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Silas nodded. "Yes. They said that Sean and Jacqueline had deliberately asked for them to appear before the two of you. Their motive is to let you all know that they are still in this city. Sean and Jacqueline even instructed them to appear at various transportation stations to trick you guys into thinking that they're leaving this place."

"A distraction, you mean?" Shane narrowed his eyes.

Silas gave a solemn nod. "That's right. According to them, as long as they appear at those locations, we'll adopt the relevant measures to capture them. After sounding us out a few times, Sean and Jacqueline decided to make the two imposters appear at the airport as an act to show that they were fleeing. That was all part of their plan. They figured we'd surely head over to capture them, but of course, in this case, our attention was diverted and we ended up catching the wrong target."

"So the real Sean and Jacqueline have seized the opportunity while we're catching the imposters and boarded the flight?" The look on Natalie's face turned a little grim.

Silas sighed. "Exactly. Because we've opened up every exit after catching the imposters and also asked Governor Stephen to withdraw the inspections. I'm afraid Sean and Jacqueline are no longer in this state by now."

Smack! Shane threw those documents onto the table. His face grew darker and grimmer than before.

Natalie was not faring any better either.

They could not believe they had let Sean and Jacqueline escape so easily.

That was, without a doubt, a mockery of them.

Nevertheless, they had a more critical issue at hand. With Sean and Jacqueline's departure, there was no way to locate them. That meant it would be difficult for Shane or Natalie to put up a defense against them.

"Shane..." Feeling worried, Natalie turned to look at him as she knew he must be burning with rage on the inside right now.

Sean and Jacqueline's escape was like a slap in their faces.

"I'm fine." Shane shut his eyes tight, stifling the raging emotions inside him. By the time he opened his eyes again, his gaze was evidently calmer than before.

"Expand the search. I want you to find out the headquarters of the organization behind Sean in the shortest time possible," Shane ordered as he stared straight at Silas.

Distressed, the latter lowered his head. "Mr. Shane, I'm afraid—"

"I'll ask Connor to work along with you," Shane interrupted.

Silas' eyes lit up at once. "Understood. We'll do our best and find them as soon as possible."

"Go on then." Shane gave a dismissive wave.

With that, Silas turned and left.

Natalie turned to Shane. "Don't you think it's not a wise choice to involve Connor in this? He's still a kid."

"He's very mature with his thinking, so don't treat him like an average child. Besides, he loves helping us. With Connor's participation, he can use his capabilities to help us locate and thereby exterminate Sean's organization. Without those forces behind him, it'll be easy for us to deal with Sean," Shane uttered.

Natalie sighed and nodded. "All right then. I got it. I won't stop you."

She used to forbid Connor's participation in the past as she reckoned he was still a child and should not get himself involved in the dirty work of grown-ups.

But Shane's words had reminded her that Connor was not an average kid.

In this technologically advanced world, complemented with Connor's help, it would be easy for Shane to locate Sean's organization and even exterminate them.

Most importantly, the faster they could get rid of Sean and his organization, the earlier Shane could get out of the possible risks and danger.

That way, it would mean that the two kids would not have to live their lives with their guards up constantly anymore.

"So what are we going to do with that two imposters?" Natalie pointed to the ground, indicating the two people they had held captive in the underground parking lot.

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Shane narrowed his eyes. "I'll get someone to recover their original looks before throwing them back to their country."

On the account the imposters were blinded by greed and that they did not do evil, Shane reckoned that repatriating them back to their country was an adequate punishment.

Natalie nodded in understanding and did not ask any further.

In the next few days, lives became more peaceful without Sean and Jacqueline's frequent appearances.

But that peace soon vanished as Natalie and Lina completed their designs.

As they were heading into the clubhouse to submit their blueprints, someone abruptly poured a bucket of iced water from upstairs, directly splashing onto the two of them.

The two let out a scream due to the extreme coldness and shock.

Yet, that was not all. The person from upstairs wasted no time before sending another bucket of iced water splashing down again, leaving both Natalie and Lina drenched. This time, even the folder in their hands could not escape the clutches and were soaked.

