

Some onlookers even took out their cell phones to snap a photo of this picture-perfect family. After all, it was not often they got to see something so pleasing to the eye.

A waiter approached them. "Have you made any reservations?"

"Yes, under Ms. Yulia Lawrence." Natalie smiled.

Hearing the name, the waiter immediately led them to their private room courteously. As they got closer, Natalie gave Shane an encouraging look.

In the private room, Yulia heard footsteps and familiar voices approaching. Sensing their arrival, she went out to meet them.

She was caught off-guard by the onslaught of good-looking genes. Even before, Yulia had already felt that there was an uncanny resemblance between the kids and Shane. Now that she knew the truth, it all made sense. They were meant to be a family.

After the waiter left, Natalie went over and tugged on Yulia, who was lost in her thoughts.

"Mom?"

"Grandma!" Both Connor and Sharon greeted her chirpily.

Only Shane failed in his attempt to greet.

Yulia came back to her senses and patted her grandchildren's head before speaking, "You're all here."

"Sorry we made you wait." Natalie smiled sheepishly.

"I've only arrived not so long ago as well." Yulia then turned to Shane, some of her warmth escaped. "Do you not know how to greet?"

Shane pursed his lips. "Yulia."

Feeling satisfied, the elder woman went back to the private room to take her seat.

Meanwhile, Natalie helped Sharon down from Shane's arms.

The siblings held hands as they, too, made their way to their seats. Only Natalie and Shane stood rooted outside the door.

Shane lowered his gaze. "Your mom doesn't seem happy to see me."

Natalie masked her hesitation with a smile. "How is that possible? You must have read her wrongly."

"I'm certain of it. Her attitude toward me is even colder than before." He lifted his head to look at her.

In front of his knowing gaze, she could not muster up a lie. She sighed before confessing, "I'll admit that my mom does hold some grudges against you."

Hearing her confirmed his suspicions, Shane felt his chest tightened and his face fell.

"Why?" He skimmed through his memories. Did I do anything that has offended Yulia?

"Just one reason. The assassination incident with Alice."

Hearing that, Shane's pupil shrank and realization dawned on him. Of course, it was that.

After all, I exposed her precious daughter to danger. "I'm sorry."

Natalie smiled warmly. "It's all in the past now! Besides, that wasn't even your fault. It's all because of that delirious woman."

Just then, Yulia interrupted their conversation. She nagged, "What're you two still doing outside? Come and take your seats."

"Coming!" With that, Natalie held Shane's hands. "C'mon, let's go in!" She led him in.

Upon entering, Shane remembered the advice Silas had given him. He handed Yulia the gifts. "Here, Yulia, these are for you. I hope you like them."

Yulia was slightly taken aback when she saw the logos on the bag; they were all high-end products. "Thank you. I'll accept your thoughtful gifts."

Seeing how she accepted the gifts, Shane felt a weight off his shoulders. To him, this meant one step closer toward full acceptance.

Noticing that he was still standing, Natalie pulled the chair next to her. "Shane, don't just stand there. Take a seat."

Shane hummed in acknowledgment before he sat down while Natalie took a seat beside him.

"Mom, have you ordered?" she asked.

"No. I was waiting for you so you could order," replied Yulia as she handed the menu to her daughter.

Before adding a few other dishes, Natalie had scanned through the menu and ordered some of Shane and the kids' favorite dishes first. After that, she closed the menu.

Seeing that, Yulia arched her brows. "That's it? Are you not going to let Shane see the menu?"

"I've already ordered all his favorite dishes." Natalie smiled.

Upon hearing that, Shane's expression softened while Yulia pursed her lips. "Your relationship hasn't even been that long, yet you already know him that well? You even know what dishes he likes."

"Yeah. That's because he only likes a few things. It's easy to remember," answered Natalie while tousling her hair.

"What about you?" Yulia directed the question at Shane. "Do you know Nat as well as she knows you? Do you know what she likes?"

"Mom, why are you asking these questions?" Natalie tugged on Yulia's arm, hoping that her mom would change the subject.

However, Yulia stubbornly stayed on the topic as she removed her daughter's hand from her.

"Because I want to find out if he's serious about you. A relationship shouldn't be one-sided. He has to get to know you as well. That's how things work. You have to give and take, get it?"

"I..." Natalie trailed off as her lips twitched slightly while she lowered her head.

Of course I know a one-sided relationship won't last long.

"Well? Answer me, Shane." Once again, Yulia turned her attention to the man. "I want to know just how deep your love for Nat is."

Natalie also turned to look at Shane. Part of her was hopeful that he could answer, yet part of her was worried about what would happen if he could not.

Shane noticed her apprehension as the corner of his lips curled up. Patting her head, he began narrating everything she liked.

Both the women's eyes widened in shock as they hear him speak.

He... he actually knows!

What delighted Natalie the most was that he had noticed little details about her that even she was not aware of.

"Okay, okay. That's enough." Yulia raised her hand to stop him. "You've proven that you're sincere, but..."

Upon hearing Yulia's last words, Natalie and Shane's hearts skipped a beat. The atmosphere around the private room had become so intense that even the kids noticed, for they had lifted their heads to look at the adults.

"But what, Mom?" asked Natalie, holding Shane's hand.

He patted the back of her hand. "Relax. Let's listen to what she has to say."

"But can you guarantee that being with you, Nat will not encounter any danger anymore?" questioned Yulia seriously.

"Yes," replied Shane as he narrowed his eyes. "What happened last time had given me a wake-up call, and I'll never let it happen again. Besides, I've already hired bodyguards for both Natalie and the kids. Though they'll remain in the shadow, the bodyguards will keep them protected at all times."

"Bodyguards?" Natalie froze. "When did you hire them? Why haven't I heard a word about this?"

Glancing at her, Shane replied, "It's actually the second time now. The first time was before

Alice got arrested. After that, I relieved them of their duty, but then you got kidnapped, so I-”
“What?” Yulia interrupted as her expression darkened. “Nat was kidnapped?”

Oh s**t!

Natalie quickly looked down, knowing that this could not end well.

“You didn’t tell your mom?” questioned Shane, feeling like hitting himself for having a slip of the tongue.

Seeing how Natalie remained silent, Yulia slammed the table before standing up. “Get up, Nat!”