

Arabella 1991

Chapter 1991

"Your daughter? Well, if your daughter attracts attention with her thick glasses, suitors for my daughter would line up from Times Square to the Golden Gate Bridge."

"Alright, let's all calm down. The marriage prospects of the younger generation have you all too concerned; I feel terribly burdened for making you all worry so much."

Before David could fully broker peace, everyone's gaze suddenly fell upon him.

"David, tell us, what do you think of Melissa? Is she a good match?"

"David, now in front of me, just give it to me straight—do you fancy Linda?"

"David, why don't you just lay out your criteria for choosing your partner?"

"The daughters and nieces of the guests here, even Mrs. Lee's granddaughter—who would you pick?"

David hadn't expected that the difficult question had been kicked to him.

Just then, Arabella walked in, and David had an idea, "Truth be told, I do have a girlfriend. It's just that due to certain sensitivities, we haven't gone public."

"What?" Everyone's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Which family's darling is she? She's better than our Melissa? Or do you just look down on my girl?"

"David, do you really have a girlfriend? Are you serious?"

"But I was on the phone with your mother just yesterday, and she was quite sure that you're the only single person in the family."

"If you don't believe me, you can ask my sister." David hooked his arm around Arabella's neck, pulling her close, "Bella, tell them, am I dating Kelly?"

"Kelly? The Miss Piper from the Piper family?"

The guests were stunned. The standing of the Piper family was leagues above anyone else present.

If David was really dating Kelly, then their kids really didn't stand a chance.

"Just nod if it's true," David said with a smile, shooting a pleading look at his sister.

Arabella knew he was fibbing, but given the circumstances, she obediently and seriously nodded her head while internally dissenting.

"Forgive me, it is due to company policies that we've had to keep quiet. Please understand."

Arabella noticed the man's expression which didn't seem truly happy.

"Yes, now that you have a girlfriend, your parents can finally be relieved, and we don't have to worry

about you anymore."

The guests quickly shifted to polite small talk, as if the earlier quarrel had never happened.

Arabella's eyes were wide open once again.

Chapter 1992

Little did they expect—

They had barely taken a few steps when a servant came to report, "Ms. Bella, Kelly has arrived."

David's eyes nearly popped out of his head, and he froze in his tracks!

No way, such a coincidence! What's she doing here?

"Bella!"

At that moment, Kelly entered the living room, a radiant smile on her face and a gift in hand.

This is it! Game over!

David bolted over to her and enveloped her in a hug reminiscent of intimate couples, whispering

urgently in her ear, "Kelly, I need to speak with you. Can we step outside?"

"What's with you, getting all hands-on?!"

Kelly tried to push him away, but David clung to her tightly.

This man must be out of his mind, embracing so publicly in the living room, in front of so many people,

and muttering strange things.

"I know you're still mad at me. Just give me a chance. I'll go outside and explain everything slowly."

David desperately signaled with his eyes.

"Explain what? Are you drunk or something? Let go of me!" Kelly couldn't push him away and, with

anger, stomped on his foot.

Though she was just wearing slippers, her force was enough to twist David's face in pain.

He couldn't speak a single word.

All the guests were stunned; they hadn't expected Miss Piper to have such a fiery temperament.

True to being pampered from a young age, she didn't leave even a shred of dignity for her boyfriend in

front of all these guests.

"Kelly, you've misunderstood my brother."

At this point, Arabella stepped forward, her calm words causing Kelly to widen her eyes in confusion.

What on earth was going on?

But to the onlookers, her look of disbelief seemed to reflect shock that a friend would take her brother's

side, defending him.

"My brother's relationship with that actress is strictly business. You're his girlfriend and my dear friend.

He would never do anything to hurt you."

Arabella's words made Kelly pause for a split second before she got it!

All these guests, all these eyes on her.

And they hadn't expected her to turn up.

Now, with her arms crossed over her chest and her face lifted proudly, she said somewhat petulantly,

"Considering Bella's speaking up for you, I'll forgive you this time. But remember, there won't be a next time!"