"Who did that?!" Lina hurriedly pulled Natalie to a side before raising her head furiously to find the perpetrator. Nonetheless, all she saw was a pair of hands holding onto the bucket, retracting inward from a window on the seventh floor.

Following that, the windows were shut tightly, leaving no way for Lina to catch a glimpse of anything.

Lina's face sank to a murderous look while she clenched her fists tightly. "Damn it! That person must've done it on purpose! I'll skin that person alive if I find out who it is!"

By then, her whole body was shaking in anger. Accompanied by her dripping wet hair and clothes, she looked utterly miserable.

Of course, Natalie was in a similar predicament. Pregnancy had made her loathe heat and as such, she was wearing thin clothes. After getting splashed by iced water twice, she was freezing to the point where her face went pale, her lips turned purple, and her whole body was shivering uncontrollably.

Seeing that, Lina came over worriedly. "Nat, let's head to the lounge first."

Natalie had her arms wrapped around her body as she muttered, "Okay."

Very soon, the two arrived at the lounge.

As they were at a clubhouse for fashion designers, it was easy for them to find extra clothing lying around.

Lina randomly grabbed two dresses for herself and Natalie to change into.

Despite feeling reinvigorated, they did not feel relieved because of that. Instead, the atmosphere grew even more somber.

Silence engulfed the entire lounge as they stared at their blueprints on the table before them.

Those once wonderful sketches of gowns and jewelry had now been reduced to scrap. The colors had blended into a whole pool of mess, and it was possibly the most agonizing sight for any designer. "I'm sure that person did it on purpose!" After a short while, Lina broke the silence and slammed her fist against the table. Anyone could tell that she had packed so much strength in that punch from the way the table quivered.

Natalie pursed her lips. "You're right. Otherwise, there's no need for a second bucket. Someone must be targeting us."

"I'm sure they're coming at our blueprints." Lina was so furious that her eyes were bloodshot with anger.

She clearly remembered that she had protected the folder well in her arms when the perpetrator splashed the bucket of water for the first time.

During then, she had kept the folder well away from the water. She reasoned that was why the perpetrator had immediately followed with the second bucket of water, this time, aiming at the folder, thus explaining why she was much more drenched than Natalie.

"There's no doubt about it." Natalie squeezed her fists tight. "The host has mentioned that we have to meet the submission deadline, and it'll mean an immediate disqualification if we don't."

"You're saying the perpetrator is doing that to ruin our blueprint so that we'll get eliminated when we can't submit in time?" Agitated, Lina stood up and raised her voice.

Natalie nodded in response. "Yeah. There's only this possibility. We're only about ten minutes away from the submission deadline. We won't be able to rush out another drawing in time."

In truth, it was actually possible for her to do that. With the memory she had of her designs, all she had to do was to replicate them on paper again.

In contrast, there was no way Lina could do that. Not only were her jewelry designs extremely complicated, but there were also several components to it other than a necklace, a pair of earrings, a bracelet, and a ring. There was no way she could replicate her sketches again unless she had two hours.

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"This is too much! They've gone too far!" Lina was so furious that her whole body was shaking. Gritting her teeth, she added, "It must be Jayson!"

"Nope, not him. That's undoubtedly a lady's hand. Tina is right; many others want to get rid of us other than Jayson. After all, we're potential candidates for topping the competition. The others will gain a higher standing once they root us out." Natalie narrowed her eyes as she analyzed.

During the earlier stages of the competition, everyone was on good terms and no one enlisted any dirty tactics other than Jasmine.

But as they progressed into the finals, many began to reveal their cunning selves.

Though many times it was Sean and Jacqueline trying to sow discord, Natalie believed that there were contestants who would still act that way even without their instigation.

Essentially, no competitions in the world would ever progress amicably. It was more than normal for humans to harbor evil thoughts and even allow the darker side to take over their minds and ultimately resort to unscrupulous methods to achieve their wants.

"Let's wait and see. I won't let the culprits get away with it once I find out their identity," Lina muttered with bloodshot eyes.

Natalie rubbed her eyes in exhaustion. Oh gosh, troubles never come singly.

With Sean and Jacqueline's departure, she thought she could finally enjoy some peace. Yet, there came another series of problems for her.

