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Shane did not linger on as well. Together with Silas, he headed back to the office after Natalie left.

After a half an hour's drive, Natalie arrived at Sky Towers. She parked her car and headed up to her studio.

The studio was packed with representatives from all the major media. The situation was a little chaotic. Joyce was trying her best to settle them down and maintain some semblance of order.

The reporters would have none of that. They kept bombarding her with questions about the online rumors.

Joyce was so exasperated she looked like she could storm off anytime.

Natalie flung the door open and marched into the studio. She swept her gaze across the room, raised her voice, and commanded, "Can't you hear my friend? She said to keep quiet and settle down."

The reporters immediately settled down, in awe of her aura.

Natalie was not done with them. She closed the door and announced, "If anyone does not follow instructions and creates a commotion, you will be banned from the press conference. I will call the security to escort you out."

"Don't worry, Ms. Smith. We will be on our best behavior." The reporters were blown away by her pluckiness.

It was only then Natalie softened her expression and walked towards Joyce.

Joyce held her hand and whispered, "Well done, Nat! You are so cool!"

"What can I do? We have to get tough with these preposterous reporters. Otherwise, they will get out of hand." Natalie put down her bag and smiled at Joyce.

"You are right. I'll know what to do from now on!" Joyce agreed as she nodded her head.

"Are all the invited media here already?" Natalie asked as she picked up a microphone.

"Yes. The cameras are in place. The live streams are also on standby. We have a record number of viewers," Joyce reported.

"Let me take a look," Natalie requested. Joyce brought her a laptop.

As soon as Natalie went online, the negative comments came pouring in.

Joyce was infuriated but Natalie shrugged it off. She hid the comments and looked for the viewers' count.

There were half a million viewers in total. Not too bad.

"Okay." Natalie signaled Joyce to remove the laptop. Joyce took it and sat down with it, ready to moderate and monitor the streams.

Natalie picked up the microphone and inspected the crowd. She cleared her voice and started the press conference. "Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to my press conference. Today, I will be addressing the rumors about me that had been swirling around recently."

The reporters' eyes lit up. They were hungry for juicy details. Their recorders were thrust closer to Natalie and the cameras started flashing away furiously.

The blinding flashing lights and the probing crowd would have been unsettling for most people. Nevertheless, Natalie was cool as a cucumber as she took it all in her stride.

Shane was watching Natalie on her live stream. He was smiling softly with his eyes full of admiration.

Even Silas was impressed. He nudged his glasses and complimented, "Mr. Shane, Ms. Natalie is really composed."

"If she gets flustered by such a small event, then she would not have the potential to go far." He rested his hands on the table and inquired, "Are the media on standby on our side?"

"Most of them are here. They are waiting in the lounge." Silas updated him.

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"Great. Settle them in the conference room. We will begin as soon as Natalie is done with hers."

"Okay." With that, Silas left to make the necessary arrangements.

Shane settled into a comfortable position and continued watching the live stream.

Natalie pressed on a remote control button and a projected screen appeared behind her. "Two days ago, CEO of Smith Group, Mr. Harrison Smith, accused me of seducing the CEO of Thompson Group. He also hinted I was the one who sabotaged the engagement between Ms. Jasmine and Mr. Shane. He claimed that I have exposed Ms. Jasmine's plagiarism during the competition because of jealousy. Today, I want to debunk those blatant lies."

The crowd was startled by her denial.

One of the reporters asked, "Ms. Natalie, do you have any proof against his lies?"

"Of course!" Natalie nodded and threw a glance at Joyce.

Joyce clicked on her laptop and the screen behind Natalie changed.

Natalie directed her pointer at the screen and continued, "This is my resume. I graduated from Laurent Academy of Design. Ms. Mercede is my mentor, and Ms. Daphne is Ms. Mercede's mentor. Ms. Jasmine plagiarized Ms. Daphne's work and also stole my designs in the competition. I have valid reasons to expose her."

Some of the reporters nodded in agreement.

