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Her friends were so shocked that they shut up immediately.

They had never heard Kelsea scream with such a high-pitched voice before.

Nevertheless, they were all good friends and quickly understood her feelings after they saw the look in her eye.

Kelsea was obviously jealous.

When the fact dawned upon them, all of them smiled wryly. No longer able to praise Arielle's beauty, they changed their tack instead. "Arielle has no reason to feel smug. Once the chess tournament is over, she will be asked to leave."

"Exactly! Kelsea, we won't be able to see that irritating lady anymore. Thinking about it makes me miss her already."

"Tsk-tsk. If she meets Kelsea in the first round, she is finished. Kelsea's chess mentor is Mr. Jewell, the founder of Haut Monde. Arielle would be trashed by Kelsea in just a couple of moves."

"That goes without saying. Given the participants today, only Mr. Nightshire,

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who was last year's champion, is good enough to take on Kelsea. Therefore, comparing Arielle to Kelsea is by itself an insult to her."

After hearing their words, Kelsea's gloomy expression turned into a smile.

Every year during the Haut Monde, her goal was to beat Vinson at chess so that she could impress him. Unfortunately, she would never get the chance to face him because she would be defeated by Everett Eakins first.

After a whole year of hard training, she was confident of beating Everett so that she could finally face Vinson.

With that, Kelsea began to calm herself down.

She knew that she shouldn't lose her focus because of Arielle. After all, Arielle was just a distraction while her real rival was Everett.

Holding that thought, Kelsea made an excuse to leave the group. After that, she found a quiet place on the balcony and discreetly watched the videos of Everett's

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latest games.

After all, "Know thyself and know thy enemies" was the secret to victory.

Meanwhile, as Vinson introduced Arielle to other guests who were elites in their own fields, one famous detective caught her attention.

She made an effort to obtain his contact and planned to get in touch after the banquet.

Soon, the chess tournament began.

The opponents in the first round were decided by a draw.

Coincidentally, Arielle's first opponent was one of Kelsea's friends from earlier.

However, anyone who attended the Haut Monde was an elite in their own right. It had nothing to do with them being socialites.

When Vinson saw the draw she picked, he couldn't help but feel worried. "If you don't feel confident, I can have a word with the organizer."

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"It's fine." Arielle remained exceptionally calm as she tightened her grip on the lot.

When Vinson saw the expression on her face, he didn't remonstrate further. After wishing her good luck, he headed to his allocated chessboard.

By the time Arielle found hers, Kelsea's friend was already seated at the board.

Her name was Zany Zane. The moment she saw Arielle, she sneered, "Oh, why does it have to be you, Arielle. Do I need to go through the basic rules with you?"

The moment Zany spoke, the person on the board next to them turned around in shock.

He couldn't believe that there was someone present who didn't know the rules of chess.

How did she get in here?

Looking at her face, they surmised that Arielle must have attended the event because of her looks.

Mr. Nightshire shouldn't have brought

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someone who doesn't know chess to the banquet. Wouldn't he just disgrace himself?

Arielle ignored what everyone else thought. Instead, she calmly made eye contact with Zany and tried to hold back a smile. "Thank you for your offer. I appreciate it."



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Zany didn't think that someone who grew up in the village would know how to play chess. Therefore, Arielle must just be putting up a strong front.

Unbeknownst to her, reality was different from what she expected.

The tournament was about to begin in two minutes, and Zany noticed that many people had gathered around them to watch.

Pretending to be magnanimous, she explained, "I had better run through the ground rules with you. The chess pieces are already in place so I don't have to show you that. I'm black while you're white. I'll move the black pieces and you will do the same to the white pieces. Based on the rules, white will move first. If you want to surrender, all you need to do is to topple your king..."

Zany acted as if she was an expert while going through the rules with Arielle.

However, Arielle didn't interrupt and quietly listened to her show off.

In the eyes of others, Arielle looked as if

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she was learning the game earnestly.

Finally, the tournament began.

Zany gestured courteously for Arielle to start.

Smirking, Arielle made the first move.

Without any hesitation, Zany followed by capturing Arielle's pawn.

Arielle made her second move... and third... and fourth.

Gradually, Zany's expression turned into one of disbelief. Her eyes opened so widely that they were about to pop out of their sockets.

How is this possible? Arielle... has actually captured so many of my pieces.

Rubbing her eyes, she couldn't believe what was going on.

Nevertheless, the reality was exactly what she saw. Her queen had been captured, causing her hands to tremble.

Lifting her gaze at Zany, Arielle asked, "Are

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you moving?"

Zany stared intently at the board.

This way? Checkmate!

That way? Checkmate!

No matter what moves she made, her king would end up being captured. Therefore, it was just a matter of time before she was defeated.

Sweat began to break out of Zany's forehead.