"Nat, what do we do now? We'll really get eliminated if we can't provide our blueprints for submission!" Lina bit her lip as she directed her gaze at Natalie, hoping that the latter would have a solution to it.

Natalie patted Lina's hand as she assured, "Don't worry. Remember we've scanned our blueprints into the computer after completion for backup? I'll call Shane and ask him to send me the scans now. Then all we have to do is to go and print them out for submission."

Hearing that, Lina calmed down and put on a smile on her face. "That's great! I almost forgot about that. Hurry, Nat. Call Mr. Shane now. I can't wait to see the reactions of the culprits! I'm sure they'll be shocked to see that we can submit our works on time!"

They knew that the culprit would surely have a change in expression as long as their motive was not achieved.

All they had to do was to be attentive to everyone's expression to find the answer.

Natalie hummed in response and fished out her phone to call Shane.

Meanwhile, Shane was at the villa playing with the two kids. Upon receiving Natalie's call, he immediately walked to the balcony to answer it. "Hello?"

"Shane, go to my computer and look for a folder that I've saved as backup. There should be a couple of files that I added last week. Send them to me," Natalie said hastily.

Sensing her eagerness, Shane frowned. "What happened? Why do you sound like you're in a hurry?"

"Don't make me mention it. Lina and I just..." she briefly reiterated the situation earlier to Shane.

Hearing Natalie's illustration, Shane became visibly grim. Even his body was exuding a chilling aura.

The man remained silent. Natalie knew he must be burning with rage regarding what she had just shared with him. "All right, Shane. Don't lose your temper now. Hurry and send me those files; we don't have much time left."

"Okay." Shane set his phone aside and strode to the master bedroom to work on Natalie's request.

A few moments later, Natalie responded with a smile, "Great, I've received them. We have to hurry and get them printed for submission. That's all for now. Bye!"

She signaled Lina with an "okay" gesture as she concluded the call. The two then rushed out of the lounge to look for an office with a printer.

At this moment, in the conference room, the host lifted the microphone and asked, "Anyone else wants to submit?"

There were only two minutes left before the submission deadline.

All the designers shook their head in response.

Turning to look at the two empty seats at the neighboring table, Tina looked a little worried.

That's odd. Why isn't Mrs. Thompson here yet? Could it be that she has left after the submission?

Meanwhile, a female costume designer took a glance at her watch before shifting her gaze to the door. Seeing that there were no movements, she heaved a sigh of relief and curled her lips up into a weak smirk.

Seems like Natalie won't be able to submit in time. Without her and her friend, I'll stand a higher chance of winning first place.

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Just as that female designer was about to burst out laughing, a commotion came from the direction of the door. In the next second, Natalie and Lina ran into the conference room, panting heavily.

"Hold on. We haven't submitted yet," Lina anxiously exclaimed as she had her arms propped on her knees.

At the sight of the two of them, the host furrowed his brows. "Why are you guys so late? Where's your blueprint?"

"Here." Natalie handed the folder to him.

Upon collecting it, the host placed it above the stack of other submitted folders. "I advise you guys to come earlier in the future, instead of coming at the last minute. You'll get eliminated if you aren't as lucky as today. Understand?"

"Got it." Natalie and Lina both nodded their head in acknowledgment.

Luckily, they had arrived at the last minute.

In the crowd below the stage, the female designer's smile froze in place upon seeing the appearance of Natalie and Lina. Her widened eyes were full of disbelief.

What left her even more stupefied was when Natalie submitted the folder.

How did things turn out like this? I'm sure their folder has got drenched. Technically, that'll ruin their blueprints too. How did they still manage to submit in time?

The female designer's body started trembling slightly, and her face turned pallid.

At that point, Lina was already sizing up the crowd. What caught her eyes was a female designer whose expression was completely off.

In that split second, Lina knew who the perpetrator was.

"Nat." Lina tugged Natalie at her sleeve. "I found it. It's her!"

Lina tilted her head in the direction of that female designer.

Natalie cast a stern gaze in the same direction. "It's Julian?"

Julian was a designer from an impoverished country in Northern Epea. Perhaps because of her lack of confidence in her background, she had an aloof personality. She had barely mingled with the others, not even during her time in Team A.