The rest were not easily convinced. "Yes, you had valid reasons to expose her plagiarism. However, you may have other motives as well. Everyone at the finals could see you and Ms.

Jasmine were at odds with each other. Is Mr. Shane the reason for that animosity?" a reporter asked.

Natalie looked the reporter straight in the eye and refuted, "Nothing of that sort. My conflict with Ms. Jasmine has nothing to do with Mr. Shane. We were destined to be foes from the day we were born."

"What is that supposed to mean, Ms. Natalie?" The reporters were intrigued and some even stood up to get a better view of Natalie.

They anticipated a huge secret was about to be revealed soon.

Harrison was also keeping an eye on Natalie's press conference. His muscles tensed up upon hearing her declaration. "How unruly is that! What is she planning to do?"

She is not planning on spilling the beans on us, is she?

Harrison grew uneasy. He picked up his phone to call Natalie.

Natalie was about to start answering the reporters' questions when her phone rang.

Joyce checked the phone on her behalf and frowned. "Nat, it's Harrison. Do you want to pick the call?"

"Nope." Natalie declined right away. She knew the purpose of that call.

But she was determined to exposed the truth.

Harrison was watching her online and saw her refusing to take his call. He was hopping mad. He tossed his phone out. "What an insolent girl!" he yelled, banging his table.

Natalie couldn't care less. She turned her attention back to the reporters, smiling at them. "Sorry for the interruption. Now, I am sure everyone is wondering why Jasmine and I are destined to be arch-rivals."

The reporters and online viewers were all holding their breath, waiting for the big revelation.

Natalie took the cell phone from Joyce. "The answers can be found in the two recorded conversations that I will playback for you shortly. These recordings will prove I did not

seduce Mr. Shane. You will also find out the reason why Mr. Harrison Smith went all out to dishonor me."

Natalie unlocked her phone and broadcasted the recorded audio. They were the recordings of her phone conversations with Harrison the day before.

When Joyce told her Harrison held a press conference and spread the fake news about Shane and her, she was already on guard. That was why when Harrison called her, she did the recordings. She needed to arm herself with ammunition for this moment.

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It did not take long to play those two recordings.

When Harrison heard the recordings, he fell back into the chair, his face ashen.

I am doomed!

The online viewers and reporters were all dumbfounded.

"Oh my god! So Ms. Natalie is telling the truth!" A reporter snapped out of the state of shock and exclaimed loudly.

"Yes! Who would expect Mr. Smith would do such a thing?" The room was in an uproar.

The recordings left no doubt as to what really happened. Jasmine and her mom were being investigated. Harrison pressured Natalie to withdraw charges and lie to the police so they could be released. When Natalie rejected his demands, he despicably made those false accusations, hoping she would cave in under the negative publicity.

Instantly, there was a change in public sentiment. The condemnation of the Smith family came fast and furious. Smith Group's official social media platforms were overwhelmed by harsh comments. Harrison, Jasmine, and Susan's Facebook accounts were all under attack. The Smiths became a trending topic.

Harrison had infuriated the public. He misled them and made use of them to pressure Natalie. The netizens were angry at being manipulated. Their anger was obvious in their comments. The comments were much more venomous than those directed at Natalie.

Joyce came running to Natalie with her laptop in hand. "Look, Nat, the tide has turned. Look at those vicious attacks on Harrison!"

Natalie took a glance and coldly uttered, "Serve him right. He asked for it!"

"Yup, you are right!" Joyce was elated.

The two ladies did not bother to speak in a hushed tone so the viewers heard them. No one could dispute Natalie's statement. Indeed, Harrison brought that upon himself.

Harrison heard them too. "A**holes!" he screamed. He was trembling with rage as he watched a barrage of damning comments popped up on his screen. His housekeeper was worried he may faint from anger and gave him some medicine.

"So do you believe I am innocent now?" Natalie picked up her microphone and cheerfully asked the reporters.

"Of course! Please accept our apologies for the misunderstanding." The reporters felt bad about what they had written.

One after another, the media and viewers on live stream started posting apologies. Accounts on various social media platforms started taking down their earlier posts about her.

