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After all, she felt that it would be too awkward to continue speaking as if she were giving him a monologue.

Thankfully, they arrived at the kindergarten in no time.

The two kids hopped onto the car with merry smiles as they greeted, "Daddy! Mommy!"

"Daddy, Mommy. Why are you guys so late today? You picked us up half an hour later than usual," Connor asked while looking at his smartwatch.

Sharon hadn't been paying attention to the time, so she hadn't realized that her parents were late. Now that her brother had blatantly pointed it out, she mirrored his sentiments and nodded enthusiastically.

Natalie cast an apologetic look at her kids. "I'm really sorry. Daddy was a little busy at work today, so we got here late."

At once, the kids nodded and let out an understanding hum.

Then, Connor spoke up, "Daddy doesn't have to pick us up if he's busy. He should focus on working hard."

"Mmm-hmm!" Sharon nodded in agreement.

A bittersweet feeling arose in Shane, curdling uncomfortably in his chest as he looked at the thoughtful children through his rear-view mirror.

He was happy to know that the children cared greatly for his well-being and career.

Yet, he felt bitter because he had no idea how he would face the children if Natalie's mother was truly responsible for his parents' death.

"Shane?" Natalie's brows furrowed in concern when she noticed him spacing out again. Her worried voice hastened, "What exactly is wrong? Has something happened?"

"No," Shane snapped at her with his gaze still lowered. He put the car in gear and started driving after sprouting that one word.

Natalie's lips twitched at his harsh tone. She was undeniably hurt by how he refused to tell her what was wrong. Regardless, she decided against prodding any further.

In the backseat, the kids sensed something was off between their parents. They exchanged knowing looks with each other in silence.

Did Daddy and Mommy fight?

A deafening silence took over the car, and the atmosphere felt dense as the family of four made their way home.

Once the car pulled up in front of the villa, the two children heaved a sigh of relief.

There, Mrs. Wilson and Jacqueline stood by the villa's doors to welcome them.

"Mrs. Wilson!" The children pretended not to see Jacqueline and ran excitedly toward Mrs. Wilson instead.

At this, Jacqueline was surprisingly unbothered. She wasn't upset, nor did she bother paying attention to the children. Rather, her gaze was set on Shane and Natalie.

Delight smeared across her face when she caught sight of Shane's tautly clenched jaw and stormy eyes.

Shane is brimming with a dangerous aura. That means he must have seen the video!

But... Why hasn't he confronted or severed ties with Natalie yet?

Jacqueline's face twisted wryly at the sight of Natalie, who was offering to help Shane carry his briefcase.

The man obediently handed his briefcase to Natalie, much to Jacqueline's dismay.

Jacqueline pursed her lips, feeling aggrieved that the two were behaving as they normally did.

What the devil is going on?

Hasn't Shane seen the video yet? Why isn't he treating her with disdain?

Does he think the video is fake?

At this, Jacqueline gnawed so hard on her lip that she nearly drew blood.

If that video isn't enough, I'll have to find more evidence.

I'll do everything it takes to drive Shane and Natalie apart. Otherwise, it'll be a waste of that precious video that I've hidden for so many years.

After all, that video was...

Darkness flickered in Jacqueline's eyes. Soon, her thoughts were interrupted by Shane and Natalie, who approached her as one. She quickly flashed them a smile. "Shane, Natalie. Welcome home."

"Ms. Graham," Natalie acknowledged placidly.

Contrarily, Shane reacted with much more attentiveness. He had noticed Jacqueline's thin clothing and promptly asked, "Why aren't you putting on more layers for this chilly weather?"

Glee burst out in Jacqueline's chest as she tousled her wig and flashed a sickeningly sweet smile at him. Then she spoke in a honeyed voice, "I was in the living room where the heating is on. Plus, there wasn't enough time to put on another coat before coming here to greet you."

"Come on, let's all head inside." Nodding at her, Shane strode ahead for the villa.

Jacqueline was quick to strut behind him.