After he finished, he smiled apologetically at the other guests, "Excuse us for a moment."

As the trio made their way upstairs, suddenly, an excited voice rang out.

"Kelly?"

Chapter 1993

It was Louisa!

She had just returned home with Kenneth after bidding farewell to their guests when she caught sight

of her son and Kelly in a tiff—both unexpected and delightful, she couldn't contain her joy.

"So you and David are in a relationship."

Louisa was ecstatic, quickly reaching for Kelly's hand and exclaiming, "You've kept this a secret so well, child. At Bella's homecoming banquet, I asked if you had a boyfriend, and you told me no."

"Uh, Auntie." Kelly knew this misunderstanding had gone too far, and she tried to pull her hand away, but to no avail.

"I understand, you must have been thinking of David, knowing he's under a confidentiality agreement.

You'd rather take the hit yourself than let him breach it and pay the penalty."

Kelly was still trying to withdraw her hand.

"I saw you two having a moment just now. Did this guy get too close to some female celebrity and break your heart? He's got a girlfriend and still can't keep his distance with others. I'm going to set him straight right now!"

Kelly barely managed to say there was no need when, in the blink of an eye, Louisa had David by the ear.

"Mom, that hurts, let go." David never imagined his own mother to twist his ear quite so firmly!

A famous star with millions of fans, being reprimanded by his mother in public. How mortifying!

Where's justice in the world?!

"Louisa, please let him go. Bella already explained, it was a misunderstanding, it's not his fault." Kelly,

seeing Louisa's firm grip and feeling empathic pain for David, quickly stepped in to clarify.

Seeing Kelly rush to defend her son, Louisa knew their relationship was real, and her heart bloomed

with joy.

She let go and warned her son, "See how much Kelly cares about you! From now on, whatever you do,

think of Kelly first. Don't break her heart again! Since you're dating her, you better treat her right."

David rubbed his sore ear, "You're my mom, whatever you say is right."

"Did you hear me?!"

"I heard you, I heard you."

"Kelly, come with me. Kenneth, please entertain our guests." Louisa took Kelly by the hand and they

went into the bedroom.

"Sorry, everyone, please help yourselves to some tea and pastries." Kenneth took his place at the head

of the table to entertain the guests, saying with a hearty laugh, "We always thought David was single,

but turns out he's been quietly seeing someone and we're just finding out today."

"It's alright, we saw Kelly today, beautiful and graceful. She and David make a perfect match; we're just happy for David, and happy for you as parents."

"The Collins family just keeps having good news; it's going to be a great year! Everything will go well for the Collins family."

"Let's toast to you in advance."

"All your six children have all found great matches, we are beyond pleased. We'll toast with tea instead of wine to honor you."

"Yes, absolutely, this calls for a toast!"

Inside the bedroom.

Kelly tried to say she wasn't her daughter-in-law, that that she was just playing along with David.

Chapter 1994

"Auntie, actually I..."

"I know, Kelly. David is always so busy, hardly has time for you. I felt sorry for you. If you ever feel bored, you can come to Auntie. I'd be happy to go shopping or have meals with you."

Kelly couldn't bear to deceive her further. Just as she was about to clarify, Louisa took out her phone.

"Let me add you as a contact, dear. Even though I have many children, none can really be around to keep me company. It didn't seem long after Bella came back into our lives that she became busier than her brothers. I would be so glad if you wanted to join me for meals and shopping."

Kelly took out her phone and opened her contacts, "Auntie, I'd love to hang out, but the relationship with David."

"I get it, you two are just dating. As to whether you will make it to marriage, that depends on his behavior. David may seem carefree, but he's actually very caring. You can ask Bella if you don't believe me."

"Auntie, I know David's a great person."

"You are just like Bella, so young and yet so capable, already able to manage a corporation, still practically a university freshman."

Mentioning Arabella made Louisa's eyes well up with tears again. Arabella was too understanding, having suffered silently for so long while being bullied by Serena.

Kelly wanted to comfort her, knowing Bella never came off worse in her encounters with Serena.

