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All at once, Shane's gaze darkened. Before Natalie could turn her head back to the front, he dropped a hand from her waist and gripped her chin with it instead. Then, he dipped his head and kissed her.

Natalie was stunned at first before she squirmed apprehensively and pushed him away gently with her elbow. Her face bright red, she whispered, "What are you doing? We're in the kitchen, and I'm washing the dishes."

She then waved her soapy hands.

Since they were now dating, she naturally wouldn't decline sharing a kiss, but it was still dependent on the time and place.

However, Shane didn't have such an awareness. As he looked down at her bashful expression, his Adam's apple bobbed slightly. "It's okay. Just wash them later."

After saying that, he spun her around. With a hand around her waist and another at the back of her head, he again kissed her.

"Mmph..." Natalie blinked, mirth and exasperation brimming in her eyes.

This man is simply too eager!

But this time, she didn't push him away. Instead, she lifted her arms and hooked them around his neck as she started responding to him.

The soap bubbles on her hands dissipated one by one, turning into water and dripping onto the man's neck. The water was so chilly that the man's body went rigid.

Despite that, he didn't release his hold on Natalie, his kiss turning all the more passionate instead.

It was at this precise moment that the two children stepped into the kitchen hand in hand. As soon as they saw their parents kissing, they both stood rooted to the spot, their eyes as round as saucers and their mouths hanging wide open.

A long while later, Sharon pointed at Natalie and Shane. "Connor, what are Mommy and Dad eating?"

Snapping back to reality, Connor hurriedly clapped his hands over her mouth and eyes. "Don't look!"

"Mmm..." The little girl made a muffled sound of displeasure, wanting her brother to let go of her.

However, Connor didn't do as she wished. On the contrary, he hastily dragged her out of the kitchen.

While doing so, he even giggled at Natalie and Shane. "Carry on, Mommy, Dad! Don't mind us!"

As his words fell, he even closed the kitchen door.

The two children appeared out of the blue, yet they also disappeared in the blink of an eye, leaving Natalie and Shane staring at each other.

After a while, Natalie pushed the man away and glared at him, her face flushed. "It was all your fault that the kids caught us red-handed!"

"So what? It's no big deal," Shane murmured gently as he smoothed her hair.

Natalie wriggled out of his embrace. "Alright, go out first. I'm not done washing the dishes."

"I'll help." As Shane said that, he started rolling up his sleeves.

Natalie stared at his muscled forearms. She didn't decline but handed him a clean cloth. "Help me dry the dishes and put them into the cabinet."

Having received his orders, Shane murmured in acknowledgment of his task.

As they both promptly worked together like a well-oiled machine—one washing, and the other drying. With that, all the dishes were done in no time.

Then, they left the kitchen, one after another. When the two children who were playing Lego on the carpet in the living room heard the sound of footsteps, they both stopped short and swung their gazes over in concert.

Under the intent gazes of two pairs of big eyes, the corners of Natalie's mouth involuntarily twitched.

"Mommy!" Sharon abruptly flung away the Lego in her hand and scrambled up. Trotting over to her, she grabbed her hand before glancing up at Shane. "What exactly were you and Dad eating? Connor refused to tell me!"

From her repeated question, it was evident that she was absolutely unrelenting when it came to food.

Naturally, Connor couldn't help rolling his eyes at her. "You're such a chowhound!"

"Don't insult your sister in such a manner, Connor," Natalie chided him softly even as she pursed her lips. Subsequently, she looked down, only to lock gazes with her daughter's eyes that were gleaming with curiosity. Her flushed bright red, and she gave a light cough. "Your dad and I... weren't eating anything."

When Shane heard her referring to him as the children's dad, a burst of elation flooded him, and the corners of his mouth lifted.

After all, she'd always been referring to him as Mr. Shane with the children although they'd long since started addressing him as Dad.

Her change of address now means that she has truly accepted me!

"I don't believe that!" Sharon pouted. "I saw your mouth and Dad's plastered together as clear as day earlier..."

Before she'd finished speaking, her mouth was again covered by Connor, who had dashed over. "Alright, that's enough. The food Mommy and Dad were eating can only be consumed by adults. We, children, can't eat it."

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At this, Sharon blinked as though seeking confirmation.

Thus, Connor nodded solemnly.

Meanwhile, Natalie stifled a smile behind her hand.

