



# The Villainess who has Reborn Five Times

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**Category:** Historical

**Description:** The villainess who has reborn five times just wants to rest in peace.

I am Odette, I was once an heiress who had it all, be it money, status or fiancé. When my perfect stepsister appeared, I realized I was just a villain in this story.

I, being the evil stepsister, was of course killed off halfway through the story. When I opened my eyes again I was reborn, but no matter what I did, I died in the end.

Having experienced burning on a stake, the guillotine, hanging and stabbing to death, all I wanted now was to die normally after a normal life. Please let me rest in peace!

**Total Pages (Source):** 32

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I was contemplating how I should spend my fifth life.

Yes, my fifth life. I was living out the same life for the fifth time. I had experienced burning to death, guillotine, hanging and being stabbed to death. And all my tragic endings were related to one person, my stepsister Rachelle.

Today was the day Rachelle's mother married my father, Duke Cecil. It was the end of my pampered heiress life. After experiencing everything for four times, I knew I was not the loved pampered heiress I thought I was. I was just a tool. A tool to connect two most powerful families on the continent.

Father did not love me. If Rachelle who was more docile, more beautiful and more well-tempered could replace me, then so be it. With Rachelle as a comparison, I was just a disappointment. Someone who was known to have a bad temper, an airhead who only knew to spend money. As time went by, I was just someone who brought disgrace to the family. They would have disowned me if their pride allowed them to.

I had been a childish, spoiled heiress through and through in my first life. I had looked down on Rachelle, I thought she was just a silly country girl with no manners. She would never be on the same par as me. She would even make me look superior. I had been childish like that. But I was wrong, I was the one acting as a stepping stone for Rachelle.

Rachelle had perfect manners and temperament as opposed to my well known bad temper. Rachelle was a beauty whereas I was just someone with pleasing features. Rachelle had more talents in magic than me. Rachelle shone in every aspects while I shivered in her shadows.

This was not what I had expected. I was not supposed to be the one hovering in the shadows. My pride could not take that. I had been brimming with envy. When even my fiancé fell for Rachelle and told my father he would like to marry Rachelle instead, that was the final straw. I became the evil villainess in every romance story.

Looking back, I knew it was childish and not worth it. What I had been doing was just a pathetic joke to Rachelle.

But did I deserve the way I met my death? To be burnt alive on a stake in front of everyone? Do you know how painful it was to be burnt? Do you know how it felt to smell the way your skin and tissues turning to ashes? Do you know the despair of knowing your life being burnt away bit by bit?

I had never harmed anyone physically. It was all just angry words and hysterical fits like every pampered spoiled heiress who threw their tempers. The worst I did was trying to cheat in an attempt to win her in a magic duel. I had been quite silly really. That's how I had fallen into the trap of one of Rachelle's suitors and ended my tragic life. And started this never ending hell.

When I realized I had been reborn in my second life. I had been brimming with hatred and anger, I had wanted revenge. So much that my second life had ended much more quickly than my first.

I learned from my previous deaths. I decided to avoid Rachelle and her strings of suitors at all cost in my third life. Rachelle was like the protagonist in a story. The gods were all on her side, as well as strings of suitors who would do whatever Rachelle told them to do or hinted them to do. I lived the longest that life. In my quest to avoid Rachelle at all cost, I ran away from home and smuggled across the sea to the continent that hated people from our continent.

After seven years, I thought I could finally stop hiding in fear in a foreign country. I

thought I could return to my home country. I had planned to settle in a tiny villa in the country side. As soon as I had bought my tiny villa, I was captured. I had been told my father whom I had not been in contact with for years was planning treason all along. And I must be helping out my father in secret.

As for my dear stepsister who had been the perfect daughter to my dear father all throughout the years, of course she knew nothing of that sort! She was as pure as snow! She was innocent! I had been told that my punishment got even worse in the attempt of slandering the sacred Empress Rachelle. As expected of the evil stepsister who bullied Rachelle. I had no idea how I became the evil stepsister when I ran away as soon as Rachelle entered the scene. I was hanged.

I threw away my own pride in my fourth life. I could no longer bear this never ending reincarnation. I thought if I could die nicely like normal people, the torture would end. I pretended to be the best sister. Whatever Rachelle wanted, I gave it to her. I was even her best friend. I threw away myself in the process, I was just a puppet doing all of Rachelle's bidding. It all ended when a devastated lady, whose childhood sweetheart dumped her for Rachelle, came rushing into our tea gathering in hysterics with a knife. Rachelle had hidden behind me just in time and I was stabbed. I never saw it coming, I had been busy serving Rachelle tea. I could not even utter a protective spell.

Thinking back to all my failed attempts to live, I had little hope for my fifth life.

That was when Sarah rushed into the room and cried, "They have arrived, Lady Odette!"

I should stop lying on my bed. I should start facing my fifth life.

Let's make this life my last. Let's die for real this time.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Odette!" Rachelle said with a tiny blush on her face. Her voice turned softer as she her confidence wavered, like she was scared of me, "Can I call you Odette? I... I hope it's not too forward of me. But I really want us to be close sisters, Odette." She smiled docilely with her misty lavender eyes.

Before I could say anything, Father said, "Of course you can, Rachelle. We're all family." He smiled dotingly at her and eyed me meaningfully.

I took a sip from my cup of tea and smiled, "Of course, Rachelle. We're all family."

The wedding yesterday went by peacefully. Rachelle became the talk of capital with her stunning red dress, showing off her porcelain white complexion and deer like lavender eyes. I chose a simple dark blue dress, no longer stupid enough to think I could put her down by wearing a similar dress like what I had done in my first life.

I decided to stay as an innocent by-stander for now. I would no longer run away, it's proven not effective. I would no longer throw away myself and my pride just to please Rachelle, all that led to was me being used as a shield when danger came.

Came to think of it, my time acting as an antagonist to Rachelle in my second life was the happiest among my four lifetimes. Maybe I should consider acting as a villain again? Best live happily than to suffer if I had to repeat this over and over again.

I knew it's not Rachelle's fault, she was just simply blessed by gods. And I was the one in the wrong even if in the end I received more punishment than I deserved. I admitted I was just not a good-natured girl. I liked comparing myself with people around me and became a bitter, unlikable monster when people turned out to have it

better than me. I never once appreciated what I already had. Thanks to someone pointing that out in one of my past lives, I had become very familiar with my own fault.

I decided to just follow the flow of life for now.

"Odette, what are you doing today? Let's hang out together! If... if you don't mind of course." Rachelle smiled shyly. "I don't know anyone here."

"Odette, bring Rachelle with you. Go meet some friends," Father commanded.

"Hannah is having a tea party tomorrow. I'll bring Rachelle with me."

I remembered Hannah's tea party. No matter what I changed, how I behaved, Hannah's tea party was an event that never changed. Rachelle would be humiliated there. No matter how hard I tried stopping the humiliation from taking place, it was like a fixed plot in a novel, it would always appear right along the track it was supposed to take place.

If I did not partake, the head of the group of people who humiliated Rachelle would become the heiress of another prominent family. If I took the side of Rachelle and tried to defend her, my well worded defense would be turned around so it seemed like I was subtly making sarcastic comments at Rachelle. Same rumors about how I hated my stepsister would spread the next day. I tried hiding once so that I would not be involved in the humiliation all together. When I returned, Rachelle would blink her watery deer like eyes and stared at me with silent condemnation. Everyone with eyes would then start to think I was the one ordering my friends to do this.

There's no getting away from this. No matter what I did, two things would come out of this tea party. Rumors would spread about me hating Rachelle and Rachelle would be saved from humiliation by one of her suitors.

From my experience with my last life, I could still be friend with Rachelle after this incident, but whether if she had been secretly hating on me, I had no idea.

What should I do this time? What if I didn't bring Rachelle to the tea party? In some lives I was forced by Father to take her there and after awhile I conceded because I wanted to humiliate her in the party like the evil stepsister I was. In other lives, I thought without me instigating the farce, the humiliation would not have taken place.

Of course not. I knew better now. There were some major events that must happen no matter what. They were like cornerstones of a building. Like the tea party where Rachelle must be humiliated and thus meeting one of her suitors.

Wait... suitors? Come to think of it, all those cornerstones involved Rachelle and her strings of suitors in some ways or other.

Could I change that? What if Rachelle was not able to meet her suitor number one in the tea party? Suitor number one was Lord Hank, the son of a Duke. That duke was a powerful priest serving the god of thunder.

Our country had different temples serving different gods. Every noble family had a god they served. The nobles send their offspring to study in the temples. The offspring that were chosen would become the priests or priestess of that temple. Usually the process of choosing priests and priestess involved them battling each other with their magic. People in our continent, unlike those living on the continent across the sea, could practice sorcery or magic which become more specialized after learning in a temple.

Most of our country's power was divided and held among the priest and priestess of different temples. That's why aristocrats always sent their children to the temples, in the hope that their children would become a priest or priestess. By coming to power, their family would also become more powerful. My family once had hope for me, but

sadly I was not particularly gifted in magic. That's why in the end they turned to the more talented Rachelle even if she was not family by blood.

Back to Lord Hank, he was actually betrothed to Lady Florence from a young age and words had it that they were getting along really well. But he fell in love at first sight with Rachelle. Lady Florence was one of the priestess candidates for her god. On the day the final choosing had taken place in my previous lives, a letter that Hank had written about breaking their betrothal reached her. This affected her badly, she had been injured in the process and had lost the match. She did become a priestess, second in command to her opponent, but her face was scarred after that match.

It's really a tragedy. What if Hank didn't meet Rachelle in the tea party? Then Florence would not be distracted in her choosing a few days later. Their betrothal would end one way or another. Hank would meet Rachelle sooner or later and fall in love. But what if I could delay their meeting until Florence's choosing was over? It's really not worth it losing your place and your face for some fickle guy.

But how could I stop this tea party from happening?



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Lady Odette, where are you going?" Sarah, my maid, shrieked in horror as she saw me climbing out of the window.

"Shh!" I muttered a spell to stop Sarah from rousing the whole estate to watch me running from home in the middle of the night.

Sarah wanted to speak again, but found she was not able to. She frowned disapprovingly at me and mouthed, "Lady Odette! It's nearly midnight!"

"Yeah, I know. That's why I am choosing to sneak out now!" I rolled my eyes and then I muttered a sleeping spell before Sarah muttered one at me. Sarah collapsed on the floor. "Sleep tight! See you tomorrow!"

I climbed out of the window in my bedroom and jumped down. As soon as I jumped down, I muttered a simple wind spell to control my descent. The god my family served was the god of wind. I was sent to the wind temple when I was ten. Father expected me to at least grab a priestess position, not the higher ranking one, just a lowly one. But I could not even do that. I could master simple wind related spells, but more complex and advanced ones? I couldn't master them as well as my teachers and Father wanted.

But simple wind spells were enough for me to plan my escapade. In order to get away from going to the tea party, I needed to prepare a potion. A potion to make me look like I was feverish and sick. Very sick. A potion even healers could not discover I was faking it.

Why did I know the arts of god of darkness? From my second life where I really

turned into a villainess through and through. You thought I used it on Rachelle? Of course not, due to the laziness of a certain someone, I had to do the work of the priestess of darkness. I could remember the ingredients for that potion and that's because I made more than twenty of them during that time.

I pulled the hood over my head to make sure it covered my face and walked quickly to the forest near my estate. The ingredients for the potion were just common herbs. I should be able to find them in the forest.

After a few hours, I had finally collected all the ingredients I needed. I was stretching out my cramped limbs when I noticed a crow staying on the branch of the tree next to me. It tilted its head when it saw me looking at it and then cawed. It then flapped its wings and flew away. When it flew by me, a black crow feather fluttered down and landed next to my leg.

I picked it up. The feather seemed to have a subdued golden hint when I flickered it under the moonlight.

"It can't be... No that's not possible." I laughed dryly. Even though I did not believe the crow just now was really that crow, I placed the feather in my pocket. "Just in case. Just in case." I patted my pocket for good measure.

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"Odette, Sarah said you had fallen sick," Father eyed me with doubt in his eyes.

I had tried pretending to be sick quite a few times when I was small. The good old times when I was still naive and young. No doubt Father was considering the odds of me faking ill so I did not have to bring Rachelle to the tea party.

What a surprise that my father was totally correct this time, but sadly he would not be

able to uncover the truth.

"Father, I am not feeling quite well. I might need a healer." I sneezed. "Please tell Rachelle I am so sorry I could not bring her to the tea party." I sneezed again. "The invitation... Sarah bring me the invitation! Please don't let me hold Rachelle back, maybe Rachelle can go on her own. Rachelle must be so disappointed." I brushed the non-existent tears from my eyes.

The door pushed open at that moment with Rachelle rushing in. "Odette, how are you feeling? You look feverish! Oh dear, oh dear. How are you feeling, dear Odette?" Rachelle cried with worries, her lavender eyes began to grow misty.

Just as I had predicted. Rachelle must come rushing in to visit me. It's true that your enemy was the one who knew you best.

"Rachelle, I am so sorry. The invitation is here, it seems like you have to go on your own. It's such a pity. I thought I could accompany you to your first tea party," I sighed and dabbed my eyes with a handkerchief.

"Don't be, Odette. It saddened me that you're suffering now." Tears seemed to be about to fall from Rachelle's eyes. She squeezed my hands as she said this.

"Rachelle..." I pretended to be really touched. I did learn something from my last life, my acting greatly improved. I knew just how to act to look like we were great and loving sisters. The kind my Father would be very pleased with. When in truth, I just wanted to barf. Could you believe you had such deep feelings for someone you had only known for one day?

"Rachelle, don't let me hold you back. It's nearly time for the tea party, go and prepare!" I waved my handkerchief in the direction of the door.

Father nodded dotingly at Rachelle. "You heard what your sister said. Go and prepare."

Fighting back the urge to roll my eyes at this display of fatherly love, I waited for Rachelle to turn it down. Kind hearted Rachelle would never leave her ill sister in her sickbed alone while she went out to play.

"No, I am not going!" Rachelle cried. "How can I leave my sister here alone when I am enjoying myself? I won't be able to forgive myself! I am going to stay here and take care of Odette!"

"As expected of Hera's daughter," Father said, a look of approval appeared on his face. "Odette, learn something from your sister. Get some rest." Then he walked out of the room.

As expected from my father. Here it came, from now on the two of us would always be compared. While Rachelle shone till the end, by comparison I would always be the incompetent one.

"Odette, do you want a cup of hot tea?" Rachelle smiled lovingly.

"That'll be great." I smiled back. Now I just had to keep Rachelle at home till Lady Florence completed her final choosing.

Lord Hank you might just have to wait a tiny bit longer to meet your one true love. I smirked as I took a sip of tea.

## Page 4

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The invitation for Lady Florence's celebration party was sent to our estate a week after that. Father thought this would be the perfect opportunity for Rachelle's entrance into the society. He demanded that I brought Rachelle with me now that I had recovered from my severe cold.

I found this cruel to Lady Florence. Lord Hank falling in love with Rachelle on her own celebration party? But I could not pretend to fall sick again, could I? The same trick again would get old.

And there was another problem, the crow feather I brought back from the forest really did shimmer in golden when flicked under the sun. This meant the crow I met that night was really that crow. Why was that crow so far away from home? It should be as lazy as its owner.

It should not be of matter to me, we did not know each other in this life. That's right, I should just pretend I didn't see that crow. I should just burn the feather.

My contemplation was cut short when Sarah rushed into my room and shouted excitedly, "Guess what, lady, Lady Rachelle was robbed on the street!"

"What? Where are the servants?" That certainly didn't happen in the past few lives. What if they thought it's my doing again?

"Lady Rachelle saw some orphans on the street, so she bought a loaf of bread with money from her own purse and ordered her maid and the coachman to distribute them. She was also handing out money when she was robbed!"

"I see." I rubbed my temple with my fingers. That's certainly something Rachelle would do, it's a miracle she was not robbed more often. "Is she injured?"

"Of course not! Here comes the most exciting part, Lord Hank saved her! Lady Rachelle was obviously shocked and frightened, so Lord Hank escorted her back! He was still downstairs in the drawing room!"

Chuckles escaped my throat while Sarah looked at me worriedly. And here I was so worried that the two might ruin Lady Florence's celebration party. The first day I let Rachelle out of the estate, she immediately bumped into Lord Hank. There's really no escaping this. Maybe in a moment, words would spread about how I hired thieves to scare the poor Rachelle.

I decided to stop caring anymore. Let the words spread. But in this life I had finally changed the fate of Lady Florence, she should not waste her time with this fickle fiance. I did not want another silly girl to turn into an evil villainess just because her fiance betrayed her, just like how I had been in my first life. It's just not worth it.

If I could save them because I knew exactly where everything was heading, why not?

That night Rachelle came into my room and told me her great adventure today. When she mentioned Lord Hank, her face blushed as she waved her hand excitedly describing how heroic Lord Hank was. She acted just like a young girl falling in love with someone for the first time.

That was Rachelle. For every suitor, she acted as if she liked him or even loved him. Every single time it's this blush and look of admiration as well as adoration in her lavender eyes. When I was pretending to be her best sister in my previous life, I asked her if every suitor was to propose who would she choose. And she said she could not choose.

Sometimes I wonder if she really loved any one of them or if she's actually not capable of love at all.

"Odette, I think I should express my thanks to Lord Hank. He's such a nice gentleman. He knew I was frightened, he even escorted me back! You didn't see how heroic he was at that time! I felt so safe in his embrace!"

All I could do was nod with a fake smile on my face.

"Do you know what kind of gift he might like?"

"That I am not sure, I am not really familiar with him. I am sorry, Rachelle." I smiled apologetically.

"What do you think if I bake some cookies? Do you think he would like it?"

Whatever you do, I have no doubt he will love it. I muttered beneath my breath.

"It's your gratitude that's most important," I said with another fake smile.

"I'll go find a recipe, Lord Hank said he would show me around town tomorrow. That's really nice of him, isn't it?"

"Absolutely." So Lord Hank didn't even pause to think of his betrothed for one second and went on and set up a date?

After Rachelle left my room in a rush, I wrote a note to Lady Florence with sprawled handwriting so that it could not be traced back to me. That night I sneaked out again. When I reached Lady Florence's estate, I realized a huge problem. How could I send this note to Florence without waking up anyone?

Now I missed Isobel, my cat familiar I kept in my second life. If Isobel was here, the note could be sent out easily. In my third and fourth lives, I had thought of raising Isobel again, but decided against it. I couldn't bear separating with something I liked dearly and then losing them when I had to start over again. Only I remembered the past memories, but not one of them. They were no longer the ones I met in my previous life. Adding to the fact I would not cross path with Isobel with the current path I was taking. I smiled bitterly, I hoped Isobel met a nice owner this life.

Now I had to sort out the current problem, how could I place this note in Florence's room without alerting anyone? Using magic was kind of risky. Estates usually had spells placed around the premise to detect unfamiliar magic.