But Louisa brushed away and smiled, " I have digressed. You came to see Bella today, didn't you? I

won't keep you much longer. Let me put this bracelet on you."

"No, I can't accept it. David and I are not the relationship you think we are, just now we were only..."

Before Kelly could finish, Louisa's phone rang.

"I understand. You two were just having a little spat earlier. It's okay, I won't take it to heart. He was at

fault, and you had every right to be upset. Just wear it for now."

Louisa slipped the bracelet onto Kelly's wrist and gestured for her to go find Bella. Then she picked up

her call, diving into a chat with her friend.

Kelly didn't get a chance to speak a word.

After a while, Kelly approached Arabella, gesturing to the bracelet on her wrist. They headed to the

garden, and David followed.

"Bella, what should I do? She has got it all wrong. I've tried so many times and can't get this bracelet

off." Kelly struggled again to remove it, but the bracelet seemed custom-made, clinging snugly to her

wrist.

Arabella gave a small, amused smile. "The white jade actually looks pretty good on you."

Before she could finish, Kenneth came out to see off some guests.

The guests noticed her prominently displayed bracelet and complimented Kelly, "What a beautiful bracelet."

Kenneth grinned and said, "It's for the daughter-in-law."

Chapter 1995

"David, I can't wait to get my hands on your wedding sweets! Make sure you send me an invitation when the time comes."

"And for your wedding, Grandma Stacy will surely give you a gift."

Kelly forced a strained smile; the misunderstanding had deepened.

"Kelly has just taken over the family business and is swamped with work, and my schedule is packed

toot. I'm afraid you will have to wait a bit longer," David said, escorting guests out with his father. "But if there's any good news, we'll definitely let everyone know."

"David, my boy, you might be busy, but don't keep Kelly waiting too long."

"Absolutely, you have to give her a wedding—that'll be the talk of the nation."

"You two really look like a matching pair, a perfect couple indeed."

Kelly watched their retreating figures with a wry smile. A perfect couple? How could they look like a perfect couple!

"Bella, what should I do with this bracelet." Kelly turned her gaze to Arabella.

"Do you have any feelings for David?" Arabella suddenly asked.

"What?" Kelly looked at her friend in surprise. "You don't think we'd be a good match as well, do you?"

"You're both single, and if you don't dislike each other, you could start as friends and see where that leads."

"You want me to be your sister-in-law?" Kelly was stunned. "Ever since I started managing the company, I barely have time to sleep, let alone date."

"But you've been wanting to get out of the single club, right? Mr. and Mrs. Piper have been on your case, and my parents are doing the same to my brother."

"But we can't just settle..." Kelly looked in the direction David had left. He was handsome, with a good personality, but she had never considered dating him before. However, using such an outstanding person as a shield didn't sound too bad.

It would stop her parents from nagging her, prevent relatives from setting her up on dates...

Her life could be a lot quieter!

"Put the bracelet away for now; I'll talk to David later. By the way, you haven't told me what you wanted to see me about today."

"What happened?"

"The other day at the homecoming banquet, didn't you hold a raffle to give away cars to 99 lucky fans?"

Some of them got into accidents, and inspection reports show that there's something wrong with those cars. Now there are voices online questioning the quality of the cars, suggesting that the Collins family is just putting on a show. They're doubting that the cars' actual quality doesn't match the price, accusing the Collins family of using subpar cars for show."

Arabella's lips curled into a smile, almost excitedly, "It seems like someone behind the scenes is getting restless and stirring the pot."

"Now there are voices doubting whether the Collins family's true daughter is as stellar and well-behaved as claimed during the banquet."

Chapter 1996

"Also, there are some voices online saying that the Collins family didn't visit the injured at the hospital

right away. I bet that your parents have already heard the news."

Arabella's lips quirked up slightly. "Are they just trying to get me to the hospital to check on those injured?"

"You mean, there are loads of reporters lurking around the Collins estate and the hospital, just waiting for you to show up so they can pounce for an interview? Someone behind the scenes wants to put you on the spot, embarrass you, and stir up chaos for the glamorous Collins family and tarnish your reputation."

