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Just when Natalie was deciding whether to return to the bathroom and emerge only after the man left, she heard some heavy footsteps from the stairs. It was immediately followed by a deep masculine voice. "What's the racket about?"

"Sir, you are awake?" Mrs. Wilson looked at him in shock.

Natalie shared the same expression as her, but the surprise in her eyes soon turned to disapproval.

His fever has not subsided yet. What is he doing here?

"Mommy, Mr. Shane is here," Connor said to Natalie while pointing at Shane.

Natalie put down his hand. "Mommy knows that. Don't point at people."

"Oh, okay." Connor nodded without saying anything else.

Shane glanced at them and nodded in acknowledgment. While supporting himself with the railing, he walked down the stairs slowly. Then, with Mrs. Wilson's help, he stood before the middle-aged man.

The moment Shane appeared, the man lost all his arrogance and brashness that he displayed in front of Mrs. Wilson. In fact, his haughtiness was replaced with a sense of fear.

It was obvious that he was afraid of Shane.

"Oh, Shane, you are finally here." The middle-aged man rubbed his hands together and smiled at Shane.

With his face void of expression, Shane stared at him. "Uncle Thompson, how may I help you?"

Uncle Thompson?

Natalie raised her eyebrows when she heard the way Shane addressed him and scrutinized the man curiously. He was short and stout, with a balding head and a huge beer belly. Apart from that, his features were somewhat similar to Sean's.

It was hard for her to believe that this was actually Sean's father.

"You see, Shane, I heard that you have a plot of land in the countryside..."

"You want that piece of land?" Shane narrowed his eyes.

Sam nodded eagerly. "Yes, I did not touch Dad's cemetery plot because you told me not to. However, since you are not using this plot of land anyway, why don't you sell it to me?"

"Did Sean ask you to come here?" Shane stared daggers at him as if he were trying to see through the latter.

Sam let out a light cough. "Not really. I came here on my own accord, and Sean only told me that you have this plot of land. You know that I've invested in a holiday resort project. So now, all I need is a piece of land to build it on."

Holiday resort?

Natalie tilted her head in confusion.

Isn't the Thompson family only in the luxury goods business? How are they involved in property development as well?

"What is your offer then?" Shane folded his arms and scowled at him, clearly not interested in the holiday resort that he had mentioned.

Sam brought up three fingers. "What about this?"

Shane sniggered. "Take your leave then, Uncle Thompson. I bought that plot of land for five hundred million back then, and you want to buy it for three hundred million? How is that possible?"

With that, he ignored Sam and walked toward Natalie and Connor instead.

However, he was barely a step away when Sam pulled him back. "Shane, let's talk about this. Fine, I'll buy it for the five hundred million that you paid for. How about that?"

"It's non-negotiable." Shane frowned and pulled his arm away.

However, he did not expect Sam to let go at the same time as he retracted his arm. He then staggered and fell backward.

"Mr. Shane!" Letting go of Connor, Natalie immediately dashed toward Shane and supported him in time. "Mr. Shane, are you alright?"

Shane shook his head and panted slightly. "I'm fine. It's just that I'm feeling a little dizzy."

"That's good. I'll help you sit down over there." Natalie heaved a sigh of relief and brought him to the sofa.

When Sam saw Natalie who appeared out of nowhere, he was astonished by her striking good looks. Then, he asked his nephew, "Shane, this lady is..."

However, Shane did not respond to him. Meanwhile, Natalie smiled at him out of courtesy. Just when she was about to introduce herself, Connor ran up to them.

When Sam saw Connor's face which was identical to Shane's, his expression changed immediately. He pointed at Connor in dismay and mumbled, "You... You..."

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"Me?" Connor tilted his head and whispered with pouted lips, "Here's another one that is gonna say that I am Mr. Shane's son!"

Natalie was pouring a glass of water for Shane. When she heard her son's words, she instantly froze in place.

She suddenly felt that she should not have brought Connor here. Anybody who was acquainted with Shane would definitely be surprised and suspicious at the sight of Connor. If there were just a few people, she could still explain that Connor was not Shane's son but not when more people had seen her son.

After all, not everyone would believe her. If someone got suspicious and decided to run a DNA test for the two of them, she would be in trouble.

Shane saw that Natalie was spacing out, but he did not think much about it and assumed something was bothering her. So he asked her out of concern, "Are you alright?"

Natalie came to her senses and nodded. "I'm fine. Connor, come over here."

