

Upon hearing Arielle's name, Marcus' face instantly hardened. "It's her again?"

Donovan nodded with nonchalance. "Yes. I've told you time and again not to let anyone get into my class through connections."

Yet, Marcus furrowed his brows. He clearly did not believe Donovan.

After shaking his head, he explained, "Mr. Baxter, you made a mistake about Kelsea's incident that day, and the school lost a laboratory building because of that. I didn't even ask you for compensation. Why are you giving Arielle trouble again? Also, you were supposed to apologize to her on the stage during the freshman party. But since Mr. Parker was there, I canceled the session. However, it doesn't mean that you don't need to apologize to her. This issue has not come to an end yet. Mr. Baxter, why are you making things difficult for her again? Do you have a problem with her?"

Donovan's face fell upon hearing that.

Initially, he thought that Arielle had framed Kelsea, but later he learned that Kelsea was putting on her own show. Due to the incident, his reputation among the students was ruined.

Donovan's jaw tightened before he said, "I was oblivious about Kelsea's incident. I'm a victim as well, so you can't blame that on me. Moreover, I'm certain that Arielle is making up an excuse now. Although she was innocent in the previous incident, it doesn't mean

she's also right this time.”

“But-” Marcus was in a dilemma.

He did not want to suspect Arielle and repeat his mistake. That would make them end up in an awkward situation once again.

However, since Donovan insisted, Marcus had to give in. “Fine. I'll go with you, but we'll have to bring a bouquet of flowers. If they're really having a funeral, we'll make a fool of ourselves.”

“That's impossible! When Arielle told me that one of her family members passed away, she didn't even look sad. She's definitely lying! There's no need to bring any flowers. We'll embarrass ourselves if we actually bring flowers with us,” Donovan stated confidently.

Deep down, Marcus trusted Arielle. It had nothing to do with the latter having someone powerful to back her up. Marcus just had a gut feeling about it.

Exasperatedly, he turned to Donovan and said, “Fine. You don't have to bring any flowers. I'll bring some since I don't mind embarrassing myself. Okay?”

Veins popped up against Donovan's tautly stretched skin. He had no idea why Marcus was defending a liar.

“It's up to you then,” he snapped after letting out a sigh.

“All right. Let's go!” Marcus then put on his sunglasses and jacket before he left.

Although he was worried that others would blame him for the incident with Steven last time, he had never blamed Arielle for it.

He always encouraged his students to perform on stage.

However, if Arielle was really lying, he would punish her according to the rules of the school.

“My car is parked at the entrance. I'll drive the car over. Meanwhile, help me buy a bouquet of white chrysanthemums at the florist's opposite of the school.”

The two of them split up after that.

Soon, Donovan returned with a bouquet of flowers before they drove toward the Southall residence.

In the car, Marcus reminded, “Mr. Baxter, let me remind you. If Arielle is innocent and did not lie, you have to apologize to her for both of the incidents during the assembly tomorrow. Moreover, I'll deduct three months of your salary. You'll also have to move out of the dorm and rent a house for yourself outside. This will serve as a warning.”

Donovan agreed without any hesitation. “Okay!”

He was confident that he was not making a mistake. Arielle Moore, you'll have to get out of my class this time!



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In the moving car, Donovan's eyes were locked on the scenery outside his window. His grim gaze was filled with determination.

Arielle can't blame me for this. I have to complete my mission for my teaching career. With such a bad influence in my class, my career would be ruined. I have no choice. I have to do this!

...

Meanwhile, at the Southall residence, the funeral had just begun.

One by one, all the guests had arrived.

Cindy had changed into black mourning attire. Her makeup was elaborate and flawless, but she chose to wear a lighter shade of lipstick.

She had cried several times since she returned. After talking with Matthias over the phone, she felt calmer.

No matter how hard she cried and how upset she was, she could not bring Shandie back to life.

Knowing that, she knew that she had to pull herself together. She was determined to avenge Shandie's death by taking Arielle's life in return.

With that thought, Cindy picked herself up. She applied some makeup on the bridge of her nose to accentuate her features.

That morning when she saw Henrick, she had seen the desire in his eyes for her.

She knew that she had to use him in order to take revenge for Shandie.

After she finished putting on her makeup, she went downstairs, but Henrick was nowhere to be seen.

Thus, she asked Alan, "Where's Henrick? Is he greeting the guests in the backyard?"

The latter shook his head and answered, "No. Mr. Southall informed that he needed to head out all of a sudden."

Cindy frowned suspiciously. All the guests are here now. Where did Henrick go?

An ominous feeling began to grow in her.

Right at that moment, a housekeeper came and reported, "Mrs. Southall, there are two persons without invitation cards outside. Do you want to see them?"

Cindy hesitated and questioned, "Without invitation cards? Did they mention their identities?"

The housekeeper nodded and replied, "They're teachers from Jadeborough University."

"Jadeborough University..." Cindy recalled that Arielle was studying at that university. Her face fell as she waved her hand. "I'm not going to greet them. Bring

them to Arielle in the backyard.”

“All right, Mrs. Southall.” The housekeeper bowed and walked off.

Cindy turned to look at Alan, who had just secured his job as the butler not long ago. With a smile on her face, she asked, “How long have you been working here?”

Alan answered politely, “Six months now.”

“Six months...” Cindy repeated thoughtfully. She then added, “Who appointed you to the job?”

The half-witted butler did not even think before he replied, “Mr. Southall did.”

Cindy nodded before she removed one of the bangles on her wrist and handed it to Alan. “I bought this for my birthday two years ago. It's made of jade. You can take this.”