Despite so, Natalie had a deep impression of her, mainly because she was a talented designer. Moreover, she was good at combining elements of her country's costumes with modern fashion. With time to come, it was no doubt she would be the first Smealander to become the world's top designer.

It was a pity such a talented and capable lady like her would be consumed by her evil thoughts and ultimately even resort to such despicable means.

Natalie shook her head and let out a sigh at the thought of that.

Lina asked, "What's wrong?"

"I'm just feeling regretful that there'll be one less new designer in the fashion design industry." Natalie's gaze was still fixated on Julian as she lamented.

Regardless of Julian's talents and capabilities, she had chosen to employ sneaky acts, proving her character as a person. Since that was so, all she could do was accept the consequences that the fate of her career and achievements would only come thus far.

Lina pouted. "What's there to be disappointed about? She chose that path, and since that's her choice, she'll have to bear the consequences."

"You're right." Natalie let out a weak smile.

Lina continued, "So, Nat, how are you going to deal with her?"

Just as Natalie was about to say something, the host's voice sounded through the microphone. "All right, since everyone has submitted their works, that'll be all for today. I look forward to seeing your finished products in a week."

Upon finishing his statement, the host trotted out of the conference room.

Likewise, the designers all stood up and prepared to leave as well.

That was especially the case for Julian. Among the crowd, she was the first to leap up from her seat and rush toward the exit even before she stood steadily. All she wanted was to escape from this place as soon as possible.

In truth, she figured Natalie and Lina had found out the culprit of the water splashing incident when she noticed how they glared at her multiple times earlier.

Hence, she did not want to stay there any longer. She ran as fast as she could toward the conference room door as she was afraid that they might do something to her later.

Lina stomped her foot in rage after seeing the fleeing Julian. "Nat, look! She's trying to escape!"

Natalie narrowed her eyes. "Don't worry. There's nowhere she can escape."

Unlike Sean and Jacqueline, Julian was not as capable and influential. Natalie believed there was no way she could escape and hide from the eyes of the others.

It was no wonder why Natalie could appear nonchalant about Julian escaping for now since capturing her was an easy feat.

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Seeing Natalie's calm appearance, Lina gradually loosened up. "We'll let her run away first then. It's nice to play such games at times too."

Natalie only smiled and said nothing.

Just as they finished talking, they saw Julian retracting her pace in fear. The crowd behind her also followed suit.

"What's going on?" The puzzled Lina straightened her back.

Natalie shook her head, expressing how she was clueless about the situation similarly.

But soon, they knew what was happening.

Just as Julian thought she could successfully get off with it, she saw several big-built bodyguards before her along the corridor outside the conference room. They appeared extremely brutal and unfeeling.

Before the row of bodyguards was an authoritative-looking man. The man was emanating an indescribable sense of oppression and dominance that left Julian so intimidated that she could barely breathe.

Of course, she recognized that man. It was Natalie's husband, Shane.

At that moment, Julian's mind became clear as day. Natalie must've complained to her husband. That's why he's here with his men.

And because she figured there was no way she could escape, she could only retreat into the conference room.

"Nat, it's Mr. Shane." Seeing Shane and several bodyguards, Lina was thrilled as she held onto Natalie's hand. "Mr. Shane must have specially come here with his men after finding out that it's Julian."

Lina's grip grew a little too intense that Natalie felt a dull ache in her hand. But judging how delighted the former was, she ultimately left her to it.

After Shane's bodyguards surrounded the entrance and made sure no one, not even a fly, could enter or exit, Shane then cast his gaze at Natalie.

Natalie walked over. "Because of Julian?"

Shane nodded. "But not exactly. It's also because of other people who are up to no good."

As he said that, he swept his cold gaze across the designers in the room.

Some designers instinctively lowered their heads after exchanging gazes with his icy glares. Some, on the other hand, appeared as cool as a cucumber.

Watching those designers' reactions at one side quietly, Shane tried to etch every face of those who had lowered their heads in his mind. He wanted to do a check on them later.

He believed those had something up their sleeves; otherwise, they would not look guilty.

