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It was Susan and Jasmine!

The expression on Yulia's face changed. She ran quickly towards the front door.

When she arrived at the entrance, she spotted the hulking figures of Jasmine and Susan, just as she had expected.

Susan was pushing Jasmine around in a wheelchair. Both of them had murderous expressions on their faces, as though they were here to commit a massacre. Evidently, they were here to start a fight.

Yulia walked over to her daughter and looked warily at Susan and Jasmine. "Nat, what's going on?"

Natalie pursed her lips and replied, "These two are accusing me of causing Shane to call off his engagement. They want me to pay the price for my actions!"

"What?" Yulia looked as though she had heard the funniest joke on earth. She pointed at mother and daughter and said furiously, "The both of you must be insane! You were the ones who dug yourselves into this mess, and now you want to blame my daughter for it?"

Susan gazed angrily at Natalie. "We're speaking the truth! If Natalie hadn't returned to J City and tried getting close to Shane again, Jasmine wouldn't have exploded in rage and done all those things! If you want to know who's to blame for all this, just look at your own daughter!"

Natalie laughed but didn't pay her any attention. Instead, she looked down at Jasmine in her wheelchair. Jasmine looked every bit as furious as her mother. "Do you feel the same way?" Natalie asked.

Jasmine clenched her fists and didn't reply. She probably did.

Natalie rubbed her forehead tiredly and laughed. "Of course you do. If you didn't feel this way, you wouldn't have come to my house and made such a ruckus here."

"This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard," Yulia said, shaking with rage. "Instead of reflecting on yourselves when Shane called off the engagement, the both of you chose to pin the blame on Natalie's return! I've never seen anyone as shameless as you."

"Mom, calm down." Natalie patted her on the back, hoping that Yulia wouldn't get too excited.

Susan laughed coldly. "Your daughter is the shameless one here! She was the one who went and seduced Shane. Otherwise, how could this have happened? Jas was still his fiancée then!"

Natalie raised an eyebrow and looked at Jasmine with an unreadable expression on her face. "So that's what you think, huh?"

Jasmine's heart sank as she felt a sudden wave of unease. "What do you mean by that?"

Susan and Yulia turned to look at Natalie.

"Baby Girl, do you happen to know something we don't?" Yulia asked.

Natalie ran a finger through her hair and smiled sweetly at them. "Well, it's not that big of a secret, I suppose. Even without me around, Mr. Shane would've called off the engagement sooner or later, because Jasmine is just a stand-in for someone else!"

"A stand-in?" Jasmine asked, her eyes narrowing.

Yulia and Susan gasped at this information, too.

Natalie nodded and continued, "Yes. To Mr. Shane, you're nothing more than a stand-in for Ms. Jacqueline Graham. She's the person he truly loves in his heart. Ten years ago, Jacqueline fell into a vegetative state after a particularly horrific car accident. She just woke up recently."

Yulia clapped her hands together in shock. "That reminds me! Wasn't she the heiress of the Graham Group ten years ago?"

Natalie nodded. "Yes, she was."

"Well, that won't be strange, then. Back then, the Graham and Thompson families were on excellent terms. Jacqueline and Shane had been friends since they were kids—in fact, there were people who betted that they were going to get married someday! However, after the Graham Group became bankrupt ten years ago, Jacqueline disappeared. I never even knew she was involved in a car accident!" Yulia exclaimed, rubbing her chin.

Susan and Jasmine had only entered the Smith family and their circle of socialite friends seven years ago, so they didn't know about the events that had happened a decade prior. Hearing this from Yulia, they finally realized that Shane had long harbored a secret love for his childhood friend.

"Come to think of it," Natalie said, turning to smile at Jasmine, "Ms. Graham is staying at the same hospital as you are."

Jasmine's face was white as a sheet. She shook her head frantically, trying to convince herself that Natalie was lying. "No, that's impossible! How could Shane be in love with whatshername...Jacqueline...the person he loves is me..."

Here, she suddenly remembered something. Her eyes widened dramatically, and she clutched at Susan's hand. "Mom, didn't you tell me yesterday that Shane has been visiting the hospital a lot recently?"

