

Mysterious Woman is So Gentle by Mila Chan chapter 21

Chapter 21

Shandie's lips curled up into a smile as wide as that of some socialite and froze in place while her brain thawed.

What... Arielle? Did I hear that right?

There was a flurry of discussion within the crowd as well.

"Who's Arielle Moore?"

"Isn't Shandie Southall the champion? Why isn't she made the brand ambassador? Is Soir

Coffee breaking the convention this year and opting for someone else apart from the competition winner?"

"Even if they are not picking the champion, should they not select a candidate amongst the top three finalists? I don't see this Arielle Moore amongst any of them."

In the gallery, the unsettled Cindy turned and glared furiously at the equally stunned Arielle

in the row behind, who wondered why Vinson would make her the ambassador of the coffee chain.

"Arielle!" Cindy snarled. "What have you done? Why did you pull something like that on your sister?"

Cindy's eyes looked like they were about to pop, and were they not in a public space, Arielle was sure that the woman would have skinned her alive.

Henrick, too, had a look of surprise on him, but it quickly evolved into a smile. As both the girls were his daughters, it made no difference to him who got the job since he was going to get paid either way.

Henrick set aside some of his biases toward Arielle and regarded her warmly. “How could

you not share this great news with me earlier, Sannie?”

Arielle was quite impassive inside.

How did he manage to forget that he was her father when he upgraded himself to first class seats and left her all by herself in the economic class?

As disgusted as she felt, she did not show her emotions as she shrugged nonchalantly. “I only got to know about this too, Dad.”

“Liar!” Cindy seethed through gritted teeth. “You clearly did this on purpose!”

She was in the opinion that Arielle held back in a bid to see Shandie and herself sorely disappointed.

The vicious girl!

“Cindy!” Henrick bristled at her. “What are you doing? There’s no need to differentiate because Sannie and Shandie are both our children. So stop this.”

Cindy raged until she was heaving, but had to rein herself in in the presence of Henrick.

Arielle only smiled wryly when she looked at Cindy.

She had no desire to become some ambassador as she thought it was too much of a hassle

and an impediment to the advancement of her plans. Seeing the hatred in Cindy’s eyes, however, made her feel that this was one possible way by which she could get back at

them—

pissing Cindy off and dashing Shandie’s hopes would surely rend this family apart.

So long as there was disharmony between them, fault-lines which she could exploit would surely surface, and that suited her just fine.

Upon seeing the sliver of a smile upon Arielle’s lips, Cindy became even more unwavering in her belief that it was all intended on Arielle’s part, and was determined to not let the girl clinch that role which she felt rightfully belonged to her own precious daughter.

At that moment, the host took center-stage after conferring with Vinson. “Could we have

you on stage, Ms. Moore?”

Arielle’s eyes coincidentally met Vinson’s when she looked toward the platform, and though she could not tell what sort of mood he was in through his dark gaze, she could only comply at the host’s behest.

As Arielle placed one foot before the other in the direction of the stage, all everyone else could see was a slender silhouette from the rear.

Nevertheless, that was enough to impress upon them her gracefulness. Her poise was like a butterfly in flight, and the majestic air she exuded was not to be understated.

Arielle’s unadorned face did little to diminish her ability to dazzle. Her visage, as radiant as the sun and as pristine as the crescent moon, left the observing Shandie gnashing her own teeth

onstage.

She slowly turned herself around after she stepped into the spotlight while the audience enthralled by her back-view continued to be transfixed in anticipation.

Gorgeous!

She is simply gorgeous!

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Chapter 22

The girl on stage had defined, exquisite features and flawless looks on that most perfectly oval-shaped face to go with her almost nine-head tall frame. Her package practically reduced Shandie beside her to a figurative ugly-duckling.

Never mind the ugly-duckling, even ordinary swans would be put to shame before the real swan-princess.

Most significantly was the fact that she wore no make-up. There was no telling how

brehtaking she would be if she had put some color on, as a girl like her could overshadow

even the female stars in the beauty-laden entertainment industry.

No one dislikes beautiful women. Not even the girls present at the ceremony whose eyes

glistened in awe.

By just standing there, Arielle was that brightest light who condemned Shandie to a mere wallflower, drawing away all the attention that ought to have belonged to the latter without

exception.