This time, Shane hadn't held Natalie's hand like he normally would. Rather, he entered the villa on his own.

Pleased with this, Jacqueline whipped around to cast a victorious grin at Natalie. Then she paced beside Shane, staking claim over him. Her voice came out like a purr, "Wait for me, Shane!"

It seems like he doesn't quite believe the footage. But at the very least, it's convincing enough to cause some damage to their relationship.

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Why else would he be so cold towards Natale?

It only confirmed Natalie's suspicions that Shane was acting differently around her.

With no clue of how or why it had happened, the woman felt lost.

Did I do something wrong? Have I done something to make him angry? Why else would he treat me this way?

Despite racking her brain to find a reason, Natalie still could not conclude what triggered the change in his behaviour. If anything, it only left her more puzzled than before.

Perhaps, it will be a better idea to confront him and ask about it in person.

With that thought in mind, Natalie mustered up her courage and marched into the villa.

After entering through the door, she spotted her two children sitting on the sofa watching television while Jacqueline used her cell phone in a corner.

Her eyes quickly scanned the room, but Shane was nowhere in sight. "Where's Daddy?" she asked her children.

"Daddy is in the study room," Connor lazily replied.

Acknowledging his response, Natalie headed up the stairs to look for him as planned.

Little did she know, Jacqueline was staring at her figure from the back with her lips tugged upwards into a smile.

Anyhow, Natalie soon stood outside the study room, where she cautiously knocked on the door.

"Come in," the man inside gruffly replied.

Pushing the door open, Natalie greeted, "Shane."

"What are you doing here?" Her husband's eyes darkened at the sight of her.

"I came to talk to you about something," she responded as she padded across the room towards him.

Unfortunately, Shane only pursed his lips and grunted, "What is it?"

"Let's talk about your attitude today." Natalie stared directly at his icy cold gaze and interrogated, "Shane, what happened? The way you treat me seems to have changed completely today. Did I do anything wrong to upset you in any way?"

"No," the man uttered.

What a lie. Frowning, she protested, "Your expression tells me that's not true. Shane, please tell me what on earth is going on. Help me understand the situation, so at least I can apologize to you."

She placed a hand over her aching heart.

It was torturous for her to play this guessing game, and she hated it.

"I already said nothing is wrong." Shane's voice was louder this time, and he abruptly stood up after he spoke.

"But..."

"No buts. Please show yourself out," he asserted while rubbing his temples.

Noticing how hostile he seemed, Natalie's lips quivered, and she reluctantly left the room.

As soon as she disappeared from his sight, Shane opened his drawer and took out a box of cigars. Lighting one up, he placed it in his mouth and began to take a long puff from it.

White thick smoke engulfed him, and he could barely make out his surroundings after a few puffs.

From the aura that he exuded, one could tell that he was feeling frustrated, irritable, and confused.

Time flew past, and he was almost done with his cigar when his cell phone rang.

Snubbing out his cigar, he picked up his cell phone to check who the caller was. It was Silas, probably calling to report on the investigation he had conducted. Shane's heart dropped as he feared to hear a conclusion that he desperately hoped was false.

If he did not answer the call, he would never know the authenticity of the video. He could pretend that it was a prank and resume his usual husband and wife relationship with Natalie.

Nonetheless, there still was a small voice in his head that urged him to uncover the truth. Pick up the call and make things clear!

After all, he had spent ten years investigating the truth behind his parent's death, so there was no reason for him to give up now.

At that instant, Shane felt torn between the two options. Like a yoyo, he went back and forth between the choices because he knew that his life would undergo some earth-shattering changes the moment he answered the call.

Should I pick it up?

Staring at the name on his cell phone screen, he swallowed nervously.

Minutes passed, and in the end, he decided to click the answer button. His obsession with learning the truth behind his parent's death outweighed his feelings for Natalie at this point.

"Hello?" Shane held his cell phone up to his ear.

"Mr. Shane," Silas greeted before the line went silent.

