

## **Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband Chapter 1701**

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### Chapter 1701

Skyler's train of thought was yanked back to reality when her phone's ringtone pierced the silence. She fumbled for the device and answered the call. It was Tina on the line, "Skyler, can you swing by the office?"

"Sure thing." Skyler replied.

After hanging up, she quickly got herself together and hurried off to the game development studio.

They needed her input on the final touches of the video game's theme song-a project that Xavier and his team were personally developing. He was fully invested in it.

Xavier's presence at the studio didn't deter Skyler from getting into her work groove. The morning turned into a blur of busyness, but the results were fantastic, and the mood among the team was jubilant.

At lunchtime, Tina suggested they all head out for a celebratory feast.

Skyler felt like her head was filled with lead, too drained to entertain the idea, "I think I'll pass."e2

Xavier noticed her pallor, "You feeling okay?"

She shook her head, trying to downplay her fatigue, "I'm fine."

But Xavier wasn't buying it. He reached out, pressing his hand against her forehead, "You're burning up. Have you lost your marbles?"

Skyler felt unjustly scolded and a wave of self-pity washed over her, "Why are you being so rough on me?"

"Just come with me," Xavier commanded.

"Where are we heading?" Skyler asked, confusion lacing her voice.

"To the clinic."

The chill in the air had done her no favors. After pushing through a morning's work with a fever, it had only gotten worse.

Skyler's consciousness wavered, a nagging voice at the edge of her awareness chiding her, "You got sick and didn't even mention it, serves you right to suffer."

She tried to block out the annoying voice and slipped back into sleep. When she next opened her eyes, Xavier was there, looking about as pleasant as a storm cloud.

"Feeling any better?" he grumbled as she regained consciousness.

She shook her head in response.

"Your health is your capital. Don't gamble with it," Xavier lectured.

"I wouldn't dream of it," Skyler retorted.

"Don't bother going back to the dorm today. You're coming to my place. Mary will look after you."

"No fuss needed. I'm alright now."

"That wasn't a suggestion. It was a notification," Xavier stated flatly.

Skyler, fueled by a sudden surge of defiance, snapped back, "I said NO!"

"Suit yourself," Xavier shot back before storming off.

Skyler discharged herself and took a bus back to her dorm. Life went on.

A week flew by, and Skyler dedicated her time to composing music for lyrics that Carter had given her. After wrapping up at Carter's music studio, she bumped into Xavier, whom she hadn't seen for days. She tried to pretend she hadn't noticed him, but he called out to her, "Skyler."

She turned around, "What's up?"

"I need a favor," Xavier said, his tone surprisingly amiable.

Skyler eyed him warily, "What is it?"

“Get in the car first.”

Looking around, Skyler hesitated but eventually got into his car, and Xavier drove in the direction of the campus.

“Are we heading to the school?” she asked.

“A couple of my close buddies heard about my engagement and they’ve been dying to meet you. They’ve been bugging me about it, and I can’t put them off any longer. So, I need your help.”

“You mean Garrett and his crew?” Skyler asked, her voice tinged with apprehension.

She didn’t have the fondest memories of Garrett and his posse. They were the kind of guys who thrived on creating trouble, strutting around the campus like they owned the place..

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Zavier,” just wait ‘n see. You’ll know later.”

Before long, the car rolled to a stop in front of a charming estate that was a rare sight in the Capital.

No sooner had they pulled into the driveway than a young man approached them. “Man, I’ve been waiting forever. You finally decided to bring your fiancée around for us to meet,” he said with an easy grin.

Zavier parked and turned to Skyler. “This is Steven, heir to the Dixon Group in Harbor City.”

Skyler had heard of the Dixon Group. The Blues did business with the Dixons, but she wasn’t familiar with the Dixon family.

“Mr. Dixon, it’s nice to meet you,” greeted Skyler.

