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Raising his gaze to her, Vinson asked curiously, "How can you think that? Yvette is responsible for everything that happened tonight. She is just reaping what she sowed. If you hadn't been smart enough to see through her plot, you would have been the one suffering the consequences.

Arielle couldn't help but chuckle. "Vinson, suddenly get the feeling that you know me very well."

Vinson shrugged. "I feel otherwise. The better I know you, the more I don't understand you."

Laughing, Arielle replied, "Yvette isn't the only one responsible for tonight."

Vinson raised his eyebrows at once. "Who else is involved?"

"I also saw Cindy... and her lover," Arielle answered.

Vinson was slightly surprised but quickly digested the fact that Cindy had a lover.

Given that she could still get married after having an affair with her brother-in-law, I

shouldn't be surprised by the fact that she has a lover

With a darkened expression, Vinson remarked, "Despite being exiled to the monastery, she still has a lover doing her bidding. That's quite a surprise. What's his name? Give me his details and I'll take care of him."

Arielle shook her head to decline. "There's no need. I'm not the one who wants him disposed of; Henrick is. If he knows about that guy's existence, he will definitely be "pleasantly surprised'."

Vinson smirked. "No wonder you refrained from making any moves. That's a good idea. We can use her lover to destroy her. But still, nothing much can be done with her being in the monastery--"

"No," Arielle replied as she watched the passing scenery outside the window. "I have a feeling that Cindy will be returning soon."

Vinson was puzzled. "Since Cindy is already there, wouldn't Henrick not think of her for the time being?"

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Pursing her lips into a smile, Arielle replied, "I don't know. It's just a gut feeling. Haven't you heard how accurate a woman's sixth sense is?"

"In that case, we will wait for her to return and deal with them all at once."

Arielle nodded in agreement. However, she knew deep down that the matter wasn't as simple as Vinson was making it out to be.

Furthermore, she was curious as to how Cindy planned on returning.

Going on a hunger strike or attempting to mutilate herself would only anger Henrick further.

In spite of that, Cindy and her lover were both shrewd characters. Hence, she would definitely not stay in the monastery for long.

Nevertheless, Arielle was already prepared for Cindy's return

As she looked out the window and thought about Cindy, the car suddenly came to a stop

Just when she thought they had arrived at the Southall residence, she realized that they were in front of a different mansion.

There was a lake in front of the mansion. Even at night, it was still a beautiful sight to behold.

In Jadeborough, a similar lakeside mansion would cost hundreds of millions. Even then, the lack of availability made it difficult to buy one even if one could afford

Arielle gave Vinson a curious look. "What is this place?"

"My home." Just as he opened the door, Vinson remarked, "I'm hungry. Make me some ravioli."

Arielle was stumped.

She was annoyed at Vinson trying to take advantage of her despite how tired she felt.

Knitting her eyebrows, Arielle asked, "Can do it another day? I'm exhausted today. Besides, there's something else I need to do-"

Raising his eyebrows to make a point, Vinson asserted, "No, you promised me that you will prepare it whenever I want it."

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"You..." Arielle was filled with exasperation. Nevertheless, she knew that she had to keep her promise.

Left without a choice, she let herself out of the car under Vinson's watchful eye. After that, she dragged herself and followed him into the mansion.

Despite how extravagant the mansion looked on the outside, Arielle was surprised to find the interior furnishings to be simple.

The rooms were largely painted in black. Even the walls were covered with dark colored tiles.

It was one thing for the hard furnishings to be black, but another for the soft

furnishing to also be in black. Other than some basic furniture, the living hall had nothing else. Even the sofa was a single seater, causing the mansion to look eerily empty inside.

“Does anyone live here?” Arielle couldn’t resist asking.

Vinson grunted before replying, “When I’m not at the manor, I’ll usually be here.”

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Arielle was shocked. How can it be so spartan with someone living here?

Cognizant of what was going through her mind, Vinson explained, “I don’t like anyone to disturb me here. Besides, the minimal furnishings make it easier to clean.”

Does that mean even a cleaner isn’t allowed here?