"You can come out," a voice ranged out in front of me. "I can feel you there. I mean you no harm."

It's Florence. She was out alone with just a cloak over her night gown.

"I am a priestess for the goddess of hope. I can feel your intense despair and wish for hope."

So that's what gave me away. I was careless. But now that she was here, all I had to do was to give her the note.

I fling the note out like a dart. It landed a few inches from her feet. Then I turned around melting into the darkness.

Intense despair and wish for hope? Could she feel my intense wish for death? I nearly laughed at my own cruel joke.



## Page 5

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Words of Lady Florence breaking off her betrothal with Lord Hank spread soon after that.

"Odette, how could Lady Florence break off her betrothal with Lord Hank?" Rachelle complained with anger. "Lord Hank is such a nice gentleman! He is a powerful sorcerer but yet he's so kind to the weak! Lord Hank is so devastated with the news! He was so sad when we met yesterday."

I just continued with reading the book on my lap while nodding noncommittally. In my note, I told Florence about how Lord Hank offered to take Rachelle around town. I asked her to observe in the dark with her own eyes. It's totally up to her to decide if she still wished to proceed with the betrothal or if it's better to break everything off before it turned into a huge scandal.

From what I knew, what hurt Florence so badly in my previous lives was because her opponent had goaded her about her fiance's new love just before their duel. Telling her no wonder her fiance chose a beauty like Rachelle instead of her. Her opponent had told her it had been a known secret among the aristocrats except her because her family blocked the news from her to avoid distracting her. At that exact moment, as if it was a scheduled plan, Lord Hank's servant had brought her a letter from Lord Hank about the broken betrothal. There was not an ounce of respect for her nor her family.

Florence was a girl known for her sensibility. If she had the chance to see how Lord Hank treated Rachelle and compared that to how he treated her, she would know how to react. All of Rachelle's suitors looked at her in similar ways, the doting look, the honey dripping glance. It's very easy to distinguish the difference between you and Rachelle. There's no chance getting in between them. The best way was to break off

everything before gossips broke.

"Oh poor Lord Hank!" Rachelle sobbed. "How I wish I could comfort him."

Lord Hank was one hundred percent pretending in front of Rachelle so that she could go and comfort him.

"I can comfort him! He has been so nice to me, now it's the time I repay him!" Rachelle clapped her hands excitedly. "Odette, I'm sorry I have to leave now."

I gave her an elegant smile and waved my hand. I was trying hard to suppress my urge to shout 'Just leave! Do you think I want to hear about your love life?' at her.

She rushed out of the room soon after that. As soon as she left the room, I rolled my eyes and flopped down on the armchair, covering my face with the book I was reading.

Now what comes next? I thought. There are some events that always happen in all of my previous lives. Let's call them cornerstones. Meeting Lord Hank in the tea party being one of them. In this life I intervened a bit, but fate still drew the two of them together. Now what's the next cornerstone?

"Ah! Must be the meeting with my stupid fiance!" I sat up, the book I placed over my face fell to my lap. With that the golden black crow feather I tucked in the book also fluttered to my lap. "I should have burnt this." As I muttered beneath my breath, I slipped the feather back into my leather bound book.

It's about time Father sent me back to the temple. Originally, sending Rachelle to the wind temple was not even on Father's mind. But then Father's new wife stepped in and said Rachelle had dreams of becoming a priestess ever since she was small. She believed that's a prophecy of some kind. Or else why would Rachelle kept having the

same dream ever since she was four? Father was totally convinced. If Odette had little hope of becoming a priestess, what about Rachelle?

So Rachelle would follow me back to the temple in a few weeks. My fiance, Henri, came from a family also serving the god of wind. That's where Rachelle met him. I didn't know about Rachelle, but that's where Henri fell in love with her. Rachelle could not catch up with her study, so she asked for my help. In my first life, being the evil stepsister I was, I of course kicked her away after some sort of humiliation. In the end, it was Henri tutoring her. And then Henri told me he had to break off our betrothal as he fell deeply in love with Rachelle.

See the pattern here! Rachelle met a guy, that guy fell deeply in love and then broke off the betrothal. Wherever Rachelle went, she left behind a strings of broken hearts. Broken hearts of girls.

After burning to death in my first life, I had reflected. Did I really like Henri that much? Had he really been worth it? Or had I been so fixated on him just because Rachelle once again stole something from me and I had just been jealous? Had it all been because of my silly pride?

When I saw Henri for the first time in my second life, I realized I really felt nothing for him except for the anger and hatred for plotting my death with the other suitors. I felt not an ounce of jealousy when he was with Rachelle. Even when they were flirting around. That's when I realized, I really didn't like Henri as much as I had thought. It's all my silly pride.

"Thank gods I don't like him!" I rolled my eyes as I muttered beneath my breath. "How can my taste be this bad."

In my previous life in which I pretended to be the best sister alive. Whatever Rachelle wanted, I gave it to her. That's why when Henri announced that he was going to break

off our betrothal in a family gathering with both of our families all seated around a table, I had acted like a heart broken yet understanding ex-fiance and then accepted the sad truth that Henri wanted to marry Rachelle instead graciously. This had earned me an approving nod from Father. But the fact that Henri had dumped me in front of everyone and then declared he would marry my stepsister instead was a huge insult to me.

No wonder I lashed out in my first life when I was still childish and spoiled. Now that I thought of it anger seemed to build up in my body. Do you know how insulting that was? How humiliating when your supposed acquaintance all silently pointed their fingers behind your back and mocked you?

No I won't let that happen to me again! I swore to gods internally. Then how about we speed things up?

My lips could not help but to quirk up for this upcoming drama.

## Page 6

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"Odette, I heard lately you have been hiding in your room reading," Father stated disapprovingly.

In the past he had always asked me to study more, now I was hiding in my room all day reading, he disapproved. All I wanted to do was to roll my eyes. To be frank, my personality had changed quite drastically after four lives and he didn't even suspect anything. I wanted to applaud my Father for being so insensitive.

But now it's the time to set my plan to motion.

"I..."

"Odette, when you return to the temple next week, Rachelle will follow you," Father announced.

"We can be together, Odette! I am so happy!" Rachelle, who was sitting next to me, grabbed my arm excitedly.

"Really?" I pretended to be shocked.

"Do you know Rachelle has been busy studying to prepare herself! And what are you doing? Reading trashy romance novels all day! Have you even practiced during the break?"

So Rachelle reading a book was studying while if it's me then it's reading trashy romance novels? It's true that once someone had a fixed perception of a person, it never changed. I did not know why I still felt a hint of disappointment. It's been four

lives! Wake up, Odette!

"I will start studying with Rachelle, Father."

"Hera," Father said to my new stepmother lovingly, "your daughter is really a good influence. You raised a good daughter. While the one I have..." he glanced at me disapprovingly.

Once Father and Hera left the room, Rachelle started to cling her arm around mine. "Don't be sad, Odette. Father just did not understand your desire to relax a bit." She gave me a smile that was meant to soothe me. "Let's study together! I can't wait for us to study in the temple together! It's going to be so fun." She grinned joyously.

I nodded. Even though I did not want to stay in the same room with Rachelle for one more second, it's necessary for my future plans.

"Odette, can you show me how to do this Grade I wind spell?" Rachelle asked hesitantly while blushing.

"Let me think about it. Hmmm..." I took a look at the spell book in her hand and then cradled my head in my hands to pretend I was thinking hard. "Let me try."

I of course created a mess of the spell. It ended with a poof and the power of the wind generated was even weaker than fanning yourself with your hand.

"Opps." I pretended to be embarrassed. "I am sorry Rachelle, I am such a bad study partner. That's the what sixth spell I have failed?" I covered my face with my hands.

"It's alright, Odette. These are hard spells."

They're not. They might look hard to Rachelle at the moment, that's because she had

just finished basic sorcery with an average teacher from the country side she was from. Once she started learning the more advanced tricks, she'd soak them all up and overtake me in no time. That's what happened in every life I had experienced.

She was a genius. Not just with wind magic, but all kinds of magic. Of course it was said that the treasure she discovered in the wind temple later on helped her, but she was definitely a genius to begin with.

"Rachelle, I know who we can ask for help! I am such a bad study partner, but I know someone that suits the job!" I clapped my hands. "Just you wait! I will find you a great study partner tomorrow!"

I then ran out of the room. It's best not to spend too much time with Rachelle. It's suffocating. When I returned to the room, I dug out a note I had written a few days ago from the drawer and handed it to Sarah.

"Send this to Lord Henri."

"Lady Odette, you're finally contacting Lord Henri!" Sarah brightened. "I was so worried. I thought you two had a fight! You haven't asked me to send notes to him for a few weeks! Since the wedding of the Duke!"

Of course, that's the time point I was reborn. Who wanted to play exchange love letters with Henri? When I was young, I thought exchanging love letters was such a romantic thing. I wrote letters after letters to Henri, all I got in return was 'Really!', 'That sounds interesting!'. I still thought that's because Henri was not good with words. That illusion shattered when I came across a love letter he wrote to Rachelle. There's never someone who's not good with words, just someone you didn't want to talk to. How naive I was.

I shivered at the flashbacks of my naive and airhead self. I flopped onto my bed with

my leather-bound book and continued reading it. "Just send the note." I waved my hand to send Sarah away.

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"Rachelle, I have found you a great study partner!" I peeked into the library we used for study.

"Odette! Here you are!" Rachelle cried. She looked as pretty as always. The morning sunlight shone on her lavender eyes, making them sparkled like amethysts. Perfect.

"Rachelle, this is Henri." I led Henri into the library. "He is a fellow pupil studying in the temple of god of wind." I could see Henri visibly stiffened as he laid eyes on Rachelle. Perfect. "Henri, this is my sister Rachelle. She is going to be a pupil in the temple as well."

I dragged out a chair from across Rachelle and ushered Henri to sit. "Well we have several questions regarding spells. I am sure you'll be so glad as to teach us." I tried to imitate the sweet bubbly tone I had when I faced Henri when I was young.

"Oh! How silly of me, what are we missing? Snacks! I'll be back in a moment! Or not." I chuckled as I sneaked out of the library as quickly as I could.

When I was closing the door, I could hear Henri telling Rachelle in slight embarrassment, "Odette might not return."

"Why?" I could imagine Rachelle widening her deer like eyes with just this reply.

"It's her common trick. She hated studying," Henri sighed. "She won't be back. You said you had some spells you want to ask about?"



"Oh, yes!"

I sneaked back into my room and laid back onto my fluffy four poster bed. I took the leather bound notebook from below my pillow and muttered as I was twirling the crow feather I kept between the pages, "Who said I hated studying. Look at what I am doing now! Reading a historical textbook!"

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Lady Odette, Lord Henri has come. He's in the library," Sarah reported.

I gave her a vague nod while flipping over a page of the leather bound volume.

"Lady Odette, did you and Lord Henri really have an argument? You seldom go out of your room to meet him!"

"That's because I don't want to meet him," I drawled as I rolled my eyes.

"But he's here to meet you! He cares for you so much to the point of coming here to tutor you!"

I chuckled at this totally incorrect news. "Alright. I will go and meet him later today. Now shoo, go prepare tea." I waved my hand to dismiss my nagging maid.

Now after giving the love birds five days, it's more or less time Henri fell in love with Rachelle. Don't disappoint me, Henri. I smirked. Let's visit them after my tea.

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I creaked open the old oak door to the library and peeked inside. Both Henri and Rachelle were sitting side by side with their heads huddled close together over a spell book. Rachelle was so focused that a lock of her shiny hair escaped her braids. The lock of hair fell in front of her eyes. Henri looked up and tucked that hair back behind her ear. Rachelle looked up with her face red as she smiled sweetly back at Henri.

An exact copy of a scene out of a romance novel! I could not believe those romantic

scenes in trashy romance novels, as my Father so kindly categorized them, could happen in real life!

I banged open the door to the library and shouted excitedly, "I brought you guys snacks!"

Henri jumped at the sound of my voice and immediately leaned as far away from Rachelle as possible. He even started doodling on the paper in front of him.

"Odette! I... I was wondering where you are these few days!" Rachelle said with her face still red. "It's not the same without you studying with us! You said you would study with me. But you just never showed up. Leaving only Henri and me!"

"Now I am back, with snacks!" I grinned. "You see there's tea, cookies and... where are the cakes? I must have left them! Let me ask..."

"I will go!" Rachelle shot up from her seat and then rushed out of the room. Her face was still bright red.

"Ask Sarah to bring it over," I finished the sentence. I shrugged as I went to close the door of the library. "Hi, Henri. So there's only the two of us left." I grinned.

"Well... yeah..." Henri squirmed uncomfortably. Henri started to tidy up the table as he said, "You should study, Odette. Rachelle is very talented. She caught up a lot during the past few days while you are playing around."

Very soon, she will catch up and overtake you too, I thought silently.

"I know." Still grinning as I leaned on the wooden door of the library, "You should thank me, Henri. Do you have fun studying with Rachelle? Just the two of you."

"What... what..." Henri stuttered with his ears all red.

"Calm down, calm down. I am just saying you two seem to be good study partners," I stated innocently. "Oh, Henri, you haven't mentioned the fact that you are my fiance to Rachelle, have you?"

"No, why should I?" Henri squirmed uneasily.

"I understand, I understand. If you mentioned that tiny fact, Rachelle might not flirt with you. Totally understandable."

"What... we're not..."

"It's alright. It's alright." I tried to motion him to calm down. "I am here for a deal. A deal you won't regret." My lips quirked up.

"Deal?"

"Let's break off our betrothal."

"What? What are you playing at, Odette?" Henri narrowed his eyes.

"It's a great deal! By breaking it off, you can flirt with Rachelle all you want! You can even marry her! Both of our families will agree, they just want someone from my family to marry someone from yours. Whether it's me or Rachelle, it doesn't matter. But it matters to you, am I right?"

Henri eyed me with distrust. "But you like me, why would you give up like that? If you think by pretending to step back, I will fall for you. That's not going to happen, Odette. I know you, don't try to hurt Rachelle!"

I rolled my eyes. "You don't know me. Not anymore. Well there are certainly some conditions you have to follow."

"Conditions?"

"I have to be the one to announce it. I dumped you. Not the other way round. And you and Rachelle can only announce that you two are together or wed only after I have married. Not before my wedding. Sounds like a deal?" I raised my eyebrow. Well I might never marry though.

"Why are you doing this?" he was still eyeing me skeptically.

"I just don't want to marry you, simple as that. Let's sign a contract." I took out a piece of paper from my sleeve. "Then I can trust you."

"A contract? A magic one?"

"Of course. We both have to swear to our gods. Do you want to go over your terms or not?" I offered him the sheet. "Rachelle is coming back any second."

Once a contract was signed between two sorcerers, the two were bound by magic and their gods. They would face certain consequences if it's broken. The consequences were decided upon between the two parties before the contract was signed. In our case, the one who broke the contract had to be disowned by family.

No one wanted to break a contract bound by magic as there were no loopholes around it. You're sealing your contract with you gods as witness.

He quickly glanced through the paper and eyed me suspiciously one last time, clearly wondering why I was giving him up. But he knew this was his chance to freedom, so he bit his thumb and smeared his blood on the contract. He handed me the contract. I

smiled and took out the needle I had with me. I pricked my thumb and followed his lead by smearing my blood on the contract.

At the touch of my blood, the contract disappeared with only lingering black smoke.

Henri stared in confusion, "The smoke..."

"What? You worry that I would fail a spell as simple as to draft a contract? You scrutinize the contract before signing, didn't you?"

The tiny crease between his eyebrows smoothed, "Must be a trick of the light. I thought the smoke was black in color. Yes, I scrutinized the spell on the contract before signing, you did a surprisingly good job."

It's now my turn to feel anger bubbling inside me. "That's an elementary spell. Are you looking down on me?"

"Eh..."

I gave him one final stare and walked out of the room. He was right about the smoke being black in color though. That's because the spell I used was from the book of god of darkness. If he broke the contract, it would not kill him, I was just an average sorceress to begin with, it'd just give him a day or two bad luck.

I hummed as I returned to my room.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

Announcing to Father about breaking off the betrothal had to wait until Rachelle showed her worth in the temple, but I was still glad to break off any connection with the stupid Henri.

Now with our signed contract, Henri had to lay low when he was courting Rachelle. My happiness was built on him suffering as he watched Rachelle getting more and more suitors. He was the one who tricked me in my first life. Granted, I was stupid, but if he hadn't led me on, I wouldn't have fallen into that trap. Then I wouldn't have been burnt alive on a stake. Now it's just a little prank on him. If Henri was really Rachelle's true love, no matter how hard the process was, love would win, wouldn't it?

"Odette, I can't believe I get to study in the wind god's temple! It's one step closer to my dream of becoming a priestess! How long does it take for us to go there? Will Henri come along with us?" Rachelle said the last bit shyly.

"Around a day's journey on carriage," I said as Sarah helped me get into the carriage. "As for Henri, from what I heard boys like to ride out there."

"Aww... I thought we're going with Henri," Rachelle said dejectedly and then she clapped her hands excitedly. "So we're going to spend the whole day sitting in the carriage together! That's great! I have a lot to ask you!" Rachelle's eyes brightened.

My head ached at the thought of staying in an enclosed area with Rachelle. Others might not know, but I who once acted as her best friend knew better. Rachelle was really talkative. I made sure I didn't have to stay with Rachelle during the journey. Adding to the fact that this one day carriage journey was in fact a cornerstone of

Rachelle's life.

Oh you might think it's the common, thieves jumping out to rob a young noble lady in the middle of nowhere, prince coming to save the day? No, it's Rachelle being kidnapped by a band of heroic outlaws and then they, or the leader of the band of outlaws, fell in love.

In my first life, I of course did not go together with Rachelle, I hated my stepsister, how could I bear staying with her? I begged Henri to take me with him when he set out one day before. So when she was kidnapped, I was rumored to be the one conspiring it. And then in my fourth life, I was Rachelle's great sister, of course I went with her. And then I was kidnapped with her. It's just a very bad experience. It felt like being a third wheel or someone transparent. Everyone was so focused on Rachelle, I could just run away if I could. They treated her like a queen.

So, no I decided not to go with Rachelle. I don't want to be kidnapped with her.

I leaned out of the window of my carriage and grasped Rachelle's hand, "I am sorry, Rachelle, I don't know you're so excited about us going together." I dabbed my dry eyes with my handkerchief. "You see, I am planning to visit my mother's grave. It's a hilly and rocky road."

"I can..."

"I have some secrets I want to tell my mother." I hid my face behind the handkerchief like I was embarrassed. "I am sorry, Rachelle."

"It's alright!" she said in a fake cheerful tone, but I could see the dejection in her eyes.