She couldn't believe that she, an amateur chess player with outstanding results, would lose to a country bumpkin.

Knock... Knock...

At that moment, she heard Arielle's fingers tapping on the table, as if to hurry her up.

What an insult!

Unfortunately, there was no way for her to turn the game around.

Closing her eyes with a pale expression,

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Zany toppled her king...

That was a sign that she had admitted defeat.

Arielle stood up and extended her hand to shake.

However, Zany simply walked off in humiliation.

Arielle grinned as she watched Zany flee in disgrace.

Sometimes, it's better to ignore the taunts and insults of others. All I need to do is to defeat them when it mattered.

Given that Zany had admitted defeat, Arielle won the round in a quick two minutes.

The scorekeeper noted down Arielle's points on a scoreboard.

The participants would be eliminated based on their score.

Given how low Zany's score was from losing to Arielle, she would likely be asked to leave Haut Monde.

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Meanwhile, Kelsea had just ended her game.

When she saw her opponent topple his king, she let out a triumphant smile before heading over to the scoreboard. She wanted to see how many moves Zany defeated Arielle with.

Perhaps... she didn't even need any? After all, Arielle doesn't even know how to play.

However, before she got far, Kelsea ran into Zany whose face was pale in shock.

She was holding her bag and looked as if she was about to leave.

Stunned, Kelsea stopped her and asked, "Are you feeling okay? Where are you going?"

Looking at Kelsea, Zany forced an awkward smile, "Erm... yes. I... I'm not feeling well. I'm going off first as I need to see the doctor."

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Kelsea didn't doubt Zany's words. In fact, she held onto Zany's hand and asked, "Are you all right? Shall I get the driver to send you to the hospital?"

"No, there's no need. My driver is here. Off I go now."

Zany declined immediately. She was worried that Kelsea would find out she had lost to Arielle and admonish her in public.

Furthermore, she had drawn her next opponent, who happened to be Everett.

She knew there was no chance of her beating him.

If she lost two games in a row, she would definitely be asked to leave. Therefore, she felt it was better for her to leave on her own accord. That way, she could still preserve her dignity.

After waving goodbye to Kelsea, Zany left in a huff and was a miserable sight to behold.

Kelsea raised her eyebrows curiously.

Isn't she sick? Why can she still walk so

fast?

Nevertheless, she didn't make too much of it and just assumed Zany wasn't feeling well.

Even if she is feeling under the weather, it would still be impossible for her to lose to Arielle.

Smirking, Kelsea proceeded to the scoreboard.

When she arrived, there was already a crowd. Tip-toeing to take a look, her eyes widened at what she saw.

Zany... lost to Arielle! Moreover, it was a decisive defeat! How... is that even possible?

There was no way the scoreboard would make a mistake. The fact was Zany had lost.

Recoiling in shock, Kelsea almost lost her balance.

Does that country bumpkin actually know how to play chess? This is way beyond my expectation. No wonder Zany left in such a

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*hurry. She has been humiliated just now.
That useless piece of trash!*

Meanwhile, Kelsea's other friends ended their game and rejoined her.

When they saw the result on the scoreboard, they were equally shocked.

"What happened to Zany? How did she lose to someone who doesn't even know how to play?"

"Where is she? I want to ask her what happened."

"Did Arielle pay her off?" "Kelsea, what do you think?"

By then, Kelsea had regained her composure.

Shaking her head, she replied, "Arielle couldn't have paid her off as Zany doesn't need the money at all."

Her friends covered their mouths in shock. "Does it mean that country bumpkin really knows how to play chess?"

Kelsea gave an expressionless nod.

"Mmm-hmm. It appears that villages nowadays are much more developed than we think. They have even been exposed to chess. Therefore, if any of you face her later, you cannot afford to be careless."

"Understood!"

"Don't worry, Zany is the least skillful among us anyway. If Arielle plays against any of us, she will not escape defeat."

Feeling confident, they brushed aside Arielle's capabilities and simply assumed Zany was a terrible player.

However, with a grim expression, Kelsea studied the scoreboard thoughtfully.

Meanwhile, Vinson casually ended his game.

Someone approached and remarked with a smile, "Mr. Nightshire, congratulations!"

Vinson shook his head calmly. "It's only one game. There's nothing worth congratulating over."

"I wasn't congratulating you." The person puckered his lips in Arielle's direction. "I

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was congratulating your companion as she had won her game. Furthermore, she was the first to do so."

Vinson's raised an eyebrow.

Despite the surprising nature of the result, he felt that it was within his expectation.

"Just as expected..." he chuckled softly.

Whenever Arielle uses the phrase "a little bit", it will be an understatement.

Nevertheless, he was still curious to find out the true extent of how understated that phrase was.



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Soon, the next round of the tournament began.

Unfortunately, Arielle didn't encounter any of Kelsea's friends in the next few rounds.