"Well...yes." Susan nodded in confirmation.

Natalie laughed mockingly. "Did you two really think that he was there to visit the both of you?"

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Susan opened her mouth in shock. She was at a complete loss for words.

Indeed, that was what she had thought all along.

Susan believed that Shane had dropped by the hospital so often because he wanted to know if Jasmine had woken up from her 'coma' yet.

Natalie shrugged helplessly. "Well, I'm sorry to inform the both of you that you were wrong. Mr. Shane wasn't there to see you. He was visiting Ms. Graham!" Yulia laughed at Susan and Jasmine, obviously reveling in their misery. "Oh, dear. What a disappointment for the both of you!"

Jasmine's hand trembled as it lay on the armrest of her wheelchair. She felt as though someone had emptied a bucket of ice-cold water on her.

This was the first time she realized that Natalie wasn't the only other woman by Shane's side. He had a mysterious woman called Jacqueline too.

"Jas..." Susan placed a hand on her daughter's shoulder worriedly.

Natalie put her hands on her knees and bent down slightly to meet Jasmine's eyes. "Now, the both of you know why Mr. Shane would've canceled the engagement even without me around. Jasmine, you're just a stand-in for Jacqueline, who helped discourage other girls who want to try their luck with him. Simply put, you're just a pawn to Mr. Shane."

Jasmine was close to a mental breakdown. She grabbed at her own hair and pulled violently at it, her face contorted in rage. Jacqueline Graham, Jacqueline Graham...she repeated endlessly in her heart.

Natalie straightened up again. "Thus, there's no use in you coming to look for me today!"

"Who said there isn't?" Jasmine looked up at her with bloodshot eyes, malice written all over her face. "Even if there wasn't a Jacqueline, you still had a part to play in this! Shane might have wanted to call off our engagement, but he wouldn't have done it now if you hadn't come along! Hence, when all is said and done, everything is your fault!"

Although Natalie told her that Shane's true love was Jacqueline, Jasmine was quite clear on the fact that he was in love with Natalie as well. He might love Jacqueline more, but nonetheless, he still felt much affection for Natalie.

Jasmine would never forgive Natalie because of this. She would find a way to make both Natalie and Jacqueline disappear from Shane's life forever!

"Gosh, you're being so unreasonable!" Seeing the rancor in Jasmine's eyes, Natalie frowned with distaste.

Yulia took her hand. "Don't bother trying to talk sense into people like this. Let's ignore them—we're only wasting our time."

With that, Yulia slammed the door shut in Susan and Jasmine's faces.

As they expected, Susan and Jasmine continued to bang loudly on the door, screaming for them to open up.

Yulia found the noise too annoying to bear. She took out her phone and made a call to the guardhouse, which promptly sent two security guards upstairs to force them to leave.

There was a loud scuffle outside the door before everything returned to its peaceful normal again.

Yulia opened the door and peeked outside. When she saw that Susan and Jasmine had gone, she let out a sigh of relief and returned to the living room. "The two of them have issues!"

Natalie was peeling an apple on the sofa. "They don't have issues. They're just two people who bully the weak but fear the strong," she replied, smiling.

Yulia nodded. "That's right. However, I believe that they wanted to go and look for Jacqueline but knew that it would be completely useless. Hence, they chose to take their anger out on you instead. Come to think of it, I'm pretty glad that Jasmine ruined the engagement between you and Shane. If not, you would have been the stand-in in place of her!"

Natalie's eyes flashed briefly before returning to normal. She pushed the apple and the knife into Yulia's hands. "Alright, Mom. Let's not talk about this anymore. Why don't you help me finish peeling this? I'll go and see if the kids are awake."

"Alright, then." Yulia waved her away.

Natalie got up and made her way to the kids' bedroom.

When she entered the room, she found that the kids hadn't woken up yet. Seeing that it was already pretty late, she woke them up and pressed a kiss to both their cheeks. After getting them changed, she took them by the hands and went into the bathroom to wash up.

After they finished washing up and having breakfast, Natalie handed Sharon over to Yulia and asked her to send Sharon to kindergarten.

After seeing them off, Natalie headed over to the studio with Connor.

