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Did I say something to piss him off?

Before Natalie could think of an answer to that, the birthday banquet began.

Dressed in a pure white suit, Sean descended the stairs from the second floor. He accepted the microphone a waiter handed to him before moving to the small stage set up nearby. He gave a short speech, thanking everyone for their attendance and well-wishes.

When he was done, it was time for dancing.

As Sean was the birthday boy and also the host, he would have to open up the dance floor.

All the single females present stared at him eagerly, hoping he would select them to be his dance partner. To their immense disappointment, he set down the microphone and headed toward Natalie.

"May I invite you to a dance, beautiful miss?" Sean held his hand out in invitation, a smile playing on his lips.

Natalie could feel the pressure of the envious gazes coming from the other women.

In truth, she really did not want to dance with him. However, today was his birthday. It was not right for her to refuse. Left without any other choice, she had to accept his invitation.

"It would be my honor!" She curtsied at him before placing her hand on his palm gently.

Curling his fingers over hers, Sean led her toward the empty space in the middle of the room.

Music flowed out the moment they stepped into the clearing and they swiftly slipped into a waltz.

The other guests moved to circle them, watching as they twirled around the makeshift dancefloor.

Shane and Jasmine were standing at the very front of the crowd.

Jasmine tugged on his arm and let a surprised expression cross her face. "Shane, Sean invited Ms. Natalie to his birthday banquet and even asked her to be his partner for the opening dance. Do you think they're dating?"

Shane's face was indifferent as he removed his arm from her grip. He ignored her question as his eyes locked on the dancing couple and narrowed.

As if sensing the burning gaze, Sean spun them around and took that chance to glance over at Shane.

When he noticed the stormy look in Shane's eyes, his lips curved up into a wicked smirk. The hand he had placed around Natalie's waist tightened, tugging her closer to him.

Shane's face darkened in anger when he noticed this.

Then, he grabbed Jasmine's wrist and pulled her toward the dancefloor.

His action shocked the other guests in attendance.

Those who knew about the bad blood between Shane and Sean shook their heads in amusement.

The two sons of the Thompson family were always at each other's throats, competing with each other in everything. Despite that, it was still rather unexpected that they would try to one-up each other when it came to dancing, of all things.

"Shane, you want to dance with me?" Jasmine asked. She was so excited she was holding her breath.

The only reply she got was a grunt of agreement. He extended his hand to her even as his gaze remained fixed on Natalie and Sean.

Jasmine did not notice his distraction though. She was too lost in her elation that Shane actually wanted to dance with her. Worried he would change his mind, she hastily placed her hand in his.

Shane started their dance before slowly making their way over to Sean and Natalie.

"Mr. Shane. Ms. Jasmine." Natalie smiled at them in greeting.

Upon noticing Shane and Jasmine, Sean mentally scoffed.

As expected from Shane! Every time Natalie is involved, he just can't stay away. Seems like the depth of his feelings for her is a lot deeper than I imagined.

At that thought, Sean discreetly shot Natalie a contemplative look.

By this point, they were halfway through their dance. Soon, it would be the most interesting part of the dance – exchanging dance partners.

If there was only a couple on the dancefloor, they would not need to switch partners. However, now that Shane and Jasmine were here as well, etiquette demanded they exchange partners.

As the music swelled into a crescendo, Natalie and Jasmine twirled around.

A gleam entered Shane's eyes and he let go of Jasmine's hand. Then, he gently pushed her toward Sean.

That left Sean with no choice but to release Natalie too. He grudgingly pushed her toward Shane.

Shane gladly took Natalie into his arms before swiftly moving away to the other side of the dancefloor.

No one in the crowd seemed to find anything strange or wrong with that.

Sean and Jasmine, however, were another case entirely. Both were looking none-too-happy at what just occurred.

"You appear to have been used," Sean mocked her in a low tone.

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Jasmine glared hatefully in the direction Shane and Natalie had gone in. She hissed, "I don't need you to remind me!"