Perhaps they had not taken any action, but in essence, harboring evil thoughts meant they had the intention.

"Mr. Shane, what happened? Who offended Madam?" Catching wind of the news, the host hurriedly rushed over from his office.

When he saw the grand spectacle, he instantly knew that some ignorant fools had offended Natalie again.

Everyone in the circle knew how much the only king of luxury products loved his dear wife.

He could not bear to see her get bullied. Anyone who offended his wife would have to suffer his wrath.

As much as it sounded a little way too exaggerated, they were nevertheless still truths.

Moreover, Shane was also a sponsor, thus explaining why the host dared not take them lightly.

Lina laughed and gave Natalie a light nudge. "Nat, did you hear that? The host asked if anyone offended you. It seems like he's very experienced in handling such situations. As long as Mr. Shane makes his presence, it means someone has crossed the line."

Natalie rolled her eyes. "Go and hear what Shane has to say."

Lina, sensing that Natalie was slightly annoyed, fell silent and only nodded as a reply.

Right then, Shane was scanning through the crowd before finally pausing his gaze on the slightly trembling Julian.

Following Shane's gaze, the host looked over as well and understood at once. "Mr. Shane, she's the one?"

"My wife and her partner were here for submission this morning. But before they even got in, someone splashed them with two buckets of iced water. I guess that person wants to ruin their blueprints so that they'll miss the deadline and get eliminated," Shane replied placidly.

Hearing those accusations, the host became solemn. "Is that true?"

"Yes! That's why Nat and I could only rush over for submission at the last minute," Lina quickly chimed in.

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The host looked at Julian, whose face had turned utterly pale. "Mr. Shane, so was she the one who did it?"

"That's right. Even though the office had no surveillance camera, there was one in the corridor. I saw from the footage that she brought in two buckets of the same color that were filled with ice water. I've found the two buckets, and her fingerprints are on them," Shane uttered coldly.

The security footage and the fingerprints alone were enough to convict Julian.

The color drained from Julian's face as she sat desperately on the floor. She wanted to defend herself, but words failed her, as she was never good at speaking.

Especially when she noticed all eyes were on her, she felt even more nervous and humiliated.

"Mr. Shane, I got it. I'll handle her properly, and I won't disappoint you." The host cast an indifferent look at Julian.

Shane nodded slightly. "Okay. I'll leave her to you."

"Don't worry, Mr. Shane." The host pushed his glasses up slightly.

Shane cast a glare at all the designers and raised his voice the next moment. "So all of you saw what happened to Julian. Let this be a warning to everyone. Don't do such a thing just because of your greed. It is not worth risking your career and your country's reputation for this."

He paused momentarily before continuing, "I hope you keep my words in mind. If I find out someone who uses this against my wife or any other designers to win, I'll ban them!"

Upon saying that, he deliberately cast a glare at Jayson.

Jayson lowered his head, not daring to utter a word. He knew the warning was directed especially for him.

Shane turned to the host and ordered, "Take her away!"

The host nodded and escorted Julian out.

Julian could not think of an explanation to defend herself, so she remained silent all the while.

With that, she had no choice but to comply with the punishment.

After the fuss, all the other designers became extraordinarily silent.

Some of them who had bad intentions in mind gave up on their thoughts.

Meanwhile, the rest of them let out a sigh of relief, as they did not have to look over their shoulders for those who harbored ill intentions.

Shane's words had given them a sense of security.

"Nat, your man is so cool!" Lina praised while she grabbed Natalie's arm.

Natalie responded with a smile, "Yes, he is."

She recalled the time when she had just gotten back from overseas and Jasmine had accused her of stealing Isabelle's necklace. Even though Shane was not close with her at that time, he had stood up for her.

How could anyone not get attracted to a kind and just man like him?

"Okay. You guys may leave now." Shane waved toward the guards at the door, signaling them to make way.

But no one at the scene dared to leave before Shane.

Natalie sensed the awkward atmosphere and smiled faintly. She grabbed Shane's hand and said, "Shane, let's get out of here first."

Shane held her hand gently. "Let's go."

Upon saying that, they walked toward the door while Lina followed them.