She beckoned Connor over with a wave. When he came to her, she shielded him from Sam's line of sight.

Now that Sam was out of sight, he could only look at Shane and Natalie. It took him some time before he gulped and stammered, "S-Shane, does that child belong to the two of you?"

"How is this any of your business?" Shane looked up at him frostily.

This sounded like an admission to Sam, who was so surprised that he took two steps back. "How is it possible that you have a child? You have already..."

At this point, Sam suddenly realized that he had a slip of the tongue and immediately shut up as a look of panic flashed across his eyes.

However, it was too late as Shane and Natalie had both heard him.

Shane narrowed his eyes and glared at him. "What do you mean? I have already what?"

"N-Nothing. Shane, let's talk about the land another time. I'll make a move first," Sam said before turning around and practically fleeing away as if something was chasing after him.

Natalie shifted her gaze to Shane who looked like he was in deep thought. "Mr. Shane..."

"I'm fine. I'm just trying to figure out what his last sentence meant." Shane pinched his leg slightly.

Natalie patted Connor's head and muttered, "Is he trying to insinuate that there is something wrong with your health, and therefore... But that doesn't make sense!"

If there is something wrong with him that prevents him from having children, then how did Connor and Sharon come about?

"What doesn't make sense?" Shane did not know the meaning behind Natalie's words and raised a brow at her.

But Natalie waved her hand dismissively. "Nothing, I'm just making random guesses. But if you want to know what he really meant, you'd have to look into it yourself, Mr. Shane."

Shane looked up a little. "I know."

Of course he would find out the truth.

Judging on Sam's words and how he left in a panic, it was obvious that he had done something unbeknownst to Shane.

"Oh right, Mr. Shane, do you want to go back for another lie in? You still don't look too well to me." Natalie was worried as she looked at Shane's pale face.

Shane waved his hand dismissively. "No need."

At this moment, Mrs. Wilson brought out a steaming hot cup of tea. "Sir, do have some herbal tea."

"Herbal tea?" Shane frowned.

"Yes, herbal tea will help you recover sooner." Mrs. Wilson nodded.

Hearing that, Shane pursed his lips. He was clearly not a fan of herbal tea.

Connor never had herbal tea before, so he went up to take a curious sniff. However, the next instant, he pinched his nose and ran away, screaming, "It stinks!"

"Don't be rude!" Natalie glared at the little one with feigned anger.

The little boy stuck his tongue out.

Mrs. Wilson laughed heartily. "It's a little stinky, but it works. Alright, sir, drink it quickly before it gets cold."

Nevertheless, Shane held the cup with no intention of drinking it at all.

Seeing that, Mrs. Wilson shot a helpless glance at Natalie.

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Natalie smiled at Shane and said, "Mr. Shane, please drink it. Mrs. Wilson took a long time to find this particular herbal tea for you."

Shane shot a glance at her before turning to Mrs. Wilson. Wordlessly, he stared at the murky herbal tea with an expressionless face for a while, then lifted his head to gulp down the entire cup.

After that, Natalie took the cup from him and discreetly put something in his palm.

He was slightly taken aback. When he looked down, he saw a candy wrapped in blue paper.

Is she cajoling me like I am a child?

Shane raised his eyebrows at Natalie.

Understanding what he meant, she winked at him and said, "Just eat it. It won't be so bitter after that."

Shane let out a wry smile.

She is really treating me like a child.

Somehow, this is quite amusing.

Shane lowered his gaze to hide the smile in his eyes before unwrapping the candy and putting it in his mouth.

Soon, the sweetness spread across his tongue and chased the bitterness away. He closed his eyes slightly while his brows relaxed. When he opened his eyes, they met with Connor's huge, dark eyes.

"What's up?" Shane stared at Connor's face that was almost identical to his.

Natalie looked at the little one curiously as well.

The child put his hand on Shane's leg and gazed up at him with complete admiration. "Wow, Mr. Shane! How did you drink such stinky tea at one go?"

Shane's thin lips curled up slightly as he picked up the little one before placing him on his lap. "Thank you."

To his surprise, this child who had barely paid him any attention just now started idolizing him because of a cup of herbal tea.

As expected of a kid.

While Mrs. Wilson watched their interactions with a smile, she could not help herself but say, "Sir, Ms. Smith, the three of you really look like a family."

When she heard this, Natalie froze for a while and quickly carried Connor away from Shane's lap. "Hey, Mrs. Wilson, don't joke like this. Mr. Shane and I are just friends.

