

Matthias heard the voice as well. After hugging Cindy hastily, he spun around and climbed up the locust tree to the wall before leaping down outside.

"Cindy!"

Louisa's voice sounded increasingly nearer.

Pretending as though nothing had happened, Cindy whirled around in surprise and trotted over to her. "Why are you up so early, Louisa?"

Louisa regarded her coldly and drawled, "I seem to have seen someone else here earlier."

In response, Cindy spread her hands innocently. "There's no one else here. You must have been seeing things, Louisa. I just got up early and didn't want to wake you, so I decided to get out of bed and take a walk to get some fresh air."

Louisa's expression was grim, making it clear as day that she didn't believe the other woman.

But just as she was about to say

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something else, a monk in green robes came over and whispered a few words in her ear.

Her expression changed slightly, and there was a conflicted look in her eyes as she gazed at Cindy.

Cindy felt very much ill at ease at her odd scrutiny.

*Don't tell me they spotted Matthias? But that shouldn't be possible. He was in the army many years back, and he still keeps in shape to this very day. As such, his movements are exceedingly light and agile. He couldn't possibly have been discovered so easily.*

While she was panicking inwardly, Louisa finally murmured, "You can go back now."

Cindy didn't realize the meaning of her words at first and even thought that Louisa was asking her to go back to her room. Thus, she nodded fervently. "I'll go back and wash up right away in preparation for fetching water."

However, Louisa's brows furrowed, and she retorted, "I'm not asking you to return

to your room. I'm saying that you can go home."

Cindy was instantly stumped. With her eyes almost popping out of her head in disbelief, she exclaimed, "Are you joking with me, Louisa?"

Louisa merely uttered with a frigid expression on her face, "The car is already waiting outside. Wait for me for a bit. I'll pack some things and go back with you."

At that turn of events, incredulity was written all over Cindy's face.

"Did Rick finally decide to allow me home?"

After grunting in affirmation, Louisa was just about to get to the main point when Louisa interrupted her excitedly, exclaiming, "I'll go back to the room and wash up for a bit before going home!"

As she said that, she dashed toward her bedroom without waiting for Louisa to finish speaking.

Upon seeing that she couldn't get Cindy to listen, Louisa decided to just forget about

*it. Anyway, she'll know about Shandie's death after arriving back at the Southall residence later.*

She then clasped her hands together and offered up a prayer for Shandie's soul with her eyes closed.

The death of a person was just like the dousing of a candle, but Shandie's death was too early and sudden.

After the simple prayer, Louisa sighed and muttered, "Sure enough, one has to do good to have good karma..."

She packed up in no time and waited at the gate. But even after she had waited for a long time, there was no sign of Cindy. Just when she was at the end of her patience and decided to go in and look for her, Cindy finally appeared at the monastery gate.

Louisa looked up, only to see that Cindy had changed into the dazzling dress she wore when she first came to the monastery and had put on heavy makeup on her face. In short, she looked extremely striking.



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Her brows immediately knitted together, and she snapped in displeasure, "Why are you dressed in such a manner considering the occasion today? Go back and change into something else!"

Cindy, however, merely shrugged and replied, "This is the only outfit I brought here. I can't wear those dull clothes of yours back, can I?"

Louisa stared at her coldly.

"Dull clothes? They were all made painstakingly. Wearing my clothes is far better than this attire of yours."

At that, Cindy snorted. "Louisa, I no longer have to stay in the monastery, so why do you have to bother about how I dress? You have no more say in whatever I wear now," she retorted.

*Since I'm now out of that place, I'll never again return! As such, I don't need to ingratiate myself to her. And in turn, I naturally won't listen to her. What if people laugh at me if I were to wear those dull clothes of hers back? How am I to survive in the elite circles of Jadeborough?*

"How dare you!" Louisa was so enraged at Cindy's attitude that she almost blacked out.

But after so many years of meditation, she managed to compose herself in no time. Casting her a sidelong glance, she murmured, "All right, then. Go ahead and dress however you want. Just don't regret it later."

Cindy felt that something was off, but she couldn't exactly put her finger on it.

Failing to discern whatever was bugging her, she decided to just put it to the back of her mind. With a sneer tugging at her lips, she climbed into the car.

