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Once Cindy left, Henrick's gaze darted over to Arielle. "Sannie. Tell me the truth, how did you meet Vinson? Are you two close?"

Henrick wanted to ask this long ago. However, he worried that Arielle would think he was using her as a stepping stone. Hence, he refrained from asking up till now.

*At this rate, it seems like she's too naive to question my motives.*

*I may as well cut to the chase and ask whatever I want to know. This silly girl will tell me anyway.*

As expected, Arielle answered him without a sliver of hesitation. "I don't actually know him that well. I encountered him by chance when my ship sank at sea. He was injured at the time, so I treated his wounds with whatever herbs I could find. It was later when his subordinates came for him that I got rescued and brought back here."

What he didn't know was that Arielle had summarized the story. She omitted the details where they undressed and huddled up for warmth, as well as the truth that she saved Vinson's life.

Hearing her story, Henrick felt both disappointed yet pleased.

He was disappointed because he had hoped for some emotional entanglement between Arielle

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and Vinson, but there were none.

At the same time, he was buzzing with joy that Arielle had aided *the* Vinson Nightshire. Because it meant Vinson owed Arielle's family a favor for her kindness.

*Imagine that. A favor from the Nightshires! That experience alone is worth its weight in gold!*

"Wonderful! That's great, Sannie! As expected of my daughter!" Henrick chortled.

He stared endearingly at her as if he was looking at the world's rarest gem.

Arielle put on an innocent and unknowing expression. She flashed a quick appreciative smile at this compliment, then resumed with her dinner.

The next day had arrived at the speed of light. All four of them departed Jadeborough and headed towards Norham.

For the journey, Arielle and Shandie sat beside one another in the backseat.

Shandie wore the Crown Coffee Academy's yellow team uniform. A soft and glamorous makeup was applied on her face, befitting her aristocratic status.

In comparison, Cindy had prepared minimalistic clothing for Arielle. She also hadn't hired



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anyone to do Arielle's makeup. Thus, Arielle was completely bare-faced and had her hair up in a simple bun; she looked like an ordinary high school student.

Even without any form of embellishment, Arielle was irresistible to the eye. Her presence glowed with angelic purity, almost like a blooming orchid whose beauty was so rare that people could only appreciate from afar.

She was the definition of true beauty. Not the kind that was sought after by many men, but a true beauty that made men reflect on whether they were worthy of being by her side.

Shandie initially felt like the brightest star in the sky, knowing that her makeup was worth six figures. Yet, that confidence plummeted after seeing Arielle's simplistic beauty. Shandie now felt like a miserable side character while Arielle was the lead of the show.

Outshined, Shandie clenched her fists so hard that her claw-like nails nearly cut into her palms.

*Ahem!* Cindy cleared her throat from the front passenger seat.

At this, Shandie broke from her daze and refocused on the present.

*So what if Arielle is pretty? She's nothing but a pretty face that men keep around like toys. I'm*

*the real deal with both the body and looks; the kind of woman that men want to make their wives.*

Shandie suppressed her anger. She cracked a stiff smile and said, "Arielle, I haven't had the chance to apologize. So now that we're both here, I just wanted to say I'm sorry. I shouldn't have thrown that childish tantrum and put you in jeopardy. Please forgive me."

Arielle knew that Cindy must have scripted this whole apology, and Shandie was merely acting accordingly.

*Childish tantrum?*

*Humph. What kind of child harbors murderous intentions during a tantrum?*

Regardless, Arielle cast a gentle gaze as she held Shandie's hand. Then she soothed in a honeyed voice, "It's alright, Shandie. There's no need to dwell on the past or apologize anymore. We're family, after all."

Caught in Arielle's tight grip, Shandie bit down her repulse. She desperately wanted to fling Arielle's vermin-like hand away but couldn't.

Hence, she resisted and continued to smile stiffly.

Meanwhile, Henrick smiled contentedly at his daughters' reconciliation from the driver's seat.