It only made Shane more nervous, and he gripped his phone tightly, his heart pounding fervently in his chest.

After a short pause, the nervous man broke the silence, "So, what did you gather?"

"Mr. Shane, the sender of the email was probably highly skilled in hacking. I could not track him down. However, I did manage to check the video. It was unedited. It's a real clip!" Silas emphasized the last sentence.

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After he revealed the shocking news, Silas lowered his head in anger.

Why is God so unfair? I can't believe Madam turned out to be Mr. Shane's enemy!

"Is that really true?" Shane's tone dropped an octave lower, and a terrifying expression appeared on his face.

Even though Silas was not there in person to see it, he could sense his boss' fury. He trembled at the thought of physically witnessing it but still spoke in concern, "Mr. Shane, are you alright?"

Not surprisingly, Shane remained silent and abruptly ended the call. Throwing his phone onto the desk, he covered his face with his palms in exasperation. All he felt at that point was disappointment and hurt.

Natalie had let him down.

For the past few days, he desperately prayed that she was not his enemy. Yet, the outcome still showed that he had made the wrong judgment.

He had married his enemy's daughter and also regarded her two children as his own. At the back of his mind, he even planned for them to be his successor of the Thompson Group.

Thinking back on it, he mentally cursed at himself for being so stupid.

How could he leave all of the Thompson family's assets in the hands of his enemy's descendants?

Ugh, Grandfather is equally as stupid as me! How could he take the daughter of a man, who knocked over my parents, as his goddaughter?

For all I know, maybe Yulia is having a good laugh at Grandfather right now. She must think the Thompson family is a joke.

His eyes turned red as he started to let out a bitter chuckle. Slowly, it turned into a burst of maniac laughter.

At that moment, someone knocked on his door again. "Mr. Shane, dinner is ready. You may dig in now."

Shane did not respond.

Puzzled, Mrs. Wilson called out, "Mr. Shane, are you in there?"

Once again, the man did not make a sound.

That was enough to worry his housekeeper. As she raised her hand to open the door and have a look, the door swung open, revealing Shane standing before her.

At the sight of him, Mrs. Wilson let out a breath of relief. "Oh, you're inside. For a moment there, I thought you went out. Mr. Shane, you may head downstairs for dinner now."

This time, Shane let out a soft sound to acknowledge her.

Mrs. Wilson, who did not sense anything out of the ordinary, headed down after him.

"Daddy," the two children downstairs cheerfully greeted upon seeing him.

If it had been any other day, Shane would have bent down to scoop one of them in his arms while patting the other child's head.

But this time, he avoided them, leaving the two children hanging as they stood rooted to the ground in surprise.

Flustered, Sharon looked to Shane and murmured, "Daddy?"

Even with her plea, the man did not respond.

Does Daddy hate me?

Unlike Sharon's simplistic thoughts, Connor had a darker theory.

Additionally, he caught a glimpse of disgust in his Shane's eyes.

He hates us!

Why? What mistake did we make?

The young boy blinked multiple times as he contemplated for a reason but to no avail.

At that moment, after Natalie came out of the bathroom, she saw Shane standing in front of her two children in silence. There was something off between the three of them.

"What's wrong? Why are the three of you just standing there?" she asked as she walked over to caress the children's heads.

Still keeping his silence, Shane shot her a cold glare before heading to the dining room.

A chill ran down the woman's spine, and she shuddered in fright.

When she finally regained her composure, she did not know what to say.

Why... did he give me that look?

"Mommy." Her two children tugged on her arms as she took a moment to process the situation earlier.

"What is it?" Natalie spoke with a smile on her face, despite the uneasy feeling that bubbled within her.

"Mommy, is Daddy in a bad mood? He ignored Connor and I earlier. When I signaled that I wanted a hug, he moved away," Sharon whined with a pout on her face.

Backing her up, Connor nodded and exerted, "Exactly! Mommy, he's acting strange. It seems like he hates us or something!"

"He hates the both of you?" Natalie was surprised to hear that.