“Skyler, you’re Xavier’s lady. You’re family now. Just Steven will do,” he said with a chuckle.e2

Skyler smiled, “All right, Steven it is.”

Steven leaned in, teasing, “We’ve been bugging Xavier to show you off, thinking maybe you were too shy to meet us. But now that you’re here, I see he was just worried one of us would steal you away.”

Skyler’s cheeks tinged with embarrassment. Thankfully, Xavier jumped in, “She’s just a bit shy. Don’t tease her.”

Steven nudged Xavier, “And to think, you didn’t want to marry her at first. Now you’re all protective?”

Xavier shot back, “Remember, you’ve got your eye on someone too. When you two make it official, you’ll have to bring her around.” Steven’s face lit up at the mention of his crush. “Yeah, when I win her over, you guys will be the first to know.”

“We’ll hold you to that,” Xavier replied.

Steven asked, “Have Marc and Lucas shown up yet?”

“Lucas got here early. His sweetheart’s giving him hell. He’s in the middle of damage control, so let’s not disturb him.”

As they were talking, another car pulled up.

“There’s Marc,” Steven noted.

Skyler followed their gaze to see a young man stepping out of the vehicle, sporting a pair of sleek, silver-rimmed glasses, looking like a Greek god among mortals.

Steven wrapped an arm around the newcomer. “Marc, when are you going to bring a girl around for us to check out?”

Marcus replied dryly, “Next lifetime, maybe.”

“Don’t be so final, man. Xavier wasn’t keen on marriage either, but look at him now,” Steven pointed out.

“We’ll see,” Marcus said noncommittally.

Xavier introduced them, “Marc, meet Skyler. Skyler, this is Marcus, CEO of the Hartley Group.”

Marcus was a well-known name, having taken the Hartley Group to new heights at a young age while rarely making public appearances. Skyler was taken aback to see he looked so young, practically still a college student.

“Nice to meet you.” Marcus said politely.

Skyler nodded quickly, “President Hartley, nice meeting you.”

Marcus was a man of few words, and after the greetings, he fell silent, not one for uncomfortable jokes.

Zavier changed the topic, “How about a game of cards?”

“I’m in,” Steven said. “Let’s see if Lucas is free.”

Just then, a commotion erupted from the house. “Lucas Duncan, you big liar. You’re tricking me again.”

“Rosie, I’d fool anyone but you. If you don’t believe me, let’s go outside. Zavier’s fiancée might be here by now,” Lucas tried to reassure her.

Rosie scoffed, “There’s no way she’s here. Probably just your trouble-making friends making a fool of me.”

“Rosie...” Lucas’ voice trailed off.

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### Chapter 1703

Rosie, Lucas, I’m laying it down right now—if I don’t have any girlfriends to hang out with today and I’m stuck watching you guys play poker, don’t expect me to join you for a night out ever again.”

Lucas sighed, “Alright, alright...”

Steven craned his neck, peering into the house, clicking his tongue in mock disapproval. “Listen to this guy. Lucas is so whipped by his sweetheart. Marc my words, he’s gonna be totally henpecked once they’re married.”

Zavier gave Steven a lazy glance, “And you’re any better? You saw a girl once at school and you can’t stop thinking about her.” Steven turned to Marcus, “Marc, that’s just what happen when you fall for a girl.”

Marcus adjusted his glasses on the bridge of his nose, staying silent.

Steven continued, “Man, talking to you about this is a waste of time. But I’m really curious, what kind of girl would catch our Marc’s eye?”

“Anyway, Marc wouldn’t be like you, obsessed with a girl after just one glance.” Xavier quipped.

“What’s wrong with love at first sight? It’s not hurting you, Xavier. It’s human nature to be drawn to beauty. Would Hudson have set you up with your fiancée if she looked like a toad? Would you even bring her around to meet us?” Steven challenged.

Skyler, who had been silently listening, felt caught in the crossfire. Why drag her into their banter?

