

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?"



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Henrick was finally relieved after receiving the much needed reassurance from Arielle.

He queried further, "Did Mr. Nightshire say anything else?"

Right when Arielle was about to answer, Henrick's phone rang.

He took a glance at it and quickly picked up the call. "Hello, Mr. Chance? Continuing the collaboration? Oh, how wonderful, thank you very much! Yes, even if we have any disagreement in the future, we should communicate more effectively. Sure, you go ahead."

After hanging up, Henrick stared at Arielle approvingly. "That's my daughter, smart and capable! The other party has confirmed their willingness to collaborate with us."

Arielle flashed a faint smile. *Am I not smart and capable? I have to promise to make a ravioli feast for Vinson, in exchange for that business opportunity.*

Right when she wanted to respond to him, Cindy came out, all smiles. "I've heard... Shannie, thanks for saving my family."

Arielle scrutinized Cindy's expression and realized that she was truly glad. It did not look like she was faking it.

Seems like Cindy's plot is going well so far. She's probably waiting to see how I'll fall from the throne

and into a quagmire.

Arielle pretended not to suspect anything and smiled sheepishly.

The next moment, Cindy held Arielle's hand. "I've asked the kitchen to make some herbal soup for you. My heart aches seeing you so tired. Go and drink it while it's hot. Besides nourishing your body, it has other advantages too."

I guess the other benefit of the soup is to boost fertility, especially at this so-called critical moment.

Arielle studied Cindy's every gesture. *She must be scheming something huge this time.*

Henrick was pleased to see how polite and courteous Cindy was.

Maybe I shouldn't sleep in the study room and neglected Cindy. No matter how misbehaved Shandie is, it's got nothing to do with Cindy. I shouldn't have blamed it on her.

"Go ahead and finish your soup. Don't waste Cindy's effort. We'll catch up thereafter," Henrick advised.

As he spoke, he held Cindy's hand like a loving couple.

If it was in the past, Arielle would have turned sour seeing such a scene. That was because she felt so sorry for her mother. Conversely, there was no negative emotions felt by her now. She could even

smile sweetly at them. "Sure, I'll drink it now."

This couple deserves to be with each other, or they will harm more people. Then again, Cindy might not want to be locked down with just one man...

With her own thoughts playing in her mind, Arielle strode toward the kitchen and drank the herbal soup.

Cindy was not a fool to do something nasty to the soup which others knew was served by her.

However, to be safe, Arielle smelled the soup first. The herbs would be nutritious enough to supplement her body's needs after receiving acupuncture treatments.

When she was done, Henrick asked to see her.

He requested for all the housekeepers to leave the room, keeping only Cindy by his side. Chuckling, he asked, "Last night... did Mr. Nightshire promise you anything?"

Arielle nodded. "He did mention that Nightshire Group won't terminate our projects."

Henrick was rather frustrated. "No, I'm not asking about this. Besides this... is there anything else? Did he promise to marry you?"

A mocking look flitted past Arielle's eyes. *Given an inch, he's trying to take a mile.*

Chapter 131



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After obtaining the contract, Henrick wanted Arielle to marry into the Nightshire family.

Concealing the expression in her eyes, Arielle shook her head. "No, he didn't say anything else besides agreeing to this."

Sighing, Henrick was disappointed. "Forget it. As long as we've won this contract, it's..."

"How is that possible?" Cindy was enraged. "Sannie is a pure and innocent girl. How can we just let him be after our dear girl has lost her virginity to him? Dear, are you out of your mind? We must insist that he take responsibility for this."

Henrick was in a dilemma.

I do want him to pay for it, but it's Vinson Nightshire we're talking about. He's no Tom, Dick or Harry. What if we accidentally step on his toes and get ourselves into deep trouble. We might lose more than just a contract. Is that worthwhile?

Cindy continued to chime in, "Dear, you can't just think for the sake of your company, you need to prioritize Sannie. Don't you know that a girl's dignity is of utmost importance? How should Sannie marry others if the word gets out?"