Before long, a list of the bottom ten players was displayed.

Consequently, all of them left the venue awkwardly.

Standing in front of the scoreboard, Kelsea's expression grew solemn.

When she saw that Arielle had won all her games, just like her, panic began to set upon her.

During the first game, the sense of dread she felt wasn't strong. In fact, she was mostly filled with contempt for Arielle.

But now, that sensation had intensified to the extent that her heart pounded furiously.

Unable to tolerate it any further, she went to the organizer and asked for the videos of every one of Arielle's games.

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She wanted to see how good Arielle really was.

Before long, she had finished watching all of them.

Although Arielle had won all her games, none of her opponents were really strong. Furthermore, the moves she made looked ordinary, and one couldn't tell that she was an expert at all.

After watching the videos, Kelsea surmised that Arielle was definitely not good enough to defeat her.

She was being too careful and had overestimated Arielle.

From her perspective, Arielle had gotten lucky and was an ordinary player at best.

After heaving a sigh of relief, the tension on Kelsea's face eased.

After all, she was certain that Arielle wasn't proficient at chess.

Instead, it was her anxiety over the tournament that had fueled her paranoia over something so trivial.

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Closing her eyes, she took a few deep breaths and finally calmed down.

Before long, the tournament entered its final stages. By then, only eight competitors were left.

Vinson faced a lawyer while Everett played against a professional chess player. The third pair was also highly skilled.

And lastly, Arielle would face Kelsea.

Kelsea's friends cheered enthusiastically for her.

"Kelsea, defeat her in twenty moves!"

"No, I think you should take your time and torment her instead."

"It's such a pity I didn't get to face Arielle. She was really lucky to not have played anyone strong on her way to the finals."

Kelsea's ego was inflated by the praise her friends showered on her.

Furthermore, she no longer saw Arielle as a threat after watching the videos of her earlier games.

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When there was no one around, she couldn't resist patting Arielle on her shoulder. "I didn't expect you to know how to play chess."

"Thank you," Arielle replied indifferently, not showing any emotion.

"Ah..." Kelsea added, "However, it's a pity that you have to face me now. After this, you won't have the opportunity to play against Everett and Mr. Nightshire anymore."

"Oh?"

Thrusting her chin in the air, Arielle met Kelsea's gaze and held back a smirk. "Are you sure?"

Whenever Arielle stared intently at someone, her eyes would sparkle, causing the other person to feel embarrassed.

Suddenly, the confidence that Kelsea was brimming with earlier dissipated.

Pressured by Arielle's intimidating vibe, Kelsea was overwhelmed with frustration.

Dropping the act, she asserted, "Do you

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know who my chess mentor is?"

"Who?" Arielle casually asked.

Snorting, Kelsea declared haughtily, "The renowned chess player, Mr. Jewell. Have you heard of him before?"

"...who?" Arielle's lips twitched.

That old man?



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Kelsea thought that Arielle had not heard of him before. Rolling her eyes, she sneered, "You really are a dimwit. How can you not know who Mr. Jewell is? Let me tell you now. He is the founder of this annual event called the Haut Monde. If you don't even know who he is, what gives you the right to attend this banquet?"

From her perspective, an ignorant country bumpkin like Arielle doesn't deserve to be invited to such a prestigious event.

Kelsea added snarkily, "If you know what's good for you, you should leave right now. Don't wait till I have wiped you out in the game. By then, even your mom wouldn't be able to recognize what's left of you."

Just a moment ago, Arielle had a relaxed expression on. In fact, she had planned to play to a draw with Kelsea so as to not humiliate her. After all, she was Carter's cousin.

But after Kelsea brought up her mom, Arielle's gaze turned frosty instead.

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But after Kelsea brought up her mom, Arielle's gaze turned frosty instead.

Giving her an icy glare, Arielle asserted, "You wanted to know why am I worthy to be here? I'll show you by defeating you in

two minutes.”

“Hah?” Kelsea responded as if she had heard something ridiculous.

Rubbing her eyes, she wiped away her tears of laughter. She replied to Arielle in a condescending tone, “My dear, you can’t actually believe that you will be undefeated till the end? To be honest, the reason you won your earlier games was that your opponents weren’t very good anyway. You were lucky not to have faced anyone strong. In fact, you can’t even beat my friends, let alone me!”

“Is that so? What happens if I beat you?” Despite her chilly gaze, Arielle was grinning ear to ear.

Kelsea scoffed, “If you beat me, I will kneel and admit my defeat to you in front of everyone here! However, if you lose, you will do the same and apologize for your impudence.”

Arielle chuckled. “Do we have a deal?”

Kelsea gritted her teeth. “We do!”

Arielle scratched her ear. “In that case, see

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you at the chessboard.”

With that, Arielle left in search of Vinson without saying another word.

