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Maureen was indeed her biological mother. As Arielle heaved a long sigh, a scary thought suddenly dawned on her. Mom's only been married to Henrick, who's been recognizing me as his biological daughter. In this case, wouldn't it mean that Mom has... committed adultery? Henrick found out about it and killed her? Then again, he's not the type who would allow someone who's not his blood and flesh to enter the family. It was then that Arielle realized she had a big mystery to solve. She had returned to investigate her mother's death but to no avail. In addition, she now was confused about who her actual father was.

Her mind was in a total mess. Carter broke the silence. "It's still early. Why don't you two have a chat while I check if they've gotten any useful information from that guy?" With that suggestion, Carter went out and shut the door behind him, leaving Arielle and Vinson alone in the ward. With a wry smile, she looked at Vinson. "You must be thinking that I'm a joke. Neither am I the glamorous Ms. Moore nor Ms. Southhall. I'm just... an illegitimate child." He frowned at her words. Putting on a stern face, he tried to correct her understanding. "I don't know if you're an illegitimate child.

So what if you're one? To me, you are who you are." Though he appeared to be icy-cold, his gaze was unexpectedly warm. Arielle moved her stiffened fingers. His unswerving attitude and that one firm sentence uttered had effectively cleared the doubts she had and given her the courage needed to sail through these trying times. Vinson had once again reminded her that she would always be Arielle, regardless of whose daughter she was.

He continued, "We can't choose our parents and family background, so that's no fault of yours. It's the adults who've made a mistake." Biting her lips, Arielle shared, "From what I can remember, Mom wasn't that kind of a person... I don't know why... why would she do that." Vinson paused for two seconds. "Actually, there's something about your mom that I think you should know. I didn't tell you this earlier because I thought it'd be rude for me to say this."

Stunned, she lifted her head immediately. "About my mom? What's it about? I've looked up a lot of information about her before going back to the Southalls. I believe I know everything about her." He shook his head lightly. "There's something not recorded in those files you read." "What is it?" "Gossips shared amongst the socialites in Jadeborough. It didn't cross my mind until I saw your DNA paternity report. Maybe you should hear this."

Clenching her fists, Arielle fretted. "Go on..." He looked her in the eyes and articulated all the tittle-tattles about Maureen within the Jadeborough social circles. "You should know that your mom and Henrick got married in a flash. Based on her backgrounds, it would've deemed inappropriate for her to be married into the Southhall family.

The Southalls made a fortune from coal mines and then purchased properties in Jadeborough. He got married with your mom not long after settling down here. Don't you think that this is so strange?" "Yup," she acknowledged. "Rumor has it that your mom lost her virginity to a thug when she went hiking one day.

As soon as she found out that she was pregnant, she looked for the Southalls anxiously..." Arielle's brows were knitted together. "You're saying that my mom was rape... that's why she had me? She married my dad in order to give me a legitimate identity?"

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"That's right, but compared to this one, I think another rumor is probably more realistic. Given that your mom is a smart, capable, and agile woman, I doubt she would end up getting assaulted." "There's another piece of gossip?" "Yes, the other version says that your mom dating a guy with an exceptional family background. He dumped your mom after facing rejection from his family to marry her. Your mom did not want to abort the baby, so she chose the Southalls and made a decision to marry Henrick."

Hearing these, Arielle was even more perplexed. She questioned, "The Moores were at its prime because of how capable my mom was. In fact, the Moores could be regarded as an equal to the four big prominent families in Jadeborough, joining all of you to be the fifth distinguished family. What kind of man was that who would disregard her?"

"I've got no clue about that." Vinson was rather hesitant. "I heard about this from my mom, who was a close friend of your mom for a period of time. Though it might have sounded absurd, but there's probably some truth in it if it comes from my mom." Arielle requested, "I want to meet your mom." Vinson's heart skipped a beat as he was not prepared for that. To him, it was quite a boring chore to bring a girl to see his parents.

However, he actually felt delighted to do that albeit knowing Arielle wanted to see his mother for a different reason. What's wrong with me? Seeing that Vinson fell silent, Arielle faltered, "Is it a bad idea? If it's not convenient for you, I'll find a way to see her..." Shaking his head, he returned to his senses. "No... it's fine. I just need to come up with an excuse." "An excuse?" "Yes," he explained, "My mom has all the pet peeves of the rich and famous that you can think of. She usually doesn't meet any stranger. Moreover, the Southalls is nothing like what the Moores used to be in the past.

She won't be willing to see anyone from the Southall family. Anyhow, it's not impossible. I just need to create a reason for that." "What would it be?" "Be my girlfriend." She gasped in disbelief. "What? What did you just say?" He put on a poker face. "Frankly, my mom has been pushing me to go for blind dates recently, but I'm not interested at all. If you could pretend to be my girlfriend, it would save us a lot of trouble.