The next moment, he added, “Other than Carter and the other two, you’re my first

guest.”

Arielle’s lips twitched. “You seem to be quite the loner.”

“Perhaps.” Vinson pointed at the fridge. “The ingredients are all in there.”

Resigned to the fact that she wasn’t there on a tour, Arielle sighed before heading into the kitchen.

The moment she opened the fridge, she was stunned.

There were only two eggs inside the fresh vegetable compartment.

How am I going to make ravioli with just two eggs? Is Vinson overestimating me? I know how to cook ravioli, but I can’t make them out of thin air!

Just when she was about to question Vinson whether he actually bought any ingredients, his voice rang out from outside. “They’re in the freezer.”

With that, Arielle opened the freezer and saw a few packets of frozen ravioli inside.

After rummaging through the compartment, she noticed there was nothing else other than the ravioli.

Did he just bring me here to cook this? Why can’t he do something as simple as this himself?

Vinson explained from behind her, “This batch of ravioli is a new product yet to be launched. We’ll try it after you cook them. If they’re unacceptable, I’ll stop them from bringing it to market.”

Stunned, she turned around to look at Vinson, who had appeared out of nowhere. She asked, "Did you invite me here to test the ravioli?"

After all, anyone could have cooked it. There was no need for her, specifically, to do it.

Can it be that he is worried that I'm hungry? Actually, I haven't eaten anything the entire day, and my stomach is growling.

The next moment, she heard Vinson's reply. "In your dreams. You are good at cooking ravioli. Hence, I just want your honest opinion."

Arielle was exasperated.

Can I be any more narcissistic? As if he would be someone so attentive and thoughtful. Even if he is, he wouldn't behave that way to a friend like me. Instead, he would reserve it for his loved one. What was I even thinking?

Vinson pestered her, "What are you spacing out for? Get cracking now! I'm hungry. Cook some of each available flavor and tell me what you think. If you don't give me a satisfactory answer, I'm not going to let you leave tonight."

Gritting her teeth, Arielle glared at Vinson, "Given that attitude of yours, aren't you

worried that you will never get a girlfriend

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Vinson shrugged. "What's the use of having one? Stop wasting time and start cooking. I'll be waiting outside."

Just as he spoke, he walked out with his cutlery and plate, as if she was his housekeeper.

Arielle stomped her feet in frustration, However, she had no choice as she was bound by her word.

Taking a deep breath, she reminded herself to not make a fuss over the matter. After all, Vinson had helped her significantly that evening.

With that thought in mind, Arielle calmed down and began cooking.

Obedying Vinson's instructions, she cooked some of every different flavor. Soon, she had prepared two plates of freshly cooked ravioli.

After making the sauce, she poured it over the ravioli before bringing out the plates.

Vinson was on the phone when he saw Arielle approach. Pointing at the food, he gestured for Arielle to start first.

Coincidentally, Arielle was hungry. Disregarding Vinson, she began to dig in.

She didn't feel hungry earlier because there were too many things going on. But now that she had a break and Vinson was still on the phone, she realized she was famished. In no time at all, she finished a significant portion of the ravioli.

The amount she ate was a lot more than her usual capacity.

Putting down her cutlery, she sighed in satisfaction.

Since she was done, she subconsciously looked in Vinson's direction.

He had a grim expression on as he uttered into the phone, "There's nothing we can do if we were discovered. You should continue your search and see if you can find anything useful."

When he was done, Vinson ended the call with a grunt.

Looking at his solemn face, Arielle couldn't help but ask, "What happened? Is there anything I can do to help?"

Vinson replied candidly, "Harvey has gone to the location you provided and found their hideout."

Arielle's eyes lit up before she asked curiously, "So what's with that expression of yours?"

Sighing, Vinson explained, "By the time they arrived, it was too late as the men were gone. However, there was some stuff left behind which I instructed them to recover."

After pondering a moment, Arielle suggested, "We can conduct a fingerprint analysis of the items and see if there's a match in the database."

Smiling wryly, Vinson replied, "They already did that, but it was a dead end. The perpetrators' identities are very well hidden. Despite matching against the global database, we were still not able to find any matches."

