

The Princess And The Paupers Chapter 11 - 20

Chapter 11

“Bella, feel free to grab whatever you want – there’s an array of teas, fresh fruits, and delicious snacks. Make yourself at home.” Kenneth said indulgently.

Arabella took a sip of her tea and savored it. This wasn’t the average black tea. It had the distinct flavor and aroma of Assam tea. She took another sip, the smooth taste lingering in her mouth,. It was top-notch tea indeed.

“Bella, have some snack.” Louisa pushed some pastries towards Arabella, her voice laden with complex emotions, “We didn’t mean to lose you back then.”

“I know.” Arabella’s heart softened at her mother’s sorrow. Who would intentionally lose their child?

“How did you find me?” Arabella asked.

“A while ago, the Murphy family put out a missing person notice, mentioning the incident from years ago. It unsettled me when I saw it. I kept having nightmares, so I asked your father to look into it.” Louisa said, “After investigating, we found out that you’re our real daughter, and the girl we had raised as our own for eighteen years was not our biological child.”

Tears welled up in Louisa’s eyes as she confessed, “I’m sorry, we messed up, and you end up in someone else’s home.”

Kenneth also felt a deep sense of guilt, “I was too careless back then. I brought Serena home without checking properly. We looked into her background this time, her biological mother died in a big fire, and her father’s whereabouts are unknown. After all, we’ve

raised her for eighteen years, and it wouldn't be right to kick her out. So we want to discuss with you, can she continue to live here as your sister?"

Having raised Serena for eighteen years, they had grown attached to her, and she was an outstanding girl.

Arabella understood their intention, her expression nonchalant, "Whatever you decide is fine by me."

Louisa sighed in relief,. Their daughter was truly kind-hearted.

"Shall we show you around upstairs?" Louisa asked.

As they passed the music room on the second floor, Louisa casually asked, "Darling, do you have any hobbies?"

"Yes." Arabella replied offhandedly, "Making money."

Kenneth burst into laughter, "Ha-ha, like father, like daughter, I was also into making money when I was young! I can't believe we share the same hobby!"

"Nonsense!" Louisa called him out without hesitation, "You were all about hitting on girls when you were young!"

Kenneth froze for a moment before swiftly explaining, "But you were the only one who caught my eye. Chasing you was more important than making money."

Arabella averted her gaze, and by chance, saw through the window that they had a private helipad with three aircraft parked on it, one of which was a limited edition Boeing 747SP.

"Bella, this is your room, do you like it?" Louisa opened the door, hoping for her daughter's approval.

The room was filled with pink. Curtains, bed, wardrobe, desk – all pink. Arabella was at a loss for words.

“Your mom says all girls love pink, so she specially designed this princess-themed room for you!” Kenneth took a deep breath, exaggerating the sweetness in the air, “Can you taste the sweetness in the air?”

Arabella didn’t reply.

“It’s okay if you don’t like it. Your mom has prepared other rooms for you too!” Kenneth showed her a few neighboring rooms, each with a different theme – Mediterranean, classic, minimalist modern. Since they were unsure about Arabella’s preference and had plenty of rooms, Louisa decorated each room in a different style.

“I’ll take this one.” Arabella picked the simplest one.

“Rest up for a bit, we have a surprise for you!” Louisa held Arabella’s hand, “When the housekeeper comes to get you, go downstairs, okay?”

It was their first gift for their daughter, they were a bit nervous. Arabella understood and nodded in obedience. After tidying up her things in her room, She took out her phone and sent a message:

[Do you still have HeartEase Herb?]

The reply came swiftly in a phone call, a gentle voice on the other end, “Bella, are you planning on making HeartEase with the herb again? Did the sky-high prices of HeartEase in the black market tip you off to a business opportunity?”

Arabella smiled faintly at the sound of her clear laughter, “That’s one reason.”

“The other reason is Grannie Grace’s condition, right?” The girl asked.

The girl on the phone, Kelly, was her good friend and business partner, who knew her well.

“Making a HeartEase pill that sells for 10 million, and also helps Grannie Grace – it’s a win-win. But I only have one plant left.” Arabella said.

HeartEase Herb was very effective in treating heart conditions, and a single plant was very costly. It’s not only pricy but also rare, and only a few plants would appear at each auction. The only one left in Kelly’s possession was bought at a high price. Others who bought HeartEase Herb would only research its components, unaware of its true value and how to turn it into a product to maximize its benefits.

But Arabella was different. By combining it with other medicinal ingredients, she could turn HeartEase Herb into HeartEase. This little pill was a lifeline for heart patients deemed incurable by doctors! They sold out as soon as they hit the market. In Kelly’s eyes, HeartEase Herb could only reach its full potential in Arabella’s hands, and wouldn’t be wasted.

“Do you need it urgently? Shall I bring it to you now?” Kelly asked.

“No need, I’ll come get it in a few days. I’m staying somewhere closer to your place now.” Arabella briefly explained her situation of finding her biological family.

“Huh? Aren’t you Attlee’s biological daughter? How could such a soap opera happen to you.” Kelly couldn’t believe that the world had turned upside down in the few days they’d lost touch, “Since the Murphy family did you dirty like this, why are you still looking out for Grannie Grace?”

Arabella replied coolly, “She’s been good to me.”

Growing up, Attlee and Olga were always busy with their careers. It was Grannie Grace who raised her. Now that Grannie Grace was seriously ill, she couldn't just turn a blind eye.

“Grannie Grace is still your responsibility! Attlee is so naive, thinking that just because he's thrown some money around for a VIP hospital room and a caretaker, Grannie Grace will live forever! If it wasn't for you pulling her back from the brink time and time again, he wouldn't even have a mother now!”

Arabella's eyes darkened, but she remained silent.

Chapter 12

Kelly continued, “If it wasn't for you, how could their little factory have grown to this size? How could they have moved from a small town to a big city? How could Attlee become the richest man on the fringes of Summerfield? That's all because of your hard work behind the scenes. Otherwise, with his business sense, he'd be lucky not to go bankrupt, let alone become the richest man. Because he has no talent for business, he always causes trouble for you, forcing you to solve his problems. With your abilities, you should be the richest! He shouldn't even be involved! Unfortunately, all these years you've been doing this for them, and haven't left anything for yourself.”

“What's the big deal.” Arabella said lazily, as if unbothered, “I can make money whenever I want.”

“I just feel sorry for you! From childhood, they left you in the care of an old lady, and they barely visited home! Then when they found Yolanda, they kicked you aside. How cruel!” Kelly said.

“Enough, let’s not talk about them. Keep an eye on HeartEase Herb for me. One plant isn’t enough.” Arabella changed the subject, “Pay more attention to the upcoming auctions and let me know if there’s any news.”

“Don’t worry.” Kelly said.

They chatted for a bit more before hanging up.

Just then, Arabella’s phone vibrated. She looked at it and saw a message from one of her employees: [Boss! Big order! A super-rich guy ordered a hundred sets of clothes, a hundred bags, and a hundred pairs of shoes for his daughter, to be delivered today.]

[I’ve already sent all the limited edition items from our warehouse! We’re out of stock now!]

[When can you give me more designs?]

[Urgent! Urgent! Urgent! Three times isn’t enough for something this important!]

