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The corners of Natalie's mouth twitched and she finally gave up.

She could have finished her shower in thirty minutes, but with Shane's constant interfering, she only left the bathroom two hours later.

After she finally finished her shower, Natalie collapsed on the bed.

Shane ended up being the one to blow her hair dry for her.

Natalie was so tired that she started dozing off while he dried her long locks.

He looked at her sleeping face with a gaze almost overflowing with his love for her.

After that, he turned off the hairdryer and bent down to kiss Natalie on the forehead lightly. "Goodnight," he whispered as he tucked her in.

Natalie's mouth twitched slightly, as if trying to reply.

Shane chuckled lightly and put the hairdryer away. After he turned off the light, he pulled her into his embrace.

After breakfast the next day, the family of four went out for a day of fun.

Natalie didn't need to compete that day and Shane was free of work. Coupled with the fact that the two kids didn't have school, it was the perfect day to go for a family outing.

The two children wouldn't stop chattering in their excitement. The car ride was filled with their constant bickering of where to go. They finally settled on the first stop, which was feeding pigeons at the Town Square.

Shane frowned slightly at the sound of that, clearly reluctant.

To him, pigeons were incredibly dirty. They pooped everywhere and the floor was always decorated with all their excrements. In fact, they might even land a bomb in midair, and with a Splat, his clothes could be ruined.

But at the sight of his kids' excited grins, he didn't have the heart to say no.

Luckily, things went better than he'd imagined. He managed to steer clear of any pigeon droppings and didn't get any "gifts" from them either. Apart from the mildly pungent stench in the air, everything else was bearable. Shane's expression slowly brightened after leaving the Town Square.

"Let's get lunch. The kids are starving," Natalie said as she gently wiped off the sweat that had formed on Shane's forehead.

He nodded in response. "Okay, let's head off."

Half an hour later, the family of four arrived at a cozy little restaurant.

There weren't any booths or private rooms in the restaurant. Instead, they simply had one large room in which everyone dined.

Shane chose a table next to the window with an amazing view of the mid-century architecture below.

"What are you in the mood for?" He passed the menu to Natalie.

She passed it over to the kids. "Let the kids pick first. I need to go to the restroom."

"I'll miss you," Shane said teasingly.

Natalie chuckled and walked off.

After her bathroom break, she went back to her table.

However, a familiar face flashed into view the moment she stepped into the restaurant.

Jessie?

What is she doing here?

There was another woman at her table. The woman had on a large hat and an elegant black cape and dress. Natalie couldn't make out her features from far away.

Who is that?

She frowned and continued staring at Jessie's table.

After about ten seconds, both of the women at Jessie's table got up and went to pay for their food.

Natalie still couldn't see the other woman's face.

She didn't think too much about it and convinced herself that it was just Jessie's friend.

"Here you go." Shane passed a glass of milk to Natalie the moment she sat down.

She took it with a smile. "Thanks, Darling."

"Here. You can order now," he said as he passed the menu to her as well.

After sipping from her glass, Natalie started ordering her food.

The four of them roamed the mid-century streets after their lunch and bought plenty of things at the mall, only going back to the villa after the sun started to set.

Sally had been back since afternoon and had been waiting for Natalie.

She quickly got up at the sight of her. "Nat! Mr. Shane! Welcome back."

Shane nodded his head slightly in response.

Natalie looked at Sally. "How's your headache?"

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"Much better. The swelling has already gone down a lot, so it'll probably heal in no time," Sally replied as she gently touched the bandage around her head.

Natalie nodded. "That's good to hear."

"Nat, I actually needed to talk to you about something," Sally suddenly said.

Shane gently tugged the two kids upstairs. "I'll get them ready for bed."

Natalie knew he wanted to give Sally and herself space to talk. With a smile, she replied, "Okay. I'll head upstairs right after this."

Shane nodded and brought the kids to their rooms.

Sally chuckled. "D*mn, did Mr. Shane go to university to learn how to be a good husband? He's so attentive now."

Natalie chuckled sheepishly. "So, what did you need to ask me about?"

"Well, I worked on a magazine shoot yesterday. It's for a magazine that's pretty well-known in the music community, and they're planning a super big project. They want to gather the top twenty hottest artists of the current generation and release a never-before-seen publication."