The latter was dumbfounded. Although he was not a bright person, he knew how the previous butler was fired.

Back then, Henrick was infuriated after he found out that the previous butler was bribed by Cindy.

Hence, Alan hurriedly waved his hands. “I don't need that. I'm being paid quite a high salary, so I can't take anything more from you. I appreciate the thought though. Please just let me know if you need anything.”

Then, he added, “I need to help out in the backyard now.”

With a pale face, Alan fled the scene.

Cindy's face darkened completely. Why did Henrick let him become the butler? He's so cowardly, dumb, and uncontrollable.

With furrowed brows, she glanced around the mansion.

She figured that Alfred must have been transferred to another position or even got fired. Henrick wouldn't have the time and effort to do this, which means Arielle must've done it!

Thinking about Arielle, Cindy clenched her teeth in a fury.

When she walked toward the backyard, the housekeeper had already led Donovan and Marcus there.



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There was an unspoken rule in Jadeborough.

When a family member of a younger generation passed away, the funeral should not be too grand. Otherwise, it would bring bad luck to the elder generation of the family.

Due to that reason, Henrick did not place any wreaths at the funeral except in the backyard. Hence, the manor appeared no different from usual.

With Marcus beside him, Donovan started studying the Southall residence once they stepped in.

They did not see any signs that showed there was an ongoing funeral. All they saw was a row of luxury cars parked in the parking area.

Hence, Donovan was even more certain that Arielle was lying.

Before they arrived at the backyard, Donovan said, "Mr. Brown, do you see this? Does this look like a funeral? Arielle is lying! I need you to remove her from my class right away!"

Marcus' expression turned grim. Did Arielle lie just to apply for leave? Even going so far as to say a family member passed away? If that's true... I'll have to remove her from the preparatory class.

When Donovan noticed that Marcus' face had darkened, the corners of his lips lifted.

I knew it! I knew that Arielle was lying! I finally got her!

A housekeeper was leading the way ahead of them. She did not hear their conversation at all.

When they were about to enter the backyard, the housekeeper came to halt and made a gesture for them to go ahead. "Please continue forward. Ms. Arielle is in the backyard."

Marcus lowered his head to look at the bouquet in his hands. He was about to dump it into the dustbin at the side when the housekeeper called out, "Ms. Arielle!"

Marcus instantly paused before he and Donovan lifted their heads.

They saw Arielle in a black dress. As the hem of the dress swayed, she looked like a black butterfly.

Marcus stopped his hand and did not throw the bouquet as he looked at Arielle in hesitation. Did Donovan make a mistake? Are they really having a funeral here?

Arielle was shocked when she saw Donovan and Marcus, who had shown up at her house all of a sudden. Did Donovan come to offer his condolences? Is he that thoughtful?

She was surprised at that thought.

Arielle walked over to greet them. "Hello, Mr. Brown, Mr. Baxter."

Marcus did not want to continue guessing blindly. To know the truth, he asked, "Arielle, I heard that one of your family members passed away. Is that true?"

When Arielle was about to nod and answer, Donovan snorted coldly.

Arielle tilted her head in confusion. "Mr. Baxter, what are you laughing at?"

Donovan gave her a once-over before he replied, "Arielle Moore! Even now, you're still trying to lie?"

Arielle was even more confused. "What did I lie about?"

"What do you think?" Donovan pointed at her black dress and continued, "You knew that we were coming here, so you changed into a black dress to pretend that there's a funeral. Don't you know that the truth can't be hidden for long? Your lie will be exposed after we ask your parents about it. I can't believe that you're still trying to cover up for your lies now. I'm extremely disappointed in you!"

Arielle looked at Donovan in shock. She finally understood what was happening. He didn't come to offer his condolences; he came to find fault with me. It's such a pity that he's going to be disappointed again this time.

Seeing Arielle remaining silent, Donovan thought that she was feeling guilty. A sense of smugness welled in him.

For some reason, he enjoyed seeing Arielle being humiliated.



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Donovan was so excited he could hardly contain himself.

While he tried to hide the smile on his face, he said seriously, "Arielle, I don't want to embarrass you, so we'll resolve this matter privately. Now, apologize to me and Mr. Brown. When you return to school tomorrow, you can ask the other teachers to see who's willing to take you into their class."

With that, he stood still as he waited for Arielle's apology.

Yet, the latter chuckled loudly.

She lifted her head and questioned, "Mr. Baxter, what if I wasn't lying? Are you going to apologize to me and then see which class would accept you as their teacher?"

Donovan's face darkened upon hearing that. He yelled furiously, "Arielle! Are you still being unrepentant and as stubborn as a mule even now?"

Turning to Marcus, he said, "Mr. Brown, look at her. You brought her into my class, so I'll leave her to you now!"

Marcus cleared his throat. He was at a loss. Just who's telling the truth here?

Arielle raised an eyebrow when she said, "Mr. Brown, thank you for coming. You brought the bouquet for my sister, right? Let me take you to the backyard so you can

pay your respects.”

After gesturing for Marcus to step forward, Arielle turned around and headed to the backyard.

Donovan's veins were bulging from his forehead.

He suddenly had a bad feeling about it.

Donovan instinctively grabbed Marcus as he stated, “Mr. Brown, the truth has been revealed. Don't continue to be fooled by her.”

Marcus wrinkled his nose unhappily.

“What do you mean by that... Mr. Baxter, you're being prejudiced against her! Since we're here, let's investigate further on the matter. Let's go with her.”

Prying Donovan's hand from his arm, Marcus then went after Arielle.