Vinson's eyes, too, were riveted as well, as if everyone else had become non-existent to him.

The manner in which Shandie's eyes reddened in jealousy did not elude Arielle. The former's rage and anguish were exactly what she wanted, but she quickly averted her gaze and walked right up to Vinson. "Why did you..."

Then, Vinson interjected, "I haven't decided whether to marry you, so consider this a little

forwarding of interest."

Arielle was stumped, as she wondered whether it was solely for the payment of interest that he decided to hand such a critical endorsement role to her.

She had no idea what was going on inside Vinson's head, but she felt that that role would be

worth taking up just to see Cindy and Shandie throw a fit.

Vinson took up the microphone. "As you may understand, Soir Coffee has always picked the winner of the coffee competition to be our spokesperson, but I've decided that this year, we'll only choose the one whose image best represents our brand. That, I feel, belongs to Ms. Moore.

So, why don't you come forward and say a few words to all our friends out there?"

Arielle took over from Vinson and was about to speak when someone rushed out and

snatched the microphone from her.

“I won’t stand for this!”

When Arielle reflexively turned around, her gaze collided head—
along into Shandie’s, whose

reaction came as no surprise to her.

Arielle’s brows perked up, questioningly. “What are you doing, Shandie?” Shandie ignored her and addressed the crowd directly instead. “The brand ambassador of

the

coffee shop has always been selected from amongst those who have proved themselves to be

the

most proficient at latte art. How could someone with no knowledge of it be chosen this year? This is just unacceptable!”

Cindy was the first to take to her feet.

“That’s right, Mr. Nightshire! Your decision is too arbitrary and unprecedented, and we should have been informed even if you wish to make an exception to this. How can you have a

country girl who isn’t even a coffee drinker become your brand ambassador?”

Cindy’s words had the entire hall uproarious.

“A girl from the countryside? This chosen ambassador can’t carry the image of an international chain like Soir Coffee!”

“Disregarding the fact that she’s from the country, but not even a coffee drinker? That’s a

little too much.”

Emboldened by the supportive crowd, Shandie spoke into the microphone again, “Don’t tell us that you’ve seduced your way into this role, Arielle?”

Arielle's dagger-like icy stare gave Shandie quite a fright, while Vinson's even colder glare unnerved the latter so much that she dared not even look at him twice.

She took a deep drawl and a moment to collect herself before she continued, "Otherwise, kindly explain to us how someone who doesn't even drink coffee managed to snag this endorsement role."

"Who told you that I don't drink coffee?" Arielle retorted calmly.

That drew a sneer from Shandie. "Then, do you dare accept my challenge? If you could beat me at latte art, then I'd willingly give up the role of brand ambassador to you!"

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Chapter 23

Vinson wanted to speak up but Arielle shot him a look before she replied with a meaningful

smile, "Very well. Challenge accepted!"

Shandie was momentarily taken aback but recovered quickly with a smirk. "Good! Let's do

it. Right here, right now!"

Cindy was not idling away in the gallery either as she went over to hash things out swiftly with the organizers, after which two coffee tables were moved onstage and equipped properly.

Vinson looked a tad apprehensively at Arielle who remained silent throughout.

Once the host saw that both of them are ready, he said, "Ladies, you may begin."

Shandie burst into action the moment his voice trailed off.

The first step to creating latte art was, of course, to prepare the espresso which had to be

hand-brewed by the participants themselves.

The assiduous Shandie weighed up fifteen grams of coffee beans and fed them into the grinder with tremendous refinement.

She was surprised to see Arielle appearing quite competent when she stole a glance over, as though the latter actually knew what she was doing.

Arielle had fluidly set up the paper filter inside the filter holder before she raised the kettle to pour the boiling water in, clockwise and in a circular movement.

Shandie was unable to contain herself when she observed that, noting that this was something only professional brewers would know. Pouring clockwise would allow for the filter to adhere better to the holder, and at the same time, eliminate the starchy taste from the paper and warm up the receptacle. The resultant would be a much more flavorful cuppa.

It was easy to tell from Arielle's understanding of this coupled with her deft gestures that she knew how to make coffee.

How can it be possible for this country girl to know how to brew? In spite of her certainty that she was not hallucinating, Shandie was completely bamboozled.