Of course, she knew she had been used. What was even more infuriating and humiliating was that she had not noticed at all. She had honestly thought Shane wanted to dance with her.

Yet, it turned out that he had only done that for Natalie. He did not want Natalie and Sean to dance together, so he had pulled her onto the dancefloor so he could get to Natalie.

Jasmine was so angry she could scream. Her chest rose and fell heavily with the force of her fury while utter hatred toward Natalie shone in her eyes.

A sly look entered Sean's eyes when he noticed that. "Are you going to just accept defeat like that?"

The way her lips pursed tightly was answer enough.

He chuckled evilly and suggested, "If you're not, then do something about it!"

"Huh?" Her head snapped to look at him. "What are you…?"

He merely shrugged his shoulders in response, not saying anything more.

Jasmine lowered her gaze to hide the scheming glint that appeared in her eyes.

He's right. I finally got a chance to dance with Shane yet that b**** snatched him away from me! I'll teach her a lesson she'll never forget!

Her attention focused on the way Natalie's dress trailed along the floor. Then, her eyes gleamed brightly when she got an idea.

She patted Sean, her eyes darting to Natalie meaningfully. Her intention was obvious. She wanted him to lead them in that direction.

Once they were close enough, she pretended to stumble and deliberately stepped on Natalie's dress.

Since Natalie's back was facing Jasmine, she did not realize the latter's actions at all.

Although Shane had seen Jasmine stumble, he did not notice that her foot was right on Natalie's dress. Thus, he ignored her and twirled Natalie in a grand spin for the finishing move.

At that moment, a loud ripping sound rang out.

Immediately after that, Natalie felt the way her dress split open at the front and slipped down her chest.

"AHH!" she shrieked in panic. Her arms flew up to cover herself as she crouched down on the floor, her face pale with shock.

Shane's eyes narrowed and he hurriedly took off his suit jacket. Draping it over her body, he roared at the control room on the second floor, "Turn off the lights!"

The employees in the control room hastily did as ordered.

In an instant, the entire hall was plunged into darkness.

Shane helped Natalie to her feet. His voice was uncharacteristically gentle as he comforted her, "Calm down. Nobody saw anything."

Natalie looked as white as a sheet, her pupils blown wide in fear. Her hands clutched the suit jacket to her tightly while her entire body shivered uncontrollably.

It was clear she was deeply traumatized by what just happened.

"Shane, is Nat okay?" Sean's voice sounded from somewhere beside them.

Shane ignored him. Despite the darkness that shrouded them, his cold gaze accurately fixed on Jasmine as he demanded, "Why did you step on her dress?"

Judging from the direction the tearing sound had come from and Jasmine's location then, it was easy to guess the reason for Natalie's current condition.

"I didn't mean to! I didn't know I was stepping on her dress. I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!" Jasmine burst into tears, crying pitifully as if she had really not done it on purpose.

Too bad for her, Shane was completely unconvinced. He patted Natalie's trembling back, intoning, "Do you seriously think I'll believe you?"

Jasmine's crying hitched for a second before she continued. "Shane, I know you won't believe me because I used to be at odds with Ms. Natalie previously. But I swear, I really didn't do this deliberately!"

Sean pushed his glasses up his nose before stating, "Shane, I can vouch for her. Her heels were too high and she twisted her ankle. She must have accidentally stepped on Nat's dress then."

"An accident? I don't think so. Does she look like she twisted her ankle?" Shane pointed a finger at Jasmine with a sneer.

"That's enough, Shane. We can get to the truth of the matter later. What's more important now is to bring Nat to the private lounge so she can change out of that dress," Sean reminded.

That snapped Shane out of his fury. He moved to help Natalie out of there when Sean stopped him.

In an airy tone, Sean said, "Shane, I don't think it's appropriate for you to go with Nat. After all, you're still Jasmine's fiancé. What would others think if they see you going with another woman to change out of her clothes? What would they think about her? It's better if I take Nat out of here."