Donovan had no choice but to follow them. I don't believe that there's a funeral here. She looked so guilty just now. Also, there's not a single wreath around here. I even saw red paper cutouts above the door when I came in just now!

In the backyard, many people were walking around. There was a circle of wreaths placed at the side.

Upon entering, Donovan saw some candlesticks and a funeral portrait right in the middle of the backyard.

In front of the portrait, there was a black urn. Donovan could only stare at the white flower placed on top of the urn.

The guests were all wearing black as they took turns offering a white chrysanthemum to Shandie's portrait.

In Chanaea, white chrysanthemums signified grief.

At that moment, Donovan was dumbstruck.

He widened his eyes as he stared at the scene in disbelief. It really is a funeral! They're having a funeral here! Arielle didn't lie. One of her family members truly did pass away. How's that possible? How?

Donovan turned ghastly white, as if all the blood was drained out of his face.

Arielle came to a halt before she turned around to look at Donovan. She raised her eyebrow and asked, "Mr. Baxter, which class are you transferring to?"

Although she looked calm, the words she uttered sounded particularly mocking.

Donovan's face reddened in an instant. He could feel his ears and neck burning in embarrassment.



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Donovan had not expected this.

He opened his mouth to explain himself, but he could not get anything out.

Arielle snorted at his reaction.

Hearing that, Donovan was agitated.

He seemed to have lost his rationality.

Right at that moment, Henrick walked over in his mourning attire and asked, "Sannie, who do you have with you here?"

Before Arielle could answer, Donovan seized Henrick's arm and questioned, "Sir, is this a real funeral? Or are you putting up a show here?"

Henrick's face turned ashen. "A show? My daughter passed away, and you think that I'm putting on a damn show?"

He had never spoken nicely to people who he did not need to please.

Donovan was stumped when he heard that.

Beside him, Marcus quickly pulled Donovan away and apologized, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Are you Arielle's father? We're her teachers from Jadeborough University. We came here to pay our respects to Arielle's sister. This bouquet is for her."

“Teachers from Jadeborough University?”

Henrick gave them an accessing glance before he calmed down and replied, “Thank you for coming. But, what's wrong with this teacher? Why did he say that we're acting?”

Donovan had already returned to his senses. He was in utter regret, but he was at a loss for words.

Marcus then explained, “Mr. Baxter had a misunderstanding. It was a mistake.” Hearing that, Donovan chimed in, “Yes. It was all a misunderstanding.”

“Misunderstanding?” Arielle was unwilling to let the matter pass just like that. She asked, “Mr. Baxter, have you ever treated me like a student? First, you wrongfully accused me of spilling water on Wendy in the classroom. The second time, you accused me of starting a fight. Now, you're accusing me of lying about my family member passing away. Mr. Baxter, are you even qualified to be a teacher?”

Donovan's expression turned grim.

Beside them, Henrick's face fell.

“You... Is that how you've been treating Sannie? Do you want me to show my second daughter's death certificate in order for you to approve Sannie's leave?”

“N-No. That's not what I mean,” Donovan stammered.

This was the first time he felt so helpless. He could only turn to Marcus for help.

However, the latter wished that he did not even know Donovan.

However, since Donovan was a teacher from his school, Marcus had no choice but to help him.

Apologetically, he explained, "I'm sorry, Mr. Southall. We're in the wrong. I'll make Mr. Baxter apologize to Arielle in front of the other students in the school tomorrow."

Henrick waved his hand and said, "Forget about it. I don't want to haggle over this at my daughter's funeral. However, I don't want to hear any prejudice against Arielle in the future. Also, I demand you compensate my daughter for the mental torture you put her through!"

It was the first time he was hearing about this.

If he knew about it earlier, he would have already asked for monetary compensation.

Donovan could sense the suspicious glances from the other guests there. He clenched his teeth before he asked, "How much do you want? I'll pay you right now."

Henrick replied, "A hundred grand!"



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Donovan's face fell upon hearing the amount that Henrick demanded.

He thought that the latter would ask for at most several thousand.

In truth, a hundred grand was not a small amount of money to him.

He had just started his career as a teacher. Therefore he had not even gotten his first salary from Jadeborough University yet.

Moreover, his parents were teachers as well, and they could not earn much. Even though they were considered middle-class people, a hundred thousand was still a huge amount of money to them.

Not only that, but Donovan's parents were extremely strict. If they found out about this, they would certainly berate him.

Since he had worked as a teacher for a year before, he could still afford to pay a hundred grand. However, he would have to struggle to make ends meet after forking out the money.

Judging by the situation, he knew that he had to pay Henrick the money in order to resolve the issue. If he did not, things might get out of hand, and it would be bad if Maxwell University knew about the matter.

After some hesitation, Donovan nodded in agreement. "All right. Please give me your bank account. I'll

transfer the money to you right now.”

Yet, Henrick gave him the account number and said, “I mean a hundred grand for one accusation. You've wronged her three times now. That'll be three hundred thousand, nothing less. Otherwise, I'll report you to the Department of Education!”

Donovan's face darkened. Three hundred thousand! I've only worked for a few years. How am I supposed to pay him three hundred thousand?

Donovan's veins bulged on his forehead. Clenching his fists, he yelled, “You're being greedy! Arielle didn't suffer any loss. Why do I need to pay such a huge amount of compensation? If we bring this to the court, you're going to lose the lawsuit!”

Honestly, he felt that Arielle was not affected emotionally by what happened recently at all. Instead, not only had Arielle tarnished his reputation as a teacher, but he also had not been sleeping well because of her. That had made him extremely cranky every day. Who's going to compensate me then?