"Friends?" Shane's eyes grew darker, his lips pursing.

Even if we are not lovers, we should be more than platonic friends.

But in her mind, we are just friends?

Natalie could feel his slight displeasure but did not dwell on it. Instead, she took Connor's hand and said, "Mr. Shane, it's getting late, so we should get going."

Lowering her gaze to the little one, Natalie instructed, "Connor, say goodbye to Mr. Shane and Mrs. Wilson."

He nodded obediently. "Goodbye, Mr. Shane and Mrs. Wilson!"

Mrs. Wilson was at a loss while she turned to Shane.

She knew very well that Natalie was leaving because of what she said just now.

However, she had no idea what was wrong with her words, which prompted Natalie's huge reaction.

On the other hand, Shane ignored Mrs. Wilson and stood up while rubbing his temples. "I'll drive you home."

"No, no. Mr. Shane, you are still ill. I'll just go back on my own." Natalie immediately shook her head and rejected his offer.

Seeing how insistent she was, Shane lowered his eyes and handed her his car keys. "Here, drive my car. Just don't forget to return it to me."

Natalie hesitated briefly as she thought of how she might not be able to get a cab out there, so she accepted his offer. "Thank you. We will be on our way then."

With that, she led Connor toward the door.

Mrs. Wilson followed behind the mother and son duo to see them out.

When the door opened, they saw Silas standing outside with his hand raised. He was taken aback as the door suddenly swung open when he was about to press the doorbell.

"Mr. Campbell," Natalie greeted him with a nod.

Silas pushed back his glasses and smiled. "Ms. Smith, what are you doing here?"

"Mr. Shane is ill, and I came here to visit him. I was just on my way out." Natalie smiled back at him.

Upon hearing that, Silas immediately cleared the path for her.

After thanking him, Natalie led Connor out. Mrs. Wilson then led them to the garage.

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Silas did not linger too long after they left and walked into the villa.

"Mr. Shane." In the living room, Silas saw the pale-faced man massaging his temples.

When Shane heard Silas, he put down his hand and looked up. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to report my findings." Silas handed him the document that was in his hands.

Shane's eyes froze slightly before he took the document and flipped through it.

While he was reading, Silas said, "Previously, I conducted investigations on Harrison's family of three, but I didn't verify their statements with other people who are related to the Smiths. Therefore, what I found out then was that Ms. Natalie had eloped. However, this time, I interviewed a maid who left the Smith family a few years ago and their neighbors as well..."

Shane gazed up at Silas. "And then?"

Light reflected slightly from Silas's glasses as he continued, "And then, just like what Ms. Carter said, when Ms. Smith left the Smith family, she did not have a boyfriend, and neither did she elope. Instead, she was thrown out by the Smiths together with her mother and Jared Smith."

"He actually drove his first wife and two children out of his family home? How could Harrison do something like that?" Shane sneered.

Silas shrugged his shoulders. "He did that because he wasn't fond of Ms. Smith and Jared. Actually, his favorite child is Jasmine. Therefore, he drove them out to ensure a better future for her!"

"Better future?" Shane's thumb stopped ruffling through the papers.

Silas nodded. "According to that maid, Harrison threw Ms. Smith out so that Jasmine could take her place and get engaged to you. However, they were afraid that you would be enraged and take it out on the Smith family, so he secretly created the rumor that Ms. Smith had eloped. With this..."

"With that, even if I were to realize the swap, I wouldn't have done anything to the Smiths because I would've thought that my real fiancée had eloped and that they replaced her for me in time." Shane gripped the papers tightly with a cold glint in his eyes.

Silas looked down. "Yes, and this is also why Ms. Smith never knew that she had a fiancé. The maid told me that every time Yulia was about to tell Ms. Smith, Harrison would use all kinds of excuses to stop her, as he was afraid that Ms. Smith would get to know you."

"He had quite a comprehensive plan, didn't he?" Shane narrowed his eyes and sneered.

Both Natalie and Jasmine were Harrison's daughters, but he loved one and took down the other one.

In order to have Jasmine marry into the Thompson family, he even went to the extent of driving Natalie out of their home and tarnishing her good name. He did not deserve to be a parent at all!

As if he could read Shane's mind, Silas hesitated before asking, "Sir, should we tell Ms. Smith all this?"

"Not for the time being." Shane tossed the documents on the sofa and said dully, "Wait until I confirm my relationship with Natalie before we tell her. By then, if she wants to seek revenge with Harrison, I can help her openly."

