

A Beauty With Multiple Masks Chapter 811

“Ah... Sasha... He’s a celebrity.”

Sasha eyed the battered and bruised man in circumspect. Not one for popular culture, she failed to recognize him.

“Hmph!” snorted Sasha. “So what if he is? Our job is to protect Ms. Moore. Never mind a star, even the gods themselves will have to answer to us if they try to pick on her.”

“Right on! Now, watch how I bash his head in!”

Blake raised his fist and wound it up in anticipation of hammering it down upon the disoriented Jason.

“Wait!” Arielle immediately rushed forward to hold Blake back. “Don’t be rash. Let’s try to find out what’s going on first.”

“Understood,” replied Blake who continued to regard the man with wary eyes and his fists ready.

Arielle let out a sigh before she approached the wounded man. “Are you all right?”

Wrought with pain, the grimacing Jason sounded rather cranky. “The hell’s wrong with you? Why did your friends jump me?”

Hearing that voice jolted Arielle’s memories.

“Aren’t you that weirdo who intercepted me at the supermarket?”

“Yes! That’s me!” In the next second, Jason was seen stomping his foot.

“Whatever do you mean by weirdo? How am I weird at all?”

Arielle looked down at the mask and shades left on the ground in the aftermath of the walloping Blake handed out and nodded her head in earnest. “You are kind of strange, you know. Why are you all covered up like that on such a hot day?”

“That’s because I’m too famous and afraid that I’ll be recognized by my fans! How was I to know that you and your friends would decide to hit me on sight? —Is my face okay?”

Jason frantically pulled out a mirror from his bag and became hysterical once more after he inspected his badly bruised face in it.

That reminded Arielle of how Jason got swamped for photos after he showed his face at the supermarket the last time.

“Although I shouldn’t have hit you, it’s you who spooked me first, so you can’t blame it all on us. That being said, I’m willing to cover your medical expenses.”

Jason scrutinized his own visage carefully for any potential signs of disfigurement. He seemed to have calmed down slightly afterward before he regarded Arielle. “I don’t want your money.”

“Then what is it that you want?”

“Your contact number.”

“Huh?” Arielle asked warily, “What do you want that for?”

Jason’s back stiffened and he hastened to explain himself. “Don’t be mistaken! I’m not trying to hit on you. Actually, I’ve been asked to approach you by a director for a production that I’m currently involved in.”

Jason fished out a file from his bag as he spoke and proudly extended it to Arielle. “Here’s the script Go on and have a look at it.”

Arielle did not accept the document from him but recognized the name of the director written on the cover. It was Sam Sleight.

“So, it was Mr. Sleight who asked you to come to me.” Arielle exhaled before she continued, “I’ve

already turned him down before. Haven’t he found anyone else to play the female lead?”

“Nope. I’m currently the male lead for this film. Aren’t you a fan of mine? Now, you can seriously reconsider this offer.”

Arielle was flabbergasted. “Since when was I a fan of yours?”

“Oh, stop pretending. Playing hard to get isn’t going to work twice,” said Jason while he shoved his name card into her hands. “My number’s in there, so call me whenever you’ve decided. Chances like this aren’t going to come by again, so I’m going to give you three days to think about it. Give me an answer before then.”

Jason picked up the mask and shades and put them back before he bounded off, giving Arielle no time whatsoever to respond.

“Hey! Wait!”

She wanted to give chase but Jason had already scooted out of sight.

Blake was intrigued when he came up alongside her. “So, Arielle. You’re a fan of his?”

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“Of course, I’m not!” blurted Arielle. “I’ve never idolized anyone.”

“Then why does he insist that you are?”

“Beats me,” she replied, looking quite perplexed. “I don’t even know him.”

Sasha hooked her arm around Blake’s. “All right. Crisis averted. Time for us to disappear.”

“Yeah, okay,” said Blake as he waved toward Arielle. “Boss said that we are to stay close for your protection, but also to stay out of sight. So, on that note, we shall make ourselves scarce.”

With that, he and Sasha bolted off.

Arielle was rendered speechless while she watched the duo disappear from view. She did not even have time to say anything else.