However, Henrick did not compromise. “Fine. Since you're not willing to pay, we'll bring this to court. You'll pay based on the result of the judgment! Think about it. If you're involved in a lawsuit, will you still be allowed to continue teaching in Jadeborough University?”

“You!” Donovan was infuriated as his chest heaved up and down.

Just then, Marcus said, “Mr. Baxter, just agree with it first. We'll negotiate the amount later. You can't lose your job just for three hundred thousand. Jadeborough University wouldn't accept a teacher with a criminal record.”

Donovan's face turned several shades darker.

He felt humiliated and furious as he said, “I only have one hundred thousand. I can't pay the remaining two hundred thousand.”

Henrick then shook his head and replied, “Fine. You'll have to pay the remaining two hundred thousand by next month. Or else, I'll see you in court! I'll never tolerate anyone bullying my darling daughter, especially in her school!”

Donovan had no choice but to agree after Marcus' persuasion.

If he could not scrounge up enough money, he would have to ask his parents for it.

There was no doubt that it would be torture for him.

At the side, Arielle was enjoying the show.

She knew that Henrick was not doing that for her. He just wanted the money.

Moreover, Southall Group had just shut down, and he desperately needed money.

After getting three hundred thousand from Donovan, Henrick would have enough money to pay for the rental of his office building for the month.

All this while, Arielle hated Henrick for being a money-digger. However, that flaw had actually come in useful that day. Not bad!

Deep down, she was cheering and clapping for Henrick.



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While pulling a long face, Donovan transferred the money to Henrick's bank account. He hurriedly left after informing Marcus.

The latter did not stop him. After Marcus placed his bouquet in front of Shandie's portrait, he pulled Arielle. “Arielle, I'm also responsible for this. I didn't keep a better eye on your teacher, and it has caused so many misunderstandings between both of you. I'll make him apologize to you in school. I hope that this doesn't affect your studies. If you have any other problems and you're unwilling to talk to Mr. Baxter about it, you can talk to me.”

Arielle knew that Marcus was a nice person. She replied, “All right. Thank you, Mr. Brown. After Mr. Baxter apologizes to me, I'll forget about this issue. I just hope that he'll stop finding fault with me.”

Marcus nodded before he said, “Of course. I'll talk to him about this. I promise that nothing like this will ever happen again. If this happens again, I'll take serious actions against him.”

Arielle paused for a while before she questioned, “What do you mean by serious actions?”

Marcus furrowed his brows as he answered, “If this happens again, it'll prove that he's not suitable for his job. I'll report him to Maxwell University so they'll transfer him away.”

Arielle murmured her assent, “I understand. Oh, right. I need to ask you something.”

“What is it?” Marcus asked readily.

After glancing around, Arielle felt relieved when she saw Henrick talking to other guests. Thus, she asked, “Is there any male teacher who's a foreigner at school? Around forty years old.”

“Foreigner?” Marcus pondered the question and shook his head. “No. There are only three teachers who are foreigners. One of them is a woman, and the other two are older men.”

“What about a foreign student? A student who studied at our school many years ago. I think... in 2003.”

Helplessly, Marcus explained, “Every year, there are over tens of thousands of students studying in our school. Certainly, there are many foreigners among them. Since you're asking for a student from the past years, I can't remember all of them. I know that I was in the wrong this time, so I'll make an exception today and give you the key to enter the archives. You can find the person you're looking for in the room after class.”

Arielle's eyes brightened. She nodded and exclaimed, “All right! Thank you, Mr. Brown!”

“You're welcome. I owe this to you. Please don't tell anyone about the incident with Kelsea. Otherwise, it'll ruin the school's reputation.”

“I understand.” Once I find that man, I don't have to study at Jadeborough University anymore. Also, I won't have to see Donovan again.

With that thought, she did not want to haggle over the matter.

Marcus felt relieved after Arielle agreed to his request. He gave Arielle the key to enter the archives before he bid goodbye to Henrick and left.

Arielle watched Marcus walk away. Once he was out of sight, she lowered her head to look at the key in her hand. She could not hide the smile on her face. Looks like meeting Donovan is a blessing in disguise. Although he's always giving me a hard time, I got this key because of him.

Thinking about that, she was secretly grateful to Donovan.

That was when Cindy came to the backyard.

Even while looking pale underneath her near-flawless makeup, she was still radiating an elegant aura.

Henrick had suppressed the news that Cindy was sent to the psychiatric hospital for some time. Therefore, when she showed up, many wives from other prominent families started asking about her wellbeing.

Cindy nodded as everyone consoled her.

Right at that moment, a woman said, "Don't be too upset about it. She's just an adopted child. If you really miss her, adopt another girl and name her Shandie again."

Cindy's face turned paler upon hearing that.



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Back then when Cindy married Henrick, she announced to the public that Shandie was an adopted child in order to protect their pride and reputation.

However, they both knew Shandie was actually their biological child.

Cindy thought that it was a good way to let Shandie enjoy all the privileges as the daughter of the Southalls as well as protect Henrick and her reputation. However, at that moment, she hated herself for hiding Shandie's true identity.

Now, she could not even reveal the truth that Shandie was actually her biological daughter.

That woman was still consoling Cindy. Unable to bear listening to her any longer, Cindy told the guests she was not feeling well before she left the backyard.

Arielle saw that scene.

She hurriedly went after Cindy and called out to stop her.

“Aunt Cindy?”