To her surprise, Louisa slipped into the car as well in the next moment.

"You're going back with me, Louisa?" Cindy queried in puzzlement.

However, Louisa ignored her and closed her eyes as she started meditating on scriptures again.

Inwardly, Cindy groused, *Could it be that she plans to speak ill of me in front of*

*Henrick later? Ugh! She's truly an evil old biddy!*

Seething on the inside, she inwardly decided that she would make the first move this time around.

*First things first, I'll complain about Louisa before Henrick! After all, I've been put through the wringer during my time at the monastery, so she can't deny it even if she wants to do so! Henrick is my husband, after all, so I don't believe that he'll remain unmoved!*

The car moved slowly, but it soon went onto the main road and headed toward the Southall residence.

While Cindy was on her way back, Arielle had already arrived at the Southall residence with Vinson.

Now that she was back an hour later, the entire place was bedecked in white.

The red lanterns at the entrance to the manor had been changed to white, and the red paper cutouts above the door had also been replaced with white paper cutouts. Countless white flowers could be seen

both inside and outside the manor. From afar, the entire Southall residence seemed to be blanketed by a layer of white mist.

When they reached the manor gates, the flower stands there were particularly conspicuous.

Meanwhile, the help was also dressed in black mourning garments.

Arielle stood at the door for several seconds before she turned and said to Vinson in a conflicted voice, "Even now, I find it all rather unreal."

*Shandie's death was too sudden, catching me wholly off guard. However, it's also apparent that whoever the killer is truly ruthless. To warn me, he actually killed Shandie. It's truly quite scary!*

For the first time, she felt a chill running down her spine as the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end.

Vinson said nothing, merely taking her hand in his.

Arielle reflexively wanted to retract her hand, only to hear the man reminding her



in a whisper, "If we're putting on an act, we've got to make it believable. We're going to be getting married soon, after all."

Only then did Arielle remember their reason for coming back here. She grasped his hand in return, and the two of them walked into the manor hand in hand.

Henrick was in the living room, directing the help in decorating the place.

"Remove the red flowers in the vase..."

Before he had finished speaking, he spotted Arielle and Vinson the moment he turned his head.

Fear struck him when he saw the latter, fearing that Vinson was disgruntled because he was asking for too much in compensation.

But in the next moment, he glimpsed their clasped hands. All at once, his fright turned into delight, and he rushed forward with a wide smile on his face. "Why are you here, Mr. Nightshire? Could it be that Sannie brought you here to offer your condolences?"

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Vinson nodded in response. "I heard from Sannie that Shandie had suddenly passed away, so I came over to have a look. My deepest condolences to you and your family. Do take care of yourself."

Hearing that, Henrick put on a grief-stricken expression at once. He pretended to wipe his tears while nodding and lamenting, "Fortunately... Fortunately, I found Sannie. Otherwise, I'd be all alone in the world right now."

Not in the mood to watch him putting on a show, Arielle cut straight to the point. "Dad, there's actually another reason Vinson and I came over today."

Henrick grew apprehensive once more, and he swallowed before asking, "Is there anything else, Mr. Nightshire?"



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Holding Arielle's hand, Vinson declared, "Actually, it's not quite appropriate to mention this matter today, but I'm the kind of person who doesn't like to delay anything, including marriage."

Taken aback, Henrick repeated his words with eyes as wide as saucers. "Including marriage? What... do you mean by that?"

Glancing at Arielle, Vinson replied, "Mr. Southall, I'd like to marry Arielle, so I came here with her to get her household registry."

Henrick was instantly stupefied. Likewise, the help who heard that from the side were all struck dumb.

Without waiting for him to gather his wits about him, Vinson continued, "I'm planning to register my marriage with Sannie today. The wedding will be held later when we both have the time to do so. After all, preparations are needed for a wedding. I want to give Sannie a grand wedding when all preparations have been made. I wonder if you'll agree to us getting married, Mr. Southall?"

While Henrick was still dazed, words had

already escaped from his mouth. "Of course!"

*Of course, I agree! My greatest dream is to have Arielle marry into the Nightshire family so that I can also benefit from it! Why would I possibly object? I've even had several dreams where I wanted to move City Hall right before them both!*

Snapping back to his senses from the great surprise, Henrick ecstatically exclaimed, "I'll get the household registry for the two of you right away!"