It was only after the three of them left that the other designers felt relieved and began to leave.

In the car, Natalie cast a glance at the man beside her. "I didn't expect you would come here personally."

"My wife was getting bullied. Of course, I would have to show myself," Shane said while caressing Natalie's belly gently.

With that, Natalie felt a warmth in her heart. "Darling, you're so good to me."

"Do you only notice that now?" Shane cocked a brow and teased her.

Natalie leaned her head against his chest. "No, I've known it all along. You're the best husband in this world."

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Shane's lips curled into a genuine smile upon hearing the compliment.

Just then, his phone rang abruptly.

Natalie responsively retreated from his embrace.

Shane took out the phone and noticed it was from Silas. Without hesitation, he answered the call. "What is it?"

"Mr. Shane, the person in charge of the orphanage just called me and said that a family wanted to adopt Donald." Silas cut to the chase.

Shane narrowed his eyes. "Adopt Donald?"

"That's right." Silas nodded right away.

Natalie looked at Shane confusedly. "Shane, what's going on?"

"A family wants to adopt Donald," Shane responded briefly.

Natalie blinked her eyes in befuddlement. "Adopt? Donald's profile says he has a father. He shouldn't be on the list for adoption. Didn't the orphanage tell the adopting party about that?"

Shane asked Silas that question right away.

Silas started explaining, "The director has told the other party about that. But he also mentioned that Donald's father is currently in prison, and his father seems not to be interested in taking care of Donald even after he gets out. Thus, the director

hopes Donald can be adopted. That's why he included the latter's name on the list."

"How did the director know that Warren isn't planning to take care of Donald after he gets out?" Shane furrowed his brows.

Natalie was curious about that too.

Silas let out a long sigh. "A while ago, Donald desperately wanted to see his father, so the director brought him to the prison to visit Warren. The director initially hoped Warren could behave well in there and get out soon to take Donald away, but Warren rejected it. He..."

"Say it!" Shane's patience was running out.

Silas paused for a while and continued, "He said that Susan was dead, and he wouldn't get any of Harrison's property. The court also retracted the car and the house that Susan gave him because they were bought with Harrison's money. So Warren's broke now. He plans to get a new rich wife after getting out, so he considers Donald as a liability and doesn't want to take Donald with him."

Natalie's mouth twitched after she heard Silas' words. "How could he do that?"

She could not wrap her head around how Warren could treat his son so mercilessly.

Back in the hospital, she thought Warren liked Donald, but then she realized that money was more important than family in Warren's eyes.

Indeed. I've never heard him asking about Jasmine as well. Even Susan had asked about Jasmine, but Warren showed no concern at all. I should have known back then that he is a selfish person. It seems that money is the only thing that matters to him. He would not hesitate to trade family for wealth.

"Then what do you think? What should we do with Donald?" Shane asked Natalie.

Natalie rubbed her forehead gently. "Since Warren has no intention of raising him, we might as well let other people adopt

him. But the director should tell Donald about what Warren thinks. Then we should let Donald decide for himself, whether he wants to be adopted, or he wants to wait for Warren."

"Okay." Shane nodded slightly upon hearing that.

Just then, something came across Natalie's mind. "By the way, please ask Silas to check the background of the family that wants to adopt Donald. If they are bad people, don't let them adopt him. Even though I have no affection for Donald, as a mother, I wouldn't want to see a kid suffer."

That's the least I could do for Donald.

"You're a kind person." Shane caressed Natalie's hair gently.

Natalie smiled faintly. "So are you. I didn't even think about how to help Donald, but you did."

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Shane displayed a smile and told Silas what Natalie had said.

Silas nodded firmly. "I got it. I'll inform the director and the investigation team now."

"Okay," replied Shane.

Just then, Natalie held Shane's arm. "And please send the bodyguard to the mental hospital and tell Jasmine about it. After all, he's her brother."

"Sure," Shane replied without hesitation.

However, Jasmine was indifferent after she heard about it.

As a matter of fact, she did not love Donald at all.

Hence, she could not care less about Donald's future.

At the moment, the only thing she cared about was Jacqueline's whereabouts.