"I know it's your first trip to the temple, you must be frightened. So Sarah is going with you." I smiled elegantly. Sarah widened her eyes and was about to refuse when I



glared at her. "So you have both Sarah and your maid to keep you company. Sarah can also tell you more about life in the temple."

"Odette, you don't have to..."

"I will try to catch up with your carriage. Maybe we can meet on the road after lunch."

"That'll be great!" Rachelle's face brightened.

"I'll set out first." I gave her a tiny wave as good bye.

Now that I had gotten rid of both Rachelle and Sarah, the buzzing around my ears finally stopped. You had no idea how noisy the two of them could get.

I was gazing out of the carriage's window when I was passing through a forest. That's when I saw the carriage coming from the other direction. It was a carriage in the darkest shade of black. The horses pulling the carriage were also black. But what made it stood out was that there wasn't a coachman, just a crow standing on top of the carriage. When the sunlight shone on the crow, the black feathers glittered like gold.

That couldn't be. That's...

"That's the carriage of the priest of the god of darkness," the guard riding next to the carriage muttered anxiously. The coachman also drew our carriage to a stop.

The guard knocked on the carriage's window and said, "Lady Odette..."

Why was he here? Shouldn't he be all the way in the north? He shouldn't be here. I did not remember him coming all the way down south at this time in my previous lives. But who knew, I didn't visit my mother's grave today in my previous four lives.

Maybe he did come this far south and I did not know because I never ran into him.

Stay calm, you two don't know each other. He is just a priest from another temple. Greet him and then he will be gone. This might be the only time in this life you get the chance to see him, Odette. Find yourself lucky! I thought to myself.

I asked the guard to open the carriage door and I got out of my carriage. I placed my right hand over my heart, with my left hand I lifted my dress to curtsy. My head slightly bowed. The common greeting for priests.

When the carriage was getting closer and closer, I was suppressing my urge to look up and catch a glimpse of him through the window. That's when the carriage halted in front of me. Someone jumped down from the carriage and then my chin was tilted up.

I widened my eyes as I took in his familiar lazy grin and the mask covering half of his face.

"See who I found on the road, a perfect candidate for serving the god of darkness."

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"See who I found here, a perfect candidate for serving the god of darkness," the man from my memory had said.

At that time, I had been kneeling in front of the temple of the god of darkness, praying that the god of darkness might assist me in my revenge. The huge wooden door of the temple had then swung open without a sound. Someone had stood in front of me saying nearly the exact same words.

"So it's you who raise me from my sleep," he had said. "It has been a good nap. Are you coming in or not?" He had looked at me with a lazy grin on his masked face. All I could see at that time was his lazy grin and bloody red eyes behind the mask.

His expression at that time overlapped with the scene in front of me.

When my eyes met his, realization finally dawned on me. It's really him, the high priest of the god of darkness. It's the first time I saw him after two lifetimes. The last time I saw him I was heading to my death.

With a snap of his finger, my two guards and coachman went unconscious.

"I need some tea," he said nonchalantly as he swung around and returned to his carriage. When he settled down on the seat in his carriage, he asked, "You want some?"

"It's my pleasure, High Priest," I replied with an elegant smile. I returned to my carriage and dug out the hamper with a tea set, water and tea leaves Sarah had placed in the carriage before I kicked her out of the carriage. I brought the stuff to his

carriage and started to brew tea.

When he said he wanted tea, he meant he wanted you to brew him tea. He was too lazy to do it himself. I placed the cup of warm tea on the low table in the carriage in front of him.

The lazy grin was still on his face as he sipped the tea slowly as if he had all the time in the world.

"I need a spy, you seem to be a nice candidate," he said breezily as if he was merely talking about the weather.

"A spy?" What did he need a spy for? If I remembered correctly, he was wandering around the temple with nothing to do all day in my second life. He as the high priest of the god of darkness was only called upon when the continent really needed him, such as at times when the beasts in the forest near the border became uncontrollable and required priests from every temple to join forces.

"You can do it, can't you?" he said with a smile on his face, his ruby red eyes piercing at me.

"For what? I am just a pupil in the temple of god of wind."

"I know," he grinned. "It doesn't suit you. You're more well suited as a pupil of the god of darkness. Your soul reeks of darkness."

That's what he had told me in my other life too. He said I had such a bad personality that I would probably suit learning the arts of dark god more. I was too easily driven by jealousy.

"I want you to spy on the treasure your temple holds so dear. Oh don't try to play

dumb now, I know you know there's a treasure kept in your temple."

It's no surprise he knew about the treasure, from what I gathered in my previous life most temples seemed to have one. They're all shards of some jewel. In every life, soon after Rachelle started studying in the temple, she would break some sort of wards that sealed the shard in the temple. The jewel shard acknowledged her as its only owner. This sort of boosted up her power. Rachelle then went on a journey collecting other shards from other temples. Of course the other temples did not want Rachelle taking away their well guarded treasure. This led to a huge debate and battle between Rachelle and the other temples.

"You want me to steal it?" I asked hesitantly. That's an impossible mission for me. I couldn't fight Rachelle.

"Of course not!" his grin widened. "Why would I want that shard? It has no use to me. You just have to track her progress."

"Her progress?"

"When she collected one shard, report to me. It's simple, isn't it?"

I nodded.

"Great! Now let me give you a gift. You're doing work for me, I should give you some reward."

He whistled and then his crow peeked in from carriage window. "I am finding your friend."

His crow had a friend? But he only had one crow familiar. I was getting more and more confused. He was the same as before, but I did not understand his actions. I did

not remember him getting particularly fixated on those shards in the past. He seemed more interested on my attempts to take revenge.

"Meow. Meow." A black kitten jumped in from the carriage window. She had sleek black fur with golden eyes. Isobel?

The cat landed on the lap of the high priest and she purred as he patted the kitten.

"Your owner," he said as he placed the kitten on my lap. "My gift for you."

"What... what's the cat's name?"

"Guess?"

The kitten looked exactly like Isobel, her appearance, the way she purred when I touched it, the way she snuggled on my lap.

Without thinking, I called out, "Isobel?"

"Meow, meow." She responded as if she had done that many times before and then started licking my fingers. Just like how Isobel had been in my second life.

I glanced up to see the familiar lazy grin still hanging on his face. At that moment, the crow with golden black feathers flew in. It landed on the priest's shoulder as it cawed.

"It's nearly time." The carriage door opened by itself. "Send words to me through Isobel. It's a pleasure meeting you."

"It's my pleasure too, your grace." I climbed out of the carriage with Isobel in my arms.

That's when I felt his colder than average human's breath trickling by my ear. "See you soon, Odette."

I was still standing in the same place when my guards and coachman began to wake from his deep sleep. I looked at the kitten in my arms. This kitten was definitely Isobel.

It couldn't be...

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

The high priest created an illusion, all my guards and coachman believed that the black carriage drove by as we greeted him like it's supposed to. All the better. It's best not to alert Father. I told them I found Isobel by the side of the street and was going to keep it. Without Sarah here to reject the idea, they all accepted it. Another whim of Lady Odette, what's new?

The journey went on smoothly after that. I arrived at the temple just before sun set. When I got out of my carriage, I saw Henri getting on his horse. When he saw me, he stopped and rushed towards me and cried, "Rachelle was kidnapped!"

"How did that happen?" I asked anxiously. "Do you know who did it? I should have accompanied her. How could I tell my Father about this? It's all my fault," I cried in horror.

"It's Chris and his merry band."

"Chris and his merry band? Who are they? Did they leave any sort of letter demanding money?" It seemed like Sarah succeeded in escaping just as I had predicted.

"No, they didn't even leave a note! We wouldn't even know who did it if it's not for your maid and Rachelle's maid! They both escaped when their guards were low to call for our help."

"They left Rachelle there alone with the thieves?" I shrieked angrily.

"They made the correct choice. It seems like Rachelle and the maids were kept in



separate places. Their guards were low when compared to Rachelle. That's the only chance they had of sneaking out and calling for help. Luckily, Sarah knew the way to the temple."

"Then do you know where their nest is? I have to save Rachelle!"

"We have already located her. We're setting out to rescue her now. The priests and I. We all think it best you stay here. We can't look after you when we're rescuing someone."

So was that a subtle way of saying I'd be in their way?

"Alright," I said in slight dejection. "Please bring back Rachelle. Thank you, Henri."

Henri gave me a nod and then rode on his horse to join the others in the rescue team.

As expected Sarah successfully escaped. As I said their security was lax on people other than Rachelle, if my maid fought her way back to the temple to call for help. And gave them the location to save Rachelle as soon as possible. The suspicions on me might lessen a bit.

It had become a huge news when Rachelle went missing for more than three days in my first life. No one could locate her. People began to suspect everyone. Especially me. Now it's different, with the help of Sarah, they could very well rescue her by today. But then now there wasn't enough time for Rachelle and Chris to develop their romance. I hope I didn't mess things up. It'd be my fault if Chris really turned out to be her one true love.

I returned to my bedroom in the temple. I laid on my bed, exhausted. It's been a long day. Isobel snuggled down on my pillow just like how it would in the past. I started running my hand on her sleek fur.

"I don't understand, Isobel. Why did you come under his care in this life? You should be a stray kitten in the village down the hill from the temple of god of darkness. He would never have set foot in that village. And why did he know my name? Maybe I'm just overthinking it, maybe he just has the power to know others' name, maybe he eavesdrop, maybe he just knows. But that tone, that... that gesture... Argh... I must be overthinking..." I buried myself deep in the pillow to hide my burning cheeks and ears.

A few hours after dinner, Sarah came knocking. "They have brought back Lady Rachelle!"

"Really? Bring me to her!" Let's finish the last scene of this drama.

When I reached Rachelle's room, Henri was comforting her. He had his arm around her shoulders and speaking softly to her. Luckily I had the audacity to peek before barging in. I rolled my eyes. I had my fair share of barging into romantic moments in my previous lives. It's embarrassing and I really wanted to wash my eyes after viewing those lovey dovey moments firsthand.

I retreated back to the corridor and stomped on the ground a few times to pretend to be rushing to her room. Before opening the door I was already crying out, "Rachelle! Poor Rachelle! How are you? Are you alright?"

When I rushed into the room, Rachelle came over to give me a huge hug. She cried, "Odette, you must be really worried!"

"Rachelle, it's all my fault. If I accompanied you, you wouldn't have to experience this." I sobbed into my handkerchief. I should have soaked my handkerchief in mint so that I could cry whenever I wanted. " Those trashy kidnappers! Oh my poor Rachelle, did you get hurt?"

"Of course not! Odette, you have no idea, they are actually heroes! You see the lord overseeing this land is overbearing and strict. The villagers have to pay high taxes and they have nothing to eat! Chris and his men were actually planning to kidnap the lord's daughter so that they could negotiate with the lord and help the villagers! They are heroes!"

You sure they are heroes, Rachelle? They kidnapped people! They were planning to threaten the lord with his daughter!

I lost all hope in talking sense to Rachelle a long time ago, so I just sat there with my usual elegant smile and nodded.

Rachelle continued on with her great adventure when at last Henri got her attention and I was finally able to sneak away.

That night, I was falling asleep when I realized, if I had to report Rachelle's progress of collecting the shards to him, did that mean I had to follow her around? I could not deal with talkative Rachelle nor her suitors any more. Maybe I could just follow her from afar? That's definitely a better plan.

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

My life studying in the temple continued. It's more or less the same as my previous lives. I did not have to spend much time or effort completing my coursework. If I still couldn't master the spells after studying the same thing for the third time, not counting the life I ran away across the sea, then I would really be a great fool.

It's one nice day where I laid on my bed reading, patting Isobel, when the temple started shaking. I sat up and hugged Isobel close to me. Rachelle was breaking the seal. She had gotten hold of the first shard. It's really nearly time, soon she would start her quest to find other shards.

I went to my desk and wrote a note. I had to do my job as a spy.

"Isobel," I called the little kitten over. "I need to pass this note to the high priest." I placed the note on the desk.

"Meow." Isobel jumped onto the desk and placed its paw on the note. Within seconds, the note disappeared into a puff of black smoke. As expected, that's why he asked me to send news to him through Isobel. That's what happened in my second life too.

"Now, Isobel, stay in this room. I will be back soon. How I wish I didn't have to go out and act surprised!" I ruffled Isobel's sleek black fur as I rolled my eyes.

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"Rachelle, do you really have to leave?" I asked worriedly.

"It's my fate," she said with a sacred expression on her face. She was clutching the shard she found in the wind temple with her hands. "The shards out there are calling me. I can feel them." She closed her eyes at that moment. "It's my fate. I have to help them!"

You have to help a shattered jewel? I bit back the comment.

"Rachelle... that's very... nice of you. I worried about you. It's a pity I am not more accomplished. If I go with you, I will probably drag you down. But I will support you from afar!" I squeezed her hand in support.

"Odette... don't worry Henri is coming with me and..." she whistled and then a huge white dog tumbled out from the bush beside us. Rachelle bent down and hugged the huge dog around its neck. "I met Lucian in the forest near the temple. When I met Lucian, he was nearly dying." Rachelle sobbed. "Poor Lucian, luckily, Lucian is getting better now."

I took a brief glance at the huge dog with white fur and blue eyes. Lucian might look like a dog now, but turned out he was under some sort of a curse. He was human. He became another of Rachelle's loyal suitor.

"Be safe, Rachelle!" I waved my handkerchief as farewell. Once meeting Rachelle, I realized I had an increased rate of using my handkerchief.

"Odette, I will keep you updated!" she shouted back as Henri ushered her into a carriage, the huge dog jumped into the carriage to join her and they're gone.

I stood there until their carriage was gone from sight and returned to my room. I took out my cloak from my wardrobe.

"Isobel, let's go on an adventure! If I remember correctly, the first target is the fire

temple. We can just wait in the town the temple is situated." I placed Isobel into the cross body bag I had prepared for her, put on my cloak and headed out to the stable.

The priests in the temple did not really care where us pupils went as long as we showed up in the final choosing. Me sneaking out was nothing, they were used to me not staying in the temple since I was young. I had already told Sarah I was going on a quest to find herbs for a potion alone, she would not come finding me for now.

I climbed onto my horse and then set out on a different path as Rachelle. This route I was taking would still reach the town where the fire temple was, just a little bit of detour. I did not want to follow the footsteps of Rachelle, she was sure to attract troubles. If I remembered correctly, she met a prince and a priest of the fire temple on her way there. Nope, not gonna meddle in their mess.

It's only now that I could cheat. I never lived till she had collected all the shards, or if I had I was on another continent all together. So I only knew the first two or three places for sure.

The sun was setting when I stopped for rest. I tied my horse to a tree and then started setting up a fire for the night. I placed a thick mat on the ground and then settled down with a sigh. Who would have thought there's a day where spoiled heiress Lady Odette would spend the night in the wild?

I was having my dinner of bread and cheese and playing with Isobel when I heard a sound of cawing. Isobel replied with a small tilt of its head and then meowed at a certain direction. In a second, a black carriage appeared on the road. It's a carriage with no coachman, just two black horses leading the way. The carriage stopped in front of my mat and then the carriage door swung open.

"Mind if I join you?" asked the man sitting elegantly in the carriage.

After a brief pause I replied with a smile, "It's my pleasure, high priest."

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"I believe you're setting out for the town the fire temple is in?" he asked while feeding his crow.

I nodded. Why was he here?

"That's your dinner?" he asked skeptically.

I looked at the bread and cheese on the mat. I nodded.

"You're not planning to treat a high priest to bread and cheese I hope."

"No, of course not." I smiled elegantly. I picked up the bow and arrows from my horse. "I will go and hunt something for you, your Grace."

This lazy priest! I really wondered if he showed up now just so I could hunt and cook for him. Why didn't he just call for his shadow puppets?

"That's very nice of you," he smiled with something evil sparkling in his eyes. "I thought I'd send out my shadow puppets to hunt something, now I don't even have to use my power! So glad you offered!"

Now some of the not so great memories of dealing with him came rushing back. The memories I had of him before I died in my second life must be too impactful, it must have blinded me.

"Please wait a moment, your grace." I bowed and then turned around to enter the forest. The elegant smile I had just a second before slipped from my face, I was



clenching my teeth and rolling my eyes as soon as I turned my back at him.

A cold hand wrapped around my wrist. "Are you angry?" he chuckled. "I am just joking." He snapped his fingers as two black shadows drifted into the forest.

I glared at him. But a second later I regretted it. I lowered my eyes as I reminded myself once again. He was not the high priest I got to know in my second life. He was the high priest of the god of darkness. In this life I was just his spy and we only met twice. He was not the high priest I could roll my eyes or glare at.

"If I let you hunt for me, who knew when I can finally have my dinner." He shrugged. "My puppets are much more efficient."

And now I wanted to strangle him again. I did not want to face him at the moment. I went and take out seasonings I had packed in my luggage.

The Odette in her first or second life might not know how to cook, but the Odette who had experienced running away from home and hiding out in a foreign country, she could at least cook something edible.

I picked up some more woods from around my camp and sat in front of the fire to wait for the raw meat to come.

"You are still angry at me." The high priest's face was just an inch from mine when I looked up, his red eyes gazing intently at me. Some scenes flashed in my mind, my cheeks felt slightly warmer, as I scrambled back as elegantly as I could. Don't blush, Odette, you're not Rachelle.

"No... no I am not angry at you, your Grace."

"Do you know how to cook?"

"A bit."

"You either know how to cook or you don't. There's no in between."

I glared at him. "Then do you want to bet?"

A grin spread on his face. "If you win?"

After a moment of silence I said. "You take off your mask."

His grin deepened. "If I win?"

"Then I become a pupil of the god of darkness." I raised my eyebrow in challenge.

He burst out laughing. "You seem very confident in your cooking skills."

"It's up to you to decide, your Grace."

At that moment, the shadows brought back two rabbits.

"Skin them first," I ordered the shadows. "I don't want the blood to get on my hand."

After the two rabbits were skinned, I started to prepare tonight's dinner. I started to roast the rabbit after brewing a broth with the rabbit. As I roasted the rabbit over fire, I covered my nose with my sleeve.

After being burnt to death on a stake in my first life, I hated roasted meat. The smell of fire burning on meat and on fat revolted me. I could still eat meat, just not roasted. But there's no way to cook this rabbit aside from roasting it. Just brewing a broth was not enough for him.

The smell of meat being burnt was getting stronger every moment. It got better as I was reborn life after life, but it's still discomforting to me. Then I heard a snap of finger and a shadowy hand took hold of the rabbit I was roasting.

My wrist was once again circled by the cold hand of the priest and was pulled away from the fire.

"Let's wait here. The smoke over there is getting unbearable."

"But I haven't finished cooking..."

"Your broth is more than enough to display the fact that you can cook. You passed."  
He nodded solemnly.

That's right, I had already given him a bowl of broth while I was roasting the rabbit.

"Thank you for your acknowledgement, your Grace."

"As I have promised..." He took off the mask covering most of his face.