Henrick fell silent. He did not consider anything else at that time, except for ways to save his company.

Cindy added fuel to the fire. "Let's go to the Nightshires! They can't deny this. If they do, we'll

report it to the police. Dear, think carefully.”

Henrick felt so uncomfortable and nervous at the same time; he could not seem to bring himself to do what Cindy had suggested.

On the other hand, Cindy's got a point. It's the best time now to make demands from Vinson. If we drag it longer, the police won't be able to test anything. In addition, Vinson can deny it all.

Upon contemplating, Henrick finally decided to seize the opportunity and take action.

He said righteously, “You're right! I can't allow him to trample on my daughter's dignity!”

Arielle could see through the both of them.

Cindy is paving the way for her vicious plan whereas Henrick is blinded by greed.

They're always up to no good. Henrick doesn't realize that my reputation will be totally ruined once he makes a scene about this.

Will the Nightshires feel threatened? Absolutely not!

Unfortunately, Arielle would be the only victim in this incident. Henrick's plan could only work provided that Vinson did sleep with Arielle and treated her like a jerk thereafter.

The more Arielle thought about this, the more she grew to hate them.

The persistent Cindy continued to persuade Henrick. "Dear, do you want to do it now? Bring Sammie over to the Nightshires and gain the upper hand."

His greedy eyes lit up.

Yes, that's right! Good point.

Turning to Alfred, he ordered, "Ask the chauffeur to get ready. I'm going to see Mr. Nightshire."

Cindy quickly reminded him, "Although Mr. Nightshire is a brilliant man, I'm afraid it's not his decision to make when it comes to marriage. He has to obey his elders, so we should pay Mrs. Nightshire a visit."

Henrick hesitated at the sound of the suggestion.

Susanne was well known for her peculiarity. She cared a lot about family backgrounds and would disregard anyone from a certain walks of life even if that individual was comparatively wealthy.

"Is it a good idea to go straight to... Mrs. Nightshire? She's... Um... You do know what her response was when I wanted to arrange you to play cards with her, right?"

Cindy's face darkened as she recalled a humiliating incident.



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Once, Henrick arranged for Cindy to meet Susanne at her regular card game place because Cindy wanted to get into the same social circle as Susanne. The latter did not even take a glance at her when she shooed Cindy away. Till date, Cindy was still scarred by Susanne's scornful remarks, "Who in their right mind would think that a ragtag and bobtail can play cards with me?"

From that day onward, it had never crossed Cindy's mind to make any contact with Susanne.

Trying to shake herself off the bad memory, Cindy spoke assertively, "No matter how powerful the Nightshires are, I'm certain that they won't like any gossips and scandals to taint their family name. We're living in the Internet era. If this matter goes viral, she'll no longer have the last say in this."

"You're right. We should go to them now." Henrick instructed Arielle, "Go and get changed into something more decent. We'll head to the Nightshire residence right away."

Arielle squinted her eyes and shook her head. "I'm not going."

Henrick furrowed his brows while Cindy rushed to speak first, "Sannie, don't be stubborn. We are doing this for your sake. Marrying into the Nightshire family is the best option to ensure that you live a life of abundance and with dignity."

Cindy insisted to bring Arielle along to the Nightshires and force them to accept her.

We have to make a big fuss about this, so that people will know that Arielle and Vinson are together. Then, we shall expose her scandal with another man that will completely ruin her reputation. This is the only way for Arielle to get in the bad book of the Nightshires.

Cindy rehearsed her wicked plan in her head.

Herrick gave Cindy an approving look. Subsequently, he commanded, "Cindy is thinking for your sake. Go get ready!"

Am I an obedient person who would just welcome any kind of oppression? Sorry, that's not part of my characteristics.

Surely, Arielle had sniffed out Cindy's evil scheme.

Although she was confident that she could tackle any of Cindy's move, things would be very different once they stepped foot into the Nightshire residence.

