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She decided to reply as coldly as she could.

Got it.

Their last conversation ended when she brought up the subject of his tattoos. The night often did silly things to people's minds. When she woke up the next morning, Skylar marveled at herself for having dared to ask him about it. She had been self-delusional, after all.

She put her phone down on the bed. After tidying up her room slightly, she headed straight for the shooting location. The lead actor was arriving today. Skylar overheard this from another person's conversation during dinner yesterday.

The lead actor was a newbie as well. He had never acted a day in his life.

That made Katrina the biggest star on the set. Daryl had finally summoned up the courage to cast novice actors this time, but the public didn't think too much of his plan. Originally, the male lead was supposed to be played by a social media star who had become very popular recently. However, before they could announce this, the production crew had swapped him out with another person.

Skylar paced around the production studio. Several townspeople had gathered around to watch the film shooting. Indeed, almost everything was interesting to them in this quiet, unhappening town. Some even went up to the production crew and volunteered to be extras.

"That girl looks so pretty! Look how nice her figure is! Her hips and butt are so well-defined."

"But she's way too skinny, don't you think? Her butt isn't big enough. I worry for her if she decides to have babies in the future. All the actresses look so skinny. I'm afraid they won't even be able to attract husbands, much less have children!"

"I know, right! None of them would be willing to settle down comfortably with a guy. In fact, pity the men who will end up with them. These actresses get divorced all the time. It's so common that they probably don't even think twice about it."

A few older women were gossiping loudly near her. Skylar heard everything they said loud and clear. Too afraid to pick a fight with the locals, she turned and flashed a smile at them. The smile didn't quite reach her eyes—she wanted to show them that she had overheard their words, and they'd better shut up or else.

Suddenly, something dashed towards her, startling Skylar slightly. When she finally recovered from her shock, she realized that it was a little girl who had ran out from the crowd and hugged her thigh.

The girl's height just barely reached her thighs. Her hair was long and matted. Although it was nearly summer, she was still wearing a red cotton jacket. It was stained in so many places that it was practically glowing black in the sun.

The girl looked up at her with bright eyes. Her cheeks were ruddy and filthy. Skylar wondered when was the last time someone ran a bath for her.

"Miss, do you have anything to eat?" the girl asked timidly.

Skylar looked at the girl in shock. Quickly, she dug into her pockets to see if she had anything for her to snack on, but her search turned out to be futile.

The old ladies who had been gossiping about her just now crowded around them and started jabbering loudly again.

"Pollyanna, haven't you eaten yet? Where's your mother?"

"The mother is a disgrace. What sort of mother doesn't even feed her own child? Look how skinny the girl is. She's practically skin and bones."

"She must be busy running after her son at home."

"Pollyanna, you better let go of that woman immediately. City girls are obsessed with being clean. Why are you clinging on to her like that when you're so filthy?"

As though she had been shocked, Pollyanna released Skylar immediately. She bowed her head and fiddled her dirt-stained thumbs uneasily.

Skylar squatted down on the floor and caressed the girl's hair. "I don't have any food on me now. Wait here for me! I'll go and get you something to eat."

"God, this kid is absolutely filthy! I could smell her from a mile away. What was the production crew thinking, anyway? I can't believe they chose this disgusting shanty town as the filming location."

Katrina pinched her nose in disgust as she stopped right next to them. Regardless of where she was, her assistant would be behind her, holding the umbrella over her head.

Skylar couldn't believe that anyone could be as cruel as to say these horrible things in front of a child. It might leave Pollyanna traumatized for life.

Seeing the exaggerated expression on Katrina's face, Skylar said darkly, "It's not as though she doesn't want to take a shower. This place doesn't even have running water, to begin with. Besides, you might want to get your nose checked out. I can't smell anything."

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Katrina blinked her pretty eyes and replied, "I think you're the one who needs to get your nose checked out. Make sure to wash your hands well before we start shooting! I don't want my on-screen good friend to be all oily and gross."

Pollyanna ran her fingers through her hair, too frightened to say anything.

Skylar's impression of Katrina was getting worse by the minute. It wasn't because she stole the role of the lead actress from her, or because of the rumors surrounding Katrina and Tobias.

Rather, it was because of the awful way she spoke to this child. There wasn't a shred of decency in her voice at all.

Skylar ignored her. She took Pollyanna's filthy hand and bent down to smile at her. "I'll buy you some bread, alright? Do you want to have some soda with it?"

Hearing that food was on its way, the tension finally disappeared from Pollyanna's face. She nodded her head frantically.