Arielle's heart sank in response.

The killers that were after Vinson were ruthless. Arielle began to worry now that they were unable to find them.

When she saw the ravioli that was getting cold, she reminded Vinson, "At least we discovered their hideout. I'm sure we can find a lead in there somewhere. Anyway, don't dwell on it so much. Have some ravioli before it gets cold."

Vinson replied, "I already had dinner so I'm not hungry. Anyway, I'll send you home now."

Just as he spoke, he got to his feet.

Stunned, Arielle asked, "But I haven't given you my opinion about the ravioli."

Isn't that why he wanted me to eat them?

However, Vinson waved his hand and answered, "The marketing department has specialists to do it. So, you don't have to. Let's go."

Arielle was dumbstruck as she watched Vinson's silhouette as he walked out.

So why did he invite me here? Is it just so that he can treat me to ravioli?

Arielle didn't ask nor think too much of it, worried that she would get carried away

again and feel a sense of inexplicable disappointment.

Just as their car left the residential area, Arielle made an effort to look at the sign by the entrance. On it were the words "Maplelake Manor" emblazoned in gold.

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Shandie had once mentioned that those who stayed in Maplelake Manor were all wealthy, and it was her dream to live there one day

Soon, the car arrived at the Southall residence.

By then, Arielle was dozing off when she saw Vinson working on something on his tablet intently.

Arielle then glanced over and saw that he was replying to an email.

For a moment, she had mixed feelings.

I didn't know Vinson is usually so busy. Even so, he still brought me out to attend the elites gathering and Yvette's birthday party. But why? What's going on in his mind? Is it because I saved his life before?

Vinson, who was staring at his tablet, suddenly raised his head.

With that, their gazes met. Arielle was caught off guard, and her cheeks blushed as if she had done something guilty.

Vinson grinned and teased, "Do I look

good?"

Arielle's heart palpitated as she coughed to break the awkwardness. With contempt, she said, "You're so narcissistic!"

Seeing her embarrassed look, the smile on Vinson's face widened as he suddenly stretched out his hand to caress Arielle's soft hair.

Arielle froze with that one simple action of Vinson's.

She had gone through a lot and had met different people in her life. However, she had never had a man stroking her hair before.

The temperature in the car rose rapidly as its atmosphere changed.

Vinson's gaze was deep, and his action was gentle. His eyes were filled with emotions that Arielle could not comprehend.

"You..." blurted Arielle.

Her voice seemed to have snapped Vinson back to his senses.

He calmly retrieved his hand and asked, "What brand of shampoo do you use? Your hair is really smooth."

With flushed cheeks, Arielle shot him a furious stare and scowled. "Don't touch me!"

Vinson merely shrugged and replied, "Well, your hair is a mess. I was just trying to comb it for you. Why are you reacting so strongly? Don't tell me no man has

ever touched you? Now that we are on this topic, have you ever been in a relationship?"

"Huh?" Arielle, who had been single all her life, gave an exaggerated smile and answered, "I've dated many more times than you."

Vinson arched a brow at her. "Trying to act experienced, are we? Anyway, let's head back quickly. I think the Southalls are still unaware that Yvette was the one who prepared the gown. Shandie is probably getting disciplined by Henrick now. Hurry up so you can get a good show."

Arielle merely felt uncomfortable and tense when she was alone with Vinson.

Hence, she only agreed in a whisper and opened the car door without looking back at Vinson.

I must have been mesmerized by his beauty. I can't believe my heart was pounding madly just now. In fact, I've never felt like this before.

Halfway through her journey to the doors of the Southall residence, Arielle could not help but touch the spot that Vinson had caressed.

Why is it that the feeling of myself stroking my hair isn't the same as Vinson stroking it? Wait a moment, why am I thinking of Vinson again? I must stop thinking about him!

With that, Arielle patted her face lightly to force herself to stop thinking about Vinson.

Soon after, she arrived at the mansion.

Although there was a slight distance before Arielle entered the mansion, she could already hear Shandie's voice begging for mercy as she tried to explain herself.