It was too late for some though. Joyce had already taken screenshots of the many insulting posts by the trolls.

"Ms. Natalie is indeed impressive! She settled the issue with just two recordings." Silas was impressed and he praised, as they watched Natalie on her live stream.

"Harrison's stupidity helped too." Shane mocked, leisurely sipping on his coffee.

"True. He left incriminating evidence with that two phone calls." Silas laughed out loud.

Soon, the reporters started interviewing Natalie after offering their apologies at the press conference. "Ms. Natalie, you said other than proving your innocence, the recordings will reveal the reason for your animosity with Ms. Jasmine. There was no clear mention of that in the recordings. We heard you called Mr. Smith 'dad'. Are you and Ms. Jasmine sisters?"

"Yes, but we are half-sisters. My mom was Harrison's legal wife while her mom was his mistress, so technically, I am the legitimate heiress of the Smith Group," Natalie announced.

That revelation stunned everyone.

All these years, the public only knew that the Smith family had one daughter. It was a big surprise to have another person claiming to be Harrison's daughter. What was more shocking was her claim to be the rightful heir.

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"How dare she..." Harrison was staring at the live stream. He was so agitated he was becoming short of breath.

"Sir! Please calm down." The housekeeper was very concerned. He supported Harrison, worried he would pass out from anger.

True enough, Harrison blackout in a fit of rage.

Over at Shane's office, Silas was feeling a little sorry for Harrison. "Looks like Harrison has really infuriated Ms. Natalie and she will be spilling the beans on him."

"He asked for it," Shane sneered.

That sounded familiar. Those were the exact words Natalie used. Shane took whatever she said to heart. Silas was a little amused. He turned his attention back to the live stream so his mind would not wander further.

"Ms. Natalie, do you mean Ms. Jasmine Smith is an illegitimate child?" A reporter had to re-confirm the shocking news he just heard.

Natalie nodded and continued, "You heard me right. I think all of you would remember Harrison divorced his wife and married his current wife, Susan Sullivan, seven years ago. He even changed the name of his daughter to Jasmine."

All the reporters nodded their heads. Of course, they remembered since it was big news back then. The Smiths even held a press conference for that.

"What you were not aware of is Jasmine did not change her name. Harrison made that announcement to mislead the public as he did not want you to know she is his illegitimate child. Susan is not Jasmine's stepmother. They are blood-related mother and daughter."

"That can't be true!" Some were not convinced. Most of them believed Natalie.

"Why not? Although there were rumors that Jasmine and Susan were at loggerheads, Susan had always been very protective of Jasmine. She committed this latest offense because of her daughter too. They must be mother and daughter. Would anyone have gone to that extent for a stepchild who is not related by blood?"

"I definitely would not!"

"I told you so."

The animated discussions brought on a smile to Natalie's face. She picked up her microphone again to share more details. "Jasmine is Susan's daughter while my mom is Yulia Lawrence. Twenty-five years ago, Harrison had an affair with Susan and they had Jasmine, who is a year older than I before I was even conceived. Both Yulia and I were kept in the dark."

She got a little emotional at this point. She had to take a deep breath to calm herself before she could carry on. "We got to know about this seven years ago when Harrison brought Jasmine and Susan home. He divorced my mom, and chased her out, together with my brother and me. He even lied to the public that his daughter changed her name to Jasmine which was utterly ridiculous."

After that outburst, she buried her face in her hand. It seemed like she broke down and cried.

Joyce handed her a piece of tissue and tenderly consoled her. "Nat, don't be sad. It is not worth wasting your tears on such an awful dad."

"Yeah. We did not expect Mr. Smith to be so despicable." The reporters were all taken aback by the injustice of Harrison's actions.

"Indeed! We were all led to believe Mr. Smith doted on his daughter. So he was only showing favoritism towards his illegitimate child."

"Ms. Natalie is too pitiable. Both Ms. Jasmine and Ms. Natalie are his flesh and blood. How could he be so merciless towards her?"

