Soon, the invites were sent out, and Shane also instructed his subordinates to make arrangements with the cemetery. The only thing left to do was to wait for the funeral itself. Natalie decided to hold the funeral two days later.

During these two days, besides choosing a casket for Yulia, there were also other arrangements to take care of. Hence, everything was rather rushed.

Stanley and Joyce, who were overseas, received the invites sent out by Jared. They did not believe it at first, thinking it was some kind of prank, so they called to ask him directly, only to find out that Yulia had really passed away.

It took them quite some time to recover from their shock. Then, they started packing their things and rushed back to the country to attend the funeral.

During the funeral, Natalie broke down in tears again and later fainted from excessive crying.

By the time she woke up, the funeral was already over.

Shane brought a cup of honey water to her as she lay weakly in bed. "Here. Drink some." Natalie shook her head with a forlorn expression.

Shane did not insist either, placing the cup on the bedside. "Alright. You can drink it later then."

Natalie hummed in acknowledgement.

Shane stood by the bed and trained his eyes on her. "I know you're sad, but your mom is gone, and her funeral's over, so it's time for you to get back on your feet. You can't go on like this. You still have me, Jared, and the two kids."

He wanted her to know that she wasn't alone.

Natalie slowly lifted her gaze to look at him but remained silent.

After a while, she leaned to the side to grab the cup of honey water, then took a sip before saying, "I understand what you mean. Don't worry. I'll be fine. I'll find a way to get back on my feet."

"That's good to know." Shane leaned forward to plant a feather-light kiss on her forehead. "Rest some more. You haven't been eating much in the past two days. Jackson said you're slightly anemic."

"Okay." Natalie nodded.

Shane left after that.

As soon as he emerged from the room, he was stopped by Joyce.

"Mr. Shane, is Nat okay?" Joyce asked with concern.

Shane cast a cursory glance at her, then at Jared who was next to her. Finally, he narrowed his eyes and pinned Stanley a frosty look.

A dark glint fleeted across Stanley's eyes before he broke into a smile. "What's with the look, Mr. Shane? I already apologized to you for what happened last time. Besides, it's not like I can do anything now that Nat's already married to you."

"Last time?" Jasmine tilted his head in puzzlement. "Shane, what happened between you and Stanley last time?"

Shane did not answer him. Instead, he shifted his gaze back to Joyce and uttered, "She's fine."

"Really? That's great." Joyce patted her chest in relief, then said with a wave of her hand, "Okay then. Let's get going now. We might disturb Nat's rest if we keep hanging around here."

"Joyce is right." Jared nodded and followed Joyce down the stairs with Shane and Stanley bringing up the rear.

Shane shot the latter a sideways glance and warned, "You better mean what you said earlier and stop having funny thoughts about Natalie or else..."

"Or else what?" Stanley maintained the smile on his face, not at all fazed by his threat.

Shane pursed his lips. "Or else I'll make you wish you were never born. Even your mental illness won't stop me."

"I see. I'll keep that in mind, then." Stanley pushed up his glasses.

Shane ignored him henceforth, walking ahead of him down the stairs.

As Stanley watched his back profile, the smile on his face gradually vanished, and behind his glasses, his eyes turned ominous.

But soon, the smile returned to his face and his eyes softened once again, as though the change just now was nothing but an illusion.

Since his treatment overseas was still ongoing, he left that night itself.

It was already the next day when Natalie found out about his departure.

But she did not show much of a reaction, merely nodding her head because she felt that it was better this way.

She was still wary of him because of the previous incident. Even though she had forgiven him during their last phone call, she no longer knew how to act around him.

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"Follow me to the courthouse later." At the dining table, Natalie took a sip of milk before saying to Jared who was cutting into his omelet across from her.

"I will," Jared responded without missing a beat.

Shane, who was seated at the head of the table, put down his coffee and looked at Shane. "Are you feeling better?"

Natalie knew that he was asking about her emotional status. Arching her lips into a smile, she replied, "Mm-hmm. I am. It's time to move on instead of allowing myself to be overcome by grief. Mom's death can't be undone. Being sad about it isn't going to change anything, so I might as well step out and continue living my life."

"I'm glad you think that way, madam," beside her, Mrs. Wilson commended with a smile. Shane felt relieved that Natalie managed to pull through so quickly.

Natalie turned her attention back to Jared. "You too, Jared. Don't make me worry about you. Your heart..."

"Don't worry, Nat." Jared cracked a soft smile at her. "I know."

"Good." Natalie nodded.

After breakfast, Shane brought the two children to kindergarten.

Meanwhile, Natalie and Jared made their way to the courthouse to end the lawsuit between Yulia and Harrison.

Initially, their lawsuit would have dragged on for a long time, but since Yulia already passed away, there was no need for it to go on.

The two of them arrived at the courthouse the same time Harrison did.

Ever since Yulia's death was concluded to be an accident, Harrison and Susan were cleared of all charges and released.

Hence, Natalie sent Harrison a message the previous night, telling him to come to the courthouse the next day, but she never expected to run into him right outside.

"Nat," Harrison called out.

When Natalie stopped in her tracks, Jared followed suit.

Harrison did not recognize Jared at first, but his eyes widened in surprise when he walked over. "Jared? Is that you?"

He reached out to Jared with trembling hands.

However, Jared frowned and moved a step toward Natalie, obviously avoiding him.

"Mr. Smith." Jared nodded in greeting.

Even though he was smiling, it was formal and distant.

Harrison's expression froze. After a good few seconds, he awkwardly withdrew his hands that were hanging midair. "It's really you, Jared. You're all grown up now. I still remember how little you were seven years ago."

Both Natalie and Jared looked at him expressionlessly, with neither of them responding to

what he said.

Harrison felt like a clown talking to himself.

Thus, he clamped his mouth shut and stopped talking altogether.

Natalie looked away from him and said, "Let's go in, Jared."

Jared nodded and was about to follow her into the courthouse.

However, Harrison abruptly grabbed his arm.

Jared looked over his shoulder with displeasure. "Mr. Smith, what are you doing?" Upon hearing this, Natalie glanced behind as well.

Harrison's weathered face twitched slightly before he asked, "You're both here to end the lawsuit between your mother and I, right?"

"Yes. Now that Mom's gone, naturally, there's no need for the lawsuit to go on." Jared pulled his arm back.

With his eyes fixated on him, Harrison stated, "In that case, follow me back to the Smith residence."

"Excuse me?" Jared was dumbfounded.

Natalie narrowed her eyes into slits and pulled Jared behind her. "Why should he go back with you?"

"Why?" Harrison looked at her as though she had asked a stupid question. With furrowed brows, he continued, "Because your mother is dead and I'm your only living blood relative. Where else should Jared go if not back to the Smith residence?"

"You're wrong." Jared stepped out from behind Natalie, and his usually gentle voice hardened. "You're not our only blood relative, Mr. Smith. Nat and I have Connor, Sharon, and Shane. I won't go back with you."

Harrison's face fell. "Who's going to take care of you then?"

"I don't need anyone to take care of me. If you haven't noticed, I'm not sick anymore. I can take care of myself," Jared countered with a smile.