The face staring at me overlapped with the one in my memories. The way he was looking at me was so familiar with the one in my memories. I had this sudden urge to talk to him, to pour out my loneliness and sadness.

I lowered my eyes to hide the emotional turmoil in my eyes. Among all of my four lives, he was the only one I could call as my friend. Even though he was bossing me around most of the time, he was the only one I could talk to. But not now, he was not the priest from my memories.

"I hope I am not that bad looking to the point you're speechless. How long has it been since I last took off my mask?" he sank into deep thoughts.

He pulled me to sit down on the mat with him and placed a bowl of warm broth in my hands.

"No, I am just shocked you have a face just like ours behind your mask," I retorted.

"Oh yes the old legend that only beasts follow the god of darkness. Quite sure the god himself can't communicate with beasts nor order them to work." He smiled sardonically. Then he asked all of a sudden with a playful grin on his face, "Do you hate your popular, well loved stepsister?"

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"Do you hate your popular, well loved stepsister?" he asked in an elegant smile as if he was merely asking if you hated dogs or not.

Do I hate Rachelle? I asked myself. When I was first reincarnated, in my second life. Definitely. If she hadn't showed up, I'd still be the pampered heiress my Father cared for, even if I was just a tool to him. But he still cared for me. I would still be well respected by the society. Even if I was just a good for nothing pampered heiress, I was still the only child of the Duke.

Once Rachelle appeared, Rachelle and I were compared at every single moment. I was no longer unique. I became replaceable. And then bit by bit, everything that was once mine was gradually stolen by Rachelle. Father's attention, my fiancée, even my respect among the society. I tried to get back what was once mine, I became hysterical in my jealousy, I could not even recognize myself.

After my failed attempt in revenge in my second life, I realized Rachelle was just doing herself. I lost to Rachelle simply because I was not good enough. I did not even try to work harder to improve myself. Up till today I was still jealous of her. Jealous of her luck. Jealous of her talent. Jealous of how she was loved by every single person she met. Maybe that's why I tended to avoid her in this life, so that I would not be envious of her.

"I don't hate her. Maybe I did in the past. I... I just don't like her," I explained while tucking out the thread of my cloak.

"I can help you in your revenge," he offered. "Too bad you don't hate her." He shrugged. "Is there something interesting to do?"

He just wanted to do something to satisfy his bored twisted evil heart as a priest of darkness. In my second life, he bossed me around to make potions or devil contracts and sold them to desperate people who came kneeling in front of his temple.

"Well... even though I don't hate Rachelle now, we could still do something to hinder her," I suggested. "Just like pranks."

Why did I sound like an evil villainess now? Maybe I was really this twisted person who could not see people doing better than me. By obstructing Rachelle, like that time with Lord Hank, Henri and Chris, I felt happy. What an evil twisted person I was.

An evil grin appeared on the high priest's face. "What a nice idea, Odette. You're really suitable to study in my temple. If you come over, I can even let you take my position."

"I can't spy for you if that happens, your Grace."

"That's true. Don't worry, the offer is always open for you. Same with the revenge." He smiled dazzlingly.

"Duly noted." I lowered my head so that my hair would cover my red ears and pretended to smooth the crease on the mat.

There was a moment of silence before I asked what was in my mind, "Why is your Grace so down south? Do you have something to do in the south?"

In my memory, he had never once left his temple, except that time before my death. He had once said he was bound to his temple. The high priest of darkness was too powerful, historical books cited that the high priest could not leave the ground of the temple without reasons. As recorded in historical books, the few times that the high

priest of darkness left the temple was when the continent needed saving, how ironic, whether it be invasion of wild beasts from the border, the spread of a plague or internal wars for the succession of the crown.

He smiled mysteriously.

"Do you know what those shards your stepsister is collecting are?"

This might seem like an irrelevant question, but I knew it wasn't. Those shards were powerful and they were treasured by nearly every temple. Rachelle had to fight those temples for the shards. The high priests of those temples hated her, although of course sooner or later they would bow down to Rachelle because of her charm and power.

"This is a hint. When you solved this, you'll have your answer to your questions."

He stared at the moon and then said, "As you know the high priest of darkness cannot leave his temple. I will get a scolding if the priests of light get hold of this news. Those priests are nosy."

The mask he had taken off earlier appeared, dangling on his hand. He patted me on my head gently and whispered next to my ear, "It's a secret between us." He smiled charmingly and put the mask back on. "Have a nice dream."

He then jumped back into his carriage while waving. "See you soon." As the door swung close, the horses started to gallop. Slowly the carriage carrying him disappeared into the mist.

I huddled down next to the fire and placed Isobel in my arms. "He didn't even answer my question in the end. So does that mean he can leave his temple if he wants? Maybe at that time he just didn't want to save me. At least he showed up before I died." Some distant memories I wanted to bury appear in my mind. I covered my face

with my arm.

"Let's sleep, Isobel. Don't waste the protective ward the high priest of darkness set for us." And then I slowly drifted into deep sleep. Hoping nice dream would really befall me, though I truly did not believe a priest of darkness could bless people with nice dreams.



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I did have a dream of my past. The night before my execution in my second life. The night where the high priest came to give me one final send off. I covered my face with my arm and groaned. Of all the things I could dream about why that night?

I stayed there for a few minutes and then I collected myself. I started to pack and placed everything back to my luggage on my horse.

"Come on, Isobel. Let's set off!" I was pretty sure I could arrive earlier than Rachelle even this road took a bit of a detour.

According to my memories, Rachelle first met a prince who was on the way to a temple for blessings. Then on the second day of the journey, Rachelle found a wounded priest on the road. Thus she spent some time healing him and taking care of him. That priest turned out to be a priest of the fire temple, so Rachelle could enter the fire temple without any troubles. I wonder if that priest ever regretted letting Rachelle into the temple. He was kind of responsible for the loss of their temple's treasure.

Of course details of each life were slightly different as I acted differently, but the track of Rachelle's life was never far off as if she was a character in a novel with all the plots planned out for her. And she was merely doing her job of acting them out. Certain events must happen, meeting the prince and the priest of fire being two of them.

While I was contemplating, I arrived at the town the fire temple was situated. I decided to settle down in an inn first and then walked around town. The town where a temple was situated was like a tourist spot, there must be something interesting to see.

And I missed shopping without Rachelle's chit chatting next to me. It's horrendous having an out of this world beauty next to you when you went shopping.

The sun was setting when I had shopped to my heart's content, I chose a restaurant for dinner. I occupied a table next to the window overseeing the busy street. I was reading the menu when I heard a noise across from me. Thinking it's Isobel, I looked up to find the high priest sitting across from me reading the menu. I nearly shrieked.

"Your Grace, what are you doing here?" I hushed.

"Dinner?" he replied with a raised eyebrow. "High priests of darkness are human too, no matter what the myths said I ate."

"Yeah, I know that." I closed my eyes and nodded. I knew it's not up to me to say, but judging from him popping up every so often I knew by now he could just slip out of his temple whenever he liked. I said with clenched teeth, "I mean why are you in the town where the fire temple is situated? If you are so free, you can very well spy by yourself! You don't even need me!"

"But it's boring," he stated in a matter of fact manner. "Boring stuff should be done by my underlings. If the boss does it himself, what are underlings for." He smiled innocently.

"Then why are you here, my boss?"

"As I said I was bored."

So you came to find fun? I buried my head in my hands. Why did he have to show up now? I nearly forgot the dream I had the night before and then he had to show up! Without even wearing his mask! Scenes I had pushed to the back of my brain seemed to be rushing back. Stop thinking, stop thinking, Odette. Looked outside the window.

Oh the shoes being displayed in the show window over the street looked good. Look that girl had a nice dress. The lace really complimented her ... face...

I dropped the menu I was holding onto the table, tumbling the glass of water, water was about to splash onto my dress. I should do a simple wind spell to solve the problem but my hands were shaking. At the last moment, the high priest snapped his fingers and the glass returned to its original position.

"Who did you see that scared you that much?" he asked while looking out of the window.

"No, I am not scared," I said as calmly as I could. Holding my trembling hands together. "I was just... shocked. I didn't think I would see her here."

It's the girl who had stabbed me to death in my previous life. I had been pouring tea for Rachelle at that time, so I had my back to the door. When that girl went into the room, no one was alarmed. It had been a tea party, they all thought she was here for the party. When she walked towards our table, they thought she was here to greet Rachelle. And then she took out a knife. Rachelle hid behind me just in time and I was stabbed. Not just once. The feel when blood was bleeding out from my neck, from my back. The feel when my body turned colder bit by bit. I clamped my hand over my neck to comfort myself that there wasn't a wound there.

"Odette?" the high priest's hand covered mine. "Odette, it's over. You're not there. It's over."

I slowly regained my conscious by focusing on the hand covering mine. The memory of being stabbed to death was still very fresh in my mind. So everything that triggered such memory pulled me back to that time. My response would not be that huge as time slowly went by. Just like how I could tolerate burnt meat instead of throwing up immediately back when I was in my second life.

I squeezed my eyes shut and shook my head to get the memories out of my head. Giving him a weak smile, I said, "I am alright now, your Grace. Thank you."

"Just what is frightening you? The person who killed you in your previous life?"

I nearly dropped the handkerchief I was pulling out from my sleeve. And then I remembered, he liked to make these kind of jokes.

"What are you talking about, your Grace. If I could really remember my previous life, I would not be such a loser now." I lowered my eyes and back to reading my menu.

If he really wasn't joking, I would not know how to face him. I thought we were friends, but he never showed up to give even the slightest help in my third or fourth lives. Of course he was joking. He had to be joking.

But why did I kept reliving this same life? This felt more like a curse, something a high priest of darkness could do.

Stop thinking, Odette.

"Let's order, your Grace." I tried to smile like how I usually did. I certainly hope I did.

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We were having dessert when the high priest suddenly said, "That girl you saw just now was the sweetheart of a fire priest. You stole her sweetheart?" He looked at me with disappointment in his eyes. As if he was disappointed in my taste of a lover.

"I am not such a cheap person! I won't lead on people with fiances!"

"That's better." He nodded his head in satisfaction. "I can't bear my underlings being so distasteful."

But you sold potions that made people look sick out of boredom.

"The goddess of love and her servants might like these kind of tasteless things more."

"Well then Rachelle must be blessed by the goddess of love from birth."

The high priest chuckled. "I pity the fool who thinks blessings from the goddess of love is a gift." He took a sip of his wine and then said, "So it's Rachelle who stole the sweetheart from that girl then."

"Rachelle is in the process of stealing her sweetheart," I amended.

His smile right now was indicating how he was truly the high priest of darkness. "I am sure you know what to do, my dear Odette." A leather bound spell book appeared on his hand. He pushed it to me. With an elegant smile, he was gone.

Why after two lives, this devil of a spell book was back to my hands again?

The high priest of darkness was like a capricious tyrant. He bossed people around, he got bored easily, he wanted people to entertain him. Of course it's not by singing or dancing, he was a priest of darkness after all. For someone that powerful, he loved to prank others.

It's not really that surprising, as the follower of god of darkness, according to historical books the high priest had to be bounded by rules, the high priest of darkness was not allowed to use his power of darkness without a justifiable reason approved by the committee of priests of other gods. To avoid the high priest or priestess doing damage to the continent. He was like a powerful demigod being prisoned in his own temple.

So he liked pranking people with next to harmless tricks to pass time, although of course he would not do it himself. Instead he would order people to do it like a twisted priest of darkness he was, just like me now.

Now at this moment, I was starting to suspect that the high priest simply followed those rules because he wished to. If he didn't, he could very well break those rules. Just like how he could sneak out of his supposed prison all these time.

During my second life when I had knelt before his temple and begged for his help, I had been the one being bossed around. That's also why I knew how to make potions that made people look sick and drafting evil contracts. All these were from this spellbook that was now in my hand. Again. Let's go back to my room in the inn and studied this.

To be honest, I did not want that girl to resort to killing people just because her sweetheart left her. But she was clearly not the type like Lady Florence who could let go when she understood her fiance's heart had really left her. I wonder if there's a way of helping that girl in winning back her lover's heart. That's quite a challenge, there was not a single eligible young guy who had seen Rachelle without falling in love

with her. And her fire priest lover had already met Rachelle. If he hadn't, I could just tell that girl to go pick up her wounded lover in the forest. Then that fire priest would not have met Rachelle. Only judging by the fact that even though Lord Hank and Rachelle missed each other in the party, they still bumped into each other on the street. They would probably meet each other sooner or later.

I sighed as I turned over another page of the spell book. On this page it's about a perfume who would make anyone smelling it fell in love with you. Sometimes I wonder if Rachelle had such perfume on her. Or else why would every single eligible handsome males on the street she bumped into fell in love with her? I wonder if the high priest would also fall in love with her if he was to meet her.

Wait, he knew I had a stepsister. So that meant he had already met her? Was asking me to spy on her part of his plan to get to know Rachelle? Was I just a ploy for him to get closer to Rachelle? What was I thinking? Why did my heart feel a tiny prick? Without noticing, my fingers had crumbled the corner of a page of the spell book. I tried to smooth the corner with furrowed brows.

Why was I suddenly annoyed? I had this sudden urge to throw a temper. To throw this spell book across the room. Like I was back to the time when I was still the ill-tempered lady.

"Meow. Meow. Meow!" Isobel licked on my hand.

"Hmm, Isobel, go and play on your... What..."

"We have just separated for two hours and someone has already angered you?" the man sitting in the dark asked in exasperation. His crow was standing on his shoulder.

"Why are you here?" My mouth gaped open.

"Will you believe me if I said I was worried you might have nightmares?"

"Nope. I am more on the side you're here to see how far I have come up with an evil plan."

He walked over to where I was sitting and leaned over my shoulder to look at the opened spell book on my desk. "Perfume that makes people fall in love. That's your plan?"

"I have not yet decided."

"Oh really, don't mind me, keep going." He leaned by the window with the moonlight shining on him. "But what had the perfume did to offend you so that you wished to throw the book across the room?"

The expression on his face now was so familiar with the one he gave me on the last night in my second life. Together with the dream I had the night before, it briefly disoriented me. Without thinking, I blurted out, "Have you fallen in love with my beautiful stepsister?"



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"Have you fallen in love with my beautiful stepsister?" I regretted it as soon as the question was out of my mouth. Must be the moonlight playing tricks at my eyes, it made me confused this high priest in front of me with the one in my memories.

"I am just jo..." I stopped as I saw his expression. He raised his eyebrow skeptically, as if he could not believe I was that stupid.

"Odette, who am I?" He heaved a huge sigh.

"The high priest of darkness?" I did not understand where this was heading.

"And is your stepsister in any way related to the word 'darkness'?"

"But don't people tend to attract to things different from them? And she's a beauty and every single eligible young men who lay eyes on her fall in love with her..."

"What kind of romance novels are you reading? Throw them away." He crossed his legs and stared at me with his blood red eyes and said with a smile, "If you have so much time to daydream, why don't you go back to the spell book. Too many daydreams are bad to your brain."

I just didn't know what got hold of me a second ago. Why did I ask him such a question? He was a devil without heart.

Any spells that could help that girl to recapture the heart of her sweetheart? Or at least show it to her that no matter what she did, her sweetheart had no hope coming back to her?

I knew that perfume that made people fall in love with her seemed like a nice idea, but for some unknown reason this made me feel uneasy. It felt like I was controlling the heart of someone, the fire priest in this case.

Hmm how about this?

"You seem to have a plan." The high priest took a bite of the macaroon being held by his long and lean fingers.

Anger started to boil inside me. That's the box of macaroons I bought this afternoon for my tea tomorrow. But this guy showed up in the middle of the night and refused to leave. After a while, he said he wanted some snacks. What should I do in the middle of the night aside from offering him the box of macaroons? This annoying guy.

"Yes," I said with clenched teeth. He took another macaroon out of the box. The amount inside the box was dwindling. I glared at him.

"Care to share what's in your mind? I can't read your mind. Except the dark emotions emitting from you." He smiled elegantly and picked up another macaroon.

I wanted to kill him! I hope he saw this dark intention.

"Most of the men that followed Rachelle around fell in love at first sight. Most of the time, it's just a glorified way of saying they fall in love with her face. So what if Rachelle isn't the beauty she is?"

"You plan to ruin your stepsister's face?" Was that excitement I saw on his face?

"No." I didn't dare. If my previous deeds of sabotaging Rachelle led me to being burnt on a stake or being hanged, I think ruining Rachelle's face would lead me to

even worse kind of death. I'd rather not try it. To add injury to insult, I would probably be reborn after that. What's the difference from undergoing tortures and then reviving myself only to torment myself again?

"I plan to use this spell to create an illusion in his mind so that whenever he looks at Rachelle, Rachelle looks like an average looking girl. Let's see if his love persists after this."

"That's all?"

"No, I will also offer that girl a potion that wipes all memory of the priest from her mind for two days."

"I don't think she will take it willingly."

"She will if I told her it's a test for her lover. If she suddenly stops caring for him, he'll realize how important she is. To make it authentic, the potion is necessary."

"So it's the guy suffering at the end of the day."

"He deserves it." I shrugged.

"Looking forward to your performance. See you later." With a wave, he was gone. At that moment, the sun began to rise.

I stomped over to the coffee table for the remnants of my box of macaroons. That's when I realized the box was still full with only one missing macaroon. I could literally hear his soft chuckles. He was fooling me all along!

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After preparing all day, I had finally finished the preparation. Now all I needed was to place the illusion spell on the fire priest, Kevin, now that I had sold the potion to his ex-sweetheart, Doris. She was unsure at first, but now that words had it that Kevin was going to treat his newly made friend to dinner this evening. Yes, the gossip between Kevin and Rachelle had spread all over town. I wonder who was this bored. This made her wanted to test her sweetheart.

I was sitting in a cafe to wait for Rachelle and Kevin. Oh look who were the two slowly walking towards me? Henri was following closely behind Rachelle like a third wheel. Poor Henri. I pulled the fur cloak closer to me. When Kevin just walked past me, I mumbled the spell I practiced all morning at him. It's not a hard spell, it's just a dark twist to the elementary illusion spell we learnt when we were small.

Kevin stumbled and then rubbed his eyes. That's when I knew the spell was in effect.

"Do you think Kevin will fall out of love?" I asked the guy sitting across the table.

"His response isn't as hilarious as I have thought," he said with a bored expression.

"Just what are you expecting?" I asked in exasperation as he shrugged in response.

It's always like this, I did some pranks under his order, he just watched on with a bored expression. He never watched till the end, his attention moved on to something else soon after.

He stood up and offered me his hand. "Let's buy more macaroons."

At the mention of macaroon, I fumed. I ignored his hand and stomped away.

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The illusion lasted around one day, during this day Kevin seemed to treat Rachelle more coldly. But as soon as the illusion was off, Kevin was back to being charming to Rachelle. While the potion I gave Doris lasted for three days. During those three days, Kevin never once visited Doris, contrary to how he treated Doris in the past.

