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The two kids stopped frolicking and looked at him curiously.

Shane shook his head and said worriedly, "I don't know. Jacqueline suddenly stopped saying anything."

"Did something happen to her?" Natalie gazed at his phone and made a bold guess.

Shane couldn't help but swallow his saliva, worrying that what she said might be right. As he was about to say something, they heard a voice again over the phone. Nevertheless, it wasn't Jacqueline but another unfamiliar woman who said, "Hello, Mr. Thompson, are you still there?"

"Yes, I'm here. Who are you?" Shane immediately put the phone near his ear again and questioned in a deep voice.

"I'm the nurse on duty to take care of Ms. Graham. I wanted to check up on her just now and realized that she has passed out. Since she was holding a phone, I tried to answer it," the nurse replied.

Shane was startled. "What? Did Jacqueline pass out?"

Meanwhile, Natalie raised her eyebrow in shock upon hearing it.

She couldn't believe that she made the right guess—something happened to Jacqueline.

"Yes, I have just checked on Ms. Graham. She fainted all of a sudden," the nurse continued speaking as she lifted Jacqueline's eyelid.

Supposedly, she had to be admitted to ICU due to sudden loss of consciousness.

Shane was well aware of it. He gripped his phone tightly and said, "I understand. I'm coming to the hospital right now."

With that, he put down his phone and glanced at Natalie.

As his lips moved slightly, Natalie knew what he wanted to say. As such, she swiftly closed the lunchbox on her thighs and flashed him a considerate smile. "Mr. Shane, please go ahead."

"Is Mr. Shane leaving?" Sharon glanced at Shane and felt a little reluctant.

On the other hand, Connor didn't utter a word but merely crossed his arms like a young adult.

"Yes, Mr. Shane's friend is sick, so he has to visit her." Natalie caressed Sharon's head and continued, "Alright, let's hop out."

Then, she opened the door and showed the two kids a gesture to get out of the car.

They listened to her obediently and hopped out.

As Natalie bent down and was about to hop out as well, Shane suddenly grabbed her arm.

"What is it, Mr. Shane?" Natalie looked back at him bewilderedly.

Shane looked her into the eyes and apologized, "I'm sorry."

Startled for a moment, Natalie flashed him a smile and asked, "Why do you have to apologize to me?"

"It was me who brought the two kids here. I thought you wouldn't have time to take care of them due to the ongoing competition. I'll assign someone to give you a hand." Shane loosened his grip with that.

Ah, he apologizes for this.

"It's fine, Mr. Shane." She waved her hand and said, "Bringing them to the parent-teacher meeting has taken up too much of your time. How can I cause you trouble anymore? I'll apply for a breakroom from Mr. Horner so that they can get some rest there. So, you can put your mind at ease and visit Ms. Graham."

She hopped out as soon as she finished. Then, she turned around to wave at him and closed the door.

A moment later, Shane left in his car.

Natalie held her kids' hands and watched as he drove away. After that, she led them into the building of the Design Association.

"Mommy, is Mr. Shane going to see the woman whom you didn't allow us to meet in Uncle Stanley's ward?" Connor asked while walking.

Natalie didn't deny it. She nodded her head and replied, "Yes."

"What's the relationship between Mr. Shane and the woman?" Connor blinked his eyes.

Meanwhile, Sharon also lifted her hand and interrupted, "Sharon wants to know too."

Natalie was nonplussed by their reaction. A moment later, she gently pinched their hands and said, "Well, kids shouldn't ask so many questions. It's not something you should know."

"Humph, Mommy always says that." Sharon pursed her lips in dissatisfaction.

"Exactly!" Connor nodded in agreement.

Amused, Natalie let go of their hands and tickled their armpits. "Woah! How dare the two of you tease me!"

The kids dodged her and chuckled aloud.

They goofed around until they reached Mr. Horner's office.

Mr. Horner actually valued Natalie very much. After she put forward her request, he agreed to it right away and asked his staff to prepare a breakroom.

Natalie thanked him repeatedly before bringing her kids to the breakroom.

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Natalie kept her kids company for a little longer after having lunch in the breakroom. Since the competition was about to start, she reminded her kids not to leave the breakroom. After they agreed, she left and walked toward the meeting room.

While she was on her way, a group of men in front of her suddenly stopped her. "Nat."

"Alfred." Natalie stopped walking and saw Alfred among them.

Alfred turned around and talked to the men behind him. After nodding in response, they glanced at her for a few seconds and left.

Then, Alfred came up to Natalie with his crutch.

Natalie tilted her head and asked curiously, "Alfred, why are you here? Also, who are those people?"

"Follow me." Alfred didn't answer her question but gestured at her to follow him.

Natalie could notice his grim expression. Even though she was clueless about what happened, she didn't ask any other questions. She followed him into a room, which looked like an office.

