

Henrick must be joking. Perhaps he's mad and is getting back at me!

Russell had enough of her antics. He was their relative, and he didn't want to see Henrick being humiliated in public. He parted his lips to reveal, "Cindy, Shandie's dead. I know it's hard to take, but it's the truth. My condolences."

In fact, Russell felt drained.

After getting into trouble, his daughter had kicked up a huge fuss and refused to head to the City Hall to get married. Before leaving home today, he had told the help to tie her up before bringing her there by force. *I wonder how she's doing now.*

Meanwhile, Cindy still refused to accept the truth. After all, part of the reason she schemed and worked so hard was to benefit her daughter.

There was simply no way she would accept Shandie's death easily.

"No..." She retreated two steps back and shook her head. "Impossible."

Henrick lost all patience and announced,

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"You can see for yourself!"

Women are annoying. She'll know when she sees it for herself!

Cindy swallowed hard and went toward the coffin.

She wanted to make sure Shandie wasn't in the coffin.

Shandie won't die!

Her legs trembled as she made her way to where the coffin was placed slowly.

Her gaze landed on the coffin hastily before she even arrived.

Shandie's dead body was lying inside the coffin surrounded by flowers.

Cindy's eyes widened in utter horror. Her hopes were shattered, and her heart sank to the bottom of a deep, endless abyss.

"Shandie?"

It's Shandie!

Reality hit her like a thunderclap,

shattering her senses completely.

Utterly drained of energy, Cindy collapsed to the ground.

Russell instinctively tried to catch her, but she slipped through his fingers and sank to the ground.

Russell asked in concern, "Cindy, are you okay? She has passed on, so take care of yourself. You and Rick are still young; you can give birth to another child to make it up..."

Obviously, Russell was bad at comforting others.

Cindy paled and glared at him.

She wanted to yell that Shandie was her biological daughter, but her last shred of sanity told her that the secret should remain buried.

If I reveal the secret, I won't get to live.

Russell did not know why she was glaring at him that way. He scratched his head in confusion. *Ugh, why did I even interfere in their family's business?*

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Henrick took one step forward and said, "Get up. Don't be an embarrassment."

"Embarrassment?" Cindy finally snapped. With bloodshot eyes, she demanded, "Are Shandie and I are an embarrassment to you? Are we a joke to you?"

Henrick's expression froze. Sensing the guests' gazes, he hissed, "What are you talking about? We brought Shandie up together, and you're my wife. Of course, you're not a joke to me. I'm upset that Shandie's dead, but we're both adults. We don't have to cry to show our distress, get it?"



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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"No!" Cindy shook her head vehemently to deny the fact. "My Shandle isn't dead. She's just asleep. Why did you put her in a coffin? Take her out!"

The guests shook their heads at her antics. *She's gone nuts.*

One guest remained puzzled and asked softly, "That's her adopted daughter. Why is she this upset? No matter how much she adores her adopted daughter, there's no reason for her to lose her mind. She can just adopt another daughter, no?"

Another guest instantly quipped, "Did you not attend the Actonwards' birthday party last night? Shandle was there, and she revealed that she's Henrick and Cindy's biological daughter."

That revelation immediately attracted the other guests' attention.

"Seriously? She's their biological daughter? The timing's strange. Does that mean they got together before Maureen Moore died?"

"You're right! I thought that sounded ridiculous last night. But now, Cindy is acting like she has lost her biological

daughter for real!"

"Even if they didn't get together before Maureen died, it was wrong for Cindy to marry her brother-in-law!"

"Shh, lower down your voice. They might hear you."

Nevertheless, Henrick had heard every word clearly.

His eye twitched.

Shandie didn't forget to create trouble for me before she died. I can't believe she revealed the secret to everyone. Why did I give birth to a fool?

He had never been so humiliated in his life.

In fact, he started regretting cheating on his wife with Cindy. If that did not happen, people wouldn't be gossiping about him when he already had one foot in the grave.

Henrick's face turned several shades darker.

Alas, Cindy couldn't even hear the guests' criticisms. She grabbed Henrick and

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demanded, "Get Shandie out! If she wakes up and finds herself in a coffin, she'll burst into tears!"

Indeed, Cindy had gone mad.

She refused to accept the fact that Shandie was dead and kept asking Henrick to get her daughter out.

Henrick shoved her arm away and gave her a tight slap.

Instantly, pain flared up Cindy's cheeks. She touched her face to find blood flowing down her nostrils.

"Blood..." Her legs turned to jelly, and she collapsed to the ground once again.

Finally, she regained her senses thanks to the slap.

Staring at the coffin, she finally took in the fact that Shandie was dead. It wasn't Henrick or Arielle but her beloved Shannie who died!

"No!" she wailed in desperation, her sharp shriek piercing the air. Everyone shuddered at how horrifying her wail was.