“Leave her out of this,” Xavier cut in sharply.

“There he goes, playing coy but protective as ever. You’re totally going down Lucas’ path,” Steven tossed back before heading inside. “Miss Rosie, did Lucas fool you again?”

“Steven, don’t add fuel to the fire. Xavier, did you bring your fiancée?” Lucas asked.

“As if I had a choice when your little princess wants to meet her,” Xavier retorted.

Rosie looked up to see a young woman following behind Xavier, and her eyes sparkled with excitement. “Skyler?”

Lucas felt a pang of jealousy at her reaction. If only Rosie would look at him with such enthusiasm.

Xavier introduced, “Skyler, this is Lucas from Harbor City, and the lady with him is his fiancée, Ro-”

Before Xavier could finish, Rosie had already stepped forward, eagerly taking Skyler’s hand. “Skyler, hi! I’m Rosie. We’re going to be friends.”

“Rosie, it’s nice to meet you.” Skyler responded warmly.

Rosie quickly added, "I'm not with Lucas, and I'm certainly not his fiancée, so don't listen to their nonsense."

Lucas couldn't stand to hear that, "Rosie!"

Rosie pouted, "It's your fault for always teasing me. I just don't want to marry you."

Lucas' face darkened, "Rosie, say that again!"

If it weren't for the fact that they weren't of legal age to marry, he would've dragged her off to get the marriage certificate already, to make her his wife and silence such talk.

Rosie knew better than to cross him when he was truly angry. She bit her lip, careful not to say anything more that might upset him, "Skyler, I got a gift for you. Come with me."

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She spun around and reached into her purse, pulling out a small box and handing it to Skyler. "Open it up. See if you like it. If not, just tell me what you're into, and I'll get it for you."

Skyler was a last-minute addition to the group, thanks to Xavier's invitation. The presence of girls was a surprise, let alone the thought of bringing gifts. "Rosie, I didn't get you anything."

Rosie waved off the concern. "I gave you a gift, not to get one in return. Come on, open it! I really hope you like it."

Feeling the sincerity in Rosie's eyes, Skyler reluctantly unraveled the box to discover a stunning necklace inside. It bore no designer logo, and Skyler couldn't guess the price, but the craftsmanship and quality hinted at a hefty tag. "Rosie, maybe I shouldn't..."

But Rosie cut in, "It's a token of friendship. You can't say no."

Skyler tried to protest, "But..."

"No buts," Rosie insisted, her voice bubbling with enthusiasm. "You have no idea how small my social circle is. Aside from Lucas and his buddies, I'm pretty much a lone wolf. And now, finally, I meet a girl my age, and you're not getting away from becoming my friend."

"And I'm picky, you know. I felt a click with you the moment I saw you. That's why I'm befriending you. Hanging out with those boys is like being invisible. All they do is talk shop or play cards and drink. I might as well be talking to a wall."

"Skyler, let's exchange numbers. If I ever need a chat and there's no one around, would you mind if I hit you up? A sweetheart like you wouldn't say no to me, right?"

Rosie was a whirlwind of words, leaving no room for Skyler to chime in.

Skyler ended up accepting the gift and swapping contact info with Rosie, mentally noting to return the favor with a thoughtful present after the final paycheck from the game came through.

"Let's grab something to eat," Rosie suggested, changing the subject.

"Sure," Skyler agreed.

Suddenly, Lucas' voice called out, "Rosie, come here."

"What's up?" she responded.

"I'm on a losing streak. I need my lucky charm," he said, though he never truly cared about luck. He simply wanted Rosie by his side, every minute of the day.

Rosie retorted, "No way!"

Steven chuckled, "Lucas, have some dignity, will you?"

Zavier quipped, "Look who's talking!"

Marcus interjected, "Focus on the game, gents."



Steven taunted, "Marc, I swear, if you weren't rich and good-looking, you'd be single for life."