After she closed the door, Alfred turned around and explained, "Those people are from the National Design Association."

"National Design Association?" Natalie was a little shocked. "Since we're not in finals yet, why are they here?"

"I contacted the National Design Association, requesting the president to send his men here," Alfred added as he sat down.

Then, Natalie also took a seat in front of him.

He put his crutch aside and poured a cup of tea for himself. "After you told me that Jasmine plagiarized yesterday, I contacted the National Design Association and informed them about it. They were furious and decided to bring forward the finals. They want to penalize her."

"To bring it forward?" Natalie's eyes brimmed.

"That's right," Alfred said smilingly, "Apart from bringing forward the finals, we've also changed the theme of the finals. It was supposed to be decided by the branch president, but now the National Design Association will decide instead. As such, Jasmine's plan to plagiarize designs will not work."

"That's awesome. In that case, she will certainly freak out." Natalie clapped her hands excitedly.

"Yup," Alfred touched his beard twice and continued, "Nat, I'm telling you this because I remember you said yesterday that you would expose her wrongdoing during the finals."

"Yes," Natalie murmured a response.

"Well, get your evidence ready. I'm sure you can put it to good use later." Alfred took a sip of the tea after talking to her.

Knowing that he was reminding her, she stood up emotionally and said, "I understand. Thank you, Alfred. I'll prepare it now."

She bowed deeply before Alfred before turning around to leave the room.

After that, she took out her phone to call Joyce.

Miles away, Joyce was peeling an apple while sitting beside Stanley's bed. Once her phone rang, she took a glance and realized that it was from Natalie. She immediately answered without hesitation, "Nat."

Meanwhile, Stanley, who had closed his eyes to get some rest, woke up suddenly and glanced at her phone.

Joyce was a little displeased as she noticed his reaction. Nonetheless, she pretended to be fine and put on a forceful smile as she said, "What can I do for you?"

"Joyce, I urgently need your help now!" Natalie spoke when she was walking toward the meeting room.

Given that she sounded grim, Joyce also replied seriously, "What do you need from me?"

"Is Nat facing difficulties?" Meanwhile, Stanley stood straight and asked.

Joyce shook her head in response, indicating that she had no idea.

"Can you go to my apartment to get a folder on my coffee table and the USB flash drive beside my bed?" Natalie stopped at the door of the meeting room as she said.

"Why do you need those things? Is it urgent?" Joyce tilted her head to hold the phone on her shoulder. She was rather bewildered after listening to Natalie.

"Very urgent," Natalie nodded forcefully and added in a deep voice, "The evidence about Jasmine's plagiarism is stored in those items. I need them later."

The next moment, Joyce stood up and said excitedly, "Nat, are you going to expose Jasmine's wrongdoing soon?"

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"That's right."

"Aright, I get it. I'm going to get those items for you right now!"

"Please be quick," Natalie reminded her again before hanging up the phone and entering the meeting room.

In the meeting room, everyone had basically arrived. Even Jasmine and the two designers had also taken their seats.

Natalie glanced at them for a moment before walking toward her seat.

As soon as she passed by Jasmine's seat, Jasmine suddenly stretched her leg to block her way.

Since Natalie was caught off-guard, she tripped over Jasmine's leg. She screamed as her body was about to fall to the floor.

Those in the meeting room and live stream viewers were all stunned. However, only Jasmine's lips quirked as she was looking forward to seeing Natalie injured severely due to the fall.

Fortunately, her wish didn't come true. When Natalie was about to fall flat on her face, a reporter noticed it and pulled Natalie up in the nick of time.

With the reporter's help, Natalie steadied herself pale-faced. After thanking the reporter, she turned around and glanced at Jasmine coldly. "You did it on purpose, didn't you?"

"What do you mean by "on purpose"?" Jasmine looked into her eyes and pretended not to understand what she said.

Natalie clenched her fists and added, "You purposely stretched your leg out to make me trip over it!"

Instantly, everyone in the room was startled.

"Oh, I see. Ms. Natalie almost tripped over because Ms. Jasmine purposely stretched her leg at her."

"It definitely is. The floor is flat and there is no uneven level. She stumbled only because there was something that blocked her way."

"Ms. Jasmine, you went overboard!"

Although everyone in the room began to argue about it, Jasmine wasn't panicked but even asserted smilingly, "I admit that I stretched my leg. However, it was because my legs are tired after sitting here for quite some time. Besides, I have stretched my legs before you came. Instead, It was you who didn't see my legs. How can you accuse me of doing it on purpose? Can I also claim that you deliberately stumble to frame me?"

Deep down, Jasmine knew that no one would notice that she stretched her legs. Also, it couldn't be recorded by the live stream.

In other words, there is no evidence to prove your claim. What can you do to me, huh?