[Alright, waiting for your message. I’m about to arrive at the rich guy’s house. Let’s see what his daughter looks like. I hope she’s not too ugly to ruin your designs.]

Arabella was a bit surprised and replied: [You’re delivering it yourself?]

[For such a big order, of course, I have to provide the best service! What do you think?]

After reading the message, Arabella was puzzled. What kind of family would buy so many clothes and bags at once? Are they opening a store?

At this moment, a luxury RV pulled up in front of the villa.

Erik quickly stepped forward, respectfully opened the car door, and bowed, saying, “Miss Serena, you’re finally back for summer break? It’s going to be lively here again with you around.”

Serena exited the automobile with silky skin. She had a lovely face and a terrific body. Her brilliant eyes glittered with assurance, and her bangs were neatly cropped behind her ears to reveal a lovely forehead.

Several servants began moving her luggage into the house, with Erik following closely behind, “Miss Serena, you’ve been busy with exams, so I didn’t want to bother you. Now that you’ve finished your finals and have been travelling abroad with your girlfriends, I finally get a chance to chat with you.” Erik said, lowering his voice.

“What is it?” Serena had always looked quite ordinary, but growing up spoiled, she exuded an air of superiority and her voice was haughty, making her sound like a rich heiress. Today, she was wearing a fluffy dress, carrying a designer bag and wearing designer jewelry, looking like a graceful flower. This kind of beauty was crafted by money and skincare.

“The matter is...” Before Erik could finish, Serena noticed a dozen strangers in the garden. They were hanging beautiful clothes and bags on display racks, tidying them up a bit before taking them into the house.

The servants in the garden were blowing balloons and hanging star lights, and Martha was also busy directing them. Martha was essentially Serena’s personal maid, and had been with her since she was a child. After Louisa had five sons, when it came to Serena, she was both milkless and lacked energy.

So, Martha had always been by Serena's side, caring for her, putting her to sleep, with the single task of taking good care of Serena. As a result, Martha's status was a bit higher than the other servants, and their relationship was as intimate as mother and daughter.

Seeing her now, Serena's face lit up with a bright smile, "Martha!"

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"Miss Serena is back?" Martha's smile grew even brighter when she saw Serena. She quickly walked over, "I've missed you! You stubborn child, I told you not to live in school, but you wouldn't listen. Look at you, you've lost so much weight in just a month!"

"Haven't you lost weight too, Martha? Did you miss me too much?" Serena asked.

"You silly girl!" Martha laughed at her teasing, taking a fresh look at her, "Well, you've lost some weight, but you've become prettier!"

Serena smiled sweetly, watching the bustling crowd, "Is this a surprise from mom and dad?"

Were they rewarding her for working hard on her exams? Or did they think she had grown up after her exams and wanted to throw her a coming-of-age ceremony? Or perhaps, they were celebrating her admission to Summerfield College in advance? Either way, she was delighted by such a grand gesture. No girl could resist beautiful clothes, shoes, and bags, especially when so many limited edition ones were prepared all of a sudden, and the venue was decorated.

Indeed, she was the apple of her parents' eyes! Although she had five brothers, the attention her parents paid to her was no less than that to her brothers.

Hearing this, Martha's expression became somewhat awkward.

"I'm going to check it out." Serena's tone was still full of joy.

But Martha quickly called out, "Miss Serena, those items weren't prepared for you."

After she finished, she glanced at Erik. Neither of them wanted to hurt the girl who had grown up in a loving environment. But Martha was more qualified to say these things than Erik.

"Martha, I know. You guys probably didn't expect me to come back early on my friend's plane. I know you haven't finished setting up. It's okay. I'll pretend I didn't know. You guys carry on. I didn't see anything." Serena said.

"Miss Serena." Martha said.

Serena sauntered into the house, grinning from ear to ear. She was the only girl in the family, so who else could all these things be for if not her? Her brothers? Pfft. Her folks must have wanted to surprise her, and the servants were too chicken to spill the beans. Pretty standard stuff, right?

Serena walked into the main hall and spotted dozens of neat display racks. Each dress, each bag, seemed like it was made just for her. She darted from one rack to the other, joy spreading through her like wildfire.

Martha wanted to set the record straight, but seeing Serena's beaming face, she just couldn't bring herself to burst her bubble.

Arabella had just finished up some work in her room and was about to kick back and relax when her door was knocked on.

Chapter 13

Edith's voice politely echoed from outside the door, "Miss, your parents invite you to the garden."

Arabella understood. This must be the surprise they prepared. She closed the door and followed Edith to the garden. As soon as she stood at the garden entrance, everything around her suddenly darkened. Every light in the mansion was turned off.

Three seconds later, dreamy lights lit the place again.

"Miss, this way please." Edith gestured, bending slightly.

Arabella stepped into the garden and saw beautiful star lights hanging from the trees. Countless colored balloons floated in the air and colorful ribbons fell from the sky.

This was the surprise they prepared for her?

Having never received such a surprise from Attlee and Olga, she now felt their love and attention towards her.

Inside the house, Serena was stunned. Why did they release the ribbons without telling her? But this scene would definitely get lots of likes on social media. She was about to go to the garden to take some photos when she realized her parents had already run out excitedly, shouting, "Our baby daughter!"

Serena blushed slightly. She had never been called such an affectionate name by her parents. Was it because they hadn't seen her for a long time? Did they think she was in the garden and that was why they ran out so excitedly? They didn't know their baby daughter was still inside!

Serena had a happy smile on her face and was about to enter the garden when she saw her parents holding hands with a girl, saying something affectionately.

The girl was slender, with delicate skin, unlike Serena's, which had been pampered with countless skincare products. The girl's skin was more natural and glowing. As they approached, Serena noticed the girl's simple attire, but her features were striking. The girl had a face that somewhat resembled her mother's. A gust of wind blew, causing the girl's hair to sway. She looked mesmerizing.

Why was there such a guest at home? Serena was puzzled. It seemed that her parents valued this girl very much.

“Bella, how do you like the surprise in the garden? Isn’t it surprising? Do you like it?” Before Kenneth could finish, he noticed Serena standing there, slightly surprised, “Serena? Weren’t you supposed to arrive tomorrow afternoon? How come you’re here today?”

Hearing her father say that the surprise in the garden was prepared for the girl, Serena was surprised and confused. She didn’t understand why her parents valued a stranger so much. But there were guests present, so she behaved appropriately and said with a gentle smile, “Dad, Mom, I came back early on a friend’s plane. Who is she?”

Perhaps Kenneth hadn’t expected Serena to suddenly appear here. He quickly smiled, “You came at the right time. Let me introduce you. This is Arabella, your sister!”

Sister? What sister? A distant relative?

The girl was dressed plainly, not like a close relative. All their close relatives were very rich and had a high social status. This plainly dressed girl might be a distant relative. She could be here to establish connections or to borrow money?

Kenneth didn’t notice her thoughts and turned to Arabella, “Arabella, this is Serena, who I told you about. She just finished her exams and is now on summer vacation, so she’ll be staying with us.”

Serena, with her lively eyes, seemed to understand and greeted her politely, “Hello.”

Although she addressed Arabella as her sister on the surface, she didn’t take her seriously and treated her as a poor

relative.