"Is a wife more important than a career?" Marcus asked dryly.

Steven shot back, "Please, talking to you about passion is like talking to a brick wall."

Lucas joined in, "Marc, don't you ever think of settling down? Sure, not all marriages are happy, but you've got to look on the bright side sometimes."

Marcus replied flatly, "You guys are too young to be so obsessed with romance. Shouldn't you be focusing on your careers?"

Lucas defended, "What's wrong with thinking about the girl you love?"

Steven added, "If it weren't for his duty to run the Hartley Group, Marc would've been a monk. Just look after yourselves and don't bother trying to change his mind."

Marcus had enough of the topic and directed the attention back to the game. "Zavier, it's your turn."

Zavier announced, "Nine of diamonds."

Marcus declared, "I've won."

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Lucas, "You're on a hot streak, buddy-two games, two wins. Marc, every time we play, it's like you've got Lady Luck wrapped around your finger. Aren't you afraid you'll scare us all off with your winning ways?"

Steve grinned and said. "Let the man have his moment of glory. It's not like he's got much luck in the love department. Let him have his wins at the poker table."

Luke quipped, "You never know, tomorrow might just be the day Marc meets the girl of his dreams."

Steve burst out laughing. "Marc? Find love tomorrow? That's the funniest thing I've heard in years."

Luke shrugged, "You can't predict these things. Just the other day, you were telling us you hadn't met anyone special, and look at you now."

Steve countered, "That's different, man."

Luke mused, "Tomorrow's a new day. Who knows what could happen."e2

"Why don't we make a bet on it?" Steve proposed.

"On what?" Luke asked.

"Should we get Xavier in on this?" Steve said, looking around.

Zavier, never one to miss out on a bit of fun, chimed in, "Count me in. I wouldn't miss this for the world."

Steve declared, "I bet Marc's destined to be a bachelor for life. How about you, Luke?"

Luke pondered for a moment, "Love's a tricky thing. Marc may seem like a lone wolf now, but who's to say he won't meet the right girl tomorrow. I bet within two years, he'll be smitten."

"What about you, Xavier?" Steve turned to Xavier.

Zavier glanced at Marc and said, "Two years is a short bet. Ten years seems fair. I can't believe that in a decade, no woman will have made her way into Marc's heart."

"Deal. The losers do whatever the winner wants," Steve declared.

Luke added, "Just keep your hands off my Rosie, and you're on."

"I'm a gentleman. I wouldn't go after a friend's wife," Steve scoffed.

"Alright, I'm in for whatever," Xavier agreed.

"I'm going to win this," Steve boasted.

Marc interjected, "You guys are using me as a betting chip right in front of me. What am I, invisible?"

"Nope, just the star of the bet," Steve replied with a wink.

"How about you join in, Marc?" Xavier suggested.

"Why not?" Marcus agreed.

Luke said, "If Marc joins, doesn't that mean he's sure to win?"

Steve wasn't worried, "Let him. I want to see when he plans to tie the knot."

Marc thought for a moment, "Next lifetime, maybe."

"Okay, then. May the longest-lived among us win," Steve joked.

The guys continued their banter, each throwing in their two cents.

Meanwhile, Rosie sidled up to Skylar and whispered conspiratorially, "Hey Skylar, you know who that guy with the glasses is?"

Skylar nodded, "Just met him through Xavier."

Rosie's eyes twinkled with intrigue, "He's quite the character. Lucas looks up to him a lot. There are all sorts of rumors, most of them bad, and people outside our circle are pretty scared of him."

She sneaked a glance at Marc and said, "But from the few times I've been around him with Luke, he doesn't seem as intimidating as the rumors suggest. He's just a bit quiet and not big on jokes."

Skylar, not well-acquainted with the group, didn't want to delve too deep into gossip, "What we hear about someone isn't always the whole story. His life is his own business."

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Rosie nodded in understanding, then quickly changed the subject, "What about you and Xavier? Do you like him?"