Judging from her smug face, Natalie could guess what was on her mind. Natalie pursed her lips and gave her a cold-eyed stare, thinking about taking revenge against her later.

At this time, Mr. Horner happened to arrive while holding some documents. After seeing the commotion in the meeting room, he wore a grim expression and asked, "What's the matter?"

"Sir, allow me to explain what happened," An eloquent reporter immediately explained what went on earlier on.

Mr. Horner fell silent after listening to the reporter's explanation. Then, he glanced at Jasmine coldly and said, "I know that some less talented designers refuse to work hard and always resort to using underhanded ways. But I'm shocked to find out that they are also black-hearted."

His words dropped a bombshell at everyone in the room and the live stream viewers.

Everyone could tell that Mr. Horner was referring to Jasmine. After all, he hurled the accusations when staring at her.

No one expected that Mr. Horner would implicitly accuse Jasmine in such a way. Also, since Natalie almost stumbled, everyone began to look down upon Jasmine.

Perhaps Ms. Natalie stumbled really because of her.

Natalie's lips curled into a smile as she could sense the dramatic change of perceptions toward Jasmine. Also, she opined that Mr. Horner said such things because he was informed of Jasmine's plagiarism. Hence, Mr. Horner instantly believed that Jasmine purposely wanted Natalie to stumble after listening to the reporter.

After all, since Jasmine dared to plagiarize works, would she stop trying other underhanded attempts?"

As Natalie thought about it, she glanced at Jasmine and mouthed a few words, "You're toast!"

Jasmine's face paled as soon as she got what Natalie said. She unknowingly gripped the handle of her chair tightly.

Deep in her heart, Jasmine understood clearly that she was Mr. Horner's target. However, she dared not to rebut his remark.

After all, responding to it would be equivalent to admitting that Mr. Horner was referring to her. As such, she had no choice but to stay silent.

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At the same time, Jasmine began to feel panicked. Since Mr. Horner said that I resorted to some underhanded ways, could it be that he figured out what I have done?

"Alright, Ms. Natalie. The competition will start soon. Please have a seat," Mr. Horner went to the stage and said.

"Yes," Natalie replied affirmatively and sat in her same seat since the afternoon.

Mr. Horner had relaxed a lot as he announced, "Since everyone is here, allow me to announce the results of the competition that took place in the afternoon: fourth place, Rina; third place, Joseph; second place, Jasmine!"

Jasmine immediately looked up in disbelief once she heard her name. "Why am I only in second place?"

Given that she was in second place, the first place naturally belonged to Natalie. Therefore, Jasmine couldn't accept the dramatic turn of events.

She couldn't believe that she would lose to Natalie, given that her design was composed of a combination of designs by several designers.

In fact, even Natalie was shocked to hear the results.

After all, because Jasmine plagiarized high-quality designs, Natalie was always in second place ever since the competition started.

The results of the competition were beyond her expectations, to say the least.

"What's wrong? Are you dissatisfied with our judges or live stream viewers who cast their votes?" Mr. Horner glared at Jasmine.

Jasmine clenched her fists as she replied, "No, but I'm confident about my design. In fact, my designs in the previous rounds are proven to be better than Natalie's. Hence, I don't think that I would lose to her. Mr. Horner, I request to show both of our blueprints to see why I lost."

"As you wish," Mr. Horner snickered and instructed Liam to do as she said.

Soon, both blueprints were exhibited on the large screen.

After comparing both works, everyone opined unanimously that the blueprint on the left was better than that on the right.

The blueprint on the left was none other than Natalie's work.

Natalie couldn't help but raise her eyebrow once she saw Jasmine's blueprint. She understood why Jasmine lost to her in this round.

At the same time, Jasmine's face contorted in embarrassment because she could see the stark differences too.

After a while, Mr. Horner pointed at Jasmine's blueprint with a baton and asserted, "To tell the truth, your design is great, yet it doesn't look like a coherent piece of work. As you can see, the sleeves, leg openings, and collar designs are of totally different designs, making the set of garments resemble a cut-and-paste job. You come in second place only because the designs of these aspects are good separately. Otherwise, I'm afraid you wouldn't be in second place at all."

Jasmine was indignant at the comment. Nevertheless, she opened her mouth but couldn't find a suitable word to rebut his statement.

It was because Mr. Horner's remark reflected the truth, after all.

When looking at her blueprint alone, she didn't feel that it was a cut-and-paste product. However, it became obvious once it was being compared with Natalie's.

As such, Jasmine could only clench her fists but didn't utter a word. A moment later, Mr. Horner asked coldly, "Do you have any other comments about the results?"

Jasmine lowered her head and replied, "No."

With that, Mr. Horner stopped entertaining her and continued giving his concluding remark for this round of competition.