Natalie let on a faint smile when she heard all these criticisms directed at Harrison.

She did not know if Harrison was following her live stream. If he was, she was pretty sure he would be hopping mad.

He had always valued his reputation and image. With all these dark secrets exposed, all that he treasured would be destroyed. She looked forward to seeing what he would do to salvage the situation.

Natalie pretended to wipe her non-existing tears, then looked up to Joyce. "Joyce, please inform Mr. Shane that he can get started on his side."

"Okay." Joyce nodded. She took out a name card and her cell phone and called Silas.

While Joyce was calling Silas, Natalie fished out a name list from her bag and waved it in the air as she addressed the reporters. "Hi everyone, I have one last announcement before we end the press conference. The media and trolls listed here will soon receive a Letter of Demand from my lawyer."

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"Lawyer?" All the reporters and online viewers were taken aback.

"That's right. These trolls sullied my reputation. Some netizens posted nasty, unverified accusations against me to win likes. All these had caused me great emotional and psychological distress. I am seeking justice for myself," Natalie said.

"But that is such a long list of people! Don't you think you are being too harsh?" A reporter felt she was over-reacting. He reasoned it was just some harmless online comments, so she should not make such a big fuss over it. To him, she was being petty and vengeful.

"What do you mean harsh? I don't think I am though. Did they remind themselves not to be harsh when they posted all those vile comments?" Natalie retorted with a mirthless smile.

"Ah..." The reporter was tongue-tied.

Natalie looked away from him and addressed the crowd. "Every one of us has to take responsibility for our own actions. They should have borne that in mind when they were happily trolling others. I am not worried about the long list. I will take my time to get to every single one of them."

Natalie was unyielding. Everyone got the message that she was not someone to mess around with.

Natalie clapped her hands to get all their attention. "Okay, that is all I have for today. The CEO of Thompson Group will be holding his press conference in a short while. Harrison defamed both Mr. Shane and me, so Mr. Shane will be responding to his accusation too. If you are interested, do head over to his press conference."

Even before she finished her sentence, more than half of the reporters were already rushing out.

The rest had smug smiles on their faces. Obviously, they had colleagues already on-site to cover Shane's press conference.

At the same time, Joyce ended her call and reported, "Nat, I have informed Mr. Campbell. He said they had already started on their end."

"Thanks." Natalie went over to her laptop and log on to Shane's press conference live stream.

Shane was seated in their conference room. He looked straight in the camera and solemnly announced, "Ms. Natalie had given a very clear explanation, so I shall not go into the details again. From this moment, I will boycott the Smith Group. This is my punishment to Harrison Smith for his defamation."

No one faulted him for his decision. They would have done the same if they were in his position. Nobody would like to be given a bad name.

"Mr. Shane, since there is nothing between you and Ms. Natalie, why did you break off your engagement with Ms. Jasmine?" A reporter raised this question.

Shane adjusted the microphone and answered his query. "When I announced the decision to break off my engagement with Ms. Jasmine Smith, I have already stated my reasons. She is

a vicious woman who tried to frame Ms. Natalie on numerous occasions, despite my persuasion for her to stop. On top of that, she is a woman of easy virtue."

Easy virtue?

His choice of words and expression set everyone's imagination running wild.

Even Natalie was taken aback. He actually said that? Did he just openly hinted at Jasmine's infidelity? Ain't he worried people would talk behind his back and mock him?

Shane was not aware of Natalie's worry. Even if he was, he would not be bothered since it was Jasmine's reputation at stake, not his. Moreover, even if there were any gossips about him, no one would dare to speak about it in his face.

"That's all for today then." Shane let go of the microphone and walked out of the conference room.

Silas stayed behind to clear the crowd.

Those tuned in to the live stream were astonished. That must be the most succinct statement ever released in a press conference.

Natalie was surprised too but it was not unexpected. That was very Shane.

Natalie smilingly shook her head. She turned off the projected screen and cleared the remaining reporters from her studio.

Soon, only Joyce and she were left in the studio.