As for Kelsea, she was utterly infuriated by Arielle's attitude.

She swore to herself that she would make Arielle kneel before her in defeat.

Clenching her fists, Kelsea turned around and headed for the break room.

She needed to carefully consider which strategy to adopt in her attempt to decisively defeat Arielle.

Meanwhile, Arielle found Vinson who was chatting with someone else.

When Vinson saw her, his frosty expression broke into a smile. He remarked, “Congratulations. I heard that you're still undefeated.”

Arielle humbly replied, “I'm just lucky to not have encountered anyone strong. However, the opposite seems true for you as you kept drawing formidable opponents. I didn't expect you to be so

good in chess though."

"Everyone has their hobbies." Just as he spoke, Vinson gestured toward a man who looked to be born of mixed parentage and introduced him to Arielle. "This is Mr. Eakins and he is Mr. Jewell's favorite student. According to Mr. Jewell, Mr. Eakins is now a better player than he is. If you beat your opponent later, you will have to face him."

Arielle had heard Hans mention Everett before.

At that time, Hans told her that he had a very talented student, Everett.

Therefore, she now had the opportunity to face her student's student.

After all, she was looking forward to seeing for herself how talented Everett was given the fact that Hans held him in such high regard.

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Arielle nodded politely at Everett. "Hello, I am Arielle and I'm looking forward to playing against you."

However, Arielle was surprised when Everett only responded with an arrogant nod. After that, he took his leave from Vinson and headed toward his chess table.

Arielle had just been disrespected by her student's student.

This feels... weird.

"Don't take it personally." Worried that she was offended, Vinson explained, "Mr. Eakins is a chess fanatic and only respects those who are good at it. If not for the fact that I'm a chess player, he wouldn't be talking to me too, not to mention you."

Arielle's mind was put at ease having heard Vinson's reassurances.

Nodding, she replied with a smile, "I'm fine. It's now rare to find someone who only admires ability and doesn't fear the powerful."

"As long as you're not upset by it. It was

inappropriate of me to have introduced you to him."

Arielle waved her hand casually to show that she was fine.

"By the way," Vinson continued, "you will be facing Kelsea later, Carter's cousin. She is also one of Mr. Jewell's students who lost to Mr. Eakins last year. If you find her to be a challenging opponent, there's no shame in losing to her."

Looking displeased, Arielle asked, "Are you expecting me to lose to her?"

Usually, she didn't care about what others thought. However, when Vinson made that comment, she somehow felt unsettled by it.

Vinson shook his head in response. "I'm not saying that. I just want to tell you that it's okay to lose. To me, you are more amazing than anyone else. Whether you win or lose, it doesn't change my opinion."

Arielle's heart warmed in response. Biting her lip, she replied, "Don't worry, as your plus one, I won't let you down."

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Vinson gazed deeply into her eyes and grunted in acknowledgment.

Soon, the finals began.

Arielle and Kelsea were seated opposite each other.

This time, she was black while Kelsea was white. Based on the rules, Kelsea would make the first move.

In chess, the one who made the first move had a larger advantage. However, Arielle didn't care.

Fiddling with her queen, Kelsea sneered, "You were just lucky before this. But, your luck ended when you ran into me. If you admit defeat now, I will not require you to kneel for me."

When she finished, Kelsea waited for Arielle's response.

However, Arielle dug her ear and asked blankly, "I'm sorry, I wasn't paying attention. What did you say just now?"

"You..."

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Kelsea was filled with exasperation when her insult fell on deaf ears.

"Arielle!" Seething, she barked, "You had better not go back on your word. Whoever loses will have to kneel!"

Shrugging her shoulders, Arielle tapped on the timer and casually replied, "Let's start!"

Kelsea took a deep breath to calm herself.

When she was in the break room earlier, she had decided to use the Lightspring Maneuver against Arielle.

It was taught to her by her mentor. According to him, he had learned it from an international chess grandmaster during his time in Lightspring. Therefore, he named it the Lightspring Maneuver.

Initially, she had decided to use it against Everett. However, to guarantee her victory against Arielle, she decided to pull out all the stops. She didn't want to leave anything to chance even if Arielle could be easily squashed.

Letting out a grin, Kelsea made the first move.

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Without a second's delay, Arielle replied with her own.

When she used to play overseas, she would play lightning chess where the bet was a hundred for every game. Just by doing that, she had won herself a small fortune.

That was how she trained to think rapidly on her feet.

When Kelsea saw how rapidly Arielle made her moves, she assumed Arielle hardly knew how to play at all.

Proper chess players like her would make every move after careful consideration. By moving very quickly, Arielle seemed to be playing without thinking.

With that thought in mind, Kelsea regretted using the Lightspring Maneuver on Arielle.

After all, it wasn't worth the effort at all.

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