On the other hand, Natalie glanced at Jasmine, who looked gloomy. She supported her head with an arm and sneered, "Looks like you couldn't copy the geist of the great designs and embarrassed yourself instead!"

Immediately, Jasmine turned around and glared at her with a stern face. "Don't be cocky. I might not have plagiarized well, but I still came in second place and entered the finals anyway. Mark my words, I'll not let you win again during the finals. The entry quota to the international competition can only be mine."

"In that case, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed because you won't win in the finals. Certainly, you won't get the entry quota to the international competition," Natalie replied calmly and smilingly in the face of Jasmine's provocation.

On the other hand, Jasmine was immensely irritated by her smile and wished to tear her face apart. "Well, let's wait and see during the finals tomorrow..."

"I don't think we have to wait till tomorrow. We can see each other later in the finals," Natalie waved her hand while interrupting her.

Jasmine's heart sank because Natalie's words unknowingly sounded like a bad omen to her. She gave it some thought for a while and asked irritatedly, "What do you mean?"

"You'll soon understand what I meant." Natalie flashed her a smile but didn't answer her straightforwardly. Right after that, she ignored her and glanced at the stage.

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Mr. Horner had finished his concluding remark and closed the document.

Everyone thought that he was about to announce that the competition was adjourned for today. Unexpectedly, he lifted the microphone and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to announce some sudden changes to the competition. Based on the itinerary, the finals are supposed to be held at 2 p.m. tomorrow. However, the National Design Association has decided to bring forward the finals by organizing it now."

"What?" A look of disbelief crossed Jasmine's face.

Meanwhile, Natalie shrugged her shoulders and said, "See? As I said, we don't have to wait till tomorrow."

"How do you know that the finals have been brought forward?" Jasmine asked as she squinted.

"I heard it from others," Natalie answered casually as she tilted her head.

"From who?" Jasmine wanted to dwell on it.

Again, Natalie shrugged and said, "It's none of your business. On the contrary, I suggest that you should be worried about the finals later."

"Humph!" Jasmine sneered and continued, "Why should I be worried? The finals may be brought forward, yet the results will remain the same."

Given that Jasmine was well aware of the theme set by Mr. Horner, she had prepared the plagiarized design in advance.

Therefore, she firmly believed that she would be the champion in the finals.

"Really? In that case, I wish you all the best!" Natalie stopped saying anything to her after flashing her a scornful smile.

Jasmine frowned at her reaction, thinking that Natalie was probably scheming against her.

Am I just imagining things?

When she was deep in thought, Mr. Horner continued his announcement. "Apart from the current judges, we will add another group of judges in the finals. They are members of the National Design Association. Please welcome them to the stage."

Once he finished, several people in suits walked into the meeting room.

Natalie recognized them immediately. They were with Alfred just now.

They walked towards the judges and took the seats at the back.

Shortly afterward, another man in a suit came into the meeting room.

He looked like a big shot.

Although Natalie didn't know him, she guessed that he was probably one of the higher-ups in the National Design Association.

Just as expected, he went up to Mr. Horner directly and grabbed the microphone.

When everyone was staring at him curiously, he introduced himself slowly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm the director of the Supervision Department in the National Design Association. The president of the National Design Association has assigned me to decide the topic for the finals."

"What? Jasmin's eyes widened in surprise.

He is going to decide on a new topic, replacing the previous one set by Mr. Horner.

So, does that mean I can't use the designs that I have prepared in advance?

Natalie seemed to have read Jasmine's mind. Spinning a pen around her finger, she said, "Looks like you can't plagiarize from now on."

Disgruntled, Jasmine gazed at her with her bloodshot eyes and said, "Did you know this earlier on?"

"Yes, I heard it too when they said that the finals would be brought forward." Natalie put on a broader smile.

Jasmine's body shivered as she thought of fleeing at the very last minute.

However, she didn't have enough time to react as the director had announced the new topic. "The topic for the finals is to design a set of garments based on an object. Now, please turn your attention to the screen."

Once he finished, everyone turned around to look at the screen.

A few seconds later, a set of priceless ruby jewelry was shown on the screen.

No matter how the jewelry was judged based on its design or craftsmanship, it was undoubtedly delicate and outstandingly beautiful. As such, even the live stream viewers were astonished and kept complimenting it on the comment section.

Natalie was rather calm and unknowingly recalled the Blazing Heart that Shane gifted to her. Deep in her heart, Blazing Heart was comparable with the set of jewelry shown now, and its main ruby looked even purer.

On the other hand, Jacqueline, who had woken up for quite some time, was also watching the live stream. Her eyes brimmed with excitement once she saw the jewelry. She immediately showed her phone to Shane, who was busy working, and asked, "Shane, do you think the jewelry looks beautiful?"

Shane took a sideways glance at it and said, "Do you like it?"