Those two had a lot in common with the strange man who preceded them—popping out of nowhere before vanishing. She had been quite baffled by the entire encounter, to say the least.

Arielle shook her head and paid no more heed to them.

She casually tossed the name card that Jason gave her into the bin before striding toward the library ahead where the archive was.

On the other side, Jason made a mad dash and dove

inside the MPV parked in front of the gates to Jadeborough University.

The removal of his mask caused Gracie to exclaim aloud, “Your face!”

“Don’t worry about it. It’s just a scratch.” Jason waved her off nonchalantly.

Seeing Arielle in broad daylight that day left him even more astonished than he was previously as she possessed a bare face that was unparalleled across the entire entertainment industry.

Even though Jason did not mind the ding to his appearance, Gracie next to him was practically going bonkers.

“Who’s the one who did this to you? You’ve still got another interview to do tomorrow! This won’t do. I’m going to have to get the police right away!”

“No. Don’t!” said Jason as he snatched the phone from his manager’s hand. “No one hit me. I fell, that’s all.”

“Is that right?” Gracie’s eyes narrowed in skepticism as the wound did not look self-inflicted to her, and definitely not from a fall.

“Well, yeah! I did it to myself. Why would I want to lie about something like that?”

There was no way he would confess to getting trounced by two lasses and a kid.

Gracie was only half-convinced, but the Jason she knew was not the sort to suffer humiliation quietly. If Jason really got beaten up, she was sure that he would have gone to the police himself way before she did.

That seemed to have settled things for her. “Didn’t you say that you’ve gone to look for the female lead? Have you found her?”

“I did.”

The manager's eyes lit up. "So, what did Ms. Moore say?"

Jason leaned back into the seat. "She said that she'll get back to me in three days. But knowing that she's a fan of mine coupled with the fact that I'll be starring in this film, I'm sure she'll be totally up for it."

That made Gracie raise an eyebrow. "If that's the case, why didn't she just agree to it there and then?"

"That's because..." Jason leaned forward with a lifted chin. "She's playing hard to get."

He would never believe that a girl of Arielle's age did not know of a popular idol like him.

He reckoned that feigning ignorance and getting violent must be all part of a stunt to leave a lasting impression on him.

Beside him, Gracie regarded Jason quizzically. She had a gut feeling that the truth may be further from what

Jason described.

"If that's really the case..." Gracie went on to remind him grimly, "Being just an idol and not yet a recognized thespian right now, you're still very much dependent on your fan base. As such, you are not to get into a relationship with her. Even if you do, you are not to allow yourself to get caught on film."

"Got it." Jason waved her off. "Let's get a move on. I've got to ice my face and then study the script."

Seeing how diligent Jason was, which a rare sight in itself, Gracie probed no further and instructed the chauffeur to drive.

As this was happening, Wendy and Aaron's tour had brought them to the school's library.

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Wendy's heart skipped a beat the second she caught a glimpse of Arielle stepping inside the doors of the library.

Determined to not allow Aaron to see Arielle, she shot in front of him and obscured his line of sight. With a wry smile, she said, "Actually, there's nothing interesting to see there, so why don't we head over to the school museum first?"

That confounded Aaron. "Didn't you just tell me that the library here is the grandest one amongst all within Chanaea's higher institutes of learning? Why aren't we going in now that we're here?"

"It's because..." Wendy hastily tried to cook up something. "It suddenly occurred to me that no matter how big or impressive libraries are, they're kind of the same anyway."

"I won't argue against that."

That offered Wendy a moment's breather until Aaron added, "But since we're already here, we might as well go in and check it out."

Wendy's chest tightened and she looked to intervene, but Aaron was already headed inside.

Left with no alternatives, she could only grit her teeth and play along

She could not afford to make it too obvious, lest it aroused his suspicions.

Wendy caught up with Aaron only to see him shake his head in disapproval. “It’s a lot less than I expected. Back home, any one of our libraries would easily put this one to shame.”

Wendy’s eyes darted around in search of Arielle’s whereabouts so that she might adopt preemptive measures.