They went on their merry way to the airport. When they arrived, Henrick led his family through the check-in process and to the departure halls. Arielle trailed behind them throughout this.

According to the regulations, first-class passengers were given priority to board the plane before others.

So the Southalls had to wait in line as Henrick had bought economy-class tickets for the flight from Jadeborough to Norham.

When it was finally their turn to board the flight, Henrick suddenly halted and looked in the other direction. He exclaimed, "Mr. Nightshire?"

Shandie hadn't expected to see Vinson at the airport either. Now that it had happened, Shandie batted her lashes and cleared her throat shyly to attract Vinson's attention.

Vinson's assistant was reporting the progress of their recent project. Now that Henrick had rudely interrupted, Vinson shot a glare in Henrick's direction.

Seeing how Henrick and Shandie threw themselves at him, Vinson's glare turned murderously cold yet confused at the same time. He growled, "Do I know you?"

Henrick brushed his nose awkwardly at this. He was startled that Vinson didn't recognize him.

Shandie, on the other hand, clenched her jaw in irritation.

*We've already met plenty of times. How can Vinson not know who I am? Is he really that forgetful?*

In reality, Vinson had an excellent memory. He was simply selective about whom and what he felt was worthy of remembering.

Thus, he wouldn't waste even a drop of his time or mental effort on people whom he deemed unimportant.

As for Arielle, she had noticed Vinson as well but didn't intend to greet him.

*We're just passing by. There's no need to engage in pointless conversation.*

Henrick frowned at how Arielle was letting this golden opportunity slip. Nevertheless, he quickly introduced himself, "I'm Henrick Southall. Surely you remember me, Mr. Nightshire? You attended my daughter's birthday party a few days ago."

Vinson tried to recall. However, he had attended four birthday parties this week, so he couldn't quite figure out who this man named Henrick was.

Sensing the confusion on Vinson's face, Henrick briskly shoved Shandie aside while



yanking Arielle forward. He then reminded, "Seems like you have forgotten about me, Mr. Nightshire. But perhaps you remember my daughter?"

Arielle was now visible to Vinson. He hadn't seen her earlier, no thanks to Cindy, who questionably stood in front of Arielle and blocked her.

Vinson's eyes roamed over Arielle's appearance. Unlike the other three, who wore fancier clothing, Arielle seemed like a regular student. It was as if they were from different class groups.

Vinson raised a brow, curious to see Arielle's reactions. He feigned confusion as he asked, "Apologies, I'm not very good with remembering faces. May I ask who you are, miss?"

Arielle blinked. *Did he forget who I am?*

Despite her initial shock, Arielle wasn't at all sad that he didn't recall her.

She responded placidly, "That's normal. You must see too many faces every day to remember mine. We won't be in your way now. Dad, let's go."

Now that she had excused their family, Henrick couldn't prolong the conversation with Vinson. Without a choice, Henrick begrudgingly complied with Arielle's request.

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*What rubbish was that? How can my eldest daughter be so inept at seducing men? How stupid can she be?*

Henrick grew more frustrated at the thought of this. It was evident in the way he quickly stormed over to the boarding gate.

Cindy and Shandie were pleased with how things turned out. They stood straighter with delight as they watched Henrick leave.

*What perfect timing for Arielle to ruin things. I doubt Henrick will continue to spoil her rotten after this.*

Thinking this, Cindy paced in Henrick's direction.

Shandie and Arielle quickly followed suit. At that moment, Shandie's mood soared sky-high. It wasn't long before a mischievous thought flitted through her mind.

Walking alongside Arielle, Shandie mocked in a quiet voice, "Oh dear. I assumed that something special was going on between you and Mr. Nightshire, but I guess not. I can't believe that he didn't even recognize you. Well, don't be sad. It's normal for busy men like Mr. Nightshire to forget a country bumpkin like you."

Shandie made sure to emphasize the words: country bumpkin. She stared excitedly at Arielle, hoping to see her face blow up with



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anger.