"Not exactly." Arabella's expression remained neutral. "All that does not matter so much. The main issue is that ever since my identity as Dr. Bell was revealed, I've had to deal with a lot of unnecessary trouble. I'll call Hans, and I'll represent the Collins family to visit the victims at the hospital."

Kelly hurried to keep pace with her stride. "But it sounds like there's more to it."

"Upon arriving at the hospital and seeing the severity of the injuries, would Dr. Bell help?"

"Of course. With a doctor's kind heart, if a patient lies before you, you'd definitely save them!"

"And what if I save them, but they die?"

"They just had car accidents; minor injuries that should be no problem for you."

Kelly stopped mid-sentence, a realization dawning on her. "You're saying the mastermind might use this opportunity to tarnish your name further? They might say you saved the victim, but then they secretly tamper with something, and if the victim dies, the online masses will say your medical skills are lacking, that you're responsible for their death. They might question why someone so young can just enter a hospital and perform surgeries. No matter what you do, you're in the wrong, and you may even end up being dragged to the police station."

Arabella nodded and made a call to Hans, briefing him on the situation.

After she hung up, Kelly couldn't hold back her concern. "Who is this mastermind? With such an evil intent! Why would they want to hurt you like this?"

With the nation's eyes on this matter, if Arabella did perform surgery on the victim and they died, with so many onlookers, the police would be under pressure and would have to invite Arabella for a 'conversation'.

The person behind the scenes wants Arabella disgraced, possibly even an eye for an eye.

Why would they go to such lengths?

"It's because I've been poking around the truth about the fire, disrupting their peace. They want me to visit the hospital? I'll make the trip."

"But what if," Kelly began to worry but then she realized, "You're planning a counter-move? But can you trust those victims?"

"I'll have my precautions."

"Then I'll go with you!"

Kelly watched her walk away. How audacious and commanding she was! Forget Romeo; even she was enamored with this girl herself.

Oh, right, there was another trending search she hadn't gotten around to telling Arabella about.

Kelly thought about catching up but decided not to add to her troubles.

Alongside the trending scandal, #AlmaAssault# was also there.

Chapter 1997

Throughout the entire incident, Serena didn't fight back at all. Instead, it was Alma and her clique who were bullying her.

All the onlookers who saw Alma's actions couldn't help but lash out in condemnation.

[I can't believe how nasty Alma could be. I thought she was just a spoiled rich girl, but her behavior is shockingly crass.]

[Everyone was bashing Serena before, but now I'm thinking, did we get it all wrong? Maybe Arabella and Alma are the real culprits, and they've just used their wealth and power to twist public opinion.]

[It's entirely possible. How else could a freshman have such impressive identities?]

[I'm also starting to believe that Serena might have been falsely accused.]

[And watching Arabella fight with those hooligans in the video, she was pretty fierce. I'm sure she didn't learn those skills at home – she must have had a rough past. I mean, you don't get moves like that from nowhere!]

[Arabella loves to fight, Alma loves to fight, maybe that's the true colors of the Collins family? All the praises online are probably just bought with their fortune.]

In the surveillance footage, the online crowd watched as Alma's friends held Serena's arms, one opening the fire escape, while another pushed Serena's wheelchair, rolling her into the stairwell.

What happened inside wasn't caught on tape, but the timestamp showed that twenty minutes later, an ambulance took Serena out of the stairwell, covered in blood and barely hanging on.

[Have we been misled by the Collins family all along? Maybe Serena is the one who was really suffering.]

[Could it be that the Collins family found their biological daughter and now they want to ditch the adopted one? But to protect their reputation, they smear Serena's name.]

[Serena has been thrown out and hasn't spoken out publicly since. Could there be more to this story?]

At Reflections Villa.

Louisa was fuming upon seeing these comments.

"It's certain someone has paid for a smear campaign; these comments are all fabricated."

Kenneth, after watching the trending surveillance video, murmured, "It does look like Alma was in the wrong, she attacked first."