Isn't Arielle from the countryside?

Shandie remained stumped for some time before she pinched herself hard and turned her

focus back to the task at hand.

Brew it! Even if Arielle knows how to make coffee, will she be able to do latte art?

Shandie took a deep drawl in a bid to settle herself and resume her own work. Traditional pour-over coffee required two infusions of water, after which an aromatic cup would be ready

Shandie quietly chuckled when she saw Arielle still awaiting her second infusion while she

herself was already done, and dismissed Arielle's knowledge as something the latter must have

picked up from a stint at a coffee shop.

Shortly after, Arielle completed her brewing as well, and in response, the host communicated that they could both proceed with the creation of their latte art.

Compared to brewing, the latte art was the real litmus test.

The creation of latte art required the use of whole milk, and each person needed to conceive their theme before they began.

Maintaining an elegant smile, Shandie was first to speak, "My chosen theme is: A Snow-Covered Cottage in Freezing Weather..."

When the microphone came to Arielle, she paused before replying staidly, "Mine will be: The Bloom of a Thousand Pear-Flowers Ushered Forth by the Night Breeze of Spring."

Shandie twitched her lips upon hearing Arielle similarly reciting a verse from classical poetry.

Is this little b*tch trying to be pedantic like me?How

many years did she spend in school?

I am, of course, an arts graduate from the University of Avenport. Shandie scoffed at the thought of Arielle's proposed theme in the assumption that the latter

—

was only going to put together a few pear-flowers, and went on to concentrate on shaping out

her own designs with the whole milk.

First, Shandie covered the top of the coffee with froth from the whole milk, and then

employed the use of latte art pen to tease out a snow-capped mountain and a little wooden house upon it.

At a glance, it did foster the feel of A Snow-Covered Cottage in Freezing Weather.

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Chapter 24

When Shandie's swiftly realized theme was flashed on the screen, it drew gasps of astonishment.

"This artistic conception is pretty good. If this cup of coffee were to be offered in a coffee shop, surely it could fetch a good twenty?"

"This isn't coffee art, but art itself!"

“No wonder Crown Coffee Academy has the reputation of being the best place to learn the techniques of brewing!”

Cindy was extremely pleased at the reactions received, and was proud that the daughter she

painstakingly nurtured had not let her down.

Shandie quietly began to grow in her complacency as she was able to listen in to the discussions taking place and praise lavished upon her off-stage.

She just knew that she would be the one to come up on top!

Her theme was secretly conceived by a famous designer, and one which she had spent a week practicing at home. There was none who could rival her work in terms of visual impact.

She could just imagine the legions of fans she would be able to garner when the video was posted onto the blog, and all before she even starred in any movie.

On top of that, Vinson would also be mighty impressed, making her a winner in both love and her professional life!

The more Shandie thought about it, the more her delight grew. She then needed to pinch her own thigh in order to stop herself from laughing aloud.

Of course, she had not forgotten about Arielle, who was still busying away.

Shandie thought that though Arielle's Bloom of a Thousand Pear-Flowers did showcase a

considerable degree of skill, its few pear-trees with budding blossoms nonetheless paled in

contrast to her own creation.

When Arielle was finally done, she raised a hand and asked the host, “Could you do me a favor here?”

The host immediately went over.

Shandie sneered inside: Sensationalist much!

Never mind getting the host to help, Shandie deemed that her opponent had no chance of beating her even with Vinson's backing. As this was an open challenge witnessed by the masses, there was no way she would be able to pull strings here.

By this time, the host was already next to Arielle. "May I know if there's anything that you'd

like me to do?"

Arielle turned to the big screen behind her which was now focused over her coffee, and decided that the timing was right..

"Do you mind lending me the script you have in your hand?"

"Certainly," replied the host who was happy to assent to a beautiful woman's request, and generously passed his own script along.

To the side, Shandie appeared even more disdainful when she saw Arielle's design on the big screen.

So you drew up some nice looking pear-flowers? Big deal.

She wondered what other tricks Arielle might be up to, but remained skeptical as to whether it would make any difference to the outcome.

Arielle reached out to receive the script from the host and at the same time, sought out the angle she wanted. Once she got a handle on the amount of force she wanted to apply behind it, she started to fan at the coffee with the script in hand.

