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"Did they find anything then?" Natalie inquired.

Alice smiled bitterly. "Of course not. The Grahams framed Ms. Larson just to keep Mrs.

Garcia from sniffing Jacqueline out. That's why Ms. Larson and her whole family were

kicked out of the banquet. I was a coward back then. I didn't dare to tell what I saw. It wasn't

only until later that I told Ms. Larson about it."

"Is that why the Grahams went bankrupt?" Natalie surmised.

Alice nodded. "Yes. The Larsons joined forces with enemies of the Graham family, and the

Grahams went bankrupt as a result. After that, the incident of Jacqueline torturing a cat

spread like wildfire."

"Wait, then why didn't Shane know anything about it?" Natalie's brows furrowed in

confusion.

If Shane knew about Jacqueline's sick hobby of torturing animals, he would never have

indulged her every step of the way.

"Mr. Shane was studying abroad at that time. He only came back to J City after Jacqueline

went missing. By then, the Graham family had already crumbled, so naturally, no one

mentioned all the things Jacqueline did. I'm not surprised that Mr. Shane didn't know about

it," Alice explained.

Natalie widened her eyes in realization. "So that's why."

"Mrs. Thompson, why did you suddenly ask to see me to talk about Jacqueline? Hasn't she

gone missing? I even heard some people say she's already dead." Alice peered at Natalie

curiously.

Natalie's lips curled into a mirthless smile. "No, she's not dead or missing. She's just been in a vegetative state for ten years. No one knows about it because the news wasn't made

public, but she's awake now. Anyway, I came to you because there's something I need to ask

you. Does the voice of the person who told you to take the blame sound like Jacqueline's?"

Alice was momentarily stunned by the question, but then, she began to think back carefully.

After a few seconds, her jaw fell wide open and she exclaimed, "Mrs. Thompson, now that

you mention it, I think it really was her. Even though I haven't seen her or heard her voice in

ten years, I can still remember what her voice sounded like. There was a slight difference in

the voice of the person on the phone compared to Jacqueline's, but the difference isn't

significant."

"Alright, that's more than enough for me to confirm that the real culprit who wanted me dead

was Jacqueline," clenching her fists, Natalie murmured in a cold voice.

It all makes sense now. The one who reported Alice as the culprit was Mr. Gunn.

He's a retired high-ranking official. That's why Shane and I never once doubted the

investigation results he provided us.

But we both overlooked a very important detail, and that's the relationship between Mr.

Gunn and Jacqueline.

Even though Shane already knew that Mr. Gunn was Jacqueline's great-grandfather, at that

time, he still thought Jacqueline was the same innocent and kind girl. That's why he never

entertained the possibility that she'd be the culprit, which was also why he never suspected

Mr. Gunn of covering up for her.

I never suspected it either, firstly because I didn't know about Mr. Gunn and Jacqueline's

relationship until later on, and secondly because I didn't know that Alice was actually

innocent. So I never thought of the possibility that Mr. Gunn might have found someone to

take the fall for Jacqueline.

This conspiracy is much deeper that I'd initially thought.

Especially Mr. Gunn. As a retired official, he actually covered up for a criminal. How

despicable.

I can't believe I even thanked him before. Not only that, I also spared Jacqueline after she

pushed me down the stairs for his sake.

"Are you okay, Mrs. Thompson?" Alice asked with concern upon noticing the anger and

sorrow lining Natalie's features.

Natalie shook her head and replied, "I'm fine. I just figured out a lot of things I couldn't

before."

"Oh, I see." Alice nodded but didn't probe further.

Taking a deep breath to suppress her anger, Natalie smiled slightly and said, "Alright. Time's

almost up. I'll bring your mother to visit you next time."

"Alright. Take care, Mrs. Thompson," Alice said gratefully.

With that, Natalie put down the receiver and left.

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Upon leaving the prison, Natalie fished out her phone and saved the conversation she had

with Alice. Then, she got into her car and drove to the kindergarten to pick the two children

up.

After picking them up, she dialed Shane's number to ask what time he was getting off work.

Glancing at the documents in front of him which needed his urgent attention, Shane's face

grew as dark as ink. "I think I'll be back late tonight."

He had already passed a lot of his work to Silas so that he could leave earlier.

Unfortunately, some urgent documents which had to be dealt with immediately were sent

from abroad.

Thus, he probably had to work overtime.

Natalie chuckled upon hearing his grumpy voice. "It's okay. I'll wait for you."

"Mm-hmm. I'll call you when I'm done." Shane's expression softened along with his tone.

Natalie nodded. "Okay."

With that, she tucked her phone away and put the car into drive.

In the CEO's office at Thompson Group, Shane broke into a smile after staring at the photo

of Natalie and the twins displayed on his phone screen for a while. Then he locked his

phone and threw himself back into work.

Just then, there was a knock on the door.

Shane frowned slightly, evidently displeased by the interruption. In spite of that, he said in a

clipped tone, "Come in."

The door opened and Jacqueline walked in. "Shane."

"You'll address me as Mr. Shane here," Shane corrected icily.

Previously, when she called him by his name and placed her stuff at the office, he had

turned a blind eye to it and said nothing.

But after Natalie established that she did not like it, he decided that it was best to play by

the rules.

Jacqueline's smile froze on her face and she clenched her fists slightly. But very soon, she schooled her features and pretended as though nothing happened.

Loosening her fists, she approached his desk with a smile. "Alright, Mr. Shane."

"What brings you here? Didn't you say you weren't feeling well yesterday and wanted to have

a day off today? Why did you come here out of the blue?" Shane put down his pen and

interlaced his fingers on his lap.

Jacqueline fiddled with her wig and replied, "I feel fine now. I was bored at home so I

thought I might as well come in for work. This way, at least I can talk to my colleagues. But

then I remembered today's your birthday. Let's go out for dinner tonight, Shane. We'll invite

Jackie and celebrate together. What do you think?"

She gazed at him expectantly.

However, Shane's brows knitted into a frown. "Only Jackson? What about Natalie?"

I'm married but she's asking me to go out and spend my birthday with friends?

What's she thinking?

Jacqueline lowered her gaze and feigned pity. "B-But aren't the two of you in the middle of

an argument? I thought you wouldn't want to celebrate your birthday with her, so..."

"We've made up," Shane replied curtly.

Although Natalie hadn't yet officially forgiven him, he knew that she would after tonight.

Acting as though shocked, Jacqueline clapped a hand over her mouth.

"The two of you have

made up? When?"

When Shane did not reply, Jacqueline put her hand down.

"I'm sorry, Shane. I really didn't know about that. But is this really a good thing?"

"What do you mean?" Shane eyed her suspiciously.

Jacqueline tugged on the hem of her blouse. "Didn't you and Ms. Smith stop speaking to

each other because her mother caused the death of your parents? If you get back together

with her, aren't you afraid your parents won't be able to rest in peace?" In fact, she already suspected Shane and Natalie had reconciled when she saw the latter at

the villa that morning.

She just wasn't sure what happened between them or why they got back together all of a

sudden. Knowing she wouldn't be able to get anything out of Natalie, she came to see

Shane at Thompson Group to fish for information.

"No." Shane unclasped his hands and picked up the pen again. "Yulia wasn't the one who hit

my parents."