"Yes, sir." Silas nodded with understanding.

Suddenly, he added, "By the way, sir, there is one more thing. After they were driven out of their family home, Yulia looked for you at Thompson residence."

"Looked for me?" Shane was slightly stunned.

Silas looked down. "Yes, she wanted to discuss your engagement with Ms. Smith. However, you were not there then, so she met with Sam's family. Using the excuse that Yulia was divorced, Sam told her that your engagement with Ms. Smith was nullified. Yulia then left the house in a huff."

Shane sprang to his feet instantly with an icy cold glare. "Sam Thompson!"

Silas was feeling indignant as well.

When he found out about it, he almost flew into a rage. If not for Sam Thompson, Mr. Shane and Ms. Smith would have been together a long time ago.

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If it weren't for him, Ms. Natalie wouldn't have gone overseas and given birth to the children of another man. Most importantly, she wouldn't have missed the chance to be with Mr. Shane seven years ago.

Staring at Shane's icy expression, Silas pushed his glasses up and asked, "Mr. Shane, should we teach Sam a lesson?"

"No need to rush. I will deal with it once you've investigated this matter." A murderous glint flashed across Shane's eyes. Then he told Silas about Sam's visit earlier on.

Upon hearing that, Silas was taken aback. After a while, he regained his composure and put on a serious expression. "Understood. I'll do it now."

Having said that, he turned and left.

At the same time, Mrs. Wilson returned home.

Shane rubbed his temples. "Has she left?"

Mrs. Wilson understood who he meant and nodded. "Yeah."

Shane hummed in response, then remained silent. He turned to the porch, staring into space as if he were about to make out something beyond the door.

It took a while before he retracted his gaze and headed upstairs.

After leaving Shane's villa, Natalie took Connor to the studio.

Joyce was stunned when she saw Natalie driving a Bentley. The former's jaw was about to drop to the ground as she said, "If my memory serves me right, this car belongs to Mr. Shane, isn't it?"

Natalie nodded. "That's right."

"Why are you driving his car?" Joyce pointed at her in shock.

Natalie smiled. "It's a long story. Alright, no more questions. Are there any updates from Mr. Miller regarding the draft I sent you last night?"

"Not yet." Joyce shook her head.

Natalie sighed in disappointment. "I see."

"Don't fret. I guess he still hasn't looked at it yet. Let's wait a little longer," Joyce comforted Natalie and patted her shoulder.

Natalie flashed a smile and did not say a word.

"Oh. Before I forget, let me tell you something." Joyce seemed to recall something and took a piece of paper from her desk. "This is the registration form for the competition. There's an additional candidate."

"Who's that?" Natalie bent down to the water dispenser to fill up her cup.

Joyce passed the paper to her and replied, "Jasmine!"

The cup in Natalie's hand jerked a little. Then she took the registration form to have a look. Noticing that Jasmine's name was indeed printed on it, she pursed her lips. "She is taking part in this competition too?"

"Yes. She is still pushing herself despite having a fractured leg. I'm truly impressed," Joyce's lips twitched as she remarked sarcastically.

After that, she reminded, "Nat, you have to be careful during the competition. I'm afraid that she might pull a trick on you again. Mr. Shane can't cover for you now that you're no longer working for Thompson Group. Considering that she has no relationship with him anymore, she will not hesitate to cross the line when it comes to you. You—"

"Don't worry. I know what to do," Natalie interrupted her and put the form down.

Joyce did not say a word as she knew that Natalie read her mind. With that, she took the design notes with her and headed to the textile mill.

The design for the new season was completed, and the dress-making department at the textile mill had to make sure everything was going smoothly.

After Joyce left, Natalie sat at her desk and started working.

A while later, her phone suddenly rang. It was a call from Miller's secretary, Plumlee. "Good day, Ms. Smith. Mr. Miller has checked your draft and gave his approval."

"I see. That's great." Natalie was all smiles when she heard that. Then she added, "Can I meet Mr. Miller? I would like to discuss with him to understand his preferences."

"That's not possible at the moment. Unfortunately, Mr. Miller is currently out of the country. But he said that we should go with your style." Plumlee answered.

Does he trust me that much?

Natalie arched her brows. "Alright. I got it."

"Have a nice day, Ms. Smith." Plumlee ended the call after that.

With a helpless smile on her face, Natalie put down her phone. Following that, she picked up a pencil and continued her work.

In the afternoon that day, Natalie received a text message from the Design Association to get her entry number.