Nothing would please her more than to see Arielle red-faced with helpless frustration.



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Yet, Arielle remained emotionless as if she weren't the least bothered.

And that was the truth; she truly couldn't care less about being forgotten by Vinson.

She knew that the Southalls wanted connections with the Nightshires because of their elite social status. Despite this, that prestige wasn't what she wanted or needed.

So, it didn't matter whether Vinson remembered her at all.

Shandie scoffed when Arielle didn't react to her.

*Liar! Keep acting like you don't care then, Arielle. I bet that deep down, you're crying like a big baby who's hurt about the whole thing.*

*Serves you right!*

*Vinson would never be interested in a plain country bumpkin like you!*

Little did the four Southalls know, Vinson's eyes had burned holes in the back of Arielle's head for quite some time.

He stayed that way until Arielle boarded her flight. Only then did he let out an intrigued chuckle.

Beside him, the assistant's eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets.



*What's going on?*

*Mr. Nightshire never laugh. He's usually unsmiling, and some would even say intimidatingly distant. I can't believe he's chuckling to himself now.*

*Also, this isn't sneering laughter. No. It's more genuine, like an amused laugh that comes from deep within one's chest.*

*It's been ages since I last saw Mr. Nightshire laugh like this.*

While the assistant was deep in thought, Vinson's voice suddenly sounded. He asked, "Did you notice a difference between her and the others?"

*There were three women in that family. Which is he referring to?*

The assistant had worked alongside Vinson for several years now, so he knew better than to ask Vinson outright. He pondered for a while before recalling that Arielle had dressed differently from the others.

Then he answered hesitantly, "Indeed. The other three have donned well-known designer brands while that young lady's clothes... Well, they seem like some randomly bought clothes from an unknown stall."

Even with such a sharp observation, Vinson still

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shook his head.

The assistant instantly stiffened in shock. *Did I guess wrongly? Was Mr. Nightshire not referring to that lady?*

Just as the assistant felt flustered, Vinson's voice spoke up once again. "I'm not talking about her clothes."

The assistant heaved a sigh of relief since he had at least guessed correctly.

Still, he frowned in confusion. "If it's not the clothes, then what is it?"

Within seconds, Vinson's facial expression returned to its usual indifference. "It's nothing. Let's resume."

Then the assistant dropped the topic altogether. He didn't dare to probe any further, so he continued with his report.

On the plane, the four Southalls sat in the same row. Henrick had been in a foul mood ever since Arielle's stunt. Because of this, he ordered Arielle to carry out several mindless tasks throughout the flight. She was told to move their luggage to the overhead cabin, then tidy their coats and put them into the luggage, followed by taking out their chargers and so on...

Everyone else on the plane assumed that she



was merely their housekeeper.

Arielle wasn't bothered with doing all those tasks. All she did was comply with Henrick's request without any complaints.

Eventually, Henrick couldn't hold it in anymore. He boomed icily, "Enough! Get over here."

Once Arielle sat down next to Henrick, he interrogated with a sharp tone, "I thought you said that you helped Mr. Nightshire. So why didn't he remember you at all?"

Arielle shook her head candidly. "I only did him a small favor then, so it's normal that he doesn't remember me."

"Then you should have..." Henrick faltered as he looked at Arielle. *I guess having a naive daughter isn't always a beneficial thing.*

*If only it were Shandie who knew Vinson... she would have immediately caught on to my intentions and tried to get closer to him.*

Henrick then huffed begrudgingly, "Forget it. We'll talk about this later. There's still much you have to learn."

"Okay," Arielle nodded obediently. With eyes rounded and lips parted, she feigned a child-like innocence as if she didn't know what she had done wrong.

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Right then, the flight attendant approached them. "Good day, Mr. Southhall. According to your flight mileage, we're able to give you a free upgrade to first-class."

Henrick deliberately chose economy-class seats not only out of stinginess but also because he knew that they could get a free upgrade.