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With that said, Sean wrapped an arm around Natalie's shoulders and guided her out of the hall.

Natalie did not make a fuss as she was taken away from Shane. She did not care who she left with, only that she could leave as quickly as possible.

Shane's eyes darkened as he watched Sean and Natalie exit the hall. His hand clenched into tight fists. At that moment, he cursed his identity as Jasmine's fiancé. The thought of calling off their engagement sprouted in his mind.

At the private lounge.

Sean handed Natalie a glass of warm water. "Here, drink some water to calm your nerves."

"Thanks," Natalie answered hoarsely. She was feeling a lot better now that she was out of the hall. Reaching out to accept the glass, she took a sip.

Sean draped his suit jacket over the back of the couch opposite hers and sat down. Then, he crossed his legs before focusing a heated stare on her.

Feeling uncomfortable at his gaze, she shifted slightly and shrank back. "Mr. Sean, what are you looking at?"

He propped his head up with one arm and chuckled softly. "I'm looking at your eyes. You look beautiful even after you cry. I'm sure you'll be absolutely stunning when you're actually crying. It's just too bad that it was so dark earlier. I couldn't see anything."

Natalie scowled at his flirtatious words. "Mr. Sean, maybe you should leave first. I can wait by myself for someone to bring a new change of clothes."

If he continued to remain here, he might say more things she did not want to hear.

"Nobody's bringing you clothes." Sean took off his glasses and set them aside.

Natalie was stunned at his words. "What? Why?"

"Because I didn't even send anyone off to find you clothes," he replied while tugging at his tie.

She stiffened as alarm bells started ringing in her mind. Placing the glass of water down, she sprinted for the door.

"It's no use. I locked the door when I came in." Sean got to his feet and turned to smile evilly at her.

The color drained from Natalie's face. Her unease grew while her heart pounded in her chest. "What are you planning on doing?"

"What am I planning on doing?" He snickered at her question. "A man and a woman are all alone in a room. What do you think?"

"You!" Her eyes widened in shock as realization dawned.

When he began to prowl toward her, she instinctively backed away.

Her back bumped into the door, cutting off her escape. There was nowhere she could run.

Nevertheless, she still whirled around to pull on the doorknob with all the strength that she had. She had to open the door!

To her dismay, Sean had not been lying when he said he had locked it.

By that point, he was nearly upon her.

Gritting her teeth, she let go of the doorknob and dashed to the side to grab a vase. She lifted it threateningly and warned, "Don't come any closer or I'll call the police!"

He raised an eyebrow at her and taunted, "Go ahead. I'd like to see you try."

"What do you mean?" she asked with dread.

He did not answer, merely watched her with interest.

She hugged the vase to her with one hand while the other rummaged through her purse. When she dug out her phone, she saw that she had no signal at all.

"How can this be?" Her lips quivered as despair filled her eyes.

Sean lifted a hand to sweep some errant hair out of his eyes. "I had my men jam the signals beforehand. Not only that, but nobody will also be coming here to disturb us either."

Natalie's grip on her phone tightened. "I understand now. This is the reason you invited me to your birthday banquet!"

"That's right." He nodded then added smugly, "I had originally planned on using an excuse to lure you here after the dance. To my annoyance, Shane and Jasmine decided to get themselves involved. Thankfully, even though there were some hiccups, my plan still worked out in the end."

"Why?" She glared at him furiously. "How does sleeping with me benefit you?"

At that, Sean's lips twitched into a smirk. "It benefits me a lot. You know about the grudge between Shane and me?"

Natalie nodded.

She had heard all about it from the employees of Thompson Group. Although Shane and Sean were cousins, they were mortal enemies.

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The reason for Sean's hatred toward Shane was that Sean had not inherited Thompson Group despite being the firstborn of the eldest son.

"But what's that got to do with me being here right now?" Natalie questioned.