"Go back and ask your madam. When will Jacqueline be sent here?" Jasmine gave the bodyguard a death stare.

The bodyguard went back and told Natalie about that.

"So she still remembers."

"What?" Shane poured a glass of milk for Natalie.

Natalie took a sip of the milk. "When Jasmine was first sent into the mental hospital, I told her to hold in there and don't lose her sanity. I told her that she could take revenge against Jacqueline since Jacqueline was the one who made her go through the plastic surgery. But I didn't expect Jacqueline to escape, and we can't send her in there anymore. That's why Jasmine asked about it."

"I see. Just ignore her then," Shane uttered.

Natalie shrugged her shoulders. "Yes, there's no other way for now."

We have no idea where Jacqueline is right now, so we can only play dumb.

That night, the competition organizer informed them that Julian had been suspended and banned for three years.

It meant that Julian could not participate in any design competition for three years, or she would be blacklisted permanently.

As a matter of fact, her current situation was already equivalent to getting blacklisted, since she had been banned by National Design Association.

National Design Association represented the highest authority in the industry. Any designer punished by the former would be left with a stain on their resume. No one would want to hire an unethical designer.

Some famous apparel companies and fashion magazines would even blacklist such unprincipled designers, and that signaled the end of their careers.

In other words, even after the three-year ban, no competition organizer would be willing to accept Julian's participation. Regardless of how talented she was, she could no longer develop an outstanding career. The best she could do was become a tailor or a mentor like Calanda.

That was why designers had to be careful with everything they did, as they could not afford to make an irreversible mistake.

"Julian is such an irresponsible person. Her act not only brought harm to herself but also her partner. Abby called me just now, and she was utterly pissed. She swore she would make Julian pay for what she did." Lina brought over a plate of fruits and sat down beside Natalie.

Natalie, who was checking the dress fabrics, let out a long sigh. "That couldn't be helped. They're partners, after all. A jewelry designer can't stand alone without a costume designer."

"That's why Abby was so pissed, as she has done nothing wrong. She's been aiming for the top three. But now, she got eliminated in the fourth place in such a manner. I wouldn't be able to accept it too if I were her." Lina shook her head while eating a slice of watermelon.

Just then, Natalie was about to carry the fabrics and place them on the rack.

Lina immediately put down the plate of fruits and went over to help Natalie. "Let me do it. You're pregnant. You shouldn't be doing such heavy work."

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"Okay. Thanks a lot." Natalie smiled with gratitude as she walked over to sit down.

Lina waved her hand casually. "No problem."

She grabbed the fabrics and started putting them onto the rack. "The citizens of Abby's country seem exasperated by this incident. Some radical parties even went to the embassy of Julian's country and created a fuss."

"I heard Abby's the best jewelry designer in her country. Is that right?" Natalie questioned abruptly.

After arranging all the fabrics, Lina walked toward Natalie. "That's right. Abby's country is famous for all kinds of diamonds and crystals, and it's also an origin of jewelry designers. But after the international jewelry design industry starts to develop, her country starts to lose fame until Abby appears again. She is defined as the genius of the decade in her country."

"So her country had high expectations for her." Natalie grabbed her chin while speaking.

Lina nodded. "Yes. They hoped Abby could bring back their honor as the top jewelry design country, and Abby desired to get the champion for her country's sake too. But now it's all ruined. The citizens are outraged, and the situation might even escalate into a diplomatic problem between the two countries."

"That's why one should never do something like this. It'll be a disgrace of a lifetime." Natalie furrowed her brows.

"Indeed." Lina ate another piece of fruit. "Julian's country has become a laughingstock of the world because of her. All the citizens detest her. I bet she won't dare to go back to her country anymore."

"I guess that's none of our business. All right. The fabrics are settled. Let's start making the dress tomorrow. I'm heading back first. I'm a little tired." Natalie rubbed her waist.

Lina waved at her. "Go ahead. A pregnant woman should get more rest. I still need to deal with the obsidians given by my mentor. I need to send them to the workshop tomorrow."

"Okay. See you then." Natalie supported her waist while standing up and left the temporary workshop.

Shane specially arranged this place for her, Lina, and Sally. He connected several rooms on the third floor of the villa and turned them into a workshop.