"Stop spanking me, Dad! I'm sorry!! shouldn't have worn the gown. But I did not purchase it myself!"

Smack! A loud spank on the flesh could be heard, followed by Henrick's scolding.

"Stop coming up with excuses! I thought you would have turned over a new leaf after spending some time in the monastery. I can't believe you're dumber and more evil than before. I'm ashamed to have a daughter like you!"

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Arielle immediately hurried into the mansion as she could not bear seeing Shandie being disciplined by Henrick.

Besides, Henrick would feel apologetic to Shandie later on for being so fierce once the truth was revealed.

By then, things would just get messy.

Arielle stepped into the living room and saw Henrick whipping a badly-bruised Shandie with a leather belt.

“Dad!” Arielle hurried forward and grabbed Henrick’s arm before he could hit Shandie further.

Henrick calmed down slightly when he saw Arielle. Nonetheless, he was still furious over Shandie’s mistakes.

“Don’t stop me, Sannie. You have no idea what this girl did. Russell was so mad at her!”

Nonetheless, Arielle did not release her grip on Henrick. She looked at him and explained, “Dad, I’ve just returned from the Actonward residence and am fully aware of the whole situation now. Listen to me,

Shandie has nothing to do with it.”

With that, Henrick loosened his grip on his belt and asked with a frown, “What do you

mean?”

Arielle then briefly explained everything to him, and to sum up her story, she said, “All in all, Yvette wanted to set Shandie up. Hence, this has nothing to do with Shandie. So could you please stop disciplining her?”

Upon hearing Arielle’s explanation, Henrick was stunned and Shandie, who was on the

floor, wailed even louder.

Shandie was no fool. After all the misunderstandings had been cleared, she naturally had to milk the grievances she suffered for all it was worth.

Ultimately, Shandie was his biological daughter whom he had taken care of since she was a baby. Hence, the bond between the both of them would naturally be stronger than compared to Arielle. A regretful expression appeared on his face.

Feeling guilty, Henrick squatted down and helped Shandie up. "I'm sorry, Shandie. It's

so harshly. You should have explained yourself sooner."

Shandie thought to herself that she had, in fact, tried to explain herself but was ignored. Nonetheless, she still shook her head pitifully and replied nonchalantly, "It's all right, Dad. You disciplined me because you were not aware of the full story. But I've really reflected a lot after returning from the monastery. I'll definitely not do anything that will make you and Arielle mad again in the future. Also, will both of you please forgive me for my past mistakes?"

Seeing how matured and thoughtful Shandie had become, Henrick felt even guiltier.

He gently helped Shandie up and ordered the butler, "Call a doctor over to treat Shandie's wounds."

"Yes!" replied the butler as he turned to leave the living room.

Right then, Arielle spoke. "Wait a moment!"

The butler froze and turned over to look at

Arielle nervously. "Ms. Arielle, is there anything else? If not, I would need to call a doctor for Ms. Shandie."

Shandie narrowed her eyes when she saw Arielle stopping the butler. She thought Arielle wanted the wounds to leave a scar on her.

As expected, Arielle is still an evil b*tch!

With that, Shandie immediately put on a pitiful look and tugged Henrick's arm. "Dad, why is Arielle stopping the butler from calling a doctor over? Is she not willing to forgive me? But I've admitted my mistakes already."

Henrick was displeased when he saw the teary look on Shandie. He then turned to Arielle and questioned coldly, "Sannie, your sister has apologized to you and has guaranteed that she won't repeat her mistakes. Why won't you forgive her? As an older sister, can't you be more forgiving?"

Arielle sneered inwardly when she heard Henrick. Now you're saying that I'm not forgiving?

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Arielle showed no signs of authentic emotion on her face in response. Instead, she shrugged innocently and uttered, "Dad. Shandie. You're both mistaken. I called out to him not because I wanted to stop him from visiting the doctor but because of the black gown incident. I suspect that Alfred is involved in this matter as well."

Upon hearing her words, Shandie felt a little embarrassed. Darn it! Arielle has taken advantage of a loophole once again!