"He just doesn't care about me. It's all that witch's fault! She lured my Kevin away," Doris cried hysterically. "I am going to kill her!"

"Are you going to kill every single beautiful girl that catches Kevin's attention in the future?"

Doris broke down at that moment.

"Here's the same potion but much stronger. You'll no longer remember him for the rest of your life." I placed that potion near the door to her house and then walked away.

"The god of darkness won't approve this," said the guy waiting at the end of the path.

"I don't need his approval. She won't succeed in killing Rachelle. She will just injure others and herself in the process." I brushed my neck unconsciously as if in remembrance. I was not pitying her. I just didn't want to be stabbed again. And whether to take that potion or not was her choice.

"Now I wonder if Rachelle's face was really charmed. Kevin was obviously less enthusiastic when he was under the illusion, but as soon as the illusion was off, he became mesmerized with her again."

The high priest looked at me with his usual smile. He knew something but he was not telling me. That meant I should be quite close to the truth.

"But if it's charmed why didn't anyone notice anything? Like Kevin he was a quite accomplished priest, that's why he realized and broke the illusion spell just after a day. Henri and Lord Hank were also accomplished sorcerers."

"Do you think mortals know it when gods place a spell on them?" he asked mysteriously.

I furrowed my brows. Just who was Rachelle? Was he suggesting that some gods placed a spell on Rachelle? A charming spell?

A cold finger tapped on my forehead. "Sometimes it's better to stay out of things that's best not to be involved."

I was following him without noticing, we stopped at the top of a gentle slope overseeing the temple of fire.

"It's about time," he said. At that moment, the earth began to shake, just like that time with the temple of wind.

I lost balance and nearly fell into his arms. Luckily I hugged onto the huge oak tree next to us in the last moment. After a few minutes, I could see Rachelle, Henri, Kevin and a man with silver hair running out of the temple. They took off with their horses and rode out of the town.

That man with silver hair must be Lucian, that huge dog Rachelle found just before she set out.

"Two down, three more to go," the high priest whispered.

"Just what are those shards?"

"Didn't you hear what I told you just now?"

It's something I shouldn't stick my nose in.

"But you already involved me! You asked me to spy for you."

"Hmm you have a point. That's really selfish of me," he grinned. "But you must know by now I am a selfish tyrant."

He walked down the slope and then he turned around. He looked at me with his knowing blood red eyes, "You'll understand everything when the time comes."

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I was back at home preparing to attend the tea party celebrating Rachelle's mother birthday. It was also the tea party where I was stabbed to death in my previous life. No wonder I was caught so off guard, I had never attended this party before in all my first three lives, understandably so as I hated my stepmother back then.

This time I was ordered by my Father to come back. In my first two lives, I was so vocal in showing my hatred to my stepsister and stepmother that Father was afraid I would ruin the party, so he asked priests to lock me in my room back in the temple and then put a spell on the door to prevent me from coming back and ruining the party. This time he ordered me to join to show others what a nice big family we were. I guess I just had to be more careful this time.

I hoped Doris wouldn't resort to stabbing people again. I sighed as I touched the protective charm I made just in case. It should protect me from one stab.

"Lady Odette, it's nearly time," Sarah announced.

I nodded. Before I went down to congratulate my stepmother I walked down the corridor and knocked on the door of my Father's study.

"Odette," Father said. "What do you want?"

"Father, I am breaking off my betrothal with Henri."

"Odette," he sighed. "You know it's not up to you to decide. It's an arrangement between two families." He then waved his hand, trying to dismiss me like an unreasonable naive heiress he thought I was.

"Henri falls in love with Rachelle, Father. Do you still want to continue with this betrothal? At the risk of scandals? Risking our family's reputation?" I asked while raising my eyebrow.

"What?" he furrowed his brows. "Are you sure you're not mistaken? I know you might not like the idea of having a sister, but..."

"Do you think I made this up? It's my reputation too."

After a pause, he said, "I'll talk to Henri about it."

"I also talked to Henri, Father. He said he must marry Rachelle. So I came up with a deal, to safeguard our family's reputation. We'll break the betrothal and he can marry Rachelle only after I am married. Then you can still unite both our families, while everyone is happy."

The question was if I would even marry someone and whether Rachelle would really choose Henri now that she had so many suitors. But I kept my mouth shut.



Father looked at me with questions in his eyes. He tapped his finger on his desk and then finally he said, "Henri is the fiance your mother chose for you."

"Which was no longer mine once he falls in love with my stepsister." I smiled mockingly.

He sighed. "I will talk to Henri's family about it."

"That'd be great. Now at you order I will go down to celebrate the birthday of my dear stepmother." I curtsied and then walked out of the room.

Now at least one annoying thing was solved.

## Page 18

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

People were buzzing around when I reached the garden where the tea party took place. It would be better if I stayed away from Rachelle. I decided to find my group of acquaintances or just a quiet corner. The truth was after so many lives, I had become even more introverted. I was never an outgoing person to start with.

I was walking towards a group of people when someone patted me on my shoulder. I tensed and gripped the protective charm I made.

"Odette, I was wondering where you are!" I turned around to find Rachelle smiling angelically at me.

"I was just held back by something not important."

"I was so worried you might miss the party." She blinked her huge misty lavender eyes.

"Of course not." Best to stay away from her, but first... "Rachelle, where did your quest take you? You look thinner!"

"To the fire temple, but it's all very successful! I met a new friend, he's also in this party. Let me introduce you to him." Rachelle's face blushed at the mention of Fire Priest Kevin. I tried very hard not to roll my eyes.

"It's alright, it's alright. We have plenty of time after the party. Where do you plan to go next?" I asked innocently, like I was truly caring about her.

"The shards are calling me to the east where the water temple is situated," she said

with her eyes closed.

"Rachelle, I wish you the best of luck. Now you have lots of guests to attend to. Don't let me hold you back." I waved and then escaped Rachelle as quickly as I could.

That fire priest was here, who knew if his sweetheart was still fixated at him? I didn't want to die again. As for Rachelle, even though I was not there as a shield, all those suitors surrounding her would protect her. I did not worry about her even for one second.

The party seemed to pass by peacefully. It was dusk, the sun was setting. It was getting closer to the time I was killed in my previous life. I remembered gazing at the sinking sun when I slowly bled to death. I hid myself in the shadows of the trees. I would have gone back to my room, if Father hadn't stationed servants at every entrance and exit. No doubt reporting to him if I sneaked back in.

"You seem very tense." Cold air blew over my right ear. I screamed when I realized I lost my voice.

"Do you want everyone to know I have come over to bless your stepmother. I doubt she'd be happy." The high priest of darkness walked out of the shadow he was hiding in and gave me a wave coldly.

"You..." I realized my voice was back and continued to say, "you nearly scared me to death!"

"As I said you seemed very tense."

"And then you had to scare me?"

"It seemed fun."

I glared at him. He's intolerable. I humphed, I didn't want to talk to him.

"Why are you here?" I looked at him with the corner of my eyes. I was still angry.

"Bored."

He had not sneaked out this often in my second life. If his personality was any different, I would have suspected something. But he was still exactly the same as the one I had met in my second life. Selfish, easily bored, lazy and difficult to understand.

"Do you want to sneak out?"

"Yes, of course. If I could I would have. My Father's spies are everywhere. I would have bet he even set up a ward to prevent me from escaping. This huge act to show others we're one big family." I rolled my eyes.

"Then if you'd excuse me." He placed his hand over my waist and after a blink of my eyes, we're in a place with black marble columns. He immediately released his hand around my waist after that.

We're in the temple of darkness. I tried to check out every crooks and corners of the temple except him. I hope he did not notice my mildly red face. I would not admit some memories I'd rather stay hidden enter my mind just now.

"Is this your temple?"

"Yup." He took off his cloak as he walked towards the back of the temple. The cloak dragging behind him.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"You said you wanted to sneak out of that party," he stated with confusion in his eyes.

I grinned. "Thank you, your Grace, for rescuing me from boredom." I gave him a curtsy. "We could have a picnic here but unfortunately I didn't steal any food with me."

"Ah now that you mentioned it, I want to have tea and cake. Let me show you to the kitchen. Where's the kitchen?"

I shouldn't have mentioned that. Now I had to bake for this lazy priest?

"Ah here." He pushed open the door of a room around the corner. It's a sitting room.

He chuckled as he saw my confused face. "Just kidding." He poked at my face.

With a snap of his finger, a tray with two tea cups and two slices of cakes appeared on the low coffee table. Isobel standing next to the tray, meowing.

"Isobel? Aren't you in my room?" I patted Isobel's fur. Isobel licked my fingers and then jumped off the table. Isobel ran out of the room and disappeared into the corridor.

"Isobel knows where to go. Probably finding Blake to play with her." Blake was his crow. The high priest had already occupied a chair with his cloak scattered on the floor. He was looking at the two slices of cake, probably deciding which to eat.

"I'll take the one on the right, your Grace, if you don't mind." Without waiting for his reply, I took the plate holding the cake I knew he preferred. I beamed at him as I took the first bite.

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The tea party went by peacefully, seemed like the ex-lover of the fire priest gave up in the end. After that Rachelle, together with her group of suitors, set out to the east for the shard in the water temple. Rachelle of course successfully got her hand on that shard. However, even with the protection of her suitors, she was injured in the process.

The priests in the wind temple were afraid that Rachelle and I would bring troubles to them, so they asked us to return home for now until the anger from the water temple died down. So here we were again back in our family's estate. It's Rachelle stealing other's treasures left and right, but it's me being evicted from the temple. That's the reality of my life.

Rachelle's quest really angered a lot of people, especially the priests from fire and water temples. As for wind temple, they had to pretend to be mad at Rachelle, but I knew deep down they were kind of proud that a pupil from wind temple was the one that was acknowledged by the treasured shards. Now even the priests from earth temple were getting worked up as their temple was the next goal of Rachelle.

I knocked on the door to Rachelle's bedroom. Rachelle was my stepsister, if I didn't go visit her when she was injured, bad rumors would start circulating. So even though I didn't want to spend time next to her, I had to go. When I pushed open the door, what entered my eyes was the romantic scene between Rachelle and her silver haired suitor, Lucian. I wanted to stab myself in the eyes. I knocked! Knocked! And Rachelle gave me permission to enter! What were they doing?

I stood by the door awkwardly, wishing their good bye kiss would end more quickly. At last Lucian finally walked out of the door after a glare at me.

"Odette, did you see that?" Rachelle hid half of her face under the quilt, with only her large lavender eyes staring at me. "Ah... I am so embarrassed." She covered her head with the quilt.

All I could do was smiled elegantly and kept my mouth shut. Please don't say 'Come in' when in truth you're not ready.

I cleared my throat and said, "Are you feeling better?"

Rachelle nodded, with her face still red. "The wound has healed. I am just a bit bored staying in my room all the time."

But you had like half a dozen of suitors lining up to meet you?

"Do you want some books?" I suggested like the caring big sister I was pretending.

"I'm actually reading this." She brought out a huge tome from under her quilt. It was a magical registry recording down all the previous priests and high priests in every temple in the last five hundred years. It was like a book of family trees, but involving priests. "After this fight with the high priest of water temple, I realized I should know more about my enemies. This registry listed out the priests and magic or spells they are known of."

"That's exciting to know," I said calmly.

"Yes! You know Father is in it too!"

"That's even more exciting," I said deadpan.

"I need to be prepared. Not every temple let me get back the shard peacefully. Why do they have to fight?" she sighed dejectedly.

Maybe because you're taking away the treasure they guarded for years?

"But I found something interesting," Rachelle said as she flipped through the pages.

"Really?" I knew what was so interesting. I had actually read this huge tome back in my third life before I ran away from home.

"Look! This page about the priests in the temple of darkness! There's only one name! The high priest of darkness, Y. Arden. But that was more than five hundred years ago! The priests of darkness no longer registered themselves under the sorcerer registry."

"They are priests of darkness. They don't follow rules." I shrugged.

"You have a point. Then that made my research even harder." Rachelle frowned prettily. "Priests from the temple of darkness never attended any social events. No one knows how strong they are. When I thought checking out the registry could help me, it's empty! That's very devious of them!"

"They are called priests of darkness for a reason."

"And there isn't even a description of the spells this high priest was known of! Very devious of them." Rachelle humphed angrily.

"Do you think this high priest is still alive?" I asked nonchalantly.

"Of course not! Even though priests are known to live longer, but definitely not that long! As I said very devious of them!"

I chuckled. "That's why they are called priests of darkness."



"Exactly!"

Someone knocked on the door. Seemed like it's time I left this room, suitors were lining up, I shouldn't occupy so much time of my busy stepsister.

"Come in. Oh, it's Henri!" Rachelle smiled happily. "Henri, why are you looking so worried? I am getting better and better each day!"

"Something came up, Rachelle," Henri said anxiously. "Those priests from earth, water, fire and wind temples teamed up and pointed fingers at the temple of darkness. They said the high priest of darkness is responsible for stealing their temples' treasure."

"But we're not stealing! And it has nothing to do with the temple of darkness! The shards need to get back to one again, it's beckoning me."

To those priests who spent their lives guarding that shard, you were stealing. But why would they point fingers at the high priest of darkness?

"They said they had evidence. The high priest was not in the temple on the days we ...eh... rescued the shards."

"I don't even know the high priest of darkness!" Rachelle's lavender eyes were brimming with tears.

He had already asked me to spy for him, but he had to sneak out all the time! Now he was caught! Those priests were all talk, he should be alright. Right? I squeezed my hands together to calm myself. Of course he's alright, he's the high priest of darkness.

"No," Rachelle said firmly. "It's my doing. It has nothing to do with the poor high priest of darkness. We have to tell those priests. Henri, help me, let's go and tell those

priests." She stuck out her hands for Henri to pull her up.

"Rachelle... you're still injured," Henri said worriedly. "The high priests of other temples have already joined hand and plan to punish the high priest of darkness for not following rules. The high priests of darkness is bound by rules. They have already set out for the temple of darkness."

What? I knew there were rules, but other high priests could punish him if they want? He wouldn't be injured. He was the powerful high priest of darkness. I comforted myself.

"That's not right. Henri, we need to explain ourselves now! Henri!"

After a deep sigh, Henri carried Rachelle out of her bed and left the room.

I started pacing around the room. He was my boss, I should go check him out. That's right, it's common courtesy to check out your own boss.

I left Rachelle's room and went to find Isobel.

## Page 20

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Isobel, we'll go find the high priest of darkness." I picked up Isobel and my fur lined cloak. I wrote a note saying I had gone to see the sea. It's just a whim of spoiled Odette they were familiar with. And I set out to the stable.

I needed to ride to the far north where the temple of darkness was situated. If I went there by riding, 'd only reach it after nearly a week. On the basis I didn't rest. In order to speed things up, I decided to use the transportation spells. They were set up in some big towns and they were expensive. I did not have a choice, did I?

"Isobel, can you go to the temple first? And see what's the situation there?" Isobel flicked its tail once, but it remained in my arms. Isobel tilted its head in confusion and meowed.

"So he even stop you from visiting. Let's go."

I rode to towns with transportation spells set up and spent exorbitant amount of money for them. If he was not my boss, I wouldn't even have cared! He needed to pay me back! After two days, I have finally arrived to the far North.

It was snowing. I looked at the snowy white mountain in front of me. The temple was situated at the top of this mountain. This was still exactly the same as when I had come in my second life.

After another hour of riding up the hill, I had finally reached the temple. The ground outside the temple was empty. Had Rachelle successfully persuaded those priests that the priest of darkness wasn't responsible for the stealing of the shards or had they already left after the punishment?

Before I could knock on the huge door sealing the temple, it swung open. A long dark corridor leading to the unknown was on the other side of the door. I stepped in.

I tried to find my way in this huge temple, after a while I finally found the room with a throne on a dais. Someone with black hair and black robes lined with silver was sitting on it. His mask was still on his face, but his face was paler than usual. His eyes were also closed. He looked more like a statue than a living person.

"Your Grace?" I asked hesitantly. I cleared my throat and asked again, "Your Grace? It's your underling, Odette, coming to visit you."

The only noise was my voice echoing in this huge room. The man on the throne remained still. Hesitantly, I walked towards the throne. When I was only a few feet from him, I realized he was really as still as a statue. He was not even breathing. Worried, I went over and grasped his hand. It was as cold as ice.

"Your Grace?" I started to shake him with my other hand. "Your Grace!"

I was starting to panic. He wouldn't be killed just like this. He wouldn't be dead! He's the powerful high priest of darkness, bound by countless of rules to prevent him from conquering the world. Among all the high priests, he was the only one being offered the title 'demigod' due to his immense power.

There was no response from him. Tears seemed to be brimming in my eyes. I wouldn't cry. There must be ways. Ways to call him up. Some distant memories appeared in my mind.

"Aren't you curious about my name?" he had asked while playing with my hair.

"What? Are you finally going to tell me before I die? As a farewell gift? Is your name that horrible that you refused to tell me until now? Dead people can't say anything. So

you can trust me." I had joked bitterly.

"Have you heard of the saying that names have power?"

"Yes..." I had been wondering where that was heading.

"It's an old saying," he smiled like it's some inside joke. "Not been used in these hundred or so years anymore. Back then names do hold some power."

I had furrowed my brows at that time to try to decode his cryptic words again.

"Not to you lot anymore. But to me, names do hold power." His usual smile had returned to his face and then he leaned forward to whisper a few words into my ear, like a lover's whisper. "I will appear when you call me." He had then said.

"I am going to be executed tomorrow morning, sadly it won't be of used anymore." I smiled bitterly. "You're cheating. It's no use to a dead girl."

A caw brought me back to present. It's Blake circling near the ceiling. Could I wake him up?

"Yves," I called. "Yves Arden wake up!" I grabbed his arm and shook. Tears were nearly dropping down from my eyes.

Then as if it's ice melting, his fingers moved and then his eyelashes fluttered, he finally opened his eyes. He raised his hand to catch the single tear that escaped my eye.

"I knew it has to be you. It's always you who wake me up from my sleep," he smiled. "Now you can't say I'm cheating, can you?"

I widened my eyes as realization dawned on me. I took a few steps backward. My face first started to blush and then it turned paler and paler as time went by.

"So you knew," I said coldly. "Are you the one who cursed me? The one who made me reborn again and again? Is it all a joke to you? Do you find it funny? To see me struggling and then getting killed again and again?"

The smile that's on his face a moment ago disappeared. He took off the mask hiding his face and said while staring at me his blood red eyes, "Yes, it's me."

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"Am I a joke to you? A past time? One of your many pranks to entertain you?" I spat out the words like venom.

He had given me hints. Quite a few. I just refused to think about that or to believe that. I was shaking in anger. All those times I struggled and then died tragically were all a joke to him. I really experienced all of them. The deaths, the tortures. The hope and then failed again.