Natalie nodded in understanding.

Basically, they wanted to release an edition with the top twenty most popular artists as of right now.

"That's pretty ambitious," she said with a raised brow.

It wasn't hard to figure out how well that edition of the magazine would be selling.

"Yeah, it is. The magazine company put in a lot of money to hire all these artists, and among all that were the clothes. They wanted to have complete discretion over the outfits and reached out to a few high-class designers, but-"

"Let me guess, they were turned down?" Natalie asked.

Sally nodded. "Pretty much. There's a conference between high-class designers that happens to clash with the deadline for the magazine's outfits, so all of them said no."

"Oh, I've heard about the annual designer conference. Seems like that magazine company has pretty bad timing." Natalie chuckled.

Sally took a sip of water before continuing, "That's why the magazine company decided to set their sights a bit more leniently. They found me when I was modeling one of your designs on the runway, so they contacted me again after yesterday's shoot and asked if I could pull some strings with you."

"Hold on," Natalie lifted a hand. "You're saying they want me to design for them?"

"Yeah! They said your last two designs for the competition were pretty good, so they wanted to get in touch. What do you think?" Sally glanced at Natalie.

Natalie was intrigued.

Sally could see the interest in Natalie's eyes and tugged her hand. "Just try out, Nat. It's a big opportunity to get to design for so many famous artists at once. You have to seize it."

After Sally's advice, Natalie took a deep breath and nodded. "Okay, I'll go for it." "Great! I'll let them know right away," Sally said as she pulled out her phone and made a call.

Natalie continued sipping her tea.

Sally hung up after about two minutes.

"They asked me if you could stop by tomorrow to talk about the details," Sally said.

With a smile, Natalie replied, "Sure. Come pick me up tomorrow."

"Of course," Sally said as she nodded.

Natalie put her cup down and got up. "Okay, I'm gonna head upstairs now."

"Go ahead. Goodnight," Sally said with a wave of her hand.

Natalie chuckled before walking upstairs.

The two kids were playing in their own room. After Natalie checked in on them, she closed their room door quietly and walked into the main bedroom.

"You're back," Shane's low voice piped up as Natalie entered.

She nodded.

"What did you talk about?" he asked as he walked over.

Natalie stretched lazily as she told him everything.

Shane raised an eyebrow. "That's a pretty good magazine. It ranks pretty highly worldwide, so designing outfits for their photoshoot is going to be a good debut for you. I bet other artists will come to you for their outfits after that magazine gets released."

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"I know. That's why I agreed," Natalie replied.

"When are you meeting them?" Shane asked.

"Тотоггоw."

Shane frowned. "The kids and I are heading back tomorrow."

"Yeah, I know. Monday is the day after tomorrow." Natalie buried her head into his chest.

He stroked her hair gently. "I'll ask Silas to book the afternoon flight so I can follow you in the morning."

He wanted to spend his last few moments in the country with her.

After tomorrow, they wouldn't be seeing each other for a long time.

Natalie hummed softly in agreement.

The next day, they left the kids at the villa as they headed off to the magazine company with Sally.

After their discussion, Natalie signed a contract with the company.

Since Natalie was still in the competition, the magazine company understandingly gave her two weeks' time to finalize her design.

After she handed the design over, the company would take the design to the tailor so they didn't have to bother Natalie with the physical manufacturing of her design.

Natalie couldn't turn down an offer like that. After all, she was pressed for time.

The three of them left the magazine company after signing the contract.

Shane got a call from Silas the moment he got into the car. "Mr. Shane, Ms. Graham is in the hospital."

Shane wasn't the slightest bit surprised by Silas' words.

Jacqueline was already weak, to begin with, and the fact that she was also going on a hunger strike meant that her getting hospitalized was simply a matter of time.

"Got it," Shane said mildly in response.

Silas cleared his throat. "Dr. Baker seems very angry."

Shane hummed. "I know. He already called me."

After hanging up on Silas, he called Jackson.

Almost immediately, Jackson asked, "Shane, did you know that Jacqueline got hospitalized for starvation?"

"Yeah," Shane answered with one hand on the steering wheel.

Natalie glanced at his phone from the passenger's seat without a word.

Naturally, Sally stayed quiet as well.