Sean stroked his chin and answered, "Of course it does! You're technically Shane's woman and even gave birth to two children for him. If I make you mine and have those kids call me 'Daddy,' don't you think he'll go absolutely crazy?"

Natalie felt like the world's biggest joke was being played on her. "So you're doing all this to me just because you want to piss off Mr. Shane?"

"That's right! That's more than enough reason for me to do this. Although I have to admit you're truly an interesting woman. I wouldn't be lying if I said I actually liked you. After all, you're quite the beauty!"

With that said, he lunged toward her.

She screamed in shock before throwing her phone and the vase at him. Unfortunately, he dodged them easily.

Just as the vase smashed against the floor, her hand was seized in an unrelenting grip.

Then, he forcefully dragged her toward the coffee table. One sweep of his hands sent the items on it crashing to the ground.

He tossed her onto the table before pinning her down with his weight. Grabbing both her hands, he moved them up above her head and restrained them with one hand.

"Let me go!" she shrieked furiously. Her eyes were red-rimmed as she struggled violently. Her legs flew out wildly, wanting to kick him away from her.

He had clearly been expecting this. Raising his knee, he rammed it into her gut hard.

She howled in pain while paling dramatically.

There was a wicked smirk on Sean's face as he gazed down at her. "Baby, don't make me angry. I'm not a gentle man."

Natalie fought to endure the agony shooting from her abdomen. Her eyes narrowed into slits as she glared at him balefully.

He frowned before gripping her chin harshly. When he spoke, his voice was menacing, "I really don't like the way you're looking at me. But I guess it doesn't matter. In a short while, you won't have the energy to spare on hating me. I'll definitely make those pretty eyes of yours shine with beautiful, beautiful tears!"

Letting go of her face, his hand trailed down her slender neck and toward her collarbone. Suddenly, he grasped the suit jacket covering her and ripped it away, revealing the flesh-colored nipple covers she had on.

"Sean Thompson!" Natalie was going into a full-blown panic now. "Touch me and I swear I'll never let you go free! I'll make sure you go to prison for this!"

"You're going to send me to prison?" Sean let out a bark of laughter. "Do you see that above your head?"

Huh?

She craned her neck slightly to look above her.

There, blinking in the ceiling, was a security camera. Her blood went cold at the sight.

He patted her cheeks lightly and mocked, "Do you get it now? The security camera will record our little intimate session. If you make a police report after this, I'll leak this video to the media. Everyone can admire your amazing body then. So what if your son is a hacker? There's nothing he can do that will mitigate that damage."

"AHHHHH!" Natalie wailed in desperation. "You're crazy! Sean Thompson, you're a damn psycho!"

Sean cackled at her words, not the slightest bit angry. "You're absolutely right that I'm a psycho! I'm willing to do anything as long as it makes Shane unhappy. That's why you have to be a good little girl now and become my woman, hmm? Your children can call me 'Daddy.' I'll be sure to treat all of you well. What do you think?"

Natalie's lips trembled but not a single sound left them. Unbidden, tears leaked from the corner of her eyes.

"You truly are even more beautiful when you cry!" His thumb reached up to swipe at a tear while excitement shone in his eyes. Unable to wait a moment longer, he lowered his head to hers.

Just as he was about to land a kiss on the corner of her eyes, the door was kicked open with a loud bang.

Sean's head snapped up as he glared at the entrance. A grim scowl twisted his features when he noted Shane standing there.

Why is he here?

"Mr. Shane, save me!" Natalie cried out for help, despair coating her voice.

When Shane noted how she was partially undressed, a thunderous expression crossed his face. A murderous gleam appeared in his normally indifferent eyes.

With his long legs, he traveled across the room in a few strides. His fist flew forward to slam into Sean's face.

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Sean yelped and fell away from Natalie, crumpling to the floor. Before he could get up, Shane began to land a barrage of vicious kicks on him.