"I was killed in your first life," he suddenly said. "After your death. When Rachelle and her gang came to take the final piece of the jewel shard from my temple. I was killed. And then of course I revived myself. I am the high priest of darkness, I had several dark spells under my sleeves."

"You didn't even know me in your first life! Why did you revive me?"

"The spell drained my power. I needed to rest for a long period of time before I can act again," he said coldly. It's like a knife piercing through my heart.

"So you needed entertainment. I am the entertainment." I laughed. "And I thought you were really helping me. I am a clown all along!" I cried.

He looked at me without any emotions. That's when I realized he was really a heartless monster. The man without any emotion was the real him. He was wearing a mask all along. I hugged the cloak closer to me. I felt cold.

"I won't deny that. That's my initial intention. But I genuinely enjoyed your company. The first time in five hundred years. After the death of my parents."

I refused to look at him.

"If you have read the registry, you will have realized that the god of darkness doesn't have many followers. The Ardens being the only family serving the god. So the god blessed us Ardens. We can have long lives. Difficult to be injured. Immortality. If you can handle the long imprisonment in the temple." His lips finally quirked up in a sardonic smile. "You can end your life only when you have groomed the next high priest. My Father passed me his position as soon as I reached twenty five. He could no longer handle the imprisonment, the immortality. He had lived in this temple for six hundred long years. Now it's my turn."

That had nothing to do with me. I would not give him my pity, I was not Rachelle.

"I thought you'd come find me once you're reborn in your third life, but you ran away to the continent across the sea. I was angry." He sighed. "You knew I was a selfish tyrant."

"In all those lives, you never once came and try to save me!"

"You said you're not Rachelle. You told me you didn't need knights in shining armors to save you."

"So you're saying the faults are mine?"

"I told you to call me when you needed me, did you?" he asked without any emotions on his face. "You know I could not leave the temple without reasons. I was weakened after the spell to revive both you and me, I fell into deep sleep every now and then to recover. I need you to call me to wake me up."

I opened my mouth and then closed again. He had told me to call him when I needed him. But I did not trust him nor his promise. He had said it again and again that I had



woken him up from his sleep and I thought it was a joke.

"Then what about now? You can now sneak out of your temple! I don't see you hibernating!"

"The spell weakened me, after three lifetimes, I recovered."

"You said you'd be hibernating, then you didn't need entertainment! Why did you involve me? Do you understand the pain of being tormented and then opening your eyes to find I have to repeat everything again? Only to be tormented again? I just want to die in peace!"

I squatted down and broke down crying. I cried for the first time in my five lives. I finally let out all the loneliness, the regrets, the hatred, the frustration I had bottled up in me.

"I do. I have been living in this prison since I was born. I want this immortality to end too." He left his throne and walked towards me. He then patted me on my head. "And even if I am hibernating, I can still sense my surrounding through Blake. That's the use of a familiar."

"Can I finally rest in peace after this life? I just want to lead a normal life and then die when it was my time. I don't want to be involved in Rachelle's mess anymore."

"I don't know."

"It's your spell!"

"Have you ever wondered why I revived myself if I also want to end my near immortal life?"

That's true. He said he wanted to end everything, but why did he revive himself when his wish was fulfilled?

"Because you haven't groomed the next high priest?" I hiccuped as I wiped tears away from my eyes.

He chuckled and said, "Partly, but not the major reason. Everyone in this world is a chess piece in the game the gods are playing."

Another cryptic sentence.

"Aren't you tired, squatting here?" His usual smile was back on his face.

I did not know who the real him was. This one who faced everything with a lazy smile on his face or the one as emotionless and bleak as ice. The one who was lazy, capricious, but also gentle or the one who was cruel and heartless.

I was confused and lost. I would not say I forgave him now. I knew deep down I was still a bit angry at him. But if I was not given this chance to reborn, I would have stayed as the naive, childish, ill tempered heiress till the very end. I would not have the chance to meet Isobel or... him. I would not have the chance to try something different, to know there's a world outside of my betrothal with Henri.

"Even though you're not tired squatting here, I am," announced the selfish high priest.

"Wahhh... where are you carrying me," I cried in shock as I was carried by him deeper into the temple. "Let me down!"

Soon all of my internal struggles left my mind when I was focused on trying to let him release me.

## Page 22

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I woke up with Isobel jumping onto me, she kept poking me with her paws.

"Alright, alright, stop poking Isobel." I hugged Isobel with one arm and sat up while untangling my hairs with my fingers. That's when I saw the high priest of darkness sitting in a chair close to the window, across the room. Oh right, I was still in the temple. I buried my face in my hands.

"Good morning, you finally wake up!" he said. "I am hungry."

I picked up the pillow on my side and threw it at him. "Go cook yourself!"

"Now who angered you in the early morning?" he asked with a smiley face.

"I wonder who?" I threw the other pillow at him as well. "Get out!"

I fumed as I stormed out of the room. All he cared was his breakfast. I was still angry at him. Who would cook breakfast for him?

"Meow." Isobel jumped out from nowhere. It meowed several times and then ran towards a room. It turned its head and looked at me when it saw me still standing there.

"You want me to follow you?" I asked.

"Meow."

I follow its led to the living room. Yves was already there sitting behind a table with

food on top. I occupied the other chair opposite to him. And I started to dig in.

I still didn't know how to face him. Should I be angry at him for placing that reborn curse on me? For treating me as an entertainment? But I knew that's what he was like from my second life. From the first time I met him. He agreed to assist me in my revenge only because he found it interesting. And I didn't mind at that time because I had gotten what I wanted.

And I did treasure the chances I had to improve myself and live a better life. A life for myself. I was so conflicted. I sighed.

"Where did you steal the food?" I asked after long silence. I couldn't stand it anymore.

"Please don't use such distasteful word to describe me. You told me to cook breakfast. So I did that."

"Wh... you cooked this?"

"Is there another high priest in this room?"

"You know how to cook?"

"If I don't, how can I survive in this temple alone for hundreds of years?"

"Then why didn't you cook in the past?"

"Lazy."

I stared at him and munched the food in my mouth. This horrendous tyrant.

"Did those high priests punished you for breaking the rules?"

The usual smile hung on his face. "Are you worried I might be hurt by them?"

"No." I avoided his eyes.

"But I remember a certain someone came riding for three days straight and kneeling in front of my throne crying. Did I dream it?"

"I was not kneeling in front of your throne or even crying," I said with clenched teeth.

He shrugged nonchalantly. "It's a game these high priests and I play. Their punishments are like tickles. They're a pester, I fell asleep while listening to them droning on and on. I am not that weak." He glared at me with his eyes as a warning and then the smiles returned.

"I won't worry about you ever again," I mumbled.

"Pardon?"

"They thought you're the one ordering Rachelle to steal those shards."

"I have told those stubborn priests that I had no desire to be linked to this stepsister of yours in anyway, not even in the same sentence."

"I doubt they trust you."

"They will when Rachelle came to my temple to steal the shard."

"Maybe they thought it's just a ploy."

"If it's done by me, then I will admit it. I don't like other people taking my honors."

I rolled my eyes. "Do you plan to take revenge on Rachelle? Because she killed you?"

He just responded with a mysterious smile.

"So how did you die in your third life?" he asked suddenly. "You had been killed by that lover of the fire priest in your previous life. Then what about your third life?"

"I was hanged because my father attempted treason." I froze and then groaned while cradling my head in my hands. "The treason! How can I forget? Even if I sidestep every trap now, if my Father's treason is discovered, I'll still be executed! I just want to die normally! After I grow old! Is it that hard?"

Yves smiled knowingly at me.

I groaned in misery. "You know. Of course you know. There's Blake spying for you. If there's Blake, why did you order me to spy on Rachelle?"

"If I didn't come find you this life, you'd probably forget about your father's treason till it's too late."

I glared at him.

"It's more fun this way." He shrugged. "And I am no longer angry at you."

He said he was angry that I didn't come find him when I was reborn in my third life. Maybe I just hadn't trusted him as much as I thought. My second life was definitely my happiest among the four lives, but they all still ended tragically. Maybe I didn't want my heart to break again.

"Rachelle's next goal was the temple of earth."

"Ah, yes. You don't have to spy for me this time. The town where earth temple is situated is boring." He waved dismissively. "Feel free to sort out your Father's desire to betray the Emperor in the mean time."

I sighed. Could I just ask my father to disown me? Then I wouldn't be related to him. No, that seemed too cold blooded of me. He was still my Father.

A spell book was pushed across the table. Yves was smiling evilly at me, "Feel free to use this."

"Are you trying to groom me into a high priestess of darkness and then die?"

"Of course not," he smiled innocently. "You can't reach the lowest standard of high priestess even in five hundred years time. That's too time consuming."

I wanted to pour the cup of tea in front of me on his face. I kicked Yves beneath the table, before stomping away with the spell book.

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I was so frustrated. I didn't remember much about Father's case of treason from my third life. I hid on a continent across the sea for more than seven years. Once I arrived back home, I was captured and then sent to jail. I really didn't hear much about the case. Was my Father framed?

You couldn't blame me for thinking this, Father was a priest in the temple of wind. But he was not a high priest. He was just one of the many priests in the temple. He wasn't even holding a tremendous amount of power. Father wasn't stupid. He wouldn't overthrow the ruler with just the little power he held in the temple.

In our country, the Emperor or Empress reigning was supposed to be neutral. The ruler received blessings from all gods. They would not serve a particular god. This prevented each temple from supporting their own candidate. Thus, all the potential heirs would not study in any one of the temples.

So how did Father attempt treason? What was he even betraying? I was pulling out my hair when Isobel meowed.

"You look so frustrated." The heartless monster known as Yves laughed shamelessly.

I glared at him. "You suggested me to sort out my Father's mystery, so now I'm devoting all my brain power on it! I have zero clue! Is your twisted heart satisfied now? To see me this frustrated?"

"A bit." He smiled happily.

I couldn't hold back anymore. I threw the cushion at him. He stepped to the side to



dodge it.

"Do you know anything? I know you do. Blake has been spying all along."

His smile deepened. "I am the high priest of darkness, I don't do things for free."

"Then what do you want?"

"I am going to nap now. It'll be great if there's tea when I wake up. Even better if it's perfectly timed."

I fumed, but there's a short cut, I should grasp it. It's no use racking my brain when it's clear I didn't have that information. I stormed out of the room to bake some cookies for him.

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Holding a tray with cookies and tea I entered the room Yves was napping in. When I opened the door, he was already awake, sitting in an armchair. Argh!

"You're late."

"Do you want it or not?"

He walked towards me and picked up a piece of cookie from the tray. He took a bite of it and said, "You really learned a lot of things during the last two lives. The spoiled girl I first met certainly couldn't bake cookies."

"Try pretending to be best friend with Rachelle, I am sure even you can master baking a three tier cake."

"Do you want some?" He dangled his half eaten cookie in front of me.

"Just eat..." He placed the cookie he was holding near my mouth and I took a bite without thinking. My face seemed to explode after that. "Do you want to eat it or not?" I threatened.

He started laughing uncontrollably. "Why are you still this shy?" He gazed at me with a huge grin on his face. He tapped me lightly on the head and took the tray from my hand.

He sat down on the armchair and said, "I hope you knew that your stepsister had become Empress in the end. The Empress."

"The Sacred Empress Rachelle... Wait, you mean she didn't just marry the Emperor? I thought she just married the Emperor and was crowned Empress. You mean she had been the ruler?"

"Of course, she aimed for nothing less. I don't think your stepsister even chose one of those stupid man circling her in the end."

"Then was my Father framed?"

"Imagine if your own daughter has ascended the throne, but you found your husband is trying to look for his own long lost daughter, your stepdaughter. What will you think?"

"My stepmother? She thought I would threaten Rachelle's position as Empress? So she planned to kill my father and me? That's stupid. On what ground could I threaten the Sacred Empress Rachelle who was a genius, with lots of powerful suitors?"

He shrugged. "All I can say is your stepmother is more of a moron than you can

imagine. She even convinced some of Rachelle's foolish suitors to carry out the plan."

"That's... so I was killed because of some moron?" I cried in despair.

"Sometimes morons are more powerful than the smart." He leaned back against the chair and took another bite of the cookie in his hand.

I was speechless. That's the reason I was killed in my third life? My stepmother had even planned to kill her own husband. The husband who doted on her. If she had been such a dumb, short sighted moron from the start, then what about my other lives?

"Oh yes, turned out she had a hand in your death in your first life too," Yves added nonchalantly. "Your father seemed to have found out what your stepmother had done a few months after your death. It was a huge scandal, that's why I heard of you."

"Why are you telling me this? Leading me on so that I asked you the correct questions so you could tell me this."

"Bored?"

No. I didn't believe him. From all these, it felt like he wanted to tell me my Father actually cared about me more than I had thought. And the one I should actually be careful of was my stepmother.

I stared at him for a moment and then stomped out of the room. When I returned I had a plate of macaroons I had baked for myself. I placed it on the table in front of him.

"I baked more than I have planned." I turned my head away after saying this, wishing he hadn't caught my bright red ears.

He chuckled. He then tugged my little finger with his and then said, "Let's eat together."

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Not that I am complaining, but can you stay here for such a long time?" Yves, who was standing behind the armchair I was sitting on, leaned down and whispered into my ear.

"Can you talk properly!" I shifted a bit away from him.

He chuckled and then finally settled down on the seat next to me.

"And they won't care, as long as I return in the end." I waved dismissively.

He continued gazing at me with his all knowing red eyes, he looked like he was expecting some kind of farce that would happen in a moment to entertain him.

"Why are you looking at me like that? You made me second guess myself!" It's always been like this, I disappeared, maybe going on a shopping spree around the country, Father wouldn't say anything. He didn't care as long as I returned.

"I gave you plenty of hints already. Don't come hating on me when you face difficulties." He shrugged, the all knowing smile still hanging on his face.

Hints? What had I missed? I thought back to my previous lives. At this time point, I would have already died in both my second and fourth lives. While I was still alive in my third, I was in hiding. So that left my first life. I remembered at that time, I had already been dumped by Henri in front of all my family members. And my hatred towards Rachelle intensified. I was always thinking of ways to beat Rachelle. The final choosing of wind temple was in a few weeks and that's where I met my final downfall.

I remembered around that time, even worse scandals and gossips about me began to circulate. Like the fact that I had several lovers, that's why Henri dumped me. Like how I had beaten my servants to death. On the other hand, Rachelle was described as an angel, a goddess who had descended and graced our country. This had of course angered me even more at that time.

The final choosing of wind temple for priests and priestess. My final downfall. Those gossips. My stepmother's involvement in my death. Now I suspected those gossips were also my stepmother's doing.

But I hadn't been hostile to my stepmother and Rachelle in this life. I was keeping to basic politeness. Not too close, yet not too hostile. She wouldn't plan to kill me this life too, would she?

"My stepmother might do something to harm me?" I asked hesitantly. "She might be worried I would threaten Rachelle's position in the wind temple?"

Yves didn't say anything, but just continued feeding Blake leisurely.

"That's stupid, I am bad at magic. Everyone knows that. There's no way I can defeat her goddess of daughter!"

"But you have reborn."

"Wha..."

Because I had already lived out four lives, my ability to do magic had greatly improved. I was not excelling every subject, but I was proficient. That's because I spent more time studying in magic after my death in my first life. I knew I shouldn't even be hating on Rachelle when I had never even spent time on studying. Granted, Rachelle could just do every spell pretty well after observing the spell once.

"Even though my magical ability now isn't as bad as I have originally thought, that doesn't mean I can beat her daughter. Rachelle is a genius."

"Your stepmother is a moron from the countryside."

She's a shortsighted, narrow minded moron from the countryside. All she had in her mind was the welfare of her daughter. She wouldn't have understood the logistics of the choosing or my magical ability. She simply knew that Father hadn't scolded me as much as she expected on my studies. Then she feared I would threaten Rachelle in some ways.

Why would my Father choose such a wife? I heaved a sigh. It's such a disgrace to our family.

"If she's really such a narrow minded woman from the country side as you have said, bad gossips of me will have circulated by now now that I left home for such a long time."

"How would I know?"

I glared at him as I called for Isobel. I turned the spell book to the page about having your familiar spying for you.

"Isobel, I need your help. When you return, I will cook a huge meal for you. Ok?" I smiled dotingly at Isobel and ruffled its fur. Isobel meowed and then disappeared.

"A huge meal." Yves raised his eyebrow. "And the guy who helped you got nothing. That's how the world has turned into after a sleep. What an unfair world."

"You're a priest of darkness, what do you know about fairness?"

"Contrary to popular beliefs, the god of darkness is a god that put a lot of emphasis on equality and fairness. And I'm friend with the god of order."

I rolled my eyes at him.

"And don't forget you're now a visitor in the temple of darkness." He smiled at me.

"What do you want? Macaroons? Maybe my stepmother isn't as bad as you have said! Then I would be worrying over nothing."

"Want to bet?" He leaned over and his face was only an inch from me.

I had actually believed him about my stepmother. I was just saying out of spite. If my stepmother was involved, a lot of things could actually be explained. From my experience with dealing with Rachelle, Rachelle was someone with not a single drop of evilness in her heart. So it boggled me that her suitors, who were like mindless creatures that followed every command of hers, came up with such a cruel plan just to get rid of me in my first life. But if it's her stepmother?

Also in my third life, I had escaped as soon as Rachelle entered the scene. After seven years, who would have still remembered me? But as soon as I was captured, gossips about me bullying Rachelle circulated. Gossips with excruciating details about my family and I that only insiders would know. It had always bothered me. Now it could be explained if my stepmother was involved.

I'd rather not bet with him out of spite. I avoided his glance.

"Scared?" His lips quirked, his face was still just an inch away from me.

Finally I decided to just close my eyes to await punishment to befall me.



## Page 25

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

Turned out my stepmother had already started working. Rumors of me having several lovers and always not returning home spread throughout the capital.

"That's ridiculous. What's the point of this?" I rolled my eyes. "Isobel, come."

Isobel stopped playing with Blake near the furnace and ran towards me. Isobel sat in front of me and tilted its tiny head. I patted Isobel on its head.

"Help me give this to Sarah. I will treat you to another huge meal after this." I placed a bottle of potion and a note in front of Isobel. After a sound of 'meow', Isobel disappeared with the bottle and note.

Yves, who was lying on the sofa with a book covering his face throughout all these, took off the book on his face after Isobel disappeared.

"You're going to leave her off just like that?" he asked. "That's boring."

"Sorry, it doesn't satisfy your twisted heart for entertainment." I shrugged nonchalantly. "It's just not worth my time. The truth potion should do the job."

"Which truth potion did you make?" An evil glimmer in his eyes.

"I made the truth potion from your spell book. I knew there's something evil about this truth potion in the spell book of a high priest of darkness!" I cried and clapped excitedly.