She will come looking for you naturally." Arielle was caught in a dilemma. "Um... this is going to get very complicated. What if we can't find another lie to cover up the lies said? I'm referring to my dad... I mean, Henrick. Once he has the impression that we're an item, he will do everything to make me marry you." "There's nothing wrong with that," Vinson replied casually, "Both our courtship and marriage could be a fake relationship."

I don't plan to get married. So, if you don't plan to either, we can possibly collaborate and create a win-win situation for ourselves. After all, isn't a dream come true for you to marry me?" Arielle almost puked and choked herself to death at the sound of that. She clarified, "I've said this repeatedly, that was just a joke..." He insisted, "You should seriously consider it even if it's a joke. With the title 'Mrs. Nightshire' bestowed upon you, you can easily uncover the truth about your mom's death or take any revenge."

Things will definitely be so much smoother than now. As soon as your objective is achieved or once I've found the love of my life, we can get a divorce. I can see only pros and no cons in this ideal plan." "This..." Carter walked in to them and interrupted the conversation.

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"It's about time we have to leave for the hotel." After reminding them, Carter asked curiously, "By the way, who are you putting up a show for?" Averting his gaze, Arielle muttered, "My dad, or should I say... my so-called dad." Carter shrugged his shoulders. "Fine, whoever it's for, let's go now. I've arranged for someone to check the surroundings. There's no one guarding the hotel at the moment. I'll hack into their systems, so that the surveillance cameras won't capture your images."

"Thank you very much," Arielle expressed her gratitude earnestly. Feeling shy, Carter adjusted his spectacles. "Cut the formalities, we're a team. Let's go!" Ever since the acupuncture incident, Carter had completely changed his views about Arielle. He had fully accepted her like one of his own. Arielle nodded and followed suit. When she walked past Vinson, she heard him say under his breath, "Please consider what we've discussed carefully."

She froze for a moment and then continued walking. The inquisitive Carter asked, "What's that about?" Seeing that Arielle ignored his statement, Vinson smirked, and strode ahead. Carter grumbled, "Whatever! I bet it must be something dreadful, judging from that cunning smile." Moments later, both Vinson and Arielle had returned to the hotel without attracting any unnecessary attention. As soon as the door was closed, Arielle let out a sigh of relief. When she turned around and looked into the direction of the kitchen, a towering figure was rolling up his sleeves.

Next, the man picked up a frying pan with the hand that would usually hold a tablet. Interested, Arielle approached him. "Wow, Mr. Nightshire can cook?" A proud smug settled upon his face. "Cooking is a piece of cake. Anyone with hands

can do it. I'm just going to cook some noodles, do you want some?" "Yes, please!" she responded right away. After an eventful night, she felt so hungry. Ten minutes later, two bowls of lumpy noodles greeted Arielle. She tried to suppress her laughter. I must have been out of my mind to believe that he who was born with a silver spoon knows how to cook.

Are these noodles even edible? "No need to hold it. Go ahead and laugh as much as you like. Everyone's a master in their own field. It's my first time cooking a meal, so it's understandable that I didn't manage it well," Vinson said disapprovingly while placing the cutlery on the table. It was hard for Arielle to acknowledge his viewpoint that cooking instant noodles required the same skills as making a full course meal.

"I'm not laughing at you. Considering this is your first experience of 'making a meal', it's... not bad. However, let's forget about these two bowls of noodles. I saw that there's some flour and basic ingredients in your kitchen. I'll make some ravioli. Would you like some?" "Sure." Vinson nodded his head reluctantly and discarded the two bowls of noodles thereafter. He knew that the food he cooked was not up to standard, but did not expect to receive disdainful feedback on his maiden dish.

He was looking forward to seeing what Arielle could come up with using the simple ingredients in the kitchen. I might have a chance to tease her too! She looks like she only knows how to brew coffee. I doubt she's able to make a dish successfully. Arielle went into the kitchen and checked on the ingredients, only to realize that they were very fresh staples.

She picked a few types of vegetables then proceeded to wash and cut them into pieces. Subsequently, she mixed them together with some minced meat and added various seasonings. Fascinated, Vinson watched her every move without blinking his eyes.

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It was Vinson's first time seeing how an oily and smoky affair in the kitchen could look like a work of art when Arielle did it. Perhaps it is because she has slender fingers and her skin is as white as snow. Arielle did not notice that Vinson had his gaze fixated on her. She was paying full attention on making the stuffing and getting the dough ready. While she was preparing the stuffing, she let the dough rest. Thereafter, she flattened the dough into many thin discs, wrapped the stuffing, and skillfully shaped each ravioli. He could not help but asked, "Do you do this often?"

"You can say so. When I was living in another country... um... countryside, I'd sometimes make ravioli on my own when I'm tired of ordering take-outs. Ravioli seem easy to make as it only involves a few steps. Once it's steamed, you can eat it right away." "I see." Vinson pretended that he did not notice Arielle's slip of the tongue and took the initiative to make ravioli too. He copied her actions and the outcome seemed to be quite favorable. Although he messed up a few times,

he somehow managed to make some decent ones too. Without another word uttered, the two of them continued to shape the ravioli quietly.