“The clothes and shoes you ordered have arrived. They were personally delivered by the brand’s manager. They’re inside.” Kenneth said.

“They arrived so soon?” Louisa was overjoyed, holding Arabella’s hand and saying, “Let’s go and see if you like them. Serena, I have something to tell you later.”

Serena was stunned. The beautiful clothes and shoes inside were prepared for the girl in front of her? Who exactly was this girl? Why was she so valued by her parents?

Chapter 14

Arabella had thought that she had enough stock to last her for at least half a year. During this time, she wouldn't have to worry about designing new pieces, allowing her to focus on her pharmaceutical research and other side hustles. However, to her surprise, her parents went ahead and bought out all her stock, some of which were even her early designs that seemed a bit outdated now.

"Miss Arabella, your name is somewhat similar to our brand's founder. I'm wondering if you are familiar with our boss?" Jaime asked.

"Nope." Arabella's answer was clear-cut. Upon hearing this, Jaime understood that the rest of the people in the room were still unaware of the boss' true identity.

"You're one lucky gal, having parents who adore you so much. Look at these clothes, they're classic pieces from our brand's founder, Queen Abby. They're perfect for someone of your stature!" Jaime said.

"Arabella, check out this casual outfit. I bet it would look great on you." Kenneth pointed out a piece displayed on the rack.

"Queen Abby's designs really do stand out. Look at this skirt." Louisa held up the skirt against Arabella, "I can already imagine how beautiful you'd look in it."

"Arabella, what do you think about these?" Kenneth showed Arabella a pair of shoes like it was his prized possession.

"Arabella, how about this one-shoulder bag?" Louisa picked up a bag, "It looks like it was custom-made for you, I'm sure it would look great on you."

Arabella's eyes were bright as stars, her demeanor elegant, as she listened to their comments. She was naturally beautiful. Her eyes were sparkling clear, a mixture of cold and sweet temperament, creating an indescribable charm.

Serena, on the other hand, was turning pale, her shock was beyond words. She couldn't believe what she was hearing! What on earth was going on? Why were her parents treating this girl like their own daughter, even gifting her all these limited edition QY clothes?

Seeing them dote on Arabella, she began to feel a sense of panic that made her uneasy. What had happened during the month she was at school?

“These are all in your size. If you don’t like them, Dad can have them make another batch!” Kenneth looked at Arabella affectionately.

“No need.” Arabella’s eyes sparkled, her voice soft and gentle, “I think they’re all pretty good.”

Jaime could tell from the boss’ tone that she wasn’t exactly thrilled about the clothes. Couldn’t blame her, these were all her early works, meant to tide her over for a year or so. Who would have guessed they would come full circle back to her?

“How much for all these clothes?” Suddenly, Arabella’s gaze fell on Jaime.

Caught off guard, Jaime quickly responded, “These are all classic pieces by our brand’s founder, Queen Abby. The cheapest item is around three hundred thousand. As everyone knows, our founder, who’s both smart and beautiful, most of her works are usually priced between five hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand, with the real gems starting from a million.”

Clearly, Kenneth had ordered all items priced over a million for his daughter. At first glance, they were all top-tier designs. The difference between the gems and regular pieces was the amount of time the boss spent on the design.

Jaime had once witnessed the boss whipping up hundreds of designs in one night. The gem pieces might take a few minutes more than the regular ones.

“So, how much in total?” Arabella raised an eyebrow, giving Jaime a meaningful look.

Jaime, not catching on, felt a bit uneasy, “Mr. Collins paid a total of thirty-eight million eight hundred and eighty thousand to QY.”

Arabella didn’t expect to make so much money from her parents on the first day of acknowledging them, so she was a bit uneasy, “That’s quite expensive.”

“Not at all!” Jaime quickly explained, “QY doesn’t care about quantity, but quality. Each piece is a hot seller! You’ll be the belle of the ball wearing these!”

“Indeed, not cheap. Arabella emphasized, applying a bit of pressure with her gaze.

Seeing the founder's gaze and hearing her words, Jaime got the hint, "It is a bit pricey. How about a 10% discount

considering Mr. Collins made such a large order at once?"

"10%?" Arabella repeated his words.

"20%?" Hesitant, Jaime changed his offer upon seeing the founder's seemingly dissatisfied expression, "Or, 30% off? Can't go any lower!"

Any lower would seriously devalue the brand!

Everyone was dumbfounded. Who knew she could haggle with a top-notch brand? And that much?

Kenneth and Louisa never thought their daughter would be such a haggling pro, talk about being considerate!

"Just make it twenty-seven million, and forget the change!" Jaime decided, "I'll refund the difference back to Mr. Collins' account right away."

Kenneth thought his daughter was worried about him spending so much, and quickly said, "No need for a refund. Bella, Dad can afford it! Don't feel pressured."

"That won't do." Arabella firmly said, "Even with money, we can't just throw it around. How about we return half of the clothes?"

That way, she could sell them to other people and earn their money.

"No way." Kenneth quickly objected, "How about this, Jaime, refund the money to my daughter's account. She's the one who haggled, so it should go to her! Bella, give him your account, consider it pocket money from mom and dad."

So much pocket money. Jaime felt out of his depth. Everyone else was envious.

Serena couldn't believe her parents' generosity, casually giving away so much money without batting an eye. They'd never done this for her!

As she took a step back, Martha quickly came to her aid, whispering, “Miss, maintain your composure.”

Even though the truth was harsh, things hadn’t gotten to the worst point yet.

Serena watched as her parents, with an intimacy and warmth she’d never seen before, treated the girl in front of them with such care. They’d even forgotten about her!

That girl always had an aloof vibe about her. Even though she toned it down a bit in front of her parents, her inherent coldness and wilfulness were like a wild wolf that couldn’t be tamed. She could tell at a glance that she wasn’t a good kid.

How could there be a wolf in a flock of sheep? This place was clearly not her cup of tea! She was totally out of sync with everything here!

“Dad, Mom, who is she?” Serena tried to keep her cool, smiling as she asked.

It was then that Kenneth and Louisa noticed their adopted daughter.

Louisa was the first to give an order, “Take these things to Ms. Bennett’s dressing room.”

The title “Ms. Bennett” made Serena feel uneasy again.

She was clearly the sixth child in their family. How came there was suddenly an extra person?

Chapter 15

Jaime, you’re a lifesaver for running this errand today.” Louisa thanked him and then turned to Erik, “Please make sure he’s well taken care of.”

“Sure thing, Mr. Jaime, follow me please.” Erik said.

Jaime knew that the family had some serious talking to do. After exchanging pleasantries with Arabella, he left with Erik.

“Let’s sit down and talk.” Louisa held Arabella’s hand and gestured for Serena to sit. Serena felt as if a dagger was plunged into her heart watching this scene.

“Serena, let me introduce you again. This is Arabella Collins, our biological daughter who was left behind.” Louisa said

Serena was speechless. She had always thought this girl was a distant relative, here to borrow money. She couldn't believe that she was her parents' biological child. No wonder they were so nice to her!

"Here's the story. Years ago, Kenneth and I were passing through a small town when I went into labor. The nearest hospital was our only option." Louisa recalled the incident, "The hospital we found was out of private rooms. They temporarily put me in a ward with two other pregnant women. In the middle of the night, a fire broke out in the hospital. Due to heavy smoke, we couldn't see where we were going. In the chaos, I picked up a baby, thinking it was Bella. But in reality, you were another woman's child, not mine and Kenneth's. I picked up the wrong baby."