Jackson continued, "You said you wouldn't kill her and only wanted to keep her locked up. What happened to that promise? Not only did she pass out from hunger, but there's also an enormous gash on her wrist!"

"So?" Shane asked, completely deadpan.

Jackson's eyes were about to pop out from his skull as his temper spiked. "What do you mean, 'so?' How dare you act like that when Jacqueline-"

"She did that to herself," Shane cut him off. "I only sent her to be locked up. Apart from that, I didn't do anything to her. The gash on her wrist is from her own failed suicide attempt. She passed out because she was going on a hunger strike." "What?" Jackson said in shock. "You're saying she did this to herself?"

"Do you think I would have ordered someone to cut her wrists and starve her on purpose?" Shane's eyes glinted mockingly. "I'm not as tasteless as you think. How could I use such an imbecilic way to get my revenge? If I wanted to truly get my revenge on her, I would have pushed her so far off the deep end that she would never see the light of day again. Got that?"

Jackson gulped, completely lost for words.

A few seconds later, he croaked, "Why did she try to kill herself?"

"Just desperate for attention, I guess." Shane scoffed coldly.

Jackson instantly understood Shane's meaning from those six words.

Jacqueline must have tried to kill herself to force Shane to forgive her or to make Shane divorce Natalie and marry her instead.

But based on Shane's attitude, I'm guessing she tried to go for the latter choice.

It seems like Jacqueline is still stuck in her ways.

"Is there anything else you want from me?" Shane asked mildly after Jackson's constant silence.

Jackson's throat was dry. "N-No, I'm done. I'm sorry for thinking you did that to Jacqueline."

Shane scoffed coldly again. "Since the two of you broke up, you don't need to concern yourself with her anymore."

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"Alright..." Jackson lowered his head.

With that, Shane hung up the call. Before Natalie could ask, he turned and told her about their conversation.

She pursed her lips as the disdain she felt for Jacqueline intensified once Shane was done. However, she did not make any comments.

"Nat, this Jacqueline woman is so thick-skinned! I'm guessing she must be from a wealthy family since she's friends with Mr. Shane. Yet, her mind is full of men. To add on, she brought upon this disaster on herself all for the sake of a man. I don't know about you, but I think it's a shame," Sally blurted.

Although I have not met Jacqueline, I could already tell she must be swooning over love judging by Mr. Shane's description, Sally thought to herself.

Natalie noticed Shane's darkened expression and let out a chuckle. "Sal, the man you mentioned is actually your boss and my Darling."

"What?" Sally looked at Shane in disbelief.

Noticing his cold expression, she gulped and cleared her throat. "Oh... Well, Mr. Shane, you didn't clarify who that man was, so I thought it was someone else," Sally explained as cold sweat beaded her forehead. "Oh? So it's my fault that I didn't clarify?" Shane narrowed his eyes.

"No, of course not! I didn't mean it that way. I just... Nat." Sally glanced at Natalie for help.

"Come on, Shane. She didn't know it was you. Cut her some slack, alright? But she did get one thing right. Ms. Graham is rather thick-skinned." Natalie wiped the tears of laughter off her eyes.

Shane pursed his thin lips and did not answer her. it was a clear sign that he agreed to Sally's statement.

To be honest, I have no idea why Jacqueline's so in love with me. But it doesn't matter. It won't change my love for Natalie no matter how much Jacqueline loves me.

In the afternoon, it was time for Shane to return to J city with the children.

Natalie and Sally went to the airport to see them off.

Sharon refused to leave Natalie as she sobbed and clung to her tightly moments before they boarded.

Although Connor did not cry like his sister, his eyes were also red as he stared at his mother.

Even Shane was looking at her sadly.

Seeing that, Natalie was very tempted to purchase a ticket and return home with them. However, she held herself back at the very last moment.

She waved at Shane and the children as they walked through the VIP passage. She did not stop waving until she could no longer see them and hugged Sally.

Sally knew she was sad and gently patted her back to comfort her.

After ten minutes or so, Natalie raised her head and wiped her tears. "Alright, Sal, I'm fine now. Thank you." She smiled.

"No problem. Shall we go?" Sally suggested.

Natalie nodded in agreement and they both left the airport.

Sally realized Natalie was still feeling down during their ride home. She pondered for a moment and said, "Hey, cheer up, Nat. I know you miss them, but you can always give them a call. Besides, didn't Mr. Shane say he'd bring the kids over to visit you in a couple of weeks?"