Cindy came to a halt. She did not want to act anymore. Since Arielle had made her spit out the truth using Matthias' herb and Henrick was not around, she knew that she did not need to put up an act there.

Coldly, she asked Arielle, “What do you want? I heard that you chased your homeroom teacher out of here. Do

you think that your father was protecting you? He just wants the money. Although you're his biological daughter and Shandie was adopted, both of you are just his puppets to make money for him!"

Cindy was trying to provoke Arielle. Since she was upset, she would not let the latter have it easy either.

Yet, she was surprised that Arielle was not mad at all. The latter smirked as she questioned, "Adopted... Are you sure?"

Cindy froze for a while before she calmed herself. I didn't mention anything about Shandie's identity that day.

She clenched her teeth and asked, "What do you mean?"

"Nothing..." Arielle deliberately drawled. "I just think you seem a little too upset with Shandie's death. It's almost as if she's not an adopted child but your biological child."

Cindy became anxious upon hearing that and tried to calm herself. "What nonsense are you talking about? I raised Shandie, so she was like a biological child to me. Quit talking nonsense!"

Arielle shrugged before she said, "Maybe I'm talking nonsense, but do you know where Dad went just now?"

Cindy furrowed her brows.

She wanted to know, but she could not ask Henrick about it with all the guests around.

Besides, she had assumed that Henrick went out for business.

However, she became curious after listening to Arielle.

After pausing for several seconds, Cindy said, "I don't know what you're talking about. Let me tell you this. Your father and I love each other dearly. You can't do anything to separate us!"

"Love each other? Aren't you afraid of being struck by lightning for uttering such a lie?" Arielle questioned in a mocking tone.

Cindy's gaze wavered when she yelled guiltily, "Arielle! Stop with the nonsense! I'm not feeling well. I need to take a rest now!"

After that, she hurried off toward the mansion.

She was extremely nervous as she left, worrying that Arielle knew about her affair with Matthias.

However, upon further contemplation, she thought that it was impossible. If she knew about it, she would've exposed me long ago. She wouldn't keep it secret till now.

With that thought, she felt assured.

That was when she walked past Malorie's room.



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Two bodyguards were standing outside the door of Malorie's room.

Initially, it barely bothered Cindy. She thought that Malorie made two bodyguards stand at her door because she wanted to show off her distinguished status to others.

However, she then heard Malorie shouting for the door to be opened inside the room, yet the bodyguards did not move an inch.

That was when Cindy knew that Malorie was being locked up.

She widened her eyes in shock.

After she made sure that she had heard correctly, she walked toward the bodyguards.

Finally, the bodyguards responded. They nodded and greeted, "Mrs. Southall."

Cindy frowned as she asked, "Are you deaf or blind? Senior Mrs. Southall is telling you to open the door. Can't you hear her?"

When Malorie heard her voice, she shouted, "Cindy! I'm in here! Tell them to open the door! They've already locked me in here for a day now!"

Cindy could not believe her ears. She glared at the bodyguards and chided, "What? How dare you lock Senior Mrs. Southall in there? Open the door now!"

Looking exasperated, the bodyguards exchanged looks with each other before one of them said, “Mrs. Southall, this is Mr. Southall's order. We have no choice.”

Cindy furrowed her brows tighter. “Why? Why would Rick lock his mother inside her room? He's so filial.”

When it came down to it, Henrick was successful today because Malorie had worked hard to pay for his education back then. After Henrick went to university, he even had the chance to become the Moores' live-in son-in-law.

Therefore, Malorie was undeniably one of the key reasons for Henrick's success now.

Moreover, Malorie had been keeping an eye on the family's coal mining business. Since Henrick could not trust anyone else, he had been treating Malorie well. Hence, there was no way he would mistreat Malorie like this.

Hearing Cindy's question, the bodyguard explained, “Senior Mrs. Southall had a conflict with Mr. Nightshire yesterday. Mr. Southall is afraid that she might provoke Mr. Nightshire again, so he ordered us to keep an eye on her.”

Finally, Cindy understood the situation. So, she had a conflict with Vinson.

Deep down, Cindy actually hated Malorie. She had had a difficult time buttering up the latter in the past.

Back then, Maureen did not pamper Malorie, hence the latter hated her. When Maureen died, Malorie did not even show up at her funeral.

Therefore, Cindy knew that Malorie would certainly provoke Vinson again. Henrick had locked her up to protect her. Otherwise, Malorie would provoke Vinson and make things difficult for the Southalls.

Suddenly, an idea appeared in her mind.

Henrick wanted Arielle and Vinson to be together, but Cindy certainly did not want that. If I let her out now, she'll probably ruin their relationship!

With that thought, Cindy said, "Vinson just left. You can let Senior Mrs. Southall out now. The funeral is starting soon, and she has to attend it."

The bodyguard replied in a conflicted tone of voice, "But, Mr. Southall ordered-"

Cindy lifted her head and said, "If Mr. Southall asks, tell him that I told you to do so. That should be fine, right? Let me warn you. Senior Mrs. Southall's health is not exactly the best. If anything happens to her, you'll have to bear the consequences!"



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Under Cindy's pressure, the bodyguards could only open the door.

“You may go now! You might need to help out in the backyard,” Cindy ordered. After the bodyguards left, she quickly rushed inside the room.

“Mom, how are you?” Cindy asked in a worried tone.

Malorie bought her act. She sighed and complained, “Rick has been bewitched by that little witch! He even locked me up because of her!”

Cindy could tell that Malorie hated Arielle. She pretended that she did not know anything. “Little witch? Who is that? Did someone come here when I was hospitalized?”