Pleased, Henrick beamed as he bounced onto his feet. "Thank you. Please lead the way."

Shandie and Cindy stood as well.

The flight attendant soon noticed Arielle, who was the last to stand. Then he immediately explained, "My apologies, sir. You only have enough mileage for three free upgrades. Here, have a look."

"Three?" Henrick's temples started to ache. *Then who will go with us to first-class? Shandie or Arielle?*

Seeing that Henrick was conflicted, Cindy chimed in, "I'm sure you've realized that Arielle isn't very quick-witted. She won't be of much help at all. Plus, we're heading to Shandie's awards ceremony. So why don't we give the seat to Shandie this once, hmm?"

Henrick's face turned grim before he finally agreed.



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He promptly turned to Arielle and explained in a matter-of-fact tone, "I can't help that there are only three seats. We'll still see each other once the plane lands. Ergo, it's not all that different."

Arielle stared intensely at Henrick.

Disappointment shrouded in her chest, but she couldn't show it on her face. She refused to let Cindy and Shandie feel triumphant.

Thus, Arielle pressed her lips into a tight smile and said, "It's fine."

"Sorry about this," Henrick uttered while averting her gaze. He then pranced away with Cindy and Shandie for the first-class cabin.

Shandie intentionally slowed her steps. Once their parents were a good distance away, she taunted in a low voice, "It seems like Dad loves me more. You'll have to work harder to catch up now! I'll be off to the first-class cabin, so you rest up here in economy-class, hmm? There's actually not much difference between the two cabins, save for the bigger seats and better service in mine. But hey, don't let that get to you."

Arielle gritted her teeth at how Shandie was gloating around like some proud peacock.

Face twisting into a mocking smile, Arielle motioned towards the first-class cabin. She then provoked, "You'd better hurry over. Dad

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might change his mind and let me go with them if you keep dilly-dallying.”

Shandie panicked upon seeing Arielle's maliciously gleaming eyes.

Then she grabbed her bag and shot straight for first-class, fearing that Arielle would somehow end up in the superior cabin instead.

Soon after, all three Southalls plopped down comfortably in their first-class seats. Shandie had even ordered a glass of the cabin's complimentary red wine.

In economy-class.

Arielle could finally shut her eyes to rest now that Henrick and the others were gone.

Her chest sank with sorrow at that moment. She was human, after all; she felt sadness like every other person on this planet. However, she was terrified of revealing her emotions and vulnerabilities as anyone could use them against her. So she concealed everything, hiding away under the guise of an unbothered girl.

*Fake it till you make it*, she reminded herself.

Just as she got comfortable in her newfound peace, a voice suddenly sounded beside her.

“Excuse me... Are you here by yourself, miss?”



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May I sit next to you?"

A man had politely asked Arielle that question. He watched her with a set of wide eyes as his throat bobbed, gulping anxiously.

Arielle met his gaze with an icy expression. She turned him down, "Sorry, my family will be back soon. These are their seats."

The man didn't need to be told twice. He turned to leave while letting out a wistful sigh. *Who am I kidding? I'm out of her league. There's no way I can get a gorgeous girl like her.*

*Although, I wonder what kind of man will be able to reel in such a great catch...*

Not long after the man left, someone else approached Arielle. "Excuse me, miss..."

Arielle's head flung upward with a pinched expression. Just as she took in the person's face, her mouth fell open.

*Isn't that person who was reporting stuff to Vinson at the airport?*

The man proceeded to introduce himself, "I'm Mr. Nightshire's assistant. He would like to invite you over to his private jet. I've already taken the liberty to clarify things with the attendants on your current flight, so please come with me."

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Arielle hesitated for a moment, then promptly nodded when she thought about the man who approached her earlier.

There were many people on this flight, and she wasn't keen on being interrupted again.

"Alright," said Arielle.

"Follow me then. This way, please." The man gestured towards ahead.

They needed to pass through the first-class cabin to exit the aircraft.

As they walked by, Shandie immediately took notice.



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