When she heard what he said, it irrepressibly piqued her curiosity. “Our school library previously became a popular search topic domestically because of its size and splendor, so where exactly are you from, Aaron?”

Aaron narrowed his eyes and smirked menacingly. “I hope that’s the last time I’m hearing you ask me that, Wendy.”

Wendy was suddenly gripped by terror as she could clearly see the warning signs in Aaron’s eyes.

The look inside them was akin to a sharp blade pressed up against her chest, threatening to pierce through it at any time.

The only time she saw something like that was from Vinson, and that spelled extreme peril.

She was so cowed that she became dumbstruck and started to break out in cold sweat.

Wendy sensed that there were unfathomable secrets to Aaron and it was this mysteriousness that drew her to him.

Any man who was sufficiently mysterious must possess tremendous strength, and she greatly fancied powerful men.

If Vinson only had that pretty face without that fearsome aura and the Nightshire Group behind him, perhaps she might not have been as desperate to marry him. Practically drawn to him like a moth to a flame, her heart fluttered and increasingly gravitated toward Aaron in the same manner.

Aaron quickly turned his attention away and scanned his eyes through the first floor of the library again in a way that unnerved Wendy enough to hurriedly hunt for

Arielle herself.

She exhaled, relieved to have confirmed the latter's absence from the vicinity. "The interiors of the floors beyond look more or less the same as this one. Since you don't think this place is grand enough for you, shall we move on to the school museum?"

"Yeah." Aaron's waning interest in the library had already sent him on the way out.

Wendy quickly followed suit and something popped into her head that she thought might be safe to ask. "Did you transfer to our school because of Arielle?"

Pertaining to this question, Aaron seemed significantly less inhibited. "I did."

Wendy felt a lump in her throat. "Do you... perhaps, like

her???

His brow perked up. "You could put it that way."

That caused Wendy's fingers to tighten against themselves while she murmured ambivalently, "Strangely though..."

"What's strange?"

“Arielle isn’t that popular in school.”

“Why so?” Aaron asked.

Wendy sighed. “Because her grades are poor. She kept missing class and she... often talked back to the teachers. Previously, she was involved in a gang fight and one of the students involved even landed up in prison. She’s a bad girl in everyone’s eyes.”

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“A bad girl?” Aaron gasped.

Wendy’s keen eyes caught the astonishment in his, and that filled her with tremendous satisfaction.

She nodded in affirmation. “That’s right. You could see for yourself that she isn’t in school today. We’re going to have our monthly test the day after and still, she’s playing truant. Hence, it’s no mystery why our homeroom teacher doesn’t like her. That makes me curious, though, as to what it is that you fancy about her?”

“I like that...” Aaron dragged out that last syllable before he spat out these words in Wendy’s anticipatory face. “It’s none of your d*mn business.”

Wendy was appalled. She bit down on her lip as she could scarcely believe how crassly Aaron would speak to a girl like herself. “Aaron, you...”

Aaron put a finger in his ear and cut her off. “You really are kind of annoying.”

“I...”

“I think I’m done here. You should go get busy on your own as I have other places that I’d like to visit.”

This was his second time in Chanaea. Truth be told, opportunities for him to leave Turlen were far and few in between, so he was certainly going to make the most of this one to explore this sprawling country.

While everyone considered Chanaea to be one of the four major nations with a long and illustrious past, it was Turlen that was truly the most ancient and historically rich one of all.

The only difference was that Turlen had always been reclusive and constantly avoided contact with other countries. That was the reason why it was hard to pick up on their imprints in the history books.

Undeterred, Wendy chased after him when she saw him about to leave.

“I know Jadeborough pretty well, Aaron. Would you like for me to be your guide?”

“No, that won’t be necessary.” He only felt that this girl talked too much.

Were they in Turlen, he would have grown bored toying with girls like her for a day before he kicked her to the curb. It was a pity that they were in Chanaea where he could not blatantly employ force against anyone for fear of blowing his own cover.

He tried to repress his own irritability and fished out a note which he passed along to Wendy. “Here’s a tip. You may go now.”