Connor's arm hadn't recovered fully, and he was wearing it in a cast. Natalie was worried that he might get injured again if he played around with the kids at the kindergarten, so she decided to give him a small holiday instead and bring him back when his injury healed.

When she spotted Natalie entering the studio with Connor, Joyce hurried out from her office and said, "Nat, you're here!"

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Natalie let go of Connor's hand and told him to go and play in her office. After putting her bag down, she nodded at Joyce and said, "You're here early today, Joyce."

"Good morning! How was the meeting yesterday?" Joyce asked anxiously.

Natalie took out her notebook and passed it to her. "Here are the notes I made during the meeting. Take a look at them yourself."

Hearing this, Joyce took the notebook from her and started reading through the notes. When she finished, she was so excited that she started clapping with joy. "That's amazing! Nat, we have to enter this competition and win the right to represent our country!"

"Of course." Natalie nodded.

"Well, I'll go and sign us up, then." With that, Joyce turned around and made a beeline for her own office.

Natalie didn't follow after her. Instead, she started walking around the studio to check out other designers' works.

At that moment, a plain-looking man in a suit appeared at the door of the studio. He knocked on the door and asked politely, "Excuse me, is Ms. Natalie Smith around?"

Natalie gripped her design notes a little tighter and looked at him warily. "That's me. May I know who you are?"

The man smiled courteously and introduced himself. "I'm Mr. Alfred Moore's assistant."

"Mr. Moore's assistant, you say?" Natalie put down her notes and walked over to him. "May I know why you're looking for me?"

"It's like this. Mr. Moore thinks he's at the age where he should retire soon. Hence, he has decided to hold a retirement party, where he'll announce his decision to leave the industry. Here's the invitation." The assistant passed her an invitation card.

Natalie took it from him with both hands and read through it carefully.

After that, she closed the invitation card and said, "Alright, I got it. I'll be sure to arrive there on time."

"Alright," the assistant nodded. "I'll get going first, then."

After he left, Joyce came out of her office and asked confusedly, "Nat, who was that guy?"

"He's Mr. Moore's assistant." Natalie shut the studio door after him and turned around. "Are you done with the registration?"

"Yup! The competition is three days from now, and it will be held at the office building of the J City Council. Just make sure to be there," Joyce replied, stretching leisurely as she did.

Natalie nodded, grunting in acknowledgement.

Joyce's gaze fell on the invitation card in her hands. "Hey, what's that?"

"You can take a look at it for yourself." Natalie handed the card over to her.

Joyce took it from her and glanced at it. Her eyes widened in amazement. "Oh my goodness, is Mr. Moore actually going to retire?"

"Yes." Natalie towards her own office.

Joyce followed after her, looking a bit confused. "Mr. Moore is a designer whose talent is on the same level as your mentor. Why would he suddenly retire?"

"His assistant said it's because he's getting older. That's to be expected, I suppose. A designer's ingenuity can only sustain them for so long—once they reach a certain age, they'll be left with no more inspiration. That's what happened to my mentor. After he realized that

he wasn't going anywhere with fashion design anymore, he switched over to clothing research," Natalie said, smiling.

Joyce wasn't a fashion designer, so she could only nod in confusion when she heard this. "Is that so? The invitation card says that the banquet will be held tonight. Should we bring a gift along?"

"Of course! Mr. Moore likes collecting oriental teacups. I'll try and see if I can find one." Natalie opened the door of her office.

Noticing that someone had entered, Connor looked towards the door. When he saw that it was Natalie and Joyce, he waved at them and greeted them sweetly. "Mommy, Aunt Joyce!"

"Good boy!" Natalie walked over to him and caressed his hair.

Joyce made the bolder decision to go straight for Connor's face.

The boy's cheeks were soft and chubby, and it felt very nice to pinch them. Joyce didn't want to let go of them at all. Natalie saw her son frown in displeasure and swatted Joyce's hand away, freeing him at last.

When he got his long-awaited freedom, the boy jumped off his seat and fled into another corner.

Joyce looked at him with her arms akimbo and started to complain. "This child..."

Natalie interrupted her playfully. "Alright, that's enough! You sound like a child yourself."