Shandie was dumbstruck. How could you fan at the latte art?

Wouldn't that mess up your original drawing?

You're an ignorant country girl after all!What a joke!

While Shandie ridiculed away at Arielle inside, an astonishing sequence was unveiled in the

next instant as the buds on the pear-trees seemed to bloom under Arielle's steady fanning.

Then, a few blossoms appeared to detach from the branches and scatter upon the ground below.

With that, Arielle stopped fanning and extended a bow to the audience and guests. "This is

my work: The Bloom of a Thousand Pear-Flowers Ushered Forth by the Night Breeze of Spring. Thank you for watching."

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Chapter 25

All presents were so stunned that the entire hall remained hushed even after her voice faded out.

Latte art had always been static, but Arielle's effort was animated!

A cup of coffee was a one-off, but this one was worth a few times more because that few

seconds of motion itself could sell for hundreds!

While the audience below was still awestruck, Vinson in the front row was the first to start

clapping

There was no exaggeration to The Bloom of a Thousand Pear-Flowers Ushered Forth by the

Night Breeze of Spring, as that scene they witnessed expressed just that.

Now he understood why Arielle accepted the challenge.

There was not only curiosity in Vinson's eyes but also an element of admiration, as he did

not expect that this uncouth lass could also exhibit such elegance and finesse.

What else was there to her that he did not know about? Vinson's applause brought the crowd back to their senses. "Marvelous! I've never seen this form of latte art in my life. Could this be patented?"

“This is going to go viral. If the video goes online, it is going to take the coffee industry by storm!”

“Is she a student of the Crown Coffee Academy? How is it that I’m not able to find her within the list of alumni? Could it be that she isn’t from the school?”

Henrick was delirious with glee and almost lost control as he jumped onto his feet. “She’s

not a student of the Crown Coffee Academy. She’s my daughter, Arielle.”

“So she’s your daughter? I recall that you have another daughter onstage. You are one lucky

man to have two talented girls like them!”

“The video! Could we play that segment again? I’d like to see it one more time!”

“Me too! Me too!”

“Could I get a sip of that coffee? Just one sip?”

“Excuse me, sir? Could you introduce me to your daughter? I’m the manager at Orecchiette

Cafe...”

“I’m the CEO of XX Coffee and I’d like to get to know her too...”

Henrick’s face was flushed red by the courtship of all the countless parties clamoring for his

attention as never in his life had he been so popular with the sponsors, and for this, he had to credit his darling daughter Arielle for it!

Next to him, Cindy was already red in the face from rage, unaware that her fingernails had dug so deep into her own flesh that she was bleeding from it. All she could do was glare at Arielle onstage.

Why? How did things turn out this way?

There were no words to describe the hatred in her heart!

In less than the short one week since Arielle's return, she and Shandie had already lost out

to her three times. And each time, it had been a complete slaughter.

Her own daughter who she thought the world of kept getting her thunder stolen by that wily fox Arielle!

She had to find out which burrow this vixen crawled out of so that she could bring the whole lair down as soon as possible!

Compared to Cindy, Shandie looked like she was about to explode onstage as the immense amazement she felt she saw the pear—flowers bloom and fell was supplanted by an irrepressible fury.

“You are a liar!”

Shandie stormed up and grabbed Arielle by the collar. “Aren't you someone who doesn't even drink coffee? How do you learn about latte art? You liar!”

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Chapter 26

Shandie's expression bordered on savagery, to which Arielle responded with a stern rebuke.

“Get your hands off. You've been warned!”

She had really been overtly polite to Shandie all the time.

Shandie was stewing as she stared straight into Arielle's eyes, but what she saw hidden inside was like a gargantuan glacier that could swallow someone whole.

That intimidating coldness shocked Shandie as it was something she had never seen before.

Arielle tugged Shandie's offending hand off her own collar and turned to the host. “Sir, I think my sister might be a little agitated, so it might be best if you could bring her backstage to

cool off.”

Before the host could react, two black-clad bodyguards walked onstage and positioned themselves either side of Shandie before they escorted her off.

Arielle was a little taken aback by the appearance of the duo as she did not bring along any bodyguards herself on this trip back.

In the next second, a tall and stalwart man steadily approached her.

It was Vinson.