Henrick softened his expression slightly after listening to those words and said to Shandie, "You shouldn't doubt Arielle at the drop of a hat every time."

He then shifted his gaze toward Alfred, his expression instantly chilling. "Are Sannie's words true?"

Feeling a chill running down his spine, Alfred explained hurriedly, "H-I know nothing about that, Mr. Southall!"

Arielle smirked when she heard those words and responded, "Frankly speaking, Alfred was the person who brought me this gown, Dad. Because the size was too big for me, I gave it to Shandie since she

was going to Yvette's birthday party. As I'm from the countryside, how could I have known that black was a taboo color for Mr. Actonward? It's also understandable for Shandie since she has only returned from the monastery and had no idea about Mr. Actonward's return to the country. However, Alfred has already worked here for so many years. How is it possible for him not to know this kind of stuff?"

Those words from Arielle caused Henrick's countenance to darken even more as he glared at Alfred intimidatingly.

Alfred could not help but tremble in fear at that glare as he noticed the murderous intent in Henrick's eyes.

Since he had worked for the Southalls for many years, Henrick had always trusted Alfred. Sure enough, Henrick had never glared at him in such a manner before.

"H did nothing but receive the gown on Ms. Arielle's behalf. I didn't have a clue what color it was back then..." Alfred tried to defend himself in panic.

"Nonsense! Don't believe in his words, Dad. I suspect that Yvette bribed him from the

very start. When I opened up the parcel of the gown, he urged me to wear it to the Actonward residence no matter what. I didn't give it too much thought back then, but I feel like something is very fishy the more I think about it now. You have to investigate this matter thoroughly. Having a spy from another family sneaking into our family is not a desirable thing. You know that." Arielle spoke to Henrick with a cold tone.

In response, Alfred shook his head vehemently. "I-It was only a coincidence! I didn't even have a clear look at it! You can't declare me guilty because of Ms. Arielle's speculations, Mr. Southall! I've served you for so long! You should know my character!"

To Alfred's dismay, his defense of himself failed to dissipate the iciness from Henrick's expression.

Henrick had always been a skeptical person and would never tolerate any wrongdoings.

Besides, he had nothing to be wary of since Alfred was only a subordinate.

He then commanded his bodyguard to pin Alfred down and requested his assistant to investigate Alfred's bank account.

The pale-faced Alfred's pupils constricted in shock as he protested, "Y-You can't look into my bank account just like that, Mr. Southall! You're invading my privacy!"

When he heard that remonstrance, Henrick narrowed his eyes. "The investigation hasn't even started yet. Is that a demonstration of fear out of guilt? Do you still have the nerve to say you have nothing to do with this matter? How can you work with outsiders to frame my daughter when I've treated you decently all these years?"

Those words rendered Alfred utterly speechless.

Not long after, Henrick received a return call from his assistant and turned on the phone's speaker. "I've looked into his bank account, Mr. Southall. There are quite a few large transactions from a card he rarely uses. The most recent remittance was yesterday. The amount is, um, two hundred thousand."

For a butler who had a salary of around ten

thousand a month, two hundred thousand was a lot of money.

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Two hundred thousand was not an amount most ordinary people could easily earn.

Moreover, it was technically impossible for Alfred to earn that amount of money overnight since he was only an unknowledgeable butler and had no involvement in any businesses outside.

Upon listening to the assistant's words, Alfred began to quiver in fear while his face twisted into a terrified expression.

If that's not an indication of guilt, what is? Henrick cast a fierce glance at Alfred before questioning the assistant, "Who's the sender?"

Unlike before, the assistant was a little hesitant when he spoke this time. "I-It's, u um..."

"Stop stuttering! Tell me already! Is it Yvette Actonward?"

"It's not Yvette, but Mrs. Southall..." The assistant's startled voice sounded from the other end of the line.

"What!" The bewilderment in Henrick's tone was even more striking than the

Before he could ask more questions, his assistant continued, "That remittance is not the only transaction from Mrs. Southall. All of those large transactions ! mentioned earlier were also under her ΠΑΠΠΑ.

