he stopped just to talk near us."

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