His standout chiseled face appeared unapproachable without a smile, but perhaps owing to the lighting from behind him, he seemed a little more genial at this time.

“Are those two bodyguards working for you?” Arielle asked.

Vinson stopped less than two feet away from her and extended his right hand. “Congratulations for becoming the brand ambassador to Soir Coffee, the retail chain under Nightshire Group. I’ll have my lawyer contact you regarding the details in due time.”

Arielle did not manage to reply before Henrick’s voice rang out again. “Thank you for giving Sannie this opportunity, Mr. Nightshire. As she’s still young and unfamiliar with contractual agreements, I’ll be standing in as her manager. So please, direct your lawyer to follow up with

me.”

Vinson evoked a rare smile at Henrick. “In that case, we’ll be in touch again.”

Seeing that Vinson was about to leave, Henrick quickly called after him. “Wait, Mr. Nightshire! To facilitate communications, would you be able to give me one of your

name-cards?”

That only earned him a frosty look from Vinson. The demeanor of his assistant beside him was just as aloof. “Mr. Nightshire’s name-card is

custom-

made and is not something granted to just anyone. There’s no need for you to try to reach us either, as we’ll contact you as and when there’s a need to.”

Henrick’s face shriveled and reddened and he cleared his throat awkwardly, not daring to

bring up the issue of the name card again.

The observing Arielle was a little taken aback by this. Isn't the assistant overreacting a little? It's just a name-card. After Vinson departed, the curious Arielle inquired of her father, "Why won't he give us a

name-card, Dad? Is there any special meaning to it?"

"Of course, my girl." Henrick looked upon Arielle with the eyes of a kindly father as he patiently explained. "Mr. Nightshire's name-card isn't handed out freely, so when he chooses to

give it to someone, it means that he's taken that person into confidence. Anyone in possession of Mr. Nightshire's name-card will be held in esteem, and will be able to enter and leave Nightshire Group's premises at will."

Arielle instinctively reached over the pocket holding the name-card Vinson gave her. If what Henrick said was true, she had nearly thrown away an invaluable gift.

She supposed that she probably would not find a use for something like that, but even if she did, she was certain she would not want to hand it over to someone like Henrick who would more than likely abuse the privilege.

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Chapter 27

"That's why, girl," Henrick continued, "You've to try to get me one of those when you're better acquainted with him, got it?"

Arielle sneered quietly but nonetheless nodded dutifully. "Yes, Dad."

She then continued, "I'm going need more knowledge to perform my role as ambassador,

Dad. As I haven't attended much school, could I use your study to do some reading? I noticed

that you have quite a collection in there."

What she figured was that there might be some clues in there which may reveal the cause

of her mother's death.

Henrick's study was not a place which she was allowed to access freely, so over the past

week, she had not managed to find an excuse to get in.

The man hesitated before he nodded. "Sure! But you are not to go through any documents or

the likes inside."

"Yes!

Thanks, Dad!" Arielle's sweet smile drew the eyes of the people around her, and only she herself was oblivious to how captivating she was.

Those looks only served to improve upon Henrick's good mood, as he thought to himself

what a gem he lucked out on.

Not only was she beautiful, but she was also skilled at latte art as well. He felt that

somebody up there must really like him, and thought how much of a travesty it would be if he

could not manage to put the Southalls on the map.

At this moment, Cindy hastened over. "Dear, I saw someone take Shannie away so could you

help find out where she is? I'm afraid that she might be in trouble..."

It was only then that Henrick remembered that he still had another daughter, and

proceeded to search for her alongside Cindy.

However, Shandie showed up when they were about to set off.

The aggrieved and irate woman ranted at Henrick, "Dad! Arielle had Mr. Nightshire's men

lock me up inside a house! She's an evil woman!
You've to set this right by punishing her!"

Henrick's face darkened as he barked hoarsely, "What are you raving on about? Keep acting

out like that, and see whether I'll smack you!"

Shandie was stunned and reflexively raised a protective hand over her own tender face.

It took three days of icing for her to get the swelling down the last time she got hit, and she had not even had that broken tooth of hers patched up to date.

Shandie staggered back two paces. She could not understand why her father was yelling at her when it was clearly Arielle who was at fault.