Joyce stuck her tongue out at her.

Natalie burst into laughter. She walked over to her desk and put the invitation card into one of its drawers. "Alright, I'll drop by the store first to pick out Mr. Moore's gift. Please help me take care of Connor."

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"Go on, go on! I'll take good care of him." Joyce waved her away.

Natalie smiled and thanked her. After nagging at Connor for a few more minutes, she finally picked up her bag and left.

When she got to an oriental wares street, she stood at the entrance of the alleyway. It stretched on so far that she couldn't see the end of it—that was how long it was. Besides, the street was bustling with people. It was every bit as crowded as the street that sold vintage items.

Natalie took out her phone and, using the built-in GPS, finally found herself at the most famous collectible items store on this street.

The moment she stepped into the store, an employee came hurrying up to her with a smile on his face. "Welcome to our store! May I know what sort of teacup you're looking for? We stock both dish and bowl."

"Oh, definitely the bowl!" Natalie said as she glanced around the store, awestruck.

Mr. Moore wasn't interested in the dish-style teacups. He much preferred the bowl-style ones.

"Here you go!" The employee pointed at a shelf to her right. "All of these are bowl-style teacups."

Natalie thanked him and walked over to take a look.

Back in the lounge, a man attired very lavishly sat on the sofa with his eyes fixed on the security footage monitor in front of him. He brought the glass of wine to his lips and took a sip.

An old man sat next to him, examining a teacup very closely. Noticing that the air had suddenly gone quiet, he put down the magnifying glass in his hands and turned to look at the younger man. "Shane, what are you looking at?"

Shane swiveled the wine around in the glass and didn't say anything.

The old man followed his gaze. When he saw Natalie in the security footage, he pushed his glasses up and yelped in surprise. "Dear me! Isn't that the girl from the Smith family? I believe her name is Natalie."

Shane turned to look at him. "Mr. Blackwood, do you know her?"

The old man shook his head. "I wouldn't say that. However, I do know that she was the girl your grandfather selected as your fiancée before he passed. Back when he picked her out of so many others, I was right next to him."

I see. That's interesting.

Shane bowed his head quietly, his thumb grazing over the stem of the wine glass. "So you knew all along that Jasmine was lying."

Mr. Blackwood nodded. "That's right."

Shane's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Well, then, why have you kept the truth from me these past five years?"

If he had known that Jasmine wasn't the true heiress of the Smith family, he would never have agreed to get engaged with her, even if she had saved his life five years ago.

Mr. Blackwood removed the cotton gloves on his hands and laughed bleakly. "Clearly, I misunderstood your intentions. When you got engaged with Jasmine five years ago, I thought you were truly enamored with her, so I decided not to tell you."

Shane pressed his lips into a thin line. "I've never liked Jasmine for even a second."

"I know that. Just now, when I asked you why you broke off the engagement, I could tell that the person you really love is Natalie. I've seen the way your eyes look when you gaze at her!" Mr. Blackwood twirled his mustache and laughed brightly.

Since Shane didn't deny it, Mr. Blackwood took his silence as acknowledgment.

Mr. Blackwood put the teacup into a small box carefully and kept it away. "There's something I still don't understand, however. If you've been in love with Natalie all along, why did you choose to get engaged with Jasmine five years ago? Also, after leaving the Smith family, Natalie never came to look for you."

He didn't know that Shane had only fallen for Natalie recently—he thought they had been in love since a long time ago.

Shane didn't see a point in correcting him. Pinching the wine glass by its stem, he said in a low voice, "She didn't come and look for me because she had a boyfriend."

From the information he had received, Natalie had eloped with another man shortly before Yulia got divorced.

Harrison Smith had been beside himself with rage because of this and divorced Yulia in a fit of anger.

"A boyfriend?" Mr. Blackwood shook his head. "That's impossible. If your grandfather knew that she already had a boyfriend, he would never have selected her as your fiancée. Besides, I'm absolutely certain that your grandfather did a background check on that girl before he chose her. With his connections and power, he would definitely have known if she had a boyfriend!"

Hearing this, Shane's eyes narrowed, his face clouding over again.