Sure enough, it takes a kid to handle another kid best!

Sharon finally believed Connor, and her eyes drooped in disappointment.

At long last, Connor dropped his hand from her mouth. "Let's go. I've got a lollipop in the room, and I'll give it to you."

"Yay!" Sharon clapped her tiny hands exuberantly.

The two children then went to their rooms hand in hand.

When silence again reigned in the living room, Natalie turned and looked at Shane. "Mr. Shane..."

"You're still calling me Mr. Shane?" Quirking an eyebrow, Shane stared at her with a half-smile playing on his lips.

Choking, Natalie instantly realized that it was indeed rather inappropriate for her to be addressing him as Mr. Shane since she was now dating him.

That's too distant and doesn't sound as though we're lovers. But how should I address him, then?

Biting her lip, Natalie mulled it over for some time. Then, she inhaled deeply and mustered all her courage to murmur out a single word tentatively. "Shane?"

In response, Shane gently murmured an acknowledgment in assent.

Natalie giggled. "So, I'll address you thus henceforth, yeah?"

"Sure." Shane nodded.

At this, Natalie breathed a sigh of relief. She was just about to say something when the doorbell rang out of the blue.

Hence, she went over to open the door after pointing at the entrance hall.

As soon as the door was opened, she was greeted by Silas, who was standing outside while grinning from ear to ear. "Ms. Smith, I'm here to look for Mr. Shane. Mrs. Wilson said that he's here?"

As he spoke, he cast his gaze beyond Natalie.

Natalie then twisted her body sideways and allowed him entry. "Come on in. Shane is in the living room."

"Sure!" Silas replied. He had just taken a step into the house when he realized that something was off. All at once, his eyes bugged. "What did you just call Mr. Shane a moment ago, Ms. Smith?"

If my hearing didn't fail me, she called him Shane?

Natalie, on the other hand, had long since expected that others would be surprised at her new address of Shane. Thus, she merely answered smilingly, "Shane."

Ha! I knew it!

Swallowing, Silas inquired, "You're now dating Mr. Shane, Ms. Smith?"

In reply, Natalie nodded slightly before handing him a pair of slippers.

After Silas had changed into the slippers, he followed her to the living room in a daze.

"I'll leave you two to talk. I'm going to brew some tea in the kitchen." After Natalie said that, she pivoted and headed to the kitchen.

The very moment she left, Silas swiftly trotted over to the sofa and congratulated the man who was sitting on the sofa. "Congratulations, Mr. Shane! You've finally managed to win Ms. Smith over!"

This congratulatory remark sent a wave of gratification sweeping across Shane. Nevertheless, he still maintained an impassioned expression outwardly and murmured placidly, "Go and get a month's bonus from the finance department yourself."

Silas' eyes lit up at once. "Thank you, Mr. Shane!"

After acknowledging it with a tilt of his chin, he went back to business. "Why did you suddenly come and look for me?"

"It's about Mr. Thompson's will." Speaking of this, Silas promptly schooled his expression into a blank mask, and his demeanor turned solemn. "I found Mr. Thompson's assistant back when he was alive and asked about the will's whereabouts, but he has no inkling about it."

However, Shane wasn't the slightest bit surprised upon hearing this. Rather, he adjusted his position unhurriedly. "It's not surprising that he has no inkling of its whereabouts, for if he did, Sean would've long since gotten his hands on it."

"That's true." Silas nodded in agreement. "I also asked him a few other questions, but he couldn't answer any of them. However, he told me to convey a message to you, which he claimed Mr. Thompson left for you before his death."

"What is it?" Shane's eyes narrowed.

Taking a breath, Silas slowly murmured, "The assistant urged you not to look for the will if Sean Thompson doesn't cross the line or harbor any avarice toward Thompson Group and the Thompson family."

"What does that mean?" Shane's hands clenched into fists. "Is there something in the will that can bring him down?"

"That's the most likely possibility. Otherwise, there's no reason Mr. Thompson would leave such a message for you. Besides, it's clear as day that Sean Thompson knows the content of the will, hence doing everything in his power to get his hands on it so that he can destroy it. By doing so, he would have nothing to fear anymore," Silas postulated as he nudged his glasses.

Shane's eyes narrowed into slits, and he coldly snorted. "In that case, I must find the will! I want to see just what exactly is in there!"