Katrina remained rooted to her spot, frowning slightly. She turned to her assistant and ordered, "When we're shooting our scenes together, make sure to check that she has washed her hands thoroughly."

Her assistant nodded. Inside, she was complaining about how picky and capricious Katrina was. What a difficult person she is to work with!

Skylar led Pollyanna to the only sundry store in town. The interior of the shop was completely dark when they stepped inside, and Skylar was sure she could smell something rotting.

The cabinets and shelves looked old and dusty. Skylar looked at the snacks on the shelves and felt a little put-out. Most of them are probably past their expiration date.

Before she bought some bread for Pollyanna, she made sure to take a good look at the expiration date written on the plastic packaging. They were still three days away from the expiration date. Skylar muttered a prayer of thanks and paid for the bread.

Pollyanna ripped open the packaging and wolfed down the bread. Evidently, it had been a long time since she had a full meal.

In fact, Pollyanna reminded Skylar of herself a long time ago, back when she was still living with Miranda.

Back then, they lived a hand-to-mouth existence. Miranda had fallen into a depressive state over her failed marriage with Thomas. In fact, she never got over it.

She couldn't even be bothered to prepare meals for Skylar. Most of the time, they were reduced to eating stale croissants at home. Later on, when Skylar was sent to live with her grandmother, Meredith had called Miranda all sorts of names and blamed her for taking out her anger on Skylar.

Skylar didn't have many memories from her childhood, but sometimes she thought that was a good thing. Having a bad memory that was too powerful could cause unnecessary pain.

Skylar sat on a huge rock and said to little Pollyanna, "Chew slowly. Don't choke on your food! I've even bought you soda—here."

A bright, youthful voice rang out from behind her. "Children shouldn't be drinking soda."

The voice belonged to a man who was wearing an army-green jacket and a shirt with the logo of the navy in it. He was wearing a pair of black loafers on his feet.

He was a very handsome young man, and he looked even better when he smiled. He was very well put-together, but unlike the pretty boys who were gaining fame on social media these days, he had a manly air about him.

Skylar replied, "She doesn't get to drink it that often."

Pollyanna nodded timidly at the man.

He smiled and replied, "That won't do either. Are you here for the shoot? I'm Kai. I just arrived."

Skylar had seen his name on the list of actors. Kai was playing the role of the male lead in this film. No wonder he was dressed in such a peculiar manner.

Kai's smile was bright and full of self-confidence. Skylar could tell that he had grown up overseas, probably in a more liberal country.

She said, "I'm Skylar, and I'm here for the shoot, too. I'm your future wife."

Realizing how strange that might have sounded, she quickly corrected herself and introduced herself as the supporting actress.

Kai looked at her, and something flickered in his eyes. Very sweetly, he gushed, "What was the male lead thinking? Why did he go for the lead actress when there's a beauty like you around?"

Skylar stood up and dusted off her pants. As she straightened out her clothes, she said, "The lead actress is way more beautiful than me."

However, Kai was adamant. "I've seen Katrina before, you know. She isn't really as beautiful as people say she is. Anyway, it didn't leave much of an impression on me."

Skylar muttered to herself, "How picky can you get!"

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Pollyanna finished the bread and the entire bottle of soda. Skylar took out every single cent she had on herself and pushed the money into Pollyanna's hands.

Quietly, she said, "Take this money and buy some food for yourself when you're hungry. Don't let your mother find out."

Pollyanna nodded thankfully at her. Shyly, she asked, "Miss, can I call you Mom?"

This was a little shocking to Skylar. She shook her head and said kindly, "I don't have any children yet. Just call me Skylar, okay?"

"Oh." Pollyanna sounded a little crestfallen. She turned around and fled without looking back at her.

Kai saw this and said to Skylar, "Don't be so kind to everyone you see. I've heard stories about the children here. Whenever they see someone from out of town, they act pitiful so they can get free food. Lots of people in the production crew have encountered this sort of incident."

Skylar didn't think much of it. Who cared if Pollyanna had tricked her out of her money? The kid was just peckish. There was no need to be so calculative about it.

Skylar and Kai made their way to the shooting location. Kai followed after her as Skylar led the way. His tall, bulky build completely shielded her body from the sun.

When they all got there, everyone's eyes turned to Kai. Although he was a newbie in the industry, he held a rather prestigious status as the only son of Henry Group's CEO. He was a walking God of Fortune.

Unbeknownst to Skylar, Henry Group had another connection to her. The CEO was Tobias' uncle.