"Don't worry, I'm fine now." Natalie grinned.

Sally looked at her one last time and did not say anything else.

She assumed that Natalie was fine. Yet, the moment they arrived at the villa, Natalie had locked herself in her room.

Sally shook her head helplessly. "They say things get rough when a couple doesn't get along. Well, it seems that it's not all smooth sailing either when a couple does get along. I mean, look at her, it's like she's lost her soul as soon as she's away from her husband. Perhaps it's better to stay single," she murmured.

Her cell phone rang as soon as she said so.

Glancing at the caller ID, her eyes gleamed. "Hello, Mr. Brandy? Oh yes, I'm available. Okay, I'll be right there!"

She notified the housekeeper of her whereabouts as she grabbed her bag and dashed out of the door.

"Hello abs! Here I come!" she muttered.

It wasn't until dinner time that Natalie found out that Sally went out for a date. She was surprised to hear that.

We've been here for so many days and I didn't even know Sally's met a guy!

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The next day, Natalie went to the magazine company to meet up with some artists. She needed to understand the artist's personality, hobbies, measurements, as well as their dressing styles.

This information would provide her with a better direction to create designs that would suit the artists' tastes.

Natalie got to work and didn't stop till noon. Once she was done, she held a large stack of paper containing the artists' information and headed toward the parking lot. However, a couple of men blocked her path as soon as she reached the parking lot.

"Hey miss, fancy a cup of coffee?" one of them asked devilishly.

The other man was staring at her in a perverted manner as he constantly eyed her hips and chest.

He even stretched out his hand and tried to touch her.

Natalie knew they were the thugs around the area who usually live by robbing others. Similarly, they wouldn't pass on a beautiful woman if they met one.

These thugs usually wouldn't pay attention to Asian women as they were smaller in size and looked the same.

However, Natalie didn't look like any typical Asian woman. Although her height was incomparable to a western woman, her appearance and body were very appealing. As such, even someone like them who couldn't understand oriental beauty thought she was gorgeous.

They wouldn't miss the chance to advance on her.

Natalie took a step back to avoid the man's touch. She frowned as an uneasy feeling crept into her heart.

D*mn, I'm pretty sure they're up to no good. I know incidents like this happen all the time here, but I didn't expect myself to encounter this one day.

Okay Natalie, don't panic. There must be a way out of this. She took a deep breath to calm herself down. "Would you let me go if I hand you some money instead?" she suggested hopefully.

If I could dodge a bullet in exchange for a sum of money, I'd be more than willing to do so. At least my safety would be guaranteed. "Your money would eventually be ours once we have you, Miss. So why choose one when we can have it all?" the men laughed.

Natalie's heart dropped. She knew then there was no way she could talk them out of it. Hence, she subconsciously stepped back and planned to turn and run while she shouted for help.

I know the people here are indifferent toward one another and they may not step up to help. But I wouldn't know for sure if I don't try.

With that thought, Natalie clenched her fists and backed away slowly before she turned and ran.

The two men were taken back for a brief moment before they went after her. They shouted threats and nasty words at her as they continued to chase after her.

Natalie's face paled when she heard those words and ran even faster.

Unfortunately, she failed to outrun them and was caught in an instant.

One of the men slapped her across the face, causing her to fall to the ground. Natalie's face stung and her ears were ringing.

Consequently, the other man grabbed Natalie by the collar and lifted her.

He leaned close to her and said, "Where do you think you're going, b*tch?"

Natalie retched when she got a whiff of his disgusting breath.

The man was offended and said angrily, "Why? Am I not to your liking? Just you wait, I'll make sure to change your mind later."

Then, he let go of her collar and she fell to the ground once again.

The man pinned Natalie down as he ripped at her clothes.

"Let go of me!" Natalie screamed in horror.

She tried to resist his hold as she laid kicks and punches on the man. Yet, the man was not affected by the slightest. In fact, Natalie's behavior had excited him even further.

Soon, Natalie's bra was revealed the moment her clothes were ripped open.

She shuddered as the cold wind hit her body. Is this the end for me? she thought to herself hopelessly.

Natalie closed her eyes in despair as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Suddenly, a figure rushed over and landed a kick on the man who was on top of Natalie.

