

Very soon, Janet was wrangled in and she started wailing the moment she spotted Henrick, “I've always been loyal to the Southalls, Mr. Southall, and only left the house because my own good-for-nothing son had gotten himself into trouble again. It has nothing to do with the incident involving the snake, so I am innocent!”

Henrick was having none of it. He straight up ordered to have her tied up before he handed a leather whip to a housekeeper. “Flog her!”

Though somewhat hesitant initially, that housekeeper eventually did as told.

Smack! The raised whip was brought down upon Janet, splitting her skin where it struck and causing her to writhe back and forth on the ground as she

screamed in agony.

To the side, Arielle watched on emotionlessly and without an iota of sympathy.

Looks like this old hag is the one who had snuck onto my balcony and also the one who let the cobra in. She is getting her just desserts!

By the tenth blow, Janet's body became slick with cold sweat, and her voice had already gone hoarse.

In spite of that, she refused to spill the beans, because that would make her culpable of attempted murder.

The housekeeper tasked with the flogging could not stand it anymore. "We can't carry on like this, Mr. Southall. She's getting up in years and might not be able to take it if we were to continue!"

Having no desire to rack up another casualty before the truth had been established either, Henrick thus called for a hiatus.

Coincidentally, the housekeeper who had been away conducting the investigations had returned.

“I've asked around the marketplace in the south of the city, Mr. Southall, and from here, I have a man who claimed that someone had bought a venomous snake from him during the night.”

Prone on the floor, Janet's back stiffened. That subtlety got picked up quickly by the keen-eyed Arielle.

“Bring him in here!” Henrick instructed promptly.

“Understood.”

Shortly after, the snake vendor approached gingerly.

Henrick had the remains of the snake brought into the hall and asked the snake vendor, “Was this the snake you sold?”

It took only one glance for the snake vendor to affirm with a nod. “Yes, it is, because it's missing a scale from its tail. I remember that quite clearly because I was the one who had accidentally knocked the scale off during the course of the transaction.”

Letting out a scoff, Henrick went over to lift up the face of the cowering Janet. “Is this the old lady who bought it off you?”

Though oblivious to what was really going on, the setting of the place made the snake vendor wary of being dishonest. He took one look at Janet and said,

“That's her... She told me that she needed a venomous snake for medicinal purposes. That was why I recommended one of the deadliest species from the south which I had on hand.”

Both the material proof and eye-witness account were thus conclusive.

“Now, what else have you got to say for yourself?”  
Henrick cast Janet aside and asked coldly.

In a half-sitting position, Janet trembled but with nary a word.

Arielle then chimed in a timely fashion, “I'd advise that you tell us why you wanted to harm Shannie before the police arrive, Janet! She's someone who you watched grow up, so don't you think you're vicious for wanting to take her life?”

“No... I wouldn't. Why would I want to harm Ms. Shannie? She's like a daughter to me...”

“Who was it you trying to harm then? Was it my Dad?”  
Arielle adopted a more cautious approach, and in anticipation of the possibility that Janet might try to flip one on her, she bluntly stated, “Or were you put up to this by someone else in order to frame me? Surely you aren't thinking about telling us that I was the one who put you up to it?”

Having the words taken right out of her own mouth, Janet was left stumped.

Indeed, she had planned to say that it was Arielle who had instigated her, but now, it would come across as being a lot less convincing was she to say so right after Arielle did.

While Janet was hung up in her own indecision,

Arielle turned to Hendrick. “Call in the police, Dad. Such a wicked person deserves to spend the rest of her life rotting in prison!”

“No! Please! I've two sons who are still dependent on me...” Janet hastened to beg and even got down on her knees before Arielle.

“Then, tell us the truth. Spell it out, and perhaps my Dad would consider letting you off in view of your long ties to the family...” Arielle said blandly.

Janet was completely shaken up.

It was clear to her that there was still a possibility that she would not wind up in prison, but by refusing to divulge the truth, she would only be taking Shandie's place behind bars.

She was definitely not prepared to make that big of a

sacrifice on the account of Shandie and her mother.

“I'll tell you what you want to know. I'd tell you everything...” Janet choked up between tears. “It was Ms. Shannie who put me up to this! She was the one who wanted me to buy the snake and set it loose inside Ms. Moore's room, but I've no idea how it ended up inside Ms. Shannie's room...”

In response, Arielle reddened her own eyes promptly in aggrievement. “With both of our rooms in such close proximity, it might be possible that the snake found its way into Shannie's room across the balcony. Shannie's been so nice to me so I've never expected that she would actually hate me this much...”

Donning a look of abject disbelief, Arielle acted as though she had been dealt a massive emotional blow.

“D\*mn you, old woman, and curse that girl! She



brought it upon herself!”



Casting his gaze skyward, Henrick needed several deep breaths before he was able to settle himself.

“Bring Mrs. Southall to me. I want her to know what a good daughter she has raised!”

Having spent a huge fortune nurturing his daughter into a celebrity, he was appalled by the wickedness that that celebrity daughter of his proved to be capable of.

Arielle tried to offer him some words of comfort. “Don't get mad, Dad. My appearance was indeed quite sudden, so perhaps that was why Shandie struggled to come to terms with it. In spite of everything, I believe that she would be able to accept me, in time...”

“Why are you still trying to defend her, seeing how things have come to this? Your kindness is going to

get you killed! Had you been unlucky, the one who would have been bitten by the snake would have been you!”

By that time, Cindy had been brought downstairs.

When she heard Janet's account of the events, Cindy went red in the face and looked profoundly disappointed.

She had, on more than one occasion, reminded Shandie that the timing was not ripe for them to act. Contrary to her own expectations, Shandie still went on ahead and pulled a major stunt like that. Such foolishness!

“I'm so sorry, Dear, for failing to raise my daughter well. When she comes back, I'd be sure to take her properly in hand!” With that, she turned to regard Arielle. “I'm so sorry for having maligned you, Arielle.

Please do not take Shandie's actions to heart because she doesn't know what's she doing.”

The apology extended to Arielle by Cindy did much to alleviate Henrick's anger toward the latter.

“One should not seek to wash one's dirty linens in public, so this would be the end of it. Regardless, we cannot afford to continue to keep this old hag around. Send her off to the countryside, and do not allow her to make contact with anyone!”

“Understood!”

Thus, Janet was forcibly taken away.

Right after, a call came in from the hospital.

“Ms. Shandie has awoken, Mr. Southall. She doesn't want to stay in the hospital and wishes to be taken

home immediately.”

“Let her have her way!” Henrick did not sound like a happy camper.

If Shandie was vicious enough to plot against Arielle, there may be no telling whether she would eventually set her sights on me next time round!

He was genuinely baffled as to how he could have brought such a monster into this world.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, Shandie was eager to discharge herself after completing all the necessary paperwork and had every intention of going back to tell her own father that Arielle had let the snake into her room and that she wanted her dead.

If Dad knew about this, he would surely teach that country girl a proper lesson before kicking her out of

the house!

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