Henrick continued to lecture her, "Don't you know the principle of seniority? You are not to

speak of your big sister again that way cause if you do, you're going to get it from me!"

"Mom..." Shandie was tearful and trembling all over. Cindy steadied her by her shoulders. "Quickly now. Congratulate your sister."

Shandie managed to rein herself in but was unable to eke out a smile. Hence, she said stiffly, "Congratulations, Arielle..."

Arielle curled her lips and her eyes hinted at a smile. "If not for you giving me a chance, I'm afraid I'll be unable to get this endorsement deal with Soir Coffee. So thank you, Shandie. You truly are my dearest sister."

"You..." Shandie tried to take in a deep drawl, but she was so angry that she could neither breathe in or out. She felt her sight blacken and would have passed out again in public had

Cindy not caught her in time.

"Arielle!" Cindy could not help but glare at Arielle as she watched Shandie recover. "You've already cost Shandie the ambassadorial role, so would you stop provoking her already!"

Arielle replied innocuously, "I'm sorry, but I'm not sure how I might be provoking her... Are

you alright, Shandie?"

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Shandie's frustration kicked in upon seeing how fake Arielle was, and she fainted right away.

Henrick knitted his brows and said, "What an embarrassment. Quick! Send her back to the hotel!"

Cindy shot daggers at him at first but immediately hid the disdain on her face. She then called a waiter to help carry Shandie away.

The sponsor did not expect Shandie to faint. Just when he was about to defuse the tension, a

group of sponsors representing various coffee brands came over.

One of them said, "Would you like to be the ambassador for our brand? We'll reward you

handsomely."

The other sponsor echoed, "Choose us, Miss. We're a world renowned brand!"

"Yeah, right! As if no one knows you're just a company that sells cheap instant coffee!"

another sponsor mocked. He then turned to Arielle and said, "Please work with us!"

More and more sponsors from different brands walked up to them. Some even started fighting amidst the commotion.

The situation spiraled out of control so quickly that the sponsors even pushed Henrick out

of the crowd.

He was utterly at a loss for words. Are these sponsors fighting to get my daughter to be their ambassador? My daughter who

grew up in the country?

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Well, well, well... Despite growing up in the countryside, she has a great charisma like me. I guess she takes after me,

Henrick looked at his daughter and nodded with a smile.

Shandie finally woke up when the waiter carried her to the entrance of the ceremony.

She opened her eyes and noticed those sponsors had all surrounded Arielle. No one paid attention to her anymore.

All this happened because she wanted to challenge Arielle, thinking she would crush her in

public.

But who knew, her plan had backfired.

Shandie felt a jolt of anger and fainted once again.

Shandie fainting for the second time made Cindy even more nervous. She could hardly pay

attention to Arielle anymore.

By the end of the awards ceremony, Arielle received a stack of name cards from representatives of different coffee brands.

Henrick eventually snatched the cards away and started going through them one by one.

Arielle responded with a sigh upon seeing the excitement on Henrick's face. What have I gotten myself into? All I wanted was just to teach Shandie a lesson...

But she was still glad that she had successfully disturbed the family, and she knew the mother-daughter duo would not let her off easily.

Cindy had been trying to get rid of Arielle the moment she decided to return to the family. Arielle knew she would have to face Cindy head-on eventually.

Bring it on, Cindy. Bring it on!

Before leaving the ceremony, Henrick took out a card from his wallet and gave it to Arielle. "This is a supplementary card. If you've maxed out the other two cards, you can still use this."

"Buy yourself some nice clothes and doll yourself up," he added, "Don't worry about the

money.”

After a few perfunctory rejections, Arielle accepted the card. The card would come in handy for her to investigate Henrick’s current assets.

Arielle had once hired a private investigator to find out more about her mother, Maureen. She eventually learned that Maureen had ten billion worth of liquidity in cash flow before she

passed away.

So she was curious how much did the Southall Group own after they took over the Moore

Group.

Arielle and her family soon got on a flight, and in the blink of an eye, she arrived back at Jadeborough

They did not interact with each other when they stepped out of the airport. Henrick had to leave for work, so his chauffeur was already waiting there to pick him up. While waiting for their car to fetch them back to the manor, Shandie could no longer

contain her anger anymore. She shot daggers at Arielle and warned, “My patience has limits.

You’d better watch it.”