"We didn't want to reveal Bella's identity at first because we were worried it would be too much for the grandparents, we wanted to spend more time with Bella, and we didn't want these rumors disturbing her life." Louisa was irate.

But now she was on the trending search again.

The #ArabellaSpotted# was all over the trending search.

The moment her car appeared outside the hospital, the media swarmed her.

Bella had been considerate, yet she still got criticized.

Chapter 1998

"People just love to nitpick these days." Kenneth set his smartphone down and turned to comfort his wife.

Meanwhile, at the other end of town.

"Son of a gun!" Beverly, seeing the trending news on her feed, was so furious she chucked her cell phone at her daughter.

Had Alma not quickly reached out to catch it, the phone would have likely smacked her right in the face.

"Mom." Alma was a little frightened.

"Don't you 'Mom' me!" Beverly couldn't believe how naive her own daughter was, "In broad daylight, with cameras everywhere, what do you think?"

"It's just I didn't expect that little tramp Serena to actually release the security footage. How dare she?"

Alma fumed, shocked at how the once-simple girl had suddenly wisened up.

"Why wouldn't she dare?" Beverly glared at her daughter, "Last time, Martin got into it to defend her, and mistakenly hit you. This time, even if you did beat her up like that, the worst Martin would do is give a verbal warning. He can't really do anything to you. Serena must've guessed this, so she let the surveillance footage leak, to sway public opinion her way! She's grown a brain, knows to call an ambulance first to keep evidence for herself. Look at you, getting dumber by the minute! Even this little slip-up got caught!"

"Mom." Alma felt a bit wronged, "It was such a rare chance, finally running into her after I got beat up so badly last time, I was just so angry when I saw her."

Beverly's face remained stoic, silent.

"Mom, I have an idea. What if I come out and say Serena used to always pick on Arabella, and that day at the mall, she started throwing insults at Arabella, and I couldn't stand it so my friends and I stepped in."

Alma didn't get to finish before Beverly doused her with cold reality, "Haven't you seen Arabella's reputation right now?"

Both she and Arabella were getting dragged through the mud!

Still, anger aside, Beverly finally said, "Arabella's being slandered, but the Collins family will surely handle it. Once Arabella's name is cleared, that's when you come forward. Public opinion will naturally shift in your favor then."

A gleam of delight appeared in Alma's eyes – old ginger is spicier indeed! Her mother was still the shrewdest of them all. This way, she could not only gain some notoriety for herself but also ride on Arabella's coattails to a redemption arc and grow her own fanbase!

She thought, "That damn Serena, daring to pull such a stunt behind my back. Did she think she can manipulate the public narrative with some surveillance footage?"

Elsewhere.

Chapter 1999

A woman of delicate sensibilities put away her smartphone with a dismissive huff, "So, Romeo's got a thing for her? I mean, sure, she's got a pretty face, but the rest is probably just smoke and mirrors courtesy of the Collins PR machine."

A piano prodigy? A renowned doctor? And now, rumors are swirling that her perfect test scores might be as fake as a three-dollar bill!

"Ms. Monroe, you are right. How can a girl, abandoned and left to fend for herself, rise to the top of every field just because of her grandfathers' nurturing? That's not human; it's almost divine!"

The butler, Moira, let out a derisive chuckle, "If it weren't for the engagement deal between the Collins and the McMillians, there's no way this stray kitten would be rubbing shoulders with the young McMillian heir. But the tide of public opinion is on our side now. Once Arabella's name is dragged through the mud, you will secure Romeo without even breaking a sweat."

"That Serena, what a useless piece of work. I've been studying overseas, and she still hasn't managed to get her claws into Romeo. And Alma, what a waste of space, mooning over Romeo while Serena isn't even a true heiress, yet she can't win his heart. Instead, she's getting herself dirty fighting Serena. Looks like it's up to me to step in."

Harriet Monroe stood before the floor-to-ceiling windows of her family's palatial villa, arms crossed over her chest, gazing out at the sprawling garden with a smug curve of her lips.

"Ms. Monroe, you grew up alongside Mr. Romeo and even lived with the McMillians for a while. Back then, it was just you and him. That sort of bond is deeper than any of these flings. Ms. Monroe, you are

on winter break now, the perfect opportunity to rekindle that flame."