This made Tobias Kai's older cousin. Anyone with a background as powerful as Kai's was surrounded by bootlickers everywhere they went. Even the director himself was obliged to treat him favorably.

Katrina was the happiest person to see Kai's arrival. Skylar couldn't help but suspect that the two of them were somehow involved with each other.

Skylar's scenes would only be starting filming tomorrow. She returned to her room to memorize her script again, conveniently steering clear of Jeremy.

When Jeremy found out that she had lost the role of the lead actress to Katrina, he started mocking her loudly whenever he saw her around the set. Seeing the malicious smile on his face, Skylar was so angry that she could hardly breathe.

She wormed into her bed and held her phone high up above her face. The signal here was horrible. The Wi-Fi router was basically a decorative item, and her data was working very poorly. It took her ages to send out one message.

She texted Tobias: Are you online? Have you returned from Thailand?

He replied almost instantly: I'm back. I'm having a meeting at the office now.

Skylar lay on her side and held the phone up to her face. For the past two days, chatting with Tobias on WhatsApp was the only thing she looked forward to.

With Tobias, she felt too shy to say anything romantic. Even a simple "I miss you" seemed immensely difficult to her.

She sent him another message: I won't bother you if you're in a meeting, then. I was just bored so wanted to know what you were doing.

Tobias didn't reply for a long time. Just as Skylar was starting to wonder if he had ended the conversation, her phone screen lit up with a notification again.

You aren't bothering me. Find a movie to watch if you're so bored.

Skylar replied: There haven't been any good movies recently.

Tobias sent her a link to a streaming website.

Skylar clicked on the link excitedly. When the website finally loaded, however, she flushed scarlet immediately. Her heart was beating so fast that she felt a little light-headed.

Nevertheless, curiosity got the better of her and she clicked on the video immediately. However, she didn't expect it to play so quickly. Immediately, the lewd sounds of a woman moaning filled the quiet room.

Skylar quickly returned to WhatsApp.

She sent him another message: Why are you making me watch stuff like that?

Tobias replied: Baby, do you want to spice up our bedroom life? Take a lesson or two from her. We can get closer that way.

A series of embarrassing images popped into Skylar's mind as she read his message. She was bent over Tobias's lap—he raised his hand and swung it down on her buttocks with a humiliating slap, leaving a clear, red mark on the flesh.

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Imagining that painful yet gentle sensation, a sense of pleasure and excitement arose in Skylar's heart.

She got out of bed and stood in front of the mirror in the bathroom, then took off her pants and tried spanking herself erotically.

To her frustration, she could not achieve a sense of pleasure out of it.

Suddenly, she came back to her senses. What the hell am I doing?

She put on her pants again and crawled back into bed when she noticed a few unread messages on her phone.

Tobias: Have you seen it? How do you feel?

Tobias: We can try that when we meet.

His suggestive text messages made Skylar wonder if he was truly in a meeting. How could he speak of such things if he were in a meeting?

She sent a smiley face emoji without typing anything else.

Tobias: Come on, say something. Don't just send me a smiley face.

Skylar: I'm afraid of pain. If you hit me like that, it would be considered domestic violence. I'm not a fan of that.

Tobias: Don't worry, I will control the intensity. You don't have to be shy with me. Just be yourself.

Skylar: I'm going to sleep.

Although Skylar put an end to the topic abruptly, her heart was captivated by Tobias. As the night fell, the air conditioner made a rumbling sound.

Tobias did not respond to her message any further or even wished her good night, causing her to wonder if she had disappointed him.

At ten o'clock that night, the atmosphere in the meeting room of Ford Group was silent and tense. The project manager was still busy presenting his new proposals.

Meanwhile, the other employees peeked at their CEO from time to time as though they were walking on a knife-edge.

In the midst of his presentation, the project manager wondered if Tobias was listening to him as the latter was staring at the phone the whole time.

There wasn't much expression on his face, and his employees couldn't figure out what he was thinking.

When Tobias heard from Skylar that she was going to sleep, he intentionally placed his phone with its screen facing up so he could easily see any new incoming notifications.

At that very moment, the project manager ended his presentation.

“Mr. Ford, do you any comments on the proposal?” he asked.

Tobias finally looked up and narrowed his eyes. “I didn’t catch anything you said just now. Could you repeat your presentation?”

Though the project manager’s throat was already dry from speaking, he had no choice but to present everything again.

Just as he scrolled back to the first slide of his presentation, Tobias interrupted him and signaled for the secretary to come over.

The secretary walked over and waited for instructions.

“Take a look at my itinerary and book me a flight ticket to N Province,” said Tobias.