That was very true. His grandfather would never have chosen a fiancée for him without conducting the necessary background checks.

Hence, had Natalie truly eloped with a boyfriend, or was it all hogwash? If she never had a boyfriend back then, where did her two children come from?

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A wave of suspicion washed over him. Shane's expression looked very nasty indeed—he was frowning so hard that a mosquito might be squashed to the death between the folds of his skin.

He had made Silas dig up all the information he could find on Natalie's past, but Shane had a hunch that some of that information was inaccurate.

At that moment, Mr. Moore smiled and said, "Shane, I think the girl has finished choosing her teacup. She's going after that Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup you wanted to gift to Mr. Moore."

This distracted Shane from his troubling train of thoughts. He shot another look at Natalie in the security footage.

She was standing at the display cabinet in front of the cashier counter, pointing at a teacup behind the glass. Exquisite lines of Osmanthus designs streaked across the sides of the teacup. "Is this the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup?"

The employee looked at the teacup she was pointing towards and smiled. "Yes, it is! This has been Mr. Blackwood's favorite work recently."

"It's beautiful! I've heard of this teacup before, but it's the first time I'm seeing it for myself. Mr. Moore will love it. How much does it cost?" Natalie looked up at the employee.

However, the employee looked rather sheepish. "I'm very sorry, Miss, but someone has already reserved this teacup for purchase."

"Are you serious?" Natalie's smile froze on her face. "They've reserved this?"

"Yes, Miss. But we have lots of other teacups for you to choose from," the employee replied.

Natalie pouted sadly. "I see. It's alright, then! I'll go and take a look somewhere else. If I don't find anything I like there, I'll be right back."

"Okay." The employee nodded and prepared to send her off at the door.

"Heimlich!" At that moment, a female employee rushed over to them. After shooting a look at Natalie, she shuffled over to the male employee and whispered something in his ear.

After that, she left immediately again.

Seeing that Natalie was about to leave, Heimlich's expression turned a little pale. Quickly, he dashed after her, waving his hands. "Miss, please wait a minute!"

Natalie stopped in her tracks and turned around to look at him. "Yes?"

"We've received new updates regarding that teacup you were looking at. The customer who reserved that teacup has changed his mind and decided to purchase something else. Do you still want the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup?"

Natalie shot back to the cashier counter instantly. Without hesitating, she replied, "Yes, I do!"

She didn't think that she would have such excellent luck. I have finally gotten my hands on this teacup!

"Alright, I'll help you pack it up immediately." With that, the employee walked over to the display cabinet and opened it. Putting on his gloves, he took out the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup carefully and wrapped it up carefully before handing it to Natalie. "Here you go! One hundred thousand, please."

Natalie's hand froze as she took her card out from her wallet. She felt rather stunned. "Is it really so cheap?"

Before arriving here, she had taken some time to read up on Mr. Blackwood, the owner of this store. He was one of the most famous teacup makers in the country, and even his cheapest works were frequently sold at five-figure values.

However, the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup was his best work yet. It was quite extraordinary that he was only selling it for one hundred thousand.

Seeing the suspicion in Natalie's eyes, the employee thought quickly on his feet and replied, "Of course not. The original price of the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup was one million. However, our boss has a habit of selling his works at a discount when they've been rejected by a potential buyer. This is because he thinks his work has been insulted."

"I see." This explanation was perfectly reasonable. Besides, the employee looked way too serious to be kidding. Natalie swallowed her suspicions and handed her card over to him.

My luck today is simply amazing!

The employee swiped her card and handed it back to her with both hands.

Natalie took it from him and left with the teacup in her hands.

At that moment, the door of the lounge opened. Shane and Mr. Blackwood stepped out of the room one after another.

Mr. Blackwood looked rather amused. "Shane, I didn't think you would give the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup up to that girl. You even foot nine hundred thousand of her bill! Why didn't you just pay for everything, eh?" "She would have suspected something if that was the case." Shane stuck his hands in his pockets and side-eyed Mr. Blackwood. He continued, "Mr. Blackwood, please help me choose another teacup that's on the same level as the Timeless Osmanthus Fragrance teacup."