"Dad!" Arielle grabbed Henrick, her face a mask of worry. "When we made this decision, we didn't expect Shandie to suddenly pass away today... Wouldn't it be inappropriate for us to register our marriage at such a time?"

She wasn't just pretending to be a sensible daughter in front of Henrick in making that remark, but it was also for the sake of her reputation.

After all, the fact that she registered her marriage on the day her sister passed away would tarnish her reputation if it were to get out.



"No, no, of course not!" Henrick waved his hand fervently. "It's impossible for the dead to come back to life, but the living has to continue with their lives! I'll go and get the household registry for you both! When your sister has been buried and several days have passed, I'll find a time to announce this good news to everyone!"

As he spoke, he couldn't even fake sorrow anymore. He rushed up the stairs with jubilation written all over his face. In no time, he handed the household registry to Arielle.

Of course, he didn't forget to hand them the two monetary gifts he had just prepared. Taking their hands, he asserted, "Go and have your marriage registered and live happily ever after."

"Thank you, Dad!" Arielle flashed him a sweet smile. With the household registry in hand, she then left with Vinson.

As Henrick gazed at their interlinked hands, utter elation was etched on his face. His exhilaration right then was beyond words.

He couldn't help exclaiming, "God is really

good to me!"

*Although I've lost a daughter, God gave me an affluent son-in-law! When I think about it that way, God is really good to me! When the funeral ends, I can soon host a wedding. At that time, everyone in Jadeborough will have to look up to me, the father-in-law of Vinson Nightshire!*

Glimpsing the joy on his face, the new butler hesitantly went up to him and asked, "Mr. Southall... are we having a funeral or a wedding now?"

The newly appointed butler was rather dense, and he was Arielle's choice of candidate.


Ultimately, nothing good ever came out of appointing someone too smart as the butler. Conversely, an idiotic person wouldn't be able to go against his master.


Henrick's expression changed drastically, and he stared at the new butler coldly. "Of course, we're having a funeral when Shandie has just passed away! What nonsense are you spouting?"


Stricken, the new butler stammered, "Yes,

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yes, of course! I was just spouting nonsense..."

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Henrick shook his head and barked, "Convey my orders that no one is to mention the wedding. No matter what, the dead takes precedence, so we'll have Shandie's funeral first before we talk about the wedding later."

"Understood!" The new butler hastily left to execute his orders.

Despite his slow-wittedness, he was rather efficient in performing his tasks. Soon enough, no one in the manor dared to mention that matter, for the previous butler's fate was still vivid in their minds.

Just after Arielle and Vinson drove away from the Southall residence, the car that was driving Louisa and Cindy finally arrived at the manor gates about half an hour later.

The moment Cindy alighted from the car, she sensed something amiss. White flowers hung above the door as though a funeral was in progress.

*Hmm? Why would there be a funeral at home?*

When she strode in anxiously, she



immediately caught sight of the wreaths that were placed everywhere.

Her heart abruptly jolted, and her joy at returning home waned.

*Someone in the family has truly passed away?*

She unconsciously clenched her hands into fists. But in the next moment, her apprehension was swiftly replaced with delight at the thought that popped into her mind.

*I reckon that Henrick must have kicked the bucket! After all, there are only four people in this family. He smokes and drinks heavily, so he has quite a number of minor ailments though there's nothing major. Besides, he's impulsive and irritable, so he might collapse anytime. Therefore, it's not entirely surprising if he suddenly contracted some illness and passed away!*

Cindy's heartbeat abruptly sped up, and excitement gripped her.

*If he's dead, Arielle came from the village, so she doesn't have any inkling of laying claim to his inheritance. At that time, I can*

*bribe the lawyer and have him give Southall Group to me legally!*

Right at that moment, she was even tempted to start laughing uproariously.

*No wonder Louisa came back with me! It turns out that Henrick is dead! I initially thought that it'd take some time for me to get my hands on Southall Group, but I never thought that God would be so good to me and hand it to me on a silver platter! This is truly a miracle! I'll soon be able to take Shannie away to stay with Matthias! As for Southall Group, I'm going to change its name to Cindy Group at once after seven days have passed since his death!*

"Cindy Group..." Cindy muttered to herself.