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Losing all patience, Henrick summoned Alfred. "Bring her back to her room and get her a psychologist!"

"Understood!" Alfred waved his hand, and two bodyguards promptly dragged Cindy away.

"Let go! Let me go!" Cindy screamed. "I want to avenge my daughter. Someone must've killed her! It must be—"

Before she could finish, Henrick gave Alfred a look, and the latter swiftly covered her mouth.

Getting cut off mid-sentence, Cindy glowered at Alfred.

Alfred waved his other hand. The bodyguards picked up their pace and left with Cindy in tow.



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Henrick sighed in frustration.

*I shouldn't have brought this crazy b*tch back! Her antics have thoroughly embarrassed me.*

The backyard once again regained its serenity after Cindy had been escorted back to the house.

"Apologies, everybody," Henrick started. "Cindy is too distraught tonight to think straight. She has made a fool of herself in front of all of you."

The crowd exchanged glances before dismissing his apology by waving their hands. "Not to worry, it's completely understandable."

"Make sure Mrs. Southall takes care of herself. You can always try for another child. It wouldn't do if she fell ill."

"You must take care of yourself too and be strong throughout this ordeal."

With the words of consolation offered by his guests, Henrick felt much calmer.

Russell hesitated before stepping forth.

"Henrick," he said, tugging his arm. "Cindy doesn't look too well, I'm afraid. We should find a good doctor to have a look at her. I'm worried for her if this goes on."

Henrick nodded. "I'll do that."

"Speaking of doctors," Russell continued, with a thumbs-up of admiration, "your daughter Arielle is an excellent one. If it weren't for her, I would have died from a cerebral hemorrhage last night."

Henrick was shocked. "Arielle practices medicine?"

Russell returned Henrick's look of surprise. "Don't you know that your daughter is a miracle doctor?"

"How is that possible?" Henrick murmured, his mind a blank.

Didn't Arielle grow up in the village? From where would she have learned the art of medicine?

Shocked by Henrick's ignorance on the matter, Russell immediately recounted the events of the night before. His narration was so fanciful and exaggerating that

Henrick's surprise soon turned to astonishment.

"Your daughter is amazing," Russell concluded at last with a pat on Henrick's shoulder. "You must treat her well! Don't let the incident with Shandie happen again."

Barely hearing what Russell said, Henrick nodded in a daze. Despite the humorous circumstances, he felt fearful.

How am I completely unaware that my daughter is skilled in the medicinal arts? Did she keep it from me on purpose? Why would she do such a thing? Is Arielle up to something like Cindy is? Or did she return here with a motive all along?

Henrick felt the hairs on his back standing erect as alarm bells began ringing in his head. His gaze darkened as he fought the urge to succumb to panic.

Perhaps I need to take the initiative to know my daughter better.

He clenched his fists and narrowed his eyes as he thought about his other daughter.

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At that moment, Arielle, who had just emerged from the City Hall after obtaining her marriage certificate, gave a sneeze.

Rubbing her nose, she felt a sense of foreboding.

"Did you catch a cold?" Vinson asked concernedly.

Arielle shook her head. Suddenly remembering that she had left her coat in the City Hall, she said, "I've left my coat behind. I'll go get it."

Arielle turned around, but Vinson gently pressed her shoulder. "Get in the car. I'll get it for you. We'll go for lunch after that. It would be pretty messy at your house right now, you might not be able to have much to eat."

Arielle nodded. "Okay. I don't want ravioli, though." After having it for several meals in a row, she felt nauseated just thinking about it.

Vinson chuckled. "Do you think I'll take you for ravioli as our first meal as a married couple? Arielle, I don't think you know your husband well enough."

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Vinson's dark eyes glimmered mischievously under the bright sunlight, causing Arielle to feel a blush creeping across her face.

Clearing her throat loudly, she attempted to disguise her emotions with levity. "I know you are rich. I've married a wealthy old bachelor."

Vinson missed the point entirely. "Old?" he repeated with a frown. "I'm only three years older than you!"

Arielle thought it was funny to see him get riled up over their age difference. "Don't you know that three years is as much as a generational gap these days?"

Vinson's frown deepened in alarm as he took Arielle's words literally.

"I'm joking with you," she said helplessly. "You can't even take a joke."

He's taken my remark about marrying him seriously. And this time, he's sulking over the generational gap thing... I get it now. He is an obtuse guy who can't take any jokes.

Even Arielle's reassurance did not ease his

frown.

"Wait for me in the car," Vinson said rather dully. "I'll get your coat."

Without another word, he disappeared back into the building.

"Hey!" Arielle called after him, but he did not turn back. It was hard to tell if he was doing it on purpose.

Arielle scratched her head. *Is he seriously angry?*

She was worried that she had inadvertently offended him as she had never flirted with men before.