Malorie spat hatefully, “That blasted daughter he brought back! She even glared at me last night!”

“Arielle did that?” Cindy pretended to be shocked. “You'll need to tell Rick about this and have him make Arielle move out. Since I'm her stepmother, it's not really my place to do that, if you know what I mean.”

Malorie replied, “I'll talk to Rick now!”

“Don't...” Cindy hurriedly stopped her. “Shandie's funeral is more important. It'll be more appropriate to talk to him after the funeral ends and all the guests leave.”

“Fine!”

Both of them walked toward the backyard together.

When Henrick saw Malorie, his expression turned grim. He frowned and looked at Cindy.

Seeing the cold glare, Cindy felt that Henrick was unhappy with her.

However, she did not think much about it. She assumed that he was unhappy that she had brought Malorie out of her room.

Since Henrick did not say anything, Cindy tended to the other guests after talking to Malorie for a while.

Soon, the funeral began.

Cindy could not help but cry again. In the end, she could not even stand still.

Without the strength to even get up, she thought that Henrick would come and help her. However, the latter was still talking to other guests.

That was when Cindy realized that something was amiss. After the funeral ended and all the guests were eating, she pulled Henrick aside and asked, "Rick, are you mad at me because I let Mom come out of her room?"

Henrick looked at her with a complex expression. As the veins bulged on his forehead, he replied, "It's nothing! I need to take care of the guests now. We'll talk after they leave."

Since Henrick did not tell Cindy the reason right away, she got anxious.

Before she could say anything though, Henrick went back to talking with the other guests again.

Yet, Cindy and Henrick did not notice that Arielle was watching both of them from afar.

There was a smirk on her face. She knew that Henrick went to the psychiatric hospital just now. Clearly, Carter had done as Arielle had instructed as well.

Arielle raised her eyebrow and sat down in front of an empty table before she started eating. She looked extremely clueless and innocent.

Beside her, the guests started talking about Russell.

“Why is Mr. Actonward not here? He was still here when Shandie passed away.”

“Didn't you see the news? Russell's daughter was murdered by her cousin. She suffered a terrible death!”

“What? Really?”

“Yes! I heard that Russell still hasn't found Yvette's complete body yet. He certainly has no time nor mood to attend a funeral.”

At that moment, another guest chimed in, “The Actonwards and the Southalls have lost their daughters one after the other, and they're relatives. Maybe their

families are having a stroke of bad luck due to a jinx?”

Right at that moment, Cindy was approaching them with Malorie.

Although Malorie was old, she still had a sharp sense of hearing. Her body stiffened upon hearing the guest's words.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Our family... A jinx...

Malorie could not help shifting her gaze to Arielle, who was eating and minding her own business. Hatred began to fill her eyes.

I didn't know that the Actonwards had a mishap. But, two youngsters passing away at the same time? Could this really be a coincidence? Maybe they're right - our family has come across a jinx, and that jinx is none other than Arielle Moore!

Malorie narrowed her eyes.

Beside her, Cindy did not hear the guests' conversation. She was still thinking about why Henrick was being so cold to her.

When Malorie came to a halt, Cindy finally returned to her senses. Curiously, she asked, "Mom, what's wrong? Your seat is over there."

She pointed at the round table in the center of the backyard.

That was the main table. Since Arielle was young, she was not allowed to sit there. Only Cindy and Malorie had the right to sit there.

At Cindy's words, Malorie snapped out of her thoughts.

She pulled Cindy to the side and asked in a low voice, "Cindy, do you know any famous exorcists in Jadeborough? Someone who can get rid of the spirits of

the dead.”

Cindy was stunned. She frowned and asked, “Why do you need someone like that? Shandie is going to be buried today. She's always been a good girl, so she won't disturb us even after her death. Besides, all the exorcists in Jadeborough are just scammers.”

“No. I'm not talking about Shandie. I'm talking about Arielle.”

Cindy raised her eyebrows in surprise. “Arielle?”

Malorie nodded and told Cindy about the guests' conversation just now. “It must be Arielle's fault! She stayed in the countryside, right? She probably brought some malicious spirit here! That's why our family and the Actonwards have met with such terrible misfortune!”

When she recalled the way Arielle glared at her last night, she was extremely scared. She's not supposed to have that kind of look at such a young age. She must be possessed by an evil spirit or something!

With that thought, Malorie added, “People say that female spirits like to possess beautiful women. Isn't Arielle too beautiful? If we can't find an exorcist here in Jadeborough, I'll bring one over after Shandie's funeral ends. If it's a mistake, then that's fine. But if I'm not wrong... We need to force Arielle to stay away from us!”

Cindy almost burst out laughing as she listened to

Malorie.

Initially, she was worried, knowing that Malorie had come to Jadeborough. Cindy had clearly changed her mind now. This is wonderful! It's such nice timing for her to be here now! Arielle Moore, you're doomed! Malorie is not someone easy to deal with. Shandie must be watching me from above. She even sent me such a great opportunity!

Clenching her fists, Cindy had an idea. "Mom, I actually know an exorcist. Shall I bring her over after Shandie's funeral ends later?"

"Sure! The sooner the better!" Malorie replied.

She was extremely impatient. At the thought that there might be an evil spirit at home, Malorie felt goosebumps all over her body.

She turned to look at Arielle instinctively.

Right at that moment, the latter finished eating. She turned around, and her eyes met Malorie's.

"Ah!" Malorie shrieked in shock. Her scream attracted the attention of the other guests around her.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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“Is that Senior Mrs. Southall? What's wrong with her?”

“Why does she look like she's possessed?”