The words shattered Serena's last defense. She couldn't believe that she had no blood ties with the Collins family!!

"Bella was taken by the Murphy family, and the Murphy's baby was taken home by a janitor. And you, ended up with us, the Collins. If I hadn't come across a post online about a family searching for their lost child, we would still be in the dark about the mix-up!" Louisa said.

Serena was left speechless.

"As for your birth mother." Louisa paused, then decided to tell the truth, "We had someone look into it. She bled out after giving birth and was too weak to escape the fire that night."

What??? Her biological mother had died the night she was born?

Serena's face turned pale. She couldn't believe what was happening.

"Your birth father is nowhere to be found." Louisa said, then looked at Arabella and said softly, "We've talked to Bella. We plan to let you stay in this family. From now on, she's your sister. We owe Bella a lot and we'll do our best to make it up to her. Although you're not our biological child, we've always treated you as one. You and your sister need to get along well, take care of her, and be there for her, okay?"

Hearing her parents' favoritism, Serena couldn't accept it! Since when did the younger sister look after the older sister?

For years, she had been proud of her background because her father was one of the richest men in the country, her mother was a famous beauty, and her five brothers were all successful in their fields.

From childhood, everyone had always given way to her, appeased her and tried to please her. How could she give way to others, appease and try to please others?

Although she was very reluctant, at this moment, Serena, weighing the pros and cons, said without hesitation, “This is all very sudden for me, I won’t lie and say I’m not heartbroken. I’ve lived in this family for eighteen years. Then one day, my beloved parents tell me that I’m not their biological child.”

Serena lowered her head, her lost and heartbroken look was pitiful, “I didn’t expect my birth mother to have died in a fire the day I was born, and my birth father is missing. I never even had a chance to repay their kindness.”

As she spoke, tears rolled down her cheeks. She wiped them away, expertly managing her heartache, regret, and sorrow, “Dad, Mom, I’m grateful that you’re willing to keep me in this family. I’m content. I promise I’ll get along well with my sister from now on!”

Her face was sincere, and her tear-streaked eyes were heartfelt. But Arabella, having grown up in the Murphy family and seen all sorts of people, knew at a glance that Serena was being insincere.

“Welcome back to the family.” Serena opened her arms, attempting to express her affection for her sister.

Under the expectant gaze of their parents, Arabella responded, “Yeah, I appreciate the sentiment, but I don’t need a hug.”

Serena was left standing.

“I’m not a fan of physical contact, sorry.” Arabella had always been cold, but her reaction and attitude made Serena feel like she was deliberately making things difficult for her, making her feel embarrassed and awkward!

“Bella’s a bit introverted, but she’ll warm up. We’re all family now, Serena, you don’t have to be overly formal.” Louisa said. Upon hearing this, Serena’s face flushed with embarrassment, before finally replying, “Alright.”

“Alright, enough of that, let’s eat!” Louisa checked the time, “Bella, you must be hungry. We’ve been talking and totally forgot about the meal!”

“Tonight’s dinner was made by your mom and me. Let us know how it tastes?” Kenneth said with a smile, “If there’s anything you don’t like, just let us know and we’ll adjust it.”

The table was laden with delicious food, all made by Kenneth and Louisa. Serena felt a pang of jealousy. They had four chefs at home, and there was no need for Kenneth and Louisa to cook. But today, they made a special effort for Arabella! Kenneth and Louisa kept serving Arabella food, and her plate was soon full. Even though they were considerate of Serena’s feelings and served her lots of dishes as well, Serena noticed that they served Arabella noticeably more.

This made her even sadder, and she couldn’t even appreciate the delicious food.

*Bella, you’ve had it rough all these years! Have more food and nourish yourself. You should eat more meat too, you’re so skinny.” Louisa said.

Martha stood by, saddened as she saw Miss Serena being overlooked.

Luckily, Arabella went upstairs after finishing her meal, not lingering downstairs for too long. Serena found an opportunity to chat with her parents. After beating around the bush for a while, she tentatively asked, “Dad, mom, how did you confirm that Bella was your biological daughter from that online missing person ad? Were there any keepsakes?”

What she really wanted to ask was, could someone be impersonating? After all, who wouldn’t want to be the daughter of the richest man in the country. They couldn’t just determine blood relations based on a few similarities in appearance, right?

Hearing this question, Kenneth was taken aback for a moment, then explained with a laugh, “There wasn’t any keepsake. It’s just that the events of the night Bella was born were very similar to what we remember.”

Chapter 16

They were in the same hospital, and even the room number was the same. There was a fire nearby, and in the chaos, they grabbed the wrong baby.

“Is that so?” Serena wondered.

Kenneth continued, “They sent us Bella’s hair, we had it tested, and the similarity was 99.9% ! When we met, your sister and your mom, they looked like the same person. They were just too similar!”

Hearing Kenneth’s words, Serena felt a chill in her heart, her last bit of hope completely shattered. But she still couldn’t accept it, “How do you know I’m not your biological daughter?”

“We did a paternity test with Bella first, then took some hair from your room for testing.” Kenneth said.

In other words, Serena was indeed not related to the Collins family by blood. The last shred of hope in Serena’s heart had been completely extinguished!

“Serena, even though you’re not our biological child, we’ve been together for so many years, and we’ve always treated you as our own daughter.” Louisa said.

Even though Louisa looked at her as always, but Serena knew better than anyone. Some things were not the same anymore!

If only she could have been the legitimate daughter of the country’s richest family.

Now that Arabella was back, at best she could be considered an adopted daughter of the Collins family with no blood ties. In other words, she was the outsider in this family!

Her eyes dimmed for a few seconds, and she instinctively hugged Louisa, “Mom, I love you and Dad. I will take good care of you in this life.”

After spending some sweet time with her parents, Serena went up to the second floor, and suddenly found that the layout of the entire floor had changed! The entire second floor was completely new, obviously renovated, with each room a different style.

Serena grabbed a maid and asked directly, “What’s up with these rooms?”

“The master and madam wanted to welcome Ms. Bennett home, so they hired a famous international designer to design the rooms, and invited the best renovation team to come over. Apart from your room, the entire second floor has been renovated! Because they didn’t know what style Ms. Bennett would like, so each room has a different theme.” The maid said.

Serena's face turned a bit pale and twisted.

"However." The maid looked around and whispered, "Ms. Bennett grew up in a small family, and in the end, she only picked the most ordinary one."

Hearing the maid say this, Serena felt a bit better.

The maid looked around again, whispering, "Ms. Bennett is naive. She didn't know anything. I guess she hasn't seen famous paintings. That expensive 'Return of the Kings', was supposed to be hung in the living room for people to admire, but she had it moved to the lounge!"

Serena was a bit surprised, "She cares about this kind of thing?"

The master and madam seem to care a lot about her opinion, and they actually ordered it to be moved!" The maid said, "Today they even cooked themselves, and ordered so many beautiful clothes, shoes and bags for her. They even gave her ten million dollars, saying it was pocket money"

Under Serena's long eyelashes, a pair of bright eyes hid jealousy and resentment.