When he saw no reaction from the stupefied Wendy, he stuffed the money into her hands before he turned and strode off.

Wendy stared at the money in her palms and then at

Arron before she became so incensed that her hands quivered.

What's the meaning of this, Aaron?

Did he take me for a server by tipping me?

She was so angry that she got blue in the face. Never before had she been so disrespected and humiliated!

However, it seemed to have slipped her mind that she had already undergone a similar experience prior to her arrival in Jadeborough.

"Arielle Moore! It's all that d*mned slut's fault!" Wendy cursed before she suddenly recalled seeing Arielle enter the library.

She tore that note in her hands to shreds and turned sharply toward the library.

This was an insult that she refused to stomach and she was determined to unleash her wrath upon Arielle for it.

A habitual truant is not fit to walk into the school's library!

That thought drove Wendy as she stormed her way toward the library

If she was going to get it rough, there was no way she would allow Arielle to have it easy.

With the sheer number of students inside the library, she

reckoned that everyone must frown upon Arielle if she were to reveal that Arielle had been absent from school three days in a row.

After all, what good student would skip class that many days on the trot?

However, Wendy was not able to locate Arielle even after she combed through all five levels of the building.

What's going on? Did I mistake someone else for her, or had Arielle left?

After some deliberation, she was positive that it was Arielle that she saw as anyone else who looked even remotely identical would have been known throughout the school by now.

Wendy thus sought out the school librarian in charge of the first floor. "Ms. Booker, may I ask if you've seen Arielle Moore coming in?"

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It was only after Wendy tabled her inquiry that she realized that Elisabeth may not recognize Arielle. Thus, she quickly pulled out her phone with the intention of showing her a photo.

But before she could do that, she heard Elisabeth say, "Arielle Moore? Oh, do you mean the pretty girl who's great at translation and playing the piano?"

Wendy's face soured at that. Nonetheless, she had no choice but to nod in acknowledgment. "That's her."

Without noticing how Wendy's expression has stiffened, the librarian replied warmly, "Head over to the first floor school archive. You'll find her inside."

"What? The archive?"

Wendy's inflection elevated a notch. Since time immemorial, the school archive had been a place of restricted access. Never mind the students,

even the average teaching staff were not allowed in there without the express permission of the school's leadership.

In her eagerness to reach the archive, she did not catch the last part of what Elisabeth said. "Arielle's allowed to enter because she was handed the key by Mr. Brown, but you're not permitted inside."

Wendy's legs had already carried her to the archive's entrance in a jiffy.

The door which was usually shut tight there was left partially ajar, and out eked a stream of light from the resultant gap. Someone's indeed inside!

Pushing past the door, Wendy started to holler the moment she stepped through. "Arielle Moore!"

Arielle, who was flipping through the staff profiles, was caught out by this voice that came out of nowhere, and she lifted her head only to see the smug-looking Wendy strut up to her.

Amidst her perturbation, Arielle asked, "Wendy? What are you doing here?"

Wendy scoffed as she towered over her. "Shouldn't I be the one asking that? How dare a student like yourself trespass into the archive? Are you looking to get expelled?"

Arielle guessed as much that Wendy had shown up to split hairs with her. Sometimes, she felt that she had to hand it to Wendy for her resilience in coming back at herself repeatedly in spite of her extended losing streak.

Wouldn't this sort of perseverance be better served in some paid side-gig? Kids these days simply have too little homework and too much time on their hands!

Arielle offered up a shrewd rejoinder. “I have my own reasons for being in the archive, but come to think of it, aren’t you in here too? Why, are you looking to get expelled as well?”

“You...” Wendy was so pissed she started to stomp her feet. “I’m here to chase you off, Arielle. You’re not supposed to be here, so hurry up and get out!”

Arielle crossed her arms akimbo. “What if I say that I won’t?”

“You won’t, huh?” Wendy’s brow lifted mockingly. “Then, don’t blame it on me because you’re the one asking for it!”

Her counterpart nodded brusquely. “Yeah, yeah. I really had it coming. Do whatever you have to and get it over with. I’ve still got work to do.”

Wendy’s saw red at Arielle’s blasé attitude.

