

Stunned, Arielle asked curiously, "Why?"

Just as she spoke, her breath blew past two strands of stray hair, tempting Vinson to tuck them back behind her ear.

However, he tried hard to suppress the urge to do it. Chuckling awkwardly, he averted his gaze and held her hand. "It's nothing."

He just resented others ogling at her beauty.

Arielle felt puzzled over the exchange.

Nevertheless, as his plus one, she naturally accepted the hand he offered.

Holding each other's hands, they sauntered down the red carpet together.

Given how amazing both of them looked, they were undoubtedly the most compatible couple at the event.

As the emcee was the first to regain his senses, he remarked excitedly, "It's a surprise to see Mr. Nightshire attending this year's event with a companion. Mr. Nightshire, come, please sign here before

you enter."

After receiving a fountain pen from an usher, Vinson signed his name neatly before leading Arielle inside.

Many of the guests regained their senses only after Vinson and Arielle disappeared into the venue.

"Who is that girl? She's absolutely stunning!"

"Given that she came with Mr. Nightshire, she definitely isn't someone ordinary. I must chat them up later."

Of course, there would naturally be negative comments.

"I know who she is. So what if she's pretty? She is the daughter that the Southalls were reunited with. She grew up in the village. Other than being pretty, I don't think she is good for anything else."

"Huh? She grew up in a village? Tsk-tsk, that means she won't amount to much at all."

"It is a tradition of this event for everyone

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to participate in a round-robin chess tournament. The participants ranked at the bottom ten will be asked to leave the venue. As a village girl, I'm not sure if she even knows what chess is..."

"Hahaha, it seems she is going to be forced to leave right after entering."

While making snide remarks, they just couldn't wait to see Arielle being kicked out after losing.

Coincidentally, Vinson heard their conversation and shot a glare in their direction.

The few of them quickly lowered their heads in guilt.

They might dare to ridicule Arielle, but definitely did not have the guts to do the same to Vinson.

After recovering his gaze, Vinson led Arielle into the venue.

Having heard their words also, Arielle asked curiously, "What kind of gathering is this?"



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"This is the national Haut Monde, where all the elites from every industry and the top financiers of the country gather. They also include top detectives and police officers in the country. I will introduce you to them later. In the event you need any help, you can always look for them. Of course, they aren't the main reason why I have brought you here. Instead, we're here to see Josiah Doyle."

"Josiah Doyle? Who is he?"

Vinson explained, "The chairman of Noah Group who is also a chess fanatic. Coincidentally, your mom is a very skilled chess player. Based on my investigations, he is a friend of hers and likely knows who your biological father is."

Arielle widened her eyes in shock.

*So, it seems Vinson didn't bring me here to accompany him. Instead...*

Touched by his gesture, Arielle replied, "Thank you. I realize that there's no way I can thank you enough for all that you have done for me."

Vinson couldn't help but smile. "It's not like

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you did any lesser for me.”

Returning his smile, Arielle asked, “So, why is chess played during the Haut Monde? Also, why does the bottom ten need to leave the venue?”

Vinson replied, “The very first Haut Monde was founded by Mr. Hans Jewell. He was renowned for his skills in chess. Ever since then, playing chess became a tradition to kick off the event.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Vinson added, "But, you don't have to worry as I have made some arrangements. As you are my guest and not a member of the Haut Monde, you don't have to participate in the chess tournament."

However, Arielle was stunned.

*Hans Jewell? My student, Hans?*

Arielle had a talent for chess. During an international tournament, she had beaten Hans before.

Ever since then, Hans pestered her to be his teacher until she had no choice but to take him in as her student.

*So, it seems Hans is a renowned chess player in this country. What a coincidence.*

*However, a few years have passed since then, I wonder if his skills have improved.*

Lifting her gaze, Arielle requested, "In that case, can I trouble you to let the organizers know that I want to participate in the chess tournament too? The round-robin format sounds exciting."

When Vinson saw the sparkle in Arielle's



eye, he raised his eyebrow in surprise. "Do you know how to play chess?"

"A little bit."

Vinson fell silent.

During the acupuncture session and explosion incident, Arielle used the words "a little" too.

Therefore, he would be a fool to believe Arielle when she used the words "a little" ever again.

"Fine. Since you're keen to play, I'll let them know. Go ahead and have some hors d'oeuvres while you wait for me here. Just don't stray away."

"Alright." Arielle let out a mesmerizing smile, causing Vinson's heart to race.

He assumed that he had a high level of self-restraint. But, when it came to Arielle, he just couldn't keep himself in check.

*It's better not to look at her so often.*

Averting his gaze, Vinson went off at once.

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The moment he left, many other guests approached Arielle to greet her.

In a very short time, her hands were full of name cards.

Meanwhile, she glanced at the chairman of Noah Group and realized that he was an elderly man. Silent the entire time, he didn't greet anyone at all.