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The man howled in pain.

His accomplice gritted his teeth and rushed over when he noticed the newcomer.

The person seemed to have a martial arts background as he defeated the thugs easily.

Nevertheless, he was outnumbered when the other thug got up from the ground and joined forces with the other man.

Natalie opened her eyes when she heard the commotion and saw three figures fighting each other. Then, she came to her senses that she was rescued.

She hurriedly covered herself and got up from the ground.

She heard a low grunt the moment she stood up.

Natalie narrowed her eyes in confusion. Am I imagining things? Why does it sound so familiar? She turned in the direction of the voice and saw a familiar figure kneeling on the ground. He was clutching at his stomach in pain as he inhaled sharply.

It's him?

It's Sean! I can't believe it's him! Why is he here? And was it a coincidence that he appeared in time to save me?

Before she could process anything else, she saw a thug raising his fists toward Sean. "Watch out!" she warned.

If Sean had taken the blow, he would have passed out without a doubt.

Thankfully, Sean ducked in time to avoid the thug's punch. Then, he stretched out his legs and swept forward, causing the thug to trip.

The thug fell on his head and groaned in pain, unable to get up anymore.

The other thug roared angrily and swung his fists at Sean.

This time, Natalie wasn't sure if he could avoid the punch. She knew that he had probably exerted all his strength from throwing punches while defending himself. Besides, his stomach was still hurting from the hit he took moments ago.

She panicked as she watched the thug throw a punch at Sean. At that moment, she caught sight of a stone lying nearby.

She pursed her lips nervously as she mustered up some courage before grabbing the stone. Then, she smashed it onto the thug's head.

Bang!

The thug staggered backward and passed out.

Natalie didn't stop there, instead, she picked up the stone again and walked toward the other thug who was laying on the ground. She took a deep breath and smashed the stone on his head, too.

Consequently, the thug passed out as well.

Sean was stunned when he saw Natalie in action. He was surprised by her tremendous courage and decisiveness.

Oh my, this is exactly why I fell for you!

Sean chuckled as he curled his lips.

Natalie turned when she heard him chuckle. Yet, before she could say anything, her knees gave way and she collapsed to the ground.

Sean quickly rushed to her side and caught her before her body hit the ground. "What's wrong?"

Natalie did not answer him but merely blinked a few times before she fainted.

Sean furrowed his brows in concern as he quickly picked her up and headed toward his car. Once they were both in the car, he called his assistant to take care of the thugs before speeding to the hospital.

Sean looked at Natalie who was laying quietly in the ward. "Is she going to be alright?" he asked the doctor.

"She's fine, just a little anemic due to her pregnancy. Furthermore, she passed out because her epinephrine levels were high. I guessed it must have been the shock she had gone through. She'll be fine as soon as she wakes up," the doctor answered.

Sean let out a breath of relief as his heart sank at the same time.

She's pregnant? I can't believe it!

His eyes fell upon her stomach which was still flat, but the thought of the baby that was growing within got him to narrow his eyes as a dangerous gleam flashed across them.

"Doctor, is it possible to get an abortion?" Sean asked suddenly.

The doctor was stunned. "Sir, are you sure you don't want the baby?"

Sean nodded, "My wife and I weren't planning to have a child anytime soon. This child was an accident, so…"

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The doctor pondered for a moment and replied, "Yes, it's possible as the child is barely two months. But I'd advise you to discuss this matter with your wife first before you make the final decision."

"There's no need for that. As I said, we don't have plans for a child at the time being. So..."

Before he could convince the doctor to agree to the abortion procedure, Natalie groaned and her eyelashes fluttered. It was a clear sign that she was going to be awake at any moment.

A flash of disappointment was seen in Sean's eyes before it disappeared quickly. He smiled at the doctor and said, "Seems like my wife is waking up soon. You can leave now, thank you."

"Alright." The doctor nodded and left the ward.

Natalie woke up the moment the doctor left.

She rubbed her temples and opened her eyes to see a white ceiling ahead.

Then, she heard a voice that greeted her warmly. "I see that you're awake now."

She turned and saw a familiar, handsome face.

Natalie pursed her red lips as she looked at Sean warily.

He noticed it and his eyes dimmed. However, he quickly put on a smile. "What's with the look? Are you afraid of me?"