Shane did not hold back at all, putting as much force as he could into each kick.

Eventually, Sean was a half-dead mess on the floor, having long ago fallen unconscious.

Finally satisfied, Shane stopped his kicking. Letting out a soft breath, he schooled his furious expression into a calm one before turning his attention on Natalie. His voice was filled with concern when he asked, "Are you alright?"

Adjusting the suit jacket so it covered her up again, she choked out, "I'm fine."

His tightened brows relaxed a little at her words and he sighed in relief. "That's good."

Luckily, I got here just in time! Otherwise, she would have been…

Shane could not even finish that thought. His heart felt like someone had wrapped a fist around it and was squeezing it. It hurt.

"Mr. Shane, please take me away from here!" Natalie begged as she gripped the hem of Shane's shirt. Her tear-streaked face turned toward him, revealing her distress.

She refused to stay here a second longer. Everything here absolutely repulsed and disgusted her!

"Okay." He held her arm and helped her off the coffee table.

However, the moment her feet touched the ground, her legs gave out from beneath her and she fell forward in a dead faint.

When Natalie finally woke up, it was already afternoon the next day.

She blinked her eyes open before sweeping a gaze across the unfamiliar room. "This is…"

"My house." Shane was sitting in a chair beside the bed. He clarified gently, "When you fell unconscious, I thought you were drugged. Since my house is quite close to the hotel and I have a family doctor, I thought it is best to bring you here."

So that was why she was here.

Rubbing her temples, she sat up in bed. The blanket slid down her body, showing that she was currently clad in black silk pajamas.

The pajamas were quite large. Obviously, they belonged to a man. She could not help the anxiety that rose in her as she exclaimed, "My clothes!"

He shut the magazine he had been reading and reassured her, "Relax. Mrs. Wilson was the one who changed your clothes."

The pajamas were his though.

Natalie calmed down when she heard that. She shot Shane an embarrassed smile. "I'm sorry, Mr. Shane. I might have overreacted a little…"

She did not mean to have such a huge reaction either. It was just that what happened yesterday had severely traumatized her.

"It's okay. I understand." He nodded at her to show he did not mind.

She scrubbed at her cheeks as she stated, "Thank you for what you did yesterday, Mr. Shane. If you hadn't come for me, Sean would have… Speaking of that, what happened to him?"

His eyes narrowed at the mention of his cousin. "He's in the hospital," was the icy response.

Apparently, he had broken several of Sean's ribs yesterday, which meant the latter would be hospitalized for the next two months at least.

Natalie slapped the bedsheets in sadistic glee. "Serves him right!"

Shane quirked his lips at her joy. But a few seconds later, the smile slipped off his face. "Silas found a security camera in the lounge you guys were in. However, since the heinous crime didn't actually happen along with Sean's insistence that you were willing, there's not enough evidence to arrest him for his crimes."

"I most definitely wasn't willing!" The elation on her face vanished and was replaced by fury.

He crossed his legs and stared at her. "Of course I know that you weren't willing. You wouldn't have begged me to rescue you otherwise. What I want to know is why he wanted to do that to you?"

Her eyes flashed as she asked warily, "Didn't the camera record everything he said?"

"It doesn't record sound," he answered calmly.

Natalie's spirits lifted at his words. Like a rollercoaster ride, she went from being utterly depressed to being absolutely delighted.

Wonderful! That means he still doesn't know the kids are his!

At that thought, she dropped her gaze to her lap to hide the relief in them. She murmured apologetically, "I'm sorry, Mr. Shane. I can't tell you just yet."

Shane pursed his lips at her answer. "It's okay. You don't have to say anything if you don't want to. Even though the police can't arrest Sean for his crimes, I promise you I'll transfer him away from the headquarters."

"Okay, thank you," she expressed with heartfelt gratitude.

Suddenly, she seemed to remember something as her hand flew up to caress her neck. When she felt nothing there, she started to panic.