

*Is Arielle married to Vinson instead of some old man?*

*Impossible! This is absolutely impossible!*

*Arielle is a country bumpkin. How is she worthy of Vinson who is such a fine specimen of a man that even I dare not fantasize about?*

*It must be a coincidence. I must have been mistaken.*

As if to prove Yvette wrong, Vinson walked over to Arielle's side and wrapped his right arm tenderly around her waist.

Without a word, the gesture confirmed all of Yvette's suspicions and more.

Her last scornful remark of Arielle never finding happiness returned to her like a slap in the face.

Yvette's face was drained of color as an overwhelming feeling of dissatisfaction and rage engulfed her.

*Why? How dare she?*

*Why does a country bumpkin like Arielle get to marry Vinson and all that I'm good for is Mason, this useless degenerate?*

Yvette clenched her fists hard, not feeling her nails digging deep into the flesh of her palms.

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Vinson gently pulled Arielle's coat over her shoulders before casting a cold glare at Yvette and Mason. "I am putting up with you guys for the last time. If I catch you disrespecting my wife again, I will make sure you regret it."

Combining his icy cold threat and his large frame, Yvette and Mason were left cowering in fear.

Vinson's presence was not something an ordinary person could withstand. Even less so for Mason and Yvette who were bullies and who dared not stand up to people putting them in their place.

When Vinson turned to face Arielle, his expression switched back to one of warmth and tenderness, completely at odds with his hostile behavior. Yvette felt so jealous that she wanted to throw another tantrum.

"It's getting chilly," Vinson said gently to Arielle. "Get in the car before you catch a cold."

"Okay." Arielle nodded. Without sparing Yvette and Mason another glance, she turned and walked toward the Maybach.

Vinson remained behind. "If you wish to stay in Jadeborough, leave her alone. Arielle is my wife now. If you bother her again, I'll take it as a provocation against me."

He gave the couple a final cold gaze before

departing.

Yvette felt beads of sweat rolling down her temples as she watched Arielle and Vinson climb into the Maybach.

The sound of the doors slamming shut alerted Yvette to the fact that she and Arielle had become people from two different worlds.

*Arielle's world is one where she will never have to worry for the rest of her life, whereas mine is...*

At the thought of the prospect of her own marriage, Yvette's knees gave way like a lifeless doll, with her gaze remaining dully on the ground.

Mason jumped and hurriedly caught Yvette who did not even push him away as she did previously.

Mason felt his heart leap with joy before realizing that something was wrong with Yvette.

Her eyes were unfocused. At that moment, she seemed indifferent toward the entire world, even him.

"Yvette! Yvette!" Mason shouted in a panic.

*Is there anyone who can help me?*

The only people who responded were his

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bodyguards who were even more shocked than he was.



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When Vinson entered the Maybach, the chauffeur noticed his scowl and tactfully lowered the blinders.

Being a large man, Arielle felt the air in the car compressing as it was displaced by Vinson's body.

Coupled with the sudden change in atmospheric pressure within the vehicle with the fact that the chauffeur had lowered the blinders, Arielle felt deeply uneasy.

Vinson, on the other hand, looked as carefree as ever.

Arielle kicked herself for being so easily frightened.

*It's only a sham wedding. Why do I have to be as nervous as an actual new bride?*

Arielle was inwardly frustrated when Vinson suddenly handed her a document that looked like an agreement.

"What's this?" she asked in surprise.

"The ground rules which you've laid out," Vinson answered carelessly. "I've taken the liberty of drawing up an agreement. Go ahead and sign it if everything looks good to you. We'll each keep a copy."

Stunned, Arielle dropped her eyes to the

agreement.

It was so detailed that it filled an entire page. In a formal and somewhat pompous air, Arielle was "The Wife" while Vinson was "The Husband."

Arielle thought that Vinson had drawn up the agreement with the purpose of taking advantage of her. Upon closer inspection, she realized that she was the benefactor in almost all of the terms while they were constrictive for Vinson. One of the terms stated that "If The Husband is found to be overly intimate with the opposite sex, The Wife has the right to call for a divorce and up to a hundred percent of The Husband's asset as alimony."

There was only one constraint for her. She, too, was required to not be overly intimate with the opposite sex. If she was found to have violated the agreement, she too would be required to surrender all of her assets as alimony.

In other words, it was an agreement that only benefitted her.

Arielle gazed at Vinson in shock.

"Vinson," Arielle blurted. "Did you draft this agreement?"

He nodded. "Yes, I did. Is there anything wrong?"

"Let's keep it that way," Vinson grunted.

Arielle gritted her teeth and signed the agreement.