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"But we have no leads at all." Silas looked at him helplessly.

At this, Shane lowered his eyes and then plunged into deep thought as he deliberated where his grandfather could have kept the will.

However, after racking his brains for a long while, he was still left with no inkling.

The will can't be at any of all those places, for Sean can definitely think of them if I can do so. And he might have even rummaged through them all! Therefore, the will must be someplace else!

"Have some tea." At this time, Natalie came out of the kitchen with tea.

Jolting out of his thoughts, Shane lifted his eyes and ordered, "Go back first. I'll try my best to think of a lead."

"Okay." Silas nodded.

Meanwhile, Natalie was bending down to pour the tea into the glass. "You're already leaving, Mr. Campbell? But I've just made tea."

"It's okay, Ms. Smith. I've still got something to do, so I'll get on with it first instead of intruding on you and Mr. Shane." After saying that, Silas flashed her a meaningful smile before he spun around and left.

Noticing the suggestiveness in the final glance he threw her, Natalie couldn't help but blush again.

When Shane glimpsed her flaming face, his eyes darkened. Then, he glanced at his wristwatch. "It's rather late now. Shall we retire?"

"Of course. In that case, are you..."

Before Natalie had even finished speaking, Shane was already walking toward her room.

At that sight, Natalie was instantly stunned. When she'd snapped back to her senses, she quickly trotted after him. "You're planning to stay overnight at my place, Shane?"

Shane, however, went straight to her bed and parked his butt down. "Do you have any objections?"

Natalie opened her mouth to utter a resolute protest, but in the face of his profound gaze, her words got stuck in her throat.

Never mind, I'll just let him stay overnight since he wants to do so. We're now together anyway, and we're both adults, so it seems rather unreasonable to refuse him.

Thus, she sighed in resignation. She then walked over to the closet and took out a new bath towel for him. "Go and take a shower. I'll go and ask Mrs. Wilson for your pajamas."

"Okay." Shane took the bath towel from her.

Subsequently, Natalie left the room and went to the apartment right opposite hers.

After learning about the purpose of her visit, Mrs. Wilson promptly snagged a set of pajamas and a set of formal wear Shane would be wearing the next day from his closet, handing them both to her.

Holding the two bags of clothes, Natalie then went back to her apartment.

An hour later, her nerves were frayed as she lay on the bed, and her body was as stiff as a board.

As this was her first time sleeping with Shane while starkly sober, the feeling of uneasiness and even a hint of apprehension held her captive.

Naturally, Shane noticed her trepidation. Knowing that she needed time to get used to him, he didn't touch her that night, merely hugging her as he slumbered.

Despite that, Natalie's nerves remained stretched taut. It was only in the wee hours of the morning that she was finally defeated by fatigue and fell asleep. When she woke up, it was already eight o'clock in the morning.

As she ambled out of the bedroom while musing her messy hair, she was greeted by the sight of the two children and Shane having breakfast at the dining table.

As soon as the two children spotted her, they waved at her enthusiastically. "Morning, Mommy!"

"Morning!" After flashing them a warm smile, Natalie shifted her gaze to the man, who was wiping Sharon's mouth for her. "Good morning."

Shane nodded in acknowledgment. "Wash up quickly and come have breakfast."

"Okay," Natalie murmured, then strolled toward the bathroom.

Soon, they were done with breakfast, and they then sent the two children to kindergarten.

Only when the two children had been led away by the kindergarten teacher did they climb back into the car.

While fastening his seatbelt, Shane asked, "Where do you want to go next? Your studio?"

Patting her handbag, Natalie shook her head. "Nope. I want to go to the hospital first."

Upon hearing that, Shane immediately pieced the puzzle together and glanced at her handbag. "You've gotten the hair samples?"

"I got them yesterday afternoon," Natalie answered with a bright smile.

Shane nodded slightly in response. "I'll go with you."

As his words fell, he started the car.

An hour later, they arrived at the hospital.

Upon their arrival, Shane headed straight to Jackson's office with Natalie.

The moment Jackson saw them holding hands, he was so shocked that his glasses slipped off. "Y-You two..."

Jumping to his feet, he pointed at Natalie and Shane's interlinked hands. Seemingly an eternity passed before he could finally complete his utterance. "You two are now dating?"