Arielle did not wish to become the subject of everybody's gossip. She only wanted to investigate her mother's case secretly, without anyone's knowledge.

At least for this period of time, I must stay out of the limelight.

She glanced at Cindy and smirked. "Dad, it's not that I'm not willing to go, but there's no reason to go."

Puzzled, Henrick asked, "What do you mean?"

Arielle sighed. "Actually, I didn't want to tell you earlier because I was still deciding."

Her statement made Henrick even more baffled. "Deciding on what?"

"Before leaving the hotel today, Mr. Nightshire asked me to consider being his girlfriend," Arielle said timidly.

"What?"

"Huh?"

Both Henrick and Cindy snapped their heads upward instantly. One was shocked to the core whereas the other beamed with joy.

Henrick interrogated her, "Are you serious? Is that true? What else did Mr. Nightshire say?"

Arielle continued to put on an act. "It's true. Well, this is a private matter... I won't lie to anyone about this. If you don't believe me, you can ask Mr. Nightshire. I'll give him a call now."

Arielle pretended to fish for her phone from her bag.

"No, no, don't." Henrick stopped her instantly.

If Vinson has said so, Arielle absolutely has an advantage in this matter. Calling him would be redundant and make us look too petty. A girl should

play hard to get in order to make the guy go crazy about her.

Henrick was thrilled but pretended to be angry. "You're such a nuisance. Why did you keep this important detail a secret? Between us father and daughter, you should come clean with me."



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Wearing a naive expression on her face, Arielle replied, "I... I haven't thought it through yet. After all, I've only known him for a short while. Won't it be too reckless if I say yes to him hastily?"

"That's right! Don't give him an answer now. Otherwise, he might think that you're an easy target." Henrick was super satisfied with his daughter.

Luck favors the gullible one. Perhaps that's what Vinson was attracted to, the sweet and ignorant type.

Seeing how astonished Cindy was, a smug appeared on Arielle's face. "Do we still need to go to the Nightshire residence?"

"No, we are not!"

Of course not. We shouldn't disrupt it since everything seems to be going well. We'll shoot ourselves in the foot if we were to show our cards to early and demand benefits at this point.

"Since we're not heading out..." Arielle yawned. "Then, I'll go upstairs and take a rest. I'm really exhausted. I have one more shoot this afternoon as the ambassador of Soir Coffee."

"Quickly go and have a good rest." Henrick held her hand and asked with utmost concern, "Can you go up by yourself?"

Arielle nodded.

He said affectionately, "Rest well. I'll make sure no one disturbs you until you wake up."

"Thanks, Dad. I'll go up now." Arielle smiled.

Before striding upstairs, she purposely said to Cindy, "Thanks, Aunt Cindy. I'll remember your kind thoughts and return you the favor when I'm married into the Nightshire family."

Her words sent a cold chill down Cindy's spine. At the same time, she was infuriated.

How dare she threatens me! It's such a pity to lose even before the game begins.

Cindy could only faked a smile and gestured Arielle to go to her room.

Henrick was grinning from ear to ear. After sending Arielle upstairs, he instructed Cindy, "Henceforth, you should personally supervise the kitchen to make more nutrient-dense foods for Sannie every day. She's been working really hard recently. Also, get her the best etiquette coach soonest possible."

Cindy's smile stiffened.

The best etiquette coach for that country bumpkin? What gives? My darling daughter has never even had one.

While Arielle could enjoy scrumptious food daily, Shandie was suffering in the temple. Cindy almost broke down at the thought of it.

I must think of a way to get Shannie back and destroy Arielle once and for all at Yvette's banquet.

Clenching her fists, glints of hatred flashed across her eyes.

You're smug? It won't be for long until you're doomed, Arielle.

Meanwhile, the exhausted Arielle removed her shoes and crawled into her bed the moment she entered her room.

Although she was tremendously tired, she still spent some time recalling the series of events throughout the day, to check that there was no loophole.

Then, she slept soundly.