“You don’t know what’s good for you! Oh, how I’d love to see how cocky you’ll be after this!”

While she spoke, she strode outside the archive and dialed Marcus’ number on her phone.

The attention of the many students studying or reading on the first floor was quickly drawn toward that walking commotion that emerged from the archive’s doors,

Once Wendy noticed their reaction to her, she purposefully raised her voice when the call got through. “Mr. Brown, I’m Wendy Greene from the preparatory class. Could you hurry over to the school library’s archive? I’ve discovered someone who has sneaked inside and also refused to leave when I advised her to. Please come quickly!”

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Marcus had made dinner plans with a few of his close friends. But before he could leave the campus, he received a phone call from Wendy.

Immediately, he felt irritated as his mood darkened. Isn't Wendy responsible for Aaron's campus tour? Why is she calling me now?

Although Marcus wanted nothing more than to ignore her call, the archive was an area with restricted access.

Though it did not contain any secrets, many of the archive's documents were precious, and Marcus was afraid that they might be damaged.

That being said, an intruder in the archive wasn't a big deal, it would only be detrimental if the intruder decided to wreak havoc.

"Wait for me. I'll be there in three minutes," Marcus said after a brief moment.

"All right, Mr. Brown," Wendy replied before she hung up the call. A look of glee gleamed in her eyes.

Arielle really is a stupid girl. If she'd come out after I confronted her, things would blow off. Yet, she is as stubborn as ever. I can't believe she remained in the archive to spite me. She's practically asking for it! No one can help her now,

Wendy noticed there were several onlookers around her. Immediately, she wiped the cold smile off her face and replaced it with a mask of worry, "Can someone here help me? I'm afraid that the intruder might slight out before Mr. Brown is here."

Although Wendy was gifted with gorgeous looks, her personality was rotten to the core.

Most of the students weren't familiar with her devilish personality and merely saw a beautiful student begging for help. Without a second thought, they dropped their books and rushed forward to help Wendy.

"Miss, don't worry. We will guard the entrance and make sure that the intruder doesn't have a chance to escape."

"That's right, don't worry about it."

"With us here, we'll make sure the intruder has no where to run off to!"

Earlier, they were busy studying and did not notice the intruder's identity. Instead, they were mesmerized by Wendy's looks and leaped forward to help her. They were oblivious to Wendy's sinister intentions.

"Thank you so much." Wendy smiled sweetly in reply. The male students were smitten by her gorgeous smile and it motivated them even more to catch the intruder red-handed.

Back in the archive, Arielle continued to browse through the files after Wendy's departure.

She managed to confirm that the mysterious person who rescued Cindy was most likely affiliated with the organization that killed her mother, too.

Additionally, the man pictured in the photograph with her mother was the only lead she had on the organization.

Since he was her only clue, Arielle needed to find out his identity as soon as possible.

Although neither Arielle nor Vinson found a match when they ran his picture in the global database, Arielle refused to give up. The photograph was proof that he existed in this world. There were bound to be traces of his existence.

In her previous bout of chess with Josiah, she had asked the latter about the man's identity. Though Josiah's memory was hazy, he managed to confirm that the man was Maureen's secret boyfriend.

I need to find this man as soon as possible!

Since Arielle was a highly focused person, she tended to forget about her surroundings when she was fixated on something

Hence, she had long forgotten her incident with Wendy.

After a few minutes, Marcus finally arrived at the library.

Coincidentally, the librarian had gone for a bathroom break and missed Marcus' arrival.

Marcus made a beeline for the archive and noticed the horde swarming outside of the archive's entrance.

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Wendy, who was eagerly anticipating Marcus' arrival, noticed him immediately. Quickly, she waved her hand to catch his attention. "Mr. Brown, over here!"

Marcus quickened his pace as he made his way in front of Wendy. "Who on earth is the person who ignored your advice?" he demanded angrily.

Wendy skirted around his question. “You’ll know once you see it for yourself,” she replied.

She was afraid that Marcus might be biased toward Arielle. Therefore, Wendy only wanted him to realize Arielle’s identity after he was done scolding her.