That devastating statement from his assistant made Henrick widen his eyes in shock. He would have never imagined that the person who bribed Alfred was his wife, Cindy, instead of Yvette.

If Cindy were beside him right now, Henrick would have given her a brutal slap on her face without question. I knew it! That woman must have been scheming something! Why would she want to curry favor with my shareholders otherwise? Thank goodness I've discovered everything in time!

Little did he know, the person standing behind him, Arielle, was grinning mischievously

"You b*stard!" Henrick landed a kick on Alfred's face to vent his anger.

Consequently, Alfred shrieked in pain with blood dripping out from his nose.

As if that was not enough, Henrick planted two more kicks on Alfred while roaring at him, "What an ungrateful sc'mbag! I'm your rightful owner! How can you betray me!"

He was exuding a terrifying and murderous aura at the moment.

Shortly afterward, Alfred barely had the strength to scream because of the excruciating pain.

Meanwhile, Shandie also widened her eyes in stupefaction after hearing the assistant's words. Is it true? Did Mom partner with Yvette to frame me? No, that's impossible!

With that thought, Shandie suddenly recalled the period before she left the monastery. Back then, Cindy had tried to stop her desperately, even telling her that it could be a trap.

However, she had not taken Cindy's words to heart as she didn't trust her at all.

If it wasn't Mom's doing, who could it be? Following a couple of seconds of pondering, Shandie abruptly glanced toward Arielle.

Coincidentally, Arielle was looking at her as well.

The second their eyes met with each other. Shandie noticed the cold glint in Arielle's eyes and felt shivers down her spine. T-The culprit is Arielle! / freaking knew it!

Arielle then curled her lips into a smirk deliberately and asked, "Why are you looking at me like that, Shandie?"

Her innocent look successfully infuriated Shandie.

Shandie's face fell before she grabbed Henrick's arm and pointed at Arielle. "Arielle also has something to do with this matter, Dad! She must've known about the Actonwards' taboo and ordered someone to deliver the gown over to me! You must investigate her too!"

"Shut up!" The rage in Henrick's heart had not faded even the tiniest bit.

The reason he kicked Alfred was not so much for his indignance toward the butler but Cindy. Given that Cindy was not around, he could only vent his anger on the unfortunate Alfred.

Thanks to Shandie's interference, he became even more enraged as he glared at her with disdain. "You and your mother are both heartless wretches! Not only did Sannie stop me from teaching you a lesson earlier, but she also clarified the matter for your sake by revealing the truth! How can you slander her now? Why did I even decide to raise a daughter like you? What a shame it is to have you as my bio adopted daughter!"

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Henrick looked at Arielle instinctively as he had been very close to giving himself away with that last sentence. To his relief, Arielle had no reactions on her face. Since Arielle is my cash cow right now, it won't do me any good if she knows Shandie is my biological daughter.

In the meantime, Shandie could not believe that she would receive Henrick's disgust toward her in return for accusing Arielle.

Widening her eyes in disbelief, she uttered dumbfoundedly, "I'm telling you the truth, Dad..."

"Say that again if you dare!" Henrick smacked Shandie on her face after that rebuke.

As a result, that slap left a visible imprint on Shandie's face. She covered it while tears sprung to her eyes. "D-Dad? Why did

you..."

Why does Dad choose to believe in a country bumpkin like Arielle instead of a daughter he raised? We're both his biological daughters!

"Don't call me Dad! I don't have a shameful

daughter like you!" Henrick continued to berate Shandie.

Still, he felt exhausted because of the continuous outrage as his expression turned dull

After taking a deep breath, he turned around and instructed the housekeeper, "Monitor her and deliver food to her every day. Do not allow her to leave her room. Anyone who neglects their duty by letting her leave will suffer severe consequences. Understood?"

"Y-Yes, Mr. Southall!" the housekeeper answered with a shudder.

Soon after that instruction, two tall and muscular bodyguards grabbed Shandie's shoulders.

"Please! No!" Shandie struggled to break free from the bodyguards with all her might and strength.