"Miss, forgive me for speaking out of turn. If you go abroad to college in the future, your family status may be precarious." The maid warned nervously.

Serena was very clear about her current situation, "Yeah, I know, you go ahead."

"Yes." The maid answered.

"Hold on, your name is Holly, right?" Serena suddenly called her back, took off the diamond bracelet from her wrist and gave it to her, "I heard your family is in the hospital, this bracelet might be able to help."

"Thank you, Miss Serena!" Holly immediately showed her loyalty, "I will serve you faithfully in the future."

This maid was pretty savvy.

Serena waved her hand to dismiss her, and a plan slowly formed in her heart. Even though Arabella was their biological daughter, she had spent all these years with Kenneth and Louisa, and her feelings for them were much deeper than Arabella's!

Outside room 306 of Hope Hospital, a man pushed the door and walked in. He had clear eyes, delicate features, and an incomparable noble elegance emanated from his body.

The old man on the bed moved his fingers slightly, as if feeling someone coming over, and slowly opened his eyes.

Seeing that it was his grandson Romeo, the old man's gaze softened, and his voice was a bit weak, "You little brat."

Romeo spoke softly, "Awake?"

"Where am I?" The old man strained to open his eyes and looked around, "What happened to me?"

Why did his whole body hurt so much, and he didn't even have the strength to speak?

Romeo asked with a light laugh, "Wasn't it you who wanted to go on a hunger strike?"

He refused to eat or take medicine, forcing him to show up. And in the end, he almost lost his life.

Reminded by him, the old man seemed to remember something. It seemed that there was such a thing. Originally, he wanted to change his position, but his whole body was in so much pain, "Ouch, it hurts!"

Instead of helping him, Romeo complained, "You're lucky to be out of danger."

He should endure this little pain, who made him make such a fuss?

1/2

16:20

"You, you little brat. I just woke up, can you be a little nicer? The old man felt a bit wronged, "It's all your fault. You tell me, how many days have you not come to see me?"

If he hadn't refused to eat or take his medicine, and had such a big operation, this brat wouldn't have time to come and see him.

“Who asked you to keep saying things I don’t want to hear? Romeo said.

Every time he came, the old man would mention Serena from the Collins family and talk about the marriage contract from the past.

“You! Humph, I don’t care! The old man turned his head in anger, “I’m in this state. Maybe one day I’ll kick the bucket. Tomorrow you must bring your fiancée to see me!”

Romeo stated firmly, “I don’t have a fiancée.”

“You’re trying to give me a heart attack!” The old man couldn’t help but blurt out angrily, “We have a marriage agreement with the Collins, so you must marry Serena! How else am I gonna explain this to them?”

“The marriage agreement was all your idea.” Romeo replied coolly, “Figuring out how to fix this mess is your problem, not mine.”

“You, you cheeky little. Oh my heart.” The old man suddenly clutched his chest, grimacing in pain.

“Carl, get the doctor. Romeo said.

No sooner had Romeo spoken than the old man waved him off, “No need! I’ve said my piece. If you and Serena don’t show up together tomorrow, you can forget about having a grandpa! From then on, whether I live or die, it’s none of your business!”

Seeing the two at each other’s throats again, Carl quickly stepped in to defuse the situation, “Calm down, sir. Mr. Romeo has just been really busy recently.”

“Hmph, you might as well be single for the rest of your life! You lot, always so busy with work. Can’t you spare a little time to think about the big picture of your lives?” The old man said.

“...” How did he get dragged into this? Why was he destined to be single forever? All he did was love his work!

*Swiftly find yourself a girlfriend as well, so certain individuals can witness the blissful life of having a partner!” Phillip hinted with a purpose.

Romeo opened the breakfast he brought and placed it before him, saying, “If Carl had a girlfriend, would you take over his work?”

“I would!” unexpectedly, Phillip readily agreed, and Carl was moved.

“I would, not! But, Carl, if you have a girlfriend, I’ll make sure this lad gives you some time off. At the very least, you won’t need to work overtime on weekends anymore! I’ll also prepare numerous wedding gifts for you! Furthermore, I’ll have him hire a few more people to share your workload!”

Upon hearing this, Carl was deeply touched.

“Especially regarding your salary, it must be increased!”

“Yes, yes, exactly! Look at Carl’s understanding and sensibility! Unlike you, never listening!” Phillip praised others while simultaneously complaining about his own grandson.

Carl basked in the compliments...

“Carl, there’s a project in Antarctica that needs some hands.”

Upon hearing Romeo’s words, Carl became flustered, “Mr. McMillian, what I meant was...”

“You pack your things, and you’ll leave tomorrow.”

“Mr. McMillian!” Carl immediately sought help with a pleading look toward Phillip.

As wise as ever, Phillip skillfully defused the situation, “Carl, I need you to come to me every day after work, just to chat with me. I’m terribly bored!”

“Mr. McMillian, please consider... When you say it like that... Carl tried to use Phillip’s words to his advantage.

Just then, the doorknob turned, and someone surreptitiously pushed the door open.

“It’s me, Mr. Phillip,” a disheveled Susana entered the room, noticing others were present, she hastily composed herself, “Mr. McMillian, Carl, you’re up so early as well?”

It was not yet eight in the morning, and visiting hours should have been prohibited for patients....

Susana must have used her old work badge to get in, took the fire escape, and avoided the cameras to sneak in...

“Who let you in?” Romeo didn’t make it hard for her yesterday out of respect for the hospital director.

But she had the audacity to come in without anyone’s permission.

“Mr. Phillip, Mr. McMillian, give me another chance!” Susana suddenly knelt down, “I really don’t want to leave this profession, please let me work at this hospital again...

Phillip, for the sake of me providing advice for your condition, for the sake of me being your doctor...”

She was desperate!

“Was she kicked out of the medical profession?” Phillip asked Carl.

“Yes, she didn’t take any measures when your condition worsened yesterday. Instead, she tried to end your life prematurely. She had a bad intention. Miss Arabella who treated you yesterday said she doesn’t deserve to be a doctor! Dr. Pierce kicked her out of this profession after hearing about her actions.” Carl looked at this venomous woman, giving her a cold look.

“It’s that bitch who had a grudge against me, tarnishing my reputation in front of the hospital director! Phillip, I was wronged, I have always been dedicated to your condition, you should remember...”

Before Susana could finish her sentence, Romeo’s face darkened, giving off an unhappy aura.

Carl couldn’t believe that even at this stage, this woman still wanted to distort the truth? To slander Miss Arabella?

Did she think they were blind yesterday? Did she still hope that they hadn’t seen the truth?

“Ms. Susana, I advise you to think carefully before you speak or act!” Carl furrowed his brows and harshly reminded her.

Yesterday, she advocated for the use of sedatives and heart soothers!

And now, the one slandering others is her!

Miss Arabella is Phillip’s lifesaver, yet she called her a bitch...

“All members of your family are not allowed to step into Summerfield from now on.” Phillip on the bed suddenly spoke, “Kick her out.”

Susana originally came to plead, but she didn't expect to involve her family, "Mr. Phillip, what did I do wrong to upset you? Just because of yesterday's misunderstanding?"

She clung to the bed leg, refusing to leave, "Mr. Phillip, let me explain..."