He dislikes them?

How did that happen?

If I did something to upset him, it's alright if he vents it on me. Why did he have to drag the two children into it?

At that thought, Natalie felt anxious and troubled.

Patting the two children's heads, she forced a smile and reassured them, "Nothing is wrong. Daddy is probably tired, so he seems unhappy. He doesn't hate either of you."

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"Really?" Sharon perked up.

Her mother nodded and added, "Of course! Daddy loves you. There is no way he can dislike you."

Innocently, Sharon bought her lie and started giggling.

On the other hand, Connor kept his mouth shut, knowing better than to believe what his mother had said.

He could tell that Shane did not seem to like them at all; he could feel it in his bones.

From the corner of her eyes, Natalie spotted her son frowning and wondered what he was thinking.

She knew he had been a clever boy since a young age. Therefore, she did not doubt Connor's seriousness when he told her that there was something off about Shane.

But, it also meant that Shane did show his displeasure to them.

"Alright, let's go have dinner." Natalie took her children's hands in hers and walked towards the dining table.

No matter what happened, she wanted to talk to Shane about what made him upset.

Once they entered the room, Natalie saw Jacqueline and her husband talking.

Although she could not hear what they were chatting on, the woman was laughing while Shane's stoic expression seemed to have softened.

Even so, it did not bother Natalie. The thing that did disturb her was how Jacqueline was sitting at her spot.

In the past, the woman had done the same thing, claiming that she made a mistake. Regardless, Shane would stand up for her when she did not budge and instruct her to return to her original seat.

Little did she expect that Shane would ignore it this time around and even be in all smiles around her.

Natalie's eyes darkened as she watched the scene unfold before her.

For a split second, Jacqueline frowned, and a glint of glee appeared in her eyes. However, she covered it up quickly and sweetly greeted Natalie instead, saying, "Ms. Natalie, you are here"

Hearing that, Shane stopped conversing with Jacqueline and picked up his coffee mug to take a sip from it without sparing his wife nor children a glance.

Natalie's chest tightened.

While Sharon was oblivious to the tense atmosphere, Connor could tell that his father's attitude towards his mother had changed.

Usually, Shane would help Natalie pull out a chair to sit and carry his sister and him to their seats.

However, not only did he remain in his seat, he was treating them like they were invisible.

It was all Connor needed to confirm that Shane seemed to hate them.

Taking a deep breath, Natalie ignored her husband's cold treatment and brought her children closer to the table. She then turned to Jacqueline and said coldly, "Ms. Graham, you are sitting on the wrong seat."

She could tolerate Shane's behavior, but there was no reason for her to put up with Jacqueline's.

Jacqueline felt taken aback as she was not expecting Natalie to point it out. It even occurred to her that the woman would keep mum, given how cold Shane was acting to her.

Indeed, I've underestimated her.

"Ms. Natalie, can't you let me remain in this seat? It's a bother for me to get up and change it," Jacqueline suggested while batting her eyelids.

"No, I can't. That seat belongs to the lady of the house. Though you might be our guest, you should still show us some respect. Otherwise, you may rub off as someone with no manners." Staring indifferently at the other woman who threatened her position, Natalie did not hold back

Her daughter also pitched in. "Yes! That's Mommy's seat. Without her permission, no one else can take it."

Connor nodded in agreement too.

Instantly, Jacqueline's face turned a deep shade of red. She bit her lips and turned to Shane for help. "Shane, what do you think?"

"Return to your seat, Jacqueline," the man sternly ordered as he set his coffee mug onto the table.

Disbelief flashed across Jacqueline's eyes, but she quickly shook it off. Pretending to be unbothered by it, she stood up and muttered, "Okay, I'll return to my seat.

With that, she headed to the other end of the table and took her original spot in a pissed-off mood.

Minutes ago, when Shane came down, she could tell that there was a crack in Shane and Natalie's relationship from how they interacted. As such, she boldly took Natalie's spot, expecting the man to give up on shielding his wife.