Gleefully, Wendy trailed after Marcus as he stormed into the archive.

Out of curiosity, many of the students tagged along.

When the group entered the archive, they caught sight of a feminine figure seated on the floor with her back against the crowd as she flipped through the files. The female student was so engrossed in her reading that she did not notice their arrival.

Coincidentally, a ray of light that shone through the window happened to fall on her head. The golden rays illuminated a perfect halo around her cocked head and made it seem like she was an angel who had descended from the heavens.

The breathtaking scene before the male students left them stunned

Even Marcus found himself mesmerized. However, he snapped out of his daze immediately. “Who allowed you into the archive? Get out of here at once!” he called

out.

Similarly, Wendy stepped forward. “The principal is here. How dare you remain there?”

Finally, the woman seemed to realize their presence. Startled, she whirled around and looked at them like a deer caught in headlights.

Her bright eyes swept across the group at the same time the group caught sight of her alluring face. She was so beautiful that the group was astounded.

Her look of surprise caused their hearts to ache as they felt guilty for frightening her.

On the other hand, Wendy gritted her teeth in anger. Now that the principal is here, is she trying to play the victim?

“Mr. Brown, Arielle was the one who ignored my advice and entered the archive. She should be punished severely for her actions!” Wendy pointed at Arielle and yelled.

Marcus finally regained his senses,

Never in his wildest dreams had he expected that Arielle was the archive’s supposed ‘intruder.’

After all, he was the one who handed Arielle the archive’s key as Marcus felt guilty after he listened to her explanation.

In truth, Arielle was never an intruder.

Instead of punishing Arielle, he turned to look at Wendy, who was seething in anger. All of a sudden, realization dawned upon him.

Similar to dramatic soap operas, the female students of Jadeborough University would bicker with each other until a victor emerged. The reasons for their fights were often petty, and there was nothing that Marcus detested more than these trifling fights.

Marcus recalled how Wendy’s hiccup with the guest professor from Maxwell University almost cost them to lose the rights to Maxwell University’s advanced math lesson plan.

Unable to restrain his anger and hatred anymore, Marcus exploded in a fit of fury.

“Wendy Greene, what on earth are you trying to do?” he roared as he drew himself to full height. Despite his old age, he still towered over Wendy.

His furious bellow scared Wendy out of her wits

She had no idea why he was yelling at her. Why is Mr. Brown yelling at me? Shouldn't he be scolding Arielle instead?

**M-Mr. Brown, why are you yelling at me?” she

stammered with widened eyes.

The rest of the students looked on in disbelief.

Although they lost their train of thought when they realized that Arielle was the one who intruded on the archive, they were even more confused when Marcus directed his anger at Wendy instead of Arielle.

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“Are you really asking me why I yelled at you?” Marcus let out a bark of wry laughter. “Will you finally be satisfied after wreaking havoc across the school? Or do you want to reduce it to rubble, too?”

“Are you talking about me?” Wendy pointed at herself with a look of astonishment. “What did I do? Isn't Arielle the one at fault here? Why aren't you scolding her? Instead, you are blaming me for wreaking havoc.”

The onlooking students couldn't help but look back and forth between Marcus and Arielle as they tried to decipher Marcus's reasons for protecting Arielle.

A few of the students stepped forward to defend Wendy. "Mr. Brown, isn't the archive considered a restricted area? It's clear that Arielle ignored her advice. Why is she the one at fault???"

"Yeah! Mr. Brown, you should be scolding Arielle instead!"

Nevertheless, only a few students tried to help Wendy. Most of them remained silent as they deduced that there might be another reason for Marcus's anger.

Wendy's eyes began to fill with tears. "That's right. I really have no idea what I've done wrong. You can't favor Arielle and look over her mistakes just because she helped the school's reputation! You should treat every student fairly," she mumbled.

"I'm favoring her?" Marcus's livid gaze swept toward Wendy. "Though I suppose there is some truth in your

words. I shouldn't be so forgiving toward my students' mistakes." He laughed bitterly.

For some reason, a tremble skittered down Wendy's spine when she heard Marcus's words.