Natalie did not answer him, but sat up and edged away from him to create some distance between them.

"Mr. Sean, were you the one who sent me to the hospital?"

Sean grabbed a chair and sat down. "Yeah, it was me. You passed out, remember?"

"Thank you. And thank you for saving me back there." Natalie bit her lip.

Although I really don't like him and I'm even scared of him, I do have to admit that if he didn't appear in time, I would have been...

Natalie trembled at the thought of it and subconsciously hugged herself.

"Here, have some water. It might help you calm down." Sean handed her a glass of warm water.

She stared at the glass of steaming water and hesitated.

Sean laughed. "What? Are you afraid that it might be poisoned?"

She eyed him and said nothing.

Sean was not upset, instead, he smiled wider. "Don't worry. If I meant to poison you, I wouldn't have saved you back there nor would I have sent you to the hospital. So just drink with ease."

Natalie bit her lower lip and pondered on his words before taking the glass of water in hand. "Thank you," she said.

"Don't mention it." Sean waved his hand.

Natalie took a sip of water and instantly felt better. She could feel the warm water trickling down her throat and into her stomach which helped cast away the chills she was feeling moments ago. Similarly, her pale face gradually regained some color.

Sean looked at her with smiling eyes as she slowly calm down.

However, Natalie felt uneasy from his stares. She slid into her covers and changed the topic. "Mr. Sean, may I know why you are here?"

"I have some business to take of," Sean answered vaguely. Natalie caught signs that he didn't want to go into details about his trip here, so she didn't probe further.

Both Natalie and Sean fell into an awkward silence.

Moments later, they heard a knock on the door.

Sean turned and called out, "Come in."

The door was pushed open and a man walked in. "Mr. Sean, I've gotten rid of the two thugs."

Natalie tightened her grip around the glass when she heard about the thugs.

Sean noticed her reaction but continued, "What did you do?"

"Those thugs were recidivists over here and no one dared mess with them so no police reports were filed. Similarly, the police had an ignorant attitude toward this matter. So, I brought the thugs to the police station and donated some supplies to them. The police agreed to keep them locked behind bars until the day they die." the assistant replied.

This was how the police force in western countries worked.

Most of the police officers in western countries were very laidback. As long as no one files a police report, the police officers wouldn't budge even if they witness a robbery before their eyes.

However, if one files a police report and bribes them, the police would gladly punish the criminals with severe penalties.

"Are you satisfied with the results?" Sean looked to Natalie.

She relaxed slightly and loosened her grip around the glass. "Yes. Thank you, Mr. Sean." She nodded.

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"So, how are you going to repay my kindness?" Sean leaned in.

Natalie backed away instinctively and frowned at his sudden question.

Repay you? Well, of course I would. But I'm not going to let you decide after what happened last time.

"Let me treat you to dinner then, Mr. Sean," she suggested after some time.

I really can't think of anything else besides treating him dinner.

Natalie assumed that he would object to the idea and asked for something else as a form of repayment.

To her surprise, he agreed to her proposal.

Natalie's jaw dropped when she heard his reply.

"Are you very surprised?" Sean chuckled.

"A little," Natalie replied in disbelief.

Sean seemed to be in a good mood as he laughed heartily.

"I was going to propose something else, but I'm pretty sure you won't agree to it. Thus, I decided to settle on dinner." Natalie smiled awkwardly at him and didn't say anything else.

Sean stood up and said, "Alright, I'll leave you to rest. I have to settle some matters, but I'll come back before dinnertime."

Natalie hummed in acknowledgment and watched as he turned to leave.

He stopped in his tracks when he arrived at the door. He seemed to remember something as he turned to face her. "Oh, I heard that Shane's been looking everywhere for me. You won't tell on me, would you?"

"No, I won't." Natalie shook her head solemnly.

I would have informed Shane without a doubt if I didn't meet those thugs or get saved by him. Since he saved my life. I won't turn on him this time. Nonetheless, I would definitely tell Shane the next time.

"Great." Sean grinned and left.

After he left, Natalie was left alone in the ward.

She relaxed and leaned back into her pillow.

To be honest, I've always been afraid of Sean. I have to be on high alert every time we're alone. Or else, I'd fall easily into his trap.