“Don't say that at a funeral! You're scaring me!”

“We better hurry up and eat so we can leave!”

The backyard was filled with discussion and chatter.

Malorie heard their comments, and she became more certain about her decision.

She tugged at Cindy's clothes and said, “Don't waste time. Call the exorcist right now. After all the guests leave, bring the exorcist over!”

Seeing Malorie so scared, Cindy was delighted. So being superstitious is not always a bad thing.

However, she did not believe in any of these superstitions.

She was not afraid of spirits at all. No, she was more afraid of Arielle, who had come to avenge Maureen's death.

Cindy murmured her assent before she ordered Alan to bring Malorie back to her room.

Just as Malorie walked off, Henrick came toward Cindy with a grim expression. He questioned, “You just got back, and what are you up to now? What happened to Mom?”

“What happened to Mom? You're asking me? You locked Mom inside her room for a day! She wasn't emotionally well. If I didn't get her out, she would've fallen sick! Rick, have you been bewitched? You were such a filial son!”

Henrick froze and refuted, “I did that for her! If she provokes Vinson again, she would have to face serious consequences instead of just staying in her room for a night!”

Cindy sighed and replied, “Fine. Ask Mom to give you an explanation after all the guests leave. Apart from that, I have something important to tell you. But... Let's wait until Shandie's funeral ends.”

She did not want all these filthy matters to sully Shandie. My poor Shandie has to rest and reincarnate peacefully.

Henrick's brows were tightly clenched. Since many guests were still around, he could not press the matter further. He then continued tending to the guests.

“Please carry on. My mother is too upset. She's not feeling well, so she went back to take a rest.”

When the guests heard that, they consoled Henrick before continuing their conversation.

Henrick felt relieved. However, his gaze was locked on Cindy.

The latter was talking with a prominent lady with a

smile on her face.

Although she was almost fifty years old now, her figure looked gorgeous. From the back, she appeared to be a young lady with a mature and charming aura.

With that beauty, any man would easily fall for her. Initially, Henrick loved Maureen, but she was an aloof woman. After being looked down on constantly, Henrick gradually felt his dignity being threatened.

Later on, the passionate and free Cindy appeared. Henrick was naturally attracted to her, so they got together after that.

Even today, Henrick still had the urge of a man when he saw Cindy.

However, looking at her now, his gaze was extremely cold.

Clearly, a woman who's too beautiful and attractive doesn't benefit the family much.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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The more he stared at Cindy, the more dissatisfied Henrick became.

He had gone to the psychiatric hospital after talking to Arielle that afternoon.

Coincidentally when Henrick entered the hospital, a nurse and a doctor were talking about a man named Matthias who had visited Cindy there every day. Sometimes, Matthias even stayed in Cindy's ward for an entire day. Therefore, the nurse and doctor knew that something was fishy between them.

Hearing that, Henrick had to fight back the impulse to confront the nurse and doctor. He hurriedly left the hospital after that.

If there was one thing he could not accept, it was his wife cheating on him. After all, he would never be able to hold his head high in Jadeborough anymore.

However, if the nurses and doctors in the hospital were not just gossiping or speaking nonsense, he would not let Cindy off the hook.

He would beat her to death if that happened.

After letting out a heavy sigh, he tried to hide his emotions before he returned to talk to the guests.

I'll confront her after the guests leave. I can't let any outsiders know about this!

Meanwhile, Arielle put down her cutlery as she turned

to look at a direction in confusion.

She saw Malorie walking unsteadily with Alan holding her, as if she had just seen a ghost.

It did not escape her notice that Malorie had become like that after the latter saw her and shrieked in shock just now.

Touching her cheek self-consciously, Arielle wondered, Do I look that scary?

...

On the other side of things, after leaving the Southall residence, Vinson finally met with Blake, who had been missing for over two weeks, at the mansion.

Sasha, who had completely recovered, was crying in Blake's arms.

When Vinson entered the mansion, Jordan took several steps back instinctively.

However, no one noticed that.

Vinson walked toward Blake as he asked, "You're back?"

"Yes!" Blake wiped his tears and sniffled in embarrassment.

Blake was fifteen years old that year. He knew that he should not cry as he was a man now. However, he could

not hold back his tears when he saw Sasha crying.

After he saw Vinson, he quickly bowed down. "I'm sorry, Mr. Vinson! Sorry for getting you worried!"

Vinson sighed and patted Blake's shoulder. "You silly boy. Tell me now. Where have you been the past two weeks?"

Sasha had been too busy crying just now to ask the same question, so she hurriedly added, "Yeah! We were looking for you. Where have you been?"

Blake kept his head low as he explained everything guiltily.

"Our car fell into the water, and I went into a coma. When I opened my eyes, someone was breaking the window. The water level was already at my nose by then. I could tell that the person who was breaking the window was well-trained. Worried that it might be the driver who hit our car, we got out from the trunk of the car and swam out of the river. I was injured at that time. When I was about to lose all my strength, I saw a boat. The people on the boat saved me after they saw me. I lost my consciousness again after I was dragged onboard. After I woke up, I found myself in a town thousands of miles away near the sea. The people on the boat brought me there. They stay in a rural village. Since I was injured and lost the device to contact all of you, and I was also afraid that those people would find me if I contacted you with a mobile phone, I begged them to let me stay for some time. After I recovered, I finally set off to come back. That's what happened."

Blake suddenly slapped his head and exclaimed, “Oh, right! The people of the village said that they're indebted to someone here. They wanted me to send my gratitude to this person in Jadeborough. Her name is... Arielle Moore.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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When Vinson heard Arielle's name, his gaze flickered. He questioned, "What's the name of the village?"