To her dismay, he still defended Natalie, despite how distant and annoyed he seemed around her. Does he love her so much that it outweighs the hate he now feels for her?

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That thought alone made her look at Natalie with jealousy.

Natalie, who sensed it, narrowed her eyes, feeling amused at what had just happened.

She thought Jacqueline would know her boundaries better after she got together with Jackson.

Ah, I thought too highly of her. She's Jackson's girlfriend, but she still has the hots for Shane. Isn't she afraid that Jackson will find out?

Without exposing the thoughts in her mind, Natalie carried her children to their seats as Mrs. Wilson served the dishes.

No one talked throughout the meal, and the atmosphere in the dining room was eerily tense and silent.

Although Sharon wanted to speak up on several occasions, she refrained from doing so when she sensed the unpleasant vibe.

Shortly after dinner, Shane headed back to his study room for a meeting.

Meanwhile, Jacqueline sat in front of the piano and started to play a tune.

The song sounded cheerful, which seemingly reflected her happy mood.

Natalie had no idea why the woman would feel that way. The only reason she could come up with was how happy Jacqueline probably felt to see cracks in her relationship with Shane.

Tired of listening to the piano tune, Natalie headed upstairs to check up on her children instead.

Both of them were in their room, sitting on the floor mat playing with Legos.

"Connor, Sharon." Natalie walked over and sat beside them.

Instantly, her daughter straightened up. She crawled into her mother's embrace and hugged her neck tightly with her short arms. With a sad voice, she uttered, "Mommy, Daddy no longer loves me. After dinner, I asked him to tie my hair, but he ignored me."

It was the first time Shane had ever turned away her requests.

Natalie felt overwhelmed at that instant and could not comprehend his actions no matter how hard she tried to.

While listening to her daughter's rant, she only felt upset.

Not only was Shane hostile to her, but he also acted the same way towards Sharon.

Nonetheless, she had to put on a brave front for her daughter. With her lips tugged upwards, she comforted Sharon, "Didn't I tell you before dinner that Daddy is in a bad mood? That is the only reason for it."

"When will he feel better then?" Sharon innocently asked.

The questions surprised Natalie, who could not seem to utter a word of explanation.

As if on cue to save her, Connor placed the last Lego block on the toy house he built and assured his sister, "I'm sure he'll be back to his normal self soon."

"Really?" Sharon chirped.

Her brother nodded earnestly. "Yes. Mommy will pacify Daddy. Right, Mommy?"

Amused, Natalie pinched her son's nose and muttered, "You know it."

Connor lifted his chin proudly to look at his mother. "I also know that Mommy will not sit back and watch Daddy act like this."

"That's right." Natalie looked down and affectionately rubbed her children's heads.

As Connor said, she planned to talk to Shane and try to appease him.

After all, the four of them were a family, and they could not live their lives in such a tense state forever.

For about two hours, Natalie played with her two children in the room. Thinking that it was enough time for Shane to complete his work, she urged the two of them to head to bed.

The obedient children heeded their mother's advice and climbed into their beds, covering themselves with their blankets and shutting their eyes to sleep.

Before leaving the room, Natalie planted a kiss on their faces and turned off the lights.

She had just exited from the door when she spotted Shane walking over from his study room.

With a smile, she politely questioned, "Shane, do you happen to have some time to talk now?"

The man stopped in his tracks, and his voice was as cold as ice as he replied, "About what?"

"About the thing I brought up in the study room. I want to know what I've done so wrong that caused you to act so differently. Let me know, and perhaps, I could change it. Please don't keep it to yourself forever, okay?" Natalie sounded desperate, and her hand subconsciously reached up to her heart.

Natalie truly hated it when people hid feelings. By refusing to communicate, it tended to cause misunderstandings.

As they were a married couple, she only hoped that they were more upfront with each other.

Unexpectedly, Shane narrowed his eyes and hissed at her, "Change? What can you change?"

My parents are already gone. What on earth can she change?