Thank goodness he didn't do any harm to me this time. But I still wouldn't allow him to choose his ideal form of repayment like the last time even if I owe him.

I wonder if he's changed or if he's planning something in the dark?

Natalie lowered her gaze as she couldn't understand Sean's intention. Soon enough, she gave up but didn't let her guard down.

Whatever it is, I'll stay far away from him after dinner. I can't be with him for too long if I want to stay out of trouble.

Just when she was lost in her thoughts, her phone rang.

She was pulled back to reality and quickly picked up the call. It was Sally.

"Nat, where are you? Why aren't you home yet?" Sally asked, worry evident in her tone.

Natalie smiled. "I'm at the hospital. What's up?"

"What? The hospital?" Sally repeated loudly.

"Yeah." Natalie nodded.

"What's wrong, Nat? Why are you in the hospital? Is there something wrong with the baby? Which hospital are you at? I'm coming over right now." Sally headed toward the door of the villa as she asked.

Natalie caressed her belly and thought to herself. I don't feel any discomfort. So I guess my baby is fine even during the time I passed out.

"You don't have come, the baby's fine. I merely passed out on the streets and someone rushed me to the hospital," Natalie explained.

Natalie had no intention to tell Sally about her encounter with the thugs, lest the latter get worried.

There would be serious consequences if Sally unintentionally told Shane.

"Do you know why you passed out?" Sally asked, her worry dissipating when she heard Natalie's steady tone.

Nonetheless, she still had some doubts behind the reason why Natalie fainted.

A hint of guilt flashed past Natalie's eyes. "Perhaps I've overworked myself for the past few days. Anyway, is there something you would like to tell me? "Oh yeah," Sally answered. "An old woman came by the villa and wanted to meet you. But I told her to come back another time since you weren't around and sent her away."

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"An old woman?" Natalie asked curiously. "What did she look like?"

"She had a mole on her face. She was also dressed in a flashy style," Sally described as she recalled the old woman's appearance.

The corners of Natalie's mouth tugged upward and she instantly knew who it was. She held her forehand in her hand. Feeling dumbfounded, she said, "Sal, was that old woman called Mercede?"

"Yes! That's it. That's her name." Sally slapped her forehead. "Oh man, I swear I remembered her name when she introduced herself the second time. I guess my memory's not as good, huh? I'm lucky to have you remind me of her again. Say, how'd you know her name was Mercede? Have you met her by any chance?"

"My mentor's name is Mercede, remember?" Natalie replied.

Sally's jaw dropped. "Oh of course! How could I forget? So she's your mentor, huh?"

"Yup." Natalie nodded. "I told her where I was staying when I came here for my competition. She told me she'd meet me, but I didn't think it would be so fast."

Mercede was one of the judges in the final round of the international competition. Hence, Natalie was surprised that Mercede came to visit her.

"I'm sorry, Nat. I didn't realize that she was your mentor. I would have invited her in if I knew that..." Sally said apologetically. "That's okay. I'm sure it's going to be fine. I'll just give her a call later."

"Alright." Sally nodded.

Natalie quickly dialed Mercede's number once she hung up the call with Sally. I wonder why she's here at such an early time. Shouldn't she be attending some high-class designer gathering?

Yet, Mercede didn't pick up.

Natalie wasn't worried that Mercede was in danger just because the latter didn't pick up her call. After all, she was a top-notch designer that was constantly surrounded by bodyguards. Hence, Natalie doubt she would be in any sort of danger.

She must be caught up with something, that's why she didn't pick up my call.

Natalie decided to text Mercede next.

She'll reply once she sees it.

In the evening, Natalie and Sean met at a hotel for dinner.

Natalie did not request a private room and instead opted for a seat in the main dining area.

Although it'll be a little noisy and crowded with people, at least I would be safe. This way, I don't need to worry about what Sean would do to me. I'm way too scared to stay in a private room with a crazy guy like him.

Sean seemed to guess what she was thinking. "Are you really that afraid of me?" He rested his cheeks on his hands and asked.

Natalie's lips twitched. "Of course, who wouldn't be afraid of someone who drags people off a cliff with them?"

"So you're still hung up on what happened last time, huh?" Sean laughed.

"I'll never forget what happened last time." Natalie took a sip of water and continued, "Besides, that, I'm your cousin-in-law. So it's best if you address me by my full name."