I'd rather stay in the monastery if he locks me up again. At least the monastery has a much bigger space for activity than the house. I will lose my freedom if this persists. No, no!

She also wondered why Henrick had a sudden change of attitude after Arielle's words. He was still feeling sorry for me only minutes ago! Why did things take such an abrupt turn? I can't accept this! I won't!

Seeing that the bodyguards had not brought Shandie upstairs yet, Henrick frowned in displeasure. "Are you two weaklings? Can't you take a woman who's much smaller in size than you upstairs?"

That derogatory remark stamped out the bodyguards' concern instantly as they dragged Shandie upstairs by force straight away.

As expected, no one gave a rip about Shandie when she was wailing non-stop in anger.

"How will you deal with Alfred?" Arielle questioned Henrick as soon as Shandie had disappeared from their sight.

Henrick took a cold glance at the half-dead Alfred before replying emotionlessly, "I remember he has a son who is searching for a job. I will inform the companies associated with me to refuse to hire him as their employee!"

Even though Southall Group was not as influential as Moore Group, its connection was still pretty decent. Once Henrick notified his associates, more than half of the major companies in Jadeborough would never hire Alfred's son.

Upon hearing that upsetting statement, Alfred pleaded, "I-It's all my fault, Mr. Southall! I shouldn't have listened to Mrs. Southall and acted so recklessly. I'm willing to return the money she has given me to you, so please spare my son!"

Shooting Alfred one final penetrating gaze, Henrick waved his hand and ordered, "Break his legs and kick him out. If I see him again, you'll receive the same fate as his. Let me give all of you a solemn reminder. If I find out any one of you still recognizes Cindy as the only head of the house in the future, your fate will be even more horrifying than his!"

Those words stirred the housekeepers to reconsider doing things for Cindy.

In the end, Henrick was the true head of the house, after all.

Despite looking tranquil, a chilling glint

flashed across Arielle's eyes when she heard Henrick's words. In this way, things will never be the same as before even if Cindy returns by some unknown method.

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Since Henrick had gotten rid of Alfred – Cindy's best right hand other than Matthias – Arielle believed Cindy would not be able to cause any trouble in the manor anymore.

Nonetheless, Arielle did not let down her guard because of that. I'm heading to the only profitable department in Southall Group tomorrow. Making early preparations is essential.

Early next morning, a piercing scream from the same floor that Arielle stayed in awakened her from sleep.

She woke up as soon as the scream sounded as she was a light sleeper. What happened?

After putting on a jacket, Arielle left her room hastily and discovered quite a few people standing outside Shandie's room.

At first, she thought Shandie was making a scene for refusing to be locked up, but she sensed something off when she saw the housekeepers' unwillingness to enter the room. It doesn't seem like Shandie is causing trouble intentionally. It looks more like she's

Arielle then walked over to the room while furrowing her brows. Stepping inside, she saw a motionless Shandie lying in a pool of blood.

There was a wound on Shandie's wrist, and the blood most likely came from there.

D-Did Shandie slit her wrist?

She noticed that the blood on the ground had coagulated, while the wound on Shandie's wrist had stopped bleeding as well. Those were indications that Shandie had slit her wrist for a while already.

Witnessing such a scene, Arielle was in utter shock as she never thought Shandie would take her own life. Shandie is pretty foolish, but I've never imagined she would be that nonsensical. What in the world is going on? What she has done is far beyond what I expected

Just as she was about to check whether Shandie was still breathing, Henrick strode toward the room while shouting in a displeased tone, "What is this shameless woman up to this time!"

"D-Dad, something terrible has happened

to Shanniel Take a look at her, quick!" Arielle said, her expression frozen in shock

The annoyed Henrick walked over reluctantly in response. When he saw the pool of blood on the ground, he widened his eyes in bewilderment.

Subsequently, he snapped back to his senses and yelled with a trembling voice, "S-Shandie? S-Shannie?"

To his dismay, Shandie neither responded nor moved.

"Calm down, Dad. I'll go and have a look." Arielle told Larissa to support Henrick before crouching down beside Shandie to check her breathing.

