

“Sort of,” Joyce nodded as she answered. “but we’re just one of the candidates for now.”

“That’s not bad!” Natalie clasped her hands. “Being chosen as the candidate signifies that the government recognizes our achievement!”

After all, the government would only provide various opportunities to the companies that it deemed capable.

With that, it would be easier for the companies to achieve even more breakthroughs in the future.

Joyce was also aware of it. She flipped her short hair as she added, “But still, the government selected quite a lot of apparel companies this time.”

“Oh?” Natalie wasn’t as excited as she asked solemnly, “How many are there?”

“About twenty companies. All of them are candidates,” Joyce answered and shrugged.

Natalie pursed her lips and said, “Twenty companies! Well, the competition will be intense. It appears that the government will organize a competition to decide the final grant winner.”

“Yup, I think so too.” Joyce nodded in response. However, she soon heaved a sigh and added worriedly, “However, there hasn’t been any news about the competition, but I’ll keep an eye on it. Hopefully, we will be the winner.”

Natalie chuckled and put her hand on Joyce’s shoulder. “Alright, don’t worry too much.

Regardless of the outcome, we won’t suffer any losses. Being one of the candidates means that the government wishes to support us. Even if we fail to get the grant, the government might provide us with other opportunities.”

“You’re right.” Joyce flashed her a relieved smile.

But a thought struck her the next moment, and she bit her lips. “Nat, I have to go overseas two days later. Since Stanley has completed the first phase of his treatment, I hope I can visit him.”

“Sure.” Since Natalie knew that Joyce was fond of Stanley, it was only natural that she was supportive of the latter’s decision.

Natalie hoped that Joyce and Stanley could gradually resolve the misunderstandings between them and officially become a couple. Apart from that, Natalie had another reason for helping Joyce.

Given that Stanley had loved Natalie in the past, she felt sorry for both him and Joyce. As such, she would feel a lot better if Stanley and Joyce could be together.

“Thank you, Nat.” Joyce wasn’t aware of Natalie’s intentions. As soon as the latter agreed to it, Joyce grinned and hugged her.

Natalie chuckled and pushed Joyce away gently. “Alright, we should continue working. By the way, I’ve to leave two hours earlier today.”

“Why so?” Joyce asked curiously.

“My mom will be here today, and I’ve to pick her up from the airport,” Natalie explained smilingly.

“Understood.” Joyce nodded in response.

Time flew by, and it was already evening. After leaving the company, Natalie drove to the airport to pick Yulia up.

She was on time, for Yulia’s plane landed a few minutes after she arrived at the airport.

Shortly afterward, Yulia, who dressed in black and wore sunglasses, came out with her luggage. From a distance, she could see Natalie in the crowd.

Given that Natalie was too eye-catching, many people couldn’t help staring at her as they passed by. On top of that, some youngsters even took photos of her secretly.

Although Natalie was aware of it, she didn’t mind and only smiled in response. After all, she was used to being in the limelight.

“Baby Girl,” Yulia shouted at Natalie and raised her hand as she came out.

Natalie turned around once she heard Yulia’s voice. Then, she sprinted toward her mother.

“Mom!”

The mother-daughter duo hugged for a while before they separated.

After putting her sunglasses on her collar, Yulia held Natalie’s face and scanned it. A moment later, she exclaimed, “Baby Girl, you actually put on weight!”

Natalie’s lips twitched upon hearing that.

Compared with the time when Yulia left, she was indeed a little chubbier this time.

How can I not become chubby when Mrs. Wilson cooks scrumptious delicacies every day!

“Alright, Mom. Let’s get into the car.” Natalie pulled Yulia’s luggage with one hand while holding her hand with the other as they walked out of the airport.

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Half an hour later, they arrived at the apartment.

Natalie took out her key card to open the door.

Pulling her luggage with one hand, Yulia followed Natalie into the house.

As soon as Yulia entered, she felt that something was amiss. Scanning the apartment with narrowed eyes, she placed her hand on the shoe rack.

Immediately, her hand was covered with dust and turned black.

Yulia’s face darkened instantly. She wiped away the dust on her fingers and asked, “Baby Girl, have you moved out?”

Natalie knew that Yulia would ask the question sooner or later. Hence, she lowered her head and hummed in response guiltily.

“Where have you moved to?” Yulia gazed at Natalie and asked, “Why did you move out all of a sudden? Also, since you’ve moved out, why didn’t you bring me to your new house but here instead? Do you not welcome me to your new house? Or is it too small?”

Feeling guilty, she kept her head down upon hearing Yulia’s series of questions. “Mom, I-I moved to my boyfriend’s house.”

“What?” Yulia was stunned for a moment before she continued in a surprised tone, “Boyfriend?”

“Yes.” Natalie nodded.

Yulia got excited. “Baby Girl, since when did you have a boyfriend? Why didn’t you tell me? Besides, does your boyfriend like Connor and Sharon? Tell you what, you shouldn’t be with him if he doesn’t like the kids. Also, you shouldn’t neglect them for his sake.”

Natalie burst into laughter and explained, “Mom, what kind of a person am I to you? Don’t worry. He loves Connor and Sharon. Besides, he treats them as his children.”

“Really?” Yulia nodded with satisfaction and continued, “Well, it’s good to hear that. By the way, you haven’t told me who he is.”

“He...” Natalie avoided her gaze and said, “Mom, can you promise me to stay calm after I tell you?”

“Stay calm?” Yulia knitted her brows.

Well, he’s probably someone I know but don’t like very much. Otherwise, Nat wouldn’t ask me to stay calm.

The only man who meets the two conditions is...

“It isn’t Shane, is it?” Yulia glared at her.

Natalie was shocked when Yulia guessed it correctly and effortlessly.

Judging from Natalie’s reaction, Yulia knew the answer immediately. Fuming, she took a deep breath and growled, “So it’s him!”

Natalie fiddled with her fingers and replied, “Yes, it’s him!”

“Why?” Yulia’s expression turned grim. “Natalie, when I left last time, didn’t I say that you should not be with him? I understand that you love him, yet you’ll be in danger if you insist on being with him. Have you forgotten the two incidents that almost led to your death?”

“I know.” Natalie gazed at her and continued, “But the one who harmed me has been arrested.”

However, another mysterious mastermind who burnt her warehouse and instructed some

men to abduct her was not identified yet. Natalie wasn't sure if the mastermind was also a great admirer of Shane.

Nonetheless, Natalie believed that the probability of two of his admirers harming her at the same time was low. As such, she was inclined to believe that the mastermind was her enemy instead.

"Has she been arrested?" Yulia blinked her eyes in shock.

Natalie replied, "Yes, her name is Alice, and she's the daughter of the Brown family. Now, she is in jail."

Yulia fell silent as she was still displeased by the fact that Natalie was dating Shane. After a while, she pursed her lips and said, "Although the one who harmed you has been arrested, you two are still not a good match. Given that he's the head of the Thompson family, his social status is way higher than yours. More importantly, you already have two kids. Do you think he'll accept your kids? Won't their position in the Thompson family be awkward?"

Natalie chuckled. "Mom, the two questions that you mentioned are not a concern."

"What do you mean?" Yulia frowned and asked in puzzlement.

Natalie took a deep breath as though she had just made an important decision. A few moments later, she clenched her fists and mustered up the courage to say, "It's because he's the biological father of Connor and Sharon."