Anyone who approached him would be quickly dispatched after a quick exchange of pleasantries.

That was the reason why Vinson didn't introduce her to him.

Instead of taking the initiative to meet him, she might as well wait for him to come over.

However, she just wasn't sure how skillful he was at chess and whether she was good enough to attract his attention.

Just when Arielle was feeling conflicted, a few glamorous-looking socialites approached her with champagne glasses in their hands.



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The leader among them, who was wearing a striking yellow gown, was the first to greet her, "Ms. Moore, it's been a while. Do you still remember me?"

Looking at her, Arielle couldn't recall who she was.

After apologizing cordially, she asked, "I have just returned to Jadeborough and don't know many people. May I know who you may be?"

The lady thrust her chin proudly into the air to reveal a necklace filled with Swarovski diamonds.

She elaborated, "My name is Kelsea Morgan and Carter is my cousin. We met at Shandie's birthday party before this."

Arielle had a sudden realization.

*Since she is Carter's cousin, I suppose she is a friend?*

Just when Arielle smiled, she heard Kelsea sneer. "It seems clothes do make the man. The last time I saw you at the Southall residence, you smelled terrible, just like a beggar. But today, your beautiful outfit

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makes a world of difference. However, I still wonder if you have taken a proper bath? After staying in the village for so many years, had the stench gotten into your blood too?"

Her snide remarks wiped the smile off Arielle's face.



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Arielle answered coldly, "I had no recollection of you the last time. This time, given that you are wearing diamonds the size of pigeon eggs, you really look different too. Next time, I'll just remember you as the pigeon egg lady."

Kelsea's expression darkened at once.

"Shut up! Who do you think you're talking to? I'm one of the Morgans!"

Kelsea's friends felt indignant on her behalf.

"You really are an impudent girl from the village. You have no shame at all!"

"Exactly! The chess tournament is going to start soon. If you don't want to be kicked out, you'd better leave voluntarily now."

When Kelsea heard how her friends ridiculed Arielle, her mood improved tremendously.

She was looking forward to the moment when Arielle would be asked to leave.

*So what if she is Vinson's companion?*



*Given that playing chess is a long-time tradition of the Haut Monde, she would be asked to leave in the event she loses even if she is Vinson's guest.*

*By then, she will be humiliated and won't dare to show her face in Jadeborough anymore.*

Holding that thought, Kelsea pretended to show some concern. "Enough, everyone. It wasn't her choice to grow up in a village. If you happen to play against her later, remember to take it easy, so that she wouldn't lose the game too badly."

The girls laughed together. "We do want to help her. But, if she doesn't know how to arrange the pieces or even their names, there's very little we can do about it."

Arielle found their words amusing. Even if all of them were rolled into one, they wouldn't even come close to beating her still.

Tucking aside the stray hair over her forehead, she plainly replied, "Since the few of you know how to play, I will see you at the chessboard later."

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Just as she spoke, Vinson came back.

When he saw Arielle being surrounded, he quickly returned to her side.

Standing in front of her to protect her subconsciously, he glared frostily at the group.

As the socialites felt a chill down their spine, all of them fell silent at once.

Only Kelsea, on the account she was Carter's cousin, dared to greet Vinson. "Vinson..."

She was aware that he and Carter were good friends. Hence, she expected him to at least show her some respect on Carter's account.

However, Vinson ignored her as if she was invisible.

Feeling humiliated, Kelsea bit her lip in shame.

All she saw was Vinson turning to ask Arielle in a protective tone. "Are they bullying you?"

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When Kelsea saw how gently Vinson spoke to Arielle, she bit her lip even harder, to the extent it lost all color.

She had a crush on Vinson since they were young. However, she never dared confess her feelings as she felt no one in Jadeborough was worthy of him.

Since nobody ever snagged him, she too resigned herself to fate.

Unfortunately, when she saw how much concern Vinson was showing Arielle, which had never happened to anyone else before, she felt as if her world had imploded.

As hatred welled up within her, both her hands clenched into fists.

When Arielle heard Vinson's reassuring words, her heart melted inexplicably.

Shaking her head, she replied with a smile. "No, they didn't bully me. Instead, we were talking about the chess tournament."

"I see." Vinson nodded. Ignoring Kelsea and the others, he continued, "There's a friend whom I would like you to meet."



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Come with me."

"Sure." Arielle nodded before leaving with Vinson.

Once both of them had left, Kelsea and her friends began to chatter incessantly.

"Why does Mr. Nightshire fancy someone from the village? Are looks everything? I can't believe it!"

"That aside, I must admit there's really no one prettier than her."

"Didn't her mom use to be the prettiest girl in Jadeborough? It appears she has taken after her mom."

"Huh, if only I was half as pretty as her. I wouldn't have lost to Yvette during the beauty contest..."

Kelsea's expression darkened when she heard their discussion. Unable to bear it anymore, she barked, "Enough! Stop talking about it!"