*This only benefits me. Why shouldn't I sign it?*

*It's better if Vinson doesn't like me. If he does, I won't agree to this marriage! If feelings were to get in the way, it wouldn't be a simple sham wedding anymore.*

After both parties signed the agreement, the pair of them turned away from one another to gaze out of their windows.

The silence was so palpable that it seemed to solidify in the air.

After ten minutes, the Maybach rolled to a stop before the entrance to a private restaurant.

Arielle got down and looked at the sign. Being greeted by the words "Maureen's Kitchen," she froze.



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*Maureen...*

*Maureen Moore...*

*Isn't that Mom's name?*

"What are you standing there for? Go on!" Vinson said, interrupting her stunned reverie as he gave her a little shove from behind.

Arielle entered the restaurant without comment, dismissing the naming as a coincidence.

It was only eleven in the morning; the restaurant was nearly empty as it was not lunchtime.

Arielle glanced around and thought the decor to be expansive and simplistic. Though it looked good, she found nothing special about it aside from the name.

Arielle sat across from Vinson without a word. She did not speak until Vinson started browsing the menu. "What is special about this restaurant?"

"Why? Is it not good enough?" Vinson asked, glancing up at her.

"No, I don't have many demands about that." She shook her head. "I just thought that you would bring me to an exotic restaurant that was difficult to make reservations."



"You like foreign food?" Vinson asked, his eyebrows raised.

"No." She shook her head once more. "I just thought that... Ah, never mind. Forget I asked."

When Vinson had said "You don't know your husband well enough," Arielle thought that he would at least take her to somewhere much pricier than this. She did not expect to be brought to a place where an entire family can get full for the price of an appetizer.

However, she meant what she said about not being particular about what she ate.

Arielle dismissed the peculiar feeling and after ordering her meal, she passed the menu to Vinson.

Vinson ticked off several items on the menu for himself before summoning the waiter.

It did not take long for the food to arrive.

Upon the very first spoonful, Arielle detected a familiar taste.

Initially, she did not think much of it. She simply thought that the chef had a knack to cater to the taste of the general public.

Upon the second bite, the sense of familiarity became stronger, as though it was food that she had had many times before.

In disbelief, Arielle tasted a different dish. The sense of familiarity did not only diminish but became more overwhelming. It was as if she had been here once before.

*How is this possible?*

Arielle gazed at Vinson. "Have I been here before?" she asked Vinson in wonder.

"Yes, you have." Vinson nodded, a tender smile spreading across his lips.

"How do you know?" Arielle demanded, her astonishment growing.

Vinson wiped his mouth with a napkin before responding, "I've investigated old articles regarding your mother. There was an old photo of you taken by the paparazzi of your mother bringing you here. It seemed that you were brought here more than once. I thought you might like it here."

Arielle felt her nose twinge. Gazing at the food before her, she felt an old forgotten sense of warmth creeping up her heart. It was as though her mother had brought her here again.

Arielle suddenly recalled the first instance of her surprise when they arrived. "What about the name of the restaurant?"

At that, Vinson snapped his fingers.

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The waiter who had brought them their food earlier reappeared with a smile as he placed an agreement before her.

She glanced at the title and found it to be a transferal agreement of the restaurant.

"Is this your restaurant?" Arielle asked, comprehension dawning on her face.

"It's yours after you sign that."

Arielle gazed back at the agreement.

"You..." she began, unable to find the words as she clutched the document.

Vinson cleared his throat. "This is my wedding gift to you. Do you like it?"

Arielle nodded as tears welled up in her eyes, rendering Vinson's face a blur before her.

But that did not matter as Vinson's face was already etched in her memory.



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"Thank you," Arielle choked.

"Why are you crying?" Vinson stood up uncertainly as he leaned over and wiped her eyes.

"I'm not," Arielle said with a shake of her head. "I'm just happy. Thank you."

Vinson sighed. "If I knew you were going to cry, I wouldn't have done this."

*I only wanted to see her smile. Not her tears.*

Arielle's fingers tensed up at his words before slackening. She felt the toughness of her heart give way as it was being filled with something soft and warm.

"Vinson, though you have plenty of issues"—Arielle hiccupped—"you're a good man after all."

"Are you praising or insulting me?" Vinson frowned.

"It's a compliment. Take it." Arielle wiped her tears and looked at him seriously. "Whoever marries you in the future will be very lucky."

"Are you referring to yourself?" Vinson gazed at her.

Arielle forgot that she was already married to him.

"It's a sham marriage. We're going to be separated sooner or later. I'm referring to the person who will marry you for real in the future," Arielle mumbled, feeling reluctant for reasons unknown to her.

"We don't have to get divorced," Vinson said suddenly.