After Blake answered his question, Vinson smiled.

Blake asked curiously, "Mr. Vinson, why are you smiling? Is Arielle Moore actually the same Ms. Moore you ordered us to protect? It can't be that coincidental, right?"

Vinson smirked as he replied, "You're really lucky. Arielle came from that village."

"Gosh! I can't believe that I still ended up near Ms. Moore after so many things have happened!" Blake widened his eyes in shock.

Beside him, Sasha smiled as she uttered, "Ms. Moore has been looking for you too. You'll need to thank her. Also, you can tell her about your run-in with the villagers."

Blake nodded in agreement. He asked Vinson, "Should I go now?"

The latter shook his head and said, "She's busy with a funeral now. You may visit her some other day. Before that, I'll tell her about it. The wound on your leg has not fully recovered yet. Go to Carter's hospital for a checkup and some tetanus shots. Then, take a rest with Sasha for a few days. Also... I've postponed Toni and Andy's funerals. After both of you have recovered, we'll pay our respects together."



Blake had already heard about Toni's and Andy's passing. He murmured his assent as his eyes reddened.

It was common to face death in their career. Although he was upset, he had to push through.

Seeing Blake being so strong, Vinson complimented him for being a strong man. After that, Vinson glanced at the people at the side.

While Carter and Jordan were there, Harvey was nowhere to be seen.

Feeling curious, Vinson asked, "Where's Harvey?"

Carter shrugged and answered, "I was just about to tell you. We found a transport company that day, right?"

"Yes, and?"

"Then, we were planning to send an undercover agent there."

Vinson was stunned for a while, instantly understanding what was going on. "Harvey went there?"

Carter nodded as he added, "He insisted on going. We couldn't even stop him. However, since he normally rarely shows his face, he's the best suited to become our spy."

"When did he go?"

Abruptly, Carter hit his head. "Today. Oh, I almost

forgot. Before he left, he told us to pass this letter to Arielle. Please hand this to her.”

While speaking, he took out a letter from his pocket and gave it to Vinson.

Carter was not on anyone's side. Yet, since both men were in love with the same woman, they would have to resolve the issue soon.

He was just reminding Vinson about it.

Vinson took the letter with an indifferent expression. Arielle's name was written on it. He did not know what the content was about, but he was not planning to look at it.

After keeping the letter, he ordered Carter to send Blake and Sasha to the Morgans' private hospital.

When everything else was settled, Vinson grabbed Jordan, who was about to run away.

Sweat beaded Jordan's forehead. He was anxious as only Vinson and he were left in the mansion now.

“V-Vin... W-What's wrong?” he asked while trying to calm himself.

“Nothing's wrong with me, but something's wrong with you.”

Vinson released his grip and crossed his arms in front of his chest. His gaze was locked on Jordan when he said,

“Out with it. What's up with you recently?”

Jordan stammered, “W-What do you mean?”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Vinson gave Jordan a once-over before he asked, “Do you know what you look like now?”

Jordan covered his chest with his hands awkwardly, questioning, “What?”

“Like a man who was caught cheating.”

In other words, he looked like someone who was guilty and scared but still trying to appear calm.

His face flushed red when he heard that. “I have a girlfriend now, b-but I don't think that has anything to do with you. After all, it's not like we're in that kind of relationship... B-Besides, you can't force a relationship.”

Vinson's confusion grew upon listening to Jordan.

He frowned and yelled, “I didn't understand a single thing out of your mouth!”

“I...” Jordan clenched his teeth before he shouted, “I know you like me! Stop hiding it from me!”

Vinson was shocked. He furrowed his brows tighter as he questioned, “Were you drinking?”

“No! I can tell that you like me from the way you look at me. Also, you even asked me how to court someone you like. Back then, I wanted to tell you that no matter what, I would never fall for you. You're just a brother to me. We'll never be together because I just don't swing that way. I'm a straight man, which means I'll never fall for a man! Vinson Nightshire, just give up already!”

Words instantly fled Vinson.

The room fell silent for several minutes.

After a few minutes, Vinson finally returned to his senses.

His expression was complex, with a hint of disbelief.

He grabbed Jordan's collar and shook him violently.

The latter almost fainted when he stopped shaking. Vinson questioned, "It doesn't seem like there's water in your brain. Since your brain is not filled with water, why did you lose your mind?"

Jordan was embarrassed to hear that. "Vinson Nightshire! I'm being serious! Please stop liking me. I only see you as a brother."

Vinson tried to hold back the urge to punch Jordan. With a grim expression, he said, "I'm being serious too. I see you as a brother as well. You've misunderstood. I do not have any feelings for you. I like women!"

Jordan was stunned.

Then he became delighted.

"Are you telling the truth? You don't like me? Do you see me as a friend only?"

Vinson massaged his temples and yelled furiously, "How are you so confident? Who gave you the

courage? I don't like you! I can repeat that a thousand times! I like women!”

He had the urge to kick Jordan.

This time, he could not control himself anymore and really did that.

With a thump, Vinson kicked Jordan in his butt.

The latter almost fell onto the ground.

However, Jordan was not unhappy at all. He rubbed his butt as he said, “So, you don't like me? Haha! Great! You don't like me!”

I was overthinking! Vinson doesn't like me!

Jordan wished that he could set off fireworks to celebrate.

He had been extremely nervous to see Vinson recently because of that. Now, he was relieved after knowing the truth.

However, he became curious after that.

“If you don't like me, who are you courting?”