Was I influenced by the twisted Yves? Why was I so excited? I said it's not worth my

time to confront my stepmother, but giving her a lesson was another thing altogether.

I had already asked Sarah to add that potion in my stepmother's breakfast. I had instructed Sarah to mention the bad rumors about me circulating lately during breakfast, acting as a concerned maid, to my Father. This will probably trigger the truth potion.

"Oh, it's nothing special. People taking this truth potion won't stop talking until they have revealed every single lie they have said and every single bad thing they have done in their lives." An evil smile occupied his face. "I wonder how many lies your stepmother have concocted to grasp your Father's heart."

"Maybe she is as innocent as snow as my dear stepsister." I did not believe that sentence one bit. Now I was getting excited about this huge drama, a normal truth potion certainly could not achieve this.

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"My stepmother has been sent to the countryside to recover from her illness. Next week is Rachelle's birthday party. Please return to the estate." I read out the note Sarah sent me through Isobel.

"What a dull punishment for your stepmother," Yves said. "What a boring Father you have." He shook his head in disappointment and walked away, dragging his long robe with him.

As expected, in order to safeguard the family's reputation, Father just sent my stepmother to the countryside. Adding to the fact that Father needed Rachelle to continue on the marriage between my family and Henri's, now that I had declared I would not take back Henri. Father couldn't simply divorce my stepmother. So our great act continued. I had to attend Rachelle's birthday party. I even had to find a

present for her. It's alright I'd just buy something from the town near the temple of darkness.

"You are going back?" Yves asked with an arched brow. He was still lying leisurely on his sofa reading a book.

I responded by raising my eyebrow, "Sad entertainment is leaving you and you're going to rot in boredom?"

He chuckled and shook his head "I want a box of macaroons. As rent. Made by you of course." He smiled.

I glared at him as I threw a cushion at him. Rent. I humphed. Never seen someone this thick skinned.

"I am going to town to shop," I said as I put on my cloak.

"Let me show you around." He finally left the sofa and walked over. He helped me with the hood of my cloak. "It's my town after all." He smiled graciously.

I eyed him suspiciously. This seemed like a trap.

"Don't you need someone to hold your bags and baggage during your shopping spree?" he said with a fake doting smile on his smile.

"You're planning something." I was still eyeing him with suspicion. I was not falling for that. "Won't you be punished by those priests for setting foot outside of your temple."

"Those fools are probably drunk. They were quite angry when they left the temple that day. Now let's go. Blake, prepare our carriage."

He grasped my hand and dragged me out of the temple. I was still deep in thoughts when his carriage brought us down the hill to the town closest to the temple.

He must be planning something. I had never seen him that enthusiastic. Or had I?

In a confused state of mind, the afternoon passed by with Yves shopping with me. He really helped with the baggage and bags like a gentlemanly shopping partner. To my horror, he even gave opinions on which dress to buy.

"Can you stop giving me this side-eye glance? You made me feel like I am some kind of bad guy about to harm you."

"And can you say confidently you're not?"

"I am the high priest of darkness, Odette." He helped tucked a strand of my hair back. "But I can say pretty confidently I won't harm you," he said with a smile.

"Uh-huh." I looked out of the carriage window. I hope he didn't catch the blush over my cheeks. I nearly believed him. Odette, be careful, he's the high priest of darkness!

"So you bought this necklace for your dear sister?" I turned my head to find him taking an amethyst necklace out from the box. His fingers brushed over the huge amethyst pendant.

"Yeah, where did you go when I'm buying this necklace?" I asked as I grabbed the necklace back and placed it back into the soft padded box.

"Why should I be present when you're picking a gift for your stepsister?" He shrugged. "That's a waste of my time."

"What..." I closed my mouth just in time. Then did that mean it's not a waste of his

time when he's shopping with me? I shook my head to clear my head.

"Stop shaking." He placed his hand over my head. "I fear you injure the remaining brain you have."

I rolled my eyes as I threw my purse at him.

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I smiled elegantly as I excused myself from the fifth guy who approached me today. They were all from established noble families and they all had one point in common. They all weren't heirs to their families. They were insignificant to their families. They all approached me hinting they did not mind marrying into my family.

This was Rachelle's birthday party, but at the same time my father set up dozens of blind dates for me. Was he this concerned with marrying me off as quickly as possible so that Rachelle can marry into Henri's family?

I could not take it anymore. I clenched my teeth in annoyance. I looked around the premise this party was taking place and located Rachelle.

"Rachelle, happy birthday," I congratulated her with a smile plastered on my face. "This is my present for you." I placed the gift box containing the necklace into her hand.

"Thank you Odette! You have finally returned from your holiday! I missed you!" Rachelle came over and gave me an embrace. I received a glare from the silver haired guy, Lucian, standing just behind Rachelle.

I rolled my eyes internally. Poor Lucian, you won't be happy if you're this possessive. Rachelle had at least 5 more suitors surrounding her at all time.

"How's your quest so far, Rachelle?" I asked curiously. Last I heard, she's heading to Earth Temple. If she succeeded, then Yves' temple would be her next goal.

Yves was definitely planning something, everything started from the time he was

killed in my first life. He evoked the spell to reincarnate the both of us for four more times. This time he had finally recovered from the drain from casting that spell. For some unknown reason, I believed all the time he spent on plotting and finally his plan would set to motion in this life.

"I recovered the shard, Odette! It's a tough fight," she said dejectedly. "Lucian was injured from saving me!" Tears were brimming in her eyes when Lucian comforted her by hugging her close. Rachelle gave Lucian a thankful look and gripped his hand.

"Why won't they understand!" Rachelle cried. "The shards want to be one again! My soul aches from hearing the cries of the shards!"

Your soul... aches? That's an interesting way to put it. All I could do was to nod as if I understood how soul could ache.

"Now," Rachelle said as Lucian brushed away the tears slipping down her face gently, "one last piece is left. Then the shards will be one again."

"Congrats, Rachelle. But where is the last piece?" I asked innocently, as if I had no idea where the last piece was.

"It's in the temple of god of darkness." Her beautiful eyes dimmed for a second, before her expression became resolved again. "I'll get to it, no matter how much hardship I have to go through!"

I did not know how to respond, all I could do was to smile supportively and changed the topic. "See if you like your birthday present."

She opened the box and picked up the amethyst necklace inside it.

"It's so pretty, Odette!" Her eyes brightened at the sight of the necklace. "Thank you

so much! Lucian, quick help me put it on!" Her fingers lingered on the huge amethyst pendant.

Is the necklace that pretty? I thought it's pretty common. I didn't really put that much thought into Rachelle's gift. I just picked up something suitable for her status. Maybe she just liked amethyst or she's just being nice. I shrugged it off.

With a few more friendly exchange, I sneaked back into my bedroom. Luckily, father wasn't concerned with spying me this time.

I was reading a novel in my room when a flower appeared in from of me. It's the flower found only in the garden of the temple of darkness. I looked up to find Yves standing in front of me, a lazy smile on his face.

I pursed my lips in worries. "What are you doing here?" I asked in a hushed voice. "Rachelle is in this mansion too! What if she discovers you? You know her luck! What if she suddenly has this intuition to burst into my room?"

He arched his eyebrow in response. "Without even having the need to spy on her, she's sure to be with one of her suitors and there must be two more waiting in line to meet her. Your stepsister's life is very predictable."

He had a point.

"But that still does not explain why you are here?"

"B..."

"Don't tell me you're bored." I glared at him.

"Bring you a message." He looked at me with exasperation.



"A message?"

"You know where your stepsister is heading next?" he asked knowingly.

I nodded solemnly.

"She'll probably visit me in..." he placed the flower he was holding next to a window sill, "four days time."

Why did he tell me this? Did he want me to do something?

"And all you have to do is... stay in this room."

I widened my eyes in confusion.

"Don't set foot anywhere near the temple. Just stay nicely in this room, Odette," he said as he stood right in front of me, hands pressing firmly on my shoulders, as he stared solemnly at me.

"But..."

"Oh I know, you must be curious. You can sry all you want. I can even teach you a spell. Just promise me one thing, do not under any circumstance come near the temple." He leaned forward and whispered the last part next to my ear. "Understand?"

"What... what are you planning to do?" I asked hesitantly.

"Nothing." He was still circling me in his arms, trapping me in the armchair I was sitting in. "I am going to invite her and her knights into my temple like the friendly host I am."

His voice grew softer as his arms around me grew tighter.

The end had come.

Just like that last day we spent together before I was executed in my second life.

But this time, it's for the two of us. Together.

## Page 27

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I was pacing in my room for the tenth times. It's four days after Rachelle's birthday party and four days since Yves last visit. Today was the day Rachelle would visit the temple of god of darkness.

Should I perform that scrying spell Yves gave me before he left? I paced from one side of my room to another while thinking. I looked down to find side of my dress crumpled. Without noticing, I had been wringing my dress.

What's Yves planning? I knew all I had to do was to perform the scrying spell, then everything would be clear. But I was scared... scared the scene in front of me would be Rachelle and her knights defeating Yves or worse killing him.

Stop, Odette. It's no use killing yourself inside out like this, it would not help with the matter. Decided, I returned to my four poster bed and covered myself with my down quilt. I took out the crystal ball Yves gave me and muttered the spell he had whispered next to my ear.

Mist began to fill the once clear crystal ball. When the mist cleared, the hall of the temple of darkness appeared. The hall with a throne.

Yves was sitting on the throne, his face covered with his usual mask, his usual smile on his face. Facing him was Rachelle and her knights in shining armor. There were seven of them. It's eight against one, how's that fair? I began to fidget with my finger. No matter how powerful Yves was, it's still Rachelle with seven very competent sorcerers. Adding to the fact that Rachelle was nearly unbeatable.

"Good day, the high priest of darkness." Rachelle curtsied with a sweet smile on her

face. "I am coming for the shard that I believe is currently under your possession. Would you be so kind as to offer me that poor shard so that they can reunite again?"

Rachelle cupped her hands in front of her and after a shimmer, an object with a glimmer so strong that it hurt my eyes appeared in her hands. The object emitted rays of light in all colors but you cannot discern any color separately. The object was in the form of a heart, but it's missing one vital piece. Must be the last shard.

A heart? An idea appeared in my mind, but before I could grasp it, it slipped away.

Rachelle was still smiling sweetly and together with the shining heart in her hands, she looked like a saint coming to purify the world. It may look like a peaceful exchange if you omitted the fact that the seven knights surrounding Rachelle were all glaring at Yves, their weapons all brandished so they could attack any second.

"Reunite?" Yves asked with a smile on his lips.

"Yes, reunite. The final shard is beckoning my soul. It earns to reunite with the other shards."

Silence soon followed. It's the longest few seconds I had experienced. Then Yves said, "Of course." He snapped his finger and then I could see the ground began to shake.

The knights quickly surrounded Rachelle and started to throw spells at Yves. Yves tapped his foot and dark mist surrounded him. All the spells targeted at him dissolved as soon as they touched the mist.

After a few seconds, the dark mist cleared. Yves shook his head, "Such impatience. You asked for the shard in my temple, so I give it to you." He gestured to a raised stone pillar in front of Rachelle, a shimmering piece of shard laying on top of a

cushion. "Priests these days have such poor manners."

Rachelle's eyes were fixated on the shard on the cushion. She walked forward, her hand out as if in a trance. Henri's hand grasped her on the shoulder and said, "Rachelle, it might be a trap!"

"No, it's not. The shard is beckoning me. This is the last piece!" Her eyes turned frantic.

"There might be traps near the shard, Rachelle! It can't be that simple!" cried one of Rachelle's knights.

One by one, they tried to stop Rachelle. But Rachelle, with a frantic look on her face, walked closer and closer to the shard, omitting every caution from her knights, pushing away any hand coming in her way. Finally she had the final shard in her hand. As soon as the final shard melts with the heart-like object in her hand. Rays of light shone out, blinding me momentarily.

When my vision returned, the now completed heart was now floating in the air. Yves was still sitting on his throne, with the same confident smile on his face. Like he was not surprise such thing would happen. Maybe he wouldn't as, like me, he had repeated his life again and again.

Yves said he was killed in his first life. Was he killed because he refused to give Rachelle the shard? But never had Rachelle killed anyone in her quest. Yes, those high priests were severely injured, but not killed.

And judging from his attitude right from the start, he did not care about the shards. Or to put it in another way, he did not care about the shards when they're still separated. He wanted them in one? And Rachelle, without knowing, was doing the job for him? He wanted to take the crystal heart from Rachelle's hand, but was killed by Rachelle

and her knights? But why didn't he do it himself? He had the power.

Could it be that only Rachelle can get hold of the shards? Rachelle was the only one in centuries to be able to break the wards surrounding the shard in wind temple. Rachelle was the key? Just who was she?

At that moment, the crystal heart started to shine once again and then it went straight into the body of Lucian. The silver haired man next to Rachelle. Rachelle's suitor. The man that appeared after Rachelle broke the curse on the stray dog she rescued.

Lucian clutched his heart. And finally Yves left his throne. He knelt down, with his left hand over his heart and lowered his head. He said,

"Lucian, the god of light, please accept my humble greetings."

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

The god of light... What? I widened my eyes in shock.

"God of light?" Rachelle mumbled.

So Yves' goal was to revive the god of light? But wasn't he a high priest of god of darkness? And why would that get him killed in his first life? I was getting more and more confused.

Lucian, or the alleged god of light, hugged his head in pain.

"Lucian!" Rachelle cried. She tried to soothe his pain by hugging him. "What happened? Why are you in so much pain?" Tears began brimming in her eyes.

Lucian screamed in pain while hugging his head.

"Lucian!" Tears streamed down her face. "What can I do to soothe your pain? How I wish I could bear your pain, Lucian. It breaks my heart to see you like that."

"The god of light is not complete," Yves said, "unless the last piece is returned. Otherwise, he's simply a mortal bearing god memories with no godly power. Especially those memories aren't meant to befall a mortal."

"The last piece?" Rachelle asked. "I have collected every last piece of shard my soul called me to!"

Again this phrase. Wait... soul? Could it be that the last piece is... Rachelle.

"Don't you dare, Arden!" Lucian cried out through clenched teeth. He stood forward and shielded Rachelle from Yves. He tried to use his power. Just like how Yves said, his power was nowhere near godly level.

If Rachelle was the last piece, everything would make sense. If Yves' goal was to revive the god of light all along, he would need to get hold of Rachelle. As by the evident way of Lucian protecting Rachelle with the mention of 'last piece', the last piece might mean taking Rachelle's life. Otherwise, Lucian did not have to be all worked up at the mention of that 'last piece'. Yves died in his first life trying to kill Rachelle. Lucian might not have a god's power but he had a god's memory. He might find a way to defend himself and Rachelle. Adding to the fact that Rachelle seemed to be very blessed by gods. She herself was a genius unmatched by even high priests of other temples.

"Dare what?" Yves asked. He was back onto his throne. "I have not moved an inch since you guys entered the temple of darkness. I'm just explaining the situation we have on hand now."

Lucian eyed Yves with uncertainty.

"Wait, what is the meaning of the last piece?" Rachelle demanded behind the close protect of all her seven knights.

Yves lips quirked up and said, "It's inside your soul."

"My soul?" Rachelle asked confusedly. And then her face turned determined, "How can I save Lucian? How can I return this last piece from my soul back to Lucian?"

"No, Rachelle, you don't have to do that!" His hand gently caress Rachelle's face. "I can live without that last piece."



Rachelle, being Rachelle, of course had no none of that sort.

"No! Don't you see! You're suffering! I have to help you! Do tell me, your Grace, how can I save Lucian?" she clasped her hands and looked at Yves with her teary eyes.

"It's very simple," Yves' lips quirked into a perfect smile. "All you have to do is to die." He snapped his finger and then immediately Rachelle clasped her heart in pain. Blood began to drip down the corner of her mouth.

The knights started to attack Yves soon after that.

"What did you do to Rachelle?" they demanded.

Lucian immediately tried to heal Rachelle with his power, but no matter what he did, Rachelle coughed out more blood.

"I am just fulfilling her wish," Yves shrugged as he said, all the while sidestepping all the spells thrown in his way at ease.

"Rachelle, don't die. Rachelle... Rachelle..." Lucian muttered softly. He was doing all he can, but Rachelle's breath grew softer and softer. At last after she gave Lucian one last smile, she closed her eyes forever.

Something sharp pierced at my heart, that can't be... Rachelle just dying like this? This simply? Even though Rachelle had made my life miserable, she was still a person. A person who was nice to everyone in her life. Even Yves couldn't succeed in killing in his first life. But she just lost her life so easily within a few seconds this life. Something was wrong, something unnatural.

As soon as Rachelle's life withered, something bright and shiny arises from her body.

It then broke into million of pieces, one piece flew into Lucian's body. Power and light rushed into his body, until finally he changed. His appearance did not change, but the vibe he gave off was definitely different from the mortal he was before.

He caressed Rachelle's face one last time and then he stood up. "You'll regret this, Arden," he said as he disappeared from the temple.

Yves' face turned ashen. Worries appeared on his face. Worries for...

Before I could finish my thought, a hand snaked around my throat and strangled me. I began to struggle as my sight turned more and more blurry.

"It has nothing to do with her, god of light," Yves' voice seemed to appear out of nowhere. Are we back to the temple?

Then the one strangling me must be the god of light I realized. The god's hand over my neck loosened a bit, air rushed into my lung as my vision got clearer. Yves was kneeling in front of Lucian as he eyed me with worries in his eyes.

"Nothing to do with her?" Lucian laughed mockingly. "Don't you think that can pass my eyes. If it wasn't for her birthday gift, will you even be able to kill my dear Rachelle?" He boomed angrily.

"Yes, the curse might be on the necklace, but it's still my doing," Yves said. "It has nothing to do with Odette. She has no idea I placed a curse on the gift."

"I might not be able to kill you," Lucian said. "But I can kill her." His hold on my neck strengthened once again.

"If my death can soothe your anger and save Odette's life, I can fulfill your wish," Yves said determinedly. He then started chanting a spell.

Lucian's piqued by Yves' words, loosened his hold on me. I was thrown onto the ground mercilessly. After gasping for air, my vision got clearer and saw Yves' face had turned really pale. And finally, he coughed out a mouthful of blood.

"She shouldn't be dragged into this mess to begin with. She should be the sole daughter of her father and live her life as the heir," he stopped to catch his breath. "But the gods dragged her into their game. They changed her fate. The appearance of her stepsister, the blessings on Rachelle... I am just making up for the mess you gods created... Please let her go..."

"I admire your dedication to save your lover..." the god of light said, "but nothing can bring back my Rachelle. Nothing can soothe my anger. Not even your death!" With that, a beam of light shot out from his palm. Like a lightning bolt, it shot through my stomach.

"Odette!" His face turned more ashen and started coughing uncontrollably.