"Wendy, you've ignored the school's rules, bullied students, and nearly destroyed the school's reputation. As the principal, it is my responsibility to punish you accordingly. This will be your first strike. Additionally, you will write a three thousand word essay to reflect on your wrongdoings and publicly apologize to Arielle during assembly," Marcus uttered coldly.

Wendy could not believe her own ears.

In a haze of desperation, she clutched Marcus's sleeve. "W—Why are you giving me a strike? Arielle's the one who intruded the archive. I didn't do anything wrong! How could you punish me?"

The other students were dumbfounded by Marcus's declaration as well.

What is Mr. Brown doing?

"Are you asking me why I punished you?" Marcus pointed at Arielle. "Well, let me tell you then. I was the one who let Arielle borrow the archive key. Even Mr. Baxter was there when I gave her the key. I also recorded it down in my office. You can look at it as proof."

Wendy's mind went blank,

In a daze, she looked toward Arielle and noticed that the corners of Arielle's lips were upturned into a cold smile.

Arielle's cold and calculating smile caused Wendy's skin to prickle with fear.

Arielle was never an intruder. Right from the very start, she had received Mr. Brown's permission. No wonder she remained in the archive even after I mocked her. This entire time, Arielle had me dancing in the palm of her hand. I stumbled into her trap like a fool.

"Do you know why I've punished you now?" Marcus asked coldly.

All the blood drained from Wendy's face.

Instantly, realization dawned on the other students.

“It looks like Arielle never intruded the archive. It was this student here who was grasping at straws and tried to sabotage Arielle!”

“I must say, despite her good looks, she has a horrendous personality.”

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All of a sudden, one of the students mentioned an incident. “Isn’t her name Wendy? Do you remember when someone live-streamed Arielle’s translation of the lesson plan on the forum?”

“Yeah. What about it?”

“The person who started the stream was hoping that Arielle would fail. When Arielle succeeded, the person shut off the stream in a heartbeat. Later, it was revealed that the person was none other than Wendy!”

“Oh my. Wendy must not know that Arielle received Mr. Brown’s permission. She must have contacted Mr. Brown because she wanted to hurt Arielle!”

“Oh my God, women are terrifying creatures indeed.”

“What do you mean? Most of the female students here aren’t like her. She’s the only exception. She’s just jealous of Arielle’s capabilities. Back in the freshman party, didn’t Arielle crush Wendy with her astounding piano skills?”

One by one, the students began to gossip about Wendy, not seeming to care that she was right beside them.

The students who tried to defend Wendy earlier expressed their regrets,

“I can’t believe Wendy fooled me. It looks like I’ll have to get a new pair of glasses to improve my eyesight.”

“Me too, I must have been blind to defend her!”

As the students continued to bad mouth her, Wendy was so embarrassed that she clenched her fists. Utterly overwhelmed with humiliation, she didn’t even notice that her nails had dug into the flesh of her palms.

Wendy realized that she could never recover from such a public humiliation. It looks like I’m doomed.

“Mr. Brown.” Arielle rose to her feet and made her way in front of Marcus with a look of confusion painted across her face. “What on earth is happening?”

Arielle’s question sent Wendy into a frenzy. “Stop pretending! You knew that I would call Mr. Brown here, right? That’s why you devised a trap for me!” she yelled and brandished a threatening finger toward Arielle.

Arielle looked even more muddled than before. “Wendy, what are you talking about? How could I know that you’d call Mr. Brown here?”

“You knew about it right from the very start. You cunning b*tch!”

Marcus was so livid that the veins across his forehead twitched. “Wendy, are you trying to get yourself expelled? How could you use such profanities against another student?” he thundered.

Everyone else was equally taken aback by Wendy’s crude curse.

Stricken with anger and desperation, Wendy nearly burst into tears. “She was setting me up this entire time!”

“Enough!” Marcus bellowed. His yell scattered the onlooking students as they hurried out of the archive to avoid his wrath.

Once all the students left the archive, Marcus whirled around to glare at Wendy. “Wendy Greene, this first strike is only a warning. If something like this happens again, I will not hesitate to call your parents and get them to bring you home!”