Just as she was feeling guilty, she suddenly noticed a car stopping by the road. Several familiar faces emerged from within.

Isn't that Yvette and Mason?

Yvette was handcuffed by the bodyguard. It was obvious that she had been forced to the City Hall against her will.

It did not take long for Arielle to deduce

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that they were at the City Hall to get married.

Not only did Yvette fail to destroy Arielle, but she had also pushed herself deeper into the abyss of her own creation.

It was very unlikely that Yvette would be able to find happiness with Mason through forced marriage, given her character.

Arielle smirked at the opportunity. "Yvette, Mason," she greeted them right before the couple saw her.

Turning around to see that it was Arielle, they scowled at her.

Yvette looked as if she would like nothing more than to skin Arielle alive.

If Yvette was not held by the bodyguard, she would have pounced on Arielle and scratched her eyes out.

Arielle pretended not to understand Yvette's hostile stare. "Yvette, what's wrong?" she asked innocently. "What's gotten into you?"

"B*tch!" she screamed as she struggled. "It

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was you! You plotted all of this, didn't you?"

Arielle's eyes flashed coldly.

How dare she? Does she not remember what happened?

"Yvette, you seem to have an awful prejudice against me," Arielle protested with an irritating smile. "But it's fine. I forgive you. By the way, what are you doing here at the City Hall?"

The innocuous remark by Arielle completely broke Yvette.

"B*tch!" she howled, sounding quite deranged. "I'm going to kill you!"

However, Arielle remained unaffected. At that moment, the bodyguard gripped Yvette's elbow like he was escorting a particularly fierce dog, rendering any further struggling futile.

To Yvette, the handcuffs were symbolic of her life imprisonment in the bonds of matrimony.

"Mason, you're here too!" Arielle's eyes met

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Mason's furious ones. "Wait a minute. Are the two of you here to get married?"



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Mason gritted his teeth, unable to respond to Arielle in a diplomatic manner.

He had spent nights dreaming about getting married to Yvette and was eager to announce it to the whole world.

After Yvette's repeated and cruel refusal to accept his hand, he finally came to the conclusion that that night was a misunderstanding—Yvette had never liked him.

With the surprising turn of events, the marriage that he was going to have simultaneously excited and frustrated Mason. The strength of the polarizing emotions within him caused him to be on edge for the past couple of days.

He took a deep breath and growled, "That's none of your business!"

"That's right!" Arielle said abruptly as a thought struck her. "Mr. Actonward mentioned that you guys are here to obtain your marriage certificate too. Forgive me for my poor memory, and also congratulations to both of you!"

Yvette was further incensed by the

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sarcasm. "B*tch! Is this a joke to you? Go to hell!"

Mason reached out instinctively to comfort Yvette. Before his hand touched her, she whipped around to give him such a fierce glare that his hand never found her shoulder.

Feeling hurt, Mason vented all of his anger on Arielle. "How kind of you to come all the way here to share our joy," he sneered, cold fury ringing in every syllable. "Now that the party's over, get lost! Or I might do something I regret!"

Arielle pouted. "It looks like there's a huge misunderstanding between us," she said jeeringly. "Apologies, I'm not here to celebrate your marriage. I'm here to have one of my own."

She waved her red marriage certificate, the sight of which stunned Mason.

Even Yvette, who had been in a towering rage, was startled into silence at the sight of Arielle's certificate. "Who... Who did you marry?"

"It's a secret!" Arielle smiled enigmatically.

Yvette burst out laughing all of a sudden. "Hah! I knew it! Evil b*tches like you will get your punishment one day. You must be sold to a rich old man so that your father can gather enough money to rebuild his office building!"

Mason looked equally scornful. "I thought you have high standards," he said with disdain. "Turns out you're nothing but a pawn for your father. How dare you torment Yvette like that?"

Yvette realized with a start that her marriage with Mason was miles better than Arielle's fate of marrying an old man.

Though Mason was penniless and not very good-looking, at least he was head over heels for her.

Even if she were to sleep around, Mason wouldn't be able to control her. Perhaps he would even cover up for her.

At that moment, Yvette's mood took a dramatic turn for the better. Arielle's news felt like a gust of wind scattering the stormy clouds of Yvette's own predicament.

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She felt so victorious that she even began to develop a sense of pity toward Arielle.

So what if you're pretty and are a skilled doctor? You're still going to marry some old fart! Your destiny has already been determined the moment you were born!

"Arielle," Yvette proclaimed vehemently, "you will never ever be happy in this life!"

"Her happiness is not for you to decide." All of a sudden, a low, attractive voice sounded.

Yvette froze. *That sounds like...*

She whipped around, only to find Vinson's cold glare on her.

What is Vinson doing here? Yvette wondered before she saw the red marriage certificate in his hand. A marriage certificate... Arielle...

Yvette's eyes widened; her pupils dilated in shock.

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