"Hmph!" Phillip was so angry that his face turned red, "You're not qualified to talk to me!"

"Mr. Phillip, if you don't forgive me today, I can only die here!"

"Then go die Phillip didn't care about her life or death, "Carl, give her the knife."

Carl picked up the fruit knife from the table and threw it in front of her. The knife landed on the ground with a crisp sound, startling Susana. She had only intended to scare Phillip and never actually intended to end her life.

"Sir..." Seeing that Phillip still refused to forgive her, and her pleas and suicide threats were ineffective, Susana could only cry, sobbing as she spoke, "My family is poor, and I am the only daughter Since I was young, I have been the hope of my entire family. My dream is to become a doctor who saves

7/0

lives

"A doctor? What qualifications do you have to be a doctor?" Phillip was infuriated, "Don't think I couldn't hear your conversation yesterday when I was lying in bed! It was you who advocated for the use of the calming potion and the soothing elixir. The young girl explicitly said that taking them would be fatal, but you still insisted! This woman who was unworthy of being a doctor just wouldn't stop!"

1,1...” Susana was shocked that the old man could hear yesterday’s conversation, leaving her speechless for a few seconds, unsure of how to explain. “That young girl said that the calming potion and soothing elixir would only provide half an hour of clarity before irreversible consequences. If I hadn’t been lucky enough to encounter that girl passing by and treating me, I would have been dead by now! You want a chance to plead with me?!”

I’m sparing you by driving you out of this profession and out of Summerfield. This is already on account of Dr. Pierce’s face. Don’t test my patience, or you’ll face even more severe punishment!”

“That young girl was right. Calling you a mediocre doctor would be praising you too much! You can’t even compare to a teenage girl”

Susana’s face turned pale, twisted into an unpleasant expression, “Mr. Phillip...”

“Carl, the medical staff who advocated using the calming potion and soothing elixir yesterday, I remember there was also a doctor who tried to shift blame onto that young girl. All of these people will be dismissed! They are not fit to be doctors!”

As Phillip said this, he glanced at the woman beside the bed, “Aren’t you leaving? Do I have to get someone to escort you out?”

“My lord, your health hasn’t recovered, don’t get angry... Ms. Susana, can’t you understand plain English?” Carl said coldly.

Susana knew there was no hope left in this matter, after whispering an apology, she left in a hurry.

Chapter 18

Who was that girl yesterday?”

Once Phillip and the others left, and he calmed down a bit, he turned around and asked, “Did we thank her properly?”

“We gave her a check already” Carl said, full of admiration when he mentioned the girl. “Who would’ve thought a girl in her teens would be such a miracle worker!”

Truly, it was so unexpected!

“That young girl just happened to pass by and fortuitously discovered your condition, going against the crowd’s opinions to save you!” If not for her “interference, Phillip would have probably passed away...

“She is such a kind and capable young girl...” In Phillip’s mind, a faint image of an innocent face appeared. Although somewhat blurry, he could vaguely sense that she was a beautiful girl with a pleasant voice.

Unfortunately, she was too young, and with Romeo and Serena already engaged... Otherwise, having her as his granddaughter-in-law wouldn’t be a bad idea!

“Did you note down the young girl’s contact information?” Phillip suddenly asked, “I want to thank her in person.”

Carl was taken aback and quickly looked at Romeo. After all, he had asked for her phone number yesterday!

You better not bother her,” Romeo coolly refused.

“What’s the matter? Can’t I meet my lifesaving benefactor and express my gratitude in person?”

What Phillip was thinking was that so many experts and renowned doctors couldn’t cure his ailment, yet this young girl managed to save him at a critical moment. What did that signify?

It meant that her medical skills far surpassed theirs!

If he remembered correctly, the young girl was only seventeen or eighteen years old, and he happened to have another grandson around her age...

If he could successfully match them, it would be a splendid match.

“Do you happen to have her contact information?”

Phillip remembered the look Carl gave Romeo just now, this kid definitely has her phone number or WhatsApp account.

“I don’t care, you must bring that girl here.” Phillip tried his best.

In the end, Romeo relented, “Whether she comes or not, depends on her.”

Phillip’s “plot” was half successful and he quickly said, “Of course!”

If she doesn’t come, it must be because she’s scared of his cold demeanor!

Seeing Romeo ready to leave...

“Wait!” Phillip looked as if he thought of something and added, “When you talk to the girl, be nice! Be gentle! If you don’t know how, let Carl teach you! Don’t scare her away, got it?”

She might be his future granddaughter-in-law...

Romeo thought to himself: Isn’t he gentle? Isn’t he polite? Does he need someone else to teach him?

Carl also complained: My lord, don’t hurt me, Mr. McMillian finally forgot about the Antarctica project...

“No matter what, she’s the one who saved my life, you can’t be rude to her!” Phillip was afraid that the young girl would be scared of his cold attitude.

Meanwhile.

Kenneth and Louisa approached the dining table, placing a variety of breakfast items in front of their two daughters.

This is the chef’s freshly made pastries. Here, Bella, this is yours. Be careful, it’s hot.”

“Serena, you’ve been staying at school for a month, and you look like you’ve lost weight. Come on, eat more.”

Serena sweetly smiled, “Dad, Mom, don’t worry about taking care of me. Give more to sister instead. Have I ever lacked good food since childhood?” Louisa chuckled, thinking that this child was indeed sensible. She hadn’t tried to exclude Arabella despite her sudden arrival, but instead, she considered her stepsister in everything.

The scene was much warmer than they had imagined.

“Dad, this is the black tea you like to drink with pastries. Shall I get you some tea?” Serena stood up and served tea for Kenneth, then promptly served Louisa as well

“Mom, enjoy it.”

They hadn’t expected Serena to be so considerate. Smiling affectionately, they lifted their teacups and took a sip.

Serena seemed like the triumphant victor after a successful battle, deliberately glancing at Arabella beside her.

What if she was the biological daughter? After so many years of living together, no one understood their parents’ eating habits better than she did.

How could Arabella not notice Serena’s little scheming? Her gaze remained tranquil as water as she calmly enjoyed the delicate pastries on her plate, seemingly indifferent

“Dear sister, I don’t know what you like to drink...” Serena intended to let Arabella prepare it herself.

However, before she could finish her sentence, Arabella casually said, “Coffee, please”

Serena was taken aback. Did Arabella mean for her to make coffee for her?

“You really dote on your sister...” Kenneth misunderstood, thinking that Serena wanted to voluntarily prepare coffee for Arabella. He happily chimed in, “Bella, that’s just how Serena is. She cares about her own family a lot. If you refuse her offer, she won’t be pleased.”

Arabella looked up at her and said, “Then, I’ll trouble you for that.”

Upon hearing Kenneth's words, Serena found herself in a difficult position. But since things had come to this point, she could only stand up with a smile and graciously fetch the coffee pot.

From the corner of her eye, she noticed Arabella was wearing a white chiffon dress today.

The fabric of the dress was thin, and brewing hot coffee required high water temperature...

If Arabella were accidentally scalded...

With just a glance, Arabella saw through Serena's little scheme hidden within her heart.

After brewing the coffee, Serena was about to pour it into Arabella's cup when she heard Arabella say, "Don't pour too much."

