

Vinson reassumed his stoic expression and explained to Arielle, "I'll discuss your wish with my family. It's a serious matter, and it's not something I can decide alone."

"Wait a minute!" Arielle's eyes widened in shock as she sputtered, "You didn't take me seriously, did you? I said I was kidding!"

"Sometimes, jokes are merely tools to conceal one's deepest desires. I'll give you a reply soon. I've got to go. Bye."

Vinson turned and prepared to leave. Evidently, he had taken her joke at face value.

"Hey!"

He did not give Arielle a chance to explain herself as he boarded his helicopter and left.

Arielle was vexed. He can't possibly be serious, right? We're living in the modern era, for God's sake! I'm sure no one will fall for my silly joke. He must be pulling my leg!

Arielle pursed her lips as those thoughts crossed her mind. She stopped thinking of ways to explain her joke to Vinson and instead began to appraise the manor which used to belong to the Moores.

What on earth happened to make a family as powerful as the Moores disappear into thin air? How did the Southalls replace them?

Amid her musings, a few socialites flitted toward Arielle.

“Ms. Moore, you are an absolute stunner. I think you'd fit in well with us.”

“Let's exchange numbers. Now that you're back in Jadeborough, it's good to have some friends.”

Arielle pretended not to realize their true intentions and nodded innocently. “That sounds amazing. I'd love to make some new friends in town.”

The socialites surrounded Arielle and filled the air with their chatter.

Meanwhile, Shandie had finally regained her consciousness after being whisked away to her room to rest.

When she opened her eyes, she saw Cindy looking at her with worry. Henrick stood beside her, though he appeared distracted and wholly unconcerned over her

wellbeing.

Shandie's heart instantly ballooned with hatred.

This is all that b\*tch Arielle's fault! She stole Dad's love away from me!

Furious and upset, Shandie wept and choked out, “Mom...”

“Are you awake, Darling? Oh dear, don't cry.” Cindy's heart ached when she saw her daughter crying.

Once Henrick noticed that Shandie was awake, he immediately expressed his wish to leave. “There are many guests out there. Tidy yourself up while I go entertain them.” He then left in a hurry.

The moment he shut the room door, Shandie exploded, “Mom! Look at what Dad is doing! I can't

take it anymore! I want Arielle gone this instant!”

Cindy shared her daughter's hatred. After all, this was her beloved daughter's birthday party, yet Arielle had commanded everyone's attention since her appearance.

She took a deep breath to center herself before advising Shandie, “Patience, Darling. If something happens to Arielle so soon after her return, your father will definitely suspect our involvement. You know what a chauvanist your father is. He despises people who don't listen to him. You must not act rashly!”

“What do we do now?” Shandie covered her face and croaked, “My birthday party is ruined! I'm going to be the joke of the town!”

Cindy was about to say something when Shandie's

nanny, Janet, knocked on the door and came in. She raised an envelope in her hand and exclaimed, “Great news, Mrs. Southall! Ms. Shandie!”

Shandie replied petulantly, “What great news? Today is the worst day of my life!”

Her mother was significantly calmer as she asked Janet, “What's the great news? What's that envelope in your hands?”

Janet approached them excitedly and explained, “I just received a message for Ms. Shandie. It has the emblem of Crown Coffee Academy.”

“Wait, really?” Cindy hurriedly retrieved the envelope from Janet's hands and tore it open.

After reading the document in the envelope, she took Shandie's hand and exclaimed, “It really is great

news, Shannie! You won the Socialite Coffee Competition!”

The Socialite Coffee Competition was an international competition organized by top baristas across the globe. Past winners of the competition typically won the right to become the ambassador of Soir Coffee.

Earning a spot in the competition was already an impressive feat. Winning it was undeniably a huge honor, and Cindy was naturally pleased as punch over Shandie's triumph.

Shandie became elated once she heard the news. She snatched the document from her mother and read it repeatedly.

Besides a customary congratulatory message, the document also instructed her to attend the awards ceremony next week at International Hotel in Norham.

As usual, Vinson would personally give out the awards at the ceremony and announce the new ambassador of Soir Coffee.

Shandie's excitement grew.

Cindy smiled at her daughter and said, “Mr. Nightshire surely remembers you from your birthday party. Once you attend the awards ceremony next week, he'll look at you in a different light.”

Shandie almost crumpled the document from elation. “You're right! Mr. Nightshire's going to have a stronger impression of me! Once I become Soir Coffee's new ambassador, those socialites will stop talking behind my back!”





I'll become the center of attraction! Maybe Vinson won't forget about me then!

“This is really great news!”

Overjoyed, Cindy removed the emerald bracelet around her wrist and gave it to Janet. “You've brought us amazing news; this is your reward.”

Janet instinctively refused the gift and sputtered, “This is too much, Mrs. Southall. I only helped to bring the letter. I'm sure this bracelet is worth hundreds of thousands.”

Instead, Cindy held Janet's hand and insisted, “This bracelet is worth more than that. It'll easily fetch you one million at any jewelry shop. Of course, this isn't just a gift for what you did earlier. I do have a favor to ask of you.”

Janet did not bother to conceal the greed in her eyes as she received the bracelet. “What favor? I'll try my best to fulfill it, Mrs. Southall!”

“Help me keep an eye on Arielle! If she does anything

out of the ordinary, report it to me immediately.”

“Sure! I'll keep a close eye on that country bumpkin!”

Janet's words brought a light frown to Cindy's face.

Did Arielle truly come from the country? Her elegance is atypical of a girl raised in the countryside.

Cindy could not help but caution her daughter,  
“Shannie, I don't think Arielle is such a simpleton.  
Don't act rashly until I come up with a plan. We don't  
want to waste our efforts.”

“I know, Mom.”

Alas, Shandie's reply was a blatant lie.

Arielle is nothing but a country bumpkin! The only  
thing she has going for her is her mother's looks. I'm

sure she's simple in the head. It's not as though she can inherit her mother's brains. Intelligence and talent are nurtured. I've been educated my whole life. That country bumpkin is no match for me!

To that end, Shandie suggested, “Mom, I have an idea. I'd like to invite Arielle to the awards ceremony. She'll be humiliated when she realizes how much she pales in comparison.”

After some thought, Cindy agreed with her daughter's plan. She added, “That works. In fact, let's bring your father along too. Let him see that you have a much brighter future than Arielle!”

The two women eagerly anticipated Arielle's embarrassing state at the awards ceremony.

They believed a country bumpkin could not get make it in Jadeborough on looks alone.

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