"What?" Arielle exclaimed.

"Nothing." Vinson cleared his throat before turning to the waiter. "Is this juice alcoholic?" he demanded. "I'm talking nonsense already."

*What kind of restaurant serves alcoholic orange juice?*

The waiter navigated around Vinson's remark tactfully. "The kitchen added champagne into your juice in celebration of your wedding!" he said with a smile. "Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Nightshire! I'll be in the corner if you need me."

*Did they not just get married? Why are they still so shy with one another like they are on their first date?*

*With such a handsome couple as our new owners, our restaurant will be booming in business soon.*

The waiter was unaware that aside from their looks, the status of the restaurant's new

owners was enough to attract scores of new customers.

At the dining table, Arielle was trying hard to compose herself by focusing on her meal.

Though she said nothing throughout the rest of the meal, her heart was bursting with happiness.

*My tastebuds clung on to my past even if my memories did not.*

*I used to have this with Mom all the time.*

Vinson did not interrupt Arielle's thoughts. Instead, he focused on his own meal.

When she was almost done, Vinson finally spoke. "Do you recall anything?"

Arielle took a moment to return to the present. "Are you hoping that I will regain my memories?" she asked.

"Yes, I do." Vinson nodded. "You have a lot of things you don't remember, do you? Instead of searching for evidence from another place or person, why don't you try and look within? Anything you remember might help to locate your mother."

"I know," Arielle said wearily. "But it's no use. Before I returned, I had consulted many doctors with the hopes of regaining my memories, but

nothing worked."

"That was because you were still away," Vinson said firmly. "Now that you are back, try revisiting some familiar things. It will be more effective than any treatment."

"Maybe..." Arielle's voice trailed off. She took a deep breath and smiled. "No matter what, I think I've made progress by recalling the taste of my childhood here. I will come back more often in the future."



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"Come whenever you want. This restaurant is yours, anyway."

Arielle was about to thank him when Vinson raised a hand to stop her. "Save it if you're going to thank me again. I've heard it so many times over the course of this meal that I'm sick of it."

As he spoke, he stuck his fingers into his ears.

Arielle burst out laughing. "What kind of person does not like receiving thanks?"

As she spoke, her phone, which was on the table, rang.

With a glance at the screen, Arielle was informed that Larissa was calling.

She glanced at Vinson before picking up. "What is it?" she asked without hesitation.

Larissa told her everything about the people who had turned up to the wake. "Has she gone crazy?" Arielle asked with a hopeful smile.

"I'm pretty sure she was cross-eyed. I don't think it was an act, though. It looks like this has really hit her hard. Be careful, Ms. Arielle."

"I know." Arielle nodded. "Aside from that, did anything peculiar happen?"

"There's one more thing, but I'm not sure if I



should tell you."

"Speak."

"Uh... I heard Mr. Actonward telling your father that you saved his life at the Actonward residence. It should be a good thing, but Mr. Southall looked a bit strange after being told about that..."

Arielle's face fell. "I know," she repeated before hanging up.

"What is it?" Vinson asked, noticing the change in her expression. "What happened? You were smiling just a minute before."

Arielle set down her cutlery. "Good news and bad news," she said in an air of forced calmness. "Which do you want to hear first?"

"I'll have the good news first," Vinson said after considering for a moment.

"The good news is that Cindy is so traumatized by Shandie's death that she isn't right in the head anymore, though I'm not sure if she is faking it. After all, acting deranged has been known as an efficient method to obtain Henrick's trust."

Vinson frowned. "It doesn't sound like good news. What about the bad news?"

"Henrick is beginning to suspect me," Arielle

said with a grim look on her face.

Vinson raised his eyebrows. "What makes you think that?"

Arielle recounted what Larissa had told her earlier. "He is a man full of doubt," she concluded as she heaved a sigh. "During the barista championship, I was positive that he was beginning to suspect me. But brewing coffee isn't particularly difficult, is it? Anybody can make fine latte art with some practice. However, the medical arts take much more than that to achieve mastery. It is impossible to do so without systematic studying from a mentor."

Vinson fell silent. "Arielle," he said after a while. "Now can you tell me where you learned all of it?"

Before she could respond, Vinson added, "If you are not willing to share, you don't have to tell me anything."

Arielle bit her lip as she clutched the transfer agreement in her hand. "Actually, I didn't stay in the village at all."

She paused to allow Vinson to react. However, he remained impassive.

"You already know?" she asked, shocked.

"I guessed it. There is no way for someone to

grow up in a village to have encountered so many things like latte art, chess, and most astounding of all, your medical skills. The only thing that I do not know is where you grew up."

"Do you know the Wilhelms?" Arielle asked.



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