Skyler laughed softly, "Family arrangements don't really come down to likes and dislikes, do they?"

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Hearing this, Rosie's delicate features momentarily lost their usual sparkle. "Well, every family has its own drama. People envy us for being born into such families, but even we have our troubles. I mean, it's the 21st century, and we still can't make our own choices about who we marry."

Skyler, intrigued, asked, "So, you and that guy, was it an arranged thing by your families?"

Rosie nodded, "You have no idea. I just turned eighteen, and I've known him for exactly eighteen years. We've been inseparable since we were toddlers, never apart for more than forty-eight hours.

"If he went to a school, I had to enroll there too. My parents' meetings? Always Lucas standing in, my dad never bothered. And if I got bad grades, guess who got to lecture me? Yeah, that jerk Lucas."

Skyler just listened quietly, not saying a word.

Rosie went on, "The other day, I hung out with some friends and got home two hours late. Lucas sent a search party through the whole town, found me, and literally carried me away from the bar. Not only did he drag me home, but he also made me handwrite apologies till my hand hurt, and he wouldn't let me stop. He's like an overbearing big brother, not a boyfriend at all."

Rosie pouted, "Who ever heard of a boyfriend who bullies his girlfriend like that?"

Skyler ventured, "Maybe he was just worried about you."

Rosie sighed, "I know he was worried. When he found me, his eyes were all red, looking fierce, you know? I'd never seen him like that before. But does worrying about me mean he gets to control my life? He's always saying it's not safe for a girl to drink out on her own, but it's not like anything happened."

Skyler chuckled, "If something did happen, regret wouldn't even begin to cover it."

wouldn't even begin to cover it."

Rosie conceded, "Yeah, I thought about it, and he's got a point, so I didn't stay mad at him. Otherwise, I would've given him the cold shoulder for days, at least three days of total silence.

"And my parents, they're even worse. They set up this childhood betrothal with Lucas and then just checked out. They didn't want to deal with me, so they let Lucas do it. I feel like I'm suffocating. I really don't want to live with them anymore."

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Skyler didn't say much more. Despite Rosie's complaints, it was clear to her that Rosie was a child who had grown up cherished by her family. Only a child loved so deeply could afford to be so headstrong. As for herself, without anyone to dote on her, she had to handle everything on her own.

Rosie turned to her, "Skyler."

Skyler responded, "Yeah?"

Rosie offered, "If there's anything bothering you, you can talk to me, too."

Skyler shook her head, "There's nothing."

Rosie didn't seem convinced. "Really? Because you don't seem all that happy."

Skyler offered a half-smile, "I'm not unhappy, probably just a bit uncomfortable since I'm not too familiar with everyone here."

Rosie sympathized, "To be honest, I feel awkward around those guys too. It was always just me, the only girl, and today it's better with you here. How about we go shopping instead?"

Skyler knew she was there because Xavier had asked for her help. She couldn't just leave. "Maybe I should check with Xavier first?"

Rosie shrugged, "Never mind, I'd have to ask Lucas, and he'd never let me go shopping alone. Whenever I want something, he's always there to give me the best of everything, all perfectly arranged, completely robbing me of the joy of shopping myself."

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Had Skyler not been so sure that Rosie had no such intention, she could have sworn Rosie was showing off. In her eighteen years of life, Skyler had never known what it felt like to be genuinely cared for. Maybe, for the rest of her life, no one would ever show her that kind of concern again.

Rosie said, "Skyler, let's just eat something and forget about those jerks."

Skyler nodded. "Sounds good to me."

They had just settled down when Lucas, who had been playing poker, sidled "Rosie..."

Rosie pushed him away. "What do you want?"

Lucas said, "I was calling you. Why didn't you come over?"

Rosie replied, "Why should I join you guys when you're playing cards?"e2

Lucas stretched out his arm and wrapped it around Rosie. "I'm sorry, Rosie. From now on, if you don't want to, I won't drag you to these boring poker nights."