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Shane looked at Jackson disdainfully. "That's enough. I've got something for you to do."

He gestured towards Natalie.

Natalie nodded. She opened her bag and fished out several waterproof plastic bags.

Shane took them, then tossed them onto Jackson's table.

Jackson glanced at the bags and sat down. "What's this?" he inquired.

"Hair," Shane replied shortly. Pulling Natalie along with him, Shane crossed over to another sofa and sat down as well.

Jackson rolled his eyes. "Of course, I know it's hair," he said testily. "What I want to know is-whose is it?"

"It's Jasmine's and the bunch," Natalie quickly replied. With a few brief sentences, she outlined what had happened the night before at the news station.

Jackson listened carefully. Fiddling with his glasses, he said in a tone of mild surprise, "The Smith family is rather sensational, isn't it? All right. I'll process this for you. The results should be out in half an hour."

"Thank you, Dr. Baker," Natalie said politely. She stood up and extended her hand towards him in gratitude.

Shane grabbed her outstretched hand and yanked her back onto the sofa. He gave Jackson a vehement glare, then informed Natalie icily, "You've already thanked him."

Shane was determined not to let Natalie give Jackson more credit than he was due.

Jackson gave a wry smile. He felt that he had been rather unfairly treated.

I haven't even asked her for anything? What right does Shane have to look at me like I have done something wrong?

Jackson decided that if he couldn't win this fight, so he wouldn't even bother participating in it.

He thus said nothing, merely picked up the few bags strewn across his table, and strode out of the office.

Jackson hadn't even gone long when a voice piped up from beyond the door, calling meekly, "Jackie, is Shane here?"

It was none other than Jacqueline.

Natalie clenched her jaw. She threw a glance towards the door and said offhandedly, "Shane, Ms. Graham is here."

Shane patted Natalie's shoulder as if to soothe her. "I'll get the door."

"OK, go ahead," Natalie smiled at him reassuringly.

It was just a matter of getting the door. She wasn't that prone to jealousy yet. When she had agreed to date Shane, Natalie knew that she would eventually have to face the problem of Jacqueline someday.

And here Jacqueline was. It would be just as well to clear any misunderstandings between them now. It would have been crueler of Natalie and Shane to let Jacqueline find out by watching them become intimate. The news might be unbearable for Jacqueline now, but it would be far more brutal for her to suddenly chance upon it later.

As Natalie pondered over this, Shane had already opened the door.

Jacqueline was wearing a hospital gown. She entered the room, supported by a nurse.

Her demure smile froze when she caught sight of Natalie. That was the last person Jacqueline had expected to see. "Ms. Smith, you are here too!" Jacqueline exclaimed.

Natalie acknowledged Jacqueline with a faint smile. "Ms. Graham."

Jacqueline waved, dismissing the nurse.

The nurse nodded and turned to leave. She even shut the office door behind her considerately.

Shane helped Jacqueline over to the sofa facing Natalie. Crossly, he said, "Why aren't you resting in your room? What are you doing coming all the way over here?"

Jacqueline clasped his hands in hers as she sat down slowly. "The nurse said that you were here, so I wanted to come over to see you. I haven't seen you for quite a few days already."

"I've been very busy lately," Shane said curtly. He returned Jacqueline's hands to her lap, then retreated to Natalie's side. After he sat down next to her, Shane deliberately took Natalie's hands in his.

Jacqueline watched them, stupefied. Her eyes widened in disbelief. "Shane, are you and Ms. Smith..."

"We're dating," Shane announced firmly, gripping Natalie's hands tightly.

Natalie only smiled and nodded in affirmation.

All the blood drained from Jacqueline's face. Refusing to believe her ears, she shook her head and mumbled to herself, "No, it can't be, how could you..."

Before she could finish, Jacqueline's eyes rolled up into her head. She collapsed onto the sofa and fainted.

This turn of events left Shane and Natalie floundering.

"Jacqueline!" Shane immediately disentangled himself from Natalie and dashed over to examine her. He lifted her eyelids to check for signs of life, then pinched her in several places.

Natalie looked ruefully at the hand that Shane had flung aside in his distress. She then turned to watch Shane's immense anxiety for Jacqueline. Natalie was a reasonable person, but dissatisfaction bubbled up within her on its own accord.

They were ultimately unable to revive Jacqueline and sent her to the emergency room.

