

# A Beauty With Multiple Masks Chapter 9

## Chapter 9

Arielle decided to get up to look around. But instead of turning on the lights, she chose to rely on her phone's illumination as she searched every corner of the room. *Hiss!* All of a sudden, she heard something odd that sounded like someone was breathing rapidly. It took a while, but Arielle managed to pinpoint the source of the sound. It came from her bed and was only about three feet away from her. *What the hell is it?* Arielle hurriedly increased the brightness on her phone screen and shone it in the direction of the sound. To her horror, it was a cobra angrily hissing away. The cobra had long set its sight on Arielle as it reared itself up and stared at her with a pair of piercing green eyes. If she hadn't gotten up because the noise bothered her, Arielle would have fallen victim to the cobra's venomous bite. All of a sudden, the cobra launched itself toward Arielle, aiming for her neck. Thanks to her training, Arielle had lightning-fast reflexes and dodged the cobra's attack in the nick of time. She then swiftly caught the cobra by its tail and flung it hard against the floor, knocking it out almost immediately. Eager to cut off the head of the cobra, Arielle whipped out the scissors she had initially kept under her pillow as a precautionary measure. However, before she could deal the finishing blow, Arielle was hit by a sudden realization. The snake was indeed a cobra, but it would never be found here in the North since its species lived in the South. *This cobra couldn't have accidentally crawled into my room. Someone must have put it here!* Arielle recalled the footsteps she had heard earlier and put two and two together. She finally understood the intention of the person who had stood briefly on her balcony before leaving. *These people want me dead!* The wheels in Arielle's head started turning as she thought about the possible perpetrators who could want to harm her. Henrick thought very highly of her and was confident he could rely on her to climb the ranks in the Nightshires. He was only too eager to pamper her, so there was no way he could have done it. The only possibilities left were Cindy and Shandie. Then again, Cindy was a clever and collected person. It was unlikely that she'd carry out such a plan on the first night of Arielle's return. That meant that Shandie was the most likely perpetrator. Arielle's eyes narrowed at the thought of that, her gaze turning colder under the illumination of the moon. *Shandie Southall, you've grossly overestimated yourself. If you want me dead, you're going to have to try a lot harder!* The clock had just struck one, and the night was even darker than before. Almost everyone in the villa had fallen into a deep slumber. All except for Shandie. Shandie was wide awake and waiting to receive the news of Arielle's death. However, it had already been a few hours, yet there was still no good news for her. After waiting around for so long, Shandie could no longer stand it. She dialed Janet's number and ordered her up to her room. As soon as Janet stepped in, Shandie asked, "Did you not do as per my orders? If that's the case, you can wait for the police to come to you in the morning!" Janet panicked and immediately explained, "You've misunderstood, Ms. Shandie! I did as you instructed and bought the most venomous snake I could find. I had already set it loose in her room two hours ago." "Then why haven't I heard anything? If the snake had bitten her, she'd have woken up, screaming in pain. My room is so close to hers, yet I haven't heard any screams," Shandie replied with brows knitted together. "That... I have no idea." "Could it be that the snake doesn't bite?" Janet

shook her head. "No, the seller assured me that the snake he picked is very aggressive. He had even starved the snake for days, so it's guaranteed to attack any living body." Shandie was even more puzzled now. "So, what could have happened?" Janet scratched her head as she pondered. "The seller also said that the snake's venom is very potent. Without treatment, the victim will surely die. Perhaps the snake had already bitten her? But before she could react, the venom had taken effect, which means she's..." "She's already dead!" Shandie interrupted with a glint in her eye. "In that case, Ms. Shandie, should I find an excuse to enter her room so I can check?" "No need," Shandie replied with a wave of her hands. "We have to keep this on the down-low. You'd only incur suspicion if you were to go to her room. Besides, what if she gets sent to the hospital and they manage to revive her? I say we let the night pass, make sure she's dead, then collect her body the next day." Janet nodded in agreement. "You're right, Ms. Shandie. It'd be more prudent to wait till the morning. She'd be long gone by then, and not even the best doctor, or even God himself, would be able to bring her back to life." Shandie smiled gleefully, unable to contain the excitement bubbling inside of her. After a while, she removed her necklace and handed it to Janet. "You've done well, and this necklace is your reward. Feel free to let me know if there's anything else you need in the future." "Thank you, Ms. Shandie!" Janet exclaimed. The initial fear she had from having murdered Arielle disappeared as soon as she saw the necklace. *I don't think what I've done counts as murder anyway. After all, it was the snake that killed her. My conscience can remain clear.* "All right then, you can go back now. I can finally have a good night's sleep tonight," Shandie said as she shooed Janet out of her room. In her head, Shandie had started to picture how she'd let things play out as soon as she woke up. She would pretend to stumble upon her sister's body, and when it came to the funeral, she'd cry a river of tears for all to see. *If my acting is convincing enough, people might even believe that I have empathy.* Shandie knew the practice would come in handy, especially when she had lofty ambitions to join the entertainment industry. With such stellar acting skills, gaining popularity and fans would be a piece of cake. The more she thought about it, the happier Shandie got. The night was indeed shaping up to be one of the best nights ever for her. Her smile never once left her face, even as she turned off the lights and crawled into bed. Exhausted but happy, Shandie quickly found herself falling into a deep slumber. The cherry on top was the sweet dream that followed. In her dream, Shandie was at a graduation ceremony where she caught the eye of Vinson. He was so taken in by her talent that he publicly announced he was going to marry her. From then on, she steadily climbed the social ladder and lived happily ever after. With a dream so beautiful, Shandie smiled in her sleep, blissfully unaware that someone had, at that moment, snuck onto her balcony. As the night passed into the pre-dawn hours, there was nothing but peace and silence. Everyone was still sound asleep when an ear-piercing scream suddenly broke the silence and rocked the villa. Even the birds in the trees outside were startled by the noise and immediately flew away. "What's going on?" "What happened?" "I don't know either. I only heard a scream, like a scream for help..." "Hurry! I think it came from Ms. Shandie's room!" The housekeepers had all been jolted awake and hurriedly made their way to Shandie's room. Thankfully, Shandie hadn't locked her door, so the housekeepers opened it with ease and ran in. To their horror, they found Shandie lying by her bed, convulsing wildly and foaming from her mouth. Her face had turned blue, and it didn't seem like she'd be able to hold on much longer. Everyone was dumbfounded, with one asking the same question they all had, "What on earth is happening?" A few seconds had passed before one of the housekeepers regained her composure. She was about to rush toward Shandie when another yelled, "Wait! Don't go over yet! There's a snake on the bed!"