

“Hush now, my Darling. You're alive, while the snake is dead!”

“I have no fear so long as you are here!” Looking up, Arielle tried to project strength in spite of the ruthless expression on her face. “Don't worry about me, Dad. We've got to get Shandie to the hospital...”

Henrick's heart was full of doting, and when he saw that imprint of a palm on Arielle's cheek, he glared at Cindy in fury. “Look at what you've done! She was willing to go as far as to risk her own life to protect Shannie. To think that you'd even believe that she wanted to harm her own sister?”

“I...”

“Seeing how lacking in sensibility you are, I think that

you might not be the one best suited to manage things around the household! From today onwards, stay in your room so that you may reflect upon your own conduct. You're not to leave the house until you've sorted yourself out!”

“Dear, I was just...”

Cindy was about to attempt to remonstrate on her own behalf when a housekeeper came up to them.

“The ambulance has arrived, Mr. Southall.”

That reminded Henrick that Shandie was still twitching on the floor.

Thus, he ordered the housekeepers to have Shandie taken downstairs. Ignoring Cindy's pleas, he personally accompanied Shandie to the hospital alongside Arielle.

At the hospital, Shandie was pushed straight into the emergency room because her cardiac activity had ceased.

When the doors to the emergency room finally opened after an indeterminate amount of time, Henrick hastened to ask the doctor that emerged from there, “Doctor, how is my daughter doing?”

He had to be anxious, considering that both of his daughters were his own flesh and blood and how invaluable they were as betting chips toward the advancement of his own career prospects.

“The patient is currently out of danger, but we would still need to keep her here for at least a couple of days so that we may continue to monitor her condition. The snake's venom is quite toxic, so no one could have saved her had you arrived another ten minutes later than you did! I'm quite curious though,

how did she get bitten? That shouldn't have been possible because it was unlikely for her to encounter this snake here in Jadeborough,” the doctor replied solemnly.

“We live in a manor up on the mountaintop, so shouldn't it be normal for snakes to get inside the house?” Henrick explained.

The doctor shook his head. “This species is native to the south, so you won't find any of them out in the northern wilds. I really think that you ought to look into this when you get back and find out how this all actually happened.”

Henrick's expression dimmed. “Do you mean to say that there could be foul play involved?”

“It's highly possible, yes.”

Henrick clenched his fists. “Who was it who dared harm my daughter!”

Reflexively, his sights drifted onto Arielle, and when he did, a sliver of suspicion crept across his gaze.

Reacting as though she was oblivious to it, Arielle echoed Henrick's fury. “Whoever had brought the poisonous snake into our manor to kill is a complete degenerate! This is attempted murder. Dad, you absolutely have to get to the bottom of this!”

Hearing that from Arielle ultimately helped to banish the doubts from Henrick's mind.

This is not something that a simple country girl who had just arrived in Jadeborough would be capable of. She is kind-hearted and showed great courage in taking on the snake herself, so I really shouldn't be suspicious of her!

“Let's head on home first. I must find out who was the one who brought that snake in!”

“You're absolutely right, Dad. We must! Today, it's Shandie. Who was to say that that snake wouldn't bite you tomorrow? You have to suss out the culprit, and as soon as possible!” Arielle said in earnest.

Henrick concurred with a nod.

Inside the manor, after learning that her daughter had pulled through, the grounded Cindy breathed a sigh of relief.

She was, however, shaking with rage when she heard that someone had deliberately set the snake loose with malicious intent.

“Mr. Southall has returned, Mrs. Southall,” a

housekeeper discreetly reported to her through the door.

Cindy was no longer able to contend herself with sitting quietly inside the room. The door, however, had been locked from the outside, and the key was in Henrick's possession.

As such, she found herself an inkwell. Using that, she broke the lock in a single swing and busted out.

While Arielle and Henrick were filing in through the door, they caught sight of Cindy dashing down the stairs.

“That little b*tch must be the one responsible for this, Dear! She brought the snake from the south because she wanted to rid herself of my Shannie, so only she could have done this! You have to do right by Shannie, Dear!”

Arielle took two paces in retreat before she responded in aggrievement. “You've been suspicious of me right from the beginning, Aunt Cindy, claiming that I wished to harm Shandie. I've since risked my own life to save her in order to prove my own innocence. Are you now accusing me of setting the snake on her? It is as though what I did doesn't count for anything.”

Stabbing a finger in Arielle's face, Cindy cussed, “Cut out the act! It must have been you behind it all along! Hurry up and lock her up for questioning, Dear!”

“That's enough!” roared Henrick, his patience spent. “You've already maligned her once, but for a second time? Rest assured that I'll get to the bottom of this, but for now, get back in your room and stay there! All

of you, watch her carefully and do not allow her to sneak out again!”

“Yes, Mr. Southall.” Once again, the housekeeper aggressively ushered Cindy away.

“You have to believe me, Dear! You have to uncover the truth...”

While Arielle watched Cindy being dragged off from the rear, she grew certain that the latter could not have played any part in the incident involving the cobra, for had Cindy been involved; she would never have demanded to have the truth dug up.

Excellent. Shandie shall have to pay the price for her own insidiousness and folly!

Turning to Henrick, Arielle spoke methodically and with clarity, “I've noticed that there were quite a

number of surveillance cameras set up around the house when I came in, Dad, so you may want to check the footage to see who might have entered or left the manor at night. Also, you could have someone ask around to see from where it might be possible to purchase snakes, and if anyone had bought a venomous snake previously.”

“Good idea.” Henrick then summoned Alfred to him. “Get on it right away! Aside from that, comb through all the rooms inside the manor to see if there are any more poisonous snakes inside them.”

Although it was only three to four in the morning, he was way too restless to sleep as he was fearful that a poisonous snake might again show up out of nowhere.

It did not take long before the housekeeper in charge of reviewing the surveillance camera footage checked

in. “Mr. Southall, we've discovered that Ms. Shandie's nanny had left the manor around eleven last night. No one else did except her.”

“Janet?” Henrick's eyes narrowed to a squint. “Bring her in for questioning immediately!”

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