Rosie shot back, "You finally realize how dull they are for me?"

Lucas nodded. "Yeah, I get it now."

With his apologetic demeanor, Rosie decided to forgive him. "Next time, if Skyler's around, call me over. If she's not, don't you dare bother me. Oh, and that guy Steven, he had his eye on someone, right? If he manages to win her over and brings her along, then you can invite me."

Lucas leaned down and kissed her forehead. "Deal."

Skyler quickly averted her gaze. Some things were not meant to be seen.

Rosie wiped her forehead with a look of disgust. "Lucas, you kissed me again. We agreed no kisses until we're married, you're breaking your word."

Lucas grinned at her. "How can I resist? My Rosie is irresistible."

Rosie retorted, "Get lost."

Lucas persisted, "Come sit with me."

Rosie protested, "And leave Skyler here by herself? Am I supposed to just abandon her?"

Skyler quickly interjected, "Guys, really, don't worry about me. I'm used to being alone, it's fine."

Just then, Zavier's voice cut through. "Skyler, can you grab me a bottle of water?"

With a convenient excuse to leave, Skyler stood up promptly. "Sure."

She handed the water to Zavier and was about to step away when he asked, "Do you play?"

Skyler had been taught to play poker at a young age as a social skill by her family, but she didn't enjoy it. "I know how."

Zavier stood up, offering his seat. "Come on, play a couple of hands."

Skyler was reluctant. "I'm not very good. What if I lose?"

Zavier shrugged. "So you lose, what's the big deal?"

Steven chimed in, "Skyler, Zavier's just worried you might be bored. He's only asking you to play a few hands. Don't let his sincere concern go unappreciated, okay?"

Skyler replied, "I'm not bored on my own, really."

Zavier was firm. "If I say play, you play. What's with all the excuses?"

Rosie, who had followed Lucas over, added, “Skyler, just play. It’s boring just sitting on the sidelines anyway.”

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Skyler looked at Zavier, about to protest, but before she could get a word out, he had pressed her down into a chair.

Resigned to her fate, Skyler sat down to play. She wasn’t sure if it was luck or something else, but whatever card she needed, someone would discard. As soon as she was ready to win, the player next to her threw out the exact card she needed.

Steven laughed. “No wonder Zavier wanted you in the game. Look at that luck – you’ve got the makings of a card shark.”

Zavier chuckled. “The way you guys are playing, I can’t bear to watch. How can you even give her credit?”

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Skyler remained silent, her luck never seemed this good before. It must be the guys going easy on her.

Seeing how well Skyler was doing, Rosie was itching to get in on the action. “Lucas, I want in on the next round,” she declared. Lucas chuckled, “Sure thing.”

“You guys planning on bankrupting me and Marc? Before you let your wives step in, Marc and I were cleaning up,” Steven joked, glancing at Marcus. “I always thought Marc was a straight shooter, no favors, but it seems he’s got a soft spot. Too bad he’s soft for his buddy’s girl.”

Marcus looked up, his cool gaze flashing behind his silver-framed glasses at Steven, “What’s it gonna take to shut you up?” Steven grinned, unabashed, “A kiss from

my

sweetheart.”



His words came so naturally that both Skyler and Rosie blushed.e2

Lucas reached out, tucking a stray lock of hair behind Rosie's ear, "Just play your cards. Ignore him."

Zavier interjected, "Steven, mind the occasion."

Steven shrugged, "Did I say anything out of line?"

Lucas sighed, "Do us all a favor. Zip it."

Rosie turned to Lucas, "Which card should I play?"

Lucas took Rosie's hand, guiding her to draw a card and play it.

Watching their affectionate display, Steven suddenly lost his interest in the game. "I'm out."

"Just because you lost a few hands you're quitting? Don't be such a sore loser," Lucas teased.