"I don't care about whatever surprises or romances he's cooked up for Arabella in the past. Now that she's been unmasked, all it'll take is a little push from me, and Romeo will naturally be mine. Go prepare some snacks, I'll take them over to him."

Confidence flickered in Harriet's eyes. With her in the picture, Arabella didn't stand a chance.

"Right away, I'll make sure they suit Mr. Romeo's tastes to a T."

Harriet surveyed the garden once more and added, "Hold on—tell the kitchen to keep it simple.

Otherwise, Romeo will spot straight away they weren't made by me."

"You always think of everything, Ms. Monroe. This time, we'll focus on simple and delicious."

Moira smiled, admiring the young woman before her. "Ms. Monroe, you have the grace and the pedigree. Over the years, our family has built an empire abroad that rivals the Collins family, and if Mr. Monroe weren't so modest, shunning those rich lists. If he actually competed, what chance would the Collins have. Mr. Monroe's getting on in years and wants to return to the domestic scene. That means you and Mr. Romeo will have plenty more chances to interact."

Meanwhile, Arabella was at the hospital, where the victims' families grabbed her, demanding an

explanation.

"Though the car involved in the raffle wasn't produced by our brand, it was acquired through official channels. The vehicle in question hasn't been sent to an authoritative institution for evaluation yet. Rest assured, if this is the Collins family's responsibility, we will not shirk it," Arabella assured the weeping relatives.

Chapter 2000

Arabella's heart ached as she watched the grieving families, their tears flowing freely. She made a solemn vow, "We will get to the bottom of this. Rest assured, if there's any responsibility on our part, we won't shy away from it. But mark my words, this smacks of a smear campaign against the Collins family. Whoever is behind this, we'll hunt them down and bring them to justice."

Just then, a familiar doctor rushed over, urgency in his voice, "Ms. Bella, you've arrived just in time.

One of the car accident victims is in critical condition, hanging by a thread. Could you take a look?"

The families clamored with concern, "Is it my daughter?"

"Dr. Benedict, please tell me, is it my son? I'm the father of the patient in bed 18."

"My husband was brought in for emergency surgery this morning. Is it him you're talking about?"

"It's the patient in bed 19. Please, everyone, keep calm," Dr. Benedict explained, then turned to

Arabella, "Ms. Bella, can you help?"

Arabella nodded and followed him away.

Meanwhile, at the entrance of McMillian Corporation, a car worth a small fortune pulled up. A driver

opened the door for Harriet, handing her a lunchbox with the utmost respect.

Clutching the lunchbox, Harriet looked up at the towering skyscraper – it had been a while since her last visit.

As she entered, the receptionists rose to greet her with reverence.

"Ms. Monroe, we haven't seen you in some time."

"I'm here to surprise Romeo. No need to alert him," she said, heading forward with lunchbox in hand, as if she were already the lady of the manor.

"Ms. Monroe." Alice, one of the receptionists, stepped forward apologetically, "I'm sorry, but could you please wait here for a moment? Mr. Romeo is in a meeting and has a VIP client next. May I call Carl to..."

"Are you suggesting I'm not as important as some client?"

"Of course not!" the receptionist hurriedly responded, "It's just that, recently, a client barged upstairs unannounced, and it put the boss in a foul mood. We all got an earful."

Harriet smirked coldly, "And what's that got to do with me? Do you think Romeo would be upset to see me? Don't you know how I stand in his heart?"

"Absolutely, in Mr. Romeo's eyes, you are like his sister."

At the word "sister," Harriet peered over her sunglasses, her displeasure evident as she scrutinized the receptionist.

"Alice, I find you increasingly irritating. What if I decide to go up today, right now?"

With a push, Harriet sent her sprawling, stepping into the elevator and slamming the door-close button.

Alice crashed to the ground, her back hitting a trash can, pain shooting through her spine.

"What's going on?"

"Ms. Luna, you're here?" said Alice, concern in her voice.