Three hours later, Arielle was woken up by the alarm clock.

She had applied for a half-day leave from Vinson. Therefore, she needed to complete the commercial shoot in the afternoon.

She wanted to accomplish all the projects related to Soir Coffee and concentrate on her personal matters.

Since it was still early, Arielle slept in a little bit more.

She felt more refreshed after getting some shuteye.

Picking up her phone, she realized that there was a text message from Iris.

"Ms. Sannie, the filming set for today is confirmed to be at Southall Group. It's a stone's throw away from where you're at, so you can come over slightly later. By the way, I've got some news for you. The outrageous woman has been fired and replaced by a new person in charge. As to who that is... you'll find out as soon as you're here."



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Arielle really liked Iris—an active girl who treated everyone sincerely. She did not ask further but just simply acknowledged her text message, knowing that Iris wanted to keep her in suspense. After washing up, she went downstairs calmly.

She was guessing Henrick would be waiting for her since the location of the shoot was at Southall Group.

Just as she had expected, the moment she walked into the living room, Henrick was already there, reading newspaper on the couch.

Alerted by the footsteps, Henrick turned his head, all smiles. "My darling daughter is up? Soir Coffee contacted me an hour ago to ask for my permission to use our premises as a filming set. Fortunately for them, it's not a hectic period at the office, so I gave them the green light. I'll go to the company with you and take a look at how the shoot will be done."

Arielle responded obediently with a sweet smile, "Sure."

She scanned the living room and Cindy was nowhere to be seen. "Where's Aunt Cindy?"

"Oh... She's been learning how to do business with me over the years. Now that I'm accompanying you to the shoot today, I've deputized her to monitor some projects."

"She... as your deputy? Dad, I don't know if I should say this..." Arielle said with a hint of dread.

"Go ahead." He looked at her with a gentle gaze.

Arielle shared, "When I was in the countryside, I've seen many women betrayed their men after having a taste of wealth and power. Dad, you should take note of these things and don't hand over all of your business to others. I'm not doubtful of Aunt Cindy's character, but isn't it safer to remain wary than to be sorry later? What do you think?"

Henrick waved his hand. "Rest assured that your Aunt Cindy only has a soft spot for me. Whatever you've said won't happen. I know what to do. Don't worry about these things."

Even though Henrick said so verbally, he was reminding himself deep down to be more vigilant.

It's funny how a gullible girl like Arielle can think of such things whereas I've not paid attention to it. Perhaps it's time to watch out for Cindy.

"That's great." Arielle pretended not to take the matter to heart.

However, she knew that her analogy would sow a seed of suspicion in Henrick's heart as he had always been a skeptical person. With this seemingly unintentional reminder, Arielle believed that Henrick would start to be more cautious around Cindy.

When the time is right, Arielle would expose the love affairs between Cindy and Matthias and send the Southalls into a frenzy of rage.

"Oh, yes, there's one more thing I forgot to tell you. Mr. Nightshire suggested for me to acquire some knowledge in business if I were to be his girlfriend. Do you..."

"That's easy!" Henrick interrupted her, "Come with me to the company once you're done shooting for Soir Coffee. As his fiancée, you should indeed learn about trading. This will equip you to help him out in the future."

At that moment, Henrick had completely forgotten how much he loathed for women to get involved in business back then.

Marrying any ordinary rich man was incomparable to marrying into the Nightshire family. Though Henrick had suspected something between Arielle and Vinson, he never took it seriously. It was something he could only dream. Thinking that the faint thought in the past could now become his dream come true made him unbelievably happy.

Needless to say, learning something other girls don't know will give Arielle that added value and advantage to be married into the Nightshires, an extraordinary family.

In his excitement, he was tremendously satisfied with his daughter, Arielle.

He then thought about Maureen. *That woman was so strict. She never consumed any salty or oily food, and we've only slept together once from the day we got married till the day she died. Yet, she's given me such a pleasant surprise, my good-natured*

daughter.



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