Steven retorted, "You think I care about losing? I can't stand to see you two flaunting your love like this."

Lucas retorted, "Next time bring your girlfriend, and we can all team up against Marc."

Marcus stood up, "I need to head back to Riverton anyway."

Zavier was surprised, "Back to Riverton so soon after arriving in the Capital?"

Marcus simply nodded.

"And what about you, Steven?" Zavier asked.

Steven grabbed his jacket, "That girl I'm into is pretty popular. I can't risk someone else moving in first, so I need to dash back to Harbor City and weed out the competition."

Lucas smirked, "Aren't you the ambitious one."

Steven shot back, "I learned from the best."

Zavier concluded, "If you two are leaving, then go ahead. We'll catch up another time."

Marcus nodded, "See you."

Steven followed, "Enjoy the rest of your evening, lovebirds."

Turning to Lucas, Zavier asked, "What about you?"

Lucas looked at Rosie, "What do you think?"

Rosie was eager, "I still want to hang out with Skyler."

Zavier turned to Skyler, "Are you free tonight?"

Skyler shook her head, "No plans."

"Then let's grab dinner?" Zavier proposed.

Rosie jumped in before Skyler could respond, "Yes, let's all go eat! It's definitely more fun than playing cards."

Unaffected by the departure of the others, Zavier, with Skyler and Lucas with Rosie, set out for their next gathering.

Lucas asked Rosie, "What are you in the mood for

Rosie turned to Skyler, "What about you? What do you feel like eating?"

Skyler replied, "I'm easy, anything's fine."

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Rosie suggested, "There's a great vegetarian place nearby, how about that?"

Skyler nodded, "Sure, that works for me."

Zavier, who always encouraged Skyler to speak her mind, chimed in, "If you've got a craving, just say it. Don't always go along with everyone else."

Skyler was used to accommodating others. For the past eighteen years, no one had really given her a choice.

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Even with a choice, Skyler knew she wasn't really calling the shots, "I can eat anything. I'm not a picky eater."

Zavier's response was a silent stare if she could bring a bit of her work demeanor into her personal life, she wouldn't be bullied so much, a punching doll for everyone.

Rosie grabbed Skyler's hand, "Let's get out of here."

"Okay," Skyler agreed.

Trailing behind them, Lucas turned to Zavier, "What's your deal with this surprise fiancée of yours, Zavier?"

Watching Skyler's delicate figure ahead, Zavier mused, "She just seems so fragile, like a gentle breeze could knock her over. I feel like taking care of her."

Lucas wasn't buying it, "Come on, Zavier. We've known each other for years, and since when have you had the heart of a saint?" "Well, now you know," Zavier quipped.

"No real feelings for the girl?" Lucas pressed.

"None," Zavier affirmed.

Lucas patted him on the shoulder, "If you're not planning to marry her, don't get her hopes up. Leading her on and then bailing out would be the real harm."

Zavier replied, "With the way she doesn't seem to care about me, do you really think I can hurt her?"

"So it's because she's not into you that you don't want to like her?" Lucas probed.

Zavier chuckled, "You're reading too much into it."

"It's fine for me to overthink, but don't let the girl do the same," Lucas warned.

"I know my limits," Zavier said.

"The Blue family is really something, aren't they? Using their own flesh and blood as a bargaining chip," Lucas scorned.

Lighting up a cigarette, Zavier took a drag, "Aren't we all pawns in our family's games?"

"Not Rosie and me," Lucas countered.

"You and Rosie have that childhood betrothal, and you're saying you're not?" Zavier challenged.

"As kids, our parents joked about it, sure. But my feelings for Rosie, my desire to marry her, they're real. I want to protect her for life," Lucas declared.

"And you're sure Rosie feels the same about you?" Zavier asked.

"Of course, she does. Who else could she like? She's spent her life around me more than any other guy," Lucas asserted confidently.