Serena didn't expect her to see through her plot so quickly, she gritted her teeth secretly, she wanted to pretend she didn't hear it, but Arabella added, "That's enough, thank you."

Serena could only stop awkwardly, smiling and saying, "Sister, you're really careful, I've been pouring tea for my parents for so many years and I've never spilled it, are you afraid I'll scald you?"

Arabella looked at her with clear eyes, a light smile on her lips, "I saw you almost fill the glasses for Mom and Dad, so I wanted less."

This behavior is also a kind of respect.

"Bella, you don't have to be so formal at home..." Louisa didn't expect this kid to be so sensible, learning table manners so well.

On the other hand, Serena's words just now seemed a bit petty.

But, Serena probably didn't mean any harm.

Kenneth lightened the mood with a laugh, "Bella, Serena, exam results should be out soon, have you guys thought about which university you want to go

to?"

He put down his tea cup, looking at them with kind expectancy.

After Serena sat down, she felt the need to put Arabella in her place. So she jumped the gun, saying with a hint of pride, “I’ll probably choose Summerfield College.”

Upon hearing “Summerfield College”, Arabella lifted her eyes, twinkling with an indiscernible emotion.

Serena naturally noticed this gaze and said with a smile, “Although many classmates say this exam was hard, I found it easier than the practice problems we usually do. I’m not feeling any pressure, I’m confident I’ll get into Summerfield College.”

“Summerfield College is the best university in our country, but... I remember you were planning to study abroad, weren’t you?” Kenneth looked at her, a bit puzzled in his eyes.

Chapter 19

I used to think that way too, Serena said with a smile, “but Summerfield College is not far from home. If I finish school early every day, I can still come back home and spend time with you all. I prefer this kind of life.”

As she spoke, she deliberately hooked her arm around Kenneth’s, playfully smiling.

We’ve never had to worry about your studies since you were little,” Kenneth said kindly.

“What about you, Bella?” Serena held Kenneth’s arm and sweetly looked at Arabella across the table. “You must have done well in school, right? I forgot to ask, where did you go to school before?”

*Aren’t you feeling hot?” Arabella elegantly wiped her mouth with a napkin and suddenly asked.

Serena was leaning half of her body against Kenneth, which may not have been a problem before, but now it seemed a little inappropriate in front of others.

Kenneth smoothly withdrew his arm, smiling as he said, “Indeed, it’s a bit warm. I’ll lower the air conditioning.”

Yes.”

Serena felt a bit embarrassed, but quickly resumed a nonchalant demeanor, smiling as she said, “Bella, you haven’t answered my previous question. How were your grades in the past?”

“Okay.”

“And what are your expectations for this exam?”

Arabella ate the delicate pastries on her plate nonchalantly, “Hard to say.”

“Bella, do you have any favorite universities? Dad can talk to the people in charge over there...”

Arabella took a sip of coffee and spoke frankly, “I’m not interested in going to university.”

Upon hearing this, Serena couldn’t help but think that Arabella must be a poor student. She had said all those things about not being interested, but it was probably just an excuse because she didn’t want to admit she had poor grades.

“Hahaha! I didn’t like going to school back then either. I even got caught skipping class once by your grandpa...” Kenneth recalled the past, chattering on, suddenly remembering that his precious daughter had said her hobbies were all about making money!

An idea struck him, “So, Bella, what do you want to do in the future? Do you have any interests in specific industries? If you want to be a celebrity, I can help you secure resources!”

These days, there were many young girls aspiring to be internet celebrities or actresses, right?

If his daughter had such a dream, he would definitely support her all the way!

Arabella was confused.

Serena was shocked!

“I don’t want to be a celebrity,” Arabella candidly replied.

“So what do you want to do? Any industries you’re interested in?”

“Fashion design, maybe.”

“Fashion design, that’s great!” Kenneth echoed with enthusiasm, “How about this, since it’s vacation now, I happen to own a small clothing company, it’s close to home, you can go check it out.”

Arabella was speechless.

“If you find that being a boss is more fun than going to school, then you don’t need to go to university! We have plenty of businesses, we don’t need any degrees! Right?”

Arabella was surprised by her father’s open-mindedness, while Serena’s hand under the table was slowly clenched into a fist.

Is Dad actually giving Arabella a company to mess around?

Although the clothing industry is the slowest-growing among all the industries operated by the Collins family, and it only started developing half a year ago.

But it’s still a company!

Arabella just returned to this family for a day, and she can inherit the family business?

“If you don’t want to make your own living, mom and dad can transfer money to you every day...”

Arabella’s speechless. Is this a thing?

The servants around them were green with envy. This is the difference!

The difference between people is just too great!

Serena’s nails were digging deep into her palm, her heart filled with resentment.

“Didn’t transfer your pocket money today!” Louisa said, taking out her phone, “I’ll transfer a million first, okay? Darling daughter, what’s your bank account number?”

“No need “She had some money, which was enough for now.

“Then I’ll also transfer a million to you, let me know your thoughts when you’re ready, no rush.”

The servants around them were extremely envious! The difference between individuals was simply too vast! Serena’s nails dug deep into her palms, feeling quite unwilling.

“I haven’t transferred today’s pocket money to you yet” Louisa said, taking out her phone. “Let me transfer a million over now, my darling daughter. What’s your bank account number?”

“No need.” She had some money herself, and for now, it was enough.

“Then I’ll transfer a million to you as well. Take your time to think about it, and let me know your thoughts later, no rush.”

The servants around them were even more envious. To receive two million dollars transferred by their biological parents every day-was there any need for them to start their own companies or work for money?

“My darling daughter, give me your bank account number quickly, or else I’ll transfer it to your PayPal in batches!”

“I’ll do it now...”

“Would one million be too little? How about two million?”

“Yes, yes, each of us will do two million!”

Arabella gave up struggling, saying, “Give me the address.”

“Huh?” Kenneth and Louisa were stunned for a moment, suddenly understanding their daughter’s intention. Was she choosing to take over the company? “That’s great! I’ll send you the address...” Louisa was overjoyed. After sending the location, she smiled and said, “It’s just a very small company. Even if it loses money and closes down, it’s normal. You don’t need to put too much pressure on yourself... We have many companies in our family, so you can play as you like!”

Arabella was helpless.

Serena's face turned pale with jealousy, and a sly thought flashed through her mind. She maintained her smile and said, "Bella, the clothes and shoes Dad and Mom gave you yesterday don't seem suitable for work. Since I have some free time today, let me take you to the largest shopping center in town. I heard that you moved to Summerfield with your foster parents half a year ago, and you probably haven't been to such a big shopping center before, right?"

"Yes, yes, that's right. Bella just arrived, and we haven't taken her shopping yet... Prepare the car!"

As Louisa spoke, Arabella said, "No need." She wanted to be alone later. There were still many things she hadn't handled.

"Bella, I'll pick out some places for you to see which one you'd like to visit."

"Or how about letting Mom take you to the beauty salon for a spa?"

"Bella, I can also accompany you for afternoon tea."

"Another day," Arabella stood up, "I still have some things to organize upstairs. You all enjoy."

Seeing her leave, Louisa hurriedly said, "Do you need me to help you tidy up?"

"Or should I ask Edith to help you?" Kenneth asked with concern as he looked at her retreating figure. "Did you not get enough rest yesterday?" "No, no need. It's just some private matters."