Surprisingly, Vinson did not feel that it was a bore to do such trivial things. In fact, he really enjoyed the peaceful moments spent with Arielle. Shortly after, all the ravioli were steamed and ready to be eaten. "Let me try your masterpiece." He took one and stuffed it inside his mouth. Even though Arielle appeared to be very skillful throughout the process and she even did it from scratch, Vinson had very high expectations because he had tasted an array of good food.

Moreover, one of the companies under Nightshire Group had produced a special type of premium frozen ravioli, which was very delicious yet expensive. He had tried them all and took pride in his own products. Hence, he did not expect much from Arielle and was actually ready to comment on her food. However, the moment he ate one, he stared at Arielle with his eyes wide opened. He was so shocked to have such a rich burst of flavors inside his mouth.

The combination of savory gravy, crunchy vegetables, and perfectly marinated minced meat was such a tease to his tastebuds. It was his first time to have tasted something so delectable even though the ingredients that she used were just the basic ones provided by the hotel. There was even a sparkle in his eyes. Arielle had not had a bite yet, so she could not comprehend Vinson's reaction. "Is it not good?" "No, that's not it."

He continued speaking after swallowing a mouthful, "It tastes all right, especially when I made it myself." Arielle was rendered speechless. He was making them at a snail's pace. When I finished, he's only done six of them. The one he's eating might not even be his work. Anyhow, Vinson was not a man who would praise others easily. Thus, Arielle took his response as a compliment. She did not ask him further.

Instead, she lowered her head and continued eating. After having only one, she realized that half of the thirty-odd pieces of ravioli on the plate were gone. While chewing one in his mouth, Vinson kept serving himself albeit already having a full bowl in front of him. His actions brought a smile to her face.

The following day, Arielle put on the clothes that Vinson had asked someone to prepare for her and walked out of the hotel in the scorching hot weather. Right when she wanted to call a cab, a luxurious MPV, which belonged to the Southalls, stopped in front of her. The driver came down to get the door for her. "Ms. Arielle, Mr. Southall has instructed me to wait for you here. This way, please."a

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With a light sneer, Arielle simply nodded and boarded the MPV. There was a change in the driver's attitude. Henrick must have said something to him.

Apparently, she would only receive a decent treatment when she played the role

of a useful Sannie. However, all these no longer mean anything to her ever since she found out that Henrick was not her biological father. She looked up at the hotel from the car window and caught the curtains in her room moved, as if someone was standing there, observing her. Am I seeing things?

It's impossible that Vinson will want to see me off. Retracting her gaze, Arielle sank into deep thoughts again, trying to figure out a way to resolve all these problems she faced. She was confident that the truth would be at her fingertips as soon as she had discovered about her real identity. Soon, they arrived at the Southall residence. Arielle did not get much sleep, except for the short time when she was getting a drip. In the manor, there were also two other people who stayed up all night.

Upon receiving the news that Arielle had arrived, Henrick immediately went out of his study room and dashed downstairs. Meanwhile, Cindy got the news too. "Is she back?" Cindy could not believe what she had heard. The housekeeper nodded. "Yes, Mr. Southall is on his way to welcome her." "Welcome..." Cindy's hands started to tremble. If Henrick is welcoming Arielle personally, that means she's successfully bonded with Vinson. It'd be much harder for me to tackle her henceforth. Feeling like a cat on hot bricks, Cindy paced back and forth after sending the housekeeper away.

She called Matthias and told him all about Arielle. "I told you so, but you didn't believe me. Considering Arielle's alluring look, who wouldn't like getting entangled with her?" Matthias uttered with much annoyance. Cindy shushed him and retorted, "This isn't the time to criticize me. Hurry up and think of a solution." Matthias replied, "What else is there to think about? Just go with the original plan. This might not be a bad thing, after all."

"She's with Vinson now. Is this not the worst thing that could have happened?" "Don't fret and listen to me. According to our initial plan, she'd be given a bad name at best. However, things have gotten more interesting now. If our plan goes well, the person that she's betraying is Vinson. You and I know that the consequences are severe when one offends the Nightshires." Upon hearing that, Cindy became hopeful again.

"Yes, you're right! When Vinson blows a fuse, he might take revenge on Henrick too. If the time is right, we can even seize the opportunity and defeat Henrick once and for all. Then, the Southall Group will be entirely ours." "When that time comes, Cin, you'll be mine and mine only..." Cindy simpered.

"Yup. You'll have to arrange this quickly and get the drug that you've been looking for as soon as possible." "All right." She ended the phone call and headed downstairs happily to take a good look at Arielle. The happier she is now, the more dejected she will become later. The difference between heaven and hell is mind-blowing.

Henrick was over the moon when he saw Arielle. "Sannie, my darling daughter is back! Is everything okay?" It's a redundant question. Anyone can tell that everything went smoothly last night, judging from the time Arielle comes home. She smiled bashfully. "I... guess so?"