When Natalie returned to her room, Shane was on the phone with someone. Upon seeing Natalie coming in, he ended the call after giving some instructions to the person on the other end of the line.

"You're finally back. What took you so long?" Shane walked toward her and helped her to the bed.

In fact, he did not have to help her, as she was only six months into her pregnancy.

Nonetheless, Shane was worried about her, so he would support her whenever he was by her side.

Natalie was touched and, at the same time, amused by his gesture.

"I had a talk with Lina about Julian and her partner." Just then, something came across Natalie's mind. She sat upright and continued, "By the way, did Sean and Jacqueline instigate Julian to do such a thing? Or did she do that of her own accord?"

"She did it willingly. She admitted that someone approached her, but she didn't comply. She had been planning to use the illegal method to get rid of her competitors in the final round," Shane responded, utterly displeased.

Obviously, he detested someone immoral like Julian.

Natalie let out a sigh. "It looks like she's a terrible person then."

If someone instigated her to do so, maybe she was only weak in mind. But since it was her initial intention, she deserved to be punished.

"I wonder if other designers would still dare to make such moves after Julian's case this time." Natalie expressed her concerns, rubbing her belly gently.

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Shane poured her a glass of water. "Don't worry about it. I suppose most of them are intimidated after seeing Julian as an example. But of course, some stubborn ones might still try to get their ways with it."

It seems impossible to get rid of these problems altogether. After all, some people would be too obsessed with the victory that they lose their morality.

Natalie understood that perfectly. The only thing we can do is to be cautious.

Thus, after Natalie made the Galaxy Dress, she used other fabrics to make another dress. Then she put the authentic Galaxy Dress in the safe, and she put the other dress in the garment bag that was labeled Galaxy Dress. It was to fool those with evil intentions. Meanwhile, Lina also took her advice. She hid her jewelry well and made a fake from black glass and silver-plated white glass.

With that, they would not have to worry even if someone tried to steal their work.

Soon, it was time to announce the result.

In the dressing room, Sally's phone rang when Natalie was about to help her put on her makeup. Sally stood up and said, "Nat, my boyfriend's calling. I'll take it outside. I'll be back soon."

She exchanged a look with Natalie and Lina.

Natalie then nodded slightly. "Go on, but make it short."

"Okay," Sally replied with a smile, and she walked out with her phone in her hand.

A costume designer from the other side could not help but ask, "There's just half an hour left before the show. What if she comes back late? You wouldn't be able to make it in time."

"It's fine. She is the last one to go on stage. There should be enough time," Natalie responded.

The designer displayed a smile. "I see."

With that, she turned around and continued to work on her model.

All of a sudden, Lina stood up abruptly. "Nat, we're screwed! I forgot to bring something important."

"What is it? Is it really important?" Natalie asked.

Lina nodded anxiously. "Yes, we need it for the show."

"Then what should we do?" Natalie's face turned pale instantly.

The other designers in the room were left bewildered by that.

With that, Lina held Natalie by the hands. "Nat, I can't drive. Please drive me back. Our place is not far from here. We still can make it in time."

"But..." Natalie bit her lip, hesitating.

After pondering for a while, she eventually agreed.

As such, the two of them ran out of the room.

The room went into an uproar as soon as they left. Everyone laughed at them for making a silly mistake at such a critical moment.

If they get caught in a traffic jam or something, they will get eliminated from the competition.

Meanwhile, some did not think they would be late, but still, they did not believe it was wise to leave the place at the last minute.

Tina was one of them.

Since they had already left, she could only pray for them to get back soon.

At that moment, the designer who had spoken to Natalie just now cast a sidelong glance at Natalie's garment bag and Lina's jewelry box. Her lips curled into a cunning smile.

A while later, when her model went to get changed, she suddenly reached out for the garment bag and jewelry box.

Half way, someone grabbed her hand forcefully.

The designer's heart skipped a beat as she thought she got caught in the act. But before she could open her mouth to apologize, a familiar voice sounded. "Do you want to steal Natalie's and Lina's stuff?"

The designer turned around and saw a smiling face. At that instance, she let out a sigh of relief. "It's you!"