Arabella patiently answered all their questions before returning to her room. Just as she sat by the bed, her phone vibrated, and she saw it was Kelly calling.

"Bella, there's a HeartEase Herb auction at three in the afternoon-six plants! I've prepared the money for you!"

Arabella curled her lips into a smile. "You're quite generous."

"Of course! As long as you have a need, even if there's a danger to your life, I'll send someone to handle it for you! This tiny bit of cash is no big deal at all!" "Ha" Arabella heard the last sentence and couldn't help but mock, "Why don't you handle it yourself, are you afraid of death?"

“It’s about cherishing life! Alright, alright, I’ll pick you up at two in the afternoon.”

“Okay”

Arabella didn’t bother being polite with her and sent the location right away.

Downstairs.

Since finishing breakfast, Serena had been trying her best to please Kenneth and Louisa, offering massages and saying sweet things to make them laugh heartily. When noon came, Kenneth and Louisa went to the kitchen to cook, and Serena finally let out a relieved breath.

Chapter 20

At this moment, Martha brought some fruits and said, “Serena, you’ve been busy all morning. Would you like to have some fruits?”

Before Serena could thank her, Martha whispered, “Miss Serena, there’s something I’d like to talk to you about.”

Serena glanced at her, understanding what she meant. She saw another servant working nearby and stood up, saying, “Martha, take the fruits to the garden, and I’ll eat there.”

“Sure.”

Carrying the fruits, Martha followed Serena to a secluded corner of the garden. Seeing that there was no one around, she couldn’t help but express her concern, “Miss Serena, you’ve been through a lot! In the past, you wouldn’t have needed to go to such lengths to please Mr. and Mrs. McMillian.” Serena lowered her gaze, her lashes hiding the disappointment that emanated from her. While her eyes couldn’t be seen, her despondent aura was palpable.

In truth, she didn't want to act this way, but in this household, Arabella's status would only grow stronger while hers would diminish. At this moment, she still had a chance to catch up.

"Miss Serena, these are all imported fruits, and I've cut some of each for you. Please, eat them. You didn't have much in the morning..."

Martha's empathy was heartwarming. "Oh, and I wanted to tell you that for now, they haven't revealed Ms. Bennett's identity to the public, so in the eyes of outsiders, your engagement with Mr. McMillian is still valid..."

Serena's eyes instantly lit up. Yes, Romeo, she still had Romeo...

What did it matter if she was the daughter of the Collins family? As long as she married Romeo, she would be on top of the world!

"You've grown up with Mr. McMillian since childhood. Although you haven't met often, you still spent more time with him than that Ms. Bennett! She probably hasn't even seen Mr. McMillian in person!"

"Martha, are you suggesting...?" Serena had a rough idea of what Martha was getting at, but she dared not say it, nor could she.

"I know some people from the McMillian family, and a few of them work at Phillip's villa. I heard that these days, in order to force Mr. McMillian to show up, Phillip hasn't been eating or taking his medicine, and he's practically on the brink of collapse!"

Serena covered her mouth, clearly startled by the revelation.

“But luckily they got to him in time and he’s still kicking! He’s hoping you and Mr. McMillian can pay him a visit. Don’t you have Mr. McMillian’s contact? Why not ask him out?”

“But...”

“He’s running a huge corporation, so he’s definitely busy. But no matter how busy he is, he’s still a red-blooded male! If a pretty girl like you asks him out, he’ll definitely be tempted.”

Martha was confident. “Even if he’s slow on the uptake when it comes to romance and isn’t thinking about marriage yet, there’s no rush. You can spend more time with him, build a stronger connection. Once you two are tight, who cares about Ms. Bennett?!”

“Phillip has always wanted to arrange your marriage. If you gain his approval... what’s there to fret about? You’re practically gonna be his grandchild’s spouse!”

Serena’s desires were reignited, but her rationality held her back.

“Martha, the Collins and McMillian families are engaged, but we both know... that engagement actually belongs to my sister... I’m just a foster daughter.”

Serena seemed slightly swayed by her words.

“Now is the time, while the McMillians are still in the dark about Ms. Bennett. Serena, make your move. This is your best shot!”

Martha had watched her grow up over the years and didn’t want to see her in such a state.

With Mr. McMillian by her side, she could make a name for herself nationwide!

“Ms. Bennett is of high status and won’t have trouble finding a good family to marry into. But you’re different! You don’t have parents or a powerful backing. You’re just a foster daughter of the Collins family, and who knows if they’ll still acknowledge you in the future! You know how high society works. As a foster daughter, marrying well is a tough sell! If you don’t marry Mr. McMillian, you’ll be overshadowed by Ms. Bennett for the rest of your life, always inferior to her!!”

Upon Martha’s persuasion, Serena took out her phone and pulled up Romeo’s WhatsApp. There were messages she had sent before.

The messages were things like “Are you asleep?”, “Are you busy today?”, “Goodnight”, but Romeo had never responded to any of them.

The last time she made contact was yesterday, when she had just returned and asked him if he was there. He didn’t reply.

“Miss!”

Martha said a lot more, and Serena finally stopped resisting. She opened the chat and sent several messages in a row.

[Romeo, are you there?]

[I heard your grandpa is sick and in the hospital. Let’s go see him, okay?]

[When are you free today? Can you come pick me up?]

[If not, I can have my driver take me. It won’t be any trouble for you.]

[I’m really worried about Grandpa Phillip!]

On the second floor.

1/2

16:20

Arabella arrived at the spacious balcony and admired the view.

As she was looking, she noticed two figures in the distance apparently discussing something.

She was too far away to hear the contents, but she could tell that those two were Serena and Martha. Serena was sitting in a white wicker chair, and Martha was standing next to her, seemingly persuading her about something.

Arabella wasn't bothered, and after admiring the views a bit more, she went back inside, leaving only Serena and Martha in the garden, nervously staring at the phone.

Unlike before, a new message alert quickly appeared on Serena's phone screen.

Serena's heart nearly pumped out of her chest. She looked closely, and sure enough, it was from Romeo.

Romeo had replied.

Romeo had finally replied.

But his response was 'No need.'

Serena's burning heart felt like it had been doused with cold water. It went cold in an instant.

Under Martha's bad influence, Serena sent a few more messages, saying she was really worried about his grandpa, and knowing he was sick, he'd probably appreciate someone visiting. She was just looking out for Grandpa Phillip on behalf of the Collins family.

By the time lunch was over, Serena still didn't hear back from Romeo.

She had a hunch that Romeo on the other side was probably not gonna reply.

Meanwhile, Arabella was sitting on the couch with her phone in hand, sending out orders.

"Look up the cause of the fire at Mercy Hospital on September 10th, eighteen years ago for me."

"Jeff Boss? Are you pulling my leg? Mercy Hospital?"

That was located at the intersection of three cities, with a hell of a big and complicated population, and so much time had passed, that place was long gone.

"Jeff Boss, why are you looking into this? Does it have something to do with your past?"

Arabella "Mhm"

Arabella always felt that the fire was fishy. Everything was fine one moment, then suddenly there was a fire?

Her mom told her it was a rainy night. Even if someone accidentally started a fire, it shouldn't have spread that fast.