The secretary was stunned. He wondered why Tobias wanted to add N Province to the itinerary even though the company had no business dealings there.

Nevertheless, he nodded and answered, “Sure, Mr. Ford. You have some time to spare on Friday. Do you want to depart on Friday then?”

“Mhm,” Tobias responded. This meant that he would need to wait a week before he could meet Skylar.

This was the first time he had changed his travel plans for a woman. In the past, he used to be emotionally detached as such matters would inevitably get in the way of his career and business.

Early the next morning, Skylar was woken up by a sudden knock on her door. As she opened her eyes and regained her senses, she regretted what happened the night before. She had spent all night chatting with Tobias and did not even finish going through her script.

She was stunned to see Kai when she opened the door. “Is the hotel on fire?” she asked.

Kai looked around in confusion. “No, do you smell smoke?”

Skylar took the hair tie around her wrist and tied her hair into a neat ponytail, saying, "Well, you knocked on my door so anxiously. I thought the building was on fire. Is something wrong?"

"I need to use your toilet. The one in my room is broken," he said.

Before Skylar could say anything, Kai rushed into her room to use the toilet.

Leaning against the door, she said loudly, "Don't you feel embarrassed? We don't know each other that well, yet you charge into my room early in the morning to use my toilet."

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With the sound of a toilet flushing in the background, Kai said, "Your room was the closest to mine, and I couldn't hold my pee any longer. There's nothing to be embarrassed about."

Skylar didn't refute any further, and she treated the situation as though she was doing him a favor.

A while later, Kai walked out from the toilet while shaking his wet hands.

Just as he was about to close the toilet door, Skylar stopped him and said, "Don't close the door. Let the smell escape."

"It was only pee, not poop. Why aren't you at the studio yet anyway?" he answered.

She stared at him with a puzzled expression, wondering why did he behave as though they were old friends.

She then said sluggishly, "I'm about to leave. The director wants me to familiarize myself with the script these two days."

Suddenly, Kai caught a glimpse of the black bracelet on Skylar's wrist. "These beads look familiar. My cousin also has one of the same colors," he said.

Skylar lifted her arm and took a look at the bracelet. It was given to her by Tobias, but she did not pay much attention to it.

“Not all bracelets are the same. It’s impossible that your cousin and I are wearing matching bracelets,” she said.

He then raised his chin slightly, saying, “Of course not. He’s not into innocent girls like you.”

It was Skylar’s first official day on set, and she was treated as a newcomer despite the several small roles she had played before.

Because her skin was extremely fair, Daryl had asked the makeup artist to use a darker shade of foundation on her. Otherwise, her natural fair and unblemished skin wouldn’t look realistic when she played characters from the countryside.

While most lead characters generally looked pretty, Skylar’s character was meant to be unattractive-looking. She did not have many complaints about this since she had played a dead person before in a previous role.

With a rough attitude, the makeup artist smeared foundation on Skylar’s face as though she were brushing paint on a wall.

“It’s not even,” said Skylar.

The makeup artist put down the makeup brush and said, “It’s even. You’re just not looking properly.”

She simply let out a hum in response.

Skylar’s first scene showcased a rivalry between her and Katrina’s characters. Leanne, the supporting actress played by Skylar, had just found out that Stacie, Katrina’s character, was in love with Todd, the male lead played by Kai.

So, Leanne asked Todd about their movie date the night before in front of Stacie, deliberately causing a misunderstanding between them.

Out of jealousy, Stacie started to act out.

During this scene, Skylar was wearing army-green pants and white shoes while her hair was tied into two long braids. On the other hand, Katrina wore a neat, short wig, making her look youthful.

With all cameras ready on set, Kai sat on a foldable chair as he watched the two actresses play out the scene.

His agent Mr. Yue then said, "Katrina is really attractive and she has pretty good connections. She will become a big hit in the next two years or so. I heard she even had a fling with your cousin some time ago."

Kai looked at Mr. Yue and said, "I don't think Katrina is that good-looking, but Skylar is really pretty to me. Her eyes are angelic, yet they contain a hint of sadness. I've never met anyone as beautiful as her overseas."

Mr. Yue thought that Skylar was pretty too but he responded wittily, "What's the use of having only good looks? If you do not have good connections, you will not be able to make it big either. I heard that Skylar was initially offered the female lead role but the investors did not agree to it. Of course, there would be sadness in her eyes."

Kai felt disappointed at that moment. If only Skylar could play the female lead role, his performance would be much better. Katrina simply wasn't his cup of tea.