Sean ignored her as he stared deeply into her eyes. "But I prefer calling you Nat."

Natalie secretly rolled her eyes and decided to drop the subject.

Forget it, he's probably never going to listen to me. I know I'm going to be the one who gets mad at trying to correct him in the end.

Sean was a little sad that Natalie didn't intend to argue back. He lifted the wine glass and began to twirl it. "So, how have you been? I heard you're going through a rough patch with Shane and you're even considering filing for a divorce."

Natalie looked up to meet his eyes. "Wow, I'm impressed at how much you know about us, Mr. Sean. It seems that you've been very well-informed despite being away."

"Shane's looking everywhere for me and I don't want to get caught. It's only natural for me to keep an eye on him as well. It isn't a surprise that I know all of this." He smiled.

"Perhaps you also know the reason behind our conflict, then?" Natalie fixed her eyes on him.

Sean's gaze darkened as he took a sip of wine and answered, "Of course I do. It's because of my uncle and aunt's death."

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"Well, since you know about this, then you should also know that Shane had found the culprit responsible for his parent's death. It's your dad, am I right?" Natalie asked. "Yea, I do. Shane went crazy some time ago as he tried to bring down my father's business until he was bankrupt. My father's reputation was also greatly tarnished. How could I not know?" Sean responded calmly. Natalie placed her utensils down. "Aren't you afraid that he might strike you next?"

"Why should I?" Sean laughed.

"Shane will destroy your entire family, you know?" Natalie answered.

The smile Sean had on his face was instantly wiped away at that. He recalled the good memories he once shared with Shane as a hint of nostalgia flashed before his eyes and disappeared. "From the moment my father made that decision, I knew that our families would no longer be the same. It would either be him or us who's going to face the end. But I'm prepared for it, so why should I be afraid?"

Speaking of which, Shane's parents treated me like their own. Dad would always stay out late as he indulged in women while Mom would be on the hunt to catch him. Hence, Shane's parents took me in and cared for me like their own son. If I knew what my Dad was going to do, I would have stopped him.

But it's all too late now...

"So you're ready to face what's coming for you?" Natalie stirred her soup.

Sean smirked. "Yes. But there's one thing you should know."

"What is it?" Natalie stared at him.

"While it's true that my father did hire someone to hit Shane's parents with a car, there's actually another culprit behind this murder." Sean's eyes glinted.

Natalie's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

Another culprit? Does that mean Sam wasn't the only one responsible for the death of Shane's parents?

"That's right. It is exactly what you think it is." Sean leaned back as he watched Natalie's stunned expression.

"How can I trust you?" She clenched her fists.

"It's doesn't matter if you believe me or not as I'm just letting you know. Back then, someone used Shane to lure his parents to that road so the men my father hired could complete their task easily," Sean explained and took a sip of wine.

Natalie's heart was racing. The dining area was rather noisy, yet she could clearly hear her heartbeat pumping loudly.

"Who was it?" Natalie swallowed.

Sean looked at her and shrugged. "I won't tell you who that person is. You'll need to find that out on your own. The only thing I can tell you is that it's someone you least expected it to be."

Someone we'd least expect? Urgh, I don't understand what this means. Natalie pursed her lips in frustration.

I hate it when he leads me on like this. I'm trying so hard to resist the urge of smacking him.

Natalie took a deep breath to suppress the urge to hit him and scowled. "Then why are you telling me all this? You could have stayed silent about it."

'Why?" Sean adjusted his glasses. "Perhaps I thought it was unfair that Shane's only taking his revenge on us while the other culprit lives a free life."

"I see." Natalie curled her lips. "If so, why don't you just tell me who the person is. That way, Shane could have his revenge on that person, too. It would balance things out between you two."

"I can't do that. After all, I planned to watch you both slowly find your way to the culprit. It'd be a pleasant thing for me to witness." Sean smiled devilishly.

Natalie secretly rolled her eyes again and decided to ignore him.

Meanwhile, Jessie was walking out of a private room and was about to leave the hotel with an older man in hand when she caught sight of Natalie.

She panicked and instinctively let go of the man's arm. She didn't want Natalie to spot her with the man.

"What's wrong, babe?" The older man frowned and was displeased with Jessie's evasive actions.