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Natalie waited with Shane outside the emergency room.

Shane paced up and down, often glancing impatiently at the red light above the entrance to the emergency room. He'd pressed his lips together so tightly that they were barely a thin line.

"Don't worry, Ms. Graham will be fine," Natalie consoled Shane. Sensing his inner turmoil, Natalie pressed her hand against his and forced a smile onto her face.

Shane turned towards her, an unfathomable look in his dark eyes. He remained silent.

Natalie's smile faltered slightly.

What's Shane thinking? Doesn't he believe me? Or is he blaming me for causing Jacqueline's mishap?

Natalie bit her lip and released Shane's hand. She walked off to the side, keeping a distance from him. Then she said dispassionately, "Mr. Shane, our relationship caused such a tremendous shock to Ms. Graham that she fainted. Perhaps it would be better for us to break it off."

"What are you saying?" Shane asked wildly. He whirled around, looking menacingly at her.

Is she saying that she wants to break up with me?

Natalie found herself flinching in the face of Shane's fury.

She refused to concede, however. Gathering up her courage, Natalie said bravely, "I meant that we should break things off between us. You may not have romantic feelings towards Ms. Graham, but she does towards you. That's why she can't accept the idea of us dating."

"I'll have a good talk with Jacqueline when she comes to. But I don't want to hear you mention us breaking up ever again!" Shane declared, glowering at Natalie. The strength of Shane's assertion left Natalie speechless. She merely gaped at him, unable to summon a response.

Just then, Jackson raced over, clutching a set of documents. "What happened? Why was Jacqueline suddenly sent to the emergency room?" he asked frantically.

"It's nothing. Have the profiling results come out yet?" Shane demanded, casting a glance at the documents in Jackson's hands. He had intentionally omitted the reason for Jacqueline's fainting spell.

Jackson thrust the documents at Shane rather peevishly. "It's out. See for yourself. I'm going to check up on Jacqueline."

Without another word, Jackson stormed into the emergency room.

Shane immediately handed the documents to Natalie, who opened it.

Upon reading its contents, Natalie's lovely almond eyes narrowed.

"What's wrong?" Shane asked.

Natalie massaged her temples, then spoke. "Jasmine is indeed Susan and Warren's daughter, not Harrison's."

This meant that none of Susan's children truly belonged to Harrison.

Harrison's only two legitimate children were thus Natalie and Jared. Harrison had chosen another man's daughter over his own flesh and blood. Is this retribution? Natalie wondered.

Shane jammed both hands into his pockets. "If Harrison knew about this, he'd surely devise all ways and means to get you and Jared back under his roof."

"We can't say for sure. He hates me to the core right now. How could he possibly bring himself to acknowledge me?" Natalie said, placing the profiling documents aside. "Things might be different for Jared, though. Harrison actually called me a few days ago to ask about Jared, intending to get him back home and inherit the Smith family legacy."

"What's there to inherit from the Smith family?" Shane scoffed, raising an eyebrow. He didn't even bother to disguise his contempt.

Natalie shrugged. "That's true. We all know that the Smith family has fallen, and there's nothing left worth inheriting. Harrison, however, is of a different mind. He still firmly believes in the prosperity of the Smith family."

Shane sneered, but said nothing.

After a while, the light above the door of the emergency room went off.

Jackson emerged from within, pushing Jacqueline on a hospital bed.

Shane stepped forward, keeping pace with them. "How's Jacqueline?" he asked.

"She's fine. She's just in shock. Her heart rate was a little higher than usual. She'll recover consciousness soon enough," Jackson replied, his eyes remaining fixed on Jacqueline's inert body. The tenderness with which Jackson gazed at Jacqueline shone through his glasses.

Natalie finally realized with a start that Jackson was in love with Jacqueline.

The three of them are a proper mess indeed! Natalie mused.

Jackson liked Jacqueline, while Jacqueline had eyes only for Shane. Shane, on the other hand, saw Jacqueline as nothing more than a sister. It was almost a love triangle.

Natalie took another look at Jacqueline.

Jacqueline's face was white as a sheet. She lay on the hospital bed with both eyes tightly shut. Jacqueline wasn't wearing her wig, and multiple scars crisscrossed, standing out in relief against her bald scalp. Each scar was at least five inches long. The horrible sight was enough to make one shudder.