However, she had no intention of doing that as soon as her hand touched Shandie. Her body is as cold as a corpse already. There's no way she's still breathing.

At the outset, she had thought that this was probably another one of Shandie's schemes. However, reality had proved that was not the case as her body was already thoroughly cold. She's dead without

question

Regardless, Arielle did not understand why Shandie wanted to take her own life. It's not as if Henrick has never hit her before. Why couldn't she take it this time? That is unusual of her indeed.

"H-How is she? I-Is she alive?" Henrick questioned with a quivering voice.

Arielle turned around and shook her head at Henrick, her expression sorrowful. "There's no heat left in her body..."

"What?" Henrick dashed forward in disbelief to personally check Shandie's breathing and nearly ran into Arielle.

Fortunately, Larissa managed to steady Arielle in the nick of time, thus preventing her from falling into the pool of blood.

A few seconds later, Henrick's wail of agony echoed around the room. "Why were you so foolish, Shannie! Why did you have to take your own life? I chose to discipline you for your own good! Don't you understand? Shannie!"

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Disheartened upon seeing Shandie's corpse, tears slid down Henrick's face uncontrollably.

Witnessing the man grieving over his deceased daughter, the bystanders inevitably felt distressed.

It was almost like he really was a father crying over his daughter's death.

The housekeepers crowded around Henrick and offered their condolences, but only Arielle understood what he truly felt.

He had spent immense effort and money to nurture Shandie, and she was quite pretty when dressed up appropriately. With her appeal, she could undoubtedly marry into a wealthy family in Jadeborough. Her sudden death was solely a blow to his master plan.

Hence, he was not grieving for the loss of a daughter but a useful pawn.

Arielle did not further contemplate Henrick's feelings. She merely stared intensely at the dagger in Shandie's hand.

Suddenly, she found something wrong.

She stealthily took out her phone and snapped some pictures of the scene.

Only then did she walk toward Henrick and feign sorrow. "Dad, I'm as saddened as you are. However, now is not the time to mourn because I think Shandie's death might not be as simple as it seems. We should contact the police first."

As Shandie and Arielle did not see eye to eye, unfavorable rumors would arise from the former's death.

To prevent troublesome gossips, she had to prove her innocence.

However, Henrick immediately refused, "Why should we contact the police? Look at her! It's obvious that she cut her wrist. Do you want the outsiders to gossip about us?"

His words were indeed true. Besides, the injuries on Shandie's back were his work. Thus, if the police were to investigate, he would be the first suspect.

Even if he could prove his innocence, rumors would still spread among the public

As he was concerned about his reputation, he would never agree to the risky measure.

Disappointed, Arielle mentally shook her head. She had anticipated his refusal, which was why she discreetly took the photos earlier.

As Henrick was adamant in his stance, she did not bother mentioning the police again. Instead, she suggested, "Still, we should hold a funeral for Shandie. However, regarding Aunt Cindy..."

Henrick stood up and assured in a pained tone, "I'll appoint someone to fetch her. Also, we'll announce to the public that Shandie passed away from an illness. You don't need to worry about this matter anymore. If the news gets out, it will impede your marriage into the Nightshire family. Right now, you should head back to your room and take a rest. I'll handle this matter."

"All right." Arielle nodded docilely as she secretly scorned him, *He's still thinking about my marriage to the Nightshire family at such a moment? What an unbelievable man.*

Before leaving, she stole a glance at Shandie's corpse. Upon confirming she had not overlooked any details, she turned and walked back to her room as she gestured for Larissa to follow her.

Right after they entered her room, Arielle immediately questioned, "When I arrived, you were already there. Do you know what happened? Who was the first to discover the corpse?"

With Arielle's help, Larissa's child had received treatment abroad and convalesced after some time. As such, she had now devoted herself wholeheartedly to Arielle.

She answered truthfully, "I'm in charge of the cleaning of this household. The first person to discover the corpse was a housekeeper working with me today. As you and Mr. Southall occasionally come back late, we usually start mopping the floor around five in the morning, avoiding accidents from occurring due to the slippery floor."