*What a wonderful name! And I'm sure Maureen, who was far superior to me back when she was alive, never would've thought that the company that she painstakingly brought to glory would end up becoming Cindy Group in the end. If she's looking down at us from heaven, she'll surely be so irate that she keels over and dies again!*

Ever since Arielle came back, she had never been this happy in a long time. As

she got all the more worked up, she couldn't help laughing aloud. "Haha..."

Coincidentally, one of the help in mourning attire walked out.

Upon noticing the smile on Cindy's face, he was instantly floored.

*Why is she still grinning in elation despite the death of her daughter? Don't tell me that the rumor of Shandie being Cindy and Henrick's biological daughter is actually false? But even if so, she raised her ever since young. How could she still smile so brightly when Shandie has passed away? She's not worthy of being a mother at all!*

As soon as Cindy lifted her head, she spotted the chagrined expression on the man's face. Her expression went frosty. Frowning, she demanded hotly, "What kind of expression is that?"

*I know I'm not supposed to laugh since Henrick is dead, but as the help, what right does he have to look at me with such a gaze when Henrick is dead? When I take over this house completely, he'll be the first person I dismiss! I'm going to fire all those who are dense and disobedient! Anyway, I'm*

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*going to have the final say here in the future! I can do whatever I want! After I've dealt with the few insignificant figures, I'll make a move against Arielle and Vinson!*



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The help felt a chill traveling down her spine as Cindy stared at her. She immediately caved in. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Southall. I could've seen it wrongly. You should head in and see for yourself."

With that, she hurried away.

As Henrick had released news about Shandie's death, many guests had arrived to pay their last respects to her in the backyard, where her coffin was placed. Everyone working in the residence was busy serving the guests and had no time to talk to Cindy.

Cindy stared at the help's back in a sinister manner and memorized her features before entering the mansion.

There was a mournful air about the mansion.

*Cindy sighed. We've been married for years, and I used to love him. Though I'm glad he's dead, I still feel bad about it. Life is short, so I must live for myself! Hmm, where's the coffin, though? Is his body still at the hospital mortuary?*

Confused, Cindy stopped a maid that was

heading out. "Where is the coffin?" she demanded.

The maid was none other than Larrisa.

She blinked guiltily at the sight of Cindy. Calming down, she answered politely, "It's in the backyard."

Larrisa's answer only served to heighten Cindy's confusion.

After all, according to the local customs, an elderly person's coffin should be placed in the hall. Only the younger generation's coffin would be placed outside.

*Henrick's the oldest in the family, so his coffin should be in the hall. Why is it in the backyard?*

Cindy shrugged off that thought. She wasn't at home, so it was perfectly normal for Arielle, Shandie, and the help to not understand the local customs. *The young people must've thought it was inappropriate for the coffin to be placed in the hall and moved it to the backyard instead. Clearly, the family can't make do without me!*

Her eyes were twinkling with mirth as she

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made her way to the backyard.

On the way there, she glanced at her attire. After a brief hesitation, she decided not to change.

No one knew about the funeral, so she didn't have to put up an act.

In fact, she had no intention of putting on mourning clothes for Henrick.

She headed for the backyard and bumped into Louisa.

Louisa suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. Her legs would hurt when the weather got bad, and she'd have to walk slowly. As it was a rainy day today, she soon fell behind Cindy.

Cindy was no longer afraid of Louisa when their eyes met.

*Louisa can't complain to Henrick now. He's dead, and there's no way he'll come back to punish me. I even went out to celebrate Maureen's death with a drink back then. There's no way I'm afraid now that Henrick's dead!*

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Nevertheless, Cindy was sensible enough to put up an act so that Louisa wouldn't interfere with the inheritance.

Louisa might be a nun, but no one would refuse money.

The smugness in Cindy's gaze faded away as she greeted Louisa. "Louisa, you should've informed me earlier. How can I accept this? My life is in tatters!"

Calmly, Louisa uttered, "I told you to do charity work, but you refused to listen to me. After the funeral, be benevolent and do good deeds."



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