Zavier laughed, "Have you ever actually asked her? Maybe all this time you've been wishful thinking, and she sees you more as a brother."

Lucas' face darkened, "That's impossible."

"So you've never asked her if she likes you in that way?" Zavier prodded.

Lucas fell silent, then, mimicking Zavier, lit up a cigarette and took a couple of puffs, "Before we sign any papers, I'll make sure to ask her."

But it was just asking, not letting her choose. He would never allow his girl to marry another man.

Zavier snuffed out his cigarette, "Let's go!"

"Yeah," Lucas agreed, though the thought of Rosie's feelings being more fraternal than romantic ruined his appetite.

Throughout dinner, he busily passed dishes to Rosie, who, with her carefree nature, didn't notice his unusual behavior.

After dinner, the group split up. Xavier drove Skyler back to campus. The ride was typically quiet until Xavier parked outside the campus and broke the silence, "I'm sorry!"

Skyler, confused by his sudden apology, blinked her doe eyes at him.

Zavier clarified, "I didn't come through with the help I promised. Your parents don't want your sister coming to the Capital"

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## "Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband"

Chapter 1710

Skyler had seen this coming. With a wry smile, she said, "It's not your fault, you don't have to apologize to me."

Zavier hesitated, "But the Blue family didn't completely shut the door. They offered me a condition."

Skyler raised an eyebrow, "What condition?"

Zavier looked away, "If you can get pregnant with my child before Christmas and it's confirmed to be a boy, they've agreed to let your sister come to the Capital."

Skyler clenched her hands at her sides, "Ha. Don't worry about them."

Zavier, "Skyler..."

Skyler, Yeah?'e2

Zavier took a deep breath, "I'll work hard to become strong enough to call off our engagement before it's too late. I won't marry someone I don't want to, and I won't let you marry someone you don't want to."

Skyler gave him a tearful smile that quickly turned into actual tears.

Zavier reached out to wipe away her tears but thought better of it and slowly drew back his hand.

Skyler, wiping her own tears fiercely, said, "You getting stronger only means calling off our engagement. After that, I might become the laughingstock, the castoff, or they might just pawn me off in another alliance. To break free from their control, I need to be the one who gets stronger. But how? I used to think if I could just earn enough money to support myself and my sister, I'd be free. But I was naive."

Zavier listened in silence.

Skyler. "Thanks for taking me out today and introducing me to more friends. I'm really glad I got to meet Rosie."

Rosie's vivacity was like a warm little sun for Skyler, casting a beam of light in her cold world.

Zavier broke the silence, "We are here."

Skyler opened the door, "Thank you."

For the job he had introduced her to.

For not forcing her to do anything she didn't want to.

For bringing new friends into her life.

She remembered every kindness.

Zavier, "Winter break is coming. I'll send Mary to pick you up and bring you to my place."

Skyler, "It's alright. I can stay in the dorm over the break."

Zavier paused, then relented, "As you wish."

Skyler, "Goodbye."

Zavier, "Yeah."

He watched Skyler walk away before driving off. He had a place near the school, but suddenly, he didn't know where to go. He drove aimlessly until a

call snapped him back to reality. It was his mother Kalene, “Zavier, your father’s condition has worsened. He’s critical. Come to the hospital immediately.”

Zavier’s heart skipped a beat, “Which hospital?”

Kalene, “The Capital General.”

Zavier, “I’m on my way.”

His grip on the steering wheel was shaky as he rushed to the hospital. Just days ago, the doctors had said his father was improving. How could things have turned so quickly?

His mind was a blur. He couldn’t make sense of it.

Zavier made it to the hospital as fast as he could, but it was too late. The death certificate had already been issued.

Kalene collapsed on the floor, too shocked to even cry.

Zavier’s steps faltered, “Mom...”

Nora, full of fury, confronted Zavier, “How could you take so long? Your father wanted to see you one last time before he passed.”

**"Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband"**