I lay on the cold marble stone of the temple as blood bled out from my stomach. I was surprisingly calm. This was so familiar to me, dying once again. Will this finally end? I thought back to Yves' words, was the gods the reason for my misfortunes? Was I just a chess piece in their game? Something to be discarded once her mission was completed.

Something cold touched my hand. It's Yves, he had staggered his way across the temple. His expression was just like that night before my death in my second life. A hint of sadness, a hint of regret and what?

"I am sorry, Odette," he said weakly.

I raised my eyebrow in surprise. Did the tyrant just apologize?

"I thought I could make it up to you, by giving the poor girl who was being drawn into the game of gods another chance of life. I was too full of myself. Nothing can escape the gods," he said wistfully. He caressed my face. "This is your last life... and mine. All your misery will end."

My fingers shook as I tried to caress his face with my other hand. I smiled in relieve, so in the end this reborn curse on me was not solely for his entertainment, although I did think this was also part of the reason why he put the curse on me in the first place.

"Can... can you hug me one last time. I feel cold," I said faintly.

Yves returned my embrace as he cradled me in his arms.

When I was growing colder and colder from the loss of blood, I sensed a presence similar to the god of light had appeared in the temple.

"Odette, don't forget that your wish is to die after a long life, after you have grown old," Yves whispered into my ear. I glanced at the face just inches from me, to find the mask of sadness over his face awhile ago was gone. In its place was his usual smile.

That was when I realized, all of it was his plan! No wonder I didn't die after bleeding for such a long time!

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

"Lucian, did that girl really mean that much to you? To the point that you have to kill my sole supporter in revenge?" A cold voice boomed in the temple.

"You won't understand," Lucian cried in anguish. "You didn't understand thousands of years ago, you still don't! Rachelle is my life! Without her, what's the point in becoming god again?"

Well that's one shocking speech. I did not know if I was to applaud for their love or roll my eyes at such dramatic declaration.

I realized now, my wound might seem serious, but I wasn't dying as I had expected. The power of a god should be fatal to us mortals, but the wound wasn't even as painful as I had expected. It was not even up to par to the stabbing wound I had in my previous life. That's weird...

I was still being cradled in Yves' arm. He even had the decency to play with the bracelet on my wrist. Wait... didn't he play with my bracelet awhile back? When we're riding back from town, on the day I bought Rachelle her birthday gift. I glared at him as he returned a knowing smile. Did he place a protective spell on the bracelet? To absorb part of the power of the spell Lucian threw at me?

A sigh brought me back to reality. "I just don't understand where do your intense love come from! How long have you known each other? A few weeks at best! And then you have to throw everything away? Even your life?" The cold voice sneered in distaste.

The voice was from a dark hooded figure hovering in the center of the temple, in

front of Lucian.

"Someone as heartless as you will not understand even with a million years of time," Lucian retorted. He then began to attack the hooded man. "Killing off Rachelle must be your order!"

"I am saving you, my dear brother. If you don't return, the other gods plan to replace you! This whole plan is to overthrow you, don't you understand? They merged a piece of you with that girl's soul and recreated Rachelle so as to lure you into their trap! Look what you're about to do if Yves didn't kill Rachelle. You're about to give up your godly power! You're about to die as a mortal!"

"That's my choice! At least as a mortal, I can spend the rest of my life with Rachelle. Now as the god of light what do I get? Rachelle isn't even here with me!" He continued to fight with his brother, the god of darkness.

According to the lore, the god of light and the god of darkness were actually twins. That meant the hooded figure facing Lucian must be the god of darkness.

"When will you grow some brains, brother? You're a god! You have the power of a god! If you want your dear Rachelle so badly, just collect the pieces of her soul floating around you when they're still present! Then you still have some chance of reviving her, but what are you doing? Killing my sole follower, ruining my temple!" He humphed in anger.

The hooded figure that was the god of darkness raise his hand. A glob began to form in his palm. With a flick of his other hand, a puppet in the shape of Rachelle began to form from the rubble Lucian created in the temple. He forcefully pushed the glob into the marble puppet and then clapped his hand. "See that's how you use the power of a god! Her body might be ruined, but you can create one for her! Only the useless weeps when facing a problem. What a disgrace of a brother. What a disgrace to us

gods."

The hooded figure then walked towards us, abandoning his brother who was weeping with joy as the marble puppet that was Rachelle opened her eyes . The god of darkness' face was still covered by the shadows of the hood. If he was Lucian's twin brother, would the two of them look very alike?

"Don't you let me catch you trying to kill yourself off before you have groomed the next high priest!" he sneered angrily at Yves. "I will not let you go even if you become a ghost!"

"Care to come any later? Otherwise, you won't even be able to summon my ghost," Yves said as he pulled me up from the floor. That was then I realized my wound had stopped oozing and not an ounce of pain was left.

"But, my lord," Yves continued in a sing song manner, "it might be best for you leave now. The god of order might appear anytime. Reviving Rachelle, though a spectacular act, was a deed against his book of order." He smirked after finishing the last sentence.

The god of darkness cleared his throat and then said, "The mortal world is just as stuffy as always."

"The mortal world is not for powerful gods like you, my lord."

The god of darkness nodded approvingly and then disappeared into dark mist.

I eyed the entire exchange with my mouth left agape. Was the god of darkness afraid of the god of order?

"The god of order is a nightmare," Yves said, his usual mask of laziness back on his

face. "The god of light is an idiot. The god of darkness is a talkative old man, best send him away as soon as possible."

"Huh?"

"Come on, I'm tired. Let's get some sleep." He then dragged me away while grasping my hand, leaving the rubble, the lovebirds and the third-wheels (Rachelle's knights) behind us.

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

I couldn't fall asleep. Things I had gone through this afternoon kept boggling my mind. Rachelle was killed and then she was kind of revived again. The dog turned silver haired suitor of Rachelle was actually the god of light. Even though the spelling of dog and god was just mirrored, that didn't mean I could accept that! And most important of all I was just a chess piece in the game of gods. All my miseries were just inconsequential to them it seemed.

Yves and the god of darkness kept talking about the game the gods were playing, but what exactly was that game? I rolled over for the tenth times. I couldn't fall asleep, I needed to get some answers.

"Yves, wake up," I called while shaking him. "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!"

The guy in front of me groaned as he covered his eyes with his forearm. "I said you could wake me up when you needed me, but never have I expected this. Can't your curiosity wait?"

"No."

"I am just so glad you now know how to use my name, so glad." He smiled like he wanted to kill me. "What do you want to know?"

"The truth. Just what are the gods planning?"

"Do you know besides us mortals, the gods, there was once a third type of creatures in this world?" He ruffled his hair with one hand and with his other grabbed the cup of tea I had prepared for him. You need some incentive for a lazy high priest to tell

you bed time story. I pushed forward a plate of macaroon I made.

I thought back to the lore of our kingdom. "The beasts?"

The beasts were the nightmares of every child in this country. They were the villains in every fairy tale. They were what stopped people from exploring the deep woods. Lore had it that the beasts were now residing in the Forbidden Woods near the border of our country. That's just the lore. Once in a while, there were some who weren't afraid of death and had a crave for adventures venturing into the Forbidden Woods, but rarely would they return. Those selected few who returned had their power greatly improved, but they all lost their memories. As if they signed a contract with a devil that made them gave up their memories in return for great power.

Yves took a bite of the macaroon in his hand and said, "Many, many years ago, mortals, the gods and the beasts live along peacefully. Well, the gods treated mortals as their servants all the while ignoring the existence of the beasts. Mortals, with a lot of help from the gods, started to invade lands of the beasts. The gods at that time still lingered in our land all the time. They found mortals entertaining. This fragile balance continued on for a long time. Guess what happened next?"

"The beasts were dissatisfied?" If I was in the position of the beasts, I would too. The beasts were basically ignored by mortals and humans alike and their living habitats were invaded by mortals.

"The beasts were a huge bunch. Some were as weak as mortals, but some had power as powerful as the gods. The stronger ones decided to revolt against the gods. They devised a plan to pull down the gods."

"That's where Rachelle came in?"

"According to what the old man said the beasts handpicked a beauty who had a heart

of gold and sent her into the temple of light." He rolled his eyes. "As I said, the gods lingered with the mortals quite a lot back then. And the god of light was a fool."

Was he referring the god of darkness as the old man?

Putting one and one together. "So the god of light fell in love with Rachelle. But how did this kill him? He is a god!"

"While the gods and mortals use sorcery, the beasts were born with their powers and abilities. Didn't you learn anything from your own bed time stories? The hints were all there. Bed time stories are tales written by victors." He smiled cruelly.

In those stories, the villainous beasts had all kind of powers and abilities. Like venom, like a voice to hypnotize people, like from their bones they can form the most invincible weapon. They could change their appearance to look similar to us mortals, but they were also a beast at the same time.

"Rachelle was part of the beast?"

"No, she was a mortal through and through. She was just hypnotized by one beast and she carried out the plan perfectly. The beasts gave her a dagger specifically designed to shatter a soul of god. And the hypnotized Rachelle killed the god of light with the dagger. In the end the soul of god of light shattered into a million shards."

"And the gods didn't notice a thing at that time?" I asked. The god of darkness and his high priest knew quite a lot of details.

"Well," Yves smiled mischievously. "Do you think it's possible? Those were dark thoughts and plans of darkness."

"So... the god of darkness knew about this plan all along? And he didn't stop them

from killing his brother?"

Yves shrugged, "He found it entertaining. The most entertaining thing he found in years. He was never neutral to begin with. He is the god of darkness. He can start wars so as to entertain himself. For all I know, the idea of invading lands of the beasts might even be instigated by him."

"So he just stood by the side when the beasts were plotting to kill his brother and the plan took action?"

"He is a god, a god is prideful and narcissistic." Yves smirked. "Who knew his brother is such an idiot?"

So he thought his brother could spot the trap and kill Rachelle, but in the end his brother was a god who found love more important than his life.

"But by putting together the shards of his soul, they could revive him. Why did the gods simply keep those shards in their own temples?" I pointed out.

"The gods are all a bunch of power hunger maniacs. Back then the twin brothers of light and darkness were the most powerful, they were like the kings above them. Now one was down. Do you think they would allow the god of light to be revived and reining them again?"

"But wouldn't the god of darkness disagree?"

"Who knows what the old man was thinking at that time? Maybe he was entertained. Maybe he thought his idiot brother deserved a punishment. Maybe he was too embarrassed to say anything. If it was me, I would have just let this idiot rot in hell."

"But the beasts still failed in the end, didn't they?"

"Of course, even though the other gods sat back when the beasts killed a powerful god, the gods responded by showing their gratitude by banishing them into the Forbidden Woods. Gods are ungrateful." He shrugged nonchalantly.

"The god of darkness said Rachelle was recreated by the gods as a trap for the god of light. Why set out Rachelle to revive him now if they want the god of light gone?"

"See how lack of sleep messes with your brain?" He tapped on my brain. "It's the god of darkness who wants to revive his brother. Or else why do I need to evoke this reborn curse we both hate so much?"

Wait... after Lucian regained all his memory, he chose to live on and die as a mortal instead of killing Rachelle. The other gods wanted to kill Lucian once and for all! I widened my eyes in shock.

"As I said, the world is a chess board for the gods. We are just the chess pieces." Yves looked at me with his knowing red eyes. "Now, after telling you a bed time story, it's time for you to sleep."

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*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

Life returned to normal. Except the fact that Rachelle disappeared. Or that her knights were all weeping in their respective temples to the annoyance of their high priests.

I didn't know where Rachelle had gone, but I guess Lucian had taken her back to wherever his godly presence lived. With Rachelle gone, I became the sole heir of the family. Father became worried with the problem of my marriage again.

"Odette," he sighed. "I believe you have an understanding with the situation we have on hand. Rachelle... has not been in touch for a few months. Henri's family became... eh... concerned."

"They're concerned about their runaway bride to be or the fact that Henri is weeping like a loser all day long?"

After a pronounced period of silence, Father responded, "Both."

"Now that you see what a loser Henri is and how in love he is with Rachelle, you still want me to marry him?" I raised my eyebrow.

"Of course not!" Father's face was red in anger. "I would not allow my daughter to marry such a loser!"

"Uh-huh. Then are we done?"

"The point is this, Odette. I fear they might put their idea on you once again. Now that Rachelle has disappeared, you become the only candidate again. You know Henri's family wanted to join forces with us."

"Everyone is a chess piece in this world," I whispered wistfully.

Father seemed to be taken aback by my words. After awhile he finally said, "I know you don't want to marry Henri. That's why you have to marry quickly. To someone you like, of your own choosing, before they lost all hope on Rachelle. I am just a priest in the wind temple, but Henri's grandfather is the high priest. If his grandfather asked the Emperor for you to marry into their family, I can't stop it."

That's the most my Father had said to me in ages. To marry someone I like, of my own choosing?

The image of a person appeared in my mind. I quickly pushed it to the back of my mind. After that incident we still met a few times, but just like before, he was just teasing or bossing me around. We were just the boss and his servant. Nothing more. He put the reborn curse on me, partly because he pitied me, but a very large part was because he wanted entertainment. I guessed that canceled things out.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Here's a list of eligible young men who could marry into our family. You don't have to leave home, Odette. I have invited them over for a family dinner party."

I nodded once and left the room. Everyone in this world is a chess piece in one another's game. I sighed.

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I met candidate after candidate Father had chosen for me. They were no doubt the most eligible and coveted husband choices among the society. But I did not feel an ounce of excitement when they dazzled witty words at me or when they invited me for a dance.

I knew to avoid the fate of marrying Henri, I had to choose someone I like and marry quick. But all of this felt wrong. None of them understood me. They still treated me as the pampered, naive heiress they thought I was. Some even said I could simply stay at home after marriage, I no longer needed to study in the temple. But I was no longer the pampered, silly heiress before. I wanted to have a meaning in life. Something to do. Something to work for myself. Something to be proud of.

They would never understand the tiredness I felt of living through so many lives. The worries that someday another Rachelle would pop up and steal everything from me. I felt so lonely even surrounded by so many people.

"If you marry me, no matter what jewelries or handbags you want, I can buy for you!" said the man standing in front of me.

I don't need anyone to buy me anything. I can buy them...

"She prefers buying things herself. With her own money," someone chirped in.

I turned my head to find Yves standing behind me and smiling at me.

"Who are you?" the man shouted angrily.

"Why are you here?" I asked at the same time.

"I am bored. You have a great party here, can I join?" He smiled like how he usually did, but why did I suddenly feel a chill going down my spine? He seemed... angry?

"Of... of course." I responded with a tight smile. It's just that this was a party for me to find my future husband, it would be so awkward if he found out the truth. Or could it be that he already knew?



As if to make things worse, Father had to walk over at this second. "Odette, is everything going fine?" he asked. Then he noticed Yves, he looked confused for a second, no doubt trying to match Yves with the list of candidates he had. "Odette, is this your friend?"

He is the high priest of darkness! My boss! Your daughter's partner in crime!

Yves was looking at me expectantly, like he was waiting for me to introduce him.

"Father, this is... eh..." I could not disclose Yves' name. "This is... eh..."

"I am your daughter's lover," he said with a mischievous smile hanging on his face.

Father widened his eyes in shock. My heart literally stopped for a few seconds after hearing what he said. Then after that as if to make things up, my heart started beating like a galloping horse. What was he saying? Must be one of his pranks.

"Am I right, Odette?" he tucked a strand of my hair behind my ear.

How should I respond? Was this a prank? Must be a prank. Right. Right?

"Odette?" his eyes narrowed as a warning and the chills I felt just now returned. He was really angry. Angry for what? Because I decided to choose a husband without notifying him?

"If you'll excuse the both of us, Father," I muttered as I dragged Yves away. "What is the meaning of this?" I said through clenched teeth.

"I think that's my question. What is the meaning of this? A party to choose a husband?"

"We are... You... But..." I couldn't say a full sentence. At last the anger that built up inside me helped me do all the talking, "You never said anything! How would I know? How would I know if it's another prank again? Huh!"

"I never use my feelings as prank." He smiled his first true smile this evening.

"Odette," Father's voice boomed behind me. "Care to do some explanation?" Father looked exasperated.

Together with Father was the man I was talking with just now. He said, "Lady Odette, I never met him in my life. Clearly he is just some lowly, poor commoner. He..."

"Oh shut up if you don't want to go bald the next instant!" I cried.

"How distasteful and boring," Yves drawled. "Don't you think it's more interesting if he's turned into a big fat toad?"

"And that's tasteful?" I retorted.

"Odette, can I have some explanation?" Father asked once again.

"Father, this is... eh... the high priest of darkness..."

Father looked he was about to faint.

"And yes I am here to kidnap your daughter to the temple of darkness." Yves smiled elegantly.

Father fainted after that.

"Do you have to say something like that?"

"Well, isn't that fun?"

I rolled my eyes in response.

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## Page 32

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 11:31 am*

A girl with dark black hair and ruby red eyes was sitting below a huge tree. Snow was drifting down from the sky, slowly turning her fur lined cloak to white.

"If you ask them, they will stay." The crow with golden feathers sitting on the branch stated.

"I know. If I asked them to stay for a few years longer, they would. Because they loved me," the girl responded.

"Then why didn't you do that?" The crow asked again.

"Because this is life. There is an end to everything. You live, you grow old and then you die. It's what makes life precious and meaningful."

"I don't die, but I find my life meaningful."

Laughter rang out from the girl. "No, you don't. You lost meaning in life years ago. If you do, why would you stay here comforting a little girl like me now?"

The girl was faced with silence.

"All my father and mother's wish was to die after living a long and meaningful life. I honor their wish." The girl placed her palm on the trunk of the tree in front of her. The tree that was planted on the day of her parents' marriage. "Even if it saddens me." Tears she had been holding in finally streamed down her face.

The crow on the branch a few second ago disappeared. A hooded figure appeared

behind the girl a few seconds later.

"Do you want me to tell you a secret?" After a long while, the hooded man asked.

"Will by telling the secret only entertain you?" She turned around and wiped the tears from her face.

The man beneath the hood tilted his head and after a while he said, "I think it'll entertain the both of us."

The girl eyed him with uncertainty and then finally she nodded. "Alright."

The man beneath the hood smiled and leaned forward to whisper something in the girl's ear.

The girl narrowed her eyes. She leaned down, grabbed a handful of snow and threw it at the hooded man.

"Liar!" she shouted. "I'll never trust you again!"

The man's laughter boomed through out the garden. The solid figure just now slowly dissolved into black mist. Before he disappeared, he said, "I am most certainly not comforting you. I am just here to make sure Yves' heir did not escape her duty."

"Whatever you said, my lord." The girl in eyes with rubies curtsied reverently. When the last trace of the god of darkness disappeared, she rolled her eyes and said, "As if, you liar."

The girl gave the tree one final look and muttered, "Farewell, my beloved parents."

The End