Wendy’s teeth sank into her bottom lip as fury blazed in her eyes. Though she could not accept Marcus’ warning, she restrained herself from exploding in anger.

If I—Horington’s top socialite, am expelled, I would become the laughing stock of Horington. My social status would plummet, and I’d never recover from such a devastating embarrassment.

With that in mind, Wendy smothered her urge to hit Arielle and left.

Arielle looked at Wendy’s retreating back with a dark gaze.

It was true that she had set Wendy up on purpose. Yet, Wendy played a part too. If Wendy didn’t despise Arielle so much, Arielle’s trap would have never succeeded.

Hopefully, Wendy has learned her lesson. I can’t be bothered to deal with her anymore.

“Arielle.” Marcus’ voice jerked Arielle back to reality.

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“Mr. Brown.” Arielle gave him an apologetic smile. “It looks like I’ve caused you quite some trouble.”

“Not at all. Professor Sleight told me that we would have lost the rights to Maxwell University’s lesson plan if you hadn’t offered your assistance. I also caught wind about the freshman party. You’ve done well to raise the school’s reputation. Recently, there were quite a few famous pianists who wanted to seek your guidance. However, I declined their visits because I didn’t want to distract you from your studies,” Marcus replied with a shake of his head.

Arielle nodded in acknowledgment. “Thank you. I truly don’t have the time to spare.”

“About Wendy...” Marcus trailed off for a moment as a wistful look crossed his face. “Although I have a grasp of the situation, I hope that the two of you can still be good friends. Once you’ve graduated, these petty fights will not matter. In the future, your friends will be useful connections.”

“Got it.” I can only hope that Wendy thinks the same way.

“That’s great. I will try to speak some sense into Wendy too.” With a pat on Arielle’s shoulder, Marcus excused himself. “Continue your search. I will be taking my leave first.”

It was almost time for dinner with his friends.

“Okay. Have a safe trip, Mr. Brown.”

Once Marcus left, Arielle returned to her original spot and continued to flip through the files.

According to her mother’s diaries, she was looking for a professor working at a specific time period. This way, I can narrow my search.

Arielle did a quick mental calculation in her head. Given my current speed, it will take me two days to finish all these files.

At the same time, a new post popped up in the school's forum.

The post's title was extremely eye-catching. It was titled: Wendy the nutcase, cursed at Arielle in front of the principal! Video attached below as proof!

In the blink of an eye, Arielle had become a viral star at Jadeborough University.

As soon as the post surfaced on the forum, everyone clicked on it. True to its title, they discovered a short video attached to the post.

The footage perfectly captured how Marcus had punished Wendy as the latter lost her temper and called Arielle a b*tch.

In no time, the post gained a lot of traction.

When Wendy was on a stroll to clear her head, she noticed countless fingers pointed in her direction.

"Look, isn't that Wendy? She must be the nutcase shown on the forum's post."

"Oh my God, that's her! Quick, we should leave before she goes berserk. Seeing how crazy she is, she might attack us."

Flabbergasted, Wendy stared at them. When she locked gazes with them, the two female students scurried off with their tails between their legs.

School forum? Nutcase? Are they blabbering about me?

Feeling uneasy by their whispers, Wendy quickly went to the school's forum. Immediately, the infamous post appeared on the screen.

When she scrolled to look at the comments, Wendy realized that none of the post's comments were trying to defend her. Contrarily, they were all belittling her.

Has Wendy gone mad? Did you see her face? She looks absolutely terrifying!

She really is nothing but a nutcase. How is she still a student here? They should just expel her.

Not only is she crazy, but she's also a schemer who wants to bring others down.

As she read the comments, Wendy was so furious that she saw red.

As Horington's top socialite, she was always treated and

pampered with respect. The audacity of them to call me a nutcase!

Wendy's eyes reddened as tears streamed down her cheeks. But even amidst her sorrowful sobs, her teary eyes gleamed with unadulterated hatred.

This is all Arielle's fault!

With a clenched jaw, Wendy called Cecilia. "Mom, when will you be here?"